



## EDITORIAL: THE HINDU

**GENERAL STUDIES 3: ENVIRONMENT**  
**TOPIC: WETLAND CONSERVATION**

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### The necessity of mainstreaming wetland conservation

#### Meghalaya's Suo Motu Case on Wetland Conservation

##### 1. Importance of Wetland Conservation in India

- A suo motu case in Meghalaya highlights challenges in wetland protection.
- Despite being part of the Ramsar Convention, India's wetlands face urbanization, pollution, and climate change threats.

#### Key Facts About Wetlands and Their Global Importance

##### 2. World Wetlands Day and Ramsar Convention

- February 2 is observed as World Wetlands Day to mark the 1971 Ramsar Convention.
- The 2023 theme, 'Protecting Wetlands for Our Common Future,' emphasizes their role in sustainable development.

##### 3. The Role of Wetlands in the Ecosystem

- Wetlands are among the most biologically productive ecosystems, covering 12.1 million km<sup>2</sup> globally.
- They provide 40.6% of ecosystem services, including water filtration, flood control, and carbon storage.

#### Major Threats to Wetlands

##### 4. Decline in Wetlands Over Time

- Since 1900, 50% of the world's wetlands have been lost.
- From 1970 to 2015, wetland surface areas declined by 35%.
- Inland wetland species declined by 81%, and coastal/marine species by 36% since 1970.

##### 5. Causes of Wetland Degradation

- Urbanization, population growth, industrialization, and climate change are major factors.
- The 2022 Ramsar Convention emphasized integrating wetland conservation with climate action and biodiversity protection.



## Wetland Conservation Efforts in India

### 6. India's Wetland Protection Initiatives

- India, a Ramsar Convention signatory, has designated 75 Ramsar sites covering 1.33 million hectares (8% of total wetland area).
- India's total wetland area is 15.98 million hectares.
- According to the 2017-18 National Wetland Decadal Change Atlas:
  - 66.6% of wetlands in India are natural.
  - 43.9% are inland wetlands, while 22.7% are coastal wetlands.

### 7. Alarming Loss of Wetlands in Indian Cities

- 30% of India's natural wetlands have disappeared in the last four decades.
- Urban wetlands are under severe threat:
  - Mumbai lost 71% of its wetlands (1970-2014).
  - Kolkata lost 36% of its wetlands (1991-2021).
  - Chennai lost 85% of its wetlands, according to a recent study.

## Economic Impact of Wetland Degradation

### 8. Financial Losses from Wetland Destruction

- Loss of wetlands reduces ecosystem services, affecting economies and livelihoods.
- A study in Colombia estimated urban wetland loss costs \$76,827 per hectare per year.
- In peri-urban areas, the loss amounts to \$30,354 per hectare per year.

## Need for a Stronger Conservation Strategy

### 9. Gaps in Current Wetland Management

- India's wetland conservation policies focus mainly on ecological aspects but lack attention on:
  - Human-induced impacts (pollution, encroachment).
  - Land-use changes affecting wetland health.
  - Governance challenges in enforcement.



## 10. Importance of an Integrated Conservation Approach

- Wetlands support ecological, economic, and social stability and need holistic conservation.
- They act as carbon sinks, helping in climate change mitigation.
- Conservation strategies must:
  - Use an ecosystem-based approach.
  - Be integrated into broader development plans.
  - Align with international climate and biodiversity agreements.

## Conclusion

- Wetlands are crucial for biodiversity, climate resilience, and water management.
- Stronger policy measures, sustainable management, and community participation are needed.
- Without urgent action, wetland loss will continue, leading to severe environmental and economic consequences.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/the-necessity-of-mainstreaming-wetland-conservation/article69276052.ece>