Pilot Programme

Eight wetlands and urban water bodies in the water stressed districts of Sambhal, Bulandshahr, Hardoi, Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, Vaishali and Bhagalpur in Bihar and Hooghly in West Bengal were identified through a reconnaissance survey. The status of these wetlands in terms of pollution, biodiversity and socio-economic importance were assessed and restoration work was initiated. These wetland comprises of natural and man-made water bodies in the Ganga basin viz., Kashipur wetland, Sambhal; Bilona wetland, Bhulandshahr; Kakarakehra wetland, Hardoi; Ugapur wetland, Varanasi; Nepali dham wetland, Varanasi; Baraila wetland, Vaishali; Jagatpur wetland, Bhagalpur and Daha Beel, Hooghly. The involvement of local communities and Ganga praharis has created a momentum for wetlands and water conservation in line with government's Jan Andolan. It is envisioned that other stakeholders will take up similar steps for wetland and water conservation in the country.

WII is involving Ganga Praharis, urban local bodies, district administrations, gram panchayats, state forest departments, temple committees and organizations such as Ganga Task Force to assist with the programme. These stakeholders are working towards fulfilling Ministry of Jal Shakti's initiatives of making water conservation Jan Andolan. This programme will focus on the main stem Ganga River, for a week, in the initial stage. Later on, the programme will be upscaled to the basin level.

For more information, please contact:

NMCG
National Mission for Clean Ganga,
Ministry of Water Resources,
DoWR, RD & GR
Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium,
India Gate, New Delhi- 110001
csractivity@nmcg.nic.in

GACMC
Ganga Aqualife Conservation Monitoring Centre
Wildlife Institute of India,
Chandrabani,
Dehradun- 248001
nmcg@wii.gov.in

www.wii.gov.in/national_mission_for_clean_ganga

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जल शक्ति अभियान
संचय जल, बेहतर कल

नमामि गंगे

WETLANDS AND WATER PROGRAMME

NMCG-WII INITIATIVE FOR RESTORATION OF WETLANDS IN THE GANGA BASIN FOR BIODIVERSITY AND WATER CONSERVATION

भारतीय वन्यजीव संस्थान
Wildlife Institute of India

Wetlands are transitional lands between terrestrial and aquatic systems where the water table is usually at or near the surface. Wetlands are the most productive ecosystems usually comprising a reservoir of water and a number of plant and animal species. The interactions among physical, biological and chemical components of a wetland enables them to perform vital functions such as, filtering polluted waters, ground water recharge, flood prevention and support aquatic biodiversity. Due to their function of absorbing wastes such as nitrogen and phosphorous, wetlands are also called the "kidneys of a landscape".

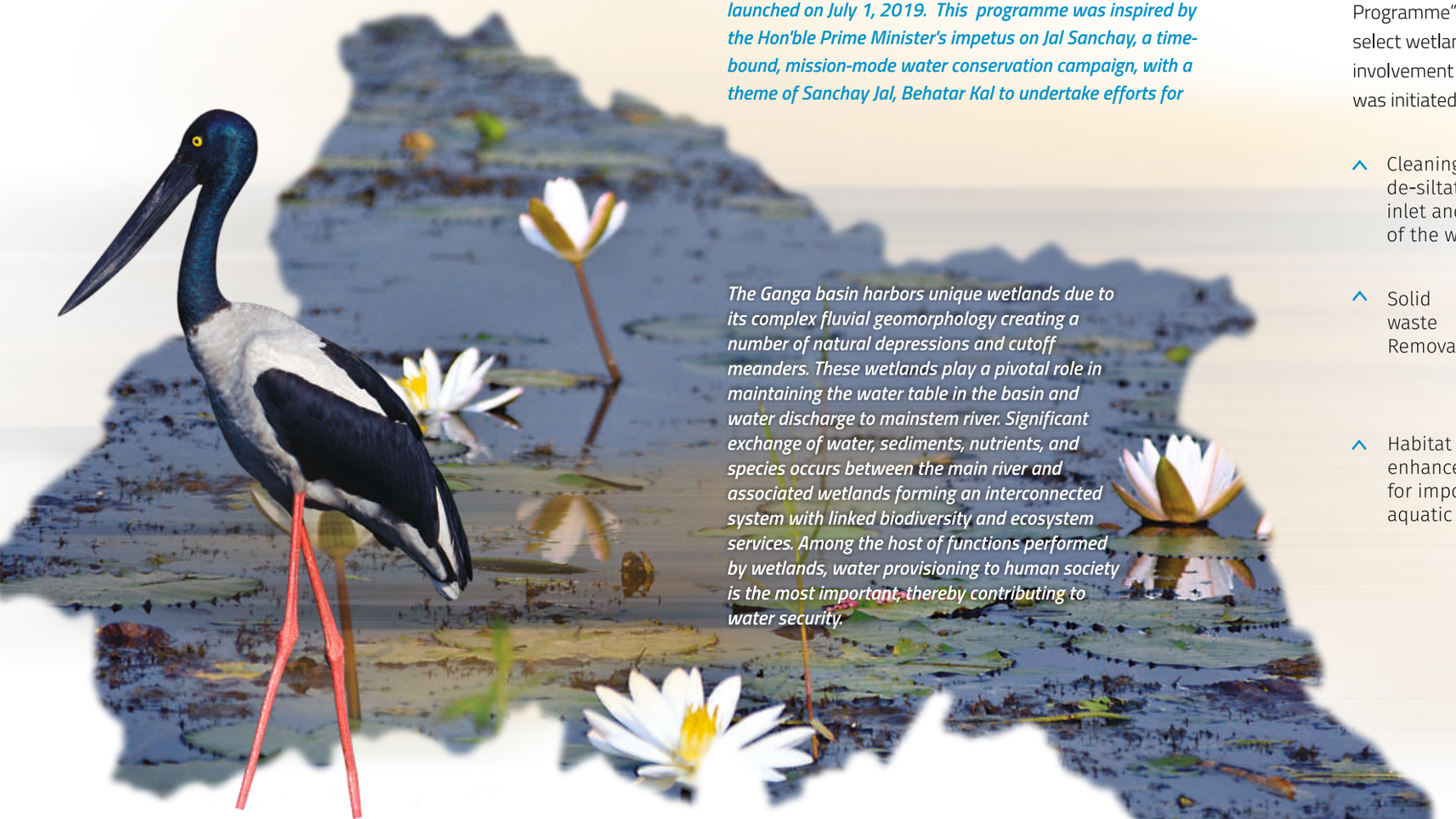
Water security is one of the critical challenges of the century, enshrined in the Sustainable Development Goals, which envisages availability and sustainable management of water for all by 2030. Designated as a water stressed country, India is facing the challenge to serve 17% of the global population with 4% freshwater resources.

The Ministry of Jal Shakti aims to tackle water issues with a holistic and integrated approach, the Jal Shakti Abhiyan launched on July 1, 2019. This programme was inspired by the Hon'ble Prime Minister's impetus on Jal Sanchay, a time-bound, mission-mode water conservation campaign, with a theme of Sanchay Jal, Behatar Kal to undertake efforts for conservation, restoration, recharge and reuse of water. The Jal Shakti Abhiyan is being implemented through the cohesion of water related schemes of several ministries of the Govt. of India, which are jointly coordinating interventions in the areas of rainwater harvesting, reuse and borewell recharge structures, watershed development and afforestation activities. The Jal Shakti Abhiyan is being carried out in 255 water stressed districts across the country. As a part of this Abhiyan, groundwater recharge through wetland restoration in the basin is being carried out by the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG). The programme aims to augment flow of the Ganga River through ground water recharge of aquifers.

NMCG in association with the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) has initiated a pilot scale "Wetlands and Water Programme" towards this cause, which aims to restore select wetlands of the Ganga basin through community involvement and low cost investment. The programme was initiated with the following objectives:

- Cleaning and de-siltation of inlet and outlet of the wetland
- Removal of invasive species
- Solid waste Removal
- Plantation to restrict nutrient inflow and recharge aquifers
- Habitat enhancement for important aquatic species
- Community involvement in wetlands and water conservation

Subsequently, complete restoration plan for selected wetlands will be prepared and implemented through stakeholder participation for wetland and water conservation.



The Ganga basin harbors unique wetlands due to its complex fluvial geomorphology creating a number of natural depressions and cutoff meanders. These wetlands play a pivotal role in maintaining the water table in the basin and water discharge to mainstem river. Significant exchange of water, sediments, nutrients, and species occurs between the main river and associated wetlands forming an interconnected system with linked biodiversity and ecosystem services. Among the host of functions performed by wetlands, water provisioning to human society is the most important, thereby contributing to water security.