

## Wetland Conservation and Management Rules 2017

### *UPSC Exam Preparation: Topic of the Day – Wetland Conservation and Management Rules 2017*

Following the notification of draft Wetland Rules in 2016, the Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) notified the Wetland (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017 in order to prohibit a range of activities in wetlands. The updated rules will supersede the 2010 rules.

This is an important part in environment section of [UPSC Syllabus](#).

The candidates preparing for [IAS Exam](#) and other government exams, can use the information in this article for both Mains GS 3 and Prelims exam.

### **Latest Context related to Wetland Conservation and Management Rules –**

On the occasion of World Wetland Day celebrated every year on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February, the Minister of State for Environment, Forest and Climate Change announced the establishment of a Centre for Wetland Conservation and Management (CWCM), as a part of the National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management (NCSCM).

- The year 2021 also commemorates the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Convention on Wetlands signed on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1971 in the Iranian city of Ramsar. Aspirants can check the [list of Ramsar sites in India](#) on the linked page.
  - The theme for 2021 is 'Wetlands and Water'.
  - It was first celebrated in 1997.

## Centre for Wetland Conservation and Management (CWCM)

- The centre was launched on World Wetland Day 2021 (February 2, 2021).
- It is a part of the National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management (NCSCM), Chennai, functioning under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

### **National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management (NCSCM)**

- It is a research institute under MoEFCC, Government of India.
- **Vision** – To manage the Indian coast sustainably.
- **Location** – Chennai, Tamil Nadu
- Research divisions of NCSCM:
  - Geospatial Sciences,
  - Remote Sensing and Geographic Information Systems (GIS),
  - Integrated Social Sciences & Economics,
  - Coastal environmental impact assessment,

- Conservation of Coastal & Marine Resources, Knowledge, Governance and Policy, and
- Futuristic Research and Integrated Island Management Unit.
- **Objectives:**
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  - Aspire to become a World-Class Knowledge Institution related to coastal zones, environment, resources and processes
  - To promote integrated and sustainable management of the coastal and marine areas in India for the benefit and wellbeing of the traditional coastal and island communities, and
  - Advise the Union and State Governments and other associated stakeholders on policy, and scientific matters related to Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM).
- Survey of India in collaboration with NCSCM have mapped the **Hazard Line for the entire coast of India**, which incorporates vulnerability mapping of flood, erosion and sea-level rise.

### Importance of Centre for Wetland Conservation and Management (CWCM)

- The centre is aimed to work towards the conservation, restoration and management of India's wetlands.
- The dedicated Centre would help in addressing specific research needs and knowledge gaps.
- It would serve as a knowledge hub and enable exchange between State/ UT Wetland Authorities, wetland users, managers, researchers, policy-makers and practitioners.
- It will help in building partnerships and networks with relevant national and international agencies.
- Furthermore, it will aid in the application of integrated approaches for conservation, management and wise use of the wetlands.
- It would also assist the national and State/UT Governments in the design and implementation of policy and regulatory frameworks, management planning, monitoring and targeted research for wetlands conservation.

## Wetland Conservation and Management Rules 2017 – Provisions

- **Constitution of State Wetland Authority:** It has provisions for setting up of a State Wetland Authority (SWA) in every state and Union Territory to be headed by the Environment Minister of the respective state. It is to include a range of government officials. One expert each in the fields of hydrology, socioeconomics, landscape planning, fisheries, and wetland ecology. They will determine the 'wise use principle' that shall govern the management of wetlands. "Wise use" can be defined as the principles of sustainable use that are compatible with conservation. This has led to the decentralization of powers.
- **The SWA shall:**
  - Develop a comprehensive list of activities to be regulated and permitted within notified wetlands and their zone of influence.
  - Recommend additional prohibited activities for specified wetlands.

- Define strategies for better use of wetlands.
- Recommend measures for wetland conservation and for raising awareness among its stakeholders and local communities with respect to the importance of wetlands.
- **Setting up of National Wetland committee:** NWC will replace the Central Wetlands Regulatory Authority and shall be headed by the secretary to MoEFCC.

### What are Wetlands?

- Wetlands are ecosystems saturated with water, either seasonally or permanently. They include mangroves, marshes, rivers, lakes, deltas, floodplains and flooded forests, rice fields, coral reefs, marine areas no deeper than 6 metres at low tide, as well as human-made wetlands such as wastewater treatment ponds and reservoirs.
- India has approximately 4.6% of its land as wetlands, covering an area of 15.26 million hectares and has 42 sites designated as Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites), with a surface area of 1.08 million hectares. India is a signatory to the [Ramsar convention](#).

### Threats to Wetlands

1. Wetlands are the most threatened ecosystem as per the IPBES (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services)'s
2. Major threats to wetlands are due to reclamation and degradation activities like drainage and landfill, pollution, hydrological alteration, over-exploitation resulting in loss of biodiversity and disruption in ecosystem services provided by them.
3. According to UNESCO, the threat to wetlands will have an adverse impact on 40% of the world's flora and fauna that live or breed in wetlands.

## National Wetland Committee (NWC) – Purpose

National Wetland Committee (NWC) will be set up for

- Monitoring the implementation of rules
- Advising the central government on appropriate policies and action programs for conservation and wise use of wetlands.
- Recommending designation of Wetlands of International importance under the Ramsar Convention.
- Advice collaboration with international agencies on issues related to wetlands.
- Setting up a digital inventory: It is compulsory for all the state authorities to prepare a list of all the wetlands. Based on this, a digital inventory for wetlands will be created and updated every 10 years.
- Prohibited activities: The rules prohibit the discharge of unwanted waste from villages, towns, cities, industries, etc., and solid waste dumping into the wetlands. Conversion of wetland area for non-wetland purposes, construction of a permanent structure on notified wetlands is banned.

These rules shall apply to wetlands notified by the State government, Central government, Union territory Administrations, and those classified as wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar convention.

