Ministry of Coal

Success Story

Life on De-coaled Land, an Ecosystem Approach

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Striking a delicate balance between meeting the nation's surging energy demands and upholding an unwavering commitment to environmental preservation, the coal sector takes a pioneering role in adopting progressive strategies for sustainable afforestation and bio-reclamation. The extensive bio-reclamation and afforestation endeavours aim to fortify both the carbon sink and green cover. Over the last 10 years, Coal PSUs have successfully brought about 18,849 Ha of land under green cover by planting an impressive 42.3 million saplings. This pioneering initiative underscores the coal sector's unwavering commitment to responsible and environment friendly sustainable coal mining practices.

Plantation on Backfilled Area of Rajrappa, Ramgarh, Jharkhand

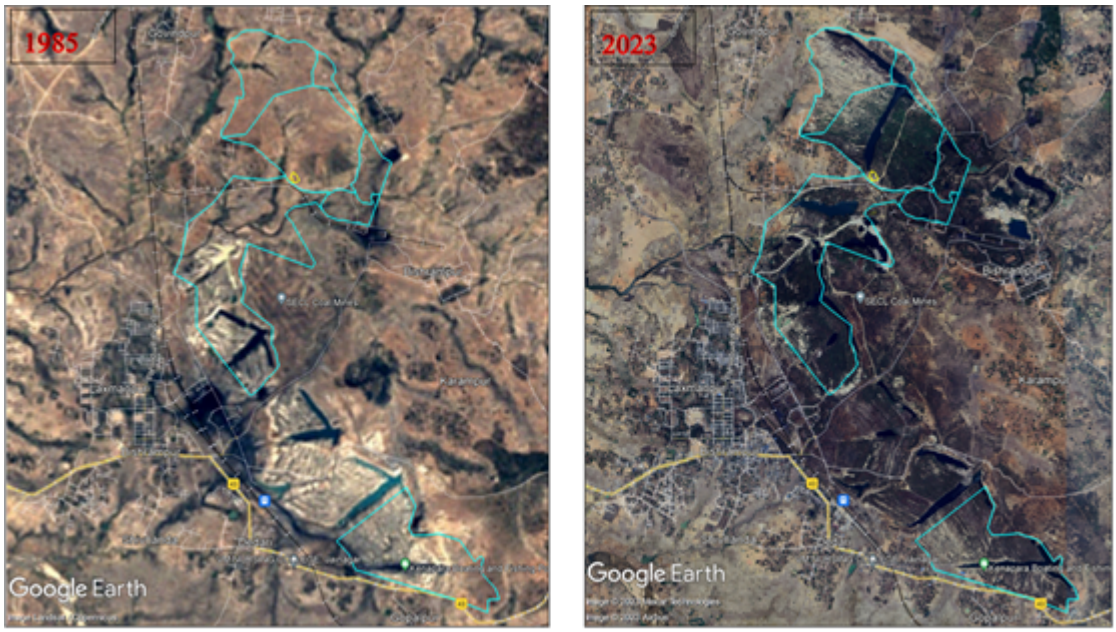
Coal mining projects, which require mandatory environmental and forestry clearances, face a significant hurdle in identifying Compensatory Afforestation (CA) land for Forest Clearance (FC). To streamline and expedite the FC approval process, reduce CA costs, earn carbon credits, and promote afforestation to meet national targets, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has issued guidelines for Accredited Compensatory Afforestation (ACA) on 24.01.2023. This proactive afforestation initiative encourages private landowners and government institutions to undertake afforestation over fallow lands, contributing to an increase in trees outside forests (TOF).

In alignment with the ACA guidelines, Coal PSUs have identified about 3075 Ha of afforested non-forest de-coaled land suitable for ACA. The proposals have been submitted to the respective State Forest Departments by Coal PSUs for the appropriate notification of the afforested non-forest de-coaled land as an ACA land bank to expedite Forest Clearance for future coal mines requiring forest land diversion.

Bishrampur Opencast Project by South Eastern Coalfields Limited in Surajpur District of Chhattisgarh stands out as a commendable example of adherence to Accredited Compensatory Afforestation (ACA) guidelines. The project has been started in 1959-60. This project has become a benchmark for sustainable mining and responsible land reclamation. Marking the culmination of operations in July 2018 due to resource exhaustion, the project followed a meticulously planned progressive and final mine closure within a leasehold spanning 1472 Ha. The phased land reclamation process, incorporating both physical/technical and biological reclamation methods, was dedicated to restoring areas that had been mined out. Within the leasehold, about 319 Ha designated as reclaimed diverted forest land. Additionally, around 40 Ha has been allocated for a solar plant, while 906.82 Ha showcase successful biologically reclaimed non-forest land. This reclaimed land now features a thriving ecosystem of local species, including Kesia Samiya, Acacia, Nilgiri, Sagwan, Khair, Babul, Sheeshu, Bottlebrush, Aam, Siris, Jamun, Neem, Gulmohar, Teak, Karanja etc. A distinctive feature of the

leasehold is the transformation of about 77 Ha of mine void into a water-filled reservoir. This reservoir plays a pivotal role in supplying water for domestic use, irrigation, rainwater storage, groundwater recharge and source of water for recolonized flora and fauna. Notably, the recolonization of local flora and fauna has significantly enriched the biodiversity of the area. Fauna, including recolonized species such as Sloth Bear, Fox and reptiles etc. and migratory birds, are now observed thriving in the vicinity of the water body.

The project's dedication to environmental protection, coupled with the Accredited Compensatory Afforestation (ACA), has identified 899.17 Ha out of afforested non-forest de-coaled land for ACA. A proposal has been submitted to the Chhattisgarh State Forest Department for the notification of the identified afforested land as ACA land bank in Bishrampur Opencast. Out of the 899.17 Ha, 403 Ha has already been inspected by Surajpur Forest Division, and a site suitability certificate has been issued, which is submitted to MoEF&CC as CA land for utilizing forest land of 402.96 Ha in Kusmunda OC. Further, SECL has requested DFO, Surajpur for the inspection of the remaining identified afforested non-forest de-coaled land for issuance of site suitability certificate as ACA land.



Google Earth Imagery of ACA land Indentfied in Bishrampur OCP in 1985 Vs 2023

Plantation on De-coaled land of Bishrampur OC, SECL

This initiative underscores the coal sector's unwavering commitment to responsible and sustainable coal mining practices. The pioneering ACA approach guarantees not only the continued availability of coal to meet

the rising energy demands but also makes a noteworthy contribution to environmental conservation and the enhancement of biodiversity in coal regions.

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