



Government of West Bengal
Department of Environment

Minutes of the meeting of the East Kolkata Wetlands Management Authority held on 03.06.2022 in the Chief Secretary's Conference Room, Nabanna, Government of West Bengal

The list of participants is given in the Annexure.

Chief Secretary, West Bengal chaired the meeting.

1. Additional Chief Secretary, Environment Department briefed the members about the background, significance, Act and Rules relating to the East Kolkata Wetlands, different initiatives and actions taken by the East Kolkata Wetlands Management Authority (EKWMA).
2. East Kolkata Wetlands (EKW) located on the eastern fringes of Kolkata comprising an area of 12,500 hectares are the largest assemblage of sewage-fed fish ponds comprising around 250 water bodies across the districts of South and North 24 Parganas covering a total of 37 mouzas (30 full and 7 part) with a resident population of nearly 1,50,000 people. It is a mosaic of water bodies, agricultural land and homestead/settlements.
3. The shallow ponds of EKW, naturally recycle 910 Million Litres per Day (MLD) of sewage water generated from Kolkata city through phyto-remediation process. For this natural filtration process, the EKW deserves the description of being '**Kolkata's kidneys**'. The natural wastewater purification system obviates the need for setting up of Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs) thus saving substantial capital and recurring expenditure. EKW produces 22 thousand tonnes of fish per year, 150 tonnes of vegetables per day and 16,0000 metric tonnes of paddy per annum. EKW is a part of Kolkata's lung system as a large amount of carbon sequestration takes place in the wetlands. EKW reduce the urban heat island effect. It soaks the excess rain water during monsoon and prevents the city from flooding. EKW also serves as the excellent ground water recharge system. EKW supports rich biodiversity and a total of 1925 species have been recorded.


4. In 2002, EKW was designated as a Ramsar site for being "wetlands of international importance". EKWMA is the nodal Government authority mandated to ensure wise use of the wetland within the regulatory framework defined by the East Kolkata Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Act, 2006.
5. **Initiatives/ Actions taken by the EKWMA**
 - a) EKWMA has prepared a five-year Integrated Management Plan (IMP) as per the guidelines of National Plan for Conservation of Aquatic Ecosystems (NPCA). The total estimated budget of IMP is Rs 110.72 crores phased over a period of 5 years with the State's share of 40% and Central share of 60%. The IMP has been submitted to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) for release of fund. So far, after a rigorous and transparent screening process, nine organisations have been empanelled for implementation of different components of the IMP.
 - b) In terms of enforcement actions, EKWMA has, till date, filed 358 FIRs against violations and also undertaken demolition of illegal structures from time to time.
 - c) Environment Department has sanctioned Rs 1.98 crore to the Bidhannagar Municipal Corporation to undertake re-excavation of Bonghery Beel which had been unauthorisedly filled up to restore the original character of the land.
 - d) For the first time, boundary demarcation on the ground has been undertaken to demarcate the EKW area physically by erecting pillars. 400 boundary pillars have already been erected at Mouza Garal, Samukpota, Nayabad, Kantipota, Ranabhutia, Atghara, Mukundapur, Jagatipota, Bhagawanpur, Karimpur, ChakKalar Khal, Nonaganga, Chowbaga of South 24 Parganas and DhapaManpur of North 24 Parganas.
 - e) For the first time, afforestation drives have also been started in EKW area. The West Bengal Forest Development Corporation has completed the planting of 5269 saplings during 2021-22 covering the areas of Bamanghata, Kheadaha 1 and Tardaha Gram Panchayats at a total cost of Rs. 1.02 crore provided by the Environment Department, Government of West Bengal.
 - f) For continuous awareness generation and public education on the need to protect EKW areas from encroachments and conversion, etc., two LED-mounted mobile vans have been deployed. To involve the general public, EKWMA has also conducted study tours and involved young volunteers as 'Wetland Mitras' for conducting awareness on related issues.

- g) During 2021, EKWMA along with the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) has published the Biodiversity Profile of East Kolkata Wetlands. As per the latest surveys, a total of 1925 species (637 species of flora and 1288 species of fauna) have been recorded in EKW.
 - h) EKWMA has coordinated with Water Resources Investigation & Development Department (WRIDD) and caused a survey of 17 canals (49.41 km) within EKW. Execution works of 2 canals, namely Bidyadhari-I and Tihuria have already been started by WRIDD.
6. Action taken by the Bidhannagar Municipal Corporation (BMC) for Solid Waste Management of MollarBheri: Dumping of household/ municipal waste at MollarBheri site has been completely stopped by BMC and New Town Kolkata Development Authority (NKDA). Boundary around the MollarBheri comprising an area of 15.86 acres has been completed with *ballah* pilling and drum sheet walling. Land reclamation through bio-mining has started on the site from February, 2021 with two trommels and is expected to be completed by March, 2023.
 7. Action taken by the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) for Solid Waste Management at Dhapa dumpsite: At the State's oldest municipal waste dumpsite at Dhapa, a part has been successfully closed and capped by the Environment Department. The total estimated legacy waste accumulation in Dhapa dumpsite was approximately 40 lakh MT out of which 3.25 lakh MT of legacy waste has been mined and stabilized by spraying bio-culture. A compost plant with 500 TPD capacity, a plastic processing plant with 2 TPD capacity and 300 KLD capacity leachate treatment plants are in operation at Dhapa dumpsite.
 8. After the presentation/ discussions on the points mentioned above, the directions of the Hon'ble NGT on East Kolkata Wetlands, issued from time to time, were discussed. These are:
 - i. *To review the manner of disposal of sewage as well as the use of treated sewage for pisciculture, encroachments by concrete structures, and removal of illegal polluting units on Basanti Highway.*
 - ii. *Regular monitoring of water quality of wetlands and water bodies and stringent standards should be applied for any discharge in the water.*
 - iii. *Demarcation of boundary of East Kolkata Wetlands within stipulated time.*
 - iv. *A Monitoring Committee headed by the Chief Secretary, West Bengal may meet at least once a month and place its minutes on the website of the WBPCB.*
 9. After detailed deliberations, the following decisions were taken:

- a) Since large quantities of fish and vegetables are being produced in EKW for supply to Kolkata market, West Bengal Pollution Control Board (WBPCB) will regularly monitor the water quality of EKW's water bodies at different locations to ascertain if the level of sewage being discharged is optimal/ commensurate with EKW's natural filtration capacity. WBPCB shall submit this report to the Member Secretary, EKWMA on a monthly basis. The Institute of Environment Sciences and Wetland Management (IESWM) will also undertake similar studies on a regular basis for ascertaining the fish and horticultural produce from EKW is safe for human consumption.
- b) KMC and BMC shall review, monitor and remove encroachments within EKW regularly with the assistance of the police authorities. For removal of illegal polluting units on Basanti Highway, WBPCB will take similar action, with the assistance of the authorities concerned.
- c) It has been seen that in spite of the legal restriction on construction activity in EKW, some Gram Panchayats are issuing building permission for minor roads, culverts, buildings, etc in violation of the rules. It was decided that like in the past, the Panchayats and Rural Development Department will re-circulate an order prohibiting the panchayat bodies (concerned Zilla Parishads/ Panchayat Samitis/ Gram Panchayats of North and South 24 Parganas) from issuing approval (including online clearances, if any) for any construction activities within EKW, without prior clearance from EKWMA. The same advice shall apply to the KMC and BMC authorities in respect of the areas falling under them.
- d) Environment Department will pursue MoEF&CC for early release of funds for the implementation of the EKW Integrated Management Plan. In the meanwhile, funds available under the Environment Department's regular budget may be utilised. For maximum public participation in its implementation, the organisations selected by EKWMA through a transparent process may be utilised; efforts must also be made to involve self-help groups, wherever possible.
- e) To effectively enforce the prohibition on conversion of land use/ change of character of land/ construction of permanent nature within the 37 mouzas of EKW, an online flag/pop up message will be incorporated in the existing property Registration Portal by the Finance Department, and in the Banglarbhumi portal by the Land and Land Reforms and Refugee Relief and Rehabilitation Department (as has been done for lands of Tea Gardens and tribal lands). Such a facility will forewarn/ caution the buyers of land about lands falling under the notified boundaries of EKW and the restrictions on change of character of land/ conversion/ large-scale construction activities.

- f) The Water Resource Investigation and Development Department (WRIDD) will undertake the periodic de-siltation / re-excavation of the canals in EKW and surrounding areas, to ensure that the maintenance of the optimum level of water conducive to pisciculture and overall wetland management.
- g) EKWMA will publish advertisements in print and electronic media from time to time as well as on social media handles to make the public aware on the environmental importance of preserving EKW as well as the prohibition on land conversion and permanent construction within EKW. It will continue other measures for extensive awareness generation on the need to protect and conserve EKW.
- h) Since the concrete boundary pillars being erected by the district administrations of South and North 24 Parganas to demarcate EKW areas are small (not noticeable in the public eye) and of destructible nature, it was decided that high-mast steel signages of indestructible nature (as seen on National Highways) will be installed by Kolkata Metropolitan Development Authority (KMDA) beginning with the locations/ sites that are most vulnerable to encroachments; since this expenditure is towards environment protection, funding could be provided by WBPCB (from the proceeds collected/deposited as Environmental Compensation by different project proponents/agencies in terms of orders of NGT or any other related fund).
- i) A copy of these minutes shall be placed on the website of EKWMA and Department of Environment.

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


[H. K. Dwivedi]
Chief Secretary
Govt. of West Bengal



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Annexure

The following persons attended the meeting of the East Kolkata Wetlands Management Authority held on 03.06.2022 in the Chief Secretary's Conference Room, Nabanna, Government of West Bengal:

- 1) Shri H. K. Dwivedi, Chief Secretary, West Bengal and Vice-Chairperson, State Wetlands Authority (SWA) and Member, East Kolkata Wetlands Management Authority (EKWMA)
- 2) Shri Debasish Sen, Chairman, New Town Kolkata Development (NKDA)
- 3) Dr. Kalyan Rudra, Chairman, West Bengal Pollution Control Board and Expert Member, EKWMA
- 4) Shri Vivek Kumar, Additional Chief Secretary (ACS), Environment Department and Member Secretary, SWA & EKWMA, and ACS, Forest Department and Member, SWA & EKWMA
- 5) Dr. Rajesh Kumar, Member Secretary, West Bengal Pollution Control Board and Member, SWA
- 6) Dr. Manoj Pant, Additional Chief Secretary, Finance Department and Member, SWA
- 7) Shri Debal Roy, Chief Wildlife Warden, West Bengal and Member, SWA (Attended through V.C.)
- 8) Shri Prabhat Kumar Mishra, Principal Secretary, Irrigation and Waterways Department and Member, SWA & EKWMA and Principal Secretary, Water Resources Investigation & Development Department and Member, SWA
- 9) Shri Anoop Kumar Agarwal, Principal Secretary, Science and Technology and Biotechnology Department and Member, SWA
- 10) Shri Khalil Ahmed, Principal Secretary, Urban Development and Municipal Affairs Department and Member, SWA
- 11) Shri Binod Kumar, Commissioner, Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) and Invitee Member, EKWMA
- 12) Shri Onkar Singh Meena, Principal Secretary, Public Works Department
- 13) Smt. Neelam Meena, Secretary, Environment Department (Attended through V.C.)
- 14) Smt. Smaraki Mahapatra, Secretary, Land and Land Reforms Refugee Relief and Rehabilitation Department and Member, SWA & EKWMA

- 15) Shri K. Balamurugan, Chief Environment Officer, Environment Department and Member, SWA
- 16) Dr. P. Ulaganathan, District Magistrate, South 24 Parganas and Invitee Member, EKWMA
- 17) Shri Ajoy Sanyamath, Senior Special Secretary, L&LR and RR&R Department
- 18) Smt. Tripti Sah, Member Secretary, West Bengal Biodiversity Board and Member, SWA (Attended through V.C.)
- 19) Shri Sumit Gupta, District Magistrate, North 24 Parganas and Invitee Member, EKWMA
- 20) Smt. Nandini Ghosh, Joint Secretary, UD&MA Department
- 21) Shri Sujay Sarkar, Commissioner, Bidhannagar Municipal Corporation (BMC)
- 22) Smt. Shanta Pradhan, Special Secretary, Tourism Department (Representative of Principal Secretary and Member, EKWMA)
- 23) Shri Supriya Ghoshal, Director, State Urban Development Agency (SUDA)
- 24) Shri Joly Chaudhuri, Additional Secretary, UD&MA Department and Additional Director, SUDA
- 25) Prof. Waikom Viswanath, Member, National Wetlands Committee and representative, MoEF&CC (Attended through V.C.)
- 26) Shri M.K. Biswas, Regional Director, Central Pollution Control Board (Attended through V.C.)
- 27) Dr Subir Ghosh, Member, IUCN and Expert Member, SWA (Attended through V.C.)
- 28) Prof. Gupinath Bhandari, Associate Professor, Department of Civil Engineering, Jadavpur University and Expert Member, SWA (Attended through V.C.)
- 29) Prof. Lakshmi Sivaramakrishnan, Head, Department of Geography, Jadavpur University and Expert Member, SWA (Attended through V.C.)
- 30) Prof. Sumana Bandyopadhyay, Professor, Department of Geography, Calcutta University and Expert Member, SWA (Attended through V.C.)
- 31) Dr Srikanta Samanta, Head, Riverine and Estuarine Fisheries Division, CIFRI and Expert Member, SWA (Attended through V.C.).
- 32) Shri Prantik Ray, *Chief Engineer, Ganga Action Plan, Kolkata Metropolitan Development Authority
- 33) Dr. Tapas Kumar Gupta, Chief Technical Advisor, WBPCB (Attended through V.C.)
- 34) Shri Sukdeb Das, Senior Law Officer, UD&MA Department
- 35) Smt. Paushali Pahari, Senior Law Officer, Environment Department