

**SAVE  
WETLANDS  
CAMPAIGN**



# **REPORT OF REGIONAL SAHBHAGITA WORKSHOP ON CONSERVATION AND WISE USE OF WETLANDS FOR NORTHERN STATES**

**AYODHYA, UTTAR PRADESH | 01 FEBRUARY 2025**

# Report on the Regional Sahbhagita Workshop for Restoration and Integrated Management of Wetlands for Northern States under Mission Sahbhagita on 01<sup>st</sup> February 2025 at Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh

## Introduction

On the eve of World Wetlands Day 2025, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) organized a regional workshop for Northern States on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2025. This event brought together representatives from nine States and Union Territories (UTs) including, Delhi, Chandigarh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Punjab, Uttarakhand, and Uttar Pradesh alongside Wetland Managers, Wetland Mitras, Knowledge Partners of MoEF&CC and private sector organizations. A detailed list of participants and selected photographs are **annexed**. The workshop marked the fourth this financial year in a series of regional workshops under the *Sahbhagita* Mission, following similar events held in Hyderabad, Kolkata, and Gangtok. The workshop provided a platform to foster collaboration among the States/UTs, MoEF&CC, and other stakeholders to enhance wetland conservation and management. The focus was to exchange innovative approaches and experiences in the management of wetlands across North India.



## Inaugural Session:

The event commenced with the lighting of the lamp by the distinguished dignitaries, followed by the welcome address delivered by Dr. Ramesh Motipalli, Scientist 'F', MoEF&CC, who set the context for the workshop.

Shri Rajat Agarwal, Joint Secretary, MoEF&CC, provided a national perspective on wetlands conservation and management, connecting with his personal experience and emphasizing the crucial role of participatory conservation under Mission Sahbhagita. Describing wetlands as the

"kidneys of the landscape," he highlighted their ecological and cultural significance, while acknowledging growing threats from degradation, pollution, and encroachment. He underscored the progress made through initiatives like the Save Wetlands Campaign, which has inter-alia, sensitized over two million people, completed ground trothing of 1,10,000 wetlands, and Amrit Dharohar, launched in 2023, promoting species conservation, nature tourism, wetland-based livelihoods and wetlands carbon. With 89 Ramsar Sites, India now leads Asia and ranks third globally. Reflecting on India's journey in wetlands conservation, he reaffirmed the Ministry's commitment to strengthening institutional frameworks and expanding conservation efforts through stakeholder collaboration and private sector engagement, ensuring a sustainable future for these vital ecosystems.

Smt. Anuradha Vemuri, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests & Chief Wildlife Warden, emphasized the need for a collaborative approach to wetlands conservation, urging governments, communities, and stakeholders to work together in protecting and restoring these vital ecosystems. She highlighted the importance of legal frameworks, scientific research, community involvement, and sustainable practices in wetland management. Stressing the need to restore degraded wetlands, she urged stakeholders to recognize wetlands as critical to biodiversity, beyond being just water bodies. In conclusion, she called for continued efforts, better policies, and resource allocation to ensure the long-term resilience of India's wetlands.

The keynote address was delivered by Shri Kirti Vardhan Singh, Hon'ble Minister of State for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, emphasizing the importance of concerted efforts toward wetlands conservation. He highlighted that India's wetlands are as diverse as the cultures they support, reflecting the rich geographical, ecological, and cultural tapestry of the nation. He emphasized the growing recognition of wetlands as potential eco-tourism hubs, citing locations like Pong Dam in Himachal Pradesh and Wular Lake in Jammu and Kashmir, which attract birdwatchers and nature enthusiasts worldwide. Shri Kirti Vardhan Singh highlighted the importance of enhancing the management of wetlands in the country and specifically in northern Uttar Pradesh. He recognized the ecological value of these sites, noting their potential not only for biodiversity preservation but also for driving local economic development through sustainable practices such as eco-tourism, nature-based livelihoods, and community-driven restoration efforts. Shri Kirti Vardhan Singh emphasised the need for restoring the hydrological connectivity of these wetlands. He mentioned about restoring the canal that connect Sarayu River with the Parvati Arga Ramsar Site. For the sustainable management of wetlands he called for greater public-private partnerships to support restoration efforts and foster sustainable livelihoods linked to wetland ecosystems.

During the inaugural session, the dignitaries together launched several publications namely, Wetlands for LiFE Booklet, a factsheet on Peatlands of India, Fauna of Ropar Lake, Punjab, Anup Newsletter Issue 6, *Aadrahoomi Sanrakshan ke liye Raashtriya CEPA Rananeeti*, Training Curriculum: Wetland Conservation and Management – A Collection of Learning Modules and a poster titled Saat Kadam: Seven Steps for conserving small waterbodies. Details of the releases are attached as **Annexure I**.

The inaugural session was concluded with a vote of thanks delivered by Shri Neeraj Kumar, Member Secretary of the Uttar Pradesh State Wetlands Authority. He briefly apprised the initiatives of Govt. of UP in the conservation and management of wetlands including the designation of Ramsar Sites, implementation of NPCA, notification of Ramgarh Tal (first notified wetland in the Country), integrating wetlands into revenue records, constitution of District Wetland Committees etc. He expressed gratitude to all the participants, speakers, and stakeholders for their valuable contributions and active engagement in the session.

### **Presentation from States/ UTs:**

Representatives from the participating States and UTs, including Delhi, Ladakh, Punjab, and Uttar Pradesh, presented updates on their respective wetland conservation efforts. The key points covered were, Updates on the progress of ground-truthing and boundary demarcation of wetlands based on the SAC Atlas, 2021, major achievements such as the designation of Ramsar Sites and the preparation of health cards for wetland areas, Identification of key challenges faced in the conservation and management of wetlands within each region, Each State and UT discussed their plans and strategies for the upcoming year to address the challenges and enhance the effectiveness of conservation initiatives.

**Delhi:** The representative from Delhi presented the structure and functions of the State Wetland Authority (SWA) for Delhi. Key updates included the progress on the preparation of Brief Documents for wetlands, the enrolment of Wetland Mitras, and the detailing of water bodies within the region.

**Jammu & Kashmir:** The Jammu & Kashmir Wetland Authority provided detailed insights into the meetings held and the preparation of Brief Documents for six wetlands. Additionally, the proposed Wetland Monitoring Cell, aimed at providing scientific and technical support, was discussed. The analysis of SAC Atlas – 2021 and DEERS Atlas – 2024 (J&K State Atlas) was shared, accompanied by an action plan, timelines, and details of concerned departments. Furthermore, Jammu & Kashmir has designated five Ramsar Sites: Wular Lake, Hokersar, Hygam, Shallabugh, and Surinsar Mansar. The state has also prepared 101 Health Cards and completed ground truthing for 174 wetlands. The progress of Integrated Management Plans (IMPs) for Wular Lake and 13 other wetlands was also highlighted.

**Punjab:** Punjab's presentation focused on the status of ground truthing and boundary demarcation for its wetlands. An action plan for further ground truthing and demarcation was outlined. IMPs have been finalized for Kanjli and Harike wetlands, while Framework Management Plans (FMPs) have been prepared for Nangal, Ropar, and Keshopur wetlands. The State has completed ground truthing for 1,143 wetlands and prepared Health Cards for 39 wetlands under the "Save Wetlands" campaign. Key challenges identified included the issue of private land ownership, resistance from stakeholders against wetland regulations, and the need for immediate benefits from wetland conservation schemes.

**Uttar Pradesh:** The Uttar Pradesh SWA presented a detailed report on the avian fauna of the Saman Bird Sanctuary in Mainpuri, emphasizing the challenges in wetland conservation such as

siltation, invasive species, agricultural runoff, grazing, and land settlement. The state also elaborated about the conservation efforts initiated in the Soor Sarovar Bird Sanctuary in Agra, highlighting its significance in the region's wetland conservation efforts.

### **Plenary Session 1: Private Sector Engagement for Wetlands**

Following the presentations from the States/UTs, the workshop focused on enhancing engagement of the private sector in wetlands conservation. The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)-India Wetland Coalition (IWC) presented its efforts to foster business partnerships for wetland conservation, emphasizing the role of businesses in building resilience to climate change. The IWC is developing guidance for industries to address their impacts on wetlands and create multi-stakeholder partnerships to mobilize resources for wetlands conservation. In this context, Dr Tejashree Joshi, Head – Environment, Godrej and Boyce Mfg. Ltd. presented their efforts in conserving and managing the coastal wetlands of Maharashtra in collaboration with IWC.

As part of the session, an example of the collaboration with Tata Motors Ltd. (TML) was also presented. This initiative by Tata Motors is a flagship biodiversity conservation project aligned with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and India's Mission Sahbhagita. Focused on wetlands along the Central Asian Flyway (CAF) near TML sites (Pune, Sanand, Lucknow, Jamshedpur), the project aims to create biodiversity-positive and water-positive landscapes through wetland assessment, ecological baseline development, health card preparation, and integrated management planning. Utilizing GIS, remote sensing, and waterbird monitoring, it supports no-regrets conservation actions and strengthens multi-stakeholder partnerships. The initiative sets a corporate model for wetland conservation, integrating public-private investments, long-term monitoring, and community capacity building.

### **Plenary session 2:**

The second half of the workshop focused on plenary discussions on two key thematic areas central to wetlands governance and management. The first session centred on ground-truthing and boundary demarcation methodologies, with participants sharing on-ground experiences and practical challenges. This was followed by a session on the proposed amendments to the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017, which aimed to gather inputs from states and site managers to inform the national revision process.

The discussions focused on the following topics –

1. Ground-truthing and boundary demarcation methodology of wetlands
2. Proposed amendments to Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017

#### **1. Ground-truthing and boundary demarcation methodology of wetlands:**

During the session, an in-depth discussion was held with Site Managers, State/UT Wetlands Authority representatives, and knowledge partners on the ground-truthing and boundary demarcation methodology for wetlands. Key discussion points included challenges in boundary demarcation, such as discrepancies in revenue records, mismatch with the SAC Atlas 2021 and on-ground situation, dynamic wetland boundaries due to seasonal hydrological variations, and

encroachments. Participants also raised practical concerns around ownership and pre-existing rights, especially related to private landholdings, community access, and traditional use. They highlighted the importance of engaging stakeholders and having clear mechanisms to address potential conflicts on the ground. Additionally, the discussion highlighted inter-departmental coordination challenges, stressing the importance of streamlined collaboration between revenue, forest, and water resources departments to ensure legally robust and ecologically sound wetland demarcation.

The session concluded with the decision that a standard operating procedure for boundary demarcation will not solve the purpose due to the complexities in ownership and therefore, it needs to be implemented with adaptive methods on case-to-case basis. Further, it was also decided that participatory approaches to enhance the accuracy and legitimacy of wetland boundary delineation is imperative.

## **2. Proposed amendments to Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017**

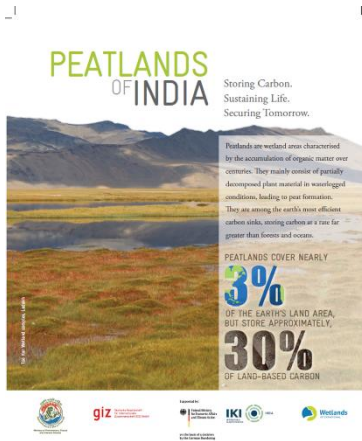
This session focused on the proposed amendments to the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017, with an emphasis on strengthening regulatory protections by reinstating key provisions from the 2010 Rules including high-altitude wetlands, ecologically sensitive areas, and salt pans. The discussion also brought out concerns shared by states around ambiguous regulatory language, limited enforcement capacity at the local level, and the lack of dedicated funding for implementation. There was agreement on the need to make the Rules more implementation-oriented, supported by clear guidance documents and capacity-building at the ground level.

Key recommendations emerging from the session included the introduction of civil penalties for non-compliance, clearer criteria for wetland identification and notification, legal empowerment of State Wetland Authorities (SWAs), and the need for stronger coordination between the Centre and States. States also proposed specific measures such as scientific management of floodplain wetlands, clearer definition of regulatory zones around wetlands, and designating ecologically significant but currently unprotected wetlands as Ramsar Sites. Participants also stressed the need for improved technical guidance, greater clarity on the roles of district-level bodies, and a robust monitoring and reporting framework. Overall, the consultation underscored the importance of strengthening regulations, institutions, and enforcement mechanisms to ensure long-term, and community-supported wetlands conservation.

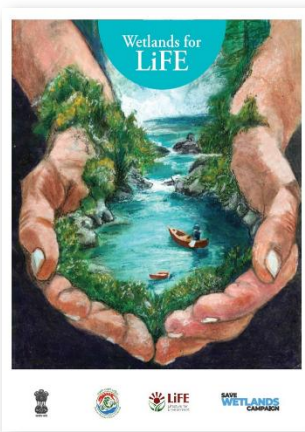
The workshop successfully highlighted the progress made by various States and UTs in wetland conservation and provided a comprehensive platform for sharing challenges and best practices. It facilitated meaningful discussions on strengthening institutional frameworks, improving regulations, and engaging local communities. The event underscored the need for continued collaboration and innovation to achieve sustainable wetland management. The workshop was concluded by a vote of thanks by the Ministry and the Uttar Pradesh State Wetlands Authority.

## Annexure I

### LAUNCHES DURING THE REGIONAL WORKSHOP FOR NORTHER STATES

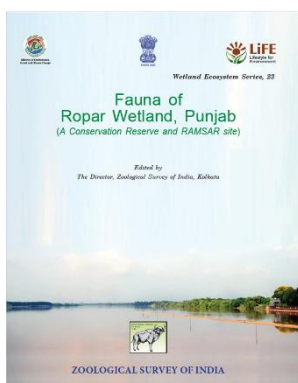


**Peatlands Probability Map of India:** The factsheet on India's peatlands provides a comprehensive overview of their extent, ecological significance, and conservation needs. The factsheet includes maps of probable peatland extent in Himalayas, Trans Himalaya, and North-East Biogeographic Zones of India. Covering approximately 0.4% of the area, these ecosystems are critical for regulating hydrological regimes, supporting biodiversity, and serving as significant carbon sinks, with the Himalayas holding the highest median carbon stock at 92.5 tonnes per hectare. The factsheet highlights threats from degradation due to lack of awareness and underscores the need for scientific assessment, regular monitoring, and efficient management to secure carbon stocks and preserve these vital ecosystems.



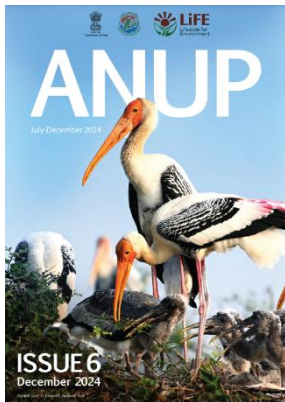
**Wetlands for LiFE Booklet:** From sacred ponds to the sustainable harvesting of wetland resources, India's cultural heritage reflects a natural synergy with the principles of conservation and sustainable use. One of the ways to ensure this is through initiatives like Mission Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE), a landmark initiative introduced by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India at COP26 in Glasgow in 2022. This booklet connects the wide range of ecosystem services wetlands offer that directly align with Mission LiFE's core themes of water conservation, climate resilience, and biodiversity protection. This document highlights individual, community and institution-level initiatives like Save Wetlands Campaign, Amrit Dharohar, and

Mission *Sahbhagita*, supported by case studies and success stories, showcasing community-driven conservation, sustainable livelihoods, and traditional knowledge integration, with actionable recommendations for the ecological, social, and economic sustainability of wetlands.



**Fauna of Ropar Lake, Punjab:** The book *Fauna of Ropar Lake, Punjab* provides an in-depth exploration of the rich biodiversity found in and around the Ropar Lake. It meticulously documents the various animal species that inhabit this unique ecosystem, with a particular focus on its avian population. The lake is an important stop for migratory birds, and the book highlights the diverse bird species. The present document provides detailed information on the Faunal diversity of Ropar Wetland, i.e. 346 faunal species belonging to 264 genera and 131 families of 46 orders both vertebrates as well as invertebrates. The vertebrate diversity including mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and pisces constituting

204 species belonging to 155 genera and 96 families and the invertebrate diversity including Nematoda, insecta (Orthoptera, Odonata and Lepidoptera) and mollusca constituting 142 species belonging to 109 genera and 35 families and 15 orders. Out of 346 species, 79 species and subspecies of fauna are the New Record from Ropar Wetland and 10 species are New Record from Punjab state. This book will be useful in determining the management plan priorities for this ecologically fragile ecosystem, will assist researchers, stakeholders and policymakers in creating effective monitoring strategies to significantly conserve Ropar wetland and their biodiversity.

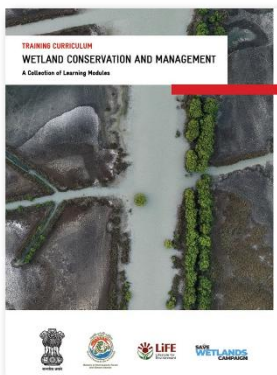


**Anup Newsletter Issue 6 (December 2024):** The Anup Newsletter on Wetlands is a resource dedicated to raising awareness about the importance of wetlands and their preservation. The first issue of Anup Newsletter was launched in June 2022 and the newsletter features articles and updates on various wetland conservation efforts, highlighting their ecological significance and the urgent need to protect these vital ecosystems. The newsletter serves as a platform for sharing knowledge, promoting sustainable practices, and advocating for policies that safeguard wetlands for future generations.



**Aadrbhoomi Sanrakshan ke liye Raashtriya CEPA Rananeeti:**

The National Wetland CEPA Strategy brochure draws from 12 pilot projects in Jammu & Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh, outlining a systematic, participatory approach to wetland conservation through communication, education, participation, and awareness (CEPA), empowering communities for sustained management.



**Training Curriculum: Wetland Conservation and Management – A Collection of Learning Modules:**

With India’s growing number of Ramsar-designated wetlands and the increasing focus on integrated management planning, the demand for well-structured capacity development initiatives is quite high. While management plans exist for many wetlands, their successful implementation requires commensurate capacity across all levels—spanning site managers, frontline personnel, and communities. In light of this, the Training Curriculum for Wetland Conservation and Management aims to contribute to scaled capacity development initiatives with six learning modules (Section A) and a collection of stakeholder-specific training plans (Section B).





**Annexure II**

**Photos of Northern Regional Workshop February 01 , 2025**





## Annexure III

### List of participants

S. No.	Name	Designation	Organisation/ Department
1.	Shri Rajat Agarwal	Joint Secretary	MoEF&CC
2.	Dr. Ramesh Motipalli	Scientist 'F'	MoEF&CC
3.	Shri Pankaj Verma	Scientist 'F'	MoEF&CC
4.	Shri Suresh Kumar	Director, IFD	MoEF&CC
5.	Dr. H V C Chary Guntupalli	Scientist 'E'	MoEF&CC
6.	Smt. Naaz Rizvi	Director	MoEF&CC (NMNH)
7.	Dr. C.R. Magesh	Scientist 'D'	MoEF&CC (NMNH)
8.	Shri Chandan Singh	Consultant	MoEF&CC
9.	Shri Siddharth Singh	PPS	MoEF&CC
10.	Smt. Gauri Vashist	Associate (Legal)	MoEF&CC
11.	Shri Pramod	Research Assistant	MoEF&CC
12.	Shri Narendra Kumar Singh	OA	MoEF&CC
13.	Smt. Anuradha Vemuri	PCCF Wildlife	DoEF&CC, Govt. of UP
14.	Shri Neeraj Kumar	CCF and Member Secretary, UPSWA	DoEF&CC, Govt. of UP
15.	Shri Manoj Kumar Sonkar	CF, Endangered Project	DoEF&CC, Govt. of UP
16.	Shri Harikesh Narayan Yadav	DFO, Sant Kabirnagar Division	DoEF&CC, Govt. of UP
17.	Shri Prakhar Gupta	DFO, Ayodhya	DoEF&CC, Govt. of UP
18.	Dr. Umesh Tiwari	DFO, Ambedkarnagar	DoEF&CC, Govt. of UP
19.	Shri Amit Singh	DFO, Sultanpur	DoEF&CC, Govt. of UP
20.	Smt. Vineeta Singh	Divisional Director, Social Forestry Division, Bulandshahr	DoEF&CC, Govt. of UP
21.	Shri Vivek Singh	RFO, Shaheed Chandra Shekhar Azad Bird Sanctuary, Nawabganj, Unnao	DoEF&CC, Govt. of UP
22.	Shri Narendra Kumar Rawat	RFO, Sandi Bird Sanctuary, Hardoi	DoEF&CC, Govt. of UP
23.	Smt. Priyanka Patel	RFO, Samaspur Bird Sanctuary, Raebareli	DoEF&CC, Govt. of UP
24.	Shri Shyam Sundar Kandpal	APCCF, Delhi	Dept. of Forests and Wildlife, Delhi
25.	Shri Vijay Kumar	Wildlife Warden	Dept. of WLP, J&K
26.	Shri Altaf Hussain	Wildlife warden, Wetlands	Dept. of WLP, J&K
27.	Dr. Majid Farooq	Scientist	Remote Sensing Department, J&K
28.	Sh. Arun Kumar, PFS	DFO, S.A.S Nagar	Department of Wildlife, Punjab
29.	Sh. Paramjit Singh, PFS	DFO, Pathankot	Department of Wildlife, Punjab
30.	Sh. Kulraj Singh, PFS	DFO, Rupnagar	Department of Wildlife, Punjab
31.	Shri Sathish Kumar S	Applications Engineer	NCSCM
32.	Shri Manodheepan K K	Jr. Application Engineer	NCSCM
33.	Shri Manish Gupta	Software Developer	NCSCM
34.	Dr. Vinay Ranjan	Scientist-E & Head of Office	BSI-CRC
35.	Dr. Sanjay Mishra	Scientist-D	BSI-CRC
36.	Dr. Anil Kumar	Scientist-E & Officer-in- Charge	GPRC, ZSI

37.	Dr Santosh Kumar	Scientist 'E'	ZSI Kolkata
38.	Shri Rahul Kumar	Senior Zoological Asstt.	ZSI, Patna
39.	Shri Rajneesh Ranjan	Senior Zoological Asstt.	ZSI, Patna
40.	Smt. Veena Kumari	Senior Zoological Asstt.	ZSI, Patna
41.	Smt. Pragya Shree	Senior Zoological Asstt.	ZSI, Patna
42.	Dr Manoj P Samuel	Executive Director	CWRDM, Govt. of Kerala
43.	Shri Ravindra Singh	Director, IGBP, GIZ India	GIZ India
44.	Shri Kirtiman Awasthi	Senior Advisor & Team Leader	GIZ India
45.	Shri Yaiphaba Akoijam	Technical Advisor	GIZ India
46.	Shri Suddhabrata C	Junior Advisor	GIZ India
47.	Dr. Ritesh Kumar	Director	WISA
48.	Shri Umang Agnihotri	Wetlands Specialist	WISA
49.	Smt. Bhuyashee Rajkumari	Programme Associate	WISA
50.	Smt. Nivedhitha MP	Programme Associate	WISA
51.	Dr. Amit Dubey	Head Wetlands	WWF-India
52.	Smt. Gitanjali Kanwar	Senior Coordinator - Rivers, Wetlands and Water Policy	WWF-India, Punjab
53.	Smt. Pratiksha	Information Officer	TERI EIACP
54.	Smt. Tejashree Joshi	Head, Environment	Godrej & Boyce
55.	Dr Saurabh Kumar	Associate Counsellor	CII
56.	Shri Ashok Biswal	HCL Tech	Delhi
57.	Smt. Swati Dhotkar	President	Weed to Wealth, Ajay Multipurpose Organisation