Threat to Wetlands - Ennore Case Study

What is the issue?

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- Recently the TN government conceded the Government of India-owned Kamarajar Port Ltd’s (KPL) request to divert 1,000 acres of the hydrologically sensitive Ennore wetlands for industrial installations that are best built on dry land.
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- The proposal is pending Central government clearance.
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How significant is Ennore creek to Chennai?

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- Ennore creek is a backwater located in Ennore, Chennai along the Coromandel Coast.
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- It buffers the rich aquifers of the Araniyar-Kosasthalaiyar Basin from the sea.
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- Located squarely in the intervening floodplains of three rivers on a high-energy coastline, Chennai is a disaster-prone location.
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- Wetlands like the Ennore creek function more as shock absorbers in times of such disasters.
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- This wetland’s importance may not be apparent as much of the creek looks dry all the year-round.
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- However, when cyclonic weather pushes the sea water landwards, or when rain waters from the two rivers drain into the sea, the creek swells to its full capacity.
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- The presence of the creek prevents many parts of the city from flooding.
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- It keeps salt water from invading the groundwater resources that supply

huge volumes of drinking water to the Chennai city.
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What are recent threats to the creek?

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- In 1996, the Tamil Nadu government protected a 6,500-acre stretch of the tidal water body under the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification.
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- However more than 1,000 acres of the creek were lost to **illegal encroachments**.
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- These installations block the path of rain waters. e.g Areas that never got flooded saw waters enter homes during the 2015 Chennai floods
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- If plans to fill the creek persist, the precious freshwater aquifer that Chennai draws from will be lost to salt.
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- The governments are only targeting encroachments by the vulnerable poor people as a remedy rather than controlling the illegal constructions of the elite.
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- It is the need of the hour to balance environmental concerns and development issues, and take appropriate policy decisions.
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Source: The Hindu

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