

## ***Book Review***

**Marothia, D.K. 2023. Multiuse Wetlands Governance – Challenges and Institutional Choices** Routledge (Taylor & Francis Group), London. 344 pages. ISBN 9781003456742, IRS 1595.

The significance of wetland ecosystems were well perceived by the global community and the International Convention - The Ramsar Convention, established in 1971, ensure conservation and judicious use of wetlands with local, national and international cooperation. The Convention takes the leadership for the world to observe February 2<sup>nd</sup> as the Wetland Day, highlighting a theme. The theme for 2024 is the one that focus on the interrelation between *Wetlands and human wellbeing*. Wetlands apart from providing food, fodder, fuelwood and other direct support to humankind, extends vital services like groundwater recharge, flood control, biodiversity conservation, knowledge systems, cultural and supporting services. These services assume greater significance in the climate change regime.

India owns 75 designated wetlands, encompassing a total area of 13,26,677 ha, under the List of Wetlands of International Importance and holds the leading position in South Asia and ranks third in Asia based on the number of designated sites. Being a signatory to the convention, there has been deliberate efforts to protect the wetland resources of India through institutional, legal, policy, and coercive efforts. Despite these efforts, the threat to wetlands continues and large tracts of these ecosystems are vanishing fast. The common Pool Resource status of wetlands in India, the multiple uses to which it is put to, and the complex stakeholder profile makes the management of these fragile ecosystems very challenging. The policies, governance mechanism and management protocols are to be designed based on systematic scientific studies with wider perspectives of legal, social, economic, ecological and cultural dimensions. Though there have been limited attempts to understand the causes and consequences of the depleting status of wetlands, focussed research on the aspects of stakeholder perceptions, governance, property right status and appropriate forms of institutional mechanism for wetland management are rather scanty.

The present volume explores these issues applying a synthesis of institutional analysis frameworks to evaluate the wetland systems under various settings (rural, urban, peri-urban), ownership regime and institutional management systems. The author is a leading environmental economist with long standing experience in research, and policy making in this subject. The book is based on analysis of information generated through extensive fieldwork and scientific analysis and brings to light the existing complexities in use, management and sustainability of the wetland ecosystems. The readers of this book will be informed of the dynamics of Multi Use Wetland systems, the effective policy instruments and governance mechanism for sustainable management and conflict resolution of wetland ecosystems, research requirements for designing efficient management protocols and the procedures and approaches for securing international tags and status for wetland ecosystems. The book is relevant under varying socio-cultural situations in the international arena and assumes greater significance in the context of global efforts towards ecosystem restoration. In this context the book is of relevance to the planners, policy makers, development officials as well as researchers, in regions where wetlands face threats.

The book is organized into nine chapters. The chapters are arranged in the sequence of relevance, starting from definition, threats and status of wetlands and institutional analysis framework. Later the details of the basic features of the State of Chattisgarh, and wetlands by categories, size, and use is presented. It include Karst wetlands, temple and sacred ponds, wetland complexes, multipurpose irrigation tanks, *Dabries* (micro-minor irrigation tanks), and wetlands constructed under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). The book then addresses the effectiveness of existing institutional hierarchies and proposed institutional mechanisms to restore the complex systems. Further it explores topics like nature and extent of water pollution, status of wetlands, issues of resource rights

regimes, estimates of willingness to pay, past and current efforts of wetland restoration, property rights, entitlements systems, authority, role and economic value of ecosystem services. Finally, issues and lessons learned from the restoration efforts are discussed. The book also discusses performance of wetlands under alternative governance structures. The policy, governance and research agenda has been proposed for restoration of wetlands. The book is appreciated by many world renowned environmental economists including Sir Partha Dasgupta, Dr. Daniel Bromley and Prof. Robert Costanza.

Nature-based solutions which involve actions to protect, sustainably manage, or restore natural ecosystems and services, are popularised as an effective approach to address the challenges that the mankind faces, in aspects of climate related disasters. In that perspective, conservation, restoration and sustainable management of wetlands assumes much more significance. This publication significantly contribute to those efforts.

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