

## MAHABLESHWAR PANCHGANI MONITORING COMMITTEE

### Panchgani Table Land - Report and Recommendations

As directed by the Hon'ble Bombay High Court, the issue of the Panchgani Table Land has been discussed by members of the Monitoring Committee several times. Visits to the Table Land have also been made and views of elected representatives, experts and architects, considered from time to time as also the representations from stall holders who are party to the Court orders.

On 6<sup>th</sup> June 2001 Members of the Monitoring Committee were given a presentation by Architects Ravi Kadam and Pushkar Peshwa of various proposals including suggestions for the Table Land. After the presentation the Monitoring Committee made another site visit with a view to finalize their recommendations about the Table Land.

### The Background

1. It is necessary to understand that Panchgani Table Land is a unique feature that needs to be protected and preserved. It is a world heritage site in size second only to the Table Land in South Africa, and of great scientific, geological & ecological importance.
2. Although the Table Land does not have suitable terrain for growth of trees, the natural green cover of grasses and herbs is most important for protection from erosion. Certain species of plants are found here are endemic.
3. Aesthetically and scenery-wise it is the only geographical land mass in the region offering a 360 degree view of the entire area, particularly of the Krishna Valley.
4. Commercial activity like stalls, amusement facilities, unrestricted movement of horses, horse carts and even motorized vehicles over the whole Table Land in recent years has had a negative and destructive impact leading to damage to growth of vegetation, leading in turn to an increase in erosion and damage to the topsoil, and although the Municipal authorities have from time to time tried to control commercial activity, they have not succeeded in keeping the Table Land free from damage.

The Monitoring Committee Members during the site visit came to a unanimous conclusion that if the Table Land is to be protected, patchwork solutions will not work and radical action is needed to keep the major part of the Table Land free from commercial activity and movement of vehicles. This would also be in keeping with the provision of the current Regional Plan for Mahableshwar-Panchgani Region. Under Section 7.2.3(c) of the Regional Plan it is prescribed that "*..... and Table Land at Panchgani should be preserved as open spaces for public recreation*"

### The Table Land

This is a unique feature consisting of a large lateritic plateau about 60 mt (200 ft.) above Panchgani, and shielding the latter from easterly winds. It overlooks the town and affords a beautiful view to the East. It is also a spot of considerable scientific interest and its landscape should be properly preserved for the enjoyment of visitors and for further study.



During the site visits Members of the Monitoring Committee saw that commercial activity from numerous stalls (food and recreation stalls) and unrestricted movement of horses, horse carts and motorized vehicles was having a deleterious effect on the ecology of the Table Land. The surface vegetation had been destroyed, leading to damage to the topsoil, and resulting in exposure of more and more rock surface. This needs to be stopped immediately.

The Committee therefore came to the conclusion that if the major part of the Table Land was to be preserved from eventual destruction, it was necessary to take the following steps.

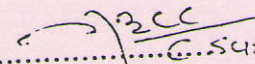
- (a) To stop all commercial activity on the Table Land plateau surface. This can only be done by a total ban on movement of horses, carts and other vehicles on the major part of the Table Land (to the North of the entry point).
- (b) Cars and other vehicles should only be allowed up to the Car Park to the South of the present entry point as shown on the enclosed map.
- (c) Stalls (only those 33 stalls that are part of the Court Order) should be relocated and confined to the topographic depression at the present entry point to the Table Land (from the South) and strictly not allowed beyond this point. They should lie below the surface level of the main plateau and be designed in an eco-friendly manner. Their ownership should vest with the Panchgani Municipal Council, which should let out the stalls to stall-holders selling food and refreshment items only. Stalls of giant-wheels, trains etc. should not be allowed.
- (d) Apart from the above, no construction to be permitted on the Table Land except for an Environmental Interpretation Centre near to the entry point at a location shown in the attached plan. This centre would give vital information and education to visitors about the Table Land and its unique environmental features.
- (e) To prevent any exception/misuse of the vehicle-free area on the main portion of the Table Land, even by VIPs, properly designed steps and barriers should be constructed to make it impossible for vehicles to enter the prohibited area.
- (f) Apart from people walking on foot, no activity of any kind should be permitted on the main part of the plateau to the North of the present entry point and the small water body near the entrance route. The only exception to this could be near the entry to the main plateau where an area should be demarcated for a playground to be given out to schools for sports such as football. This should be clearly demarcated to avoid future misuse. The control of this area should vest with the Panchgani Municipal Council, which will be responsible for ensuring that this facility is not misused.
- (g) Vehicles should be allowed only up to the Car/Vehicle Park as shown on the map. Horses and horse carts should not be allowed on the main plateau but be confined to the portion of the Table Land located to the South and South East of the present entry point. Suitable barriers should be erected to prevent horse carts and any other vehicles from entering the larger protected portion of the plateau.





- (h) All slopes should be made as green as the slope on the MRA side.  
 (i) Details of permitted activities and restrictions are set out in Schedules I & II attached to this report.  
 (j) It is suggested that powers to enforce the above conditions be delegated to the Panchgani Hill Municipal Council by the Collector, Satara under the Bombay Police Act, as the Council itself does not have the direct powers to do so.

The locations giving the precise position of all the above "users" is marked on the accompanying map.

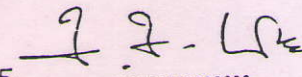
For Mahabaleshwar-Panchgani Monitoring Committee

1.  C. Sunil Limaye)  
 Dy. Conservator Forests, Satara.  
 Chairman

2.   
 SDO, Wai  
 Member-Secretary

3.   
 S.J. Patwardhan  
 Member

4. ....  
 Col. S.A. Mohite (Retd.)  
 Member

5.   
 Dr. F.F. Wadia  
 Member



SCHEDULE - 1

PARTICULARS OF RESTRICTIONS ON EATABLES AND THEIR PREPARATION  
ON THE DESIGNATED AREA OF THE TABLE LAND

1. Packed fast food items will be allowed.
2. Varieties of soft drinks approved by Food and Drugs Administration only are permitted.
3. Packed drinking water/mineral water allowed.
4. Cooking or the use of open fires and kerosene stoves are not permitted on the Table Land.
5. Hot beverages e.g. tea, coffee are permitted to be prepared using LPG gas or vending machines.
6. All activities causing air, noise, water or soil pollution are strictly prohibited. Igniting fires is totally banned. The use of kerosene, diesel, and petrol etc. fuel operated machinery or instruments is totally banned.
7. The stall holders must dispose of their garbage and waste water as per the instructions of the Municipal Council from time to time, but in no case should the garbage be disposed off on the Table Land itself or near the forest areas.
8. No kinds of PLASTIC BAGS or PLASTIC/LAMINATES/STYROFORM PACKINGS (except those which are part of the packaging of the manufactured product) or DISPOSABLE NON-BIODEGRADABLE CROCKERY will be allowed.

For Mahableshwar-Panchgani Monitoring Committee

1.....<sup>3cc</sup>.....(Sunil Limaye)  
Dy.Conservator Forests, Satara.  
Chairman

2.....<sup>LA/C.</sup>.....  
SDO, Wai  
Member-Secretary

3.....<sup>[Signature]</sup>.....  
S.J.Patwardhan  
Member

4.....  
Col.S.A.Mohite (Retd.)  
Member

5.....<sup>77.42</sup>.....  
Dr.F.F.Wadia  
Member





SCHEDULE - II


PARTICULARS OF PERMITTED ACTIVITIES AND RESTRICTIONS  
ON THE DESIGNATED AREA OF THE TABLE LAND

1. Games for entertainment e.g. ball game, total game, glass game, ring game etc. that do not cause any sort of pollution are allowed.
2. Playing equipment manufactured by recognized companies for children below 10 years with following restrictions are allowed
  - (f) The height shall not exceed 3.00 m
  - (g) The length, breadth or diameter shall not exceed 5.00m
  - (h) No Equipment will be permitted which uses diesel, petrol, kerosene or other polluting fuels.
  - (i) Such equipment shall not cause any sort of air, land, water, or noise pollution.
  - (j) Such equipment must comply with the safety standards laid down by the Municipal Council from time to time.
3. The table land has to be kept closed for all activities from 13<sup>th</sup> June to 13<sup>th</sup> September every year
4. There should be a Nature Reserve Zone surrounding the Table land which should be detailed in the Panchgani Development Plan and Development Control Rules under preparation, and accordingly provision should be made in the Development Control Rules.


For Mahabaleshwar Panchgani Monitoring Committee

1.   
Dy. Conservator Forests, Satara  
Chairman

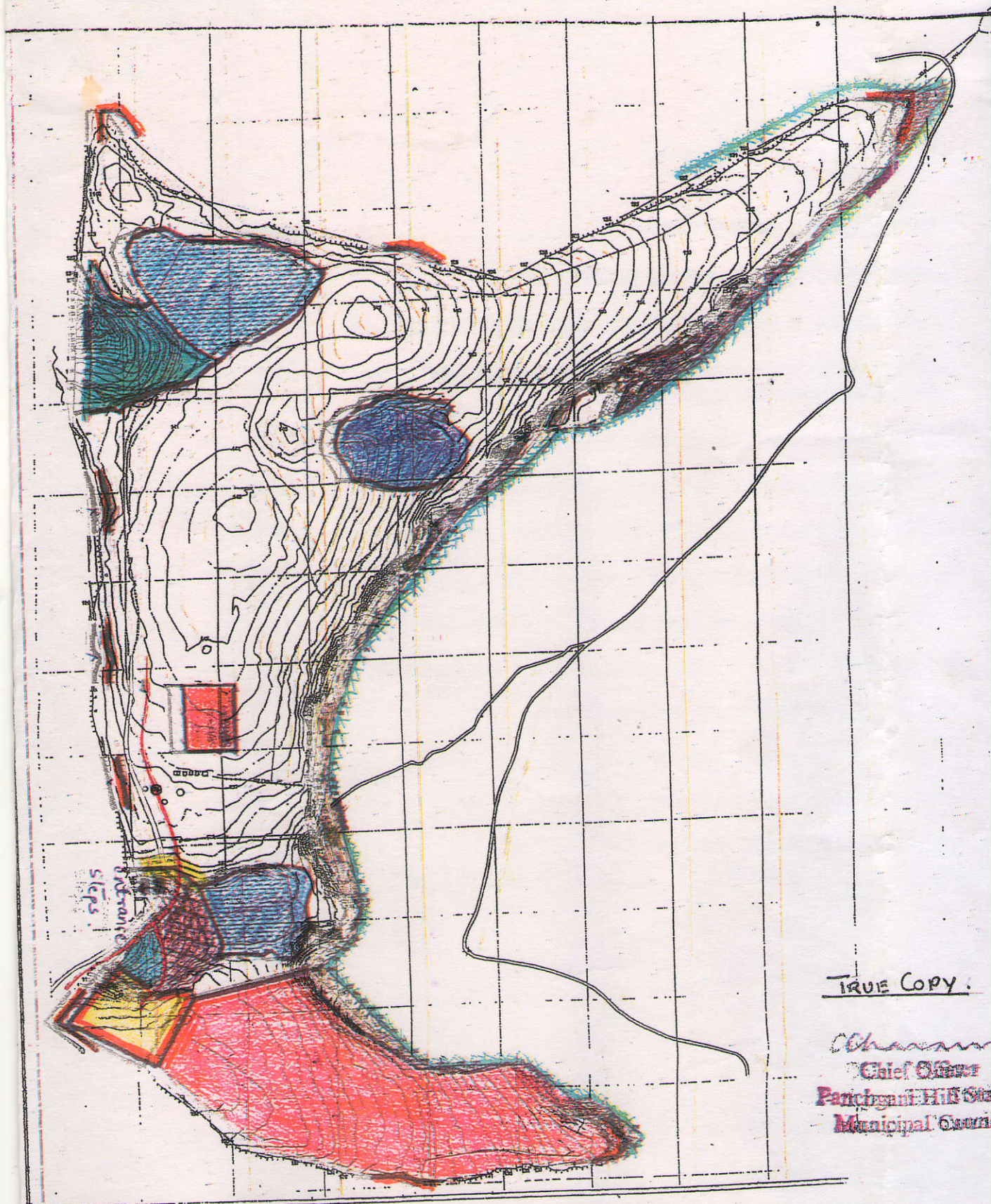
3.   
S.J. Patwardhan  
Member

4.   
P. V. Wadia  
Member

  
Chief Officer  
Panchgani Hill Station  
Municipal Council

  
SD  
Member





CONSERVATION OF TABLELAND AT PANCHGANI

TRUE COPY.  
C. Chavan  
Chief Officer  
Panchgani Hill Sta  
Municipal Comm



NOTES

- 1) EXISTING LAKE SHOWN THUS.....\*
- 2) EXISTING FOOTBALL GROUND SHOWN THUS.....\*
- 3) OPEN AREA FOR SITTING ARRANGEMENT SHOWN THUS.....\*
- 4) PROPOSED HURDEL (STEPS & RAILING) FOR RESTRICTION OF VEHICLES SHOWN THUS.....\*
- 5) PROPOSED STAGGERED RAILING SHOWN THUS.....\*
- 6) AREA PROPOSED FOR PARKING SHOWN THUS.....\*
- 7) ENVIRONMENTAL INTERPRETATION CENTRE SHOWN THUS.....\*
- 8) AREA FOR STALLS & RECREATION SHOWN THUS.....\*
- 9) AREA PROPOSED FOR HORSES & HORSE CARTS SHOWN THUS..\*
- 10) EXISTING RAILINGS & SITTING ARRANGEMENT SHOWN THUS\*
- 11) EXISTING ASPALTED ROAD SHOWN THUS.....\*
- 12) PROPOSED FENCING SHOWN THUS.....\*
- 13) PROPOSED GATES SHOWN THUS.....\*
- 14) PROPOSED RAILING SHOWN THUS.....\*

1..... *sdt*.....  
 Dy. Conservator Forests, Satara  
 Chairman

2..... *sdt*.....  
 SDO, Wai  
 Member - Secretary

3..... *sdt*.....  
 S.J. Patwardhan  
 Member

4.....  
 Col. S.A. Mohite (Retd.)  
 Member

5..... *sdt*.....  
 Dr. F.F. Wadia  
 Member



SCALE:-  
 (NOT TO SCALE)

MAP SHOWING USERS ON TABLE LAND (S.NO.40) FOR CONSERVATION OF  
 TABLE LAND FOR PANCHGANI HILL STATION MUNICIPAL  
 COUNCIL PANCHGANI TAL-MAHABAL ESHWAR, DIST- SATARA