

POLLUTED RIVER STRETCHES IN TAMIL NADU

Background of Polluted River Stretches

- GEMS (Global Environmental Monitoring System) and MINARS (Monitoring of Indian National Aquatic Resources System) samples are collected in the major rivers in the country by the SPCBs.
- Water quality of rivers and lakes in Tamil Nadu is monitored regularly on monthly basis by Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board under GEMS and MINARS programme and the reports are submitted to the Central Pollution Control Board.
- Based on the consolidated reports of GEMS and MINARS programme during the year 2005 to 2011, the Central Pollution Control Board has identified 351 river stretches as polluted river stretches in the country for not meeting the prescribed water quality standards.
- The Polluted River Stretches are categorized into five priorities based on the Bio-Chemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) values.

Criteria for priority	Priority for restoration of water quality
BOD value more than 30 mg/L	Priority - I
BOD value between 20 - 30 mg/L	Priority - II
BOD value between 10 - 20 mg/L	Priority - III
BOD value between 6 - 10 mg/L	Priority - IV
BOD value between 3 - 6 mg/L	Priority - V

Identification of Polluted River Stretches in Tamil Nadu by CPCB:

- The CPCB has identified Six Numbers of Polluted River Stretches in Tamil Nadu for exceeding the prescribed standard limit of Bio-chemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) during the period of 2015 to 2011.

Sl. No.	Name of the River	Polluted Stretch	Distance in KM	Priority
1	River Sarabanga	Thathayampatti to T.Konagapadi	15	I
2	River Thirumanimutharu	Salem to Papparapatti	15	I
3	River Vasista	Manivilundhan to Thiyaganur	10	I
4	River Cauvery	Mettur to Mayiladuthurai	200	I
5	River Bhavani	Sirumugai to Kalingarayan	60	IV
6	River Thamirabarani	Pappankulam to Arumuganeri	80	V

- The Hon'ble National Green Tribunal (NGT) Principal Bench, New Delhi took Suo-Motu Cognizance of news report appeared in "The Hindu" authorized by Shri. Jacob Koshy titled "More River Stretches are now critically polluted – CPCB" and issued certain directions vide its Original Application No. 673/2018 dated: 20.09.2018.

The important directions to comply with as per the Hon'ble NGT (PB) order are as follows:

1. All States and Union Territories are directed to prepare action plans within two months for bringing all the polluted river stretches to be fit at least for bathing purposes (i.e., BOD < 3 mg/L and FC < 500 MPN/100 ml) within six months from the date of finalisation of the action plans.

2. The action plans may be prepared by a four-member Committee comprising,

- a. **Director, Environment**
- b. **Director, Urban Development**
- c. **Director, Industries**
- d. **Member Secretary, State Pollution Control Board.**

This Committee will also be the Monitoring Committee for execution of the action plan. The Committee may be called as “**River Rejuvenation Committee**” (**RRC**). The RRC will function under the overall supervision and coordination of Principal Secretary, Environment & Forest, Govt. of Tamilnadu.

3. The action plan will include components like identification of polluting sources including functioning/ status of STPs/ETPs/CETP and solid waste management and processing facilities, quantification and characterization of solid waste, trade and sewage generated in the catchment area of polluted river stretch. The action plan will address issues relating to; ground water extraction, adopting good irrigation practices, protection and management of Flood Plain Zones (FPZ), rain water harvesting, ground water charging, maintaining minimum environmental flow of river and plantation on both sides of the river. Setting up of biodiversity parks on flood plains by removing encroachment shall also be considered as an important component for river rejuvenation. The action plan should focus on proper interception and diversion of sewage carrying drains to the Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) and emphasis should be on utilization of treated sewage so as to minimize extraction of ground or surface water. The action plan should have speedy, definite or specific timelines for execution of steps. Provision may be made to pool the resources, utilizing funds from State budgets, local bodies, State Pollution Control Board/Committee and out of Central Schemes.
4. The Action Plans may be subjected to a random scrutiny by a task team of the CPCB.

5. The Chief Secretaries of the State and Administrators/ Advisors to Administrators of the Union Territories will be personally accountable for failure to formulate action plan, as directed.
6. All States and Union Territories are required to send a copy of Action Plan to CPCB especially w.r.t Priority I & Priority II stretches for approval.
7. The States and the Union Territories concern are directed to set up Special Environment Surveillance Task Force, comprising nominees of District Magistrate, Superintendent of Police, Regional Officer of State Pollution Control Board and one person to be nominated by District Judge in his capacity as Chairman of Legal Services Authority on the pattern of direction of this Tribunal dated 07.08.2018, in *Original Application No. 138/2016 (TNHRC)*, "*Stench Grips Mansa's Sacred Ghaggar River (Suo-Motu Case)*".
8. The Task Force will also ensure that no illegal mining takes place in riverbeds of such polluted stretches.
9. The RRC will have a website inviting public participation from educational institutions, religious institutions and commercial establishments. Achievement and failure may also be published on such website. The Committee may consider suitably rewarding those contributing significantly to the success of the project.
10. The RRCs will have the authority to recover the cost of rejuvenation in Polluter Pays Principle from those who may be responsible for the pollution, to the extent found necessary. In this regard, principle laid down by this Tribunal in order dated 13.07.2017 in O.A No. 200 of 2014, M.C. Mehta Vs. U.O.I will apply. Voluntary donations, CSR contribution, voluntary services and private participation may be considered in consultation with the RRC.
11. The RRCs will send progress reports by e-mail at filing.ngt@gmail.com.

Accordingly, the River Rejuvenation Committee (RRC) was constituted in Tamilnadu as per Hon'ble NGT (PB) directions in its O.A No. 673/2018 dated: 20.09.2018 and Government Order (G.O.) was issued by the Environment and Forest (EC.1) Department vide G.O. (D) No. 372 dated: 26.12.2018 comprising:

1. Industries Commissioner.
2. Commissioner, Municipal Administration.
3. The Director of Environment.
4. The Member Secretary, Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board.

The action plans for the rejuvenation of four Nos of polluted river stretches in priority-I submitted to CPCB, Delhi on 18.04.2019 after the approval of the River Rejuvenation Committee (RRC).

The above action plans are reviewed by the CPCB task team during 5th review meeting on 24.04.2019 and the CPCB task team has recommended the action plan for the above four (4) polluted river stretches in Priority-I on 24.04.2019.