

CSE-NMCG Webinar 3: Managing Urban Waterbodies for Making Cities Water-sensitive and Improving River Health

Proceedings

School of Water and Waste, CSE in partnership with National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG), Ministry of Jal Shakti, Govt. of India organised the webinar titled *Managing Urban Waterbodies for Making Cities Water-sensitive and Improving River Health* on 30 September, 2021 from 3:00-4:30 PM. This was the third webinar in the series of webinars planned under the CSE-NMCG capacity building initiative on developing water-sensitive cities in the Ganga basin.

Shri Rajiv Ranjan Mishra, Director-General, NMCG delivered the key-note address, with presentations from Dr Suresh Kumar Rohilla, Senior Director, CSE, Shri K.S. Jayachandran, Special Secretary (Environment and Forests), Govt. of NCT of Delhi and Dr Veena Srinivasan, Director, ATREE. The webinar had a combined viewership of more than 1,130 viewers across various media platforms.

Dr Rohilla inaugurated the webinar and set the context for the speakers, where he shared the various aspects of urban waterbodies management. He talked about how we define urban waterbodies, and the threats and challenges in protecting and managing them. He showcased how various urban waterbodies have been encroached, polluted and are vanishing from urban spaces in India. Dr Rohilla concluded with the significance and importance of urban waterbodies as critical green infrastructure. He and the WSUDP approach for urban waterbodies management which play an important role in source sustainability for water supply, groundwater recharge and stormwater management, helps in building resilience against the changing climate.

Shri Rajiv Ranjan Mishra stressed upon the need to protect and conserve urban waterbodies and how these are an integral part of the river ecosystem in cities. He talked about the various policies, plans and programmes undertaken by NMCG, its partner organisations and other ministries of the Govt. of India which addresses various aspects of urban waterbodies management. He also stressed upon the importance of convergence of the various urban development missions to manage urban waterbodies, particularly in peri-urban areas, and develop them as source of water. He concluded with stating that capacity building of state and city officials is an integral aspect and key to sustainable management of urban waterbodies.

Mr Jayachandran, who heads the Wetland Authority of Delhi, shared the workings of the authority, and the work undertaken by them in an effort to manage and protect the urban waterbodies of Delhi, and execute functions as mentioned in the Wetland Management Rules, 2017. He talked about the procedures to map the waterbodies, and preparation of Brief Documents and Action Plans for the same. He discussed on the methodology which the Wetland Authority has undertaken to prepare a GIS-based inventory of 1,040 wetlands in Delhi and they have prepared Brief Documents for 539 wetlands and Action Plans for 603 wetlands in Delhi.

Mr Jayachandran shared the review process for these documents by the Technical Committee, which involves various sector experts. He concluded with the various dimensions of managing Delhi's wetlands as planned by the Wetland Authority, with aspects such as Catchment Area Protocol, Model Ponds in each district, stakeholder engagement, technical assistance for mapping and restoration, etc.

The next speaker for the training, Dr Veena Srinivasan talked about the approach to urban waterbodies management with focus on the need to manage urban waterbodies, and how we can define the vision and goal for management plans, the technical and socio-economic approaches for waterbodies management and indicators and yardsticks to monitor success. She focussed on the role

of community participation, effective stakeholder engagement with state and non-state actors, and moving beyond quick-fix solutions.

Dr Srinivasan concluded with a discussion on the concept of urban waterbodies as 'Living Labs' which can provide a platform for various stakeholders to come together and manage urban waterbodies as green infrastructure and enjoy the various co-benefits of the same.

The sessions were followed by a Q&A session and discussion moderated by Dr Rohilla. The questions and discussions were centred around the implementation of Wetland Management Rules, 2017, the issues and threats to urban waterbodies and the various structural and non-structural aspects of urban waterbodies management, including focus on catchment area management and stormwater harvesting for waterbodies management, and opportunities and challenges w.r.t reusing treated wastewater as source of water for urban waterbodies. The webinar was concluded by a vote of thanks by training coordinator Dr Amrita.