

## Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ)

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The Indian government has designated an area near the Sukhna Wildlife Sanctuary in Haryana as an Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ).



[Ref: tribuneindia]

### **About Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZs):**

- These zones, also called **Ecologically Fragile Areas (EFA)**, are critical for protecting the environment.
- ESZs are established around key natural areas like **National Parks** and Wildlife Sanctuaries to act as buffers, safeguarding these habitats from external impacts.
- The **Environment (Protection) Act of 1986** mandates their notification.

### **Activities and Management in ESZs**

- **Prohibited Activities:** In ESZs, there is a strict ban on commercial mining, setting up of sawmills, and any industries that lead to pollution. Constructing major hydroelectric projects is also prohibited.
- **Regulated Activities:** Certain actions, like tree felling and developing hotels or resorts, are controlled. Limitations are placed on installing electrical cables and making significant alterations to the agricultural systems.
- **Permitted Activities:** Local communities are encouraged to engage in agriculture and horticulture, with a focus on rainwater harvesting and organic farming practices.

### **Criteria for ESZ Declaration**

- ESZs are identified based on factors like **unique species, critical ecosystems, and significant geomorphologic features**.
- Areas within 10 km of protected zones are automatically classified as ESZs, following the **National Wildlife Action Plan (2002-2016)**.
- The government may extend this boundary to include **vital ecological corridors**.

### **About Sukhna Wildlife Sanctuary:**

- Situated in the **Sivalik Hills of Chandigarh**, this sanctuary forms part of Sukhna Lake's catchment and was declared protected in **1998**.
- It is a diverse ecosystem featuring **forests, grasslands, and wetlands**.
- The sanctuary is a haven for wildlife, hosting a variety of animals like **sambar deer, barking deer, and wild boar**, along with numerous species of birds, reptiles, and amphibians.
- A significant challenge for the sanctuary is the prevalence of **lantana weed**, an invasive species that affects over half of its area, indicating the need for effective management and conservation efforts.