



# SERInews

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*With you in Pursuit of Sustainable  
Management of Finite Water Resources*

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## Point for discussion this month **Waterbanks along the Highways**

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## Eternal Words

*It is a curious situation that the sea, from which life first arose, should now be threatened by the activities of one form of that life.*

~Rachel Carson

*After a visit to the beach, it's hard to believe that we live in a material world.*

~Pam Shaw

*Nature's laws affirm instead of prohibit. If you violate her laws you are your own prosecuting attorney, judge, jury, and hangman.*

~Luther Burbank

Dear Readers,

All of us always notice that infrastructure projects are always ruthless as far as environmental processes and ecosystems are concerned. For them, the economists and engineers not having the understanding and acceptance of the payment of ecological services and ecological engineering, they do not give heed to the local watershed and its features which can be integrated with the infrastructure project.

Even the environmental appraisal committees fail short of considering its implications. At the request of one NGO, SERI developed one feasibility report of rainwater harvesting under the guidance of Sandeep Joshi, Environment Technologist along the highway in South Maharashtra to estimate the potential of highways in providing the water to adjacent settlements.

People and professionals start talking about rainwater harvesting from February because Indian monsoon starts from 7<sup>th</sup> June every year. SERI believes in scientific action for rainwater harvesting rather than just lip service. That's why, SERI supported full heartedly for social cause to evolve unprecedented methodology to develop waterbanks along the road. This work will be beneficial for not only the villages and towns along the road but hydrology of the region in view of the staggered recharging of Ujjani Reservoir by surface and sub-surface flows from the road infrastructure.

Ujjani Reservoir – habitat for resident and migratory avifauna, World Lake Vision, receptor of pollution from most modern upstream urbanisation and industrialization – needs every bit of efforts to revitalise it. SERI has vowed it irrespective of its professional gains and benefits.

In this, we have included the excerpts of observations on coastal developments by Claude Alvares, a dedicated green-worker for your information.

Thank you,  
Chief Editor

## 14<sup>th</sup> World Lake Conference 2011 at Austin, Texas, USA

<http://www.ilec.or.jp/eg/wlc/index.html>

<http://www.rivers.txstate.edu/wlc14>

Theme “Lakes, Rivers, Groundwater and Coastal Areas: Understanding Linkages”

October 31 - November 4, 2011

Austin, Texas USA

Organizers:

River Systems Institute, Texas State University  
International Lake Environment Committee Foundation

ILEC's World Lake Conferences provide an interactive forum for the diverse group of people and organizations in both developed and developing countries to exchange their knowledge and experiences on important lake science and management issues. The 14<sup>th</sup> World Lake Conference continues this long tradition. It also addresses an exciting new topic, however, in emphasizing the hydrologic linkages between lakes and their upstream and downstream water systems (rivers, groundwater aquifers, coastal areas), as highlighted in the title of the conference, “Lakes, Rivers, Groundwater and Coastal Areas: Understanding Linkages.” The global perspective of the conference will facilitate discussions of the environmental and socioeconomic status of lakes and reservoirs, their linked upstream, downstream surface and sub-surface water systems, and their complex, and sometimes competing, uses. ILEC has been exploring these transmedia lentic-lotic linkages and interactions, and their management implications, over the past several years in a global study, and will highlight their interesting results at the conference.

### CONFERENCE ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

- The anticipated events to take place at the 14<sup>th</sup> World Lake Conference include the following:
- Plenary Lectures, including Invited Guest Expert Speakers;
- Thematic Sessions on a Wide Range of Lake/Reservoir Scientific, Technical, Socio-economic, Management and Governance issues;
- High-Level Government Dialogue and/or Round Table;
- Poster Session;

- Student Session on Water-related Issues; Water-related Equipment and Technology Exhibition Area
- Mid-conference field trip to Highland Lakes, Edwards Artesian Aquifer System and Other Waterbodies;
- Banquet and Cultural Events;
- Pre- or Post-conference Workshops (to be confirmed);
- Special Excursions for Accompanying Spouses (to be confirmed).

#### CONFERENCE TOPICS (PROPOSED)

- With emphasis on the lotic-lentic linkages that comprise lakes and their basins, the following topics are being considered for discussion at the 14<sup>th</sup> World Lake Conference:
  - Comparative Limnology of Lakes/Reservoirs in Temperate, Tropical and Arid Regions
  - Reservoir Assessment and Management in Arid Regions
  - Lake/Reservoir Aquatic Biodiversity and Invasive Species Issues
  - Lake/Reservoir Basin Governance Issues (Institutions; Policy; Stakeholder Participation; Sustainable Financing; Information; Technology)
  - Integrated Lake Basin Management (ILBM)
  - Linkages and Interactions Between Lakes/Reservoirs, Rivers, Groundwater Aquifers and Coastal Areas
  - Lake/Reservoir Ecosystem Goods and Services
  - Facilitating Sustainable Use of Lakes/Reservoirs and Their Basins
  - Climate Change Implications for Sustainable Use of Lakes/ Reservoirs and Their Basins
  - Lake/Reservoir Basin Management Tools (Models, GIS, etc.)
  - Hard and Soft Lake/Reservoir Basin Management Approaches
  - Eco-Friendly Lake/Reservoir Restoration Technologies in Varied Environmental Settings
  - Lake/Reservoir Physical Mixing and Transport Processes Land Uses and Impacts in Lake/Reservoir Basins
  - Indigenous Peoples and Cultural Issues Relevant to Lake/Reservoir Basins
  - Emerging Lake/Reservoir Basin Issues (Health and Personal Care Products, etc)
  - International Dimensions of Integrated Lake Basin Management (ILBM)
  - Lake/Reservoir Monitoring Challenges

Shrishti Eco-Research Institute, Pune

*(Excerpts of the article from Claude Alvares who is Director of the Goa Foundation which has fought several PILs for implementing the CRZ Notification in Goa and elsewhere. We received this article in Jan. 2011. Meanwhile it is published in Outlook. Duly acknowledging the permission by the author, we have given following excerpts – Editor).*

### **The Coast is Finally Cleared for Ruin**

In November 1981, Mrs Indira Gandhi issued a stern letter to the chief ministers of India's coastal states saying nothing should be allowed within 500 metres of the high tide line (HTL) in order to maintain the beauty and ecological integrity of the nation's beaches. As long as she was alive, no one dared to challenge the directive. It was finally replaced in February 1991 by a special notification under the Environment Protection Act which defined the stretch of 500 metres from the HTL as "coastal regulation zone" and introduced severe restrictions on new developments.

Within a year of the notification, Environment Minister Kamal Nath was ready to bring it down. As is usually done, a committee was appointed headed by B.B. Vohra. Kamal Nath mistreated the committee's report to notify changes, some as drastic as allowing constructions of resorts within 200 metres of the high tide line. By the time Jairam Ramesh had arrived, the notification had been amended 25 times in less than 20 years, each amendment diluting it further. Through the 25 amendments, almost everything that Mrs Gandhi frowned upon was gradually allowed in the coastal areas, including SEZs and IT Parks.

So one more committee was formed under M S Swaminathan in NDA regime. When it was done, the Swaminathan report castigated the Environment Ministry for the 25 amendments and said they were all in the nature of unwarranted dilutions. Nevertheless, rather mysteriously, it recommended scrapping the notification altogether and substituting it with a fresh notification called the Coastal Zone Management (CZM) notification.

We found our later through RTI applications that the final chapter proposing the CZM notification had been inserted by a separate sub-committee after the last meeting of the Swaminathan committee. The replacement of the NDA government with the UPA regime made no difference to the move to dismantle the CRZ.

When the CZM notification was notified in 2008 for receiving objections, the upheaval against it was enormous. More than 8,000 letters were received, including objection letters from the chief ministers of almost all the coastal states.

Several consultations were held in various cities by the Environment Ministry through the Centre for Environment Education. The CEE filed a detailed report saying that the public opinion expressed in all the consultations – especially from the fishing community – was unanimously against the new draft that sought to replace the 1991 CRZ Notification.

The Ministry of Environment brought in Swaminathan again to undo the damage. He was now asked to head a new committee to recommend scrapping of the CZM notification. In April 2010 a “pre-draft CRZ notification” which we can safely call a “daft” CRZ notification was circulated which allowed construction even within 200 metres of the HTL and several other monumental irrelevant suggestions.

In order to respond to the charges of the fisherfolk that their views were not considered, Jairam announced a series of fresh consultations on the “pre-draft”. It got fresh banging from not just the fisherfolk, but from alert environmentalists and state governments. The report of the consultations with the fisherfolk was uploaded by the Ministry on its website. A “final” CRZ draft was thereafter notified on 15 September 2010.

This time the fisherfolk were noticeably furious because the results of the entire consultations had simply been ignored in the new draft. In other words, the consultations had been a massive waste of public time and public money. In November, the fisherfolk showed they meant business when they ordered a total halt to any fish sale in the entire country. (Earlier, they had shown they could effectively with their boats block all the country’s ports from functioning.)

So where have we finally reached? The new draft allows almost everybody to be in the CRZ, even those who do not need to be there at all: SEZs, nuclear reactors, mass housing projects, airports, ports, roads, bridges. It even permits a whole lot of developments between low and high tide lines (a zone submerged by sea water twice a day) These include roads on stilts, community centres, dispensaries, community toilets, desalination plants and bridges. As a sop to environmentalists, the new notification gamely extends the CRZ across the 12 nautical mile zone, where, except for fishing, nothing else happens.

The prelude to the draft declares that the government is doing all this work to protect the interests of the fishing community and to safeguard the coastal ecology in view of sea level rise in the context of climate change.

I have often wondered at the marvels of law making in this country. The CRZ Notification was designed to restrict and limit activities in the CRZ.

Today, it legitimizes atomic reactors and stilt bridges in even ecologically sensitive areas (CRZ I). Since the careless EIA process allows every one who has 4,000 metres in CRZ III areas a right to put up a hotel, the notification has ended up legitimizing and allowing more and more hotels, a situation it was actually intended to prevent. In Goa, for instance, some stretches have 3-4 five star resorts per kilometre! All these new entrants will claim their pound of the coast’s ecological assets, from sand dunes to mangroves.

Mr. Alvares finally observes that during the two decades that the 1991 CRZ notification ruled, the Ministry of Environment displayed minimal commitment to the enforcement or implementation of its provisions. Almost all work of implementation of CRZ has been done by NGOs through the High Courts and the Supreme Court. In Goa, for instance, the High Court has banned all residential construction in the entire CRZ now for 12 years and all hotels for the last four years. Since even today implementation of environment statutes and conditions remains almost non-existent, allowing a whole lot of new actors with rights into the coast is a sure recipe for ruin.

Mr. Alvares concludes that in India, just when the entire world scientific opinion says get out of the coast, we have a notification that effectively says, “Welcome all ye here!” What a great way to start the New Year! Amen!



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