National Water Policy 2012

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Salient features of National Water Policy

- **Water Framework Law: Emphasis on the need for a national water framework law,** comprehensive legislation for optimum development of inter-State rivers and river valleys, amendment of Irrigation Acts, Indian Easements Act, 1882, etc.
- **Uses of Water: Water**, after meeting the pre-emptive needs for safe drinking water and sanitation, achieving food security, supporting poor people dependent on agriculture for their livelihood and high priority allocation for minimum eco-system needs, be treated as economic good so as to promote its conservation and efficient use.
- **The ecological needs of the river** should be determined to recognize that river flows are characterized by low or no flows, small floods (freshets), large floods and flow variability and should accommodate development needs. A portion of river flows should be kept aside to meet ecological needs ensuring that the proportional low and high flow releases correspond in time closely to the natural flow regime.
- **Adaptation to Climate Change:** Adaptation strategies in view of climate change for designing and management of water resources structures and review of acceptability criteria has been emphasized.
- **Management of Flood & Drought:** While every effort should be made to avert water-related disasters like floods and droughts, through structural and non-structural measures, emphasis should be on preparedness for flood/drought with coping mechanisms as an option. Greater emphasis should be placed on rehabilitation of

the natural drainage system.

- **Demand Management & Water use efficiency:** A system to evolve benchmarks for water uses for different purposes, i.e., water footprints, and water auditing be developed to ensure efficient use of water. Project financing has been suggested as a tool to incentivize efficient & economic use of water.
- **Setting up of Water Regulatory Authority** has been recommended. Incentivization of recycling and re-use has been recommended.
- **Trans-boundary rivers: Even while accepting the principle of the basin as a unit of development, on the basis of practicability and easy implementability, efforts should be made to enter into international agreements with neighbouring countries on a bilateral basis for the exchange of hydrological data of international rivers on near real-time basis. Negotiations about sharing and management of water of international rivers should be done on a bilateral basis in consultative association with riparian States keeping paramount the national interest**
- **Water Users Associations should be given statutory powers** to collect and retain a portion of water charges, manage the volumetric quantum of water allotted to them and maintain the distribution system in their jurisdiction.
- **Removal of large disparity** in stipulations for water supply in urban areas and in rural areas has been recommended.
- Water resources projects and services should be managed with **community participation.** Wherever the State Governments or local governing bodies so decide, the private sector can be encouraged to become a service provider in public-private partnership model to meet agreed terms of service delivery, including penalties for failure.
- **Adequate grants to the States to update technology,**

design practices, planning and management practices, preparation of annual water balances and accounts for the site and basin, preparation of hydrologic balances for water systems, and benchmarking and performance evaluation.

- **Implementation of National water policy:** National Water Board should prepare a plan of action based on the National Water Policy, as approved by the National Water Resources Council, and to regularly monitor its implementation. The State Water Policies may need to be drafted/revised in accordance with this policy keeping in mind the basic concerns and principles as also a unified national perspective.

Comparision of provisions of National Water Policies 1987, 2002 and National Water Policy (2012)

Sl. No.	Sector Description	National Water Policy (1987)	National Water Policy (2002)	Draft National Water Policy (2012)
1.	**Perspective for Water Resources Planning**	National perspectives.	National perspectives.	Integrated perspective considering local, regional, State and national context
2.	**Information System**	Standardized national information system	Standardized national information system	All water related data, should be integrated with well-defined procedures and formats to ensure online updation and transfer of data to facilitate development of database for informed decision making in the management of water

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3.	**Water Resources Planning**	Hydrological unit such as a drainage basin as a whole, or a sub-basin	Hydrological unit such as a drainage basin as a whole, or a sub-basin	Integrated Water Resources Management taking river basin / sub-basin as a unit, should be the main principle for planning, development and management of water resources
4.	**Institutio-nal Mechanism**	Appropriate organisations should be established for the planned development and management of a river basin as a whole.	Appropriate river basin organisations should be established for the planned development and management of a river basin as a whole or sub-basins, wherever necessary.	There is a need for comprehensive legislation for optimum development of inter-State rivers and river valleys and to enable establishment of basin authorities with appropriate powers to plan, manage and regulate utilization of water resource in the basins.
5.	**Water Allocation Priorities**	Drinking water accorded highest priority followed by irrigation, hydro-power, navigation, industries, etc.	Drinking water accorded highest priority followed by irrigation, hydro-power, ecology, navigation, industries, etc.	Safe drinking water and sanitation defined as pre-emptive needs followed by high priority allocation for other domestic needs (including needs of animals), achieving food security, supporting sustenance agriculture and minimum eco-system needs.

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6.	**Project Planning**	Water resource development projects should as far as possible be planned and developed as multipurpose projects.	Water resource development projects should as far as possible be planned and developed as multipurpose projects.	All water resources projects, including hydro power projects, should be planned to the extent feasible as multi-purpose projects with provision of storage to derive maximum benefit from available topology and water resources
7.	**Environmental Flow in Rivers**	No specific mention except providing for the preservation of the quality of environment and the ecological balance.	Minimum flow should be ensured in the perennial streams for maintaining ecology and social considerations.	A portion of river flows should be kept aside to meet ecological needs ensuring that the proportional low and high flow releases correspond in time closely to the natural flow regime.
8.	**Ground-water development**	Exploitation of ground water resources should be so regulated as not to exceed the recharging possibilities, as also to ensure social equity.	Exploitation of ground water resources should be so regulated as not to exceed the recharging possibilities, as also to ensure social equity.	Declining ground water levels in over-exploited areas need to be arrested by introducing improved technologies of water use, incentivizing efficient water use and encouraging community based management of aquifers.

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9.	**Access to safe drinking Water**	Adequate drinking water facilities should be provided to the entire population both in urban and in rural areas by 1991.	Adequate safe drinking water facilities should be provided to the entire population both in urban and in rural areas.	Minimum quantity of potable water for essential health and hygiene to all its citizens, available within easy reach of the household, must be ensured.
10.	**Inter-basin transfer**	Water should be made available to water short areas by transfer from other areas including transfers from one river basin to another, based on a national perspective, after taking into account the requirements of the areas/basins.	Water should be made available to water short areas by transfer from other areas including transfers from one river basin to another, based on a national perspective, after taking into account the requirements of the areas / basins.	Inter-basin transfers are not merely for increasing production but also for meeting basic human need and achieving equity and social justice. Inter-basin transfers of water should be considered on the basis of merits of each case after evaluating the environmental, economic and social impacts of such transfers.

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11.	**Water Use Efficiency**	The efficiency of utilisation in all the diverse uses of water should be improved and an awareness of water as a scarce resource should be fostered.	Efficiency of utilisation in all the diverse uses of water should be optimised and an awareness of water as a scarce resource should be fostered.	The “project” and the “basin” water use efficiencies need to be improved through continuous water balance and water accounting studies. An institutional arrangement for promotion, regulation and evolving mechanisms for efficient use of water at basin/sub-basin level will be established for this purpose at the national level.
12.	**Water Pricing**	Water rates should be adequate to cover the annual maintenance and operation charges and a part of the fixed costs.	Water charges should cover at least the operation and maintenance charges of providing the service initially and a part of the capital costs subsequently.	Water Regulatory Authority should be set up to fix water tariffs with provision of differential pricing for the pre-emptive and high priority uses of water.

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13.	**Participatory Water Management**	Efforts should be made to involve farmers progressively in various aspects of management of irrigation systems, particularly in water distribution and collection of water rates.	Water Users' Associations and the local bodies should be involved in the operation, maintenance and management of water infrastructures / facilities at appropriate levels progressively, with a view to eventually transfer the management of such facilities to the user groups / local bodies.	Community based water management should be institutionalized and strengthened. Water Users Associations should be given statutory powers to collect and retain a portion of water charges, manage the volumetric quantum of water allotted to them and maintain the distribution system in their jurisdiction
14.	**Flood management**	Emphasis on non-structural measures, such as flood forecasting and warning and flood plain zoning, so as to reduce the recurring expenditure on flood relief.	Emphasis on non-structural measures, such as flood forecasting and warning, flood plain zoning and flood proofing, so as to reduce the recurring expenditure on flood relief.	While every effort should be made to avert water related disasters like floods and droughts, through structural and non-structural measures, emphasis should be on preparedness for flood / drought with coping mechanisms as an option. Greater emphasis should be placed on rehabilitation of natural drainage system.

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15.	**Gap between Irrigation Potential created and utilized**	Concerted efforts, such as command area development, should be made to ensure that the irrigation potential created is fully utilised and the gap between the potential created and its utilisation is removed.	Concerted efforts should be made to ensure that the irrigation potential created is fully utilised. For this purpose, the command area development approach should be adopted in all irrigation projects.	All components of water resources projects should be planned and executed in a pari-passu manner so that intended benefits start accruing immediately and there is no gap between potential created and potential utilized.