

## PROCEEDINGS

**The 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of "State Level Steering Committee on Wetlands" held on 18-07-2017 at 11 a.m. under the Chairmanship of Sh. V.C. Pharka, IAS, Chief Secretary to the Govt. of Himachal Pradesh.**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of State Level Steering Committee on Wetlands was held on 18.07.2017 in the Chief Secretary's Committee Room, H.P. Secretariat, Shimla under the Chairmanship of Sh. V.C. Pharka, Chief Secretary to the Govt. of H.P.-cum-Chairman, State Level Steering Committee on Wetlands. The list of participants is annexed as Annexure-I.

At the outset of the meeting, Smt. Archana Sharma, Member Secretary, H.P. State Council for Science, Technology & Environment, (HIMCOSTE) welcomed the Chairman, Vice Chairman, members of the steering committee and special expert invitees.

Thereafter, Sh. Kunal Satyarthi made a presentation on the status of Wetland Programme in Himachal Pradesh. He apprised the Committee that the H.P. State Council for Science, Technology & Environment, (HIMCOSTE), Shimla is the nodal agency for Wetland Conservation & Management Programme since 1989 in the State and steers the whole program through a 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, District Administration, State Pollution Control Board, Himachal Pradesh University, Research Institutes (INRM, New Delhi) & NGOs' etc. He apprised the committee that five wetlands namely Renukaji (Sirmour), Pong Dam (Kangra), Chandertal (Lahaul & Spiti) [Ramsar Sites] and Khajjiar (Chamba) & Rewalsar (Mandi) wetlands have been taken up for Conservation & Management by the Govt. of H.P. under National Plan for Conservation of Aquatic Eco Systems (NPCA) of Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MOEF& CC), Govt. of India.

Sh. Satyarthi apprised the members that during the year 2016-17 funds have been received under National Plan for Conservation of Aquatic Eco Systems (NPCA) of National River Conservation Directorate (NRCD) for Rewalsar, Khajjiar & Chandertal wetlands. The HIMCOSTE will also submit the Management Action Plan proposals to the MOEF&CC, Gol for Pong and Renuka wetlands for the year 2017-18 after approval of the Steering Committee. The committee was also apprised that a GIZ, TCP Project for funding of four Ramsar Sites in India including Pong &



Renuka wetlands in H.P is at an advanced stage of commissioning. The total cost of the project with duration of four years would be Rs.28.00 Crore.

Thereafter, Sh. Kunal Satyarthi made the presentation of agenda items.

#### **Agenda item-1**

He apprised the Committee on the status/ action taken report (ATR) of the decisions taken in 2<sup>nd</sup> State Steering Committee meeting held on 29-4-2013 (Annexure-II). He informed that the Council has submitted the approved ten years (2013-14 to 2022-23) MAPs proposals of Renuka wetland (5.01 crores), Pong wetland (245 crores), Chandertal wetland (1.39 crores), Khajjiar wetland (6.14 crores) & Rewalsar wetland (7.03 crores) to the MOEF&CC, Gol for funding vide letter number SCSTE/4113-4113 A in the year 2013.

Regarding the Issue of submission of MAP of Ranjit Sagar Dam wetland, it was apprised that the MAPs have been asked from the concerned Conservator of Forests, Chamba, DFO Dalhousie & DFO Churah and they are still awaited from the Forest Department.

On the issue of inclusion of new wetlands viz. Bhrgu (Kullu), Seruvalsar Lake (Kullu), Nako (Kinnaur), Parashar (Mandi), Manimehesh (Chamba) and Chandernaun lakes (Shimla), the Committee was apprised that the proposals of Bhrgu (Kullu), Nako (Kinnaur), Parashar (Mandi) & Manimehesh (Chamba) have been received from the Forest Department and submitted to the Administrative department for further necessary action.

On this issue the consensus was that it would be better to strengthen conservation activities in the existing five wetlands being funded rather than declaring new wetlands. It was also pointed out that the most of the proposed wetlands are treated as sacred by people who have religious sentiments attached with them and even have traditional rights over these wetlands. It was felt that human interference in these wetlands is very minimal and special interventions may not be required for these wetlands. Moreover, if any specific intervention is required for these wetlands, a consultative meet with all stake holders should be organised before taking any conservation measures.

Regarding the funding pattern, it was apprised that the MOEF&CC, Govt. of India has released the funds in the ratio of 90:10. Accordingly the Planning Department of the State has to provide the State share and release the funds to the Nodal agency. The Chairman directed that the matter be immediately taken up with the Planning Department which shall release the State share on priority basis according to the funding pattern.

### Agenda Item-2 &3

The Committee was briefed on the status of past activities/intervention of each of the above five wetlands. The nodal agency has received and released funds as follows:

S.No	Name of the Wetland	Year of start of funding from MOEF&CC	Total funds received/released so far to the State Govt.	Agencies involved
1	Renuka ji Wetland	1989	Rs. 220.41 lakhs	Forest Department, Geological wing of Industries department, Himachal Pradesh University, District Administration; Research institutes
2	Pong Dam wetland	1994-95	Rs.231.23 lakhs	
3	Chandertal wetland	1997-98	Rs. 36.74 lakhs (during 2016-17 released amount Rs.10.36 lacs (Rs.13.00 lacs sanctioned amount))	
4	Khajjiar wetland	2007-08	Rs.13.00 lakhs (during 2016-17 released amount Rs.48.00 lacs (Rs.163.95 lacs sanctioned amount))	
5	Rewalsar wetland	2007-08	Rs.25.84 lakhs (during 2016-17 released amount Rs.36.00 lacs (Rs.53.33 lacs sanctioned amount))	

### Agenda item-4

Thereafter, The Committee was apprised about the activity components of Chandertal, Khajjiar & Rewalsar wetlands which have been sanctioned by the MOEF&CC during the year 2016-17 (revalidated for 2017-18)

(i) Sh. Sanjay Dhiman, Divisional Forest Officer (WI), Chamba made the presentation of Khajjiar wetland management action plan for the year 2017-18. He appraised the Chairman about the approved activities under the plan 2016-17 (revalidated for 2017-18). During discussion, reservation was expressed on the construction of cement concrete check dams. It was suggested that this activity should be replaced by other eco friendly measures. The encroachment in the Khajjiar wetland catchment also emerged as a matter of concern. It was suggested to the District Administration and Forest Department to mark their boundaries so that the encroachment (past as well as present) in the area may be checked properly. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forest, H.P. suggested that the level of the existing check dams should be raised rather constructing new check dams. The Committee approved the activities sanctioned by MOEF&CC during 2016-17



(revalidated for 2017-18) and Management Action plan of Khajjiar wetland for the year 2017-18.

The Management Action Plan for the 2017-18 for the Khajjiar wetland was approved by the Committee, subject to incorporation of the above suggestions/changes.

Dr. Brij Gopal, expert wetlands, HOD (Retd.), Ecology Division, J.N.U., New Delhi also shared his study about the Khajjiar wetland. He laid emphasis on the fact that the drainage system should be proper. He also quoted the study of Sh. Birbal Sahani which was done in the year 1920. The current flora is the same as it was mentioned in the report. Sh. Tarun Kapoor, Vice-Chairman of the committee suggested that before undertaking the activities in the area, the opinion of experts, stakeholders, other departments should be taken. The H.P. State Council for Science, Technology & Environment (HIMCOSTE) would organize a sensitization workshop in collaboration of Chief Conservator of Forest (WI), Dharmshala to take the opinion of the experts, stakeholders, other departments etc.

Regarding the preparation of wetland Atlas, the consensus was that the Wetland Atlas should emphasis on the details of five wetlands Pong Dam, Renuka, Chandertal, Khajjiar & Rewalsar wetlands.

(ii) Sh. D.S. Dadwal, Divisional Forest Officer (HQ), Dharmshala made the presentation of Pong dam wetland management action plan for the year 2017-18. He explained the issues like Fishing needs to be regulated, upper limit of fishermen, identification of non-fishing areas, use of undersize fishing nets etc, illegal cultivation to be banned, biotic-pressure on ground breeding sites, lack of demarcated boundary & ownership of land, land tenure issues, destruction of the Beas Catchment, soil erosion and siltation, illegal grazing by nomadic gujjars to be banned - 20,000 cattle (6,000 of nomads), lack of co-ordination among stakeholders / line departments. BBMB/Forest/ Fisheries/Tourism/ Mountaineering (water sports)/Distt. Administration etc.

Sh. Dadwal also explained the suggestive interventions which can be taken in MAPs 2017-18 like species specific habitat improvement, providing Battery /Solar driven Boats, all weather operated vehicles and Bi-cycles to visitors beyond entry gates through "Pong BioDCS", extension of education and awareness programme of stakeholders and visitors about wetland ecology and Wild life, training as Guides, boatmen, catering etc, encouraging home-stay. Survey & Demarcation of boundary, creating Wildlife tourism points- like in Rancer Island, Nagrota Surian, Dam site & Dehra by creation of tourist huts and tenting platforms.



After detailed discussion, it was felt that there should be a zoning/mapping of wetlands to undertake such types of activities. It was also considered appropriate that before taking any interventions, there should be a joint meeting with other line departments like District Administration, Fisheries, Tourism, Youth & Sports, Agriculture, Rural Development, BBMB, local people etc coordinated by HIMCOSTE so that they may know about each others proposed interventions in the Pong Dam wetland which would also result in checking duplication of works and conflict of interest. It was also suggested that the experts opinion should also be taken while executing the management action plans. The Committee approved the management Action plan of Pong Dam wetland with a total outlay of Rs.3.11crore for the year 2017-18 for further submission to MOEF&CC, Gol for funding.

(iii) Sh. Rajesh Sharma, Divisional Forest Officer (WL), Shimla made presentation on Renuka wetland management action plan 2017-18. He highlighted some of the important issues like soil erosion and siltation, anthropogenic pressures, destruction of the catchment, fish feeding, lack of co-ordination between stake holders and line departments, eutrophication etc. He informed that the interventions like soil conservation works, annual distillation, checking eutrophication, tourism management (religious), co-ordination among various departments, landscaping, removal of weeds, construction of basic tourist amenities, development of nature trails, signage and interpretation activities, Scientific study for baseline data, water quality analysis & silt load study are required under the Management Action plan of Renuka wetland.

Dr. Ritesh Kumar, expert from Wetland international South Asia, New Delhi suggested that the fish feeding should be checked in the wetland which is causing overcrowding of fish. It was decided that H.P. State Council for Science, Technology & Environment (HIMCOSTE) in collaboration with District Administration would hold a stakeholders and experts consultation meet to discuss the issue and opinion of experts may also be taken before executing the activities. The Committee approved the management Action plan of Renuka wetland with a total outlay of Rs.41.25 lacs for the year 2017-18 for further submission to MOEF&CC, Gol for funding.

(iv) Sh. Rajiv Sharma, Divisional Forest Officer (WL), Spiti made a presentation on management action plan of Chandertal wetland (2016-17 revalidated for 2017-18). He elaborated the issues of concern especially Soil erosion & Silting, Management of migratory graziers & local graziers in fringes, management of tourist influx, camping site, awareness & garbage management. He informed about the



suggestive interventions required in the Chandertal catchment being catchment area treatment-silting- bare minimum soil conservation works where silting is taking place, supplementing lively hood-management of graziers- with the help of animal husbandry vaccination of sheep's & local cattles, improvement of pastures by broad cast sowing of indigenous seeds of grasses and awareness etc.

After detailed discussion, the consensus was that there should be minimum need based catchment treatment in Chandertal wetland and emphasis should be laid on mass education programmes through local schools students, Eco clubs members to sensatise the tourists and other people during open season. The information with Do & Dont's hoardings should be placed at the prominent places to make visitors aware. Special cleanliness campaigns and sensitisation campaigns should be organised in the camping sites. Garbage should be collected and managed properly in the wetland periphery. It was felt that the areas near Batal and Losar should be developed so that tourist stay pressure at Chandertal wetland can be reduced to some extent which will further help in management of Chandertal wetland. The Committee approved the activities sanctioned by MOEF&CC during 2016-17 (revalidated for 2017-18) and Management Action plan of Chandertal wetland for the year 2017-18.

(v) Mr. Rakesh Kumar, Divisional Forest Officer, Mandi made his presentation on management action plan of Rewalsar wetland. He said the issues like silt load into the lake, natural water source conservation, death of the fish, growth of invasive species damaged peripheral drainage system, tourist management are great concern with respect to Rewalsar wetland. He presented short and long term interventions for the conservation and management of Rewalsar wetland. Repair and cleaning of outer drainage system, solid waste management and garbage disposal, ban or regulation of fish feeding, regular shifting of overpopulation of fish by technically competent agency, regular awareness camps among stakeholders could be the short term measures and soil and water conservation measures to reduce the silt load, plantation of bio-engineering species along nallas, plantation of broad leaved trees particularly ban (on notional ha. basis) to increase water percolation and natural water flow into the lake, restoration / rejuvenation of natural water sources could be the long term measures to manage the Rewalsar wetland.

The Committee felt that repair & maintenance of existing drainage system is very important to check the silt problem & pollution in the wetland. The repair works should be taken on priority basis. It was also decided that H.P. State Council for Science, Technology & Environment (HIMCOSTE) in collaboration with District



Administration would hold a meeting with all stakeholders and take the experts' opinion.

Sh. Ajeet Kumar, SEE, from H.P. State Pollution control Board informed the Committee the Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD) level of the wetland is decreasing due to large inputs of organic matters in the wetland. He told that the district administration has planned to oxygenate the water with some mechanical measures. On this issue Sh. Tarun Kapoor, Vice Chairman of the Committee suggested that some natural measures should be identified rather than to take mechanical measures to oxygenate the wetland water. The re-appropriation of components like desilting, deweeding & maintenance of drainage system (Nagar Panchayat has also received the funds from Govt. for channelization and maintenance of drainage system in the wetland) was discussed and Committee approved to strengthen the plantation of Bioengineering species along the nullah, soil conservation works and plantation of broadleaf species.

#### **Agenda item-5**

- (i) The committee was appraised on the issue of non-receipt of Rs.8.50 lacs (Rs.7.70 lacs+Rs.0.80 lacs) from the H.P. Govt. The funds were released by MOEF&CC, Gol during 2008-09 under the Management Action Plan (MAP) of Renuka wetland. The Ministry has asked to submit the details of previous released funds viz utilisation certificate or surrender the funds to enable them for further release of funds during 2017-18 under the Renuka wetland conservation management plan. The Chairman suggested the nodal agency to take-up the matter with H.P. finance department to refund the unutilised funds of Rs.7.70 lacs (H.P Finance Department) and Rs.0.80 lakh (SCSTE) to MOEF& CC, Gol for further funding during 2017-18.
- (ii) The Committee was appraised about the funds released pattern in case of Chandertal wetland during the 2016-17. The MOEF&CC, Gol has released funds in the ratio of 80:20 in case of Chandertal wetland whereas for Khajjiar & Rewalsar in the ratio 90:10. It was proposed that this variation of 80:20 (released) against the norms of 90:10 may be allowed in case of Chandertal wetland to be implemented, if MoEF& CC doesn't change the norms. It was decided that the MOEF&CC may be requested to release the funds in similar pattern as in case of other wetlands i.e 90:10 ratio.

**Agenda item -6**

Sh. Kunal Satyarthi, Joint Member Secretary, SCSTE presented an agenda for inclusion of three NGOs' and three National level reputed experts on wetland studies as Committee/Authority members. The suggestive names of national level experts were Dr. Suhas Khobragade, National Institute of Hydrology, Roorkee, Dr. Ainul Hussain, Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun, Dr. A.R Rahmani, Former Director, BNHS, Mumbai and for NGOs' (local & National) were Centre for Inland Water in South Asia, Jaipur (Prof. Brij Gopal ( Retd, HOD), JNU, New Delhi), Wetland International South Asia, New Delhi, (Dr. Ritesh Kumar, Conservation programme Manager) & WWF-India, BCS, Shimla (Mrs. Arti Gupta). The Committee approved the names of national level experts & NGOs' as Committee/Authority members as suggested.

**Agenda item -7**

The agenda to utilise the flexi funds/contingency amount allocated under different wetlands conservation plans for monitoring, review meetings, TA/DA, project Manpower. The Committee approved to utilise the flexi funds/contingency amount allocated under different wetlands conservation plans as under:

S.No	Component	Amount( Rs.)
1	Review meetings/workshop expenditure	50,000/-
2	Monitoring expenditure, Expert visit (TA/DA of experts, staff, transportation/taxi etc.)	50,000/-
3	Project Manpower- Project Associate (Rs.15000 p.m.)	2,00,000/-
4	Other Misc. expenditure	21,000/-
	Total	3,21,000/-

**Agenda item-8**

The Committee was apprised about integrated hydrological investigations of Renuka lake, Himachal Pradesh, for its conservation and management. The study will be taken jointly by H.P. State Council for Science, Technology & Environment & NIH, Roorkee. The objectives of the study is to assess the environmental health of the lake through assessment of its water quality, to understand the hydrological regime of the lake through analysis of its water balance, estimate sedimentation rate and expected life of the lake, determine the causes of quantitative and qualitative degradation of the lake, suggest measures for conservation and management of the lake. The total cost of the project is Rs.75.31



lacs. The Project has been submitted to Department of Science & Technology, Govt. of India for funding by the HIMCOSTE. The Committee felt it appropriate that the project report should also be shared with forest department and other stakeholders after its sanction.

#### **Agenda item-9**

The agenda regarding Constitution of State Wetland Authority by the State Government under Wetland (Conservation and Management) Rules 2017 was presented in the meeting. The Committee approved to constitute the State Wetland Authority with small change that the Hon'ble Chief Minister should be the Chairman and Minister Incharge of Department of Environment/ Forests of the State Government be the Vice Chairman of the committee. The Secretary Finance to the Govt. of H.P. should be the member of the Committee/Authority.


#### **Agenda item-10**

Sh. Kunal Satyarthi apprised the members about the Writ Petition (Civil) No 230 of 2001: M.K. Balakrishnan & Union of India & Ors before the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India-regarding auditing of the accounts of Ramsar Sites (Pongdam, Renuka & Chandertal wetlands) and others issues with respect to the wetlands are subjudice in Hon'ble National Green Tribunal & Hon'ble High Court of Himachal Pradesh including constitution of State Wetlands Authority under Wetlands (Conservation & Management) Rules, 2017 and notification of State wetlands (under the ibid rules).

#### **Any Other Agenda item**

Dr. Brij Gopal suggested that the new wetlands notification under wetland rules are important and would help in protection and management of these wetlands in perpetuity. Dr. Ritesh Kumar, Programme Manager, Wetland International South Asia suggested that the quality and quantity studies of the wetland should be taken for the assessment of the health of the wetland on periodic basis. It was accordingly decided to study the wetland parameters.

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

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