

Final Report

**Assessing levels of ecological Sensitivity of
Western Ghats**

**A project of MoEnF, GOI
For the
Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP)**

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Natural History**

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Abstract

The Ministry of Environment and Forests, Govt. of India constituted the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP) to recommend measures and to help delineate Ecological Sensitive Areas (ESAs). A scientific approach, among others, to the problem was sought to be taken. Since the identification of these ESAs has to be based on a plethora of factors, integration of the information and data is a prime requisite for such a process. Modern methods of geospatial approach for identification of ESAs are eminently suitable for enabling such process. This was attempted both in desktop and web enabled environment. The data used in these analyses comprises of seven significant physical, biological variables. A grid of 5'x5' was used to characterize relative combined significance of locations. The grids were ranked from a low of 1 to high of 10. A vast number of grids of over 2000 for the entire Western Ghats have low scores -obviously due to past cumulative anthropogenic impacts. Since the available data is primarily on forests, and forest related variables, a number of significant localities outside this configuration have not been taken into consideration. Thus a number of IBAs would fall in grids with low scores.

It is suggested that scores of 3 to 10 may be included in the Ecological Sensitive Zone 1 (ESZ 1) and ESZ 2 would have all areas with grid scores of 1-2.