

UNION ENVIRONMENT MINISTER, SH. BHUPENDER YADAV & UNION JAL SHAKTI MINISTER, SH. GAJENDRA SINGH SHEKHAWAT JOINTLY RELEASE DETAILED PROJECT REPORTS ON REJUVENATION OF 13 MAJOR RIVERS THROUGH FORESTRY INTERVENTIONS

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Environmental Conservation, Sustainable Development, and EIA

The Union Minister for Environment Forest and Climate Change, Sh. Bhupender Yadav and the Union Minister, Jal Shakti, Sh. Gajendra Singh Shekhawat along with the Minister of State, MoEF&CC, Sh. Ashwini Kumar Choubey, jointly released the Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) on Rejuvenation of thirteen Major Rivers through Forestry Interventions. The 13 rivers for which DPRs were released are Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas, Sutlej, Yamuna, Brahmaputra, Luni, Narmada, Godavari, Mahanadi, Krishna, and Cauvery. The DPRs were funded by National Afforestation & Eco-development Board, (MoEF&CC) and prepared by Indian Council of Forestry Research & Education(ICFRE), Dehradun. Smt. Leena Nandan, Secretary, MoEF&CC, Sh. C.P. Goyal, Director General Forest & Special Secretary, MoEF&CC, Sh. Arun Singh Rawat, Director General, ICFRE were also present on the occasion.



Growing water crisis on account of depleting fresh water resources especially due to shrinking and degradation of river ecosystems is a major impediment to achieving national goals pertaining to environment, conservation, climate change and sustainable development. Thirteen rivers collectively cover a total basin area of 18,90,110 sq. km that represents 57.45% of the geographical area of the country. The length of 13 rivers including 202 tributaries within the delineated riverscapes is 42,830 km.

Addressing the gathering, the Union Environment Minister, Shri Bhupender Yadav said that these DPRs are in line with the holistic vision of Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi of making the coming 25 years as 'Amrit Kaal' as these DPRs will create a target of green cover expansion for upcoming 10 years and 20 years, then the future generations will get a 'Green India' through the 'Van Bhagidari and Jan Bhagidari' of the current generation. Sh. Yadav further added that the projects will alleviate the growing water stress and help achieve national goals related to climate change and sustainable development.



Addressing the gathering, the Union Minister, Jal Shakti, Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat said that 'water is the elixir of life' and this fact was known to all traditionally as rivers were treated as goddesses and were cared for with deep reverence in the hearts, minds and souls of the

masses. Shri Shekhawat said that the day we stopped thinking about what we give back to the rivers, when we did not balance the need for development with environmental sustainability, when we stopped becoming custodians of nature and rather forced our ownership on it, we have started exploiting and over exploiting our resources.



Talking about how under Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi a holistic approach has been adopted towards river rejuvenation especially that of river Ganga, the Union Minister said that the entire world has witnessed and appreciated the results. The Union Minister for Jal Shakti stressed on the need for thinking of ourselves as custodians of nature and all its beauty & resources and the fact that in the past 5 decades we have forgotten our responsibilities towards sustainability and we need to ensure that we give a better resource base to our future generations. Sh. Shekhawat said that with these DPRs, through holistic planning, we can head towards giving a better resource base to the future through integrative management and combined efforts of all.

The rivers along with their tributaries are proposed for forestry interventions in the riverscape under different landscapes namely natural landscape, agricultural landscape and urban landscape. The different models of forestry plantations including timber species, medicinal plants, grasses, shrubs and fuel fodder and fruit trees are aimed to augment water, ground water recharge and contain erosion. A total of 667 treatment and plantation models are proposed in all the 13 DPRs meant for the proposed forestry interventions and supporting activities, in different landscapes. In all, 283 treatment models have been proposed for the natural landscapes, 97 treatments models in Agriculture Landscapes and 116 different treatment models in Urban Landscapes. Site specific treatments in terms of soil & moisture conservation and plantations of grasses, herbs, forestry and horticultural trees have been proposed for treatment of prioritized sites in the riverscape supported by GIS technique based on consultations with various stakeholders. Throughout this exercise Nodal officers from respective State Forest Departments were associated to coordinate with other line departments.

Each DPR incorporates detailed geospatial analysis of the delineated Riverscape, exhaustive review on the river environment, factors responsible for the current state and prioritization of areas using Remote sensing and GIS techniques along with field verification for proposed forestry interventions and other conservation measures through an extensive consultative process and designing and development of various treatment models for Natural, Agriculture & Urban landscape in each of the delineated riverscape. Each DPR consists of Vol. I, II and summary of the DPR in the form of an Overview. Additionally, an Overview as summary of all 13 DPRs is also prepared as abridged document.

The DPRs focus on protection, afforestation, catchment treatment, ecological restoration, moisture conservation, livelihood improvement, income generation, ecotourism by developing river fronts, eco-parks and bringing awareness amongst the masses. Research and monitoring have also been included as a component.

The proposed cumulative budget outlay of thirteen DPRs is Rs. 19,342.62 crore. The DPRs are expected to be executed through the State Forest Departments as nodal department and with convergence of schemes of other line departments in the states towards the activities proposed in the DPRs and funding support from the Government of India. For ease of implementation by the frontline staff, an Execution Manual in Hindi/Local Languages shall be prepared by the State

Forest Departments. Technical support shall be provided by ICFRE. The treatments are proposed to be spread over a period of five years with a provision for additional time for maintenance of plantations. In case of delay in initiation of the project, the proposed outlay of the DPRs shall be adjusted using the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) since the project outlay was worked out as per costs prevailing during 2019-20. During execution, "Ridge to Valley approach" shall be followed and soil & moisture conservation works would precede the plantation operations. Flexibility has been provided in change of species and sites in case the circumstances at the time of implementation so demand. Steering and Executive Committees at the National Level and State level have also been proposed in the DPRs.

The activities proposed in the DPRs shall help achieve potential benefits of increasing the green cover, contain soil erosion, recharge water table and sequester carbon dioxide in addition to benefits in the form of non-timber forest produce. Forestry interventions are expected to increase the cumulative forest cover by 7,417.36 km² across 13 riverscapes. The proposed interventions would help to sequester 50.21 million tons CO₂ equivalent in 10-year-old plantations and 74.76 million tons CO₂ equivalent in 20-year-old plantations. The proposed interventions in thirteen riverscapes would help in ground water recharge to the extent of 1,889.89 million m³ yr⁻¹, and reduction in sedimentation to the tune of 64,83,114 m³ yr⁻¹. In addition, Rs. 449.01 crore is likely to be generated from expected non-timber and other forest produce. It is also expected that the employment of 344 million man-days shall be generated through planned activities as provisioned in 13 DPRs.



These efforts will play an important role achieving the international commitments of India such as NDC forestry sector goal of creation of additional carbon sink of 2.5 -3 billion tons of CO₂ equivalent through additional forest and tree cover by 2030 under the Paris Agreement of UNFCCC, restoration of 26 million hectare of degraded lands by 2030 as a land degradation neutrality target under UNCCD, halt the biodiversity loss by 2030 under CBD and Sustainable Development Goals.

It will strengthen the country's progress towards Panchamrit commitment at CoP-26 during November 2021 in Glasgow whereby India promised to reduce its projected carbon emission by one billion tonnes by 2030, meet 50 per cent of energy requirements with renewable energy by 2030, enhance non-fossil energy capacity to 500 gigawatt by 2030, reduce the carbon intensity of its economy by 45 per cent by 2030 and achieve net zero emission by 2070.

Timely and effective implementation of the proposed forestry interventions as envisaged in DPRs of 13 major Indian Rivers is expected to significantly contribute towards improvement of terrestrial and aquatic biota, and livelihoods besides rejuvenation of the rivers in terms of Aviral Dhara, Nirmal Dhara besides Swachchh Kinara.

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