



### **ABSTRACT**

Forests – Wildlife – Announcement - Conservation initiative to study the population dynamics, behavioural pattern and habitat improvement of Smooth Coated Otters in Thanjavur and Thiruvavarur Districts Administrative sanction for Rs. 20.00 lakh - Financial Sanction for Rs. 10.00 lakhs – Orders Issued.

### **Environment, Climate Change and Forests (FR.5) Department**

**G.O.(D)No.161**

**Dated: 08.07.2025**

விசுவாவசு வருடம், ஆனி 24

திருவள்ளூர் ஆண்டு - 2056

### **Read:**

1. Announcement made by the Hon'ble Minister (Forests and Khadi) on 28.03.2025.
2. From the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Chief Wildlife Warden Letter Ref. No. WL6/7608/2025, dated. 15.05.2025.

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### **ORDER:-**

The Hon'ble Minister (Forests and Khadi) has made the following announcement among others on the floor of Assembly on 28.03.2025:-

"நீர்வாழ்வினமான நீர்நாய்கள் சூழல் சமநிலையை உருவாக்குவதில் முக்கிய பங்கு வகிக்கின்றன. தஞ்சாவூர் மற்றும் திருவாரூர் மாவட்டங்களில் அதிகமாக காணப்படும் நீர்நாய்களின் வாழிடங்களை பாதுகாக்கவும், இனப்பெருக்கம் குறித்த ஆய்வுகள் மேற்கொள்ளவும் அவற்றின் எண்ணிக்கையை அதிகரிப்பதற்கான வழிமுறைகளை கண்டறியவும் 25.00 இலட்சம் ரூபாய் செலவில் நீர்நாய் ஆய்வு மற்றும் பாதுகாப்பு திட்டம் மேற்கொள்ளப்படும்".

2. In his letter second read above, the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Chief Wildlife Warden has sent a proposal for Conservation initiative to study the population dynamics, behavioural pattern and habitat improvement of Smooth Coated Otters in Thanjavur and Thiruvavarur Districts at a total cost of Rs. 25.00 lakhs. The details are as follows :-

The smooth-coated otter one among the three species of otters found in India and belonging to the family Mustelidae, mostly occupies diverse aquatic ecosystems including lentic, lotic inland wetlands and estuarine habitats (aquaculture ponds, estuaries and backwaters). As an apex predator, the smooth-coated otter plays an important ecological role by regulating prey populations. Given its sensitivity to wetland quality, the smooth-coated otter is an Indicator species for assessing wetland health. Historically, this species



was widespread across India; its distribution range has now shrunk and become fragmented, confined to isolated rivers and wetlands due to escalating threats such as habitat degradation, pollution and human encroachment. Considering its current distribution, population trend and threats, the IUCN has listed Smooth-coated Otter as Vulnerable category.

In Tamil Nadu, outside the Western Ghats populations, a small population of smooth-coated otter also found in the Cauvery delta regions particularly in Thanjavur and Thiruvarur districts. There are sporadic records of the species from various protected areas and lakes/ponds across the plains of Tamil Nadu. Known locations of smooth-coated otter in Thanjavur District are Kallanal, Vennar Areas, Kallapperambur lake, Alangudi Canel, Thenperambur dam, Palli Agraharam, Samuthiran lake, Chozhalapuram-Kollidam areas, Anaikarai Dam area, Mullankudi kollidan river, Allur Lake, Fish ponds near Thiruvalyaru, Kandiyur-Nagathi Canel & Pattukkottai and its immediate surroundings. In Thiruvarur district, the species is known to occur in Vaduvor, Udayamarthandapuram Bird Sanctuaries, Vennar river basin, and Muthupettailagoon. Although there have been occasional sightings of smooth-coated otters along the Cauvery River in Thiruvarur and Thanjavur districts and no proper scientific survey has been conducted in the above two districts. This project aims to study and conserve these population in the agriculture-dominated areas of Thanjavur and Thiruvarur districts.

## OBJECTIVES:

1. To assess the distribution and population status of Smooth-coated Otter in two districts of the Cauvery Delta region and prioritize important patches for their conservation,
2. To identify factors influencing the habitat-use of otter by examining ecological and anthropogenic factors (including human-otter conflict) in the Cauvery Delta region,
3. To examine population trend and behavioral ecology of Smooth-coated Otters in select areas of the Cauvery delta region, and
4. To implement habitat restoration/mitigation measures in prioritized sites to enhance the population and long-term survival of the populations in the delta region.

## Awareness Programme and Conservation Implementation

**Awareness and capacity building:** The otter population in these districts are distributed within the agrarian landscape so the human interaction with otter is expected to be frequent and there are a few incidences of conflict between the otter and human both directly (Otter killing) and indirectly (destruction of holts and dens). The effective management of human-wildlife conflict management requires inclusive stakeholder engagement, both directly impacted (local communities, fisherman etc), those dealing with managing the issues (forest and other line departments) and knowledge partners (research and development institutions). Forest department, communication organizations and Non-governmental Agencies would also be critical partners of mitigating the conflict Issues. The success of any conservation activity by involving local community anchors heavily on building trust, effective communication, and long-term collaboration among stakeholders. In order to achieve effective engagement, the following activities are proposed: -



- (i). Network of stakeholders (research and technology development and advocacy),
- (ii). Education materials (bilingual pamphlets, posters and short films emphasizing the otter behaviour, ecology and ecosystem services)
- (iii). Awareness campaign among the locals by regional teams.

#### IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY:

- (i). The habitat of Smooth Coated Otter is different in Thiruvarur (Mostly in the Lakes) and Thanjavur (In the Cauvery River Course) the modalities of implementation will be worked out for each District. Selected western ghats areas will also be taken up for surveys.
- (ii). The Research and Study Works will be given to a suitable organization with specific knowledge and expertise in Smooth Coated Otter.
- (iii). The organization will be selected either through RFP or by receiving sealed quotations.
- (iv). The works like Awareness programme, Habitat management /restoration will be directly carried out through Department following procedures.

#### EXPECTED OUTCOME:

- (i) Current distribution range and population status of Smooth-coated Otter in Cauvery delta region and selected western ghats areas will be evaluated.
- (ii) Important areas for the conservation of otter in Cauvery delta region will be identified and prioritized.
- (iii) Drivers of its occurrence and occupancy in river and lakes/ponds in the study area will be identified.
- (iv) Population trend and their feeding ecology in the select sites will be elucidated.
- (v) Major threats to the population of otters including human-otter conflict in the study area will be documented.
- (vi) Important conservation activities will be implemented in select intensive locations in the delta region.

3. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Chief Wildlife Warden has requested to sanction an amount of Rs. 25 lakhs for Conservation initiative to study the population dynamics, behavioural pattern and habitat improvement of Smooth Coated Otters in Thanjavur and Thiruvarur Districts. The details are as follows:-

	Budget Head	Year 1	Year 2
<b>I</b>	<b>Man Power</b>		
1.1	Technical Assistant (@ Rs. 30,000/- month)	360000	360000
1.2	Field Assistant (@Rs. 20,000/- month)	240000	240000
<b>II</b>	<b>Equipment</b>		
1.1	Binoculars	20000	
<b>III</b>	<b>Travel</b>		
3.1	Local travel between the field and HQ and incidental charges	140000	140000



<b>IV Awareness programme</b>		
1.1 Preparation & Printing of awareness materials	100000	100000
1.2 Preparation of short films, photo and video documentation	50000	50000
1.3 Conducting awareness programme about the otters in key areas	250000	200000
1.4 Stakeholder meeting	25000	25000
<b>V Habitat management/ restoration</b>		
2.1 Release of fish fingerlings	100000	100000
<b>Total</b>	<b>1285000</b>	<b>1215000</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>2500000</b>

4. The Government, after careful examination of the proposal of the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Chief Wildlife Warden have decided to accord Administrative Sanction for Rs.20,00,000/- (Rupees twenty lakh only) and Financial Sanction for Rs. 10,00,000/- (Rupees ten lakh only) for the year 2025-2026 for Conservation initiative to study the population dynamics, behavioural pattern and habitat improvement of Smooth Coated Otters in Thanjavur and Thiruvarur Districts.

5. The expenditure sanctioned in para 4 above shall be debited into the following Head of Account:-

2406 FORESTRY AND WILD LIFE - 02 Environmental Forestry  
And Wild life - 110 Wild Life Preservation State's Expenditure  
BE Conservation of Endangered species - 333 Payments for  
Professional and Special Services - 03 Special Service  
IFHRMS DPC: 2406 02 110 BE 33303

6. The expenditure sanctioned in para 4 above shall constitute an item of "New Service" and the approval of the Legislature shall be obtained in due course of time by an inclusion in the Supplementary Estimates for the year 2025-2026. Pending approval of the Legislature, the expenditure may be initially met by drawl of an advance from the Contingency Fund. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Head of Forest Force) is directed to calculate the actual amount required for the period upto next Supplementary Estimates and apply for sanction of the same as advance from the Contingency Fund to Finance (BG.I) Department directly in Form "A" appended to the Contingency Fund Rules, 1963 along with a copy of this order. Orders for sanction of an advance from the Contingency Fund will be issued from Finance (BG.I) Department. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Head of Forest Force) shall also send necessary draft explanatory notes for inclusion of this expenditure in the Supplementary Estimates for the year 2025-2026 to Government in Finance ( AHDF&FW / BG-I) Department at an appropriate time without fail.

7. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Head of Forest Force) is the Estimating, Reconciling and Controlling authority for the above said new head of account opened in this order.

8. The pay and Accounts Officer / Treasury Officers concerned is directed to open the above said new head of account in their books.



9. This order issues with the concurrence of Finance Department vide e.file No.665/Finance(AHDF&FW)/2025, dated.08.07.2025 and ASL No.0721 (Seven Hundred and Twenty One) (IFHRMS ASL No.2025070721)

**(BY ORDER OF THE GOVERNOR)**

**SUPRIYA SAHU**  
**ADDITIONAL CHIEF SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT**

To

The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, (Head of Forest Force), Chennai-32.

The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Chief Wildlife Warden, Chennai-32.

The Accountant General, Chennai-18.

The Pay and Accounts Officer, Chennai-35.

The Treasury Officer concerned.

Copy to:-

The Special Personal Assistant to Hon'ble Minister (Forests and Khadi), Chennai-9.

The Finance (E.CC&F/BG.I/BG.II/W & M-1) Department, Chennai-9.

The Private Secretary to Additional Secretary to Government,

Environment, Climate Change and Forests Department, Chennai-9.

Environment, Climate Change and Forests (FR.7)Department, Chennai-9.

SF/SC.

//FORWARDED BY ORDER//

*Supriya Sahu*  
08/07/2025  
**SECTION OFFICER**  
*9/8/25*