

November 10, 1998  
Ref.Trg/SJE/98

Smt Maneka Gandhi  
Hon. Minister  
Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment  
Shastri Bhavan, New Delhi 110 001

Sub.: Social Welfare & Conservation of Nature

Honourable Madam,

I had the pleasure of writing to you when you were Minister of Environment in a previous government, and our Society was designated to do a research project on the Ujni wetland, 100 km east of Pune.

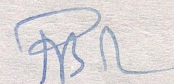
In this letter I wish to take the liberty of placing before you two suggestions which I hope will be seriously considered.

1. Through the efforts of many NGOs and people like your goodself, many youngsters are now keenly interested to work for nature conservation but do not have opportunities. I may suggest that your Ministry may offer 2-year internships to competent youngsters. Under each internship he/she will have to work in the vicinity of selected sanctuaries or national parks studying nature & wildlife, living among residents trying to reconcile wildlife interests with those of mankind----- something like a Peace Corps for our wildlife. I think these young ambassadors will bring peace to our diminishing wildlife by evoking peoples' interest in protecting their habitat at the same time benefiting people through wise and sustainable use of natural resources. Before they are appointed, these interns should undergo an orientation in the art of fieldwork among nature, wildlife and people.
2. Deserving NGOs may be helped to set up semi-public areas for nature conservation, on the pattern of Royal Society for the Protection of Birds' reserves in England. They may be financially helped to purchase/lease land(hills, degraded lands, wetlands) to be managed as nature conservation areas(no construction, resorts allowed). Youngsters may get firsthand experience and a string of small reserves on the fringes of cities, towns & villages can be established.

Our Society has already taken the initiative in training youngsters in sustainable management of natural resources and in creating our own small reserves(indigenous forest & wetland) on degraded government land. The Govt. owns the land while youngsters nurture & manage it with the cooperation from local people. I hope your dynamic leadership will galvanize our youngsters to work constructively for nature & the nation.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,



Prakash Gole.