
INTERNATIONAL CONCERNS FOR PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION OF WETLANDS AND LEGISLATIVE DEVELOPMENTS IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Wetlands constitute a vital component of the global ecological system and hold significant importance not only from an environmental perspective but also in terms of economic value. However, their importance has been recognized only in recent times. Prior to the Ramsar Convention, there was no comprehensive international agreement through which a majority of nations collectively committed to the conservation and protection of wetlands worldwide.

India, being a signatory to this Convention, has undertaken several legislative and policy measures to ensure the preservation of wetlands. The country has consistently shown concern towards environmental protection, which inherently includes the conservation of wetland ecosystems. Following the Convention, numerous legal developments have taken place in India in this regard.

This paper aims to provide a brief analysis of the Ramsar Convention held in Iran in 1971, along with an examination of the legislative steps adopted by the Government of India thereafter. It also seeks to explore the constitutional provisions relating to environmental protection and ecological conservation.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Wetlands are among the most endangered ecosystems on the planet, disappearing at a rate nearly three times faster than forests. It is estimated that almost 90 percent of the world's wetlands have been degraded since 1700², and about 35 percent have been lost since 1970. In response to this alarming trend, the Ramsar Convention was established as a global initiative aimed at conserving and protecting wetlands. Adopted in 1971, it was the first international treaty specifically dedicated to wetland conservation.

The Convention emerged during a period marked by growing environmental awareness and made significant contributions to global conservation efforts and sustainable development. Its guiding principles, including the establishment of protected wetland networks and the concept of "wise use," have since influenced numerous international agreements as well as domestic legal frameworks. Over time, the Convention has evolved considerably, with the adoption of a protocol in 1982 and subsequent amendments in 1987. Today, it includes numerous member states that have collectively six hundreds of sites under the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance. The Convention is supported by an active programme, sufficient funding, and a permanent secretariat, known as the Ramsar Bureau, which oversees its implementation.³

Historically, the relationship between humans and wetlands has often been characterized by misunderstanding and conflict. Wetlands were long perceived as unproductive, unhealthy, and obstructive to development. Despite this perception, many great civilizations developed in or near wetland regions, including those in Mesopotamia, the Nile Delta, ancient Rome, and parts of Europe and Asia⁴. These regions benefited from the high productivity and biodiversity of wetlands.

Nevertheless, wetlands continued to be viewed negatively, leading to widespread drainage and reclamation in the name of development. Over centuries, this has resulted in the disappearance of vast wetland areas. In some regions, such as Macedonia, a significant proportion of marshlands and lakes were lost due to such practices.⁵

The initial efforts to establish an international treaty for wetland conservation were largely driven by concerns related to waterfowl habitats. However, over time, a broader understanding of wetlands emerged, recognizing their crucial role in groundwater recharge, water cycle regulation, water storage, purification, and as habitats for diverse species, particularly fish. In many developing countries, large

² *Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, dated February 08, 2022*

³ *G. V. T. Matthews, The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands: its History and Development, Published by the Ramsar Convention Bureau, Gland, Switzerland.1993*

⁴ *Ibid*

⁵ *Ibid*

populations depend directly on wetlands for their livelihoods.

In developed nations, enormous financial resources are now being spent to restore the ecological functions of wetlands functions that would have been naturally sustained if these ecosystems had been preserved. Consequently, restoration of degraded wetlands is increasingly viewed as a necessary and economically sound strategy rather than an unnecessary expense.

The Ramsar Convention has played a significant role in promoting wetland conservation worldwide. In India, the Constitution provides extensive provisions for environmental protection, and following the Convention, the government has introduced several legislative measures and policies aimed at conserving wetlands and ensuring their sustainable use.⁶

II. INTERNATIONAL CONCERNS FOR PROTECTION OF ENVIRONMENT

Over the years, environmental protection has emerged as a matter of global concern, leading to the development of various international initiatives and agreements. The growing realization of ecological degradation and resource depletion has encouraged nations to cooperate in preserving natural ecosystems. Among these, wetlands have gained particular attention due to their ecological, economic, and social importance. International efforts have increasingly emphasized sustainable development, conservation, and the responsible use of natural resources, thereby promoting coordinated action at both national and global levels.

II.I. THE RAMSAR CONVENTION

The Ramsar Convention establishes an international framework for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands through collective action at local, national, and global levels.⁷ It was adopted on 3rd February 1971 in the Iranian town of Ramsar, located between the Alborz Mountains and the Caspian Sea, where representatives of 18 countries signed this landmark agreement.

As the first modern international treaty dedicated to the conservation of natural resources, the Convention plays a unique role in preventing the indiscriminate exploitation of wetlands. It specifically addresses one of the most vulnerable ecosystems, encompassing lakes, rivers, marshes, swamps, floodplains, and coastal areas that are either permanently or seasonally saturated with water.

The Convention operates through an active organizational structure supported by a permanent

⁶ G. V. T. Matthews, *The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands: its History and Development*, Published by the Ramsar Convention Bureau, Gland, Switzerland.1993

⁷ Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, dated August 26,2022.

secretariat, known as the Ramsar Bureau, headquartered in Gland, Switzerland. Funded by member states, the Convention has grown significantly over time, with an increasing number of countries participating and committing to wetland conservation.

Member states undertake several responsibilities, including promoting the “wise use” of wetlands, conducting environmental impact assessments, preparing wetland inventories, establishing protected areas, training professionals, and cooperating with other countries. A key obligation under the Convention is the designation of at least one wetland preferably more as a Wetland of International Importance. Such designated sites are afforded special protection, with their ecological condition monitored through international cooperation and review mechanisms.

By the early 1990s, hundreds of wetlands had been included in the Ramsar List, covering vast geographical areas. Although this represents significant progress, continuous efforts are required to ensure effective conservation. Regular meetings of member states provide a platform to assess achievements, share research and management practices, interpret the Convention’s provisions, and decide on financial matters, including the allocation of funds to support developing countries.

II.II. Recognition of the Value of Wetlands

While it is now widely accepted that wetlands are essential ecosystems requiring conservation, systematic documentation of their location and characteristics was initially limited, particularly outside North America. The collection and organization of wetland data involved extensive efforts by numerous experts and institutions.

Waterfowl studies played a crucial role in identifying significant wetlands, as long-term international monitoring helped determine key habitats. The criteria for classifying wetlands, though appearing straightforward today, are based on extensive scientific discussions and historical developments.

One of the most progressive aspects of the Convention is its emphasis on the “wise use” of wetlands, allowing sustainable utilization rather than insisting on complete preservation. This approach reflects a practical understanding of conservation. The management of wetlands, especially in relation to waterfowl populations, has been a subject of continuous discussion and development.

Although wetland management is not an exact science, it relies on accumulated knowledge, experience, and adaptive practices. The Ramsar Bureau, often supported by experts, has developed detailed procedures for monitoring and maintaining the ecological health of wetlands included in the Ramsar List.

II.III. Classification of Wetlands on the Ramsar List

The Directory of Wetlands of International Importance, whose final volume was published in 1990, originally did not adopt a formal classification system for wetlands. However, during the Fourth Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, it was decided that a standardized classification of wetland types should be used by member countries as well as by the Ramsar Bureau.

This classification system, while broadly consistent with earlier approaches, categorizes wetlands into three main groups: marine and coastal wetlands, inland wetlands, and human-made wetlands. Each category includes several sub-types, identified based on their ecological characteristics. The classification also records the number of sites and the area covered under each category on the Ramsar List.⁸

Habitat type	Number	Area (k ha)
Marine and coastal wetlands		
A. Shallow marine waters	12	266.7
B. Marine beds	1	1.9
C. Coral reefs	3	95.1
D. Rocky shores	19	30.5
E. Sand/shingle shores (including dune systems)	9	160.2
F. Estuarine waters	34	1,409.0
G. Tidal mudflats (including salt flats)	37	2,880.1
H. Salt marshes	9	93.5
I. Mangroves/tidal forest	13	579.3
J. Coastal brackish/saline lagoon	85	1,849.9

⁸ G. V. T. Matthews, *The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands: its History and Development*, Published by the Ramsar Convention Bureau, Gland, Switzerland.1993

K. Coastal freshwater lagoons	17	202.4
L. Deltas	22	2,343.6
Inland wetlands		
M. Rivers/streams/creeks: permanent	19	1,351.1
N. Rivers/streams/creeks: seasonal/intermittent	2	697.0
O. Freshwater lakes: permanent	104	3,969.5
P. Freshwater lakes: seasonal/intermittent	7	159.6
Q. Saline/brackish lakes/marshes: permanen	20	2,078.7
R. Saline/brackish lakes: seasonal/intermittent	10	83.2
S. Freshwater marshes/pools: permanent	38	1,966.7
T. Freshwater marshes/pools: seasonal/intermittent	7	938.5
U. Peatlands (including bogs/swamps/fens)	47	2,535.5
V. Tundra/alpine wetlands	15	8,509.5
W. Shrub-dominated wetlands	1	188.6
X. Tree-dominated wetlands (including swamp forest)	15	3,802.9
Y. Freshwater springs (including oases)	2	9.5
Z. Geothermal wetlands	1	5.2
Man-made wetlands		
1. Fish/shrimp ponds	8	19.0
2. Farm ponds/small tanks	0	0.0

3. Irrigated land (including rice fields)	0	0.0
4. Seasonally flooded agricultural land.	5	5.5
5. Salt pans/salines	6	12.0
6. Reservoirs/barrages/dams	21	183.7
7. Gravel/brick/clay pits	0	0.0
8. Sewage farms	1	0.2
9. Canals	0	0.0
Totals	590	36,702.5

II.IV. Wetlands of International Importance

Under the Ramsar Convention, all wetlands are acknowledged as valuable ecosystems; however, certain wetlands are identified as being of greater international significance and thus require special protection. According to Article 2.1 of the Convention, each Contracting Party is obligated to designate suitable wetlands within its territory for inclusion in the List of Wetlands of International Importance.

Article 2.2 further provides that such wetlands should be selected based on their ecological, botanical, zoological, limnological, or hydrological significance. In particular, wetlands that are important for waterfowl at any stage of their life cycle are to be given priority.

Although the Convention initially did not provide detailed criteria, efforts were made to develop guidelines for identifying wetlands of international importance. One such attempt was the formulation of criteria for the Western Palearctic region, which suggested that a wetland may qualify if it meets at least one of the following conditions:

- It supports more than 0.2% of the total population of waterfowl along a specific migratory route.
- It regularly sustains more than 1% of the population of a particular waterfowl species.
- It serves as a habitat for endangered or vulnerable species of waterfowl.
- It acts as a crucial stopover or staging site along migratory pathways.

- It represents a rare or declining type of wetland ecosystem.
- It complements another wetland of international importance in ecological terms.
- It possesses significant educational, scientific, or research value beyond national boundaries⁹.

Additionally, wetlands that extend across national borders should be managed and conserved collectively as a single ecological unit.

II.V. The Need for Wetland Inventories

Even after recognizing that wetlands are valuable ecosystems rather than wastelands, an important question still arises: where exactly are these wetlands located? This question becomes especially significant for countries that are either parties to, or considering joining, the Ramsar Convention.

The Convention clearly outlines obligations in this regard. Article 2.1 mandates that each Contracting Party must identify and designate suitable wetlands within its territory for inclusion in the List of Wetlands of International Importance. Furthermore, the boundaries of such wetlands must be accurately defined and mapped. Article 2.4 requires that at least one wetland be designated at the time of accession to the Convention. Additionally, Article 3.1 obligates member states to develop and implement planning strategies to ensure the conservation of listed wetlands and promote the wise use of all wetlands within their jurisdiction.

These provisions make it evident that the preparation of a comprehensive inventory of wetlands, particularly those of major ecological significance, is essential. Without such an inventory, it would be difficult for any country to fulfill its international obligations or to formulate an effective and coherent wetland conservation strategy.

II.VI. Wise Use, Management, and Monitoring

Article 3.1 of the Ramsar Convention emphasizes that Contracting Parties must promote the wise use of wetlands through proper planning and management. While it is relatively easy to identify practices that constitute misuse such as draining wetlands for marginal agricultural purposes, disrupting their natural hydrological systems, or polluting them with waste the concept of “wise use” is more complex to define.

Although the Convention does not explicitly define the term, it is generally understood to mean

⁹ G. V. T. Matthews, *The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands: its History and Development*, Published by the Ramsar Convention Bureau, Gland, Switzerland. 1993

sustainable utilization. This interpretation aligns with earlier provisions relating to the sustainable use of waterfowl populations. The Convention was forward-looking in this respect, as it shifted the focus from mere preservation to active conservation through informed management.

This idea was further strengthened in 1980 with the introduction of the World Conservation Strategy by organizations such as the International Union for Conservation of Nature, United Nations Environment Programme, and World-Wide Fund for Nature. The strategy defined conservation as the management of human interaction with the biosphere in a way that ensures maximum sustainable benefits for present generations without compromising the needs of future generations.

In the early years, the Convention was primarily adopted by developed nations, where many wetlands had already been altered or managed by human activities. Consequently, the focus was on improving management practices. However, as more developing countries joined, the emphasis shifted toward protecting relatively undisturbed wetlands, where intensive management was neither necessary nor appropriate. In such contexts, sustainable use especially in terms of food and resource production—became a more practical argument for conservation.

To support this approach, the Conferences of the Parties developed guidelines to better understand and implement the concept of wise use. The overall mission of the Convention is to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands through both national efforts and international cooperation.

An important tool in this regard is the Montreux Record, a database maintained under the Convention. It identifies wetlands where ecological changes have occurred or are likely to occur due to pollution or other human activities. Inclusion in this record highlights the urgency of taking priority action for the effective management and restoration of such wetlands.¹⁰

III. Development of National Policies for Wetlands

The importance of developing comprehensive national wetland policies was first emphasized during the initial meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention¹¹. A recommendation at that meeting highlighted the relevance of the World Conservation Strategy and stressed that national-level policy frameworks are essential for promoting the wise use of wetlands. A nationwide inventory of wetlands and their resources was identified as a fundamental requirement.

This theme was further elaborated during the Second Conference¹² of the Parties through

¹⁰ *Dr. Tarun Bala, Wetlands An Economic Valuation, Rajat Publications, 470/23, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi- 110002 (2023)*

¹¹ *Cagliari, Sardinia, 1980.*

¹² *Groningen, Netherlands, 1984*

Recommendation 2.3, which outlined five key approaches necessary for effective wetland policy development:

Scientific research and data collection

Legal and policy frameworks

Management strategies

Education and public awareness

Special measures for wetlands listed under the Ramsar Convention

While these aspects are often discussed at the international level, their implementation ultimately depends on national legal systems. International treaties like the Ramsar Convention serve as instruments through which countries agree to cooperate and establish mutual legal obligations. However, such treaties are generally less enforceable than domestic laws, as no country can be bound without its consent.

Environmental treaties, in particular, tend to be weaker due to the need to accommodate diverse political, economic, and social conditions across countries. Moreover, there is no strong enforcement mechanism at the international level. Disputes may be referred to institutions such as the International Court of Justice, but only with the consent of the concerned parties, and enforcement of decisions remains challenging. Economic sanctions are also not considered a practical solution. Therefore, criticisms that the Convention lacks strong enforcement mechanisms often overlook these inherent limitations of international law.

The Convention itself constitutes “hard law”, meaning that its provisions are legally binding on the Parties. Modifying its text is a complex and time-consuming process, which underlines the importance and stability of its provisions. Even the statements in the preamble carry legal significance, as they reflect the fundamental principles guiding the actions of member states such as recognizing wetlands as valuable resources whose loss would be irreversible.

In addition to this, “soft law” has developed through resolutions and recommendations adopted at meetings of the Contracting Parties. Although not as strictly binding as the Convention text, these instruments provide important guidance and are generally accepted by consensus. They have immediate effect and help shape the practical implementation of the Convention without requiring formal amendments.

IV. Indian Legislative Developments

Since India became a signatory to the Ramsar Convention in 1982¹³, it has undertaken significant legislative and policy measures for the protection and conservation of wetlands. In addition, constitutional provisions have been interpreted and strengthened to align with international environmental obligations. The following are some of the key legal and policy developments in India relating to wetland conservation:

A. Right to a Clean Environment

The scope of Article 21 of the Constitution of India has been progressively expanded by the judiciary. In landmark cases such as *Subhash Kumar v. State of Bihar*¹⁴ and *Virendra Gaur v. State of Haryana*¹⁵, the Supreme Court held that the right to life includes the right to live in a clean, healthy, and pollution-free environment.

Wetlands, being essential ecological systems and natural purifiers, play a crucial role in maintaining environmental balance. Therefore, their protection becomes integral to the realization of the fundamental right to life.

B. Article 48-A of the Constitution

Article 48-A, a Directive Principle of State Policy, imposes a duty on the State to protect and improve the environment and safeguard forests and wildlife. In the landmark *M. C. Mehta v. Union of India*¹⁶ cases, the Supreme Court emphasized that environmental protection is a constitutional obligation of the State.

Since wetlands support rich biodiversity and are closely linked with forest and wildlife ecosystems, the State is required under this provision to formulate appropriate laws and policies for their conservation.

C. Article 51-A(g)

Article 51-A(g) of the Constitution imposes a fundamental duty on citizens to protect and improve the natural environment and to show compassion towards all living beings. This duty extends to the

¹³ Even since India signed the Ramsar Convention, the number of wetlands of international importance in India have increased to 75 covering an area of 13,26,677 hectares in the country. (Press Bureu, Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Changes, dated August 26, 2022)

¹⁴ (AIR 1991 SC 420)

¹⁵ (1995) 2 SCC 577

¹⁶ (AIR 2002 SC 1696)

preservation of wetlands, which are vital habitats for diverse species¹⁷.

D. Article 31-A

Article 31-A empowers the State to acquire private property for public welfare. This provision enables the government to acquire wetlands when necessary for their proper management, conservation, and protection in the larger public interest.

India formally joined the Ramsar Convention on 1st February 1982. Since then, several wetlands in India have been designated as Wetlands of International Importance. The Convention primarily imposes obligations relating to the wise use and conservation of wetlands, guided by its three core pillars, rather than prescribing rigid rules.

E. Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules

The first specific legal framework for wetlands in India was introduced through the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2010, framed under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. However, due to their limited effectiveness in preventing degradation, these rules were subsequently revised, leading to the adoption of the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017, which came into force on 29 September 2017.

Key Features of the 2017 Rules¹⁸

1. Establishment of State Wetlands Authorities:

Each State and Union Territory is required to establish a Wetlands Authority responsible for:

- Preparing and updating wetland inventories periodically (every ten years).
- Identifying permissible and regulated activities in wetland areas.
- Prohibiting harmful activities based on local requirements.
- Promoting awareness among stakeholders and local communities.
- Formulating policies for the sustainable or “wise” use of wetlands.

¹⁷ Article 51(A)(g) is the fundamental duty envisaged under Part IV-A of the Constitution. This Article was incorporated in the Constitution of India through the 42nd Constitutional Amendment, 1976 to comply with Article 29 (1) of the Universal Declaration

¹⁸ Wetlands (Conservation and Amendment) Rules, 2010

- Providing advice to governments on wetland-related matters.

2. National Wetlands Committee:

A National Wetlands Committee is constituted under Rule 6(1), chaired by the Secretary of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. Its functions include:

- Monitoring and supervising the functioning of State Authorities.
- Advising the Central Government on wetland conservation.
- Formulating policy guidelines for sustainable use.
- Promoting international cooperation.
- Recommending wetlands for designation as Ramsar sites.

3. Prohibited Activities:

The Rules prohibit several activities that may harm wetlands, including:

- Industrial development or expansion within wetland areas.
- Conversion of wetlands for non-wetland uses.
- Disposal of solid waste.
- Discharge of untreated sewage and industrial effluents.
- Construction of permanent infrastructure (except limited permissible structures like jetties).
- Poaching and illegal encroachments¹⁹.

F. National Plan for Conservation of Aquatic Ecosystems, 2015²⁰

This plan focuses on the integrated conservation of wetlands and aquatic ecosystems. Its primary objectives include improving water quality, conserving biodiversity, and ensuring sustainable

¹⁹ *Wetlands (Conservation and Amendment) Rules, 2010*

²⁰ *This Act was enacted in the year 2015 after the amalgamation of the National Lake Conservation Plan and the National Wetlands Conservation Programme. This plan works for the protection of both wetlands and lakes. The Act is administered by the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests.*

management of wetland resources.

G. National Environment Policy, 2006²¹

The National Environment Policy, 2006 reflects the growing recognition of environmental protection within India's legal framework. It reinforces the expanded interpretation of Article 21 and emphasizes the right to a clean environment.

Key measures relating to wetlands include:

- Establishing legal and institutional mechanisms for identifying and conserving wetlands.
- Promoting sustainable tourism in wetland areas.
- Encouraging community participation and creating livelihood opportunities through eco-friendly practices.

H. Wildlife Protection Act, 1972

The Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 provides for the protection of wild animals, birds, and plants, and regulates national parks, sanctuaries, and other protected areas. Although it does not specifically address wetlands, those wetlands located within protected areas fall under its scope.

I. Forest Laws

The Indian Forest Act, 1927 and the Forest Conservation Act, 1980 aim at conserving forest resources and wildlife. Wetlands situated within forest areas are governed by these laws rather than specific wetland regulations.

J. Indian Fisheries Act, 1857

The Indian Fisheries Act, 1857 primarily deals with the protection of fish resources. However, since wetlands serve as important habitats for aquatic species, the Act indirectly contributes to wetland conservation.

Its provisions include:

- Regulation and licensing of fishing activities.

²¹ *Some laws are not directly enacted for the conservation of the wetlands but cover its protection within its ambit because the wetlands coincide with the subject matter of those laws.*

- Prohibition of waste dumping in water bodies.
- Penalizing pollution, encroachment, and unauthorized construction.
- Promoting awareness regarding biodiversity and aquatic ecosystems.

K. East Kolkata Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Act, 2006

The East Kolkata Wetlands Act, 2006 was enacted specifically to protect the East Kolkata Wetlands, a designated Ramsar site.

Key features include:

- Prohibition of conversion or degradation of wetlands.
- Establishment of the East Kolkata Wetlands Management Authority.
- Restriction of activities inconsistent with the principles of the Ramsar Convention.

V. Conclusion & Suggestions

Wetlands have emerged as ecosystems of critical importance due to their role in ensuring water security, supporting biodiversity, controlling pollution, and mitigating natural hazards such as floods and soil erosion. Despite their immense ecological and economic value, wetlands continue to face serious threats from both human-induced and natural factors. Activities such as drainage, reclamation, pollution, encroachment, and habitat destruction have led to their gradual degradation and loss.

The Ramsar Convention, although a landmark international agreement, initially lacked adequate financial provisions for its implementation. As a result, organizations like the International Union for Conservation of Nature and the International Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau had to sustain its activities with limited resources. Over time, the need for proper financial contributions from member states led to amendments and improved funding mechanisms. Encouragingly, many countries have since contributed voluntarily, demonstrating collective commitment toward wetland conservation.

In the Indian context, although a number of constitutional provisions, laws, and policies exist for the protection of wetlands, their implementation has not been fully effective. There is a clear need for integrated, multidisciplinary, and science-based approaches to ensure proper conservation and management. Active participation from all stakeholders including government authorities, local communities, researchers, and civil society is essential for achieving meaningful outcomes.

Efforts must be strengthened to promote the conservation and wise use of wetlands, particularly through the designation of more sites under the Ramsar framework and by improving sustainable management practices. Wetlands also play a significant role in poverty alleviation by supporting livelihoods, yet their economic value is often underestimated or ignored in policy decisions. Recognizing and incorporating the economic benefits of wetlands can further justify their conservation and sustainable use.

Public awareness is another crucial aspect. Communities living near wetlands should be educated about their ecological and economic importance. Wetlands must be perceived not as wastelands but as valuable resources, comparable in importance to agricultural land. Long-term benefits can only be realized if conservation is prioritized over short-term exploitation.

In terms of development, it is essential to adopt a balanced approach that integrates both environmental protection and economic growth. Development policies should be guided by the principle of sustainable development, ensuring that environmental concerns are not sacrificed for immediate gains. All developmental and infrastructure projects must undergo thorough environmental impact assessments, particularly with regard to their effects on wetlands, before approval is granted.

Finally, since environmental matters, including wetlands, fall under the Concurrent List of the Constitution, both the Central and State Governments have the authority to legislate on this subject. However, for more effective and uniform protection, it is suggested that wetlands be brought under the Union List, thereby enabling stronger and more centralized legal safeguards.