

PROFESSIONAL FOREST SERVICES IN INDIA: AN ANALYSIS

Karan Singh Negi*

ABSTRACT

Professional forest services in India have the responsibility of managing the vast forest area of India. These were set up more than 100 years ago and have evolved as per the changing needs of the forestry sector. This paper analyses the professional forest services in India, from the point of view of recruitment; training; cadre management and HRM angle. It has been brought out that strengthening of training at all levels is required. A recruitment strategy also needs to be evolved so as to facilitate career progression in the professional forest services. The paper also highlights the requirements for career development, specialization and HR department in state forest departments.

* Doon University, DEHRADUN

INTRODUCTION

Forests in India, occupy nearly 22 percent of the total geographical area of the country, with most of the forests being owned by the government. According to FSI (2013) the total recorded forest area of India is about 697,898 sq kms which is about 21.23% of the total geographical area of the country. This vast forest resource is being managed on scientific lines since 1864, when the first Inspector General of Forests was appointed by the then Government of India. A number of professional services have been created for managing and conserving the forests of India. This paper analyses the professional forest services in India from a Human Resource Management point of view. (after Negi 1997, IGNFA 2000, NFC 2006 and Negi 2014). It is based on primary information collected from some forestry institutions and secondary published information.

INDIAN FOREST SERVICE

The Indian Forest Service is the senior most professional service in India, coming into being (in its present form) in October 1966 as the third all-India Service with the other two being the Indian Administrative Service and the Indian Police Service. Initially it was set up as the Imperial Forest Service in 1866 with the first graded list being published in 1869. The imperial forest service was re-named as the Indian Forest Service in 1920 but in 1932, recruitment to this service was temporarily stopped in the wake of the economic depression. After 1935, this became a provincial service. The service lost its national character as forest became a state subject and the last member of the discontinued IFS retired in 1962, almost a century after the creation of a forest service at the national level.

A number of all-India service are provided for in the constitution of India but after independence only two services viz the IAS and IPS were constituted. In 1966, the Indian Forest Service came into being as the third all-India service when a bill to this effect was passed by Parliament. Different rules governing this service were made in 1966 while in 1967; the recruitment rules on the basis of competitive examinations came into being. The first batch of directly recruited IFS probationers joined training at the Indian Forest College in 1968.

FUNCTIONS

The main functions of the Indian Forest Service are:

- a. To provide personnel for important middle and high level positions related to forestry in the central and state governments.
- b. To maintain a reasonable level of uniformity in functioning of the senior forest service in the country.
- c. To establish and maintain a national status for the senior forest service.
- d. To implement the policies of the central government after taking them into account in forest management.

RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

The direct recruitment to this service is done through a separate examination conducted by the Union Public Service Commission. The annual intake of officers into this service was very high from 1984 to 1987, when more than 600 new recruits joined the service. Officers from the State Forest Service are also promoted to this service after they have put in a specific number of years of service.

The induction training of the IFS recruits is done at the Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy, Dehradun; the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration Mussoorie and also in the state forest department of the cadre allotted to them. The total training period consists of about 2 years. SFS officers inducted into the Indian Forest Service undergo a skill up gradation course after their induction into the service.

Officers of the Indian Forest Service undergo short and long term trainings during their service within India and abroad.

CADRE

The Indian Forest Service is made up of state cadres with officers belonging to a specific cadre. This is usually decided on recruitment and they continue to belong to the cadre all through their service. There is a separate cadre for each state except in the case of union territories or some states having joint cadres. Officers belonging to a specific cadre may be posted on deputation basis to the central government or other state governments; agencies; corporations and even non-governmental organizations for a specific time period after which they revert to their parent cadres.

POSTS

Indian Forest Service officers occupy various posts and positions both under the central and state governments and also under autonomous and semi-governmental organizations. The posts at present are listed below:

Under the central government

1. Director General of Forests
2. Additional Director General of Forests.
3. Inspector General of Forests.
4. Deputy and Assistant Inspector General of Forests
5. Regional Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests
6. Director/Deputy Director and Assistant Director Wildlife Preservation
7. Director Project Elephant
8. Director and Joint Director, National Zoological Park, New Delhi
9. Director General , Joint Directors and Deputy Directors, Forest Survey of India
10. Director, Joint Director, Professors and Associate Professors, Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy, Dehradun
11. Director, Forest Education
12. Principals and Lecturers, Central Academy for State Forest Service
13. Joint Secretaries, Directors and Deputy Secretaries in various ministries of the central government

Under central autonomous organizations

1. Various posts in the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education and its institutes.
2. Faculty, Wildlife Institute of India.
3. Director and faculty, Indian Institute of Forest Management.
4. Additional Director General National Tiger Conservation Authority
5. Secretary Central Zoo Authority.

Under the State Governments

1. Principal and Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests.
2. Chief Conservator of Forests.
3. Conservator; Deputy and Assistant Conservator of Forests.

4. Directors of national parks.
5. Various posts in other departments of the state government.

Under state autonomous organizations

1. Various posts in the State Forest Corporations and other corporations.
2. Dean and faculty in Agriculture and Forestry Universities.

STATE FOREST SERVICE

The State Forest Service (SFS) also known as the Provincial Forest Service (PFS) is the middle level forest service under each state government. The PFS was initially constituted in 1891 with strength of about 41 officers. Direct recruitment to the PFS on the basis of competitive examination was introduced in 1905. Recruitment to the Indian Forest Service was stopped in 1930 and when the Indian Forest College opened in 1938, a new Superior Forest Service came into existence whose members were trained at the IFC. The Superior Forest Service, started in 1938, was merged with the State Forest Service after independence.

FUNCTIONS

The main functions of this service are:

1. To provide middle level officers for forest management and conservation, practical silviculture and forest management.
2. Planning, implementing and evaluating special forestry programmes such as joint forest management; social and community forestry and soil and water conservation.
3. Managing divisional level units of Forest Corporation such as harvesting and logging.

RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

Recruitment to various State Forest Services is usually done by the Public Service Commission of the state concerned either on the basis of a competitive examination or by promotion of forest rangers. Till 1975, the training of SFS officers continued at the Indian Forest College till reconstitution of the IFS officers IFS in 1966. After this, the training of these recruits was taken up at the SFS colleges.

Training of SFS officers is done at the following colleges:

1. Central Academy for SFS, Coimbatore
2. Central Academy for SFS, Dehradun
3. Central Academy for SFS, Burnihat

SFS officers may undergo occasional refresher courses during their service.

POSTS

SFS officers may be posted to the following positions:

Under the central government

SFS officers usually do not serve under the central government as they are employees of the state governments concerned. However, they may work on deputation basis with central organizations like the ICFRE.

Under the state government

SFS officers may be posted against the following positions under the state governments:

1. Assistant Conservator of Forests.
2. Sub-Divisional Officer (Forests).
3. Divisional Forest Officers.
4. Technical Assistant to Conservator of Forests.

Under state corporations and autonomous organizations

SFS officers also work in various state forest corporations and other autonomous corporations of the state government. They head the working divisions and may be designated as Divisional Managers. Different posts in the headquarters of the forest corporation are also occupied by SFS officers who may also be posted to other autonomous organizations such as the State Electricity Boards and State Agriculture/Forestry universities.

FOREST RANGE OFFICERS

Forest range officers or forest rangers play a pivotal role in the forest department of each state. It is through these officers that most works are executed in the field.

RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

There is a separate cadre of Forest Rangers in each state with the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests being the cadre controlling authority. Recruitment is done either by the Forest department or the Public Service Commission of the state concerned. Recruitment to the level of ranger may also be done on promotion of deputy rangers or foresters with a specific number of posts being available for direct recruits and promotes.

In 1878, regular training for Forest Rangers started for the first time after the establishment of the Central Forest School (CFS). The Government of India took over this

school in 1884 and in 1906, with the setting up of the Forest Research Institute, it became a part of the institute with its status being upgraded to that of a college. This Rangers College was renamed as the Indian Forest Rangers College in 1935. Sometime before this, the Government of Madras province had started a Forest College at Coimbatore for training of rangers. Later on this college was taken over by the central government. Thus, in the fifties there were two ranger's colleges functioning; one at Dehradun, known as the Northern Forest Rangers College and the other at Coimbatore called the Southern Forest Rangers College.

After the fifties a number of colleges were started for imparting training to forest rangers. In the eighties, the central government took a policy decision to close down the colleges being run by it as the view was that rangers training fell within the purview of the state government. Following these developments, the centrally run colleges were either closed down or handed over to the state governments, except the one in Kurseong. Many state governments are running their Forest Rangers' training colleges whose course programme is being coordinated by the central government.

The in-service training of forest rangers in different states is weak, with no systematic approach being followed in most states.

POSTS

Forest rangers work under the state governments concerned and are rarely posted on deputation basis outside the state. They may be posted as:

- a. Range forest officer of a territorial range
- b. Range officer research
- c. Range officer on special duty
- d. Range officer prosecution

FUNCTIONS

The main functions of range officers are:

1. Forest management, conservation and silviculture
2. Forest accounts, procedure and law
3. Managing and protecting wildlife
4. Disbursement of government funds
5. Detection and prosecution of forest offences

SUBORDINATE FOREST SERVICES

The subordinate forest services in India are formed by the two levels of staff.

1. Forest Guards
2. Deputy rangers or foresters

Forest guards have formed the lowest rung of the hierarchy of the forest department ever since it was organized by Brandis in the second half of the nineteenth century. In the beginning, forest guards were engaged directly by the divisional forest officer with their services being regularized in due course of time. In later years, another level of foresters or deputy rangers was added and regular recruitments made. The term deputy ranger was used for the first time in 1891. Forest guards replaced fire watchers and forest patrols and thereafter regular training of the subordinate services began.

POSTS

The posts occupied by the sub-ordinate services in the forest departments of various states are:

- a. Deputy rangers/foresters or Block Officers in-charge of forest blocks or on special duty posts such as research wildlife, protection and soil conservation.
- b. Forest guards who may be posted in-charge of beats or on special duty.

Members of the sub-ordinate forest services may also be posted on deputation to other government departments and corporations within the state.

RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

Recruitment to the subordinate level of professional forest service is done by the forest department in each state. Forest guards may be promoted to deputy rangers on basis of their seniority. However, direct recruitment is not done regularly in most states and the number of intake of forest guards may differ from year to year. This results in shortage of staff at the grassroots level and adversely affects the working of the department. Training is also the responsibility of the state forest departments. State specific courses are being conducted though general forestry instruction is also imparted to them

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

The analysis and conclusions based on this study have been brought out in the following points:

- 1- There is no recruitment strategy for the professional forest services in India, including the Indian Forest Service; State Forest Service; Forest Rangers or Sub-ordinate forest services. The number of personnel recruited changes from year to year, particularly in the case of sub-ordinate forestry personnel. As a result the intake is skewed and causes stagnation at all levels in the forest services.
- 2- The training of SFS, Forest rangers and sub-ordinate forestry staff needs to be strengthened. The capacity of forest guard and forest ranger training courses needs to be improved as this is weak in many institutions.
- 3- More refresher courses are required on a systematic basis for SFS, Forest rangers and sub-ordinate forestry staff as the present arrangement does not cover all officers. Refresher courses are non-existing for sub-ordinate forestry staff. In many cases, the officers do not join the training programme due to which the resources go waste.
- 4- The forest department of each state needs to have a dedicated human resource management department manned by HR professionals for handling various issues related to HR management for the professional forestry personnel.
- 5- Career development plans for forest rangers and sub-ordinate forestry staff needs to be formulated and implemented by each state forest department.
- 6- There should be a policy of specialization for IFS, SFS, Forest Ranger's and sub-ordinate staff within the forestry sector. This could be wildlife management, forest protection, forest conservation, joint forest management and other fields.

REFERENCES

FSI 2013- India State of Forest Report, 2013, Forest Survey of India Dehradun

IGNFA 2000- Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy, Dehradun

Negi S S 1997- Forestry in India: Administration and organization, Vol I and II, APH, New Delhi.

Negi K.S. 2014- Training of Indian Forest Service professionals: an analysis, Int. Jour. Business Mgt and Leadership, vol 5 no.3, 527-538.

NFC 2006- Report of the National Forest Commission, Govt .of India, Ministry of Environment and Forests, New Delhi