

# **Punjab Water Regulation and Development Authority**

## **Press Note**

### **PWRDA seeks public objections on Draft Groundwater Guidelines**

1. The Punjab Water Regulation and Development Authority seeks the public's objections on its proposed Directions contained in the draft **Punjab Groundwater Extraction and Conservation Guidelines, 2020** under Section 15(4) of the Punjab Water Resources (Regulation and Management) Act, 2020. This draft proposes that permission of the Authority will be mandatory for extracting groundwater by every user in Punjab for commercial and industrial purposes. The Authority has exempted extraction of groundwater for Agriculture & related activities and for Drinking & Domestic usage. The Guidelines also propose charges for groundwater extraction which will be volumetric and will be based on water meters to be installed by all users. Slab rates are proposed, with minimal rates for small volumes of groundwater extracted up to 10 cubic metres per day, to give relief to micro, small and medium enterprises. The state has been divided into three zones: Green, Yellow and Orange. The highest Groundwater Charges apply to the Orange zone which is the most water stressed and the lowest Charges are in the Green zone.

The full text of the Draft Guidelines is available at the following websites:  
[www.punjab.gov.in](http://www.punjab.gov.in) and [www.irrigation.punjab.gov.in](http://www.irrigation.punjab.gov.in)

#### **2. Promoting Positive Water Balance**

The objective of the Draft Guidelines is to balance the need for ensuring sustainability of the groundwater resources and the requirements of maintaining the livelihoods of people in the State. This objective needs to be met in a time-bound manner keeping in view the orders of the National Green Tribunal dated July 20, 2020 in O.A. 176 of 2015 and the orders of the Supreme Court of India in the MC Mehta case.

The Authority has proposed that in order to promote a positive water balance a portion of the Groundwater Charges will be utilised for implementing Water Conservation Schemes to be framed by the Government. In case a user opts for implementing water conservation measures on his own, then he will be eligible for a water conservation rebate (credit) that will be reduced from his Charges.

### **3. Classification of Assessment Areas**

The Authority proposes to create three zones of assessment areas (138 Blocks) in Punjab based on the 2017 Assessment Report of CGWB and Government of Punjab. The 29 Blocks classified in the 2017 Report as Safe, Semi-Critical and Critical have all been clubbed in the Green zone since the stage of groundwater development was less than 100%. The Overexploited category as per the 2017 Report has been bifurcated into two Zones: The Yellow zone consists of 65 Blocks with a stage of Groundwater development between 100% and 200%, and the Orange zone consists of 44 Blocks with a stage of groundwater development of 200% or higher.

Since the Guidelines propose to achieve a positive water balance by conserving more water than is extracted, *all* units in Yellow and Orange Areas (including new units and expansion cases) will also be provided permission to extract ground water, and they will have higher targets for conserving water. These Targets for water conservation can be met either by the unit's own efforts or by paying the full charge for groundwater extraction. In the latter case the water conservation activities shall be implemented by Public Agencies designated by Government.

### **4. Ad-Interim Permission**

It is proposed that a unit shall have the option to apply for Ad-Interim permission which shall be granted by the Authority to enable such a unit to apply for and receive permission pending finalisation of these Draft Guidelines. However, once these Draft Guidelines are finalised and notified then all such units shall have to comply with all the conditions specified in the final Guidelines.

### **5. Previous NOC of CGWA**

If the Central Ground Water Authority has previously granted a No Objection Certificate to a unit in Punjab that is still valid then it shall be honoured by the Authority and shall be given due credit. However, after these Guidelines are finalised and notified all such units shall have to apply afresh to the Authority.

### **6. Charges for Extraction of Groundwater**

The Groundwater Extraction Charges proposed in these Draft Guidelines shall be imposed after approval by the Government under Section 17(5) of the Act. These proposed charges are as follows:

First, there is a Gross Charge for each Zone (Table A). Second, there is a water conservation Rebate that can be earned by a unit in each zone if it meets the target for water conservation set for that zone. Accordingly, we can calculate the Net Charge (Table B) after deducting the rebate (earned by those Units that achieve water conservation targets) from the Gross Charge.

The Groundwater Extraction Charges vary with the zone (Green, Yellow, Orange) in which the unit is situated and the volume of ground water extracted by the unit. The Gross charges range from a minimum of Rs 4/- per cum in Green zone for the volume up to 10 cum/day to a maximum of Rs 22/- per cum. in the Orange zone for the volume exceeding 100 cum/day. The details are as follows.

a. **Gross Charges** for Groundwater Extraction

S.no	Category of Area	Quantity Used		
		<10 m <sup>3</sup> /day	10-100 m <sup>3</sup> /day	>100 m <sup>3</sup> /day
		Charges in Rupees/m <sup>3</sup>		
1	Orange	8.00	18.00	22.00
2	Yellow	6.00	14.00	18.00
3	Green	4.00	10.00	14.00

The water conservation targets range between 100% of the groundwater extracted in the Green zone to 400% in Orange zone. These targets have been set to ensure that a positive water balance is maintain by all units extracting groundwater. Accordingly, higher targets have been set for units located in the more water-stressed zones.

A unit has the option to conserve the targeted volume of water on its own by implementing water conservation schemes with the approval of the Authority. Such a Unit shall be given a rebate in the form of a credit of Rs 2/- per cum. of water conserved, after verification by the designated Agency. Accordingly, if a unit conserves the target amount of water on its own, the net extraction charges shall range between a minimum of Rs 2/- (rather than Rs 4/-) in the Green zone to a maximum of Rs 14/- (rather than Rs 22/-) in the Orange zone. However, in case a unit does not conserve water, a designated Government Agency shall do so, and the unit shall pay the Gross charges.

The Net Groundwater Charges applicable to a unit that achieves its target for water conservation by implementing water conservation schemes on its own are given below.

- b. **Net Charges** for Groundwater Extraction (Conservation Target fully implemented)

S.no	Category of Area	Quantity Used		
		<10 m <sup>3</sup> /day	10-100 m <sup>3</sup> /day	>100 m <sup>3</sup> /day
		Charges in Rupees/m <sup>3</sup>		
1	Orange	4.00	12.00	14.00
2	Yellow	3.00	10.00	12.00
3	Green	2.00	7.00	10.00

#### 7. Covid 19 Rebate

There is a special provision of reducing all the proposed Ground Water Charges (including the Rebate) by 20% till March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021 in view of the COVID-19 epidemic.

#### 8. Water Conservation Schemes

A Unit may either implement water conservation schemes of its own accord and earn a rebate, or it may choose to pay the gross charges in which event a Government Agency will implement water conservation schemes on behalf of the Unit. Water conservation schemes can include incentivizing farmers to grow less-water consuming crops, supporting efficient use of irrigation water, recharge of canal water, improvement of natural recharge through drains, stormwater harvesting in urban areas, and rejuvenation of ponds. Details are in Chapter 2 of the Guidelines.

#### 9. Compensation Charges for Unauthorised Extraction of Groundwater

Groundwater Compensation Charges are proposed for unauthorised extraction of groundwater without appropriate permission from the authority. These charges range between Rs 8/- and Rs 44/- per cum/day for different categories of users and areas.

#### 10. Water Audit

Large consumers of groundwater (100 cum/day or more) shall be required to conduct an annual water audit to identify possible water savings and to improve efficiency of water usage.

#### 11. Filing Objections

Objections may be sent within one month (by December 17, 2020) along with a receipt of the application fee of Rs 500/- either by email to: [comments.pwrda@punjab.gov.in](mailto:comments.pwrda@punjab.gov.in) or by post to: Secretary, Punjab Water Regulation and Development Authority, SCO 149-152, Sector 17 C, Chandigarh 160017.

Secretary, PWRDA