



Kedarnath Wildlife Sanctuary

Why in News?

Recently, [the National Board for Wildlife \(NBWL\)](#) rejected the Uttarakhand government's proposal to permit [soapstone mining](#) on agricultural land at Pokhani, located near [the Kedarnath Wildlife Sanctuary \(KWLS\)](#).

Key Points

- **Wildlife Sanctuary and Endangered Species:**
 - The Kedarnath Wildlife Sanctuary is home to endangered species like the [Himalayan musk deer](#) and [Himalayan tahr](#), both listed on the [IUCN Red List](#).
- **Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ) Guidelines:**
 - While the precise boundaries of the sanctuary's [eco-sensitive zone \(ESZ\)](#) have not been defined, the environment ministry's guidelines state that **an area of 10 km around protected zones is considered an ESZ in the absence of defined boundaries.**
- **Proposal for Soapstone Mining:**
 - **In 2023, the Uttarakhand authorities presented a proposal** to permit soapstone mining in Pokhani, located within the ESZ of Kedarnath Wildlife Sanctuary.
- **Environmentalists' Reaction:**
 - Environmentalists hailed the rejection as a **significant step in protecting the sanctuary and its surrounding areas.**
 - They emphasized that the decision reflected an **awareness of the risks posed by mining operations** to the region's ecology and local residents.
- **Concerns Over Unregulated Mining in Uttarakhand:**
 - Growing concerns over unregulated [mining activities](#), particularly in Bageshwar district of Kumaon, have led to a stronger stance against such operations.
 - Reports from the [Uttarakhand Disaster Management Authority](#) revealed severe damage caused by mining, including cracks in 200 houses, roads, and agricultural fields across 11 vulnerable villages.

National Board for Wildlife (NBWL)

- National Board for Wildlife is a statutory Board constituted officially in 2003 under the **Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.**
 - It replaced the Indian Board for Wildlife, established in 1952.
- The **NBWL is chaired by the Prime Minister** and is responsible for promotion of conservation and development of wildlife and forests.
- The board is **'advisory'** in nature and can only advise the Government on policy making for conservation of wildlife.
- It serves as **an apex body for the review of all wildlife-related matters** and for the approval of projects in and around national parks and sanctuaries.
- The standing committee of **NBWL is chaired by the Minister of Environment Forest and Climate Change.**
 - The standing committee approves all the projects falling within protected wildlife areas or within 10 km of them.

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