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WATER POLICY FOR TAMILNADU¹

I. Preamble

The National Water Policy enunciated by the Government of India in 1987 has recognised that water is a prime natural resource, a basic human need, and a precious national asset. Water as a resource is one and is encompassed in the hydrological cycle; river water, surface storage, and ground water are all part of one system; water is also part of the larger ecological system. Water is one of the most crucial elements in developmental planning. As the State prepares itself to enter the 21st century, it must develop, conserve, utilise and manage this important resource on an integrated and environmentally sound basis to meet the growing needs.

With a high percentage of the State's surface water resources already utilised, the scope for constructing new surface water storage reservoirs is limited. More efficient water management is the most needed measure to ensure additional productivity from water in Tamilnadu. Opportunities for conservation and reuse in irrigation, industry and municipal water systems together with sector policies developed to promote conjunctive use of surface and groundwater and effective conservation measures in all water use sectors need to be pursued.

Water quality of surface and ground water sources must be maintained to established standards in order to protect designated users from deterioration of the resource. Water legislation and regulations, the design of facilities, and the management of basin water resources shall be directed to maintain water quality appropriate for designated uses and to permit maximum reuse of all water following each diversion. The government through the appropriate agencies shall provide means and measures to manage all aspects of water development beneficially, including timely control of ground water levels, restriction or treatment of wastes; maintenance

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of appropriate water quality as designated for each point in the river network, forecasting of supplies, and direction of individual project operations to meet developmental goals and policies.

II. Goals and objectives:

Within the framework provided by the National water policy, the broad objectives of the water policy for Tamilnadu shall be:

- a. Establish a Management Information System (MIS) for water resources.
- b. Ensure preservation and stabilisation of existing water resources.
- c. Plan for augmentation of utilisable water resources.
- d. Promote research and training facilities for water resources management.
- e. Establish allocation priorities for water use by different sectors with provision of drinking water being of highest priority.
- f. Maximise multi-purpose benefit from surface and ground water, land and other resources.
- g. Provide adequate water for domestic users.
- h. Maximise hydro-power generation within the constraints imposed by other water users.
- i. Provide adequate water for industry.
- j. Preserve and enhance the economic fisheries.
- k. Maintain water quality to established standards.
- l. Promote equity and social justice among users of water from irrigation and domestic water supplies.

- m. Plan for economic and financial sustainability based upon the principle that those who benefit from projects and programmes should also pay for them.
- n. Provide flood protection and drainage.
- o. Promote users' participation in all aspects of water planning and management.
- p. Provide mechanisms for the resolution of conflicts between users within and between intra-state river basins.

III. Action Plan

1. This water policy will apply to all the water resources in the State. The Water Resources Control and Review Council (WRCRC) will monitor the implementation of the policy. The Institute for Water Studies (IWS) will be the Technical Secretariat for WRCRC.

2. River basin will be the unit for water planning. Small river basins can be grouped together for the convenience of management and administration.

3. The IWS will be the Nodal Agency which will collect and store all data related to water resources in the State. The IWS will utilise the modern facilities and techniques for storing and retrieving data, basin modelling, water balance studies for planning new uses, etc. In this, I.W.S. may also seek the technical expertise from the Academic Institutions in the country.

4. Necessary information system for the flow of data from the field to the IWS will be built up.

5. The IWS will prepare water balance studies and prepare macro-level basin plans and assist the WRCRC

in allocating water for different sectoral users keeping the objectives in mind.

6. Regulation and control of ground and surface water will be put on sound legal footing. Legislation may be enacted dealing with ground and surface water and their conjunctive use.

7. For maximising the benefits from the available water resources, the following steps will be taken :

- a. Efficient management of watershed to minimise sedimentation.
- b. Removal and prevention of encroachment in water courses and water bodies.
- c. Restoration of the capacities of the existing water bodies.
- d. Modernisation of the physical systems.
- e. Avoidance of transmission losses in the conveyance systems by lining, providing pipe lines, etc.
- f. Minimisation of evaporation losses.
- g. Adoption of modern methods of irrigation applications.
- h. Planning of recycling and reuse of water, wherever possible.
- i. Minimisation of leakages in pipe lines in drinking water system.

8. For augmentation of water resources the following will be attempted :

- a. Artificial recharging of ground water.
- b. Interlinking the river basins within the state.

c. Co-ordinating with the National Water Development Agency (NWDA) for implementing the National Water Grid (NWG).

d. Planning for cloud-seeding discreetly.

e. Encouraging rain water harvesting by the individuals and organisations through simple techniques.

f. Adopting desalination techniques in coastal belts .

9. For maintaining the quality of water the following steps will be followed :

- a. Monitoring for water quality and ensuring strict compliance of "The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974" for the designated use.
- b. Preventing over extraction of the ground water in the coastal belt to avoid sea water intrusion.

10. The flood control and drainage component will be included in the basin plans to be prepared after identifying the extent and intensity of these problems and necessary control measures will be detailed. Watershed management, flood forecasting for reservoir operations, flood plain zoning, and prevention of flood plain encroachments by human settlement and obstructions to flow will be considered along with structural measures such as embankments and flood channels. Fast communication net-work will be created for flood forecasting and management.

11. A drought management plan will be prepared for each of the river basins as a part of the river basin plan as follows :

- a. Employment-oriented schemes will be formulated and kept in shelf for implementation during drought period.

- b. In the irrigated areas, contingency plans will be prepared for adoption in the years of deficit rainfall; rotational irrigation is one such method.

12. Participation of the beneficiaries in the water use sector will be promoted and their rights and duties defined.

13. In respect of irrigation water use;

- a. The existing irrigation Committees / Water Users' Organisations will be strengthened.
- b. Where such committees/associations are not existing, new Water Users' Associations will be formed at the sluice/distributory level. In this, the assistance of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) may be utilised.
- c. Turning over the maintenance and management of the distribution system to the beneficiaries in stages will be promoted.

14. The existing water rates for water use in different sectors will be periodically reviewed and rationalised.

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