

CONSERVATION & RESTORATION OF COASTAL ZONES IN WESTERN INDIA

ARCHANA GODBOLE¹, JAYANT SARNAIK¹, AND D.D. NAIK²

¹Applied Environmental Research Foundation , Pune, India aref@vsnl.com

²D.D & Associates , Pune, India ddnaik@vsnl.com

India's west coast is rich in natural resources. Important feature of this zone is the characteristic vegetation along the coast and traditional forests preserved by communities for many generations. These forests are under continuous threat due to processes of modernisation. Degree of degradation of these forests, their role in livelihood support to local communities and impacts of the changing vegetation patterns play a very important role in designing conservation and restoration strategies.

Western coastal zone in Ratnagiri & Sindhudurga districts of Maharashtra in Western India has many traditional forests known as sacred groves. These groves of various sizes along the beaches add to the beauty of coastal areas and have potential to develop into ecotourism destinations. However protection and restoration of these forests is an important issue as they are under threat. Their conservation could be achieved only through participatory management practices and benefit sharing with the local communities maintained them for generations.

A model and methodology to conserve such rich coastal forest reserves and their effective use in ecotourism development are discussed in details in this communication. The model of participatory grove management and collaborative efforts with State govt. along with role of various stakeholders in the process has also been discussed.

Key Words: Coastal Sacred Groves , conservation model , methodology, participation , management.