

AS INTRODUCED IN THE RAJYA SABHA
ON THE 5TH DECEMBER, 2025

Bill No.XLVI of 2025

**THE WATER BODIES (PROTECTION, REVIVAL AND
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT) BILL, 2025**

A

BILL

*to provide for the protection, revival and sustainable development
of water bodies in the country in consultation with the State
Governments and for the constitution of a Board for
recommending and taking measures for the said
purpose and for matters connected
therewith and incidental
thereto.*

BE it enacted by Parliament in the Seventy-sixth Year of the Republic of India as follows: —

1. (1) This Act may be called the Water Bodies (Protection, Revival and Sustainable Development) Act, 2025.

Short title and
commencement.

5 (2) It shall come into force on such date as the Central Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint.

Definitions.	2. (1) In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires, —	
	(a) "appointed day" means such date as the Central Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint for the purpose of section 4;	
	(b) "Board" means the National Water Bodies Board constituted under section 4; 5	
	(c) "Chairperson" means the Chairperson of the Board;	
	(d) "Member" means a member of the Board;	
	(e) "prescribed" means prescribed by rules made under this Act; 10	
	(f) "regulations" means regulations made by the Board under this Act;	
	(g) "State Government" in relation to a Union territory having a Legislature, means the Administrator thereof functioning under article 239AA or any other provision of the Constitution, as the case may be; and includes the Government of such Union territory for the purposes of this Act; and 15	
	(h) "water body" includes natural and manmade water resources, lakes, ponds, tanks and wetlands but does not include sea, river and stream. 20	
	(2) Words and expressions used but not defined in this Act and defined in the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, or in the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974, or in the rules made thereunder, shall have the meanings respectively assigned to them in the said Acts, as the context may require. 25	29 of 1986. 6 of 1974.
Comprehensive plan for protection, revival and sustainable development of water bodies.	3. (1) The Central Government shall, in consultation with the State Governments, within six months from the date of the commencement of this Act, prepare a Comprehensive Plan for the protection, revival and sustainable development of water bodies in the country.	
	(2) The Central Government, in consultation with the State Governments may, by notification in the official Gazette, amend the Comprehensive Plan from time to time, as may be necessary. 30	
	(3) For the purposes of sub-section (1), every State Government shall within one month from the date of the commencement of this Act, furnish to the Central Government, such detailed data of water bodies within its territorial jurisdiction, in such form and manner as may be prescribed. 35	
	(4) Every State Government shall, within four months from the date of the commencement of this Act, prepare a list of all water bodies situated within the State and notify such list in the official Gazette, in such form as may be prescribed. 40	
Constitution of the National Water Bodies Board.	4. (1) With effect from the appointed day, the Central Government shall, by notification in the Official Gazette, constitute, for the purposes of this Act, a Board to be called the National Water Bodies Board. 45	
	(2) The Board shall be a body corporate by the name aforesaid having perpetual succession and a common seal with power, subject to the provisions of this Act, to contract and shall, by the said name, sued and be sued.	
	(3) The head office of the Board shall be at Patna in the State of Bihar or at such other places as the Central Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, specify and the Board may, with 50	

the previous approval of the Central Government, establish offices or agencies at other places in the country.

(4) The Board shall consist of the following persons, namely,—

5 (i) Secretary to the Government of India in the Ministry of Jal Shakti,—Chairperson *ex-officio*;

(ii) Secretary to the Government of India in the Ministry of Urban Affairs,—Member *ex-officio*;

10 (iii) Secretary to the Government of India in the Ministry of Rural Development – Member *ex-officio*;

15 (iv) Secretary to the Government of India in the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change – Member *ex-officio*;

(v) Ten Member *ex-officio*, to be nominated by the Central Government, to represent the Governments of the States, by rotation in the alphabetical order of the names of such States, for such period of time as may be prescribed:

20 Provided that the nomination shall be made from officials of the State Government not below the rank of Secretary to the State Government and dealing with the subject of water resources;

25 (vi) not more than three Members, to be appointed by the Central Government, from amongst persons having experience in conservation of water bodies and water management, in such manner as may be prescribed;

(vii) not more than four Members, to be appointed by the Central Government, from amongst persons having experience in the fields of irrigation, water harvesting, environment protection and sanitation, in such manner as may be prescribed.

30 (5) The qualifications and experience, term of office, salaries and/or allowances of and other terms and conditions of service of the Chairperson and Members of the Board shall be such as may be prescribed.

35 (6) The Chairperson shall, in addition to presiding over the meetings of the Board, exercise and discharge such powers and duties, as may be prescribed or delegated by the Board.

(7) No act or proceeding of the Board shall be invalidated merely by reason of,—

40 (a) any vacancy in, or any defect in the constitution of the Board;

(b) any defect in the appointment of a person acting as a member of the Board;

(c) any irregularity in the procedure of the Board not affecting the merits of the case.

45 (8) The Board shall regulate its own procedure with regard to transaction of its business and the procedure of the Committees thereof.

5. (1) The Board may appoint such number of officers and employees as it considers necessary for the efficient discharge of its functions under this Act.

50 (2) The manner of appointment, qualifications and experience, terms and conditions of service including salary and allowances of the

Officers and employees of the Board.

officers and employees of the Board shall be such as may be specified in the regulations made by the Board.

(3) The Board may engage the services of personnel, both from within and outside the country as consultants, and visiting academicians on such terms and conditions and remunerations as may be specified in the regulations made by the Board and shall facilitate their operations within the country.

Committees of the Board.

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6. (1) Subject to the rules made in this behalf, the Board may constitute such Committees as may be necessary for the efficient discharge of its duties and performance of its functions under this Act.

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(2) The Board shall have the power to co-opt as members of any Committee appointed under sub-section (1), such number of persons who are not members of the Board as it may think fit, and the person so co-opted shall have the right to attend the meetings of the Committee, and take part in the proceedings of the Committee.

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7. (1) The Board shall serve as a body for the protection, revival and sustainable development of water bodies in the country.

(2) The powers and functions of the Board, shall, include the following, namely —

(i) serve as a monitoring agency for the protection, revival and sustainable development of water bodies;

(ii) prepare national coordinated programmes to promote the spirit of conservation of water bodies;

(iii) assist in setting up infrastructure and environment for enhancing the storage capacity of water bodies;

(iv) ensure restoration of water reservoirs;

(v) assist in creating infrastructure for de-siltation of water bodies;

(vi) suggest prevention and removal of encroachment on water bodies;

(vii) ensure cleanliness and hygiene in water bodies;

(viii) prevent pollution in water bodies;

(ix) oversee the utilization of water from water bodies;

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(x) help in preparing infrastructure for rain water harvesting;

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(xi) determine citizen and community rights over water bodies;

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(xii) create public awareness and education on water bodies;

(xiii) make recommendations for amendment(s) in the Comprehensive Plan prepared under section 3; and

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(xiv) such other functions as may be assigned to it by the Central Government, from time to time.

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(3) The Board shall submit its recommendations and observations, state-wise, to the Central Government in such form and manner as may be prescribed.

8. (1) The Central Government shall, in consultation with the State Government, consider the recommendations and observations of the Board and prepare a concrete action plan in a State-wise format for implementation of the same by the State Governments.

5 (2) The Central Government shall forward the action plan referred to in sub-section (1) to the respective State Government.

10 (3) Every State Government shall constitute a Task Force consisting of such number of officers and other persons, as may be deemed necessary, and vest it with such powers, as may be prescribed, for the purpose of implementation of the action plan so received from the Central Government under sub-section (2) for protection, revival and sustainable development of water bodies.

15 (4) Every State Government shall ensure that the action plan forwarded by the Central Government is implemented in letter and spirit, and shall submit a quarterly compliance report in this regard to the Central Government, in such form and manner as may be prescribed.

9. **The Central Government may, after due appropriation made by Parliament by law, in this behalf, make to the Board grants of such sums of money as that Government may consider necessary, to enable it to perform its functions under the Act.**

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10. The Board shall prepare, in such form and at such time in each financial year, as may be prescribed, its annual report, giving a full account of its activities during the previous financial year, and submit a copy thereof to the Central Government.

25 11. (1) The Board shall maintain proper accounts and other relevant records and prepare an annual statement of accounts in such form as may be prescribed by the Central Government in consultation with the Comptroller and Auditor-General of India.

30 (2) The accounts of the Board shall be audited by the Comptroller and Auditor-General of India or by any other person so appointed by him in this behalf, annually and any expenditure incurred in connection with such audit shall be payable by the Board to the Comptroller and Auditor-General.

35 (3) The Board shall furnish to the Central Government, before such date as may be prescribed, the audited copy of its accounts together with the auditor's report.

12. The Central Government shall cause the annual report and accounts of the Board along with the auditor's report thereon to be laid, as soon as may be after they are received, before each House of Parliament.

40 13. (1) Without prejudice to the foregoing provisions of this Act, the Board shall, in the discharge of its functions and duties under this Act, be bound by such directions on questions of policy as the Central Government may give in writing to it from time to time:

45 Provided that the Board shall, as far as practicable, be given an opportunity to express its views before any direction is given under this sub-section.

(2) The decision of the central Government, whether a question is one of the policy or not, shall be final.

14. No prosecution or other legal proceeding shall lie against the Central Government or the Board or any Committee constituted by it or the Chairperson or any Member of the Board or such Committee, or any officer or employee of the Central Government or the Board or any other person authorised by the Central Government or the Board for anything

Proposals by Central Government to the State Governments for implementation.

Grants by Central Government.

Annual Report.

Accounts and Audit.

Annual report and auditor's report to be laid before Parliament.
Power of the Central Government to issue directions.

Protection of action taken in good faith.

	which is in good faith done or intended to be done under this Act or the rules or regulations made thereunder.	
Powers of the Central Government to make rules.	15. The Central Government may, in consultation with the State Government, by notification in the official Gazette, make rules to carry out the provisions of this Act.	5
Power of the Board to make regulations.	16. The Board may, with the prior approval of the Central Government, by notification in the Official Gazette, make regulations consistent with this Act and the rules generally to carry out the provisions of this Act.	
Rules and regulations to be laid before Parliament.	17. Every rule made by the central Government and every regulation made by the Board under this Act shall be laid, as soon as after it is made before each House of Parliament, while it is in session, for a total period of thirty days which may be comprised in one session or in two or more successive sessions, and if, before the expiry of the session immediately following the session or the successive sessions aforesaid, both Houses agree in making any modification in the rule or regulation shall thereafter have effect only in such modified form or be of no effect, as the case may be, so, however, that any such modification or annulment shall be without prejudice to the validity of anything previously done under that rule or regulation.	10
Overriding effect of the Act.	18. The provisions of this Act shall have effect notwithstanding anything inconsistent therewith contained in any other law for the time being in force on the subject and save aforesaid the provisions of the Act shall be in addition to and not in derogation of any other law in this regard, for the time being in force.	20
Power to remove difficulties.	19. (1) If any difficulty arises in giving effect to the provisions of this Act, the Central Government may, by order published in the Official Gazette, make such provisions, not inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, as appear to it to be necessary or expedient for removing the difficulty: Provided that no such orders shall be made after the expiry of the period of two years from the date of commencement of this Act. (2) Every order made under this section shall be laid, as soon as may be after it is made, before each House of Parliament.	25
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STATEMENT OF OBJECTS AND REASONS

Water bodies, including lakes, ponds, wetlands, and reservoirs, play a vital role in India's ecological balance, biodiversity, agriculture, and drinking water supply. However, rapid urbanization, industrialization, and unsustainable practices have severely impacted their health. Protection, revival and maintenance of these water bodies are now critical for ensuring water security, environmental sustainability, and climate resilience.

According to the National Wetland Atlas and reports from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), over 30 percent. of natural water bodies have disappeared in the past few decades. Satellite data and field surveys reveal significant shrinkage and encroachment of lakes and wetlands across cities like Bengaluru, Hyderabad, and Delhi. Untreated sewage, industrial effluents, and solid waste dumping are major pollutants. More than 60 percent of monitored water bodies in urban areas are polluted and unfit for direct human use.

Lakes and ponds are being filled for real estate and infrastructure projects. Wetlands, especially in urban and peri-urban areas, are often encroached upon, disrupting their ecological functions. Water bodies are filling with silt and sediments due to upstream deforestation and poor land management. Erratic rainfall and prolonged droughts, influenced by climate change, have affected the seasonal inflow and recharge of water bodies. Many small water bodies dry up during summer, reducing groundwater recharge and increasing water scarcity.

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has passed several orders to protect water bodies from pollution and encroachment. Courts have directed municipalities and development authorities to demarcate and restore lakes and ponds. But the situation on the ground is pathetic. There are multiple agencies with overlapping responsibilities which hinder effective planning and execution. Lack of updated data on waterbody size, quality, and status hampers planning.

Water bodies in the country are under severe stress, but their revival is both possible and essential. Protecting water bodies is not just an environmental concern but a necessity for ensuring water security, public health, and sustainable development in the country.

Despite the growing awareness and multiple efforts by various stakeholders, the absence of a unified central legislation specifically focused on the protection, revival, and sustainable management of water bodies has been a major gap in India's water governance. Water bodies are currently governed by a patchwork of State laws, environmental regulations, and urban planning codes. Agencies responsible for water, environment, land, and urban development often operate in silos, leading to poor coordination and jurisdictional conflicts. There is no single accountable authority at the national level to ensure the protection and restoration of all types of water bodies. Many wetlands and lakes are interstate or inter-jurisdictional in nature.

Existing environmental laws such as the Environment Protection Act, 1986 or the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 do not adequately provide focused attention on water bodies like ponds, lakes, and wetlands. Encroachments and pollution often go unpunished due to regulatory loopholes and weak enforcement. Water bodies play a critical role in climate adaptation by recharging groundwater, preventing floods, and supporting biodiversity.

Countries like Australia, the USA, and the EU have integrated water laws that protect inland water bodies through centralized frameworks combined with local implementation.

A central law would provide a uniform regulatory framework and ensure coordinated action. The current state of India's water bodies urgently demands a comprehensive central legislation that moves beyond piecemeal and reactive measures.

Hence, this Bill.

A.D. SINGH.

FINANCIAL MEMORANDUM

Clause 4 of the Bill provides for the constitution of a National Water Bodies Board for the protection, revival and sustainable development of water bodies, its composition, the salaries and allowances payable to and other terms and conditions of service of the Chairperson and Members thereof. Clause 5 provides for the officers and employees of the Board and for their salaries and allowances and other terms and conditions of their service as well as for the engagement of consultants and visiting academicians, as required and for the payment of remuneration to them. Clause 9 provides that the Central Government after due appropriation shall provide adequate funds to the Board to carry out the purposes of the Bill.

The Bill, therefore if enacted, will involve expenditure from the Consolidated Fund of India. It is estimated that a sum of 100 crore rupees is likely to be required as recurring expenditure. Non-recurring expenditure to the tune of 5 crore rupees is also likely be involved.

MEMORANDUM REGARDING DELEGATED LEGISLATION

Clause 15 of the Bill empowers the Central Government to make rules for carrying out the purposes of the Bill, whereas Clause 16 empowers the National Water bodies Board, with the prior approval of the Central Government to make regulations. Clause 19 of the Bill empowers the Central Government to make such provisions through an order for removing any difficulty that might arise in giving effect to the provisions of the Bill.

As the matters in respect of which rules and regulations or orders may be made are matters of procedure and administrative detail, the delegation of legislative power is, of a normal character.

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(Shri A. D. Singh, M.P.)