

RTI Act 2005 Section 4(1) (b)

OBLIGATIONS OF PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

b) Publish within one hundred and twenty days from the enactment of this Act

(i)	The particulars of its organisation, functions and duties;
	<p>Social Forestry Wing</p> <p>The Social Forestry Wing of the Kerala Forest Department focuses primarily on augmenting tree cover outside forest areas, while also functioning as the Department's crucial outreach arm. Traditionally, its activities involved raising and distributing seedlings and planting them in public and institutional lands.</p> <p>In earlier times, natural ecosystems were well distributed across the countryside, providing essential ecosystem services for agriculture and ensuring ecological connectivity between forests. Over the years, these natural areas have significantly diminished. There is now an urgent need to recreate such habitats to stabilise local ecosystems. Many development projects have also adversely affected the natural landscape, necessitating focused efforts for restoration and ecological repair. This proposal introduces new initiatives aimed at strengthening the foundations of sustainability for the future.</p> <p>The Social Forestry Wing was established in Kerala through G.O. (Rt) No. 88/81/AD dated 12-01-1981, with staff strength prescribed via G.O. (Rt) No. 678/82/AD dated 12-03-1982. The Social Forestry Scheme is broadly categorized into four groups: Farm Forestry, Community Forestry, Extension Forestry, and Agroforestry. A regular Social Forestry Wing was formally constituted in 1982 with the launch of World Bank-aided projects. Prior to this, Social Forestry activities were undertaken by the territorial divisions, but only on limited areas and with very few staff. The World Bank-funded Kerala Social Forestry Project focused on supplying seedlings to farmers and raising tree plantations on public lands such as roadsides, railway margins, canal banks, community lands, institutional compounds, and school and college campuses. The project concluded in 1993.</p> <p>Following the completion of the World Bank-aided Social Forestry Project in 1993, the Social Forestry Wing was entrusted with the major responsibility of implementing compensatory afforestation to rehabilitate degraded forests. From 1994 to March 2008, an extent of 57,181.02 ha of degraded forest land was rehabilitated at a cost of ₹10,651.31 lakh. The Social Forestry Wing effectively implemented the compensatory afforestation programme during 1994-95 to 2007-08.</p>

For implementing the project, an organisational structure was created comprising one Chief Conservator of Forests, 14 Assistant Conservators (each with jurisdiction over one district), Range Officers for each taluk, and Foresters at the block level. Two Circles—Kozhikode and Kollam—were formed in 1984 for the northern and southern regions, respectively. A Central Circle at Ernakulam was formed in 1994, each Circle headed by a Conservator of Forests and supported by an Assistant Conservator for extension and outreach activities. The Nature Study Centre, Kalady, was subsequently brought under the Ernakulam Circle to expand the Wing's educational role. At present, the overall structure remains largely unchanged, with the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests heading the Wing and Conservators heading the Circles or Regional Offices.

Promoting tree planting and nurturing outside forest areas remains the core mandate of the Social Forestry Wing. In addition, the Wing undertakes several other initiatives including Kalpatharu, Nagaravanam, Vidyavanam, Tree-Growing Incentive Schemes, Tree Banking, Conservation of Sacred Groves, formation of Forestry and Nature Clubs in educational institutions, and organising various programmes as part of Wildlife Week celebrations. Field functionaries under the Wing also take necessary action related to the management of captive elephants.