

To,  
Chief Minister  
Government of Himachal Pradesh  
(through District Commissioner, Kangra)

Date: 5<sup>th</sup> February, 2019

**Subject: Demanding action for Clean and Free-Flowing Himalayan Rivers**

Respected Madam/Sir,

This memorandum is to draw the attention of the concerned authorities towards the massive crisis being faced by the precious Himalayan Rivers of our state in the wake of unprecedented development and severe lack of monitoring and action by the regulatory authorities. These urgent problems have several ecological, social, cultural and economic impacts and those are becoming irreversible. The unplanned and unregulated proliferations of the following activities have emerged as major threats for the rivers and streams in the state:

- Hydropower Projects
- Industrialisation and Industrial Waste
- Unregulated Urbanisation and Tourism
- Illegal Sand and Stone Mining

The above are being carried out in the absence of proper planning, impact assessment of individual development activities, cumulative environment impact assessment of river basins and carrying capacity studies and monitoring by the environment regulatory agencies of the State. Further, climatic changes are leading to extreme weather events on one hand and a falling discharge in the rivers on the other which are also affecting the rivers. The rate of deglaciation in ecologically fragile regions shows that we need to act fast to protect our water sources, which is our life line.

We believe that until and unless a larger policy change occurs there is little or no hope to save the Himalayan Rivers. For immediate action here are 10 demands that we want the government should start working on seriously:

- **Protect small streams and tributaries:** Some of the smaller streams and tributaries of the major river basins need to be marked for their fragility to ensure their sustained flow because they support ecological diversity and livelihoods. Thriving fish farms on the river, small home-based eco-tourism initiatives and cultural preservation all become possible in such an environment. These needs to be declared as a “no-go zone” not just for hydro projects but also for large scale sand mining, polluting industries and unplanned construction of both roads and buildings and rising burden of tourism. List of such streams/tributaries on each of the rivers needs to be drawn up and action to be taken urgently. The role of the Fisheries Department should be strengthened

- **Declare Free flowing Rivers:** Of the major rivers it is now the Chenab and Satluj in Upper Kinnaur as well as Spiti that remain free flowing. Given that these are high altitude regions and are ecologically fragile and more at risk due to climatic variations, these should also be declared as 'Eco sensitive zones' and no-go for major construction activities. In every district with public consultations such stretches should be identified and declared free flowing.
- **CEIA mandatory for all river basins before any new development activity:** Cumulative Impact Assessment studies for all river basins need to be undertaken in an independent, thorough and multi-disciplinary fashion before building any more dams and hydropower projects. While the draft report for Satluj, Chenab and Beas are already complete – there has been little local consultation in Satluj and no consultation in Chenab and Beas in carrying out these studies. Further, these studies have become mere formalities as the process of giving environment and forest clearances for hydropower projects has been de-linked from the CEIA process. The government can also consider carrying out a citizen's referendum. Until the complete studies are carried out there must be a moratorium on any further hydro development in Himachal.
- **Strict Actions on illegal Sand and Stone Mining:** As far as Sand and stone mining is concerned, the orders of the NGT and High Court should be strictly implemented and regulated. The regional regulatory bodies need to start acting immediately on this, especially for the small streams.
- **Controlled and regulated construction and tourism:** In the causes of degradation of rivers, both, urbanisation and the heavy inflow of tourists are emerging as major threats to the fragile ecology because of the disposal of solid waste, encroachment upon the river waterway and water extraction involved. Four-lane projects and blind road widening are not just damaging the forests but also increasing erosion and the siltation on the rivers. The sewerage system in the urban areas of Himachal is highly inadequate and it is ultimately the rivers which become the dumping ground for untreated sewage. Tourism and Urbanisation need serious policy measures that strengthen the role of regulatory agencies as well as work towards models that are small scale and community owned and managed and not large and commercial in nature. Urban bodies as well as Panchayats need to involve community participation in development plans where health of the stream or river is placed as the central concern. Solid Waste Management 2016 rules should be followed by the Urban bodies and municipal dumps should not be created in forest areas, near floodplains/river beds. Segregation of Waste at source is the only solution for this.
- **Book violators dumping industrial effluents in rivers:** Special attention needs to be paid to monitoring and regulation of industrial pollution in areas like Baddi Barotiwala Nalagarh and Paonta Sahib. Common Effluent Treatment Plants have failed miserably and effort needs to be made to monitor pollution at the source as well as treat the effluents there. The recently released report by Central Pollution Control Board on

critically polluted rivers has seven rivers/stretchers of Himachal Pradesh. Out of these seven, five are in Solan or Sirmaur, which are also the industrial centers of the state. These rivers then flow into the state of Punjab and Haryana and are also crucial for the relationship between the states. Therefore, industries violating norms should face closure as well as punitive action rather than just false threats and show cause notices. The Himachal Pollution Control Board needs to be well staffed and held accountable. The report and action plan made by the River Rejuvenation Committee made by the state should be made open for public comments and consultation.

- **Involve local community in river protection, regulation to support PCB and other bodies:** At present the Pollution Control Board and the Irrigation and Public Health department's roles have either been made redundant or they have been working to ensure least hindrance to 'developers'. In this regard, the Amendments in the Hydropower Policy of 2006, which were made in 2014 and 16, needs to be withdrawn as they dilute the process of NOCs from these departments prior to approval of hydro projects. The role of these regulatory agencies needs to be strengthened with community involvement in ensuring monitoring and compliance to existing legislations that protect rivers and riparian rights.
- **Monitor environmental-flows:** In the context of e-flows when main rivers have been plugged with projects, there is a need to do the following: Where there are cascade of projects the projects they should discharge sufficient amount of water to be able to mimic the natural pattern of the river and all the small streams joining the river should be kept free of projects so that fish can migrate in these small streams for spawning. As mentioned earlier, the rivers which don't have projects should be kept free of the project, so that all the biodiversity present can be protected. In recent years, the Expert Appraisal Committee on River Valley projects of MoEF&CC has proposed a minimum e-flow of 25 to 30% in some cases. It should be ensured that this is implemented for all hydropower projects that are functioning.
- **Rivers and Forests are to be protected together:** Rivers will be under threat if the entire ecosystem is not protected. This also means working harder to protect the biodiversity and quality of our forests. Increasing deforestation by diversion of forests for large development projects is a huge threat. Further, due to the proliferation of Chir Pine the quality of soil has deteriorated and has increasingly led to more erosion. These forests need to be converted back to mixed forests. There needs to be more community involvement in management of forests. The Forest Rights Act 2006, if implemented in full spirit will strengthen community control and ownership over forests around river basins (which mostly fall under the category of 'Forest lands'). This would also mean having the responsibility of conserving and protecting these resources. Unfortunately, the Himachal government has the poorest track record in FRA implementation with the State

government and forest bureaucracy impeding rather than facilitating the filing of claims process.

- **Prepare an action plan for all the rivers of the State:** The Department of Environment, Science & Technology department should carry out regional consultations and prepare action plans for each of the river basins with the involvement of local community with women representatives, citizens groups, environmentalists and experts, along with chosen government departments. Citizens in a democracy have an important role in governance in our democracy and this should be strengthened.

It is only through a political commitment towards a policy shift as well as a new initiative in environment governance can we protect the natural heritage and the lifelines of the State, on which our survival entirely depends.

Looking forward to your response

Thank you

Sincerely

**Copy to:**

**Chief Secretary, Himachal Pradesh**

**Principal Secretary, Forest**

**Director of Department of Environment, Science and Technology**

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	R. K. Vidyanthi	Yol Cantt	9816196844	
	PREM SAGAR	DMARAMSALA	9418137818	
	Mael	Bhadesh	9418380231	
	Vogesh Lal	<del>Yol</del> Nangurukul	8225944128	
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	Anurag Ransat	Nangurukul (H.P.)	6397984413	
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	Soni devi	वेजोल	8629882021	Soni Devi
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	Mohammad	Kandhari	8677325626	Mohammad
	Kalyang	Kara, Spiti	9418426004	Kalyang

क्रमांक	नाम	पता	मोबाइल नम्बर	हस्ताक्षर
	PRIVANKA	R.O - Dramman Distt - Chamba	9736808314	Privanka
	Anju	vill - Bhaleed Distt - Kangra	9805550244	Anju
	Sarita	v.p.o Sathpura Distt Kangra	9318788026	Sarita
	Rajeshwari	v.p.o Duggel Distt Kangra	8894312338	Raj
	Saxreen	v.p.o Sathpura Distt Kangra	8219232139	Saxreen
	Shilpa	V.P.O BOH Distt Kangra	8627802441	Shilpa
	Lammy	village Panjal P.O - Ridkumal Tehshahpur	7807055873	Lammy
	Anupama	40 Jagori Village Rakkar	9910130318	Anupama
	Seema	Rakkar	9808896639	Seema
	Rajni	Khangra	9418688364	Rajni
	MAST RAM	Rakkar	9736387096	MAST RAM
	Ankita	40 Jagori, Rakkar	9871197595	Ankita
	Seema Devi	Gehring	9805014781	Seema Devi
	Pavleen Devi	851412	7831057018	Pavleen Devi
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	Saluti	Jagori, Rakkar	9137637587	Saluti
	Gauri	Sambharnaa	8894349662	Gauri
	BINDU	Sambharnaa	8686990663	Bindu
	Aatreyee	Tanda, Kangra	9882530128	Aatreyee
	Fatema	Kandhari, Sambharnaa	8679475925	Fatema
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