

# Revised Guidelines for Ground Water Extraction Notified, to be Effective From 1st June 2019

## Water Conservation Fee Introduced for the First Time

In order to comply with various directions of the Hon'ble NGT and to address various shortcomings in the existing guidelines of ground water extraction, the Central Ground Water Authority, Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2018 notified revised guidelines for ground water extraction vide notification S.O. No. 6140 (E), which will be effective from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2019. The revised guidelines aim to ensure a more robust ground water regulatory mechanism in the country.

One of the important features of the revised guidelines is the introduction of the concept of Water Conservation Fee (WCF). The WCF payable varies with the category of the area, type of industry and the quantum of ground water extraction and is designed to progressively increase from safe to over-exploited areas and from low to high water consuming industries as well as with increasing quantum of ground water extraction. Through this design, the high rates of WCF are expected to discourage setting up of new industries in over-exploited and critical areas as well as act as a deterrent to large scale ground water extraction by industries, especially in over-exploited and critical areas. The WCF would also compel industries to adopt measures relating to water use efficiency and discourage the growth of packaged drinking water units, particularly in over-exploited and critical areas.

Other salient features of the revised guidelines include encouraging use of recycled and treated sewage water by industries, provision of action against polluting industries, mandatory requirement of digital flow meters, piezometers and digital water level recorders (with or without telemetry depending upon quantum of extraction), mandatory water audit by industries abstracting ground water 500 m<sup>3</sup>/day or more in safe and semi-critical and 200 m<sup>3</sup>/day or more in critical and over-exploited assessment units, mandatory roof top rain water harvesting except for specified industries and measures to be adopted to ensure prevention of ground water contamination in premises of polluting industries/ projects.

As per the revised guidelines, exemption from requirement of NOC has been given to agricultural users, users employing non-energised means to extract water, individual households (using less than 1 inch diameter delivery pipe) and Armed Forces Establishments during operational deployment or during mobilization in forward locations. Other exemptions (with certain requirements) have been granted to strategic and operational infrastructure projects for Armed Forces, Defence and Paramilitary Forces Establishments and Government water supply agencies.

Ground water extraction in India is primarily for irrigation in agricultural activities, accounting for nearly 228 BCM (Billion Cubic Meter), which amounts to 90% of the annual ground water extraction. The remaining 10% of extraction (25 BCM) is for drinking & domestic as well as industrial uses. Industrial use is estimated to account for only about 5% of the annual ground water extraction in the country.

Central Ground Water Authority (CGWA), constituted under the Environment (Protection) Act of 1986 vide Gazette notification No. S.O.38 (E) dated 14.01.1997 has the mandate of regulating ground water development and management in the country. CGWA has been regulating ground water development for its sustainable management in the country through measures such as issue of advisories, public notices, grant of No Objection Certificates (NOC) for ground water withdrawal.

India is the largest user of ground water in the world, extracting ground water to the tune of 253 bcm per year, which is about 25% of the global ground water extraction. Out of the total of 6584 assessment units, 1034 have been categorized as 'Over-exploited' 253 as 'Critical', 681 as 'Semi-Critical' and 4520 as 'Safe' The remaining 96 assessment units have been classified as 'Saline' due to non-availability of fresh ground water due to salinity problem.

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