

Project to cover open wells in, around Gir

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between the Rajkot based Wild Life Conservation Trust (WLCT) and the Gujarat Forest Department to construct parapet walls around open wells in and around the forests of Gir. There are nearly 9000 such wells in 158

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villages in this landscape where nearly 50 lions are reported to have fallen into them in the last six years. At least 24 of these big cats eventually died. (Also see *PA Updates*, Vol. XIII, No. 2, and Vol XII, No. 6)

Already 700 of these wells have been covered by the Forest Department and work for parapet walls around the rest is to be completed in the next three years. The most dangerous wells for wildlife are the ones that are located in Kotda, Paniya, Chanchai and Dalkhania villages and it is here that the construction of parapets on wells will be taken up on a priority basis. The expenditure per well is Rs. 10,000

The WLCT, along with the Reliance Rural Development Trust (RRDT) and Ambuja Cement would also construct parapets on 2,000 wells. Other corporates who are interested in supporting this project include the Tatas and Shell.

The Forest Department has prepared two plans for the implementation of the project. The first is where the government would monitor the process of parapet construction and would give a total of Rs 4,000 per well and the remaining would have to be financed by the NGOs and corporates. In the second model, the NGO would give the money to Lion Conservation Society formed by the state government and the government would take up the construction on behalf of these NGOs or the corporates.

Source: 'NGOs, corporates give lions wall cover',
The Times of India, 28/09/07

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