

The 1st meeting of "State Steering Committee on Wetlands" held on 15.06.2012 at 4 p.m. under the Chairmanship of Sh. Sudripta Roy, IAS, Chief Secretary to the Govt. of Himachal Pradesh.

The 1st meeting of State Steering Committee on Wetlands was held on 15.06.2012 at 4 p.m. in the Chief Secretary's Committee Room, H.P. Secretariat under the Chairmanship of Sh. Sudripta Roy, IAS, Chief Secretary to the Govt. of H.P.-cum-Chairman, State Steering Committee on Wetlands. The list of participants is annexed as Annexure-I.

At the outset of the meeting, Dr. Nagin Nanda, Secretary-cum- Director (Env., S & T) to the Govt. of Himachal Pradesh welcomed the Chairman and members of the Steering Committee on its first meeting.

Dr. Nagin Nanda made a presentation on the status of Wetland Programme in Himachal Pradesh. He apprised the Committee that the State Council for Science, Technology & Environment, H.P. is the nodal agency for Wetland Conservation & Management Programme since 1989 and is steering the whole program through a participatory and consultative process. He stated that the implementing agencies for Wetland Program include Departments of Forests & its Wildlife Wing, Tourism, Fisheries, Industries (Geological Wing), Urban Development, Rural & Development and District Administration, State Pollution Control Board, Himachal Pradesh University, Research Institutes, CBOs and NGOs' etc. He apprised that the **Five** wetlands namely Renukaji (Sirmour), Pong Dam (Kangra), Chandertal (Lahoul & Spiti) [Ramsar Sites] and Khajjiar (Chamba) & Rewalsar (Mandi) [Wetlands of National Importance] have been taken up for conservation and management by the Govt. of H.P. under National Wetland Conservation Programme of MoEF, Govt. of India. The Committee was briefed on the status of each of the above five wetlands with regard to physical and financial achievements. The same is reproduced as under:

1. **Renuka Ji Wetland:** It was apprised that the State Council received the total funding of Rs. 2,15,33,000/- for Renuka ji since 1989 and that the implementing departments have under taken various activities to treat catchment area such as soil conservation and bioengineering works,

research studies and awareness generation on conservation of wetlands etc. It was placed on record that the implementation of management action plans have led to reduction in problems of silting and weeding and that the eastern dried up part of the wetland got rejuvenated through the desilting efforts. It was further stated that the Utilisation Certificate in respect of Renukaji Wetland for the total fund received by the Council have been submitted to the MoEF, Gol.

2. **Pong Dam Wetland:** It was apprised that the State Council received the total funding of Rs. 2,31,23,006/- for the Pong Dam Wetland since 1994. It was apprised that Wildlife Wing of Forest Department is the main implementing agency and that the conservation measures have led to increase in number of migratory birds, reduction in illegal poaching, increase in income generation activities through tourism and fisheries. It was apprised that the Utilisation Certificates of total funds received by all implementing agencies i.e. Forest Deptt., Fisheries Deptt., SCST&E, SPCB, BNHS & Wadia Institute etc. have been submitted to MoEF, Gol.
3. **Chandertal Wetland:** It was apprised that the State Council received total funding of Rs. 36,74,000/- since 1997 for the Chandertal Wetland. It was apprised that the Utilisation Certificates for the entire amount of funding have been submitted to the MoEF, Gol. It was apprised that the management interventions by catchment area treatment particularly pasture development has reduced the silt load. Further, awareness about need for conservation of wetlands amongst stakeholders has increased. It was admitted that the increased tourist influx during summer season has led to increased biotic pressure causing degradation of wetland and emphasised that it needs to be regulated by the implementing agencies particularly the Forest Department.
4. **Khajiar Wetland:** It was apprised that the State Council received total funding of Rs.13.00 lacs for Khajjiar Wetland since 2007. It was apprised that the 1st instalment of Rs. 7.80 lacs have been utilised and corresponding Utilisation Certificates have been submitted to MoEF, Gol. It was apprised that the 2nd instalment of Rs. 5.20 lacs has been received by the Council during 2009-10 and an amount of Rs.1.20 lacs would be

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released to Wild Life Wing of Forest Department to carry out the remaining approved activities in view of the submission of Utilization Certificate and confirmation on execution of physical activities. It was apprised that the Comprehensive Action Plan to flushout the debris from Khajjiar Wetland as earlier asked from Wildlife Wing of Forest Department in Coordination Meeting on Wetland held on 09-06-2011 is still awaited and that on the receipt of Management Action Plan for flushing out the debris from Khajjiar Wetland, the State Council would release Rs. 4.00 lacs to Wildlife Wing of Forest Department for mitigation and restoration after getting approval from MoEF, Gol. The Committee was apprised on the issues related to instant CWPII No. 40/2011. The Adviser (Wetlands), MoEF, Gol apprised in the meeting that MoEF, Gol has not given funds amounting to Rs. 20.00 Lacs to the Tourism Development Council and SADA, Khajjiar.

5. **Rewalsar Wetland:** It was apprised that the State Council received total funding of Rs.25.84 lacs for Rewalsar Wetland since 2007. It was apprised that 1st instalment of Rs.15.00 lacs was received during 2007-08 and Utilisation Certificate for the same amount has been submitted to MoEF, Gol. It was further apprised that the 2nd instalment of Rs. 10.84 lacs have been released during 2009-10 out of which an amount of Rs. 5.87 lacs have been utilised. It was clarified that MoEF, Gol though had sanctioned a grant of Rs.25.84 lacs and the same amount was released to the State Council, however, the actual approval for activities was given for Rs. 21.49 lacs. Therefore, Rs. 4,35,000/- has been shown/ reflected as unspent and is lying with the State Council. Therefore, the MoEF, Gol need to be requested to rectify this anomaly and for this purpose the State Council would submit an activity plan for Rs. 4.35 lacs for approval to MoEF, Gol.
6. **Ranjit Sagar Wetland:** The Steering Committee was apprised that for the conservation and management of transboundary of Ranjit Sagar Wetland falling in the States of H.P., J&K, and Punjab there is an urgent need to discuss and finalises the Management Action Plan for the Ranjit Sagar Wetland for the area of which falls in three states. It was stated that since 80% of the wetland area falls in Himachal Pradesh, therefore, a request

was made to convene Co-ordination Meeting regarding Ranjit Sagar Wetland to discuss and finalise the issue of preparation of Management Action Plan with representatives of MoEF and three states. The Chairman agreed to hold the next meeting for discussion and finalise the other issues of Ranjit Sagar Wetland with representatives of MoEF- Gol, Punjab, J&K and H.P. at Shimla.

Proposal for inclusion of New Wetlands:

The proposal for inclusion of new wetlands namely Bhrigu (Kullu), Seruvalsar Lake (Kullu), Nako (Kinnaur), Parashar (Mandi), Manimehesh (Chamba) and Chandernaun lakes (Shimla) was made under National Wetland Programme so that conservation and management plans may be formulated for their conservation and protection. It was stated that the new proposed Wetlands are high altitude wetlands and highly significant due to its ecological and religious importance and are also visited in large number by local people and tourists. It was emphasized that on account of this pressure, proper management interventions are urgently required. It was decided that the proposals for the inclusion of new wetlands are to be prepared as per the provisions of Wetlands (Conservation & Management) Rules, 2010 after undertaking wide spread public consultations.

Sh. Parveen Thapliyal, Additional Pr.CCF (WL), made presentation on Management Action Plans of four wetlands viz. Renukaji, Pong Dam, Chandertal & Khajjiar on behalf of Wildlife Wing of Himachal Pradesh Forest Deptt. for funding by MoEF, Gol. The details of financial outlays for 2012-17 are as under:

Sr. No.	Name of the Wetland	Total Outlay
1.	Renukaji	Rs. 170.5 lacs
2.	Pong Dam	Rs.107.00 lacs
3.	Khajjiar	Rs. 78.25 lacs
4.	Chandertal	Rs. 31.25 lacs

Dr. S. Kaul, Advisor (Wetlands), MoEF, Gol suggested that while attempting conservation and management of wetlands, multi-stakeholder coordinated approach needs to be adopted. He said that the technical and scientific interventions should be supported by adequate research component to generate database to develop

prediction model for conservation of wetlands. He said that the Technical Committee of Experts on Wetlands needs to be notified to evaluate the management action plans, research methodology & monitoring mechanism before submitting them to MoEF, Gol for financial assistance. He further stated that the Comprehensive Management Action Plan should be prepared and subjected to multi stakeholder consultation and should not be centric to any particular Department/Organisation. He advised that since the Pong Wetland has a large area, therefore, the funds solicited from MoEF, Gol for five years does not seem to match with management requirements of the wetland. He said that the proposed outlay is much less even in comparison to other wetlands and stated that more funds are needed considering the enormity of work to be done for conserving it. He said that the MoEF, Gol has also made provisions for hiring the services of Consultants for preparation of Comprehensive Management Action Plans and that the State may consider to avail this facility. He said that the physical and financial targets should be specifically mentioned in management plan in order to have clarity regarding utilisation of funds against proposed physical activities. He emphasised the need for constitution of "State Wetland Authority" to look after the proper scrutiny, implementation and monitoring of the management plans of wetlands. He advised the Wildlife Wing of Forest Deptt. to modify, re-structure and revise the management plans as per guidelines of MoEF, Gol.

Sh. Devesh Kumar, DC, Mandi highlighted that the sewage of Rewalsar town is entering unchecked into Rewalsar Wetland and emphasised the need for urgent remedial action to ensure the survival of the wetland. He said that coordinated effort is needed amongst stakeholders viz. Forest Department, District Administration, Fisheries Deptt. and other stakeholders for formulation, implementation and monitoring of wetland.

Sh. R.K.Gupta, Pr.CCF, H.P. expressed the need for setting up of a District Level Coordination Committee, under the Deputy Commissioner and also the need for posting dedicated officers/officials with keen interest in wetlands conservation for effective implementation of management plans. He stated that correct institutional set up can demonstrate marked improvement of activities on the ground.

Sh. Gurcharan Singh, Director, (Fisheries) suggested for introduction Grass Carp fish (*Ctenopharyngodon idella*) can be useful for controlling weeds like *Hydrilla*, *Potamogeton*, *Vallisneria* etc. in the wetlands wherever the intervention is required.

He said that presence of Typha weed can be controlled by using mechanical methods.

Sh. Sudripta Roy, Chairman in his concluding remarks emphasised that there is need for proper co-ordination amongst implementing departments and various stakeholders to implement conservation and management action plan of wetlands. He recognised the need to constitute a "State Wetland Authority", but however stated that at the current juncture as there are not enough activities and funds flow under wetland program, hence, for the time being the State Steering Committee will function as precursor to the proposed Wetland Authority. He said that the constitution of "State Wetland Authority" can be considered if there is corresponding increase in work and funds flow in future. He said that there is a need for a broad geographical delineation of wetlands, depiction of zones of influence on maps including the detailed account of existing rights and privileges and current ecological health of the wetlands. He said that the Wildlife Wing of H.P. Forest Department must use the facilities of Arya Bhatta Geo-Informatics and Space Application Centre (AGiSAC) for this purpose. He said that the funds available from schemes like MNREGA & CAT plans need to be synergised with activities of wetland programme. He stressed that the tourism activities in the ecological sensitive wetlands like Chandertal and Khajjiar must be regulated with immediate effect. He also emphasised on evaluation and impact assessment of conservation works for all the wetlands. He advised Wildlife Wing of Forest Department for speedy action and assured MoEF representative that the revised management action plan of Wetlands after incorporating the suggestions given by Advisor, MoEF, GoI will be sent at earliest to the MoEF, GoI. after its proper evaluation and scrutiny.

Besides above the following decisions were taken:

- The Wildlife Wing of Forest Department will revise the management action plans for five wetlands as per latest guidelines issued by MoEF, GoI and thereafter undertake multi stakeholder's consultation for including comments / views / objectives etc. **Action: Pr.CCF (WL)**
- The Wildlife Wing of Forest Department will use the facilities of Arya Bhatta Geo-Informatics and Space Application Centre (AGiSAC) for broad geographical delineation of wetlands, depiction of its zones of influence on maps including the detailed account of existing rights & privileges and current ecological health of the wetlands. **Action: Pr.CCF (WL)**

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- The Council will release an amount of Rs.1.20 lacs for remaining approved activities. The Wildlife Wing of H.P. Forest Department will also expeditiously submit the plan to flush out the debris/cowdung from Khajjiar Wetland so that Rs.4.00 lacs can be released to the Forest Department.

Action: Pr.CCF (WL) and SCST&E

- State Council will submit the activity plan to MoEF, GoI to utilise the unspent funds of Rs.4.35 lacs for Rewalsar Wetland after receiving the same from Wildlife Wing of H.P. Forest Department.

Action: Pr.CCF (WL) and SCST&E

- The Wildlife Wing of Himachal Pradesh Forest Department will submit the proposal for holding the workshop for stakeholders at Rewalsar Wetland to the State Council.

Action: Pr.CCF (T)

- State Council will organise a Coordination Meeting with the representatives of MoEF, GoI, Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir Government at Shimla w.r.t. the Management Action Plan for Ranjit Sagar Wetland.

Action: SCST&E

- The process for inclusion of new wetlands viz. Bhrigu (Kullu), Seruvalsar Lake (Kullu), Nako (Kinnaur), Parashar (Mandi), Manimehesh (Chamba) and Chandernaun lakes (Shimla) will be started by the Wildlife Wing of Forest Department after undertaking consultation with other stakeholders and public.

Action: Pr.CCF (T & WL)

- The thought process to constitute Wetland Authority may be initiated by the Council, meanwhile the State Level Steering Committee will function as precursor to the proposed Wetland Authority.

Action: SCST&E

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to and from the chair.



**Chief Secretary
to the Govt. of Himachal Pradesh**

List of Participants

S.No.	Name of the Member	Designation
1.	Sh. S.K. Dash	Additional Chief Secretary (Forests) to the Govt. of H.P.
2.	Dr. S. Kaul	Advisor (Wetlands), Ministry of Environment and Forest, Govt. of India, New Delhi.
3.	Sh. R.K.Gupta	Pr. Chief Conservator of Forests, H.P. Forest Department, Talland, Shimla-1.
4.	Sh. R.K.Sood	Pr. Chief Conservator of Forests (WL), H.P. Forest Department, Talland, Shimla-1.
5.	Sh. ParveenThapliyal	Additional Pr. Chief Conservator of Forests (WL), H.P. Forest Department, Talland, Shimla-1.
6.	Dr. Nagin Nanda	Secretary-cum-Director (Env. Sci. & Tech.), Govt. of H.P.
7.	Sh. Rakesh Sood	Conservator of Forests (WL), South, H.P. Forest Department.
8.	Sh. Devesh Kumar	Deputy Commissioner, Mandi, H.P.
9.	Sh. Gurcharan Singh	Director, Deptt. of Fisheries, Bilaspur, H.P.
10.	Dr. Hemant K. Gupta	Joint Member Secretary, State Council for Science, Tech.& Environment.
11.	Sh. Ashish Singhmar	Additional Deputy Commissioner, Kangra, Dharamshala, H.P.
12.	Sh. Arun K.Sharma	State Geologist, Dept. of Industries, H.P.
13.	Sh. Rajesh Kumar	Assistant Commissioner to Deputy Commissioner, Sirmaur, Nahan, H.P.
14.	Sh. Rohit	Sub Divisional Officer (C), Chamba, H.P.
15.	Ms. Sarita	Deputy Conservator of Forests (WL), Wildlife Division, Forest Department, Shimla, H.P.
16.	Sh. Satpal Dhiman	Divisional Forest Officer, O/o Pr.CCF (Wildlife Division) Forest Department, Talland, Shimla, H.P.
17.	Sh. Kamaraj Kaisth	Principal Scientific Officer, State Council for Science, Tech.& Environment.
18.	Ms. Malini	Information Officer, Dept. of I&PR, H.P.
19.	Sh. Ravi Sharma	Senior Scientific Assistant, State Council for Science, Tech.& Environment.