

MINUTES of the technical workshop to discuss the wetland (conservation and management) Rules 2010 held from 1-2nd February at Bharatpur

A technical workshop to discuss the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2010 notified on 4th December 2010 was organized at Salim Ali Visitor Interpretation Centre in Keoladeo National Park from 1st-2nd February, 2011.

The workshop started with a warm welcome to the participants by Park Director, Mr. Anoop K.R. The workshop was inaugurated by the Chief Guest Sh. M.F. Farooqui, Additional Secretary, MoEF with lighting of lamp.

Dr. S. Kaul, Advisor, MoEF gave brief objectives of the workshop highlighting the issues to be discussed during the workshop.

The Chairman in his inaugural address highlighted the issues related to Wetland Conservation and Management Rules, 2010 and emphasized on recognition of wetlands because of providing various ecosystem services. Giving brief background of elaborative consultative process for drafting these rules he pointed out issues which could not be sorted out with Ministry of Law and as such regulatory process at central level with approval of legal Ministry was finalized which has resulted in notification of the present rules under Environment Protection Act 1986.

The Chairman also mentioned about international decade of biodiversity, international year of forestry, value of mangroves, COP - 11 of CBD to be hosted by India etc. He also suggested that if good project are made there is no problem funding them. He gave example of Biodiversity related project in a conceptual form which was well received by the World Bank. In future issues related wetland biodiversity can also be included for such funding.

Thereafter, he asked for the inputs from the participants on –

- Any shortfalls in the recently issued management rules where state governments are not comfortable with.
- Issues which need to be redressed.
- Problems facing execution of these rules at the ground level.
- How to make these rules effective so that wetlands are not used beyond their carrying capacity.

After that a presentation was made by Dr. S. Kaul, Advisor, MoEF on National Wetland Scenario. He talked about wetland definition, characteristic of wetlands, criteria for identification of Ramsar Site, Classification of National Wetland Conservation Programme State wise, Ramsar Convention, its importance, overall area occupied by 25 Ramsar Sites in India and global classification of Ramsar Sites from different regions. Thereafter he touched issues related to effective conservation which involved strong institutional mechanism, process of inventorization, capacity building, role of communities, economic valuation, sharing of information and importance of linkages and synergies with other related conventions. He also emphasized on effective monitoring mechanism. He tucked issues about National Environment policy 2006 which resulted in framing of these rules and activities to be taken up with approval of regulatory authority and restricted authorities act these were explained in details. Emphasis was laid on Central Authority constitution, its

function and what is expected from the state governments in regard to regulatory functions. In the end he summed up by giving information about various achievements in the past, both at National as well as International level in relation to wetland conservation.

Thereafter, all members gave their introduction. This was followed up by discussions on the presentations in respect of these rules. Presentations were also given by representatives from West Bengal Government, Andhra Pradesh Government and WWF- India. After elaborate debate on various issues by the delegates following points emerged:

- State Governments to invariably prepare comprehensive document within three months listing out all the wetlands in the state which are covered under the notification with details on geographic delineation, zone of influence, size and account of pre-existing rights and privileges.
- Identify nodal agencies along with nodal officers.
- Constitute committees at the state level to assist the nodal department in the state government for effective implementation of the rules.
- States also to prepare conservation and management plans (CMP) covering local issues for consideration of central authority after notification of a wetland in question. The powers available under section 4(2) and 4(3) can only be exercised if such CMP is approved. The state government will approve the CMP. In the absence of the approved CMP the rules as notified on December 4th 2010 will apply in toto.
- Wetlands to be declared as eco-sensitive zones for better regulation.
- There is need for redressal of water policy and in the exercise of revision of water policy by Water Resource Ministry. Issues related to wetlands to be taken up at Ministerial level so that it is incorporated in the new text.
- Water allocation to be a part of State Water Policy so that all sectors get adequate amount of water including wetlands.
- Revenue records to be re-inventorised so that they do not show wetlands as wasteland as per old records.
- All wetland related information after compilation to be put on website for the benefit of all user agencies.
- Checklist of wetlands to be prepared and circulated to all State Governments.
- India to bid for hosting of 12th COP of Ramsar Convention meeting in India.
- At least 10 Ramsar Site to be put up for designation after collecting appropriate information by 12th COP.
- Some mechanism needs to be devised for timely release of funds for wetland conservation to various state govt. & So that funds are directly released to the implementing agency as otherwise they are bifurcated to different sectors at the state level.
- Inventorisation of wetland from those states which are not covered up on project mode to have inventorisation of all wetlands in the country state wise.
- At least two State Governments to be represented in the central wetland regulatory authority on rotational basis to share their concerns.
- Guidance manual to be framed for convenience of user agencies and a format to be developed for various conservation activities on uniform pattern all over the country.

State specific issues to be taken up separately with the concerned states which involve reducing of contour levels from +5 to +3 in Kolleru lake in Andhra Pradesh and dumping of solid waster/sewage in wetlands of West Bengal or issues related to any other state which need in depth examination. These issues need to be discussed in detail with the concerned state govt. officials.

Meeting ended with vote of thanks to the chair.

List of Participants

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