

1.5 Research

Following specific research studies are proposed to be commissioned to address the knowledge gaps in assessing status and trends in ecological character:

- Carbon and GHG Flux assessment – to assess the role of EKW in sequestering carbon and GHG, and this integrate role of these wetlands in climate change mitigation strategies
- Nutrient budget - to assess the quantity of nutrients entering EKW, its uptake in resource recovery practices and discharge downstream
- Bioaccumulation studies – to assess the chain of heavy metal contamination in EKW, quantity of toxic metals accumulating in fish, vegetables and crops cultivated in EKW and possible remedial measures
- Multiple values assessment – to assess multiple values communities living in and around EKW associate with the wetland, the underlying reasons and the ways in which this value can be orientated towards behaviour change for wetland wise use

1.6 Capacity Development

To support integrated management of EKW, the human capacity of EKWMA and concerned line departments as well as stakeholders will be enhanced by training workshops on:

- Integrated wetlands management
- Wetlands inventory assessment and monitoring
- Land use planning for multiple wetlands use
- Wetlands and climate change mitigation and adaptation
- Integrating wetlands wise use in developmental planning
- Conducting excursions (National and International), developing course module relating to wetland/environment management

1.7 Communication, Education, Participation and Public Awareness

Stakeholder engagement in wetland management will be promoted through creating awareness on biodiversity and ecosystem services values, management strategies adopted and opportunities for participation. Specific activities to be undertaken include:

1.7.1 Signage

Signage indicating EKW as a Ramsar Site, is proposed to be placed at all major entry points of the wetlands complex, namely along Basanti Road, EM Bypass and Bantala Lock Gate. Signage are also proposed in the 7 Panchayat Offices and school premises inside wetlands.

At the 19th meeting of the Ramsar Standing Committee, 29 October-1 November 1996, the members adopted a decision that defines recommended wording for signs at all Ramsar Sites, when translated into the local languages of the sites. The decision reads as follows: The Contracting Parties should endeavor to place descriptive signs at all Ramsar Sites, and these signs should include the Ramsar logo, as well as the following suggested text (amended for EKW):

THIS SITE, COVERING 12,500 HECTARES, IS DESIGNATED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA AS A WETLANDS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE ESTABLISHED UNDER THE CONVENTION ON WETLANDS, THE

INTERNATIONAL TREATY SIGNED IN RAMSAR (IRAN) IN 1971 TO PROMOTE THE CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF WETLAND AREAS WORLDWIDE.

The protection and management of this site is under the responsibility of: EAST KOLKATA WETLANDS MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY, DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT, GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL.

1.7.2 Webpage

The webpage www.ekwma.in shall be periodically updated with information, datasets and communication products on EKW. The website will be an important public interface of EKWMA and Government of West Bengal on issues related to EKW.

1.7.3 Community Participation

To enable participation of wetland communities in management, following actions are envisaged:

1.7.3.1 Establishment of a Community Advisory Group

The Community Advisory Group shall function as a wetland community platform to engage with EKWMA and other line departments on wetland management issues. Specifically, the group shall:

- Articulate community views and suggestions on various management interventions
- Support implementation of various management activities on ground
- Promote awareness on wetland values and functions within community stakeholders
- Support adoption of new technologies aimed at reducing livelihood vulnerabilities and advancing wise use
- Work with EKWMA to promote behaviour change within communities towards wise use of wetlands

The platform meetings shall be convened at least once every six months, and decisions taken shall be placed in the meetings of the EKWMA.

1.7.3.2 Community wardens

The Community Advisory Group shall be encouraged to appoint community wardens to work as a para-network of wetland monitoring group. The community wardens will be responsible for collecting information on various aspects of wetlands features, and through a mobile-app system, transmit the same to the EKWMA. The community wardens will also be engaged in the awareness and outreach programmes.

1.7.4 Resource material

Resource material on following themes are proposed to be published:

- East Kolkata Wetlands Ramsar Site
- Traditional Waste Recovery Practice and Wetland Wise Use
- Environmental monitoring system in EKW

- Citizen participation in wetlands management
- Biological diversity of EKW
- People of EKW

1.7.5 Newsletter

An annual newsletter highlighting progress made in management plan implementation and key emerging issues related to EKW is proposed to be published annually in English and Bengali, and disseminated to all stakeholders.

1.7.6 Workshops and public events

Public events are proposed to be organized on the eve of World Wetlands Day (Feb 2), World Environment Day (June 5) and International Day for Biological Diversity (May 22) as a means of reaching out to public on the issues of wetland conservation and wise use. Public events on specific issues, as pollution control or water management are also proposed to be organized as a means of engaging with stakeholders.

1.8 Monitoring Plan Review

A mid-term and end-term review of management plan implementation is proposed to assess the extent to which stipulated objectives have been achieved with a high degree of resource efficiency and in participation with stakeholders. A committee on wetlands is proposed to be formed by EKWMA to carry out the evaluation, specifically looking at the following elements:

- Degree to which wetland ecological character is being maintained as a result of management being applied
- Implementation quality, timeliness and resourcing of activities
- Quality and comprehensiveness of wetlands monitoring
- Effectiveness of management being applied, in terms of design, activities, outcomes and impacts
- Quality of stakeholder engagement in implementation of various activities and discharging wetland management functions
- Changes in external environment, requiring adaptation in management plan