


# Report

## Water, Wetlands, Life: Inseparable Coexistence

Safeguarding biodiversity, delivering water & food in the face of changing climate



The poster features a scenic background of a wetland with a herd of deer standing in shallow water. In the bottom right corner, there is a portrait of the Prime Minister of India. The text 'WORLD WETLANDS DAY 2021' is prominently displayed in the center. At the top, there are logos for the Government of India, Water Resource, NAMAMI GANGE, and Wetlands for our Future. A quote from the Prime Minister is at the bottom.

**WORLD  
WETLANDS DAY  
2021**

*"Namami Gange mission is not confined to just cleaning the Ganga but has been expanded into the country's biggest river conservation Programme." -  
Hon'ble Prime Minister, Govt. of India*

## Water, Wetlands, Life: Inseparable coexistence

### *Safeguarding biodiversity, delivering water & food in the face of changing climate*

Each year World Wetlands Day is celebrated across the world with renewed commitment to raise



awareness towards conserving the wetlands and its biodiversity. This year's theme threw spotlight on wetlands as a source of freshwater and encouraged actions to restore them and stop their loss. We are 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. The 2021 campaign highlighted the contribution of wetlands to the quantity and

quality of freshwater on our planet. Water and wetlands are connected in an inseparable co-existence that is vital to life, our wellbeing, and the health of our planet. Given the total wetlands in India amounting to 7,57,860, occupying 4.63% geographical area of the country and 42 Ramsar sites it becomes more important to have cumulative approaches with water-energy-food nexus approach as well as Ecosystem-based Adaptation and Integrated Water Resources Management towards conservation and management of wetlands.

National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG), Ministry of Jal Shakti, Department of Water Resource, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation, Government of India, and India Water Foundation (IWF) jointly observed the celebrations of the 'World Wetlands Day' on 2nd February 2021. The main objective was to have a holistic understanding on various facets of Wetland Management and transform them into an indicator of economic development and understand linkage between Wetlands and water, Wetlands and food security, Wetlands and climate change, Wetland biodiversity in a changing climate. By the advent of the guidelines for the implementation of Wetlands Rules 2017 in January 2020 this brainstorming facilitated taking it to the next level. It showcased promising outcomes to be incorporated to inflate the 'relationship between water-wetland-biodiversity and to provide an opportunity for augmenting scope of work and future partnerships for capacity building, sustainable funding and to turn river and wetland conservation into a public movement as envisioned by our hon'ble Prime Minister. Some ministries have





adequate infrastructural facilities, some lack in resources and others lack in trained personnel and technical expertise. Convergence and right synergy enable these ministries to pool together their energy, resources, and technological expertise in dealing with particular problems within a stipulated period and manageable costs. Also, to jointly define critical local and national wetland conservation plans as well as advocate for actions to safe-guard wetlands. Conservation of wetlands would also go a long way in achieving our PM's dream of 'Nal se Jal' in each household.



Highlighting the interconnectedness of all water bodies and their role in maintaining each other's Aviralta (flow) and Nirmalta (cleanliness), Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Minister of Jal Shakti said, "NamamiGange is the first of its kind program where Wetland Conservation is integrated with Basin Management Plan." He added, "The innovative work done by NMCG for wetland conservation linked to River Rejuvenation would help the entire country as a model framework". He said that all stakeholders have to act as

custodians of the environment for creating a sustainable future. On the occasion of Wetland Day, a massive scientific and community-based program to develop Health card and management of 10 wetlands in each of the 50 plus Ganga districts was launched.

Shri Rattan Lal Kataria, MoS Jal Shakti Ministry while emphasising the integral role of wetlands in the socio-ecological system said, "Wetlands are very important for maintaining the country's biological diversity." He said that a lot of information is available on wetlands, regulatory frame work is also present, but there is a need to strengthen them at the grassroots level and raise awareness among the people.

Speaking about role of wetlands in addressing various environmental issues, Mr. Atul Bagai, Head India Country Office, UNEP said, "We need to see how wetlands can be useful to address the issues of desertification and migratory species. We hope in regards to wetlands conservation, India will again show the leadership that it has shown in a lot of other areas."

Shri Pankaj Kumar, Secretary of Jal Shakti, while sharing that the awareness about wetlands has heightened in recent times said, "NMCG not only looks at rejuvenation of Ganga but the overall river basin including its cities and their wetlands." He said that events like World Wetland Day encourage us to continue this holistic approach.



Shri Rajiv Ranjan Mishra, Director General, NMCG added that, “This is not just a celebration but a call for action to conserve wetlands and that is why we have organised capacity building workshops for wetland conservation.” Mr. Mishra shared that a futuristic guideline for monitoring of Ramsar sites and wetlands through Wildlife Institute of India and support of MoEFCC is being developed.

Dr Arvind Kumar, President, India Water Foundation, shared that this year commemorates the 50th anniversary of the Ramsar Convention and by now India has around 42 Ramsar sites. He suggested encouraging cooperation among several ministries to further scale up wetland conservation.

The works of Wetlands are widely known, although when it comes to maintaining these functions, municipalities lack knowledge. An innovative attempt to develop Guidelines for protection and conservation of Urban Wetlands by NMCG with the help of the prestigious School of Planning and Architecture in the form of a toolkit called, ‘Urban wetlands/water body management guideline - a toolkit for local stakeholders’ was released at the event. ‘Framework for Ecological Monitoring of Ramsar Sites and Other Wetlands in India’ was also released. The Wetland Quiz, received enthusiastic participation throughout India and winners were announced by Ms. Bhawna Badola, CEO, Tree Craze Foundation during the function. Posters for spreading awareness on wetlands by WWF-India were unveiled by the Minister and MoS, Jal Shakti.

## **Recommendations**

- *To create multi-stakeholder partnership opportunities and alliances at all levels for capacity building and identifying funding opportunities, best practices and lessons learned based on existing projects and programs and documentation that demonstrably links management of wetlands to improving ecosystem services.*
- *Integrated wetlands wise approach for the scientific management and governance of incorporating various components like Biodiversity, Ecosystem management, Riparian erosion control, Natural Resource Management, Natural & Human capital, etc.*
- *Conservation and rejuvenation process should prioritize actions in holistic way and to bring behavioral change among stakeholders.*
- *Understanding the linkages among water, wetland, biodiversity conservation and sustainable development*

## AGENDA

Time (IST)	Sessions
<b>Inaugural Session</b>	
10.00AM – 10.25AM	<b>Tea</b>
10.30AM– 10.40 AM	Welcome Address <b>Dr. Arvind Kumar</b> , President, India Water Foundation
10.40AM – 10.55AM	Introduction & Key Address <b>Sh. Rajiv Ranjan Mishra</b> , DG, NMCG
10.55AM – 11.10AM	Keynote Address <b>Mr. Pankaj Kumar</b> , Secretary, Ministry of JalShakti
11.10AM- 11.25AM	Address by <b>Sh. Rattan Lal Kataria</b> , Hon’ble Minister of State, Ministry of Jal Shakti, Govtof India
11.25AM – 11.55AM	Chair address and release of ‘ <i>Urban Wetland/ Water Bodies Management Guidelines – A toolkit for local stakeholders</i> ’  <b>Sh. Gajendra Singh Shekhawat</b> , Hon’ble Union Minister of Jal Shakti, Ministry of Jal Shakti, Govt of India
<b>Panel Discussion</b> <b>Water, Wetlands, Life: Inseparable coexistence</b> Safeguarding biodiversity, delivering water & food in the face of changing climate	
12.00Noon– 01.00PM	<b>Mr. Atul Bagai</b> , Head, UNEP India Office (Moderator) Department of Science and Technology, Govt. Of India <b>Mr. Dhananjay Mohan</b> , Director, Wildlife Institute of India <b>Dr. Ritesh Kumar</b> ,Director, Wetlands International South Asia <b>Mr. Suresh Babu</b> , World Wide Fund <b>Mr. Brijesh Sikka</b> , Senior Consultant, NMCG
01.00PM onwards	Vote of Thanks & update on NMCG’s initiatives under Arth Ganga by Executive Director (Finance)

Link to the full video of the celebration-

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oe1btZAUHnU>

Wetlands for our Future Sustainable Livelihoods | GNAMAMI GANGE | Water

“वेटलैंड्स का प्रदूषण नियंत्रण और निर्मल गंगा की परिकल्पना को साकार करने में बड़ी भूमिका है। पूर्वी कोलकाता वेटलैंड्स द्वारा साइट के लगभग 400 एमएनडी अपशिष्ट जल का उपचार इसका सबसे महत्वपूर्ण उदाहरण है। इस वेटलैंड्स में salt marshes, कृषि क्षेत्र और तालाब शामिल हैं और इसे रामसर साइट घोषित किया गया है। हम निर्मल वेटलैंड्स के लिए प्रकृति आधारित समाधान और SoP के विकास को प्रोत्साहित कर रहे हैं।”

**श्री गजेंद्र सिंह शेखावत,**  
माननीय जल शक्ति मंत्री, भारत सरकार

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“इस वर्ष की थीम 'वेटलैंड और वॉटर' है जो साफ पानी, पारिस्थितिक तंत्र के लचीलेपन, स्थायी आजीविका, जैवविविधता संरक्षण, कार्बन भंडारण, जलवायु परिवर्तन अनुकूलन और स्वास्थ्य के प्राधान्य में वेटलैंड्स के महत्व को दर्शाता है”

**श्री रतन लाल कटारिया**  
जल शक्ति राज्यमंत्री

जल शक्ति मंत्रालय  
Ministry of Jal Shakti  
Government of India

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**Dr. Arvind Kumar**  
Dr. Arvind Kumar is Governor World Water Council and President, Founder of India Water Foundation a non-profit organization and think tank. He is Member 'National Wetlands Committee', and Technical Advisory Committee for India's Third National Communication and Biennial Update Reports to UNFCCC Ministry of Environment, Forests and climate change, Government of India. He specializes in ecosystem-based adaptation, water-energy-food nexus, with specific emphasis on interlinkages between water, environment and sustainable development.

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**Mr. Atul Bagai**  
Mr. Atul Bagai joined UN Environment's Ozone Action programme in 2000 and served as Senior Regional Coordinator to build the capacity of subregional networks in Asia and enable them to meet the compliance targets under the Montreal Protocol. He spearheaded and led some innovative initiatives with the Executive Committee of the Multilateral Fund. He was instrumental in designing and developing synergies between Ozone Depleting Substance phase out and climate change in Maldives and Bhutan and many more achievements. Atul worked with the Government of India for 17 years as Chief of Staff to two Ministers at the federal level and to a Chief Minister at the provincial level. He also served as the Ozone Cell Director at the Ministry of Environment and Forests.

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**Mr. M. P. Singh**  
Mr. M. P. Singh is the Chief of Development operations with Jica India. His passionate work in Water & Sanitation, Urban Transportation (Metro), Railways sectors through effective policy dialogue, harmonized procedures, consensus building among diverse stakeholders and intensive project management have made a real difference to the society. Singh's constant endeavor has been to maximize effectiveness and mitigating risks amongst the vulnerable sections by incorporating value-added/reforms measures in projects, such as Pollution abatement of Ganga, Yamuna and other Rivers in major cities like Pune and Nagpur in India remained a big challenge to work with.

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“We appreciate that in budget 2021 an outlay of Rs2.87 trillion towards the launch of the Jal Jeevan Mission Urban has been announced. There should be an allocation for the wetlands as well as they are the primary sources of water.”

**Dr. Arvind Kumar**  
President  
India Water Foundation

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**Dr. Ritesh Kumar**  
A natural resources economist by training, Ritesh has nearly 2 decades of work experience on wetlands of South Asia, specifically on the aspects of integrated management planning, ecosystem services assessment and valuation and mainstreaming wetlands in development. He has led multidisciplinary projects on the formulation of management action plans, environmental flow assessment, wetlands and climate change adaptation, and ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction. Ritesh is also a nominated member of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel of Ramsar Convention, and a coordinating lead author at the Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).

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**Mr. Dhananjai Mohan**  
Before taking over as Director Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun in January 2020, he served as Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Planning and Financial Management and Chairman State Biodiversity Board, in Uttarakhand. Dr. Dhananjai is a fellow of Leadership for Environment and Development (LEAD), a programme initiated by the Rockefeller Foundation and has been a recipient of Dr Salim Ali fellowship of Ministry of Environment and Forests, Govt. of India in 2005. He served as a consultant to TERI and supervised doctoral research and 6 M.Sc. dissertations in wildlife science and forestry.



## Media Coverage

