

An Evaluation of the Implementation of the Coast Conservation Act No. 57 of 1981

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The Coastal Resources Development Branch was established on 01.01.1978 under the auspices of the Ministry of Fisheries with the responsibility of implementing the Coast Conservation Act No. 57 of 1981 being cast on it, in addition to the task of drawing up a plan for the management of coastal resources which it had already undertaken

The urgency for activating the provisions of this act became so acute that it was driven into effect from 01.01.1983 by a Government Gazette Notification.

The work connected with the preparation of the coastal resources management plan was undertaken with a view to effectively managing the coastal belt of Sri Lanka on a long-term need oriented basis. Under this, the policy through which the solutions could be found for eradicating and minimising the ever aggravating environmental, social and economic problems and the means of implementing the issue of permits for development activities in the Coastal Region were brought into play with effect from October 1, 1983.

The Act provided that "irrespective of the legal provisions elsewhere no person shall engage in any kind of development activities within the coastal zone unless with a permit issued by Director of Coast Conservation for such purposes".

A programme was launched through the media to build up awareness among the members of the public regarding the scope of development activities in the coastal region. A co-ordinating committee was set up at which every Coastal District was represented, so that the issue of permits would be expedited. Initially the work connected with the issue of permits commenced at head office with provision for decentralisation to take place at a later stage in case of need.

In order that possibility of assistance from the Government Departments, Corporations and other concerned institutions is harnessed, the local police stations G.S.s Offices, and A.G.A.'s Offices in the coastal districts were all furnished with posters and application forms.

District	No of Applicants
Colombo	16
Kalutara	87
Galle	128
Matara	11
Hambantota	03
Amparai	04
Batticaloa	06
Trincomalee	20
Mullaitivu	01
Jaffna	06
Mannar	31
Puttalam	08
Gampaha	19
Total	340

During the 14 months from October 1983 to November 1984 the total number of applications received for permits under the Coastal Conservation Act of 1981 stood at 340, the monthly average being about 28.

During this period only the Galle District had received over 100. With the exception of Galle and Kalutara Districts, receipts of applications by all other district remained comparatively low.

The applications received at the Department were classified into following four groups for purpose of expediency:

1. Housing
2. Sea Sand
3. Hotel Projects
4. Marine Constructions and others.

The number of applications received under each of these headings are given below:

District	Housing	Sea Sand Mining	Hotel Projects	Marine Construction and others
Colombo	2	3	2	9
Kalutara	7	78	2	0
Galle	10	109	14	0
Matara	3	1	1	6
Hambantota	1	1	1	0
Amparai	0	3	1	0
Batticaloa	3	1	2	0
Trincomalee	14	4	2	0
Mullaitivu	1	0	0	0
Jaffna	2	4	0	0
Mannar	2	29	0	0
Puttalam	3	3	1	2
Gampaha	6	5	7	1

Even in the case of the following districts which have received a higher number of applications the majority are on account of removal of sea sand.

Coastal Zone management and the implementation of the Coast Conservation Act were assigned to the respective coordinating officers. This method seems to have been in operation successfully in the Mannar District.

With effect from June 1984 the issue of permits for sea sand from Panadura and Thalpitaya estuaries was vested in the Sri Lanka Fisheries Harbour Corporation and they were entitled to collect a royalty payment of Rs. 5/- per cube of sand. Periodical checks were carried out by the Departmental officials. The quantities issued by the Fisheries Harbour Corporation in the Panadura and Thalpitaya estuaries during 1984 are as follows:

1984 June	Cubes	226
July	Cubes	1007
August	Cubes	1059
September	Cubes	557
Total		2849

In a district wise analysis of data relating to the applications for removal of sea sand the response does not appear to be encouraging except in the districts of Galle, Kalutara and Mannar. An inference may therefore be that illicit scoop-

ing is rampant in other areas. Having considered the applications received in these areas the applicants have been requested to submit feasibility reports on their projects affecting the environs.

Viewed as a whole the procedure of issuing permits under the Coast Conservation Act No. 57 of 1981 does not appear to have been welcomed by the public.

With the exception of applications on account of sea sand the number in respect of Development activities vouches for this unwelcome feature of the procedure involved.

Housing	55
Hotel projects	33
Marine constructions	18
Removal of Sand	106
	207

The lack of information regarding illicit scooping in almost all districts too has a bearing on this decline of applications for permits.

There were only 6 applications for collection of Coral and Sea shells during the period in question, that is, 2 for shell collecting and 4 for conch collection.

The number of applications received in respect of Hotel projects are given below

District	No. of Projects
Colombo	02
Kalutara	02
Galle	14
Matara	01
Hambantota	01
Amparai	01
Batticaloa	02
Trincomalee	02
Mulativu	-
Jaffna	-
Mannar	-
Puttalam	01
Gampaha	07
Total	33

Of the 33 applications received at all district centres, Gampaha and Galle districts alone claimed 25. The restrictions imposed by the Ceylon Tourist Board in March 1984, appear to have had a hand in the low response from other districts.