

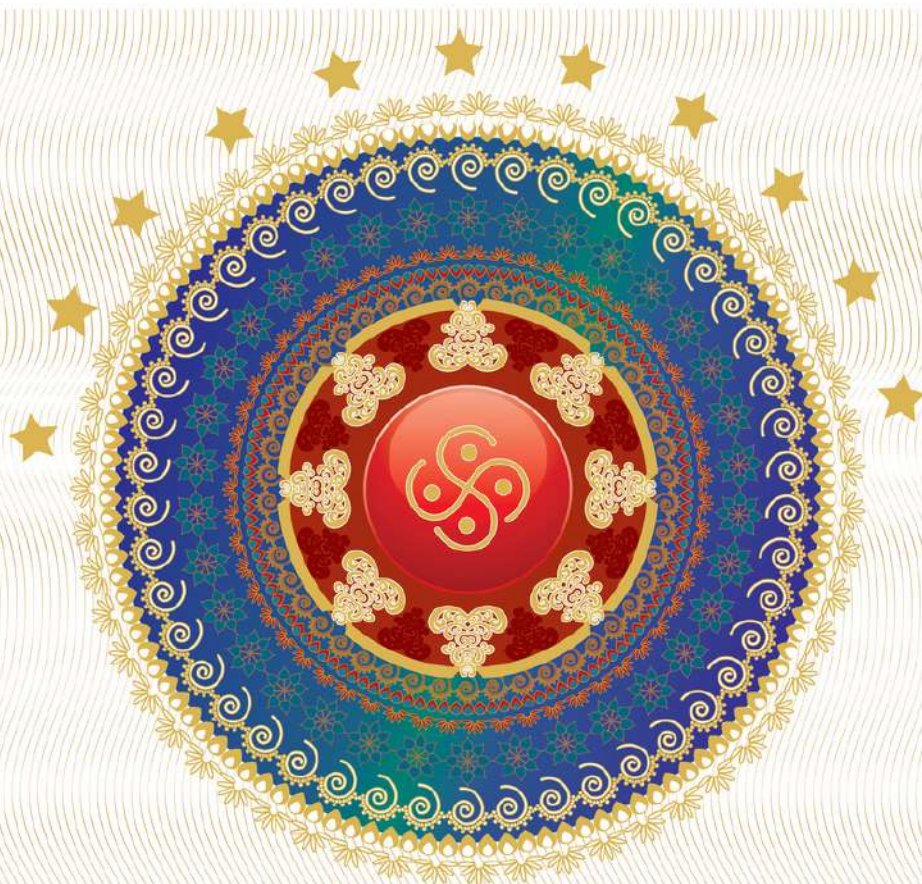


# PRT

(Primary Response Team)

*A key to man animal conflict  
mitigation in Pench, Maharashtra*

**PENCH TIGER RESERVE,  
MAHARASHTRA 2024**



# SKOCH AWARD

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**PENCH TIGER RESERVE, MAHARASHTRA**

FOR

**PRT - A KEY TO MAN ANIMAL CONFLICT MITIGATION**

**2023**



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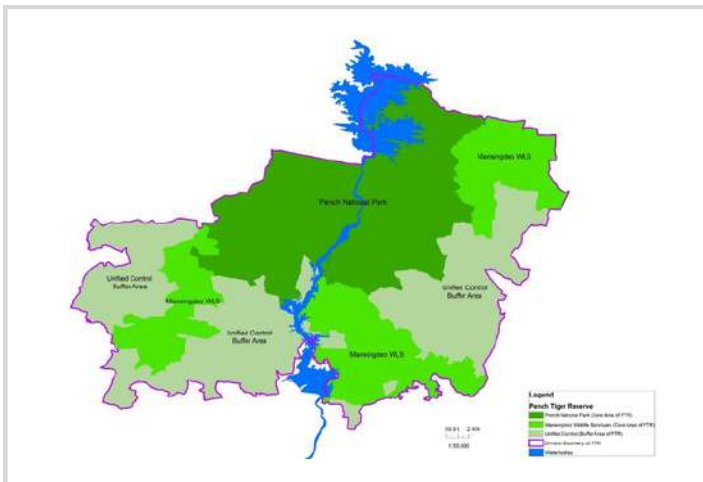
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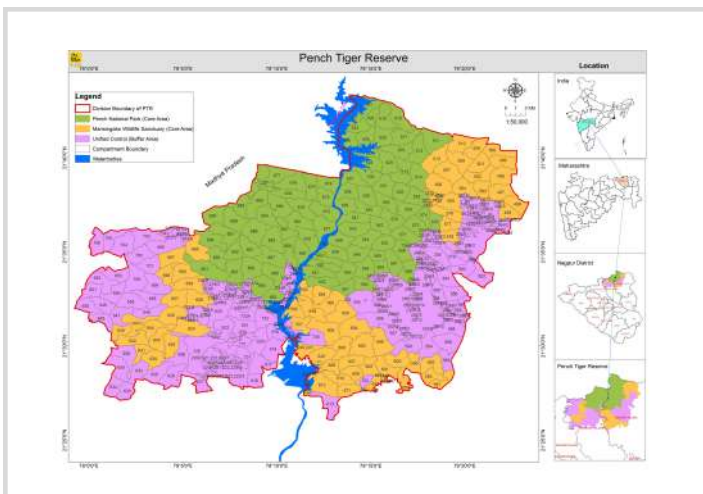


## 1. PENCH TIGER RESERVE, MAHARASHTRA : AN INTRODUCTION

Pench Tiger Reserve is spread in Maharashtra and Madya Pradesh state of India. Pench Tiger Reserve of Maharashtra is situated in Center of Central India Tiger landscape is spread in Ramtek, Parseoni and Saoner tehsil of Nagpur district. Declared national park in 1975, and 25th Tiger Reserve in 1999, it is spread over 741 sq.km. of area. Pench Tiger Reserve is an excellent abode to almost all the major floral and faunal species including Tiger, Leopard, Sloth bear, Indian gaur, Wild dog, Wolf etc. found in central India. As per the 2023 census, tiger population of Tiger Reserve is more than 41. It has good connectivity with Kanha, Pench (M.P), Tadoba Andhari, Navegaon-Nagzira and Bor Tiger Reserve. Pench river which gives the Tiger Reserve its home, divides the reserve in almost two equal halves. Totladoh reservoir built on the Pench river plays an important role in enriching and sustaining the wild life in the Tiger Reserve.



Core and Buffer area of Pench



PRT Location Map

## 2. BRIEF OVERVIEW OF MAN-ANIMAL CONFLICT IN PENCH

Human-wildlife conflict is on the rise in protected areas and surrounding villages across the country. Tiger population in Pench Tiger Reserve (PTR) increased up to 41 in the 2022 which was 9 during 2008-09, indicating the success of the conservation and protection measures also entailing increase in crop depredation, cattle death and human loss bringing issue of man animal conflict at fore front.

For this, two Rapid Rescue Units (RRU) at subdivision level have been established for the specialized rescue operation in PTR. At the secondary level of response, Quick Response Teams (QRTs) have been established at range level to carry out simple rescue operations. However, issues involved in this were-

1. Delayed receiving of any conflict information resulting into delayed response from forest department through its RRU/QRT.
2. No skilled support at the conflict site if situation demands.
3. Mob management at conflict site.



Training of PRT Team

### 3. SOLUTION : ESTABLISHMENT OF PRT TEAM

For dealing conflict situation and garnering support of community, engaging of PRT (Primary Response Team) was started in 2022.

For preparing PRT team 3 to 5 youths were selected in each village which constituted the PRT team of that particular village. They filled the gap in our man-animal conflict management system. They are working on a voluntary basis.

In case any incidence happens, members of the PRT team of that particular area informed either through PRT coordinator or through WhatsApp group created range wise. Till the time, QRT or RRT team arrives at the site, PRT controls the mob, keeps eye upon the animal or situation. After the team arrives, they assist the RRT/QRT team, if the operation is prolonged for several days, they keep patrolling or searching either as part of forest department or independently.



Patrolling by PRT team



Certificate and award being given to PRT Team

For the same, they are being imparted training regularly as per training calendar prepared for their capacity building. Content of such training sessions consist of departmental rules and procedures, rescue operation, hands on rescue

implements, mob managements, information of different “Right to Services” being rendered by the department for the villagers.

### 4. CHALLENGES WITH ESTABLISHMENT OF PRT TEAM

There were several challenges in establishing this structure. No institutional arrangement for the PRT was present in Pench Tiger Reserve prior to this experiment. When the structure was being established, making the youth as well as people from our own departmental believe that such system can work was very hard. Besides, it was very hard to persuade the youths to work on voluntarily basis in the otherwise risky rescue operations.

Main challenges were-

1. Working on voluntarily basis.
2. Youths reluctant to control/direct their own kins or community.
3. Lack of skill at village level.
4. Lack of formal structure.
5. Hardship/danger in rescue operations.
6. Oppositions from some villagers.

### 5. PROCESS BEING FOLLOWED

3 to 5 youths typically aged between 18 and 35 are selected from each village to form PRT team. They receive a specialized training module designed to equip them to handle any conflict situation. Additionally, they are provided with necessary gear such as clothing, shoes, fiber sticks, torches, bags, and water bottles. These are the bare minimum required for them to effectively carry out rescue operations or forest patrols. Initially, the CSR fund and foundation corpus of the Tiger Reserve was utilized to fund this project since there was no other source of funding available. Later on, formal source of fund were utilized.

To keep them engaged throughout the year irrespective of emergency situations, they patrol at least once a week and attend quarterly meetings with RFO.

All of them were registered with fire alert system of the Forest Survey of India (FSI). If a forest fire occurs, the Forest Survey of India (FSI) system sends alerts to the concerned authorities. The authorities then coordinate with the forest department to contain the situation until the firefighting team arrives. The best performing members of the PRT team are frequently called upon in village level eco-development committee meetings and are honoured for their service. This recognition instills confidence among the members and gives them a sense of pride in their community. Currently, the different PRT teams and the Range Forest Officer (RFO) are working together to monitor the system. The RFO office serves as the nodal center for coordination. To facilitate this, one person from each range has been appointed as a PRT coordinator. They receive an honorarium for conducting meetings with PRTs, data collection, and coordination. Members of the PRTs are also given an honorarium in recognition of their services.



Equipping the PRT team



Training of PRT team

## 6. BENEFITS OF PRT TEAM BEING LOCAL



Meeting of PRT coordinator with its member

- PRT members know the landscape better than anyone else.
- They know general behaviour of any particular animal.
- Villagers are amenable to listen to PRT members or get convinced by them easily.
- PRTs know the local language. so are better to communicate with the community during crisis situations.

## 7. BENEFITS OF PRT TEAM BEING LOCAL

- Their support reduces the response time of RRT/QRT.
- Conflict situation getting averted due to timely information given by PRTs.
- Relation of community with forest department becoming positive.
- Better management of any conflict situation.
- Ready made availability of human resource in from of PRTs at root level.
- Help of PRTs in protection/conservation and establishing informers network.



PRT members creating awareness



Patrolling by PRT team during man animal conflict

3. Insurances of all the members of PRTs have been supported through Tiger Reserve Foundation.
4. I-Card have been issue to them.



PRT team patrolling



PRT team helping in documentation for giving compulsion

## 8. INNOVATIONS

- All the villages within buffer and adjoining villages have been covered.
- Capacity building is integral step and for this training calendar has been prepared.
- PRT coordinators have been appointed for the coordinating.
- All of them were registered for fire alert system of FSI (Forest Survey of India).
- Their regular interaction with higher official was ensured.
- Giving certificates and recognition to best performing PRT teams as well as individual members.
- Plan aimed at engaging them throughout year beyond conflict operation have been prepared.

## 9. SUPPORT TO PRT MEMBERS

1. Honorarium to PRT members depending upon their engagement with forest department.
2. Livelihood plan for giving alternative livelihood for all the villages have been planned.



PRT team helping in rescue operation



PRT team cleaning waterhole

## 10. PRT ACHIEVEMENTS

During last 3 years (from 2021-22 to 2023-24) the achievements of PRT have been summarising below :

| Sr.No. | Particulars                                       | Total |
|--------|---------------------------------------------------|-------|
| 1      | Total PRT member                                  | 191   |
| 2      | Number of village EDC meetings                    | 87    |
| 3      | Total number of RFO level meeting for PRT members | 33    |
| 4      | Total number of patrolling by PRT members         | 798   |
| 5      | Total length of patrolling                        | 3406  |
| 6      | Total number of training for the PRT members      | 30    |
| 7      | Given information of crop damages                 | 106   |
| 8      | Given information of cattle deaths                | 146   |
| 9      | Given information of human death/Injury           | 8     |
| 10     | Participated in wild animal rescue                | 12    |

## 11. POTENTIAL

It can be replicated in buffer villages in all the protected areas. Furthermore, as the man animal conflict cases are very acute in territorial forest areas outside protected areas and most importantly tiger corridors, it is need of hour to establish such set up in all the villages wherever wildlife is present.

## 12. FUTURE

We are planning to create an app so that seamless and real time information and respective response can be collected. System needs further formalization so that it can sustain in long term. There is need to plan further benefits for PRT members, may be in form of livelihood initiatives so that their association with department get further strengthened.



