

TFRI steered Achanakmar-Amarkantak Reserve under UNESCO Biosphere Network

The International Council of UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB) meeting in Paris from 9-13 July 2012 has declared Achanakmar-Amarkantak Biosphere Reserve under the World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR).

Tropical Forest Research Institute (TFRI), Jabalpur of Indian Council of Forestry Research & Education (ICFRE) has been appointed as the lead institute for Achanakmar-Amarkantak Biosphere Reserve by the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), Govt. of India, New Delhi. The TFRI in close association with Chhattisgarh Forest Department has been conducting extensive studies in Achanakmar-Amarkantak Biosphere Reserve for last six years. As a result, the MoEF, New Delhi filed nomination with UNESCO, Paris to declare this Biosphere Reserve under the World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR). The studies conducted by TFRI epitomized the vast significance of the Biosphere Reserve which the UNESCO declared Achanakmar-Amarkantak Biosphere Reserve under the World Network of Biosphere Reserves on 11th July 2012. This is the only one Biosphere Reserve from India included under World Network of Biosphere Reserves during this MAB-ICC session.

Achanakmar-Amarkantak Biosphere Reserve: A Brief Description

Achanakmar-Amarkantak Biosphere Reserve, India occupying an area of 3835.51 sq. km is located at the junction of hill ranges of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh with topography ranging from high mountains, shallow valleys and plains. The core area of Achanakmar-Amarkantak consists of the protected forest land while the buffer zone and the transition area are characterized by forests, agricultural and rehabilitated land and small suburban clusters. Twenty seven tribal and non-tribal communities inhabit 418 villages living on agriculture (including production of medicinal plants) and non-timber products produced in the buffer zone and transition areas. Ecological studies on the restoration of degraded forest land, the conservation of medicinal plants and their sustainable harvesting are being conducted by the TFRI at Achanakmar-Amarkantak.



Dr. U. Prakasham, Director of the institute said "the Biosphere Reserve harbours a rich biodiversity of great conservation value. So far 1,527 species of flora and 324 species of fauna have been recorded from the site. The flora includes >324 species of thallophytes (algae fungi and lichen), 44 species of bryophytes, 40 species of ferns, 16 species of gymnosperms and more than 1,111 species of angiosperms. Moist deciduous forests constituting 63% of

the area dominate the Biosphere Reserve and provide diverse habitat to various flora and fauna. The Biosphere Reserve supports animals like tiger, bison, bear, spotted deer, barking deer, panther, wild cat, fox, wild dog, sambhar, four horned antelope, mouse deer etc. Different types and methods of forest management are practiced inside this site. The research findings are documented and applied to continue improving management of the site."

Director further told that the World Network of Biosphere Reserves of the Man and Biosphere Programme consists of a dynamic and interactive network of sites of excellence. It fosters integration of people and nature for sustainable development through participatory dialogue, knowledge sharing, poverty reduction and human well-being improvements, respect for cultural values and society's ability to cope with change, thus contributing to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). With this recognition from UNESCO, the Achanakmar-Amarkantak Biosphere Reserve enters into new realm of developmental activities which will usher in biodiversity conservation and socio-economic improvement of nearby tribals and open up for international scientific cooperation and funding.

Dr. S. A. Ansari, Group Coordinator (Research) of the institute said that the contribution of scientist team headed by Dr. N. Roychoudhury deserve special mention for this achievement.

