

Wetlands in Maharashtra: Wetland and Water



World Wetland Day celebrated on 2nd February every year. This day marks the date of the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands on 2 February 1971, in the Iranian city of Ramsar on the shores of the Caspian Sea. The Standing Committee of the Convention on Wetlands approves the themes for every year & World Wetlands Day is celebrated over a theme. Theme for the year 2021: **“Wetlands and Water”**.

Wetlands are areas where water covers the soil, or is present either at or near the surface of the soil all year. Wetlands areas are marsh, fen, peat land or water. Wetlands can be:

1. Natural or Artificial,
2. Permanent or Temporary,
3. Fresh water,
4. Brackish water or
5. Salt, including areas of marine water

The Ramsar Convention definition for wetlands includes marshes, floodplains, rivers and lakes, mangroves, coral reefs and other marine areas no deeper than 6 metres at low tide, as well as human-made wetlands such as waste-water treatment ponds and reservoirs. The International Ramsar Convention on Wetlands has declared Nandur Madhameshwar wetland in Niphad tahsil of Nashik district as Ramsar wetland. This is the first wetland in the state and among the nine wetlands in India declared by the Convention as Ramsar sites on January 27, days ahead of International Wetlands Day on February 2. The new sites added are: Lonar crater, Nandur Madhameshwar in Maharashtra & Sur sarovar or kheetam lake in Agra.



Lonar crater, Maharashtra



Nandur Madhmeshwar

Theme for the year 2021: **“Wetlands and Water”**

World is facing a growing freshwater crisis that threatens people and our planet. We use more freshwater than nature can replenish, and we are destroying the ecosystem that water and all life depend on most wetlands. **“Wetlands and water”**, the theme for WWD 2021, shines a spotlight on wetlands as a source of freshwater and encourages actions to restore them and stop their loss. Water and wetlands are connected in an inseparable co-existence that is vital to life, our wellbeing and the health of our planet.

Wetlands are a vital component of the freshwater cycle. Their conservation and sustainable use must be a vital solution to the freshwater crisis. They are the providers of freshwater, so maintaining healthy freshwater wetlands means securing water supply for future generations. It is

profoundly realized that the earth is facing grave environmental problems with fast depleting natural resources and threatening the very existence. Most of the fish depend upon wetlands at some stage in their life cycle, while millions of cattle and wild herbivores are supported by floodplain pastures. Estuarine and coastal wetlands – mangrove forests, salt marshes, seagrass beds and mud flats have enormous biological productivity and are important nursery grounds for marine fishes as well as defences of low-lying coasts against sea storms these all are simultaneously getting affected.

THREATS TO WETLANDS:

The major threats include the urbanisation and anthropogenic pressure; land based industrial outfalls, and community pressure for fuel, food and fodder. Wetland loss & degradation is a direct human induced impact resulting from wetland conversion for economic use.

The other major threats include:

- ✚ Draining of wetlands to make space for agriculture or construction work is one of the biggest threats to wetlands.
- ✚ Wetlands are also suffering from climate change-induced alterations in the environment.
- ✚ Often, wetlands are treated as the dumping grounds by aquaculture and its wastes, industrial effluents, household wastes or sewage is released.
- ✚ A major threat to the inland wetland is the aquatic weeds, which multiply very quickly and cover the waterbodies.
- ✚ Over harvest of resources
- ✚ Pollution: killing the Flora & Fauna of wetlands
- ✚ Conversion for alternate use

NEED TO PROTECT WETLANDS?

Wetlands have a number of beneficial effects on the environment. Coastal wetlands protect the settlements along the coast from storm surges and tidal waves. Wetlands moderate the effects of flooding and help purifying water. Such ecosystems are also economically beneficial and are a source of fuelwood, medicinal plants, fish, etc. Thus, it is important to protect them from potential threats. In many places across the world, the importance of wetland habitats has been recognized and such areas have been granted protection. Exploitation of such ecosystems has been strictly prohibited.

EFFORTS TAKEN FOR WETLAND PREVENTION & CONSERVATION:

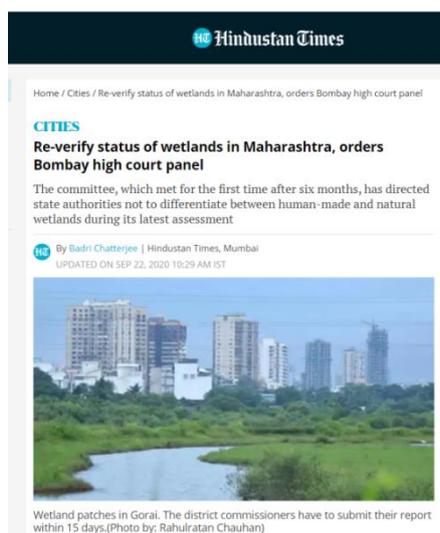
1. International Efforts:
 - Ramsar Convention on Wetlands
2. National Efforts:
 - Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2010
 - National Lake Conservation Plan (NLCP)
 - National Wetland Conservation Programme (NWCP)
 - National Plan for Conservation of Aquatic Eco-systems
 - National Wetland Management Committee:

- The National Wetland Management Committee was formed in 1987. The functions of this committee are as follows:
- To create a policy related to Wetland, to guide the conservation, management, and research of Wetland.
- Selecting a Wetland for Conservation.
- Reviewing the implementation of programs.
- To advise the preparation of disinvestment inventory over Indian Wetland.

3. State efforts:

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has recently notified the new Wetland (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017 under the provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 as regulatory framework for conservation and management of wetlands in India. These guidelines were drafted by a committee constituted by the MoEF & CC vide OM dated August 10, 2018.

CURRENT NEWS ON WETLANDS:



The Bombay high court (HC)-appointed committee, which is looking after the protection of mangroves and wetlands in Maharashtra, on Monday, directed all district collectors (DCs) along the Konkan coast and municipal commissioners to undertake a fresh survey to re-verify the status of all wetlands and submit their reports within 15 days to the panel.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Navi Mumbai: Greens hail re-inspection of Uran wetlands

TNN | Dec 17, 2020, 10:16 PM IST



NAVI MUMBAI: The city greens have hailed the latest move by the Konkan division commissioner to form a sub-committee that will re-examine the wetland sites in Uran. This development happened after the recent controversy of Raigad district administration declaring that there are no wetlands in Uran taluka.

The Bombay high court appointed Wetlands and Mangrove Committees chairman has asked Raigad collector to appoint a sub-committee to ascertain the status of the wetlands in Uran.

Wetlands and Mangrove Committee member secretary Neenu Somraj has asked Raigad collector Dr Nidhi Chaudhary to have the sub-committee set

up and submit report within 15 days.

The committee will have representatives from the collector, environment department, police, apart from Stalin D of NGO Vanashakti.

Wetlands help in recharging ground water and biodiversity and are a critical habitat for domestic and migratory birds.

“Wetlands are vital to the ecosystem and thus needs to be preserved.”