

Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA)

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The Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) is an important part of India's environmental policy framework, designed to strike a balance between development and forest conservation. It was created to ensure that when forest land is diverted for non-forest purposes, equivalent afforestation and ecological restoration are carried out. Over the years, CAMPA has played a key role in channeling funds towards sustainable development, biodiversity protection, and climate resilience.

Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA)

The Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) functions as a dedicated mechanism to manage and utilise funds generated from compensatory afforestation. This process is designed to offset the ecological damage caused by deforestation due to industrial and developmental activities. CAMPA plays a vital role in ensuring that the diversion of forest land is balanced by afforestation, regeneration, and other conservation measures, thereby helping to maintain ecological equilibrium and safeguard **biodiversity**.

Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) Background

The destruction of forests results in the loss of crucial ecological services. However, due to developmental and industrial needs, forests are often “diverted for non-forest purposes.” Under the Forest (Conservation) Act of 1980, any diversion of forest land requires afforestation on non-forest land equivalent to the area being diverted.

Since afforestation is a long-term process, the ecological goods and services lost during this period must be compensated. To ensure this, the law mandates that the Net Present Value (NPV) of the diverted forest be recovered from the agency responsible for the diversion.

Thus, any user agency seeking to convert forest land must deposit funds for compensatory afforestation. The authority tasked with managing and utilizing these funds is the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA).

Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act, 2016

The Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) was initially set up under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, to manage funds generated from compensatory afforestation. Over time, challenges in managing these funds necessitated a formal structure, leading to the enactment of the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act, 2016, which streamlined the functioning of CAMPA.

Key provisions of the Act include:

- Establishment of the National Compensatory Afforestation Fund (NCAF) under the Public Account of India and State Compensatory Afforestation Funds (SCAFs) under the Public Accounts of respective states.
- Utilisation of funds for compensatory afforestation, additional/penal afforestation, Net Present Value (NPV) payments, catchment area treatment, and compliance with conditions under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.
- Statutory recognition of two authorities:
 - National Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (NCAFMPA) for managing NCAF.
 - State Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority for SCAFs.
- Sources of funds include payments for compensatory afforestation, NPV of forest land, and other project-specific contributions.
- Provision for annual audit of accounts by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) to ensure transparency and accountability.

Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority Challenges

The Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act, 2016, while providing a formal mechanism for managing afforestation funds, also presents certain practical challenges:

- **Land Availability:** The law mandates that afforestation should preferably occur on land adjacent to the diverted forest, but finding suitable non-forest land is often difficult, particularly in smaller or heavily forested states like Chhattisgarh.
- **Diversion of Funds:** CAMPA funds are not limited to afforestation alone; they can also be used for other programmes under the Green India Mission, necessitating careful monitoring to ensure funds are used effectively.
- **Impact on Tribal Rights:** The act grants the forest bureaucracy significant discretion over fund allocation, which may adversely affect the rights and participation of tribal communities and forest dwellers.

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