

National Board for Wildlife (NBWL)

Boards and organisations under the government that perform important functions in the country are relevant for the IAS exam. Questions can be directly asked about them in the [UPSC prelims](#) and good knowledge about them also helps you write better well-rounded answers for the IAS mains. In this article, you can read all about the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) for [UPSC](#) and other govt. exams.

What is National Board for Wildlife?

The National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) is the apex body in India for all wildlife-related matters. It is primarily responsible for the **promotion of wildlife conservation and the development of wildlife and forests**.

- It is a statutory body constituted under Section 5A of the [Wildlife \(Protection\) Act, 1972](#) (WLPA).
- It approves projects (including government projects) in and around the protected areas (national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, etc.).
- It is an advisory board and advises the central government on policy matters concerned with wildlife conservation in the country.
- The Board was constituted in 2003 under the WLPA, as mentioned before.
 - It replaced the Indian Board for Wildlife, which was formed in 1952 as an advisory board.
- The NBWL is chaired by the Prime Minister.

National Board for Wildlife Composition

The NBWL comprises 47 members counting the chairperson. The Prime Minister of the country is the ex officio chairperson of the NBWL. The Minister of Environment, Forests and Climate Change is the Vice-Chairperson of the Board. As per the WLPA, every time a new government is formed, a new NBWL has to be constituted with the Prime Minister as the chairperson.

Functions of the National Board for Wildlife

The functions of the NBWL are as follows.

1. Promotion and development of wildlife and its conservation.
2. Advise the government on matters relating to wildlife conservation and preservation.
3. Giving or reserving clearances to projects in and around national parks and other protected areas.
4. No alteration of boundaries of the protected areas is possible without the NBWL's approval.

NBWL Standing Committee

The NBWL may constitute a standing committee at its discretion. The committee would be headed by the Environment Minister as its vice-chairperson, and consist of not less than ten members that the Minister nominates from among the Board's members.

The difference between the standing committee and the Board itself is that while the Standing Committee's function is to regulate land diversion within protected areas and eco-sensitive zones, making it a purely project clearance body, the NBWL, on the other hand, has the power to deal with policy-level decisions on wildlife.

- In April 2020, the National Board for Wildlife Standing Committee met and approved 16 project proposals that were related to highways, transmission lines and railway lines through national parks, sanctuaries and tiger corridors.
 - It also approved many other projects covering about 3000 acres of land in eco-sensitive zones.
 - It is to be noted that the NBWL in India has not met for the last 6 years.
 - There has been criticism of the working of the standing committee that gave approvals to many projects. It is opined by many environmentalists that the approvals have been given keeping in mind only the economic benefits and not the long-term environmental hazards they can cause.
 - Another criticism is that the NBWL has not been working to fulfil its mandate but rather, through the standing committee, is only engaged in giving approvals to projects that may actually cause more harm to the environment/wildlife than good.
 - Given that the NBWL has not met since 2014 and that the standing committee is expected to work under the supervision of the NBWL, there is no policy advice on matters related to wildlife and conservation in the country, but only a body for the clearance of projects.
 - There is no indication that the committee considered the ill-effects of its recent decisions on wildlife.
 - The fact that there are no independent environmentalists and conservationists on the committee makes it easier for the committee to give approval for projects without any real objection from concerned people.
 - Wildlife activists are concerned about how policy level proposals are being handled in the absence of a board.
 - While Ministry officials contend that there is not much difference between the standing committee and the NBWL, since the members of the committee are drawn from the NBWL itself, the fact is that a committee with a smaller membership makes the dilution of the Board's mandate easier.
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