Reimagining urban lakes

Understanding and managing tradeoffs, pathways to restoration, institutions and stakeholders
This document has been made to be used as a community resource and is meant to evolve with the contributions and experiences of everyone working to protect lakes. Please write to us with your contributions.

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Rejuvenating Our Urban Lakes

This section is on rejuvenating lakes in our modern urban context.

How did people use and value lakes in the past?

And what are more concurrent imaginations of these uses and values?

And how can we reimagine the lake through the values and uses it has?
Earlier Uses, Values and Users (a reminder)

What we call “Lakes” were mostly man-made irrigation tanks.

Communities were largely agrarian and communities clustered around lakes.

Lakes also had environmental uses, they were critical to flood control management, and stored water. They were not always perennial.

Lakes recharged groundwater

This was accessed through wells and then used for drinking and domestic purposes such as washing (both domestic and cattle)

Of course, most importantly, it had economic uses as well, farmers used the water as irrigation, the silt as manure, shepherds used the grass for grazing, dhobis washed clothes, fishermen fished in the lakes
Who Managed and Owned These Lakes?

- **Rulers**
  - Patronage: Ensured tanks were maintained

- **Community and Village Elders**
  - Joint decision and management on water use

- **Neeruganti**
  - Implementing decisions and distribution of water to village or community tank

- **Community**
  - Active participation in maintenance: cleaning, desilting…

- **Farmers, Fishermen, Grazers**
  - Used lakes for economic use
Reimagining Uses, Values and Users

Community uses: as urban communities, we use lakes for recreation (walking, boating…), cultural uses

Environmental uses lakes lower ambient temperature, are still important for groundwater recharge and biodiversity conservation

Lakes and wetlands treat wastewater

Lakes are still critical for flood control and storage

Livelihood uses can lakes reclaim their value for dhobis, grazers, fishermen, as sources of silt and manure…?
There will always be trade-offs.

Lakes are used for livelihoods, for waste water management, flood control, groundwater recreation, biodiversity, conservation and recreation.

Strength and sustainability lies in equitable stakeholding.
Livelihoods
Groundwater recharge
Biodiversity and Conservation
Recreation
Recreation
Flood Control
Waste Water Management
A sustainable solution (?) – working together with traditional, urban and government

- Control management distribution of water to village or community tank
- Joint decision making on water use
- Active participation in maintenance: cleaning, desilting…
- Used lakes for economic use

CSR?
BBMP
Community
Community
Farmers, Fishermen, Grazers
Institutional and non institutional stakeholders

- **FISHERMEN** maintain the lake, wetland and fish sustainably.
- **VILLAGE COMMUNITY** Responsible for grazing, clothes washing, keeping an eye.
- **STAFF, SECURITY, GARDENERS** Watch and ward of all activities.
- **CORPORATE** private entities such as CSR, Companies etc.
- **URBAN FAMILIES** Enjoying the lake responsibly.
- **FISHERMEN** maintain the lake, wetland and fish sustainably.

**Institutional and Non-institutional Stakeholders**

- **KLCDA** Overarching statewide lake authority.
- **BBMP** Lake Custodian, monitoring, construction, maintenance, infrastructure, security.
- **BWSSB** Construction, Maintenance of Sewage and Stormwater Drains.
- **KSPCB** Water Quality Monitoring, Legal Action against Offenders.
- **FISHERIES** Contracting Commercial Fishermen.
- **FOREST DEPT**
- **MINOR IRRIGATION**
- **CORPORATE** private entities such as CSR, Companies etc.

**Environmental**

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The Lake Custodian Agency

A custodian agency is the sole agency with whom the bottom line of responsibility lies.

Since many agencies are implicated in one way or another with lakes, the custodian agency needs to work together with other institutions.

In many cases, the BBMP is the lake custodian, but other agencies can also be designated (like BDA).
How can Citizens work with the Government?

The responsibility of the lake lies with the custodian agency, which is supposed to work with other implicated agencies. However, this does not often happen.

Citizen groups can help achieve this convergence between institutions (with the blessing of the lake custodian!), as well as increase citizen stake in the lake.

You can work with your local government either informally through a group or a network or formally engage through an organisation.

Engagement varies from advocacy, awareness building and citizen oversight, to working with lake custodians to improve lakes, for example, groups being authorised by BBMP to maintain lakes themselves.

We see variations these models in Bangalore, and the choice of which to choose really depends on your specific lake context.
Citizen Engagement: Leveraging Existing Networks

There are many avenues for citizen engagement, and the strategy you choose will depend on your specific lake context.

In all cases, you should be in touch with existing citizen lake networks like Friends of Lakes Bangalore or One Bengaluru for Lakes.

These networks can help by:

- bringing experience from other lakes,
- including conversations of upstream and downstream lakes and bring in a cascade level thinking,
- facilitating collective conversations with the government.
The Informal Engagement

You can engage informally with local institutions,
Individually or through a lake group, who bridge the citizen-institution conversation.

**Friends of Lakes** Bangalore – a loose network of engaged citizens active in advocated lake rejuvenation across Bangalore.

Friends of Lakes is a pan-Bangalore citizen led advocacy group that talks to local government institutions. Here, citizens act as watchdogs, play an advocacy role, and support government institutions to make them more effective.

If you’re interested in engaging with your lake and are not aware of any existing group active around your lake, you can contact Friends of Lakes, who will help you set up one!
How does the Government see Citizen Participation?

Every agency has their own way “institutionalising citizen participation”.

For example, BBMP has entered into partnerships with lake groups through formal MoUs.

KSPCB has created Watchdog Committees for water quality, comprising of government agencies and citizens.

And the Karnataka Lake Conservation and Development Authority has created the post of the Lake Warden.
Formal Agreements with Local Government

You can work with the local government through a citizen formed Formal Trust or Society.

These trusts typically adopt lakes and sign MoUs with lake custodians for particular responsibilities such as fundraising, working with CSR.

When the custodian agency formally hands over maintenance responsibilities to a group or an organisation (through an MoU), there may be financial implications – the maintenance party is also responsible to ensure securing of finances for maintenance.

Some examples: PNLIT, MAPSAS, Jalaposhan
PNLIT – rejuvenating a neighbourhood around a lake

The Puttenahalli Neighbourhood Lake Improvement Trust was registered in 2010 and works with BBMP to rejuvenate and maintain Puttenahalli lake in JP Nagar, 7th Phase.

It is the first case in the city where a lake was handed over to a trust to manage by the BBMP.

PNLIT is funded through public donations.

PNLIT works on issues of environmental protection, local governance and problem solving, boosting economic activities that improve the area, support other non-profit activities and foster educational initiatives that improve the neighbourhood.

The lake is an entry point to rejuvenating the entire neighbourhood around the lake:

- Core lake related activities: lake administration, awareness, nature watch, lake monitoring and regulation, gardening, cleaning, waste management
- Other activities: PNLIT memorabilia to promote local economies, recycling, local governance (traffic, waste etc), engaging with local schools

PNLIT signed an MoU with KSPCB and BBMP to use treated water from a nearby apartment – the first of its kind in B'lore
MAPSAS – working with a series of lakes

Mahadevpura Parisara Samarakshane Mattu Abhivrudhi Samiti is a not for profit registered Trust that was formed in 2011 to revive and rejuvenate lakes in the Bellandur/ORR/Sarjapur Road/Harlur Road area.

Beginning with a single lake, MAPSAS maintains two lakes – Kaikrondahalli Kere (with United Way) and Lower Ambalipura Lake.

MAPSAS also engages with a series lakes in the single cascade: Kaikrondahalli Kere, Lower Ambalipura Kere, and Kasavanahalli Lake, and is involved in reviving Soul Kere, Dodda Ambalipura Kere, Haralur Lake and Iblur Lake.

MAPSAS collaboratively produced with BBMP a Lake Development Plan for Kaikrondahalli Lake and also have an MoU for Haralur Lake Park.
Jalaposhan – a mix of formal and informal engagement

Jalaposhan is a community built around Jakkur Lake

Formed by citizens in the vicinity, Jalaposhan tracks the sewage inflow, water quality and also forces institutional intervention. They also help build a vibrant community around the lake.
Some provisions by institutions to recognise citizen engagement

How has the government created a space for engagement with citizens?
Two new roles have been recently created to encourage citizen engagement

‘Lake Wardens’ set up by G.O. FEE 99 ENV 2016
Watchdog Committees under KSPCB
Lake Wardens

Lake Wardens set up by G.O. FEE 99 ENV 2016

Roles and Responsibilities:
- Awareness of roles and responsibilities of citizens towards lake conservation and preservation and carry a message to citizens and enlist public support
- Collect and formulate suggestions for protection, conservation and development of lakes
- Assist the Lake Custodian in regulatory efforts like prevention of encroachment, detection and prosecution of offences, prevention of prohibited acts
- Anything else entrusted by the Lake Custodian

An active role for the Lake Warden, a bridge between citizens and institutions. An active role, with scope for further definition by the Warden and Lake Custodian
How are Lake Wardens appointed?

- Eligibility: Indian Citizen, between 25-70 years, resident in the lake locality, fit, speak Kannada and English, not active in politics, and not be convicted for any offences
- Interested citizens need to submit details to the Lake Custodian authority using a format issued by KLCDA
- The Lake Custodian will form a committee for the selection, appointments made for 2 years
- The Lake Custodian monitors and reviews the work of the Lake Warden regularly
- This is a non-remunerative post and has no statutory powers
- Issued a Cap and a Tshirt

Unclear legal standing for LWs. How will they enforce decisions if they are not empowered? Are they simply an extension of the Lake Custodian or is there scope for engagement?
Watchdog Committees under KSPCB

Lake Protection Watchdog Committees have been formed for Pollution Control and Response

Formed as a result of the work by Wg Cdr (Retd) Athri on Madiwala Lake.

Committee will consist of members of KSPCB, Lake Custodians (BBMP, BWSSB, BDA etc) and four citizens. Currently citizens already engaged in lake protection have been identified.

Copies of meeting and directives will be circulated amongst RWAs

No constitutional mandate – simply an avenue for citizen engagement, and can only watch and report back to KSPCB when a pollution infarction takes place.

Questions around the rights and remits of this committee and selection of citizen members remain.

See http://www.deccanherald.com/content/503843/watchdog-committees-stem-further-decay.html
Get in touch with Biome Environmental Trust at water@biome-solutions.com

With thanks to
Shri Ramprasad and Friends of Lakes, PNLIT, MAPSAS, Jalaposhan
And everyone engaged in lake rejuvenation in Bangalore

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