

National Water Policy

September 18, 2020

The objective of the National Water Policy is to take cognizance of the existing situation, to propose a **framework for creation of a system of laws and institutions** and for a plan of action with a unified national perspective.

Features of National Water Policy

▪ **Water Framework Law**

. The framework law must recognize water not only as a scarce resource but also as a sustainer of life and ecology. **Groundwater** in particular needs to be **managed as a community resource** held by the state, under **public trust doctrine**.

. Comprehensive legislation for optimum development of inter state rivers and river valleys.

▪ **Adaptation to Climate Change**

. The anticipated increase in variability in availability of water because of climate change should be dealt with by increasing water storage in the various forms.

▪ **Enhancing Water Availability for Use**

. The availability of water resources and its use by various sectors in various basins and States in the country need to be **assessed scientifically and reviewed** at periodical intervals, say every 5 years.

. There is a need to **map aquifers** to know the quantum and quality of ground water resources.

. 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.

▪ **Water Pricing**

. Equitable access to water for all and its fair pricing, for drinking and other uses such as sanitation, agricultural and industrial, should be arrived at through **independent statutory Water Regulatory Authority (WRA)**, set up by each State.

. The principle of **differential pricing** may be retained for the pre-emptive uses of water for drinking and sanitation; and high priority allocation for ensuring food security and supporting livelihood for the poor.

. The over withdrawal of groundwater should be minimized by **regulating the use of electricity** for its extraction. Separate electric feeders for pumping groundwater for agricultural use should be considered.

▪ **Database and Information System**

All hydrological data, other than those classified on national security consideration, should be in public domain. A **National Water Informatics Center** should be established to collect, collate and process hydrologic data regularly from all over the country, conduct the preliminary processing, and maintain in an open and transparent manner on a GIS platform.

▪ **Institutional Arrangements**

. A **permanent Water Disputes Tribunal at the Centre** should be established to resolve the disputes expeditiously in an equitable manner.

▪ **Water Supply and Sanitation**

. There is a need to **remove large disparity** between stipulations for water supply in **urban and in rural areas**. Efforts should be made to provide improved water supply in rural areas with proper sewerage facilities.

. Urban domestic water systems need to collect and publish

water accounts and water audit reports indicating leakages and pilferage, which should be reduced.

. In urban and industrial areas, **rainwater harvesting and desalination**, wherever techno-economically feasible, should be encouraged to increase availability of utilizable water.

- **Water Infrastructure**

. The water resources infrastructure should be maintained properly to continue to get the intended benefits. A **suitable percentage of the costs of infrastructure development** may be set aside along with collected water charges, for repair and maintenance.