Government of Odisha

Forest, Environment & Climate Change Department

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NOTIFICATION

Bhubaneswar, dated the 25.11., 2022

FE-ENV1-ENV-0064/2022/ 20954 /FE&CC, Mahendragiri hill located under Paralakhemundi Division of Gajapati district is one of the biological, ecological and archaeological important mountain ecosystems in Odisha. The hill ecosystem acts as a transitional zone between flora and fauna of Western Ghats and the Himalayan biogeographic zones making the region an ecological estuary of genetic diversities. Presence of high altitude dry ever-green Shola Forest above 1000 m above mean sea level is the distinctive vegetation of this hill which support several threatened and endemic plants and animals. Mahendragiri hill plays a pivotal role in maintaining the ecological balance and control the climate of the entire south Odisha and Srikakulum district of Andhra Pradesh. This fragile ecosystem is being treated as critical habitat of Saora (Saura), a Primitive Tribal Group (PTG) of India and Kondh tribe.

Floristically the hill represents 40% of the reported higher plants of Odisha. In total 1348 species of plants and 388 species of animals are reported to occur in this ecologically fragile mountain. It is an abode for 5 species of endemic and 60 species of threatened plants out of 153 identified threatened species of Odisha. It is also the critical habitat for 2 endemic animals. Brief information on Biodiversity of Mahendragiri hill is given in Annexure I.

The ancient temples of Kunti, Bhima, Arjuna and Yudhisthir at Mahendragiri have been declared as protected monuments under the Ancient Monument and Archaeological sites and Remains Act 1958 by the State Government. These monuments provide a sacred and holy background for receiving about one lakh devotees annually every year to worship the deities of the hill.

At present the rich biological resources and the associated traditional knowledge practiced by the tribal communities residing in and around the hill is under immense pressure due to various anthropogenic and climatic factors. The long-term protection, conservation and management of biological resources of the hill are of utmost significance.

Whereas it is provided under Section 37 of the Biological Diversity Act, 2002 that the State Government may in consultation with the local bodies, notify in the Official Gazette, "any ecosystems- Aquatic, terrestrial and marine having rich in biodiversity comprising wild as well as domesticated species, endemic species rare and threatened species, keystone species, species of evolutionary significance, distinctive forest types, sacred groves, medicinal plant conservation areas, preservation plots maintained by the Forest, Environment & Climate Change Department, Corridors for RET species of flora

and fauna, wild ancestors of domestic/cultivated species or their varieties past pre-eminence of biological components represented by fossil beds and having significant cultural, ethical or aesthetic values and are important for the maintenance of cultural diversity can be declared as Biodiversity Heritage Sites (BHS) in the State".

Whereas the Rule 20 (2) of the Odisha Biological Diversity Rules,2012 mandates the State Biodiversity Board to frame guidelines on the selection, management and other aspects of Biodiversity Heritage Sites. In pursuance of these provisions the Odisha Biodiversity Board has notified the guidelines which has already been approved by the Government of Odisha in Forest and Environment Department vide letter no. 23339 /F&E dated 26-12-2015.

Whereas proposals from Biodiversity Management Committee of Gandahati, Sushree Basanti Mallik, MLA of Mohana, DFO, Parlakhemundi, and one NGO named LIPICA working in Ganjam and Gajapati districts have been received for declaring Mahendragiri Hill as Biodiversity Heritage Site in prescribed proforma of BHS guidelines issued by Government of Odisha. The proposal submitted by the BMC of Gandahati has been approved in Gramsabha held on 12-09-2020 for declaring Mahendragiri as BHS.

Whereas following the guidelines of BHS, Odisha Biodiversity Board has published the preliminary information on Mahendragiri as the proposed BHS in a local Odia newspaper 'The Prameya' (published on 13 -09-2022) and in one English Newspaper "The New Indian Express" (published on 14 -09-2022).

Whereas the Odisha Biodiversity Board has recommended the same as per above guidelines and recommended the proposal for declaring Mahendragiri as a Biodiversity Heritage Site. Now, therefore, Government have been pleased to declare an area of 4250 ha of 'MAHENDRAGIRI' covering two Reserve Forests (Idongiri and Mahendra RFs) in the district of Gajapati under Forest Division of Parlakhemundi as the Second 'Biodiversity Heritage Site of Odisha' (as per the Map in Annexure- II and Boundary description in Annexure- III), as per section 37 of Biodiversity Act and Rule 20(2) of Odisha Biodiversity Rules, 2012 and as per the criteria of the Guidelines issued by this Department letter No. 23339 dated 26-12-2015.

By Order of Governor

Manoj Sharma

Additional Chief Secretary to Government

Memo No. 20955 Date. 25.11.22

Copy along with soft copy of the Notification forwarded to the Director, Printing Stationary & Publications, Odisha Govt. Press, Madhupatna, Cuttack-10 for publication of the Notification in an extraordinary issue of Odisha Gazette and supply 100 (hundred) spare copies to the FE & CC Department for circulation.

25/11/22

Director, Environment-cum-
Special Secretary to Govt.

Memo No. 20956 Date. 25.11.22

Copy forwarded to the PCCF, Odisha/ PCCF(KL)/ PCCF(WL), Odisha/ Odisha Biodiversity Board for information and necessary action.

Director, Environment-cum-
Special Secretary to Govt.

Memo No. 20957 Date 25.11.22

Copy forwarded to All RCCFs/ All CCFs/ All DFOs for information and necessary action.

Director, Environment-cum-
Special Secretary to Govt.

Memo No. 20958 Date 25.11.22

Copy forwarded to the Secretary, MoEF&CC, Government of India, New Delhi for information & necessary action.

Director, Environment-cum-
Special Secretary to Govt.

Memo No. 20959 Date 25.11.22

Copy forwarded to All Departments of Government/ All Collectors for information & necessary action.

Director, Environment-cum-
Special Secretary to Govt.

Memo No. 20960 Date 25.11.22

Copy forwarded to All Officers/ All Sections, FE&CC Department for information & necessary action.

Director, Environment-cum-
Special Secretary to Govt.

Memo No. 20961 Date 25.11.22

Copy forwarded to the Head, State Portal IT Department, Lokseva Bhawan for information & necessary action.

Director, Environment-cum-
Special Secretary to Govt.

Annexure-I

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF BIODIVERSITY OF MAHENDRAGIRI BHS:

Mahendragiri hill is situated at an elevation between 700-1501 m above mean sea level in Gajapati district of Odisha. With increase altitude, the hill complex demonstrates several micro climatic conditions like tropical shola, tropical semi-evergreen, tropical moist-deciduous & tropical dry deciduous.

The diversified vegetation with rich floral diversity representing 40% of the reported flora of Odisha.

A total of 1,358 species of plants including 1,042 species of angiosperms under 122 families, 60 species of pteridophytes, 104 species of bryophytes, 53 species of lichens and 72 species of macro-fungi and 2 species of gymnosperms occurring in the hill ecosystem.

In term of botanically curious plants, 44 species of orchids, 8 species of insectivorous plants and more than 300 species of medicinal plants are found here. Of late 5 new plant species with their type localities in different parts of the hill have been discovered from Mahendragiri which has increased the phytogeographical significance of the hill. Following type of forests occur in Mahendragiri hill.

Threatened and Endemic Plants: Plant species like *Dimeria mahendragiriensis, Tripogon mahendragiriensis, Themeda odishe, Strobilanthes jeyporensis* and *Brachystelma mahendragiriense* are endemic to the hill while *Themeda mooneyii, Themeda saxicola, Lasianthus truncatus, Dendrobium peguanum* (The pegu Dendrobium), *Campanula benthami and Cheirostylis parvifolia* (Small Flowered cherirostylis)are apparent endemic.

It is an abode of 20 species of threatened medicinal plants ascertained by Foundation for Revitalization of Local Health Tradition (FRLHT), Bangalore. Out of 154 threatened plant species identified for Odisha, at least 60 species are reported to occur here which is ascertained from various scientific publications. It is also an abode for two species of tree ferns: *Cyathea spinulosa* (Flying spider-monkey tree fern) and *Cyathea gigantea* (Tree fern).

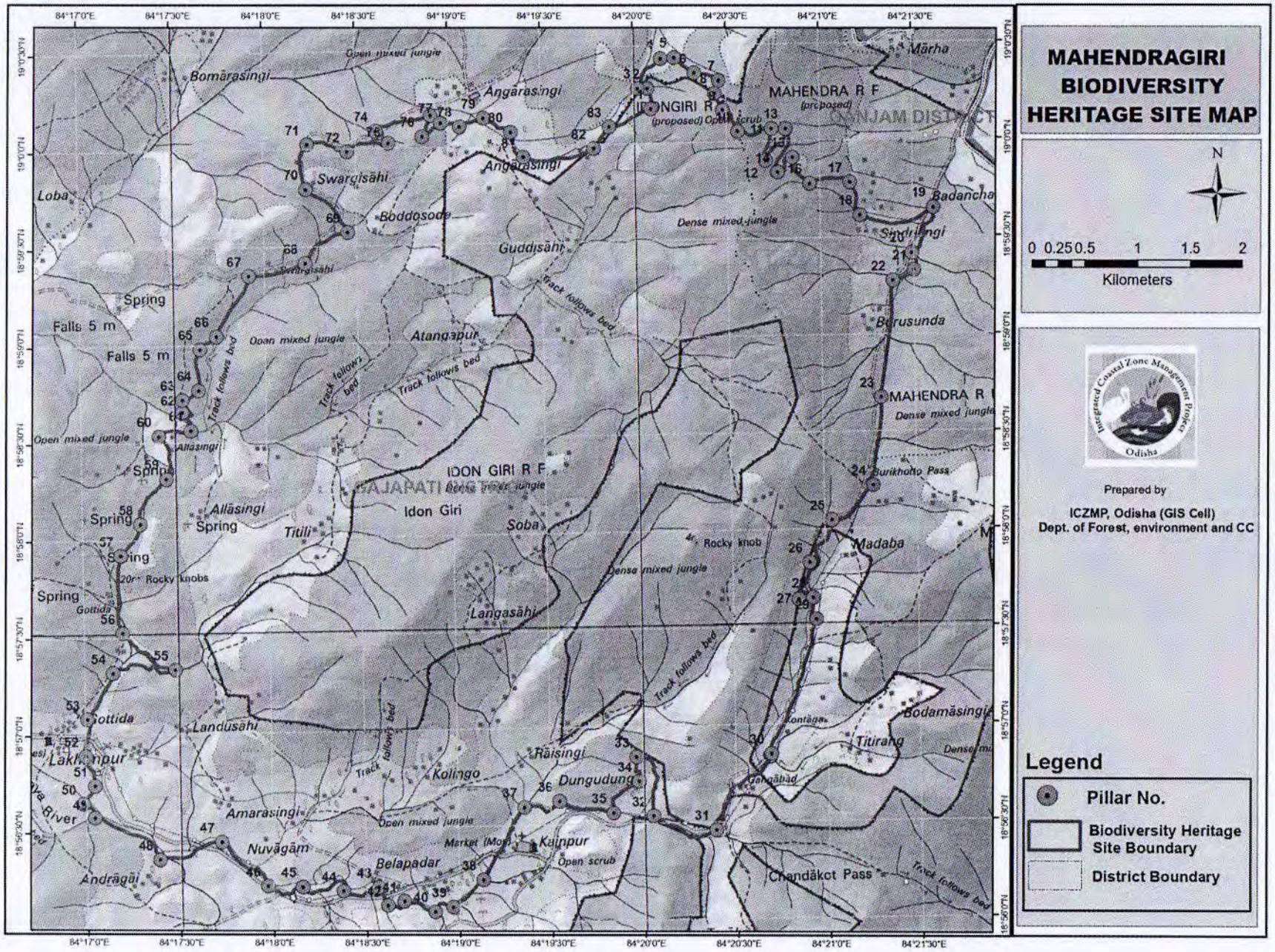
Orchids: Out of 153 species of Orchids found in Odisha, 44 species are occurring here.

Medicinal Plants: Out of 41 threatened medicinal plants found in Odisha as per IUCN, 20 species are occurring in Mahendragiri with suitable population for conservation function. Out of 32 plant species in the country identified for conservation, cultivation and sustainable commercial exploitation by the National Medicinal Plants Board under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, botanists have identified at least 18 species available in the Mahendragiri ecosystem.

Faunal Diversity: The faunal diversity of the hill consists of 388 species of animals which include 27 species of mammals, 165 species of birds, 60 species herpetofauna (23 species of snakes, 15 species of amphibians, 3 species of turtles, 19 species of lizards), 100 species of butterflies and 36 species of moths occur here. Among some relict faunal resources two skinks such as *Sepsophis punctatus* and *Uropeltis ellioti*, one caecilian, *Gegeneophis orientalis* added the biogeographic significance of the hill. The hill complex is a critical habitat for Caecilians, Golden Geckos and frogs, 6 species of owls and 3 species of owlet. It is also the habitat for Rock Python and Royal Bengal Tiger. The four- horned antelope or Chowsingha, the Ruddy mongoose (*Herpestes smithi*), East- Himalayan long- tailed minivet, red breasted falconet, gray-headed fishing eagle, white eared bulbul and slender billed scimitar babbler are found here are of great conservation interest.

Threatened and Endemic Fauna: Dutta's Mahendragiri gecko (*Hemidactylus sushilduttai*) is endemic to this hilly range. The hill ranges are the type locality of Eastern Ghats neo endemic frog, *Fejervarya kalinga* and critical habitat for Eastern Ghats endemic Golden Gecko (*Calodactylus aureus*). The other species of conservation importance are tigers, Asiatic elephants, munia bird (*Lonchura malacca malacca),* giant squirrel and few others.

Annexure-II


MAHENDRAGIRI
BIODIVERSITY
HERITAGE SITE MAP
N
0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5 2
Kilometers
Prepared by
ICZMP, Odisha (GIS Cell)
Dept. of Forest, environment and CC
Legend
Pillar No.
Biodiversity Heritage Site Boundary
District Boundary
MAHENDRA R F
IDON GIRI R F
Idon Giri
Bomārasingi
Angārasingi
Swargisāhi
Boddosoda
Guddisāhi
Atangapur
Allāsingi
Titili
Soba
Langasāhi
Landusāhi
Kolingo
Rāisingi
Dungudung
Amarasingi
Nuvāgām
Belapadar
Kainpur
Andrāgāi
Chandākot Pass
Madaba
Titirang
Bodamāsingi
Burusunda
Badancha
Mārha
Loba
Spring
Falls 5 m
Open mixed jungle
Dense mixed jungle
Track follows bed
Rocky knob
Open scrub

Annexure-III

Boundary description of Mahendragiri BHS

Pillar No.	Latitude	Longitude
1	19° 0' 10.564" N	84° 20' 5.298" E
2	19° 0' 16.894" N	84° 20' 4.112" E
3	19° 0' 16.953" N	84° 20' 1.018" E
4	19° 0' 25.938" N	84° 20' 8.579" E
5	19° 0' 26.258" N	84° 20' 12.860" E
6	19° 0' 21.431" N	84° 20' 19.303" E
7	19° 0' 18.964" N	84° 20' 27.209" E
8	19° 0' 14.988" N	84° 20' 25.826" E
9	19° 0' 9.693" N	84° 20' 28.442" E
10	19° 0' 3.125" N	84° 20' 33.127" E
11	19° 0' 3.729" N	84° 20' 44.032" E
12	18° 59' 53.999" N	84° 20' 42.071" E
13	19° 0' 3.693" N	84° 20' 48.699" E
14	18° 59' 50.338" N	84° 20' 45.872" E
15	18° 59' 54.846" N	84° 20' 50.738" E
16	18° 59' 46.718" N	84° 20' 56.129" E
17	18° 59' 46.905" N	84° 21' 9.201" E
18	18° 59' 36.784" N	84° 21' 12.399" E
19	18° 59' 38.843" N	84° 21' 36.098" E
20	18° 59' 24.894" N	84° 21' 28.936" E
21	18° 59' 19.613" N	84° 21' 29.562" E
22	18° 59' 16.418" N	84° 21' 22.696" E
23	18° 58' 40.446" N	84° 21' 18.447" E
24	18° 58' 13.217" N	84° 21' 15.361" E
25	18° 58' 2.641" N	84° 21' 1.800" E
26	18° 57' 49.849" N	84° 20' 54.431" E
27	18° 57' 38.526" N	84° 20' 50.574" E
28	18° 57' 38.853" N	84° 20' 55.396" E
29	18° 57' 32.262" N	84° 20' 56.368" E
30	18° 56' 50.808" N	84° 20' 41.023" E
31	18° 56' 27.621" N	84° 20' 22.820" E
32	18° 56' 32.256" N	84° 20' 2.702" E
33	18° 56' 50.512" N	84° 19' 57.328" E
34	18° 56' 42.886" N	84° 19' 58.154" E
35	18° 56' 33.367" N	84° 19' 49.593" E
36	18° 56' 37.197" N	84° 19' 32.448" E
37	18° 56' 35.615" N	84° 19' 20.983" E
38	18° 56' 13.330" N	84° 19' 7.438" E
39	18° 56' 5.086" N	84° 18' 57.478" E
40	18° 56' 3.658" N	84° 18' 51.535" E

41	18° 56' 7.127" N	84° 18' 41.610" E
42	18° 56' 5.915" N	84° 18' 36.369" E
43	18° 56' 11.601" N	84° 18' 33.457" E
44	18° 56' 10.661" N	84° 18' 21.975" E
45	18° 56' 12.175" N	84° 18' 8.990" E
46	18° 56' 12.629" N	84° 17' 57.648" E
47	18° 56' 26.348" N	84° 17' 42.948" E
48	18° 56' 21.259" N	84° 17' 23.127" E
49	18° 56' 34.501" N	84° 17' 2.223" E
50	18° 56' 38.767" N	84° 16' 58.602" E
51	18° 56' 44.242" N	84° 17' 2.490" E
52	18° 56' 53.489" N	84° 16' 59.629" E
53	18° 57' 4.938" N	84° 17' 0.257" E
54	18° 57' 19.054" N	84° 17' 8.719" E
55	18° 57' 19.966" N	84° 17' 28.944" E
56	18° 57' 31.363" N	84° 17' 11.956" E
57	18° 57' 55.271" N	84° 17' 11.826" E
58	18° 58' 4.827" N	84° 17' 18.338" E
59	18° 58' 18.779" N	84° 17' 26.904" E
60	18° 58' 32.035" N	84° 17' 24.746" E
61	18° 58' 33.692" N	84° 17' 35.116" E
62	18° 58' 39.330" N	84° 17' 32.494" E
63	18° 58' 43.201" N	84° 17' 32.522" E
64	18° 58' 46.118" N	84° 17' 37.899" E
65	18° 58' 58.856" N	84° 17' 38.507" E
66	18° 59' 2.718" N	84° 17' 43.778" E
67	18° 59' 21.194" N	84° 17' 54.510" E
68	18° 59' 24.817" N	84° 18' 12.896" E
69	18° 59' 34.136" N	84° 18' 26.761" E
70	18° 59' 47.670" N	84° 18' 13.320" E
71	19° 0' 1.397" N	84° 18' 13.963" E
72	18° 59' 59.014" N	84° 18' 26.913" E
73	19° 0' 1.478" N	84° 18' 40.220" E
74	19° 0' 5.186" N	84° 18' 36.145" E
75	19° 0' 9.711" N	84° 18' 53.954" E
76	19° 0' 3.376" N	84° 18' 51.234" E
77	19° 0' 7.385" N	84° 18' 57.246" E
78	19° 0' 6.132" N	84° 19' 3.343" E
79	19° 0' 8.618" N	84° 19' 11.115" E
80	19° 0' 4.203" N	84° 19' 19.812" E
81	18° 59' 56.315" N	84° 19' 23.899" E
82	18° 59' 58.552" N	84° 19' 46.595" E
83	19° 0' 5.145" N	84° 19' 51.605" E

(Member Secretary)