

# **Corbett Gets Hazard Zonation Map to Tackle Forest Fires**

*Jotirmay Thapliyal*

The famous Corbett Tiger Reserve has got its first-ever forest fire hazard zonation map to tackle forest fires. The map, which will strengthen the tiger reserve's preparedness to tackle forest fires, identifies 202 sq. km. of the reserve area that falls in the very high forest fire zone while 324 sq km is in the high fire zone.

A total of 370 sq km of the Corbett Tiger Reserve area falls in the moderate forest fire zone. Further, 322 sq km falls in the low forest fire category and 76.42 sq km in the very low forest fire category.

Forest Research Institute scientists Amit Kumar Verma, Raman Nautiyal and Namitha Kaliyathan, who came up with the forest fire hazard zonation map for the Corbett, took into account all the past fire incidents at the reserve from 2000 to 2014.

Besides forest fire incidents in the past, the scientists considered nine parameters in the Corbett, including forest type, vegetation density, slope and elevation of the forest. Even factors such as distance to the nearest village, to the nearest road, to the nearest water source and the distance to the nearest guard chowki were taken into consideration to prepare the map.

Forest fires in the Corbett have always caused a furore among conservationists due to a high density of tigers in the rich wildlife in the area. Scientist Amit Verma says like other forest areas of Uttarakhand, forest fires have been occurring regularly in the Corbett Tiger Reserve as well. Fire incidents at the Corbett have been a matter of concern as these impact behavioural as well as ecological traits of tigers.

"The most predominant impact of forest fires has been reduction in the prey species, which directly affects tigers that are therefore motivated towards human habitations, aggravating man-animal conflicts," Verma adds.

He says the zonation map of the tiger reserve can be of immense help in effective management of forest fires there. "Mapping these risk zones can help in minimising the frequency of forest fires and strengthening forest fire preparedness," he observed.

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