

# TAMILNADU WATER WEEK 2014

Water Management for Sustainable Development

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Bulletin

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## Restoring River Vaigai

A Session on Restoration of River Vaigai was organised on the fifth day of the Tamil Nadu Water Week 2014. Mr. Phanindra Reddy, IAS, Principal Secretary to Government of Tamil Nadu, Municipal Administration and Water Supply Department was the chief guest.

Quoting Thirukural “When water fails, functions of nature cease”, Mr.C.Kathiravan IAS, Commissioner of Madurai Corporation highlighted the legacy of River Vaigai, which is facing neglect by the community today. “If water flow is regular, the process of self-cleaning would restore the ecology. Corporation has been taking measures to control pollution and ensure safe-drinking water and community should cooperate to maintain and protect the environment. Corporation limit has been extended and at present from those areas waste water and solid waste enters the river. Vaigai river restoration can be possible with the participation of the community. Low cost and efficient technology to clean the river and city is the need of the hour”, he said.

Dr. L. Subramanian IAS, District Collector of Madurai, in his felicitation hinted the swift action needed to



Dr. L. Subramanian IAS, District Collector of Madurai



Mr. Phanindra Reddy, IAS, Principal Secretary to Government of Tamil Nadu addressing at the Water Week

restore the River, which is facing twin issues of poor run-off of water due to poor monsoons and manmade issues of indiscriminate dumping of garbage by the communities living around, especially the workshops wastage, wastes from livestock maintained along the river bank as the major contributors of pollution. He said, “Only through community participation we can reverse it. Community should spearhead the monitoring of such wrongdoings. Presently Madurai district has taken steps in addressing the issues of water bodies, especially in Vandiyur tank where desilting and rehabilitation was done with the support of community and ensured drinking water facility to Gomathipuram area. *Prosopis* (weed plant) clearance was done on the entire stretch of 15 Kilometres of Vaigai River within the city limit, which helped for free-flow of water. While focusing on harvesting rain, we have to be conscious in using it judiciously as well”.

Mr. Phanindra Reddy, IAS, Principal Secretary to Government of Tamil Nadu, Municipal Administration and Water Supply Department delivered a keynote address at the Water Week. He said, “Rivers are the cradle of civilization, at the same time uncivilized act of the civilization poses serious threat to the existence of the rivers. Rivers are the sources of promoting tourism.



**Mr.C.Kathiravan IAS, Commissioner of Madurai Corporation**

European countries grew and thrived because of tourism. In earlier days Singapore bought water from Malaysia, and later Singapore adopted a number of technologies like desalination and recycling of used water, and now problem of water scarcity is addressed". He further said that we can recycle wastage water and supply it for industrial use. In Chennai every day 40 lakhs litres of recycled used-water sold to industries at the cost of Rs. 11 per litre. The same experiment was started in Nagapattinam and Tuticorin by the local governments and the Government has issued a GO, allowing every municipality without seeking prior permission to setup water treatment and sell the used water to industry.

He further elaborated that Government has allocated about Rs.600 crore for cleaning Couvam River in Chennai and Chennai River Restoration Trust was formed for this. In the same way, he proposed Vaigai River Restoration Trust to take up restoration. The River Restoration needs engagement of multi stakeholders like corporation, line department, architects, community, educational institutes, town planning, agriculture and engineering departments. Corporation should take efforts in controlling wastage water flow to the river and proper mechanism to be adopted for treating the waste water and open defecation to be avoided to protect the environment. These small activities will bring good results within a few years.

### **Tamil Nadu Water Week 2014 Concluded**

Dr. S. Mohan, Dr. Mohan, Professor, Environmental and Water Resources Engineering Department, Indian Institute of Technology-Chennai, in his concluding remarks said that continuous flow of water needs to

be kept in the rivers for the ecosystem to function well; water audit should be conducted at basin, systems and field level for effective management of resources.

Sustainability of water resources should focus on fulfilling present needs, without compromising the availability for the future generation. Survivability and efficiency of the systems are two determinants of sustainability. We should focus on productivity for each cubic meter of water. For any river basin, both surface and ground water interaction are very important. Recharge can be ensured through surface water storage. He appreciated DHAN Foundation for taking lead for the Vaigai River Restoration.

Dr.Sakthivadivel, Emeritus Professor, Centre for Water Resources, Anna University, Chennai, in his concluding remarks shared that the Tamil Nadu water week 2014 provided all the stakeholders to interact and engage with each other for effective management of water. Thirty percent of water needs of our state are dependent on water from neighbouring states. This always leads to conflicting situation. In the coming 10 to 15 years, all the ground water would get depleted if the situation goes like this. The time has come to look at the demand side of the water management. Conjunctive management of Surface and groundwater is required. Instead of "demand management" we can call it as "gap management".

He also said "Active participation of people and localized traditional water management practices and restoration of traditional water bodies need immediate attention. Necessary changes in rules and regulations in usufructs rights related to water and water bodies are needed immediately. Tanks and groundwater are important for our farming community. Tank is like temple and bank. The number of tanks are 70000 including ponds. We need to enumerate all these tanks and ponds".

Effective and sustainable ground water management is need of the hour. By adapting water saving technologies at water starving regions through farm pond, SRI, and other technologies, we can get 12 times of higher production through these technologies. These innovations need further researches for simplifying and make them suitable for adaptation.

Tamilnadu has a long coastline, excessive extraction of ground water, population pressure and increased industrialization has led to sea water intrusion, contamination of groundwater. Only through revival and construction of water resources on the surface we can prevent intrusion. The State should come with ground water regulation acts to conserve ground water. We have to map out potential aquifers and hand over them to the community.

The water week has given us sense of belongingness, and consensus has been arrived at many of the water issues. The experts came together and deliberated on important issues and students got great opportunity to learn the problems faced by farmers. This Water Week should become a water movement.

Dr.Arunachalam, Porfessor and Head, Department of Civil Engineering, Thiagarajar College of Engineering, thanked for the platform created under Tamil Nadu Water. The Vaigai restoration project and the project on Future proofing of city would provide opportunities for many likeminded organisations to come together to contribute for water sector.

Mr.M.P.Vasimalai, Executive Director of DHAN Foundation shared that the Tamil Nadu Water Week was successfully initiated last year at Coimbatore. The 2014 edition of Water Week conducted at Madurai has been made a great success due to joint working by all the consortium partners. The community also equally and enthusiastically participated. The theme of this year event is water demand management. We have to think about the strategies for the implementation of the water demand management in a large scale. We should jointly work out strategies and action plan to conserve at least 10 percent of the water in the coming year. The success depends on to what extent we are going to practice the decisions made here. The seed for the Vaigai river restoration was sown today by the District collector of Madurai and Principle Secretary of Municipal administration.

Rainfall pattern is changing for every 10 years. So the ecology, context and climate diversity have to be considered while taking up the research in demand

and supply management. A lot more collaborative researches are needed from all the organizing partners. The farmer leaders who participated in this event can organize farmer's seminars among their fellow farmers to sensitize on water demand management.

Vice Chancellor Shri.K.Ramasamy in his special said "The five-day water week event has brought out good learning and insights on the needs of the community in water demand management. We all are concerned mostly with supply side of the water and we are least bothering about the efficient use of the available water. While the quantum of rainfall has not changed, there is a drastic change in distribution. Our ancestors had collectively planned cropping with the available water through various traditional practices. Farmers need to pay attention on recycling of waste water and recycling of solid waste management".

## **Watersheds for Sustainable Development**



A seminar on Role of Watersheds in Tamil Nadu in water Management and sustainable Development was organized by NABARD on the fifth day of Tamil Nadu Water Week 2014.

Mr.S.Natarajan, General Manager, Watershed division, NABARD–Regional Office, Chennai and Mr.W.Nagarajan, Watershed Development Fund, NABARD-Project Monitoring Unit, Madurai were the panellists for the event. Farmers, water experts and NGO practitioners attended the event



Mr.S.Natarajan, in his invocation address stressed that people have to participate in harvesting rainwater at the surface because 90 percent of rain water falls on the land. He shared the orivayal watershed experience, wherein the farm ponds helped for sustaining farming, the bunds of the farm ponds were effectively used for cultivating vegetables and the field bunds helped the farmers for harvesting rainwater to cultivate paddy. He expressed his concern on damages caused by certain people in watershed to the waterbodies. He also showcased some of the good practices in the watershed development initiatives like displaying permanent cut-stone with the details of the construction which has to be inbuilt in the structure, growing more trees, promotion of vegetable cultivation, using bio-gas from cow-dung and fish rearing in the Farm ponds.

He shared that the summer ploughing, selection of short duration crops, cultivation of tree crops, cultivation of fodder crops, drip and sprinkler irrigation methods in the watershed schemes helped the farmers to manage the effects of climate change.

Also he listed the good practices like sowing grass seed in the bund of the farm pond for controlling erosion, inter cropping, kitchen gardening, sprinkler for groundnut, summer ploughing, vermicompost production, using solar energy and value addition practices for getting more income from agriculture. He shared that these good practices should be shared across many places. He shared the importance of Farmers Producer Company and the schemes available in NABARD.

Dr.Sakthivadivel shared that the allocated grant by the state Government is not sufficient as the field conditions are diverse and different. He also stressed that the subsidy amount should be given directly to the farmers and proper training for utilizing the drip system. Mr.Sadasiva, Team Leader, DHAN Foundation hared that three watersheds were implemented with the support of NABARD in Andhra Pradesh where the 100 percent of financial inclusion was achieved and they achieve 100 percent use of solar power use in the watershed villages.



**Participants of the Water Walk organised as part of Tamil Nadu Water Week 2014**

*Organised by*

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