

Minutes of the 2nd meeting of the National Wetlands Committee (NWC) held on 5.11.2019 at 3.00 p.m. under the Chairmanship of Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change

Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change convened the second meeting of the National Wetlands Committee (NWC) on 05.11.2019 under the Chairmanship of Shri C.K. Mishra, Secretary, MoEF&CC. List of participants is at Annexure I.

2. At the outset, the Secretary, MoEF&CC welcomed the members of the committee and a brief introduction of the members ensued. Secretary, MoEF&CC, chairperson of the committee stated that the committee had some unfinished agenda items which it plans to take up.

3. Ms. Manju Pandey, Joint Secretary MoEF&CC then gave a brief presentation about the agenda items, which included: Confirmation of the minutes of the 1st meeting of NWC held on 26.07.2018, Action Taken Reports (ATRs) on the decisions taken during first meeting, Status on 100 days' action plan of the Ministry for conservation of 100 identified wetlands, Appraisal regarding designation of more wetlands as Ramsar sites, Status of implementation of Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017 and any other issue which the committee desires to take up. Following this agenda, items were taken up.

Agenda item No 1

Confirmation of MOM of last meeting:

Since, no comments regarding the minutes of the last meeting had been received, the minutes were confirmed during the meeting.

Agenda item No 2(1):

Permission for sewage inflow in EKW:

The second agenda item pertained to ATR on the decisions taken during 1st meeting of NWC. Thereafter, Joint Secretary invited Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) to share the conclusions and recommendations of the detailed study of East Kolkata Wetlands (EKW) area carried out by CPCB and EKWMA as per the decision taken during the 1st meeting of the NWC.

Representative of CPCB then presented the findings after a brief overview and situational analysis of EKW in terms of physiography, the characteristics and composition of sewage flowing through sewage canals and bheries (Ponds). Areas like concentration of heavy metals and threats to East Kolkata Wetlands such as urbanization, conversion of wetlands to agricultural purposes and subsequent impact on human health were dealt upon. The recommendations were then shared which included reversion of wetland converted for agricultural purposes to its original state, ban on construction activities, constitution of committee to monitor human intervention, regular dredging, regulation of storm water flow, ban on inflow of industrial discharge and a comprehensive action plan for all drainage channels and distributions within EKW. It was stated by CPCB that the contamination of sewage with industrial effluents is a problem and if industrial discharge is omitted, the situation is not a cause of concern.

The Chairperson of the committee emphasized that CPCB should quantify the optimum level of sewage inflow.

Decision:

After due deliberations it was decided that the CPCB shall quantify the optimum level of sewage inflow in case of EKW. (Action: CPCB).

Agenda item No 2 (2-4)

**(2) Permission for continuation of solid waste disposal in Dhapa area of EKW without conversion or filling up of any water body; and
(3 & 4) Permission for construction activities in settlement areas and Permission for public works in EKW areas without net loss of water body in the area:**

The committee was informed about the comprehensive management action plan which was to be submitted for Conservation and Management of EKW covering solid waste disposal in Dhapa area without conversion of any water body, construction activities in settlement areas and permission for public work in EKW area without net loss of water body in the area. In this regard, EKWMA had informed that an Expression on Interest (EOI) for integrated management plan of EKW has been published in 3 National Newspapers for which last date was 31.10.2019.

Decision:

After due deliberations it was decided that EKWMA shall submit a comprehensive management action plan covering all 3 issues in a time bound manner (say by 31st December, 2019) (Action: EKWMA Government of West Bengal).

Agenda item No 2 (5)

Permission for construction of elevated corridor over the EKW:

The Scientific Officer, EKW then presented the Impact Assessment study carried out wherein it was brought forth that circumventing the wetland shall help and stated that a further study is planned. Secretary, MoEF&CC then stated that the proposed alignment is approved subject to the condition that there is no damage to the wetland. He stated that results of any further study are to be presented to the committee.

Decision:

After due deliberations it was decided that the results of any further Impact Assessment study on EKW shall be presented to the committee (Action: EKWMA).

Agenda item No 3

Status on 100 day's action plan of the Ministry for conservation of 130 identified wetlands:

The Joint Secretary then proceeded with the 3rd Agenda item i.e. briefing the committee regarding the transformative idea for restoration and rejuvenation of 100 wetlands across the country. The rationale, approach and outcomes of the action plan were shared. The Joint Secretary pointed out that the exercise had created awareness

at many levels and achieved better integration and synergy and effected an awareness to the ground realities. The health of the wetlands, the areas where there are gaps with an overall focus on the four-pronged strategy that was adopted were discussed. During the course of the meeting, it was decided that the report in the form of presentation shall be shared with members to reflect on the conclusions drawn in terms of gaps and challenges and frame their ideas. The Secretary, MoEF&CC stated that comments/ideas on the report are to be sent by 25th November, 2019.

Decision:

After due deliberations it was decided that the report/ power point presentation of the 100 days' action plan shall be shared with the members of the committee for comments on how to take this programme further (Action: MoEF&CC).

Agenda item No 4

Apprising the Committee regarding designation of Ramsar sites already declared and proposed Ramsar sites:

The committee was apprised regarding the status of designation of Ramsar sites. It was brought to the notice of the committee that eight wetland proposals have been sent to Ramsar Secretariat alongwith all required documents for their designation as Ramsar sites and ten more are in process.

Decision:

After due deliberations it is was decided that a reminder to send to all State Govts proposals for designating more wetlands as Ramsar sites under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. (Action: MoEF&CC).

Agenda item No 5

Status on implementation of Wetlands Rules, 2017:

The final item on the agenda was thereafter taken up. The Joint Secretary stated that the picture of implementation of Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017 was not very satisfactory. The Secretary, MoEF&CC then stated that no financial assistance would be provided by MOEFCC till the time State Wetland Authority is constituted in the State. The Secretary, MoEF&CC, at the suggestion of Director, ZSI, and Director, BSI mentioned that there are some states which need assistance in such exercises and if the states are keen on seeking assistance, it shall be provided by willing partners which shall be arranged at a cost.

Decision:

After due deliberations it is was decided that communication shall be sent to the States that no financial assistance would be provided by MOEFCC till the time State Wetland Authority is constituted in the State. (Action: MoEF&CC).

The meeting ended with thanks to and from the Chair.

List of participants in the 2nd meeting of National Wetlands Committee to be held on 5th November 2019 at 3.00 P.M. in Kaveri Hall, IPB

1. Shri. C.K.Mishra, Secretary, MoEF&CC - Chairman
2. Shri. Ravi Agrawal, Additional Secretary, MoEF&CC - Vice-chairman
3. Smt. Manju Pandey, Joint Secretary, MoEF&CC - Member ex-officio
4. Shri B.B Barman, Advisor NRCD, MoWR, - Member ex-officio
5. Dr. Alka Bhargav, Additional Secretary, (NRM/RFS), DAC&FW - Member ex-officio
6. Shri Subhash Chandran, Deputy Commissioner (NRM), DAC&FW - Member Ex- Officio
7. Shri. Surendra Sompalle, Addl. Chief Planner, MoUD - Rep. Member Ex- Officio
8. Shri. C.P Reddy, Scientist (TE), DoLR - Member ex-officio
9. Shri Arun Srivastava, DDG, Ministry of Tourism - Member ex-Officio
10. Dr. A.A. Mao, Director, BSI - Member ex-officio
11. Shri A. Sudhakar, CPCB, DH-water Division - Member ex-Officio
12. Dr. Kailash Chandra, Director, ZSI - Member ex-officio
13. Dr. P.K Gupta, SCI-SF, SAC, ISRO, Ahmedabad - Rep. Member ex-officio
14. Shri L. Gopinath, S.R.O, NITI Aayog - Rep. Member ex-officio
15. Shri. Umesh Kumar Ram, D.D, Social Justice & Empowerment - Rep. Member ex-officio
16. Shri Anirudh Paul, Scientific Officer, EKW - Rep. from HIDCO
17. Shri S.P. Sisodiya, APCCF (Wildlife), Gujarat - Rep. from Gujarat
18. Shri Sanjay Shriwastav, PCCF, Wildlife, Tamil Nadu - Rep. from T.N
19. Dr. U.A. Vora, Former CCF(WL), Gujarat, - Expert Member
20. Dr. Arvind Kumar, President, Chairman, IWF, New Delhi - Expert Member
21. Dr. Afroz Ahmad, Former Member (E&R), Narmada Control Authority - Expert Member
22. Dr. Rita Salia, Scientist- D, CPCB, Regional Office, Kolkata
23. Shri. B.R Rakshit, Deputy Chief Engineer(Mech) SCOM Deptt/KMC, -Rep. W.B
24. Smt. Rita Khanna, Scientist 'F', MoEF&CC
25. Shri. Chandan Singh Scientist 'D' MoEF&CC
26. Shri Ashok Kumar, Scientist 'D', MoEF&CC
27. Ms. Shikha Singhal, Research Associate
28. Ms. Sarita Singh, Research Associate