



## Wetlands Restoration

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Recently, the Government has **identified 130 wetlands for priority restoration** in the next five years and asked states to submit their respective integrated management plan.

- Each of these wetlands will be restored under a comprehensive scheme of the **National Plan for Conservation of Aquatic Ecosystems (NPCA)** for conservation and restoration of wetlands and lakes.
- This decision came on the sidelines of the ongoing **UN conference on combating desertification (COP14)** at Greater Noida.
  - Apart from this, the government also proposed the concept of '**Wetland Health Card**' to be introduced to monitor the entire ecosystem based on multiple parameters.
  - In order to increase community engagement, the government declared to form '**Wetland Mitras**' (the group of self-motivated individuals) for taking care of the identified wetlands across the country.
- **Importance of Wetlands**
  - The wetlands are actually land areas covered by water, either temporarily or permanently. Marsh, fen and peatland come under this category.
  - They play a key **role in the hydrological cycle and flood control**, water supply and providing food, fibre and raw materials.
  - They not only act as a source of water but also as ecosystems that **prevent land degradation and desertification**.
  - Besides, such land areas also **support lakhs of migratory birds** from colder regions of the world in summers.
  - Mangroves protect coastlines and filter pollutants, that's why wetland are referred to as **kidneys of the ecosystem**.

- **Wetlands in India**

- In 2011, ISRO came out with a national wetlands atlas on the basis of satellite images, mapping over **two lakh wetlands covering around 4.63% of the total geographic area of India.**
- India's prominent wetlands include Chilika lake areas (Odisha), Wular lake (J&K), Renuka (Himachal Pradesh), Sambhar Lake (Rajasthan), Deepor Beel (Assam) etc.
  - All these falls in the list of 26 wetlands of India under **Ramsar Convention.**
  - Globally, there are 2,220 wetlands in the Ramsar list.

### **National Plan for Conservation of Aquatic Ecosystems (NPCA)**

- NPCA is a single conservation programme for both wetlands and lakes.
- It is a **centrally sponsored scheme**, currently being implemented by the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF).
  - It was formulated in 2015 by merging of the National Lake Conservation Plan and the National Wetlands Conservation Programme.
- NPCA seeks to promote better synergy and avoid overlap of administrative functions.

**Source: TOI**