

Ecological Protection and Conservation of Wetlands of Puducherry

The General Body undertook a detailed discussion on the ecological significance of wetlands in Puducherry, recognising their critical role in groundwater recharge, flood moderation, nutrient cycling, biodiversity conservation, microclimate regulation, and carbon sequestration. Members expressed serious concern over the continued degradation, encroachment, hydrological alteration, and loss of ecological connectivity of wetlands due to unplanned development and weak institutional oversight.

The General Body noted with concern the ineffective functioning of the Wetlands Authority of Puducherry and the absence of comprehensive scientific inventories and legally enforceable demarcation of wetlands. After deliberation, the General Body resolved that all wetlands of Puducherry, including eris (traditional irrigation tanks), lagoons, estuaries, backwaters, marshes, and associated seasonal and perennial water bodies, shall be urgently surveyed, ecologically characterised, scientifically mapped, and clearly demarcated.

It was further resolved that wetlands shall be governed as dynamic ecological systems rather than as vacant or developable land. The mapping and notification process shall incorporate hydrological boundaries, catchment areas, inflow–outflow channels, and buffer zones essential for maintaining ecological integrity. The General Body emphasised that wetland governance must be undertaken in collaboration with neighbourhood communities, explicitly recognising traditional ecological knowledge and the customary stewardship of stakeholders historically associated with these ecosystems.

Agenda Item: Ecological Integrity of the Coastline and Protection of Coastal Community Livelihoods

The General Body deliberated on the ecological vulnerability of the Puducherry coastline, recognising the role of coastal ecosystems such as sand dunes, beaches, nearshore waters, and intertidal zones in shoreline stabilisation, storm surge buffering, sediment transport, and marine biodiversity support. Members expressed concern over increasing shoreline modification, erosion, and habitat loss driven by hard coastal structures, commercial development, and unregulated activities.

After detailed discussion, the General Body resolved that the ecological integrity of the coastline shall be treated as a non-negotiable priority. Any developmental activity along the coast must adhere strictly to Coastal Zone Management (CZM) regulations and precautionary ecological principles. The General Body categorically resolved that there shall be no dilution of CZM guidelines that could compromise coastal geomorphology, sand dune systems, biodiversity, or the adaptive capacity of coastal ecosystems to climate change and sea-level rise.

The General Body further resolved that the long-pending Coastal Zone Management mapping, including the identification of ecologically sensitive areas and coastal commons, shall be completed through a participatory, science-based process in consultation with coastal communities, whose livelihoods and traditional practices are intrinsically linked to the health of coastal ecosystems.

Agenda Item: Ecologically Sustainable and Climate-Resilient Town and Country Planning

The General Body discussed the urgent need to align urban and rural planning in Puducherry with ecological carrying capacity and climate resilience considerations. Members highlighted that current planning practices inadequately account for ecosystem services, natural drainage networks, urban heat dynamics, groundwater recharge zones, and cumulative environmental impacts.

Following deliberation, the General Body resolved that town and country planning must be reoriented to function within ecological limits. This shall include protection and restoration of natural drainage systems; strict segregation of sewerage and storm water networks to prevent contamination of water bodies; upscaling of drainage infrastructure based on updated climate projections; and integration of nature-based solutions for flood mitigation and urban cooling.

The General Body further resolved that planning processes shall prioritise the protection of green and blue spaces as critical ecological infrastructure. Measures shall include the development of a Heat Action Plan focusing on ecological cooling through tree cover and open spaces; promotion of sustainable rainwater harvesting; managed aquifer recharge; and protection of recharge zones from contamination

and over-extraction.

It was also resolved that no new approvals shall be granted for water-intensive industries, in recognition of the region's limited hydrological capacity. A phased reduction of existing water-intensive industries shall be pursued, with mandatory enforcement of water recycling, reuse, and zero-discharge principles to minimise ecological stress on freshwater and coastal ecosystems.