New Water Extraction Guidelines

Why in news?

\n\n

The Central Ground Water Authority (CGWA) has notified the new water-extraction guidelines recently.

\n\n

What does the revised guidelines reveal?

\n\n

\n
- It has introduced the concept of Water Conservation Fee (WCF).
\n

\n\n

\n
- The WCF payable varies with the category of the area, type of industry and the quantum of ground water extraction.
\n
- It is designed to progressively increase from safe to over-exploited areas and from low to high water consuming industries as well as with increasing quantum of ground water extraction.
\n
- Through this design, the high rates of WCF are expected to discourage setting up of new industries in over-exploited and critical areas.
\n
- It also acts as a deterrent to large scale ground water extraction by industries, especially in over-exploited and critical areas.
\n
- The WCF would also compel industries to adopt measures relating to water use efficiency and discourage the growth of packaged drinking water units, particularly in over-exploited and critical areas.
\n
- It encouragesuse of recycled and treated sewage water by industries and a provision of action against polluting industries.
\n
- It mandates requirement of digital flow meters, piezometers and digital

water level recorders, detailing the quantum of extraction.
\n
- Also, water auditshould be conducted by industries abstracting ground water of 500 m3/day or more in safe and semi-critical and 200 m3/day or more in critical and over-exploited assessment units.
\n

\n\n

\n
- Industries should undertakeroof top rain water harvestingand measures should be adopted to ensure prevention of ground water contamination in premises of polluting industries/ projects.
\n
- There is also an exemption from requirement of No Objection Certificate for –
\n

\n\n

\n
1. Agricultural users
\n
2. Users employing non-energised means to extract water
\n
3. Individual households (using less than 1-inch diameter delivery pipe)
\n

\n\n

\n
- Other exemptions have been granted to strategic and operational infrastructure projects for Armed Forces, Defence and Paramilitary Forces Establishments and Government water supply agencies.
\n

\n\n

What are the concerns?

\n\n

\n
- **Regulation** - The guidelinesdo not make any effort to ensure efficient and need-based utilisation of water for irrigation, which uses nearly 90% of the extracted groundwater.
\n
- The domestic sector has also been exempted from any restrictions.
\n

- Only 5% groundwater that is accessed by the industrial sector is proposed to be regulated for careful use.
\n
- **Approval** - Some of the well-advised norms that are already in place have been relaxed for no good reason.
\n
- Many commercial ventures, including beverages and drinking water bottlers, do not only consume water in bulk but also waste it in substantial measure.
\n
- The power of issuing no objection certificates (NOC) for many kinds of industrial units has now been vested with district magistrates instead of the CGWA.
\n
- Since the civic authoritieslack wider perspective on this matter, they can be expected to be quite lenient in letting the commercial ventures tap it unchecked.
\n
- **Norm relaxation** - The existing provision for mandatory recharging of groundwater by bulk consumers has also been diluted.
\n
- They are now bound only to undertake rooftop water harvesting and not large-scale field projects for rainwater harvesting.
\n
- **Fund utilisation** - The new guidelines propose water conservation fees (WCF) on groundwater use to generate resources for the state governments' water harvesting schemes.
\n
- However, there is no guarantee that these funds will actually be used for this purpose.
\n
- **Usage cap** - Though water charges have been levied, there is no cap on water withdrawals.
\n
- Thus, this step will not suffice to discourage wasteful use by cash-rich consumers.
\n
- **Re-use** - The new rules havevirtually done away with the obligation to reuse the extracted water.
\n
- This will result in the rampant overexploitation of this resource, causing a sharp dip in water table in many areas.
\n

\n\n

What should be done?

\n\n

\n
- India is already the world’s largest user of groundwater, tapping annually about 253 billion cubic metres (BCM) of water.
\n
- This is equivalent to 25% of yearly withdrawals at the global level.
\n
- As many as 1,034 of India’s total 6,584 groundwater blocks have already been categorised as “over-exploited”.
\n
- Among the rest, 253 blocks are in “critical” and 681 in “semi-critical” categories and some others hold only saline water.
\n
- Water tapping in these areas needs to be kept below the level of annual recharge through natural or artificial means.
\n
- However, the recent guidelines are unlikely to help check wasteful and injudicious use of rapidly vanishing groundwater because of several loopholes.
\n
- Thus, exceptional care is needed not only to thwart its indiscriminate use but also to incentivise its replenishment with rainwater.
\n
- Otherwise, large parts of the country would soon face severe shortage of water even for domestic and drinking purposes.
\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: Business Standard

\n

SHANKAR IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering