

Note on the Water Pollution Prevention and Control Action Plan

The State Council announced an action plan on April 16 that includes a list of measures to tackle water pollution, with the aim of improving the quality of the water environment around the country by 2030.

The action plan requires that by 2020 China's water environment quality will be gradually improved; the percentage of severely polluted water bodies will be greatly reduced and the quality of drinking water will be improved.

Also by 2020, groundwater overdraft will be reduced; the aggravated pollution of groundwater will be preliminarily controlled; the environmental quality of offshore areas, and the aquatic ecosystem in areas such as the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Region, will be improved.

As it strives to improve the country's water environment quality and restore the system function of water ecology.

By 2030, the government will also work to improve the quality of the ecological environment and realize the virtuous circle of ecosystem by the middle of the 21st century.

The plan includes specific indicators, including:

By 2020, the quality of over 70 percent of the water in seven key river basins, such as the Yangtze River and Yellow River, will reach level III or above, and the amount of foul water in urban built-up areas will be controlled, thus not exceeding 10 percent.

Ten major measures are included with specific measures under each; different responsibilities of central-level ministries are clearly stated for specific measures; local governments at all levels are required to implement the action plan without further elaboration of distinctive responsibilities:

I. The discharge of pollutants will be controlled and emission reduction measures will aim to tackle pollution caused by industries, urban living, agriculture and the rural sector, and ships and ports.

1. Prevention and control of industrial pollution (led by Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP), supported by Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT), Ministry of Land and Resources (MLR), National Energy Administration (NEA), etc.

a. Special treatment of ten key industrial sectors – led by MEP, supported by MIIT, etc.

b. Centralized treatment of water pollution in industrial zones – led by MEP, supported by Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST), MIIT, Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM), etc.

2. Strengthen treatment of urban living pollution – led by Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development (MOHURD), supported by National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), MEP, etc.

a. Strengthen comprehensive construction of the supporting pipe network – led by MOHURD, supported by NDRC, MEP, etc.

b. Enhance treatment of sludge – led by MOHURD, supported by NDRC, MIIT, MEP, Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), etc.

3. Enhance prevention and control of agricultural and rural pollution – led by MOA, supported by MEP, etc.

a. Control of non-point source pollution from agriculture – led by MOA, supported by NDRC, MIIT, MLR, MEP, Ministry of Water Resources (MWR), General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine (AQSIQ), etc.

b. Restructure layout of planting industry – led by MOA, supported by MWR, NDRC, MLR, etc.

c. Accelerate comprehensive treatment of rural environment – led by MEP, supported by MOHURD, MWR, MOA, etc.

4. Strengthen pollution control of ships and at ports – led by Ministry of Transport (MOT), supported by MIIT, MEP, MOA, AQSIQ, etc.

a. Enhance capacity of prevention and control at ports and piers – led by MOT, supported by MIIT, MOHURD, MOA, etc.

II. Economic restructuring and upgrading will be further boosted. Industrial water, reclaimed water and seawater will be used to promote cyclic development.

5. Restructure industrial sector – led by MIIT, supported by NDRC, MEP, etc.

a. Set stringent environment thresholds – led by MEP, supported by MOHURD, MWR, State Oceanic Administration (SOA), etc.

6. Optimize industrial layout – led by NDRC, supported by MIIT, MLR, MEP, MOHOURD, MWR, etc.

a. Promote the phase-out of polluting enterprises – led by MIIT, supported by MEP, etc.

b. Protect eco-space proactively – led by MLR, supported by MOHURD, MEP, MWR, MOA, etc.

7. Enhance cyclic development – led by NDRC, supported by MIIT, MWR, NEA, etc.

a. Promote utilization of recycled water – led by MOHURD, supported by NDRC, MIIT, MEP, MOT, MWR, etc.

b. Promote utilization of seawater – led by NDRC, supported by MIIT, MOHURD, MWR, MOA, etc.

III. Measures will aim to continue saving and protecting water resources. A strict management system of water resources will be implemented so as to control the overall use of water, improve water-use efficiency, and protect the ecological flows of key rivers.

8. Control of total water consumption – led by MWR, supported by NDRC, MIIT, MOHURD, MOA, etc.

a. Strictly control over-exploitation of groundwater – led by MWR, supported by MLR, NDRC, MIIT, Ministry of Finance (MOF), MOHURD, MOA, etc.

9. Raise water-use efficiency – led by MWR, supported by NDRC, MIIT, MOHURD, etc.

a. Enhance water-saving in industrial sector – led by MIIT, supported by MWR, NDRC, MOHURD, AQSIQ, etc.

b. Strengthen water-saving in urban areas – led by MOHURD, supported by NDRC, MIIT, MWR, AQSIQ, etc.

c. Promote water-saving in agricultural sector – led by MWR, supported by MOA, NDRC, MOF, etc.

10. Protection water resources in a scientific manner – led by MWR, supported by NDRC, MEP, etc.

a. Strengthen water dispatch management in water bodies – led by MWR, supported by MEP, etc.

b. Set out the ecological river flow in a scientific manner – led by MWR, supported by MEP, etc.

IV. Scientific and technological support will be further improved. Advanced technologies will be promoted and fundamental research is set to be strengthened. The environmental protection industry will be regulated and the authorities will accelerate the development of the environmental protection service industry.

11. Disseminate and demonstrate adaptive technologies – led by MOST, supported by NDRC, MIIT, MEP, MOHURD, MWR, MOA, SOA, etc.

12. Achieve breakthroughs in key technologies – led by MOST, supported by NDRC, MIIT, MLR, MEP, MOHURD, MWR, MOA, National Health and Family Planning Commission (NHFPC), etc.

13. Enhance development of environmental protection industries – led by NDRC, supported by MOST, MIIT, MOF, MEP, MOHURD, MWR, SOA, etc.

a. Accelerate development of environmental service industries – led by NDRC and MOF, supported by MOST, MIIT, MEP, MOHURD, etc.

V. Market will play a bigger role. The authorities will make efforts to step up water price reform, improve taxation policies, facilitate diversified investment and establish an incentive mechanism that promotes water environment treatment.

14. Improve price tax system – led by NDRC, supported by MOF, MOHURD, MWR, MOA, etc.

a. Improving policy of leveraging fees – led by NDRC and MOF, supported by MEP, MOHURD, MWR, etc.

b. Improve taxation policy – led by MOF and State Administration of Taxation (SAT), supported by NDRC, MIIT, MOFCOM, General Administration of Customs (GAC), AQSIQ, etc.

15. Promote diversified financing – led by People's Bank of China (PBC), NDRC and MOF, supported by MEP, MOHURD, China Banking Regulatory Commission (CBRC), China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC), China Insurance Regulatory Commission (CIRC), etc.

a. Increase governmental investment – led by MOF, supported by NDRC, MEP, etc.

16. Establish incentives mechanism for enterprises – led by NDRC, supported by MIIT, MOF, MEP, MOHURD, MWR, etc.

a. Promote green credit loan – led by PBC, supported by MIIT, MEP, MWR, CBRC, CSRC, CIRC, etc.

b. Implement trans-boundary compensation for water environment – led by MOF, supported by NDRC, MEP, MWR, etc.

VI. Relevant law enforcement and supervision will be stricter, and environmental violations and illegal construction projects will be severely punished.

17. Improve laws, regulations and standards – led by Legislative Affairs Office of the State Council (LAOSC), supported by NDRC, MIIT, MLR, MEP, MOHURD, MOT, MWR, MOA, NHFPC, CIRC, SOA, etc.

a. Improve standardization system – led by MEP, supported by NDRC, MIIT, MLR, MOHURD, MWR, MOA, AQSIQ, etc.

18. Strengthen law enforcement – responsible by MEP

a. Improve environmental protection supervision and enforcement system at central and local levels and strengthen coordination of all departments in environment, public security and supervision affairs – led by MEP, supported by MIIT, Ministry of Public Security (MPS), State Commission Office for Public Sector Reform (SCOPSR), etc.

b. Crack down environmental violations – led by MEP, supported by MPS, MOHURD, etc.

19. Raise the level of supervision – led by MEP, supported by MOT, MWR, MOA, SOA, etc.

a. Improve monitoring network of water environment – led by MEP, supported by NDRC, MLR, MOHURD, MOT, MWR, MOA, SOA, etc.

b. Enhance capacity of environmental supervision – responsible by MEP

VII. Management of water environment will be further strengthened. Authorities will strictly control the amount of pollutants and various environmental risks, and give authorization, whenever appropriate, to discharge pollutants.

20. Strengthen management of environmental quality targets – led by MEP, supported by MWR

21. Deepen total control of pollutant discharge – led by MEP, supported by NDRC, MIIT, MOHURD, MWR, etc.

22. Control environmental risks strictly – led by MEP, supported by MIIT, NHFPC, State Administration of Work Safety (SAWS), etc.

a. Handle effectively emergent pollution accidents in water environment sector – led by MEP, supported by MOHURD, MWR, MOA, NHFPC, etc.

23. Promote pollution discharge permit in a comprehensive manner – responsible by MEP

a. Reinforce permit management – led by MEP, supported by SOA

VIII. Authorities will make efforts to ensure the safety of aquatic ecosystem, including ensuring the safety of drinking water sources, treating underground water pollution and pollution in major river basins, and strengthening the protection of water bodies and the ocean environment. By the end of 2017, foul water in urban built-up areas will be basically eliminated.

24. Ensure safety of drinking water sources – led by MEP, supported by NDRC, MOF, MOHURD, MWR, NHFPC, etc.

a. Reinforce environmental protection of drinking water sources – led by MEP, supported by NDRC, MOF, MOHURD, MWR, NHFPC, etc.

b. Prevent and treat groundwater pollution – led by MEP, supported by MOF, MLR, MOHURD, MWR, MOFCOM, etc.

25. Deepen pollution prevention and treatment in key river basins – led by MEP, supported by NDRC, MIIT, MOF, MOHURD, MWR, etc.

a. Strengthen protection of water bodies of good quality (level of III and above) – led by MEP, supported by Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), NDRC, MOF, MWR, State Forestry Administration (SFA), etc.

26. Strengthen environmental protection of coastal waters – led by MEP and SOA, supported by NDRC, MIIT, MOF, MOHURD, MOT, MOA, etc.

a. Promote ecological and healthy cultivation practice – responsible by MOA

b. Strictly control pollution from environmental hormone chemicals – led by MEP, supported by MIIT, MOA, etc.

27. Implement treatment of black and smelly waters – led by MOHURD, supported by MEP, MWR, MOA, etc.

28. Protect aquatic and wetland ecosystem – led by MEP and SFA, supported by MOF, MLR, MOHURD, MWR, MOA, etc.

a. Protect oceanic ecosystem – led by MEP and SOA, supported by NDRC, MOF, MOA, SFA, etc.

VIII. The duties of all parties will be clarified and implemented. Local governments should be more responsible for the protection of the water environment and pollutant discharge units should be made accountable. The central government will check the implementation of the action plan in different basins, regions and sea areas every year.

29. Reinforce responsibilities of local government in the protection of water environment – led by MEP, supported by NDRC, MOF, MOHURD, MWR, etc.

30. Strengthen coordination and harmonized actions – led by MEP, supported by NDRC, MOST, MIIT, MOF, MOHURD, MWR, MOA, SOA, etc.

31. Ensure polluting enterprises are held accountable – led by MEP, supported by State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC).

32. Ensure strict performance assessment on allocated targets and tasks at local levels – led by MEP, supported by Organization Department of CCCPC.

a. Allocate funding based on assessment results of achieving water pollution prevention and control targets – led by MOF and NDRC, supported by MEP

b. Post-assessments actions for underperformance and non-performance of required targets – led by MEP, supported by Central Committee of Discipline Investigation (CCDI).

X. Public participation and community supervision will be improved, and the government will regularly publish a list of cities and provinces that have the best and worst water environment.

33. Disclose information to the public according to law – led by MEP, supported by NDRC, MOHURD, MWR, NHFPC, SOA, etc.

a. Local governments at all levels must publish reports on water environment within the jurisdiction regularly; key emissions enterprises on national supervision list must disclose emissions details to the public and be subject to public supervision – led by MEP, supported by NDRC, MIIT, etc.

34. Strengthen public supervision on environmental affairs and enhance public participation – responsible by MEP

35. Set up a public-action model of full scale by engaging the whole society at various levels in various forms – led by MEP, supported by Ministry of Education (MOE), MOHURD, MWR, etc.