

NEWS LINE

Wetland Management Plan for 5 Water Bodies of Bhandra and Gondia Districts, Maharashtra having Catchment Area of Wainganga River Basin

Background

The prolonged ambiguity around the operation and maintenance of Malguzari tanks between the Malguzaars (Zamindars' during Britisher's era) had led to the deterioration of water quality of traditional water tanks. The water which was once utilised for irrigation and fishing is now unsafe for use. Despite the decision by an independent committee in 1983, ruled that the tanks were the government's responsibility to maintain but no progressive actions were taken by the government to arrest water pollution. Set against this backdrop Wainganga Water Partnership (WWP) worked with the village gram sabha and other government departments to shape new standards of rules that discourage developments and harm the traditional water resources in selected five villages of Gondia and Bhandara districts Maharashtra having catchment area of Wainganga River. With the above background, India Water Partnership (IWP) with support of Wainganga Water Partnership (WWP) has studied the present scenario of traditional water bodies in five villages of Bhandara and Gondia districts of Maharashtra in the catchment area of Wainganga River in 2015 and has prepared a Wetland Management Plan in 2016. The new rules proposed in the plan will drive for improved and holistic management of traditional water resources potentially benefitting 8,803 people across the five villages. The study was undertaken on following parameters which led to preparation on Wetland Management Plan:

- Collection of soil and water samples and test in a laboratory authorized by Government of Maharashtra;
- GPS mapping of water bodies;
- Bio-diversity assessment of the water bodies (aquatic plants, birds, Fish/ Pila/ Crab, etc) survey was done on bird species and identification of various types fish species;
- Literature review of chemical saturation in aquatic life forms in water bodies;
- Sampling of food sources from water bodies; and,
- Organization of various workshops for the community and local stakeholders residing in the villages of 5 water bodies for their capacity building and decisions making.



Bandhya Talav, Nimgaon, Gondia District, Maharashtra

Wetland Management Plan

Based on the study findings and consultation with the village communities and stakeholders, Wetland Management Plan for the 5 selected water bodies has been prepared. The water body-wise major recommendations of Wetland Management Plan are as follows:

- (i) **Bandhya Talao (Tank), Nimgaon Village, Gondia District** has an area of 89.8 ha. The plan recommends:
 - Banning of fishing during reverse migration as it results in loss of fish diversity and reduces brood stock.
 - Seed of Tilapia should not be released in Talao. Instead Cyprinus (Common carp) and Grass carp should be used for management of aquatic vegetation.
 - Cutting and taking away Sedges should not be allowed for burning as fuel or for stall feeding to animals.

- (ii) **Umri Talao (Tank) No.2 Sawartola Village, Gondia District** has an area of 4.64 ha. The Plan suggests:
- Organic farming to be promoted as very few farmers practice it to avoid excessive use of pesticides and weedicides
 - use of Cyprinus (Common carp) and Grass carp is needed for management of aquatic vegetation.
 - Plantation of aquatic plants for habitat development to be done through MREGS.
 - Digging of bore wells to be banned as the Talao goes dry in summer by extraction of water in the catchment area.
- (iii) **Gaon Talao Channa village, Gondia District** has an area of Village Tank of Channa is 32.6 ha. The Plan recommends that:
- Plantation of local species to be encouraged to save the bio-diversity of the Talao.
 - Carry out de-siltation in Talao.
 - Protect the rare and threatened species of *Ompokbimaculatus*, *Ompokpabda*, *Wallagoattu*, *Clariusmagur*.
 - Laundry activities at the water body to be regulated as chemical detergents increase the pH value.
- (iv) **Gaon Talao Bampewada village, Bhandara District** has an area of 6.96 ha. The Plan suggests:
- Water distribution of Talalo for irrigation to be done by Farmers' Water Distribution Committee.
 - Fishing during reverse migration to be banned which results in loss of fish diversity and reduces brood stock.
 - Minimize excessive use of pesticides in the catchment area to maintain bio-diversity.
 - Aquatic plants diversity should be conserved in the Talao to provide habitat for the small indigenous fish species.
 - Use and throw plastics to be banned in Talao.
- (v) **Gaon Talao Khamkhura village, District, Gondia** has an area of 6.73 ha. The Plan suggests:
- Fishing during reverse migration to be banned which results in loss of fish diversity and reduces brood stock.
 - Laundry activities and other domestic usage of water, and discharge waste including plastics should be prohibited in the Talao.
 - Regular plantation activity needs to be carried out near the catchment area and aquatic plants to be conserved to protect bio-diversity.
 - Encroachment in the area and open defecation to be banned in and around catchment area and periodic de-siltation in Talao to be carried out.

Major Recommendations:

- No mining of minerals should be allowed from the tank as it affects vegetation near the Talao.
- Prohibit excessive use of pesticides and weedicides as it affects loss of fish diversity. Instead promote organic farming.
- The catchment area land use patterns, actual tank area and the command area to be addressed as one single unit.
- Water Distribution Committee at village level to be reformed as Water Management Committee as per State Water Plan and all the village level stakeholders from the catchment area, actual area of water body and the command area should be the members of Water Management Committee.
- De-siltation of Talaos (Tanks) to be done at regular intervals.
- There should be atleast 50% women representation in each water management committee.
- Afforestation activity of the local species should get a boost in forest of catchment area.
- Convergence of all State Government schemes dealing with water is required down at village level to provide technical and other supports.

Preparation of wetland management plans by Wainganga Area Water Partnership (WWP) had assumed prime importance for benefit of the communities. Some of the work, such as extraction of *Ipomoea fistulosa* and plantation of aquatic plants, which are not included in the Maharashtra Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MREGS) have also been proposed by community through Gramsabha. The district administration has also responded positively to include these works as the special case, on the basis of the data collected in 2016.

For further information, please contact :

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