

Minutes of the first meeting of the State Wetlands Authority held on 29th November, 2017 in the Chief Secretary's Conference Room, Nabanna

Members present:

1. Shri Sovan Chatterjee, Hon'ble Minister-in-Charge, Environment Department - Chairperson
2. Shri Malay Kumar De, Chief Secretary to Govt. of W.B. - Member
3. Shri Chandan Sinha, Principal Secretary, Forest Department - Member
4. Shri Manoj Pant, Principal Secretary, Land & Land Reforms Department - Member
5. Dr. Ravi Inder Singh, Secretary, Fisheries Department - Member
6. Dr. Kalyan Rudra - Expert Member
7. Shri Soumyajit Das, Managing Director, WBSFDC - Expert Member
8. Smt. Baisakhi Banerjee -Expert Member
9. Shri Arnab Roy, Principal Secretary, Environment Department - Member Secretary

Other Participant Present

1. Shri Sandipan Mukherjee, Chief Technical Officer, EKWMA
2. Shri Paritosh Roy, Special Secretary, Panchayats and Rural Development Department
3. Shri Dibyendu Das, Joint Secretary, Panchayats and Rural Development Department
4. Shri Biplab Mukherjee, Deputy Secretary, Irrigation & Waterways Department

Agenda No. 1. The Central Government has notified the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017 which have come into force

At the outset Principal Secretary, Environment Department, welcomed participants to the first meeting of the State Wetlands Authority and informed that the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India, has notified the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017, vide their notification no. GSR 1203 (E) dated 26th September, 2017. These rules shall apply to the wetlands categorised as 'Wetlands of International Importance' under the Ramsar Convention and wetlands as notified by the Central Government, State government and Union Territory Administration. At present the East Kolkata Wetlands is the only wetland of the State categorised as 'Wetlands of International Importance' under the Ramsar Convention.

Agenda No. 2. The State Government has notified that the EKWMA will also function as State Wetlands Authority

Principal Secretary, Environment Department informed that under Rule 5(1) of the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017 the State Wetlands Authority has been constituted for each state. As the composition of the State Wetlands Authority constituted is similar to the composition of East Kolkata Wetlands Management Authority, State Government has notified the East Kolkata Wetlands Management Authority will also function as the State Wetlands Authority for the time being vide notification no. 2320/1C-07/2014 dated 30.10.2017.

Agenda No. 3. The powers and functions of State Wetlands Authority

Principal Secretary, Environment Department informed the power and functions of the State Wetlands Authority to the members as laid down in the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017.

Agenda No. 4. Restrictions of activities in wetlands

The Authority was informed about the rule 4(2) of the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules 2017 which prohibits the activities within the wetlands. The Authority discussed in length about the inflow of sewage in the East Kolkata Wetlands, disposal of solid waste in Dhapa and blanket restriction of construction of permanent nature within the East Kolkata Wetlands.

The Authority recommended that the State Government will send a proposal to the Central Government for omitting these three items, namely, inflow of sewage, solid waste disposal in Dhapa, construction activities for residents or incorporating of specific exemption in respect to East Kolkata Wetlands since implementing the provisions of the Central Rules in toto would lead to drying up of the East Kolkata Wetlands, loss of the unique features of EKW and hardship to citizens residing within EKW.

Agenda No. 5. Recommendation for provisions for public works

The Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017 prohibits all construction works in the wetland area. However, the EKWMA has a large resident population, and a number of buildings existing on the bastu and within EKWMA. Due to prohibition of all construction works in wetland areas, it is not possible to take up any development works in public interest for the benefit of the resident population. Public works is needed for the benefit of the residents as well as for transportation needs of the surrounding area.

The State Wetlands Authority considered the proposal and recommended that State Government may be taken up with the Govt. of India as an omission under the rule 4 of the Wetland (Conservation and management Rules) 2017.

Agenda No. 6. Penal provisions in the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017

The Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017 is made in exercise of the appropriate sections of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. Both of them do not lay down penal provisions in case of unauthorized filling up of water body. State Wetlands Authority decided to take up the matter to the Central Government for making appropriate amendments in the said Act, 1986 for provision for restoration of wetlands in case of unauthorized filling up of water body and creation of compensatory water bodies where emergent work is sanctioned.

Agenda No. 7. Preparation of Brief Documents

Authority decided that the Fisheries Department will prepare a list of wetlands with area of upto 20 ha in the first phase and a list of wetlands /waterbodies of historical importance or of tourism attractions within three months and submit to the state Wetlands Authority.

Agenda No. 8. Constitution of Technical Committee and Grievance Committee

It was proposed to constitute the Technical Committee to review the brief documents, Management Plans, and advise on any technical matter referred by the Wetland Authority with the following composition:

Principal Secretary, Environment Department	- Chairman
Municipal Commissioner, KMC	- Member
Dr. Dhrubajyoti Ghosh	- Member
Dr. Kalyan Rudra	- Member
Managing Director, WBSFDC	- Member
Sri Rajendra Jakher, APD, SPMU, ICZM	- Member
Sri Sandipan Mukherjee, CTO, EKMWA	- Member Secretary

and the Grievance Committee to provide a mechanism for hearing and forwarding grievances raised by public to the Authority with the following composition:

Chief Technical Officer, EKWMA
Managing Director, WBSFDC
Smt. Baisakhi Banerjee , Socio economic expert
Environment Officer, Department of Environment

The Authority approved the proposal.

Agenda No. 9. Secretariat to the State Wetlands Authority

It is decided that the office of the EKWMA will provide secretariat service to the State Wetlands Authority.

Agenda No. 10. Construction of elevated corridor over East Kolkata Wetlands

The State Wetlands Authority recommended the proposal in public interest. It was decided the WBHIDCO may prepare a note in favour of the proposed elevated corridor and forward the same to the State Wetlands Authority. The State Government will send the proposal to the Central Government for its consideration.

Agenda No. 11. Miscellaneous

Two items are discussed with regard to the East Kolkata Wetlands and decided that

- i) to prepare a consolidated report of extent of heavy metal present in fishes and vegetables grown in the East Kolkata Wetlands based on previous data and
- ii) to periodically analyze the heavy metal content present in fishes and vegetables grown to EKW from any agency and to take measures based on the data.

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



(Sovan Chatterjee)
Chairperson, State Wetlands Authority
&
Minister-in-Charge, Environment Department