

Minutes of the second meeting of the Expert group for the formulation of guidelines for management of river fronts through the River Regulation Zone (RRZ)

The second meeting of the above Expert Group was held on 23.01.2012 under the Chairmanship of Shri. J. M. Mauskar, Special Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests at 3.00 PM. in Society of Integrated Coastal Management (SICOM), No-9 Institutional Area, Lodhi Road, New Delhi – 110 003. List of the participants at Annexure – I.

2. The Chairman welcomed the Members to the second meeting of the above Expert Group and also introduced the special invitee namely, Shri Manoj Misra, Yamuna Jiye Abhiyaan Secretariat to the Group. It was informed that the second special invitee namely, Dr. Latha Anantha, Director, Research River Research Centre could not attend the meeting.

3. The Chairman took up the agenda. Since, there were no comments on the draft minutes of the first meeting of the Expert Group held on 20th May, 2011, the Committee approved the minutes of the first meeting.

4. Chairman invited Shri Manoj Misra to make a presentation. Shri Manoj Misra made a detailed presentation on the various issues relating to management of the rivers. In his presentation he covered in detail the human interventions that affect the rivers which include construction on the river banks and river beds, sand mining, dams, pollution etc. He also dealt on the classification of the river stretches. With regard to the legal provisions of the river conservation, he highlighted the Madras River Conservation Act of 1884 and also the orders of various Hon'ble Courts. In his presentation he stressed for a comprehensive legislation for the river conservation.

5. Chairman invited Dr. Brij Gopal to make the presentation. Dr. Brij Gopal in his presentation stressed that the word RRZ may not be used as it denotes regulation in the legal language and regulations for the river would mean control on the flows and the river course. Hence, the word regulation should be avoided or should be explicitly defined. He dealt in detail the resolution of Ministry of Environment and Forests on 16th February, 1985 setting up of Central Ganga Authority. He also stressed that the river conservation should focus on ecological integrity which would directly depend upon conserving and protecting [physical habitat, hydrological parameters, chemical and biological characteristics. The classification and zonation of rivers should be based on elevation, run off and sediment characteristics. Dr. Gopal propose that the regulations for rivers should be called as River Conservation Rules or River Corridor Conservation Rules.

6. After the presentation the Chairman requested Dr. A. Senthil Vel to circulate the soft copy of the presentation made to all present and invited comments from the Members.

7. Shri Ajay Deshpande, Joint Director, Maharashtra Pollution Control Board mentioned about the river conservation legislation of Government of Maharashtra. He indicated that the main purpose of the river conservation legislation is to regulate industrial activities based on their classification adopted by the Pollution Control Board. This legislation has been issued under Section 5 of Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. In this regard a discussion also took place if such legislation could be issued under Section 5 of Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 or Section 6 of Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

8. Shri Yogesh Dwivedi, Additional Director, Department of Environment, Government of Tamil Nadu indicated that the Tamil Nadu Government has adopted a river conservation programme based on an Office Order issued by Government of Tamil Nadu. However, this programme has no legislative backing.

9. Shri Rajiv Gauba, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests while mentioning the various approaches for river conservation indicated that the existing legislations like the Environment (Protection) Act, Water Act etc., provides for adequate safeguard to deal with issues relating to river conservation, but however, there is lack of enforcement at various levels. He stressed for strengthening the enforcement machinery.

10. Dr. G. J. Chakarapani, Professor, IIT, Roorkee indicated that the river regulation mechanism cannot be uniform for all rivers as there the rivers are diverse and each of them have to be treated as a separate entity.

11. Dr. R. C. Trivedi, National Institute of Ecology while agreeing to the above suggestion also mentioned the implications of the flood plain to be included as a part of the river regulations and also the impact of monsoon on the flood plains and rivers.

12. After detailed discussion the following were the decisions:-

- (a) The Committee could identify the stretches of the river courses which need immediate attention in terms of pollution/ecological damage and initiate action under Section 5 of Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
- (b) The draft notification prepared by Dr. R. C. Trivedi shall be circulated to all the members and their opinion be sought before the third meeting of the Expert Group.
- (c) The concept note prepared by Dr. Brij Gopal shall be put on the website of MoEF seeking comments.
- (d) The Ministry may consider mapping of the rivers stretches through satellite imageries/photography through SoI/BISAG, Gujarat who have already initiated such activities.

13. It was decided that the next meeting would be held on 29th February, 2012 at 3:00P.M. in Society of Integrated Coastal Management.

The meeting ended with vote of thanks to and from the Chair.
