

# 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 **Self-regulation of ecosystem processes**

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## Eternal Words

*We must not be forced to explore the universe in search of a new home because we have made the Earth inhospitable, even uninhabitable. For if we do not solve the environmental and related social problems that beset us on Earth - pollution, toxic contamination, resource depletion, prejudice, poverty, hunger - those problems will surely accompany us to other worlds.*

~ Donald G. Kaufman and Cecilia M. Franz,

*Man has been endowed with reason, with the power to create, so that he can add to what he's been given. But up to now he hasn't been a creator, only a destroyer. Forests keep disappearing, rivers dry up, wild life's become extinct, the climate's ruined and the land grows poorer and uglier every day.*

~Anton Chekhov, Uncle Vanya, 1897

Dear Readers,

Under the pressure of infrastructure development small tributaries loose their existence causing serious problem in hydrologic flow of the region. Sometimes they are modified in such a way that they get converted into either stormwater drains or sewerage lines. They loose their connection with subsurface flows or underground aquifers. Actually, that is great loss to biodiversity and thermoregulation of the region.

Devnadi, a very very small river in the Pune city is under stress due to the modern culture of concretised urban development. Awakened citizens requested governance activism in protecting the river but the engineered minds were hell-bent on channelizing with concretised bed and banks. So, there was no option but to go to the court. River can't represent its naturalness in the humans' court of laws in person. So, it was done by river-lovers to protect its life as a natural water body.

The case repeats in every city. Can't we ask one fundamental question to administrative and technical governance that what sort of healthy environment they are looking for? Is it like London's Times Square - very well manicured, no-tree healthy environment or a square in Matheran, Hill Station in Maharashtra where still living, breathing soil is seen, greenery is seen? Can't we ask what we want - is it survival as machine or living being? As a citizen of modern cities are we supposed to pay heavily for natural tranquillity of water bodies out of the city limits? Isn't it our right to have ecologically healthy river in the city?

A group of river lovers in India with Dr. Rajendrasinha Sisodiya, a Magaseysey Award winner for revival of seven rivers in Rajasthan is developing a River Policy having central theme of river culture of purity and uninterrupted flow. Water policies talk of sharing of water and river policy talks about retaining the streams and rivers healthy with sufficient flow and purity. IL<sup>2</sup>BM (Integrated Lentic and Lotic Basin Management) shall be useful in maintaining the water bodies in modern urban world!

Thank you,  
Chief Editor

## Devnadi Is Still Fighting for Survival

- Compiled by SERINews Team

In case of Devnadi, Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) - a body of urban managers - under the Government of India's Jawaharlal Nehru New Urban Reforms Mission (JNNURM) planned to channelize the entire stretch of Devnadi a 5-km tributary of Mula River. Natural undulating rivulet is converted into a sewage carrying drain, and interspersed by pipes, with a road above it, at stretches.



Construction of extension of Mumbai - Pune Express Highway encircling Pune city going towards Kolhapur - Bangalore opened access to vast agricultural tracts for the habitation. So, many residential apartments spruced up in last decade. As per Environmental Status Report of Pune city, population density increased 150% in just 10 years breaking all the records of urban population growth. But, the urban services could not match the population growth. The area lacks in proper roads and sewerage networks. Therefore, under the central government's urban reforms schemes, local administration decided to concretise the small tributary and convert it into channelized gutter to carry sewage piped from surrounding residential growth. It is permanent change of ecologically alive tributary into sewerage line carrying wastes.

So, the awakened citizens like Dr. Anupam Saraf with his co-residents of Concord Proxima on Baner Road formed an association of Baner Area Sabha (Baner Area Residents' Group) to protect the Devnadi River from being converted into gutter. Baner Area Sabha with Jal Biradari (an association of river lovers) filed Public Interest Litigation (PIL) in Mumbai High Court in April 2011 which halted all the river works and concretisation of streams and converting them into artificial waste carriers with successful pleading of lawyer Ms. Gayatri Singh and her colleagues. This PIL has become the only hope to protect streams and rivers from being hammered by engineered hydromodifications and encroachments. With three hearings once change of lawyer of respondents the stay continued. In last hearing, the High Court asked the petitioners and respondents to assess the ground situation together in presence of Ministry of Environment and Forests and arrive at certain conclusions to help move forward. But the Ministry has not responded yet. Is it possible that all concrete structures made on river will be removed completely? And shall riverine ecosystem be reinstated with eco-techniques only?

The glimpses of ecosystem of Devnadi River being killed by hydromodification,



