

**Minutes of the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Central Wetlands Regulatory Authority (CWRA) held on 22.9.11 under the Chairmanship of Dr. T. Chatterjee, Secretary (E&F) , Ministry of Environment & Forests, New Delhi**

The second meeting of the CWRA was held on 22.9.11 at 1100 hrs. under the Chairmanship of Dr. T. Chatterjee, Secretary (E&F). The list of participants is annexed.

The Chairman in his opening remarks welcomed all the members of the CWRA. He expressed his appreciation for the concern shown for taking up cause of wetlands in a serious manner seeing their deterioration and degradation. With the wetland regulatory mechanism in hand, he was of the view that their further degradation could be minimized. If appropriate steps are taken well in time.

With the merger of three schemes viz. Wetlands, Mangroves and Corals and national lake conservation plan, we should be in a position to cater to needs of financial assistance in a better manner through the combined financial pool for all the three programmes. Secretary talked about larger wetlands like Pulicat falling in Andhra and Tamilnadu where the state governments are not agreed for making a joint management action plan. He also mentioned about grave consequences of uprooting of willow trees in Wullar wetland where some concerted effort are needed to take up conservation of Wullar wetland in totality. Private concerns and banks to finance management action plans for wetlands in various states so that dependence on government is minimized was another idea mooted. While interacting with members on various issues of wetland conservation, he appreciated the idea of some of the members that wetlands could generate their own income and could become bankable, as suggested by Prof. Varshney. .

Additional Secretary appreciated the idea of implementing the economics of biodiversity methodology which can generate money and can have self sustaining aspects. A suggestion was made that with lower discount rates for costing, we should try private banks. They can be asked to have meetings with the environment ministry so that some bankable proposals are developed for ecosystem services from wetlands. Examples of HSBC bank was given where we could initiate dialogue in this regard.

Thereafter members were asked to raise issues which need immediate attention. One of the main issue was that most of the financial assistance is being eaten away by few dominant wetlands. Suggestion was made to strengthen institutional arrangements in liaison with industries and other organizations for better management. West Bengal government, Principal Secretary, Environment came out with a suggestion that he will initiate action in collaboration with private sector for some of the wetlands and give inputs to the ministry about the success made in this direction so that it can be replicated in other wetlands. Some members suggested to have one to one

interaction with the state governments to guide them about new wetland regulations for getting desired results..

Some members were of the view that notification proforma need to be devised to make state governments understand about the modus operandi of wetland regulation. Funding was suggested as a big constraint in dealing with execution part of the wetland processes. However, keeping this in mind we still need to persuade all concerned to go ahead with the regulatory mechanism. Members also informed that since wetland deterioration is seen as a breach of law and with new notification processes in hand, people are ready to go to court with the PILs. As such, we have to be very clear about how to go ahead with regulation at state level to restrict wetlands being used beyond their carrying capacity.

Members informed the Chairman that with the merger of all water related schemes together, it will be beneficial to go ahead with their conservation in an effective manner as all type of wetlands are covered under the notification. With the report of SAC and release of atlases for various states, state governments to come forward with notification of more wetlands for regulation for their better management.

As far as water policy by the Ministry of Water Resources was concerned, members suggested that the revised policy should contain elaborate content on wetlands as they are crucial for water storage. In this regard a letter from MOEF to go to Water Resources Ministry to reflect wetlands prominently in their policy document to enable people to understand the role of wetlands in a better manner particularly in regard to problems related to water scarcity.

After elaborate discussions, Secretary asked Advisor, Wetlands to take up agenda items one by one.

**Agenda Item No. 1: Confirmation of the minutes of first meeting of CWRA held on 25.03.2011.**

Since no comments were received from any member pertaining to minutes of the first CWRA meeting held on 25.3.11, minutes were confirmed.

**Agenda Item No. 2: Action Taken Report on the decision taken during second meeting held on 22.09.2011 under the Chairmanship of Secretary (E&F).**

Action Taken Report on the decision taken during second meeting are as follows:

<b>S. No.</b>	<b>Decisions taken during the meeting of CWRA</b>	<b>Action Taken Report</b>
1	Merging of 3 schemes related to wetlands viz. Wetlands Mangroves and Coral reefs and National Lake Conservation Plan	On merger of three schemes, Secretary informed that all the three schemes, viz National Wetland Conservation Programme, National Lake Conservation Programme and Mangroves and Coral Programme have been merged together under a scheme entitled "Conservation of Aquatic Ecosystems" and letter in this regard has already gone to Member Secretary, Planning Commission recently.
2.	Notification process of new wetlands under wetland conservation rules 2010 to be initiated on the basis of the report on survey of wetlands in the scale of 1:50000 state wise by SAC Ahmadabad put on their website.	All state governments will be again requested to send relevant details to notify more wetlands under Wetland Conservation Rules, 2010 on the basis of atlases released for all states in the scale of 1:50000 by SAC, Ahmedabad which is now available on ministry's website..
3	Three members committee constituted to make guidelines for regulation and notification of wetlands in the states.	Draft guidelines made by Dr. James and Dr. Rahmani were combined and a draft version made by Prof. Varshney was circulated to all the members. Advisor (Wetlands) was asked to go through the guidelines, consolidate them and send it to all the members for their further refinement.
4.	Review of Status of all existing authorities in various states	Reminders will be sent to all the concerned state government again.
5.	Relevance of State Level Steering Committee and National Wetland Committee once Central Wetland Regulatory Authority (CWRA) has been constituted.	
6	Assistance for larger wetlands like Wullar in J&K, Vembanad in Kerala, Kolleru in Andhra Pradesh, Pulicat in Tamil Nadu & Andhra Pradesh and high altitude	Since no funds are available at present no further action is possible. As and when fund availability is there, these will be taken up on priority.

	wetlands in the Himalayan out of budget of Rs 200 crores which has an additional budget provision for water bodies having cultural and historic importance	
7	Taking into consideration number of pilot project which will come up for wetland regulation from time to time and also new research projects for both long and short term measures, it was proposed that all research proposals related to wetlands, Mangroves, Coral reefs and National Lake Conservation Plan to taken out of the research thematic area and a separate committee to be constituted to look into various research proposals related exclusively to wetlands.	Members welcomed the suggestion that a new research expert group will be constituted to look into all wetland related projects which can supplement better execution of management action plan in a more coordinated manner. However, being an internal matter, Addl. Secy. assured that some immediate action will be taken to address these issues internally which can be conveyed to member later.
8	Reconstitution of Expert Group on Wetlands (EGOW) to scrutinized and examined MAPs after merger of three schemes	Additional Secretary assured that this will be resolved internally and need not come to the regulatory authority for further discussions.
9	Identification of Nodal Institutes/ Officers for regulatory mechanism at state level.	State government will again be reminded about the identification of nodal institutes. Letter to go to all the states for further necessary action.
10	Regional/ State consultations for dealing with various regulatory issues.	Secretary informed the members that he visited TN and Andhra and will be visiting J&K and later on Kerala for having discussions with the state authorities pertaining to regulatory mechanism.
11	Co- option of two members from each state on rotational basis in CWRA.	As per decision made in the last meeting state government of Kerala, West Bengal, J&K, Gujarat will be requested to nominate representatives for the next meeting.
12	Setting up of Wetland Regulatory Authority / Cell along with staff	Additional Secretary will look into this matter internally. Decision

		will be conveyed to CWRA when finalized.
13	Finalization of guidelines pertaining to penalties for violating regulatory norms.	This will be discussed once the guidelines are finalized.

**On request of representative from SAC Ahmedabad and West Bengal government with the permission of Chair, it was proposed to have their presentations first and the rest of the Agenda could be debated later.**

Dr. Panigrahy, SAC, Ahmedabad gave presentation on atlases released by SAC Ahmadabad on 8<sup>th</sup> June, 2011 in the scale of 1:50000 on the basis of pre-monsoon and post monsoon data which have shown all wetlands of less than 2.25 hectares in details and upto 0.5 hectare as dots indicating their presence. She informed that with Winsis software, we can get all the survey number and details pertaining to any wetland and can also have access to data of earlier surveys from 1990-95 in the scale of 1:250000 where changes in wetlands could be compared.

To the question whether catchments are also included, Dr. Parihar replied that it included only hydrological boundaries and not the catchment. She informed that imageries of 2006 and 2008 were used for this study. Members were of the view that we must have some information from Ministry of Water Resources on these issues. There was a suggestion that wetlands shown as waste lands in revenue records needs to be changed. Action in this regard need to be initiated by ministry to inventories old revenue records in this direction. Some members also felt need of publishing white paper to elaborate on degradation of wetlands in the country. By citing example of Wullar wetland, it was opined that lot of water capacity is lost in the Wullar because of plantation of willows inside the wetland area.

SAC Ahmadabad presentation was appreciated by all the members and they wanted that all should have access to this type of information so that it could be used in an effective manner. Dr. Panigrahy informed that whatever suggestions were to come from members regarding rectification of some of the items in the inventorization process, that will be taken care of as the inventorization process has kept margin for changes in different components in the studies undertaken.

**Second presentation was made on East Kolkata Wetlands by Secretary, Environment & ETO, Government of West Bengal.**

Presentation was made by Principal Secretary, Environment, West Bengal government and Dr. Nitai Kundu, ETO jointly regarding increasing area of the wetland from 12500 hectares To 12740 hectares. The members did not find much justification in the proposal as such changes are only allowed under Article 2 (v) of Ramsar Convention where boundaries of wetlands are extended only because of urgent national interest. To delete or restrict the boundary of wetland already included by it in the list, has to be informed to contracting parties as per Article 8 and only after debate such changes can be allowed.

As far as wise use principle of sewage fed fish was taken up by the communities, members were of the view that there is no authentication through international standards to see impact of various toxic levels in the food chain. They were of the view that if there are no toxic contents, such type of information needs to be circulated to members for their satisfaction. It was reported that studies undertaken by CIFRI, Jadhavpur university and other relevant organization did not find any such effects in the fish produced from such sewage for consumption of human beings.

Regarding dumping of solid waste in the wetland on the basis of economic use and proposed house building and repairing activities in the settlement area of wetland, no state government can be given any exemption from the regulation.

After discussions, members were of the view that all these issues need to be understood in a better manner and WB government to come up with more detailed information on justification of the boundaries, dumping of solid waste, house building and repairing, science based information on foodchain contamination so that a legitimate view could be taken regarding the proposals of the WB government.

**Agenda Item No. 3: Notification of new wetlands under Wetland Conservation Rules 2010 on the basis of the report of SAC Ahmedabad.**

All state governments will be requested to send desired document for identification of new wetlands under wetland conservation rules on the basis of available data of SAC on our website. They will be requested to send it within three months time.

**Agenda Item No. 4: Identification of experts to visit Wetlands for notification as per new regulations.**

Some of the prominent and large wetlands will be visited by ministry officials to have discussions with state government on various issues. For other wetlands, experts will be nominated to visit these areas to make them understand about the importance of regulatory mechanism and its execution at the ground level to yield desired results. This exercise will be taken up internally by the division and after approval members will be accordingly informed to undertake visits. Their expenditure will be borne by MoEF for such visits and appropriate notification will be issued after approval by the competent authority.

Members were of the view that wetland regulation being a sensitive issue, meetings of CWRA need to be convened at regular intervals to address some of the crucial issues which need immediate attention both at the central and the state level. Chairman assured the members that in future these meetings will be held more frequently.

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to the Chair.

### **List of Participants**

1. Dr. T. Chatterjee, Secretary (E&F)
2. Sh.M.F. Farooqui, Addl. Secy, MoEF
3. Sh. RPS Kahlon, Secretary, Environment, West Bengal
4. Sh. S. Kaul, Advisor, MoEF
5. Pr Dr. E.J. James, Director, Karunya University, Coimbatore
6. Prof. C.K. Varshney Ex. Professor & Dean Sciences, JNU.
7. Dr. Asad Rahmani, Director, BNHS, Mumbai.
8. Prof. A.R. Yousuf, Department of Environmental Sciences, Kashmir University.
9. Sh. Mukat Singh, DDG, M/o Social Justice
10. Dr. S. Panigrahy, Group Director, SAC, Ahmedabad
11. Sh. C.M Pandey, Addl. Commissioner, M/o Agriculture.
12. Dr. Nitai Kundu, ETO, EKWMA.
13. Dr. Sanjeev Agrawal, Scientist 'D', CPCB.
14. Sh. P.S. Chakraborty, Under Secretary, M/o Water Resources.
15. Sh. Ajit Pal Singh, Asstt. Director, M/o Tourism
16. Dr. Shruti Rai, DD, MoEF
17. Sh. Ashish Kumar, DD, MoEF.
18. Sh. Chandan Singh, Scientific Officer, MoEF.