

**“MWRRA Media, Public Outreach, Mass Awareness,
Communication, Advertisement, Publication and Publicity Policy”**

1. Introduction :-

Water being the subject in the State List, State Govt. is empowered to legislate the laws – the Acts, the Rules read with the Regulations and the Guidelines framed thereunder. Maharashtra Water Resources Regulatory Authority (Authority for short) has been established under the provisions of the MWRRA Act, 2005 and the composition was changed by way of amendments from time to time and has been entrusted with various functions, powers and the duties for regulation of water resources in the State of Maharashtra, facilitate and ensure judicious, equitable and sustainable management, allocation and utilization of water resources, fix the rates for use of water for agriculture, industrial, drinking and other purposes, and matters connected therewith or incidental thereto, for the purposes of water resources within the State.

The Authority has also been entrusted with the responsibility of Maharashtra State Groundwater Authority (SGA for short) under the provisions of Section 3(1) of Maharashtra Groundwater (Development & Management) Act, 2009 and is supposed to carry out functions to further facilitate and ensure sustainable, equitable and adequate supply of groundwater of prescribed quality, for various category of users, through supply and demand management measures, protecting public drinking water sources and to establish District Level Authorities to manage and to regulate, with community participation, the exploitation of groundwater within the State of Maharashtra; and matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

Hon’ble Supreme Court of India has recognized water as the Right to Life as guaranteed under Part III of the Constitution of India, especially under Article 21 of the Constitution to be read with other Articles dealing with the fundamental rights constitutionally guaranteed to the citizen of India and as such further community ownership of water resources has been recognized. As such no individual can claim any ownership thereon. The State Government is the custodian and the Authority is mandated to regulate the water resources of the state.

In this background, since Authority has been entrusted and dealing with the important subject to ensure surface water, sub-surface water and the water available from all other sources to ensure judicious, equitable and sustainable management, allocation and utilization of water resources, fix the rates for use of water for agriculture, industrial,

drinking and other purposes, and matters connected therewith or incidental thereto, for the purposes of water resources within the State for surface and the sub-surface - Groundwater.

The functions of the Authority as State Groundwater Authority is wider and vital so far as to further facilitate and ensure sustainable, equitable and adequate supply of groundwater of prescribed quality, for various category of users, through supply and demand management measures, protecting public drinking water sources and to establish the State Groundwater Authority and District Level Authorities to manage and to regulate, with community participation, the exploitation of groundwater within the State of Maharashtra; and matters connected therewith or incidental thereto. The State Groundwater Authority has to function for the development and management of the Groundwater in which larger public and society participation is needed so far as the functions pertaining to assessment of groundwater, notification of the exploited water sheds, protection of water quality, registration of well owners, prohibition of drilling of deep wells, levy of cess, rainwater harvesting, groundwater used plan and crop plan, preventive measures to be issued, registration of drilling agencies, safety of the wells, control over the functions of the district authorities, areas of influence and drinking water source, control over extraction of water from existing wells in the scarcity period, protection of drinking water sources against contamination, involvement of Panchayats, declaration of water scarcity areas, payment of compensation to the well owners in the event wells are declared as public drinking water source, control and the functions of Watershed, Water Resources Committee (WWRC for short), Prohibition on use of Chemical Fertilisers and Pesticides, Constructions of New Wells in notified areas, Promotion of Community Participation, Publicity to the decision and the plans of WWRC, Regulation or Prohibition of Sand Mining, Transparency in the working of WWRC, Control over the functions of GSDA especially for identification, delineation and declaration of basic watershed or aquifer, delineation of areas of influence, publicity of punishment and action on offences by the entities, all these are the functions in which transparent public outreach and publicity is needed.

The Authority is of considered opinion that continuous process of awareness building for Conservation of water, minimization of wastage, community ownership of water resources, need for keeping the water resources pollution free, the laws, Rules, Regulations and interventions made by the Authority is essential for achieving the various objects of the Act expeditiously. It is also essential to build certain degree of consensus for bringing change in prevailing water use practices by way of mass awareness.

Viewed above, the interest of the society and the public at large is prime and vital. The public at large is thus having right to get all the information of the various activities,

functions and the steps taken by the Authority in the interest to ensure judicious, equitable and sustainable management, allocation and utilization of water resources, fix the rates for use of water for agriculture, industrial, drinking and other purposes, and matters connected therewith or incidental thereto, for the purposes of water resources within the State, including its activities or SGWA for groundwater.

The Authority having considered its role and responsibilities in its discharge of functions, powers and the duties under the Act, felt it prudent to have transparent policy for Media, Public Outreach, Mass Awareness, Communication, Publication and Publicity Policy and accordingly having discussed in the meeting of the Authority decided to frame and adopt policy guidelines governing the clear and transparent policy for “Media, Public Outreach, Mass Awareness, Communication, Publication and Publicity Policy.”

2. Objects of the Policy:

- a) To provide society and public at large the true, correct and transparent information as well as knowledge regarding various decisions taken by the Authority.
- b) To create information and knowledge platform in respect of regulatory interventions made by the Authority under the MWRRA Act and the State Ground Water Authority under the Maharashtra Groundwater (D &M) Act.
- c) To build awareness and motivate the users for action regarding efficient use of water and minimization of wastage.
- d) To achieve the involvement of the public and society at large in the process of judicious, equitable and sustainable management, allocation and utilization of water resources, fix the rates for use of water for agriculture, industrial, drinking and other purposes, and matters connected therewith or incidental thereto, for the purposes of water resources within the State.
- e) To create publication, advertisement and publicity divisions as well as Media Cell for the purpose of social Media, Electronics Media and Print Media in the interest of society and public at large.
- f) To organize mass contact, awareness and communication programs for above purposes, including organizing contests/competitions, instituting awards, organizing functions for observing specific days and public outreach programmes.

3. Implementation Guidelines for achieving the Objects –

- a) The Authority will be the apex body for the implementation of this policy. The M-CIPRAW, NGOs working in the water sector will be involved in the implementation process.

- b) Committee headed by Member – Law will be constituted by the Chairman of the Authority in which the Members nominated by the Chairman for the overall implementation of this policy.
- c) Media, Advertisement and Publicity Cell headed by Member – Law will be responsible for the publicity, public outreach including Print, Electronics, Social Media Network and Broadcast of all the decisions, Orders, Judgments of the Authority including regulatory Orders issued by the Authority from time to time and for this purpose, the press release or the material to be made available for the publicity, public outreach including Print, Electronics, Social Media Network and Broadcast will be prepared under the guidance of Member – Law and will be circulated to the Chairperson through the Secretary of the Authority before it is released to the publicity, public outreach including Print, Electronics, Social Media Network and Broadcast.
- d) Publication cell headed by Member – Economics, will be constituted by the Chairman of the Authority. This cell will be responsible for publication of research papers, articles, books, booklets either in print or electronics form.
- e) The committee headed by Member – Law will be constituted by Chairman of the Authority. This committee will be responsible to organize mass contact, awareness and communication programs in various educational, social, industrial and NGO sectors.
- f) The Committees working for all the above subjects /objects will give due weightage to the principles of transparency and will work for building mass awareness for achieving the objects of the Act.
- g) The main thrust will be on providing correct, true and transparent knowledge and information related to water to the public at large. The persons involved in effective implementation of this policy will not cause any personal bias or the controversial acts or omissions, keeping in view the interest and the objects of the Authority. The various functions under this policy will not be used for any individual, organization, undertaking or the associations. The interest of the public and society at large will only be paramount and shall be protected at all the times.

4. The Reporting mechanism and the responsibilities thereof:

- a) The Member heading a committee will submit report of the activities on quarterly basis which will be tabled in the meeting of the Authority by the Secretary.
- b) The gist of the reports under clause 4a above will be included in the Annual Report of the Authority under the provisions of the Act.

5. The Budget and the Accounts :

The necessary budgetary provisions for implementation of this policy will be made in the Annual Budget of the Authority. The prevailing procedure of the Authority for incurring expenses and accounting thereof will be maintained.

6. Power to Review, Revise, Modify and/or Annul the Policy Guidelines :

The Authority will have power to review, revise, modify and / or annul the present policy guidelines as and when needed and upon such review, revision, modification and / or annulment, these guidelines will be deemed to have been reviewed, revised, modified and / or annulled as the case may be.

7. Power to Remove Difficulties:

The Authority reserves the right to remove any difficulty in implementation of this policy as and when it arises.

