
Water for the Environment

Protection and preservation of the natural environment is essential for sustainable development. Given that most of the country's environmental resources are linked to water resources, it is vital that the continued development and management of the nation's water resources should include the protection, restoration, and preservation of the environment and its bio-diversity including wetlands, mangrove and other national forests, endangered species, and the water quality. Accordingly, water resource management actions will take care to avoid or minimize environmental damages.

Water quantity and water quality issues are uniquely linked. Poor water quality affects the availability of fresh water for different uses. Contamination of surface water bodies and groundwater aquifers by agricultural pollutants, industrial discharge, domestic pollution, and non-point source urban runoff exacerbate water quality problems and endanger both natural ecosystem integrity and public health. Other environmental problems include: excessive soil erosion and sedimentation, waterlogging and salinization of agricultural land, groundwater depletion, watershed degradation and deforestation, reduction of biodiversity, wetland loss, saltwater intrusion, and coastal zone habitat loss.

Henceforth, all agencies and departments entrusted with water resource management responsibilities (regulation, planning, construction, operation, and maintenance) will have to enhance environmental amenities and ensure that environmental resources are protected and restored in executing their tasks. Environmental needs and objectives will be treated equally with the resources management needs. It is, therefore, the policy of the government that all water management agencies and related natural resources departments will:

- a. Give full consideration to environmental protection, restoration and enhancement measures consistent with the National Environmental Management Action Plan (NEMAP) and the National Water Management Plan (NWMP).
- b. Adhere to a formal environmental impact assessment (EIA) process, as set out in EIA guidelines and manuals for water sector projects, in each water resources development project or rehabilitation programme of size and scope specified by the Government from time to time.
- c. Ensure adequate upland flow in water channels to preserve the coastal estuary eco-system threatened by intrusion of salinity from the sea.
- d. Protect against degradation and resuscitate natural water-bodies such as lakes, ponds, beels, khals, tanks, etc. affected by man-made interventions or other causes.
- e. Completely stop the filling of publicly-owned water bodies and depressions in urban areas for preservation of the natural aquifers and environment.
- f. Take necessary steps to remove all existing unauthorized encroachments on rivers and watercourses and to check further encroachments that cause obstructions to water flows and create environmental hazards.
- g. Stop unplanned construction on riverbanks and indiscriminate clearance of vegetation on newly accreted land.
- h. Encourage massive afforestation and tree coverage specifically in areas with declining water table.
- i. Enforce the "polluter pay" principle in the development of regulatory guidelines for all regulatory actions designed to protect public health and the environment.

Provide education and information to the industrial and farming communities on self-administered pollution control mechanisms and their individual and collective responsibilities for maintaining clean water sources.