

‘Minimum river flows’ for the Ganga

11th October, 2018



In a first, the National Mission for Clean Ganga has mandated the minimum quantity of water — or ecological flow — that various stretches of the Ganga must necessarily have all through the year.

Implications:

The new norms would require hydropower projects located along the river to modify their operations so as to ensure they are in compliance. Power projects that don't meet these norms as yet would be given three years to comply and “mini and micro projects” would be exempt from these requirements.

Flow specifications:

- **The upper stretches of the Ganga** — from its origins in the glaciers and until Haridwar — would have to maintain: 20% of the monthly average flow of the preceding 10-days between November and March, which is the dry season; 25% of the average during the ‘lean season’ of October, April and May; and 30% of monthly average during the monsoon months of June-September.
- **For the main stem of the Ganga** — from Haridwar in Uttarakhand to Unnao, Uttar Pradesh — the notification specifies minimum flow at various barrages: Bhimgoda (Haridwar) must ensure a minimum of 36 cubic metres per second (cumecs) between October-May, and 57 cumecs in the monsoon; and the barrages at Bijnor, Narora and Kanpur must maintain a minimum of 24 cumecs in the non-monsoon months of October-May, and 48 cumecs during the monsoon months of June-September.

Designated Authority:

The Central Water Commission would be the designated authority to collect relevant data and submit flow monitoring-cum-compliance reports on a quarterly basis to the NMCG, according to the notification.

Background:

The notification is issued in the backdrop of ongoing ‘fast unto death’ by environmentalist and former IIT Kanpur faculty member GD Agarwal at Haridwar on issue of Ganga conservation. The 87-year-old Agrawal has been observing hunger strike since June 22 for pollution free and uninterrupted flow in the Ganga.

Facts for Prelims:

About CWC: Central Water Commission is a premier Technical Organization of India in the field of Water Resources and is presently functioning as an attached office of the Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, Government of India.

Functions: The Commission is entrusted with the general responsibilities of initiating, coordinating and furthering in consultation of the State Governments concerned, schemes for control, conservation and utilization of water resources throughout the country, for purpose of Flood Control, Irrigation, Navigation, Drinking Water Supply and Water Power Development. It also undertakes the investigations, construction and execution of any such schemes as required.

To be looked in UPSC Paper 3 Topic: Conservation related issues.