

Threat to Wetlands - Ennore Case Study

What is the issue?

\n\n

\n

- Recently the TN government conceded the Government of India-owned Kamarajar Port Ltd's (KPL) request to divert 1,000 acres of the hydrologically sensitive Ennore wetlands for industrial installations that are best built on dry land.

\n

- The proposal is pending Central government clearance.

\n

\n\n

How significant is Ennore creek to Chennai?

\n\n

\n

- Ennore creek is a backwater located in Ennore, Chennai along the Coromandel Coast.

\n

- It buffers the rich aquifers of the Araniyar-Kosasthalaiyar Basin from the sea.

\n

- Located squarely in the intervening floodplains of three rivers on a high-energy coastline, Chennai is a disaster-prone location.

\n

- Wetlands like the Ennore creek function more as shock absorbers in times of such disasters.

\n

- This wetland's importance may not be apparent as much of the creek looks dry all the year-round.

\n

- However, when cyclonic weather pushes the sea water landwards, or when rain waters from the two rivers drain into the sea, the creek swells to its full capacity.

\n

- The presence of the creek prevents many parts of the city from flooding.

\n

- It keeps salt water from invading the groundwater resources that supply

huge volumes of drinking water to the Chennai city.

\n

\n\n

What are recent threats to the creek?

\n\n

\n

- In 1996, the Tamil Nadu government protected a 6,500-acre stretch of the tidal water body under the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification.

\n

- However more than 1,000 acres of the creek were lost to **illegal encroachments**.

\n

- These installations block the path of rain waters. e.g Areas that never got flooded saw waters enter homes during the 2015 Chennai floods

\n

- If plans to fill the creek persist, the precious freshwater aquifer that Chennai draws from will be lost to salt.

\n

\n\n

\n

- The governments are only targeting encroachments by the vulnerable poor people as a remedy rather than controlling the illegal constructions of the elite.

\n

- It is the need of the hour to balance environmental concerns and development issues, and take appropriate policy decisions.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The Hindu

\n

