

F. No.W-7/1/2022-WTL
Government of India
Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change

Indira Paryavaran Bhawan
Ali Ganj, Jor Bagh,
New Delhi - 110003
Date : 13.04.2022

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

**Subject: Minutes of the 3rd Meeting of National Wetlands Committee (NWC)
held on 06.04.2022 at Indira Paryavaran Bhawan, New Delhi – reg.**

Please find enclosed copy of the Minutes of the 3rd Meeting of National Wetlands Committee (NWC) held on 06.04.2022 at Indira Paryavaran Bhawan, New Delhi under Chairmanship of Mrs. Leena Nandan, Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, for information and necessary action.

Encl: as above

Yours sincerely



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To

As per List attached

Copy to

1. PPS to Secretary (EF&CC)
2. PPS to ADG(WL)
3. PS to JS (MP)
4. PS to Dir (RKK)

Minutes of the 3rd meeting of the National Wetland Committee held on 6th April 2022 at 3:00 PM in Kaveri Conference Hall, Indira Paryavaran Bhawan, New Delhi

The Third Meeting of National Wetland Committee constituted under Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules 2017 was held on 6th April 2022 under the Chairmanship of Secretary, MoEF&CC in hybrid mode (both physical and virtual through video conferencing). The Meeting commenced with an introduction of the Committee members and invitees. The list of participants is placed at **Annexure 1**.

Agenda Item No. (1): Confirmation of MoM of 2nd Meeting of NWC

Mrs. Manju Pandey, Joint Secretary (MoEF&CC) briefed the Committee on the Minutes of 2nd meeting held on 5th November 2019, the prolonged time gap due to COVID pandemic and nominations of expert members.

Decision: Since no comments were received, the minutes of the second NWC were confirmed.

Agenda No. (2): Action Taken Report – 2nd meeting of NWC

I. Permission for construction of elevated corridor over the East Kolkata Wetlands (EKW)

JS (MoEF&CC) briefed on the Agenda Item No. (2), i.e., permission for construction of elevated corridor over the East Kolkata Wetlands (EKW), the report of sub-committee (NWC), the EIA/EMP prepared with alternate route for elevated corridor.

Additional Chief Secretary (West Bengal) made a broad submission to the Committee on the proposed realignment route of EKW elevated corridor which connects Eastern Metropolitan (EM) Bypass and New Town, there by interlinking Kolkata to Rajarhat, Newtown. He explained the need of the project due to existing and projected vehicular fleet, on developments in the Eastern Kolkata and connectivity to the airport, advantages of proposed corridor in the improvement of air quality and noise levels parameters etc. He also explained the proposed re-alignment designed with lesser piers, i.e., reduced to 36 nos. and along the bank of wetland avoiding the water body in compliance to the recommendations of sub-committee including permission accorded by Fisheries Department of West Bengal.

Prof. PSN Rao, Director, SPA who visited the site as part of the NWC sub-committee, apprised NWC about the three alternatives and the proposed route which reduces the running length across the EKW, no of piers and as result the minimal impact on the wetland. He informed that the EIA report is exhaustive, covering all the aspects of environmental concerns including technology proposed for the fine piling for piers. He agreed with the proposal for recommendation of permission.

Decision : Considering all the facts, distress condition of existing Chingrighata bridge, proposed re-alignment with reduced piers and fine piling methods, compliances to the recommendation of sub-committee, environmental safe guards proposed in the EIA report, proposal for construction of elevated corridor in the EKW area subject to the EMP and environmental safeguards was recommended. It was advised that while planning infrastructure projects, the State Governments may finalize designs using a scientific approach to save the time and resources.

II. Permission for sewage inflow in EKW

JS(MoEF&CC) briefed the next Agenda Item on permission for sewage inflow in EKW wherein CPCB was requested to quantify the optimum level of sewage flow in EKW. Dr A. Sudhakar, Scientist F, CPCB concluded the report with remarks that as per the monitoring data, the actual organic loading fed to the EKW is much lesser than the limit prescribed (22.7 kg/hectare).

ACS(WB) mentioned that Ramsar Secretariat has acknowledged the great role of EKW in sewage treatment of sewage flow approx. 910 MLD from Kolkata city naturally through bioremediation in East Kolkata Wetlands (EKW) itself without any expenditure. He explained the increase in the fishponds area in southern part of EKW, enrichment of biodiversity observed within the EKW during a worldwide survey, Great Backyard Bird Count in the year 2022, continuous monitoring of flow and its quality at identified locations, capacity of EKW to accommodate continued sewage treatment.

Committee deliberated on bioaccumulation of heavy metal concentrations, increase in heavy metal concentrations due to sewerage flow stagnation in channels, dredging requirement in drains carrying the sewerage flow, possibility of industrial effluents, action taken by Govt. of West Bengal on industrial effluents from Leather Complex near by EKW including more Common Effluent Treatment Plant (CETP)s and monitoring of heavy metal concentration levels.

Decision: Govt. of West Bengal may monitor the industrial effluents not only in case of wetland, in general, it needs the close observation in respect of effluent management is always required. Further, the natural phenomena of cleaning of water through bio-remediation process should be studied for replication in other wetlands through a scientific methodology. As SACON has been merged with the Wetlands Division of MoEF&CC, it will now be a part of the outreach developmental activities and states may take the help of SACON to understand the site-specific phenomena of the wetlands in their States.

III. Permission for continuation of solid waste disposal in Dhapa area for EKW without conservation or filling up of any water body; Permission for construction activities in settlement areas and Permission of public works in EKW areas without net loss of water body in the area

JS(MoEF&CC) briefed on the Dhapa solid waste management, Integrated Management Plan submitted by EKW under NPCA scheme and the status of approval in the Ministry. ACS(WB) appraised the committee on the recent developments in the management of solid waste, 12.14 hectares (out of 35 hectares) legacy dump reclamation with vegetation, visit of NGT Judges and close monitoring of NGT in view of ongoing Public Interest Litigation case, measures taken in the solid waste management, viz., waste composting, plastic recovery unit and production of bio CNG, a mechanical and biological treatment plant and setting up of construction - demolition waste plant away from EKW.

Decision : IMP of EKW with mitigation measures for these agenda items would be cleared for sanction subject to agreement of third-party appraiser.

Agenda No. (3): Initiatives taken since 2nd NWC meeting

Dr. M. Ramesh, Scientist 'E', MoEF&CC briefed on the various initiatives taken since the second meeting of NWC including the status of wetlands of international importance (Ramsar sites), notifications of wetlands under provisions of Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules 2017 and formation of sub-committee.

The Committee deliberated on the perspective of states in respect of notification of wetlands, challenges faced during notification process, delineation of zone of influence and catchment, interference of city master plans with catchment areas, exercise of delineated activities, natural limits of wetlands and legal concerns, available technology, datasets of satellite images, prioritization of IMPs for Ramsar sites under NPCA scheme etc.

Decision : An update on these recommendations be provided in the next meeting and Technical Committee be formed for studying various aspects.

Agenda No. (4): Subject Matters for Discussion

I. SAC Update on Decadal Change Atlas

An update was provided by SAC on the decadal change atlas and the findings therein. It was proposed that some of the findings like increase in mangrove area and decrease in tidal mudflats need to be investigated for correlations and impacts. It was also proposed that the shape files of the analysis be made available to all States and UTs for enabling delineation.

II. Applicability of Wetlands (C &M) Rules, 2017 for human-made Wetlands vs Court pronouncements:

The agenda item for definition of wetlands was placed before the Committee for further clarification. Further, it was informed that an in view the order of Hon'ble Supreme Court, an OM had been released by MoEF&CC and placed in public domain. This OM clarifies that '*...the 2,01,503 wetlands (>2.25 ha) as per the National Wetland Inventory and Assessment (NWIA), 2011 should be protected as per Rule 4 of the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017. This protection is irrespective of the applicability of/notification as per the said Rules.*'. The state representative noted that for protecting the wetlands more than 2.25 hectares which need delineation, mapping is a huge task.

III. Proposal for formation of Technical Committee of NWC

It was proposed that a technical sub-committee be formed under NWC to take up technical discussions intermediary to the larger NWC meetings.

Decision : Formation of technical committee of NWC was agreed upon. This sub-committee at national level would discuss issues and come up with outcome for policy makers. For example, the elaboration on delineation guidelines and other matters like analysis of decadal change to be taken up under that committee and to be presented in next NWC meeting. Further, with regards to the mapping exercise, Chairperson opined that MoEF&CC may provide technical support to the states.

Meeting ended with thanks to the Chair

List of participants

NWC ex-officio and/or nominated members:

1. Mrs. Leena Nandan, Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India (MoEF&CC)
2. Mr. Bivash Ranjan, Additional Director General of Forest (Wildlife), MoEF&CC, Gol
3. Mrs. Manju Pandey, Joint Secretary, MoEF&CC, Gol
4. Mr. Raghu Kumar Kodali, Scientist F, MoEF&CC, Gol
5. Shri A. Sudhakar, Scientist F, Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)
6. Dr. M. Ramesh, Scientist E, MoEF&CC
7. Dr. C Raghunathan, Scientist E, Zoological Survey of India (ZSI)
8. Mr. Rajasekhar Ratti, Scientist D, MoEF&CC, Gol
9. Shri. Chandan Singh, Consultant, MoEF&CC, Gol
10. Dr Murugan, Botanical Survey of India (BSI) (through VC)
11. Dr Brijesh Sikka, Senior Consultant, NMCG, MoJS, Gol (through VC)
12. Dr Praveen Gupta, Scientist, SAC-ISRO, Ahmedabad (through VC)
13. Director (Technical), Economics Division, Central Water Commission (CWC)

State Govt representatives from current cohort

14. Mr. Lokendra Thakkar, Environmental Planning & Coordination Organisation (EPCO)
15. Mr. Kushwant Singh, Addl. CEO, Chilika Development Authority (on behalf of representative of Odisha, through VC)
16. Dr R.N.Samal, Chief Scientific Officer, Chilika Development Authority (on behalf of representative of Odisha, through VC)
17. Dr Tasneem Keng, Scientist H, DE&RS, Jammu and Kashmir

Expert Members

18. Dr Sanjay Deshmukh, Professor of Life Sciences, University of Mumbai
19. Prof.Rajiv Sinha, IIT Kanpur (through VC)
20. Prof. T.V.Ramachandra, IISC, Bangalore (through VC)
21. Prof.Surabhi Mehrotra, MNIT, Bhopal (though VC)
22. Prof. Vishwanath Waikom, Manipur (though VC)

Special Invitees

23. Mr. Subhankar Bhattacharya, Additional Chief Engineer, Kolkata Metropolitan Development Authority
24. Dr Sanhita Bandyopadhyay, Environmental Expert, EIA Consultant, regarding EKW matter
25. Prof. PSN Rao, Director, School Planning Architecture (SPA), New Delhi
26. Mr Vivek Kumar, Additional Chief Secretary, Govt of West Bengal (through VC)
27. Mr Balamurugan, Chief Environmental Officer, East Kolkata Wetlands, West Bengal (through VC)
