

Minutes of 68th Meeting of Punjab Water Regulation and Development Authority held on 16.08.2023 at 10.30 AM in the Committee Room under the Chairmanship of Sh. Karan Avtar Singh, Chairperson.

Present: Mr. Sushil Gupta, Member

In attendance: Mr. Rajpal Singh PCS Secretary and Mr. J.K. Jain, Additional Secretary.

Item No. 68.01: Confirmation of the Minutes of 67th Meeting of PWRDA.

Decision: *Confirmed.*

Item No. 68.02: Action Taken Report:

Action Taken Report on the decisions taken in the previous meetings of the Authority is as under:

Item No. 51.11: Regarding draft Tariff Regulations.

Fresh Agenda item on Water Tariff Regulations will be placed before the Authority in the next meeting.

Item No. 64.10: Regarding Staff Cars.

Pending.

Item No 67.03: Regarding Operation & Maintenance of “Application for Granting online Permission for Ground Water Extraction, for PWRDA”.

Funds as approved by the Authority have been released.

Item No.67.04: Canal Water based Groundwater Recharge Schemes.

Approval has been conveyed to Principal Secretary, Department of Water Resources, Punjab on 18.07.2023. Estimates are awaited.

Item No.67.05: Hiring of services of Chartered Accountant for preparation of Audited Balance Sheet and filing of Tax returns.

The agreement has been executed.

Item No. 67.06: Specifications of Flow Water Meters.

Public Notice issued and uploaded on PWRDA website on 19.07.2023.

Item No. 67.07: Resignation Notice by Mr. Rishamdeep Singh, Technical Manager (Agriculture).

Mr. Rishamdeep Singh was relieved on 31/07/23. Offer Letter to Mr. Anil Kumar has been issued on 18.07.2023.

Item No. 67.08: Recruitment to the one post of Manager (Legal).

The decision of the Authority has been placed on the relevant file.

Decision: *Noted.*

Item No. 68.03: Amendment to the Punjab Groundwater Extraction and Conservation Directions, 2023

The Punjab Groundwater Extraction and Conservation Directions, 2023 were published on January 27th, 2023 and came in effect on February 1st, 2023.

Para 3.6 of the Directions states as follows:

"3.6 PERMISSION BY WATER TANKERS

A. No motor vehicle shall be used for conveyance or transportation of groundwater through a water tanker (whether installed on the vehicle or towed as a trailer etc.) with a carrying capacity in excess of 500 litres for any purpose other than drinking and domestic or agricultural usage without Permission of the Authority.

B. An application for Permission for operating an existing water tanker shall be submitted to the Authority within six months from the date of commencement of the Directions...."

According to Para 3.7 of the Directions:

"3.7 PERMISSION FORA POWER-OPERATED DRILLING RIG

A. No power-operated drilling rig shall be operated for exploration of groundwater or for establishing, modifying, augmenting or improving any groundwater extraction structures in the state, without Permission of the Authority.

B. An application for Permission to operate the power-operated drilling rig shall be submitted in the required format within six months from the date of commencement of the Directions...."

According to Para 3.17 of the Directions:

"3.17 CONSTRUCTION OF GROUNDWATER EXTRACTION STRUCTURE

After six months from the date of commencement of the Directions, no User shall engage a power-operated drilling rig other than that permitted by the Authority for exploration of groundwater or for establishing, modifying, augmenting or improving any groundwater extraction structure."

2. The period of six months to apply for Permission has expired on 31 July, 2023. No application for permission to operate power operated drilling rig has been received till date. Only one application has been received for permission to operate water tanker.

3. In public interest, the Authority may consider to revise the timelines given in paragraphs 3.6, 3.7 and 3.17 of the Directions, 2023 on the same lines as done in case of paragraph 3.3.

4. Amendment in Paragraph 4.8 D.

According to Para 4.8 D of the Punjab Groundwater Extraction and Conservation Directions 2023:

*"For the period from the date of commencement of the Directions up to date of submitting the Permission application or up to the date of installation of required water meters (**whichever is later**), an existing User shall pay groundwater charges for the entire volume of groundwater for which Permission is sought. In case the User is granted Permission for a different volume of groundwater than applied for, then the difference in payment, if any, will be paid by the User or adjusted in future payment cycles, as the case may be."*

5. While scrutinising applications for Permission for extraction of groundwater, it has been observed that there are Users, new applicants as well as those granted Ad-interim Permission, which have already installed water meters and have been observing water meter readings as required by the Authority.

6. Since, the Authority has given time to all Units to apply for Permissions, the condition of payment of groundwater charges for the entire volume of groundwater for which Permission is sought up to the date of submission of application even if the User has already installed the required water meters, is not in line with the intent of the Directions 2023.

7. Therefore, it is proposed that Para 4.8 D of the Directions 2023 may be re-phrased as under:

“For the period from the date of commencement of the Directions up to the date of installation of required water meters (if not installed already), an existing User shall pay groundwater charges for the entire volume of groundwater for which Permission is sought. In case the User is granted Permission for a different volume of groundwater than applied for, then the difference in payment, if any, will be paid by the User or adjusted in future payment cycles, as the case may be.”

8. **Amendment in Paragraph 3.19** of the Directions.

Paragraph 3.19 of the Directions reads as follows:

“GROUNDWATER QUALITY REPORT

Existing Units seeking Permission for extraction of a volume Groundwater (other than Brackish/Saline water) more than 15,000 cubic metres per month shall submit a Chemical Analysis Report of water of each extraction structure provided by a NABL-accredited laboratory (as per IS-10500:2012) for the parameters as described in the Application Form. This report should not be older than six months on the date of Application. New Units granted permission to extract more than 15,000 cubic metres per month of groundwater shall provide this report within 6 months of grant of permission.”

9. In case of ‘New Units’, some applications have been received wherein the Unit proposes to start extraction later than 6 months from the grant of permission. Therefore, it is proposed that in Para 3.19 of the Directions, the last line pertaining to New Units may be amended as below:

“New Units granted permission to extract more than 15,000 cubic meters per month of groundwater shall provide this report within 6 months from the date of installation of extraction structures.”

Placed before the Authority for consideration.

Decision: *To facilitate applicants, the following procedural amendments to the Punjab Directions for Groundwater Extraction and Conservation 2023 were approved:*

A. *In paragraph 3.6 ‘PERMISSION BY WATER TANKERS’, in paragraph 3.7 ‘PERMISSION FOR A POWER OPERATED DRILLING RIG’ and in paragraph*

3.17 'CONSTRUCTION OF GROUNDWATER EXTRACTION STRUCTURE' the phrase "six months" wherever occurring be substituted with "such time period as stipulated by the Authority".

B. Consequent to the above amendments, the following timelines are stipulated:

- i) the time period to apply for permission for WATER TANKERS and POWER OPERATED DRILLING RIGS shall be 31st December, 2023.**
- ii) CONSTRUCTION OF GROUNDWATER EXTRACTION STRUCTURE: After 31st March, 2024, no User shall engage a power-operated drilling rig other than that permitted by the Authority for exploration of groundwater or for establishing, modifying, augmenting or improving any groundwater extraction structure."**

These timelines shall be published in three newspapers with wide circulation in the State for information of the public and be uploaded on the website of PWRDA.

C. WATER FLOW METERS

The Authority in its 67th Meeting by Resolution no. 67.06 decided to relax the specifications of water flow meters. In order to give relief to the Users who are otherwise complying with the provisions of Punjab Groundwater Extraction and Conservation Directions 2023, the Authority re-examined the issue and decided as under:

- i) Paragraph 4.8 D of the Directions, 2023 be substituted as under:**

"For the period from the date of commencement of the Directions up to the date of installation of water meters, a User shall pay groundwater charges for the entire volume of groundwater for which Permission is sought. User shall install the water meters of required specifications within three months of the date of permission as required under paragraph 5.1 C of these Directions. In case the User is granted Permission for a different volume of groundwater than applied for, then the difference in payment, if any, will be paid by the User or adjusted in future payment cycles, as the case may be.

It is clarified that in case an existing Unit had already installed water meters (even if not of required specifications) on the date of commencement of these Directions, then it shall pay Groundwater extraction charges as per the readings of such water meters for the period from the date of commencement of the Directions 2023 to the date of installation of water meters of required specifications, being not beyond a period of three months from the date of permission.

ii) *The following be added to paragraph 6.2(i) of the Directions, 2023.*

“In case a User has installed water meters (even if not of required specifications) on all extraction structures and submits readings of such water meters, the Groundwater Compensation Charges shall apply on the actual volume of groundwater extracted based on these water meter readings. Otherwise, Groundwater Compensation Charges shall be on the entire volume of groundwater for which permission is applied for”.

D. In view of the decision taken in paragraph C above, the Authority decided to give following relief to the Users who had obtained ad-interim permission.

In the context of paragraph 3.6 and 3.7 of Draft Guidelines 2020, a User who had obtained an ad-interim permission and had installed water meters (even if not of required specifications), shall pay groundwater extraction charges based on the readings of such water meters installed on all the extraction structures even if the water meters are not of the required specifications.

E. Proposal paragraph 9 of the agenda item approved as proposed.

F. Secretary to notify the amendments made in the Directions 2023 in the Official Gazette of the State of Punjab. The gazette notification be uploaded on the website of PWRDA.

Item No. 68.04: Quarterly statement of Receipt and Payment for the quarter ending 30.06.2023.

Quarterly statement of Receipts and Payments for the 1st quarter ending 30.06.2023 is at **Annexure A68.04.01** for information of the Authority.

Decision: *Noted.*

Item No.: 68.05: Quarterly Statement of PWRDA Fund placed in Fixed Deposit for the quarter ending 30.06.2023.

Quarterly statement of PWRDA Fund placed in fixed deposit during the 1st quarter ending 30.06.2023 is at **Annexure A68.05.01** for information of the Authority.

Decision: *Noted.*

Item No.68.06: Performance Review Report of Authority Staff.

In 57th Meeting held on 20.01.2023 by Resolution No. 57.03 (**Annexure A68.06.01**), Authority approved the format for PRR and designated reporting and accepting authorities. As per this decision, the PRR is to be submitted twice in a year i.e., on completion of six months and eleven months of the contract period.

2. As on date, Authority is offering contractual appointment for a period of one year. The existing system of submission of PRR is not practically viable. However, it is feasible in case of multi-year contract. In such case, the appointee may be asked to complete self-appraisal part of the PRR within ten days on completion of one year of the contract period and submit it to reporting officer on the required proforma. Reporting officer shall forward it to the next higher authority within next ten days. The whole process of PRR be completed within one month and the accepted PRR be placed on record/file within one month. The revised draft of instructions for processing of PRR is placed at **Annexure A. 68.06.02**.

3. As per the Authority Resolution No. 57.03 dated 20.01.2023, The PRR of Technical Manager (Groundwater) & (Agriculture) is initiated by the Secretary as Reporting authority and Chairperson is the accepting authority. The Technical Manager (Agriculture) and Technical Manager (Groundwater) report directly to the Technical Advisor. Therefore, their PRR may be initiated by Technical Advisor as reporting officer and be forwarded to the accepting authority through Secretary, PWRDA.

Placed before the Authority for consideration.

Decision: *Deferred. Put up as a fresh agenda item in the next meeting of the Authority.*

Meeting ended with a vote of thanks to the Chair.