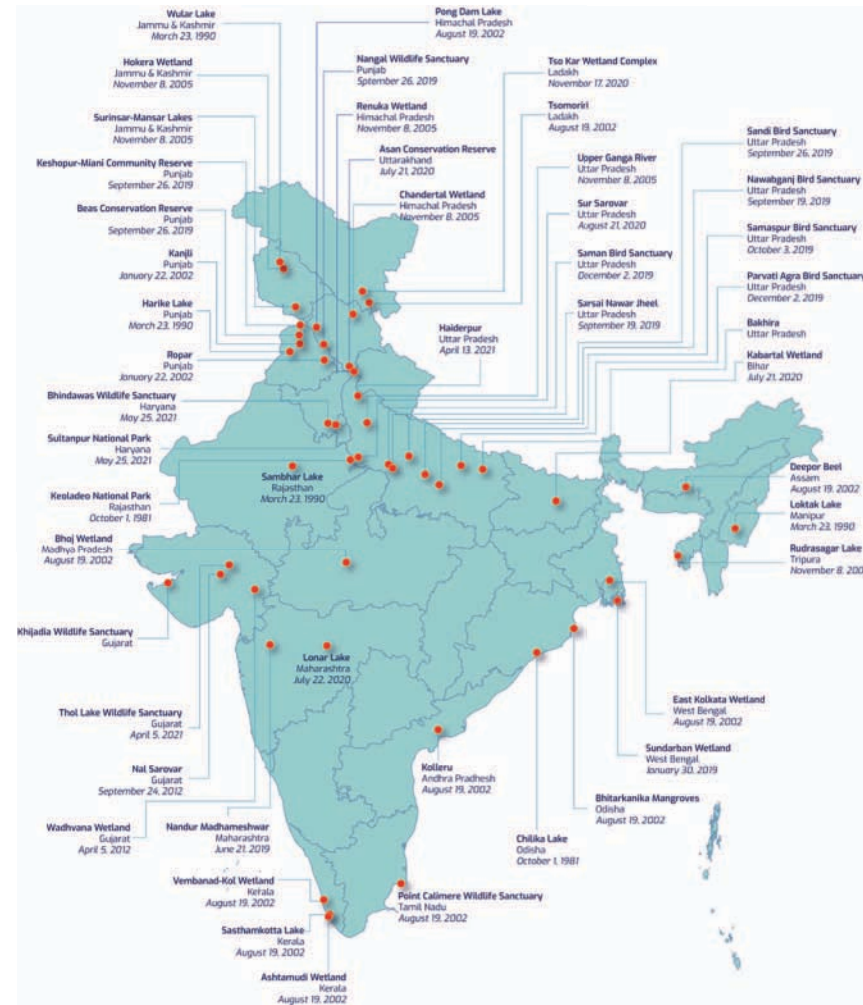


RAMSAR SITES OF INDIA

India has the largest network of Ramsar Sites in South Asia

The MoEFCC has designated 49 wetlands, spanning 1.09 ha, to the List of Wetlands of International Importance. The vision of creating the list is to 'develop and maintain an international network of wetlands which are important for the conservation of global biological diversity and for sustaining human life through the maintenance of their ecosystem components, processes and benefits/services'

Designating wetlands to Ramsar site network is an affirmation of the India's commitment towards 'maintenance of ecological character', also referred to as wise-use.



The Indian Ramsar List includes diverse wetlands, ranging from...

Himalayan high altitude wetlands

Tso Kar Wetland Complex, Tso-moriri and Chandertal

Lakes and marshes

Wular, Hokera, Renuka, Keoladeo, Kolleru, Loktak, Deepor, Rudrasagar, Nalsarovar, Samaspur, Parvati Arga, Sarsai Nawar, Sandi, Saman, Sur-Sarovar, Nawabganj, Lonar, Kabartal, Keshopur Miani and Sasthamkotta, Thol, Bindhawas, Sultanpur, Wadhvana, Haidarpur, Khejadia Wildlife Sanctuary, Bakhira Wildlife Sanctuary

River stretches

Upper Ganga River stretch, Beas Conservation Reserve and Kanjili

Salinas

Tso Kar Wetland Complex, Tso-moriri and Chandertal

Mangrove swamps

Sunderbans, Bhitarkanika and Point Calimere

Lagoons and estuaries

Chilika, Ashtamudi and Vembanad-Kol

Assemblages of sewage fed fish farms

East Calcutta Wetlands

Water storage areas

Pong, Bhoj Wetlands, Nangal and Surinsar-Mansar

and

Barrages

Asan, Nandur Madhmeshwar, Ropar



THE WETLAND PLEDGE

The following wetland pledge, reminding citizens of their fundamental duties towards wetlands, is aimed at securing their participation and stewardship in conservation and management efforts. Over 10,000 individuals have taken this pledge so far, and the number continues to grow.

We have volunteered as Wetland Mitras to keep our wetlands healthy. We recognize that wetlands play a vital role in social, economic and environmental well being.

We understand that the degradation of wetlands by encroachment, disposal of solid and liquid waste and overuse of resources has impacted the health of people, nature and our diverse biodiversity.

We recognize and uphold that collective and individual efforts shall bring a positive change towards wetland conservation.

We pledge to take necessary actions and join hands with different stakeholders to protect and conserve our wetlands.

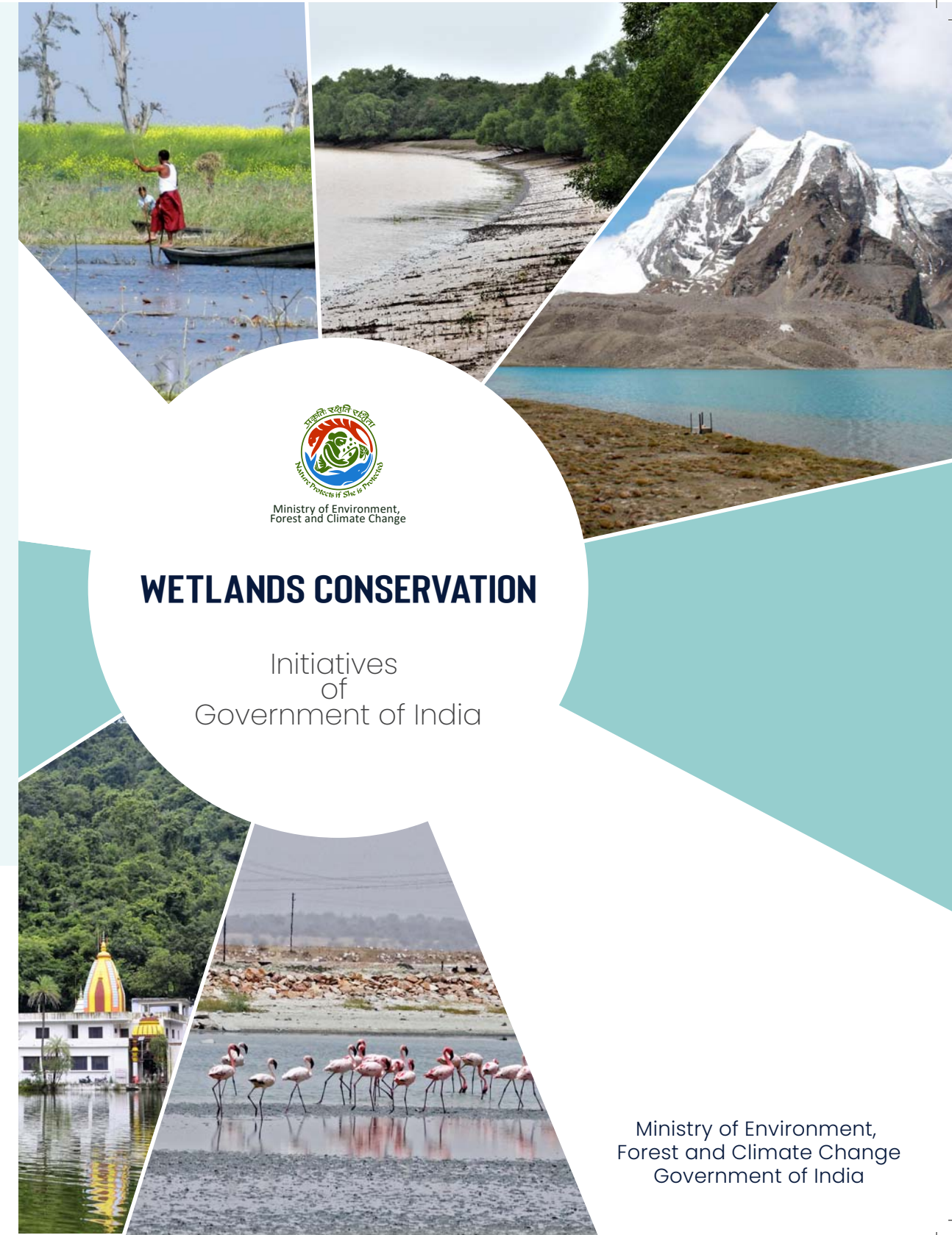
We shall keep the wetlands free from solid and liquid waste, create awareness and motivate others to join this endeavour.

We are proud to be Wetland Mitras.

Our Wetlands, Our Heritage.

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Ministry of Environment,
Forest and Climate Change

WETLANDS CONSERVATION

Initiatives
of
Government of India

Ministry of Environment,
Forest and Climate Change
Government of India

WETLANDS

Wetlands are ecosystems at the interface of land and water.

The Ramsar Convention, an intergovernmental treaty on wetlands, defines these ecosystems as 'Areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tides does not exceed six meters'

India, owing to the extremes of climatic, geological and topographic diversity, is endowed by a rich diversity of wetlands ranging from high altitude lakes in the Himalayas, marshes and swamps in the Terai, floodplains and ox-bows in the Gangetic-Brahmaputra alluvial plains, saline flats in the Great Indian Desert, tanks and reservoirs in the Deccan region and extensive mangrove marshes and coral reef areas interspersed along the country's over 8,000 km long coastline. These ecosystems range in areas from small village ponds (having areas less than an acre) to large lagoons such as Chilika and

Vembanad backwaters having expanse of over a thousand square kilometer.

As per the National Wetlands Atlas, India has 15.26 million ha under wetlands, accounting for nearly 4.6 % of her geographical area. India is home to a wide variety and a myriad number of wetlands, accounting around 4.7% of the total geographical area of the country.

ECOSYSTEM SERVICES AND BIODIVERSITY VALUES

Wetlands are important societal assets and referred to as 'cradles of human civilization', and 'kidneys of landscape.' Some of the major societal benefits (ecosystem services) and biodiversity values are as follows:



Serve as a principal source of fresh water such as drinking and water for irrigation.



Purify water by locking up pollutants, heavy metals in their sediments and vegetation.



Have deep connections with our culture and traditions, providing avenues for recreation and tourism



Act as a 'natural storage reservoirs' enabling excess water to spread out over a wide area and reducing its impact its depth and speed, thus acting as buffers for floods and droughts.



Provide a range of plants, animal and minerals for human use. Rice and fish are some of the key wetland products that sustain humanity.



Serve as habitats for over 1200 plant and 18000 animal species, including several of high conservation value locally, nationally and globally



Mangroves, coral reefs and sea grass beds help mitigate the impacts of tropical cyclones and tsunami, as well as stabilize shorelines



Mangroves and salt marshes acts as natural carbon sinks by storing atmospheric greenhouse gases and help in mitigating climate changes impacts



Provide stopovers for thousands of migratory bird species for resting, feeding and breeding during their journey of miles to avoid harsh winters of the temperate region.

WETLAND CONSERVATION POLICY AND PROGRAMMING

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change is the nodal ministry for wetlands. Wetland conservation draws strength from India's rich legacy of environmental conservation enshrined in various policies, legislations and regulatory regimes.

The Indian Constitution encapsulates this spirit, notably in its Article 51-A (g) stating that "it shall be the duty of every citizen of India to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife and to have compassion for living creatures."

The National Environment Policy of 2006 lays down specific policy elements for wetlands. Wetlands have been identified as components of 'freshwater resources', and the recommended

policy actions for wetlands conservation include integration in developmental planning, management based on prudent use strategies, promotion of ecotourism, and implementation of a regulatory framework. The India's National Wildlife Action Plan (2017-2031) identifies conservation of inland aquatic ecosystems as one of the 17 priority areas, and envisages development of a national wetlands mission and a national wetlands biodiversity register as key interventions. The National Action Plan for Climate Change includes wetland conservation and sustainable management in the National Water Mission and the Green India Mission.

The MoEFCC established a national programme on wetlands in 1986 for assisting state governments for implementing management plans for prioritized wetlands. The national wetlands programme is currently known as the National Programme for Conservation of Aquatic Ecosystems (NPCA) and has subsumed the programme on

urban wetlands. As of December 2021, over 250 wetlands have been covered under these national programmes.

Wetlands receive protection from a number of central enacted rules and regulation. Provisions of the Indian Forest Act, 1927, the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 and the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 define the regulatory framework for wetlands located within forests and designated protected areas. Similarly, in 2017, the Ministry notified the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules under The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 (EP Act). As per the provisions of these Rules, State Wetlands Authorities have been constituted as the main policy and regulatory bodies within states.

A remote sensing based national wetlands inventory provides the spatial data framework for policy making and programming. The National Wetland Atlas has been prepared by the Space Application Centre using satellite imagery on 1:50,000 scale.

A national portal on wetlands has been launched in 2021 as an information hub on wetlands for wetland authorities and site managers, administrators, decision-makers and also students and citizens. The portal currently has information on Wetlands inventories; Health cards of more than 500 wetlands; Management information hub for regulation and management; and Resource and e-learning material.

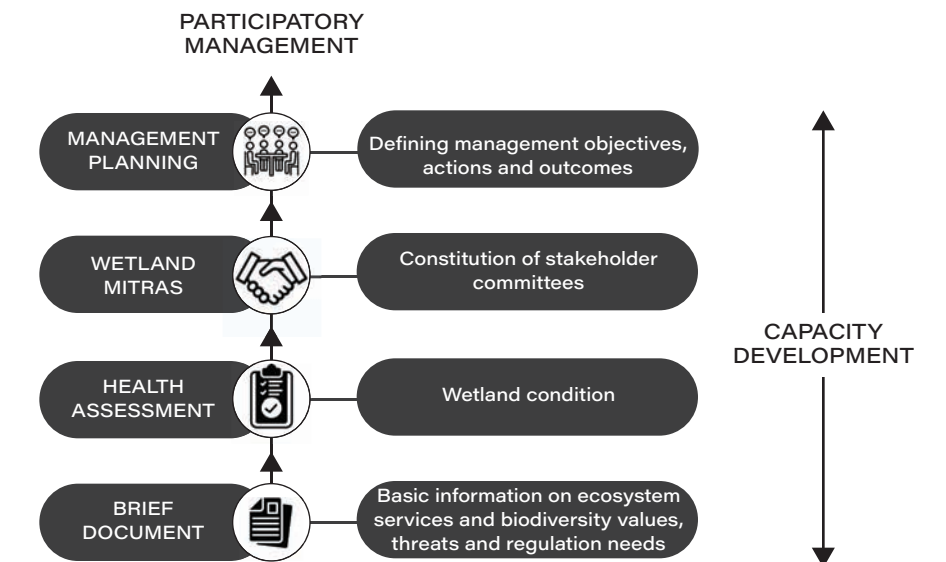
To strengthen the capacity of wetland managers and stakeholders for effective management of wetlands, the Ministry also provides technical handholding through workshops and review meetings. Training programmes, regional and national workshops have been organized.



WETLANDS REJUVENATION – FOUR PRONGED APPROACH

Under the framework of 169 transformative ideas of the Government of India, a four four-pronged approach for the rejuvenation of wetlands has been developed, with an objective of: "initiating work on restoration and rejuvenation of at least 100 major wetlands across the country". Systematic restoration and rejuvenation of 130 wetlands have been initiated using the four-pronged approach, which includes:

- Developing baseline information in the form of 'Wetland Brief Documents'
- Rapid assessment of wetlands condition using a simple 'Wetland Health Card'
- Stakeholder platforms to enable collaborative and participatory management in the form of 'Wetlands Mitra' networks for each wetland.
- Management planning addressing wetlands' biodiversity and ecosystem services, values and threats.



INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

India ratified the Convention on Wetlands, known as the Ramsar Convention in 1982. The Convention provides a framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. As a contracting party, India is committed to the three pillars: a) designating wetlands to the List of Wetlands of International Importance; b) working towards the wise use of wetlands, and c) cooperating internationally on transboundary wetlands, shared wetlands and shared species.

The Ministry is also working in partnership with bilateral and multilateral organizations for improving wetlands management in India. Currently two projects are active with international stakeholders

- Wetlands Management for Biodiversity and Climate Protection-Commissioned by German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, and Nuclear Safety (BMU) under International Climate Initiative (IKI).
- Integrated Management of Wetland Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services-with support of Global Environment Facility (GEF) and UN Environment Programme.

International cooperation projects help in strengthening the capacities and institutional framework for wetlands' management, monitoring as well as effective implementation of the NPCA.