Concerns with draft Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ)

Click here to know more on the draft features.

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What is the issue?

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- The draft Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ), 2018 was recently released by the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF).
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- The dilutions introduced by the new draft could possibly affect the customary land use and traditional land rights.
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What is a Coastal Regulation Zone?

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- Under the Environment Protection Act, 1986, the MoEF issues notification for regulation of activities in the coastal area.
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- Coastal land up to 500m from the High Tide Line (HTL) comes under the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ).
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- Also, a stage of 100m along banks of creeks, estuaries, backwater and rivers subject to tidal fluctuations is called CRZ.
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- CRZ along the country has been placed in four categories:
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- **Category I (CRZ -I)** - Areas that are ecologically sensitive and important, areas between the Low Tide Line and High Tide Line.
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- **Category II (CRZ -II)** - Areas that have already been developed up to or the shoreline.
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- **Category III (CRZ -III)** - Areas that are relatively undisturbed and those

which do not belong to either Category I or II.
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- **Category IV (CRZ-IV)** - Coastal stretches in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakhadweep and small islands, except those designated as CRZ I, CRZ II and CRZ III.
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What are the concerns with the draft?

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- **Fisherfolk** - There are concerns that the draft has opened up fragile inter-tidal areas to real estate agents.
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- It seems to be favouring the large-scale industry at the cost of fishing communities.
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- This will affect how common areas used by fisherfolk are managed.
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- **CRZ**- A major change pertains to the CRZ limits on land along “tidal influenced water bodies”.
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- The proposed limit has been reduced from 100 metres to 50 metres or the width of the creek, whichever is less.
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- This dilution will help builders and could make the coast more vulnerable to development.
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- **Authority** - The draft seems to have shifted some of the powers already vested with the MoEF.
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- It makes the National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management (NCSCM) the final authority to lay down standards for HTL.
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- Earlier the demarcation was carried out by one of the agencies authorised by MoEF, on recommendations of the NCSCM.
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- Also, only those projects located in CRZ-I and CRZ-IV shall now require MoEF clearance.
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- All other projects shall be considered by Coastal Zone Management Authorities (CZMAs) in the states and union territories.
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- These are perceived as a dilution of regulation and control over the coastal areas.
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- **Hazard Line** - The 2011 notification placed a lot of importance on the hazard line.
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- The 2018 notification takes away the protection that the hazard line could provide.
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- The hazard line has been delinked from the CRZ regulatory regime.
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- It, instead, merely states that the hazard line should be used as a tool for disaster management.
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- This means that one can build in these areas after preparing an environment assessment report.
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- It has to just state that certain precautions have been considered.
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- **Bifurcation of CRZ-III areas** - CRZ-III areas have now been divided into two categories.
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- The accuracy of data that is used for classification is being questioned.
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- As per 2011 Census [data], only state-wise population density is available.
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- So the process of narrowing down to the coastal region population is unclear.
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- Revenue records are not available of how many people live in some of the CRZ-III areas.
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- Some of these common areas are used by fisherfolk to dry fish and park their boats.

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- Opening these up would affect their livelihood related activities.
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- **Strategic projects** - The draft allows for construction of roads and roads on stilts, “by way of reclamation in CRZ-1 areas”.
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- This can only be in exceptional cases for “defence, strategic purposes and public utilities”.
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- This is to be recommended by the CZMA and approved by the Ministry.
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- However, it does not explicitly state what strategic projects are.
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- **Implementation** - As per the National Green Tribunal, it has been 7 years since the deadline set by 2011 notification to submit CZMPs has passed.
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- It is delayed due to opposition from fisherfolk, and some states have requested an extension.
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- Given this, the fact that the new draft would come into force once the states update their CZMPs seems flawed.
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Source: Indian Express

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