

National Environmental Policy Act and Its importance

Environmentalism in the 21st Century is likely to be characterized by various efforts to implement the sustainable development agenda. International organizations, such as United Nations and World Bank, will be integral to developing effective global environmental policy. Similarly, at the national level, there are authorities that develop such national standards for the country itself. In India, the Ministry of Environmental and Forest (MoEF) developed a policy for the protection of the environment. In this article, we will discuss this policy, its features and its importance in detail:

What is the National Environment Policy, 2006?

The National Environmental Policy, 2006, was released in August by the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MOEF) to establish a set of regulations for environmental protection, Environmentalists welcomed it wholeheartedly because it is the dire need of the hour to have such regulations to prevent environmental degradation. Some of the important facts about National Environmental Policy, 2006 are

National Environmental Policy, 2006	
Draft of National Environmental Policy	The draft was introduced in 2004
Ministry concerned	The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MOEF)
The final policy came in	2006
Applicability	PAN India

Objectives of National Environment Policy, 2006

Below are the objectives of the National Environmental Policy, 2006:

- To protect and conserve ecological systems and natural resources
- To confirm equitable access to environmental resources and quality for all sections of society
- To ensure the rational use of environmental resources to encounter the needs and aspirations of the present and future generations
- To incorporate environmental concerns into policies, plans, programmes, and projects for economic and social development.
- To ensure efficient use of environmental resources in the sense of reduction in their use per unit of economic output, to minimise unfavourable environmental impacts.
- To apply the principles of good governance in the management and regulation of the use of environmental resources.

Importance of National Environment Policy, 2006

The National Environment Policy, 2006 is an umbrella document that has covered the provisions that were separately governed by different acts earlier like National Forest Policy, 1988, National Agriculture Policy, 2000, National Population Policy, 2000 and the National Water Policy, 2002 etc. this act has made the environmental provisions more comprehensive and clearer. Following are the points showing the relevance of the Policy are

- **Stimulates partnership between stakeholders:** The policy also seeks to stimulate partnerships of different stakeholders, i.e. public agencies, local communities, academic and scientific institutions, the investment community, and international development partners, in harnessing their respective resources and strengths for environmental management.

- **Concerns on Freshwater Resources :** While dealing with freshwater resources, the NEP expresses alarm over the wasteful and inefficient use of surface as well as groundwater and points to a slew of actions that need to be taken for conservation. The policy also refers to the levy of proper user charges to reflect water
- **Biodiversity Conservation :** Biodiversity conservation has received adequate attention in the NEP. An important object of the Biological Diversity Act, of 2002 is to check piracy of biomaterial and traditional knowledge and to enforce intellectual property rights (IPRS) over them. The Policy reiterates the letter and spirit of the Act.
- **Enhancing Forest Cover :** The MOEF is trying to find out ways and means to achieve the target of increasing the forest cover to 33 per cent by 2012. This task has been set by the Planning Commission under the Tenth Plan and approved by the National Development Council. The involvement of people-particularly at the grassroots level-and agencies outside the government will be crucial.
- **Forest and Wildlife Conservation :** Forest and wildlife conservation have been the forte of the MoEF. The NEP breaks new ground in pleading for “legal recognition of the traditional rights of forest-dwelling tribes” to “remedy a serious historical injustice”.
- **Participation in coastal and marine areas :** The Government earmarks to encouraging stakeholder participation in solving problems related to multi-user conflicts in coastal areas in keeping with effectively integrated coastal zone management principles and philosophies.
- **Information on air pollution :** The Government developed a registration programme for all listed activities that emit specific air pollutants so as to assess their contribution to air pollution, which will lead to the development of an air emissions inventory in Trinidad and Tobago.
- **Participation in wetlands :** The Government by means of national environment policy will promote public awareness and understanding of the wetland resources of Trinidad and Tobago and actively encourage the participation of landowners, nongovernmental organisations and institutions in wetland conservation.

National Environment Policy, 2006 Strategies and action

The strategies to be embraced for the conservation of environmental resources in India are given below.

Strategies to prevent land degradation

- To prevent land degradation effective usage of science and technology along with traditional land-use practices that are sustainable is promoted.
- Programmes implemented to impart relevant farmer’s training on the adoption of new environmental techniques.
- To prevent and reduce the desertification of land

Strategies for the Protection of Forests

- Formulating innovative strategies to increase the forest cover from 23% to 33% by 2012.
- Afforestation of degraded forest lands, wastelands and tree cover on private and revenue lands.
- Multi-stakeholder partnerships which will involve the forest department, local communities, and investors

Strategies to conserve Wildlife

- Promoting and developing ecotourism to different wildlife sites.
- Encouragement for multi-stakeholder partnerships for afforestation
- Implementation of safe measures for captive breeding and protecting endangered wild species

Strategies to conserve Biodiversity

- Protection and conservation and protection of biodiversity hotspots.
- Implementation of developmental projects aiming at biodiversity resources and natural heritage.

Strategies for protecting Wetlands

- Since wetlands provide many ecological benefits, hence strategies to protect them are adopted.
- Setting up a legal regulatory mechanism for identifying valuable wetlands
- Taking explicit account of the impact of big developmental projects on wetlands

Strategies to conserve man-made heritage

- Formulation and implementation of integrated regional development plans with the active participation of the local community.
- Setting up ambient environmental standards with strict checks for designated heritage

Conclusion

Hence, the policy ensures fair access to environmental resources and a good standard of living for all sections of society especially poor communities, which are most dependent on environmental resources for their livelihoods. The policy outlines a range of strategies to meet these objectives that aim at the conservation of existing environmental resources through regulatory reforms.

