

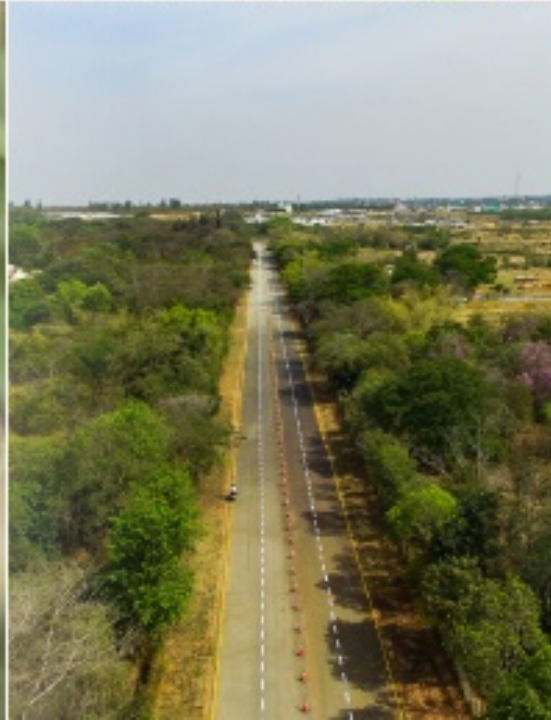


# Expanding the Conservation Estate

## *The Indian OECMs Experience*

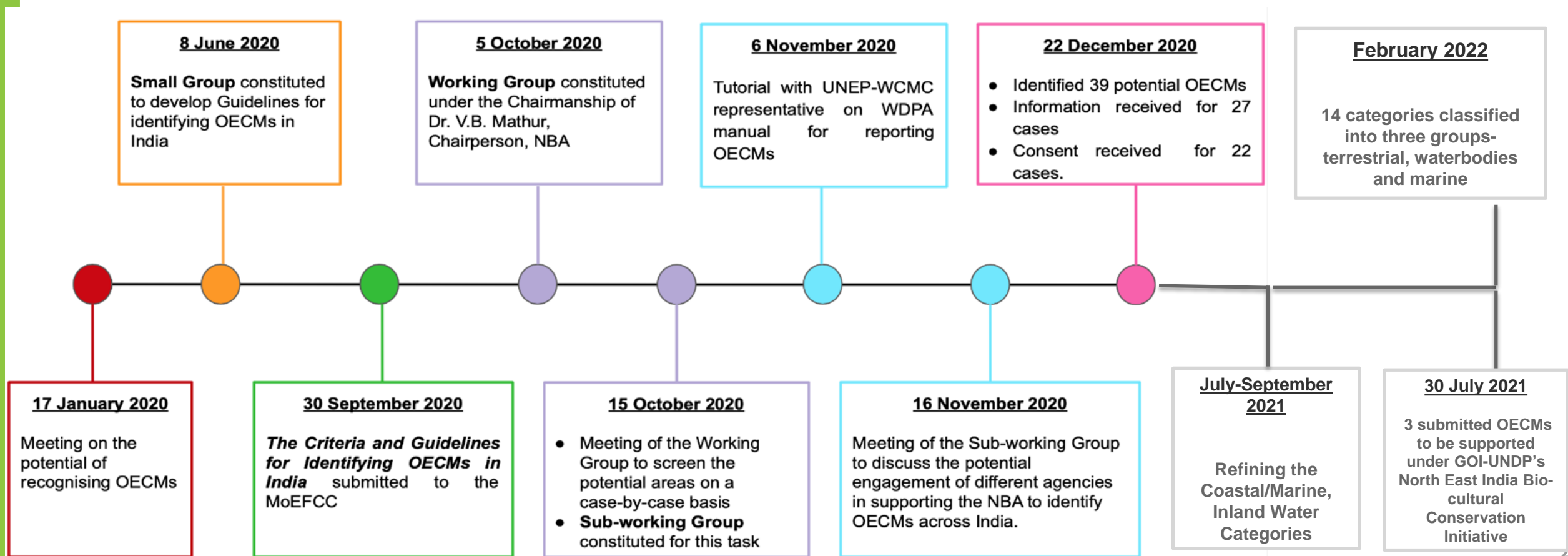
Dr. Ruchi Pant  
Chief, Climate Change, Resilience,  
Biodiversity and Chemicals Management

11th APBON Web Seminar  
4 March 2022



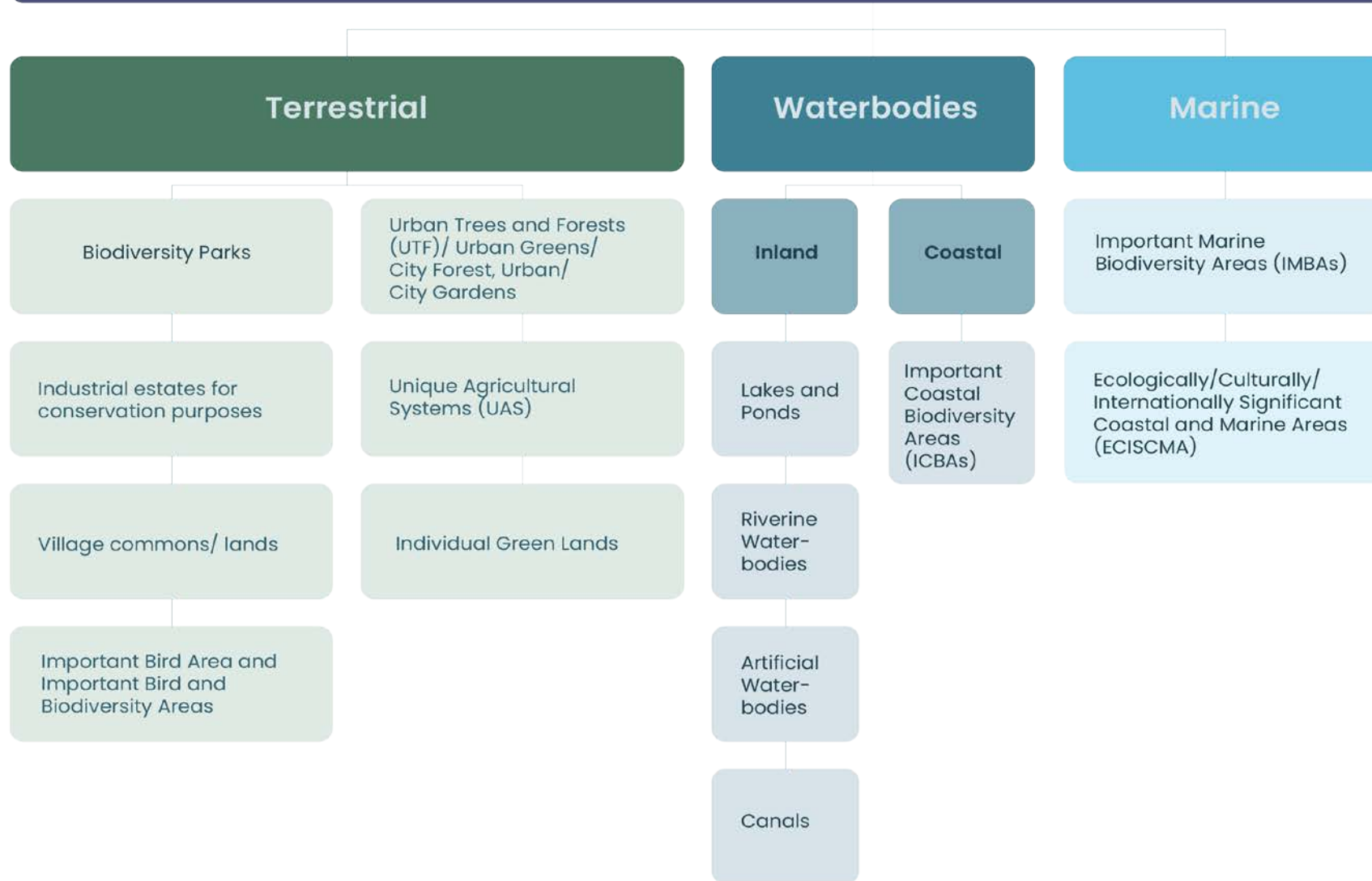


# OECMs identification and recognition in India: *Work in Progress*



# Potential OECM Categories In India

(work in progress)



# Guidelines of the 14 Categories (1/4)

Category	Definition and specific guidelines
<b>Terrestrial Categories</b>	
<b>1 Biodiversity Parks</b>	<p>Biodiversity Parks are unique landscapes in urban and rural areas, that serve as nature reserves and harbour a vast variety of native plants, animals and microbial species rendering ecological services to the region.</p> <p><b>Specific guidelines:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The biodiversity park should have owned/ governed/ managed by a local body.</li> <li>2. Biodiversity Parks existing outside forest areas mapped by FSI or PAs (National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries, Reserved forests, etc.) qualify as OECMs.</li> <li>3. The biodiversity park should serve as sites for ecosystem restoration and should not have a pre-dominance of exotic species</li> <li>4. The biodiversity park should have been managed for long duration for delivering effective in-situ conservation of biodiversity.</li> </ol>
<b>2 Industrial estates for conservation purposes</b>	<p>Green belts are areas where vegetation is maintained to function as pollutant sinks, and provide other benefits like aesthetic improvement and providing possible habitats for birds and animals, thus recreating hospitable nature in an otherwise drab Urban-Industrial scene</p> <p><b>Generic guidelines:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The site should be privately owned/ leased Industrial estates</li> <li>2. Industrial estates located outside forest areas mapped by FSI can only qualify as OECMs.</li> <li>3. The area should be substantial to support habitat conservation of any major species (e.g. native species, Rare, Endangered and Threatened Species, etc.), as per approved conservation plan.</li> <li>4. Comprehensive Environmental management plan should exist for management of operations and activities, and also covering biodiversity management.</li> </ol>
<b>3 Village commons</b>	<p>Common lands are natural and/or modified ecosystems containing significant biodiversity values, ecological services and cultural values, voluntarily conserved by local communities, both sedentary and mobile, through customary laws or other effective means.</p> <p><b>Specific guidelines:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Forested community lands cannot not qualify as OECMs as forested areas outside of private ownership are considered state owned, and therefore, documented in the WDPA as PAs.</li> <li>2. Area should be recorded in Govt. land records as owned by revenue department</li> <li>3. Community/ clan/ village areas clearly demarcated and governed by traditional laws and regulations including long term sustenance of biodiversity. Often unwritten long term in-situ conservation values will be determined by the extent of the area under each village, sustenance use could be done from these areas.</li> </ol>

4	<b>Important Bird Area and Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas</b>	<p>The IBAs serve as conservation areas for protection of birds at the global, regional or sub-regional level. According to Birdlife International, designation of IBAs is based on standardized criteria, namely</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Hold significant numbers of one or more globally threatened bird species,</li> <li>ii. Be one of a set of sites that together hold a suite of restricted-range species or biome-restricted species and</li> <li>iii. Have exceptionally large numbers of migratory or congregatory birds.</li> </ol> <p>The IBAs contain a range of habitats, such as wetlands, mudflats, microhabitats in biodiversity hotspots, grasslands, scrublands and forests making them excellent indicators of biodiversity richness (India's 5th National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity, 2014). To define Important Bird Areas, global standards and guidelines needs to be followed.</p> <p><b>Specific guidelines:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. IBAs existing outside forest areas mapped by FSI or PAs (National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries, Reserved forests, etc.) can only qualify as OECMs.</li> </ol>
5	<b>Urban Trees and Forests (UTF)/ Urban Greens/ City Forest, Urban/ City Gardens</b>	<p>Networks or systems comprising all woodlands, groups of trees and individual trees located in urban and peri-urban areas outside forest areas. These include trees outside the forest, forests, street trees, trees in parks and gardens, and trees in derelict corners. They provide economic, environmental and sociocultural benefits.</p> <p><b>Specific guidelines:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Urban Trees and Forests (UTF)/ Urban Greens/ City Forest, Urban/ City Gardens located outside forest areas mapped by FSI can only qualify as OECMs.</li> <li>2. Area should be substantial to support habitat conservation of native species, as per approved management plan.</li> </ol>
6	<b>Unique Agricultural Systems (UAS)</b>	<p>Unique Agricultural Systems (UAS) can be defined as unique land use systems and landscapes which are rich in indigenously significant biological diversity evolving from the co-adaptation of communities with its environment and needs, resulting in food and livelihood security and sustainable development of the region. The system should support a rich agro-biodiversity and genetic resources for food and agriculture (e.g. endemic, domesticated, rare, endangered species of crops and animals) and not harbour invasive species. UAS should not have intensive agriculture activities.</p> <p><b>Specific guidelines:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. UAS should not have land-use changes over a period of time.</li> <li>2. UAS should have evolved over generations through the integration of food production, environment protection and culture.</li> <li>3. Established MoUs with communities to ensure no land-use change and commercial crop cultivation for a long time period.</li> <li>4. The UAS should include only those sites that are not designated as Biodiversity Heritage sites under the Biological Diversity Act, 2002</li> </ol>
7	<b>Individual Green Lands</b>	<p>This refers to those green lands which are not the property of the Government or over which the Government has no proprietary rights or to the whole or any part of the forest produce of which the Government is not entitled. The land rights are owned by an individual where the habitat and resident species are offered protection from exploitative activities like hunting, logging, etc.</p> <p><b>Specific guidelines:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Area should be owned and managed by private individuals</li> <li>2. Areas that do not fall under, lie adjacent to or is contiguous with Protected areas such as National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries, etc., or forest areas mapped by FSI can only qualify as OECMs</li> <li>3. Since there are no legal restrictions, an alternate mechanism for long term sustenance of biodiversity should be ensured.</li> <li>4. The area should be managed as per management plan with the primary objective of biodiversity conservation.</li> </ol>

## Waterbody Categories

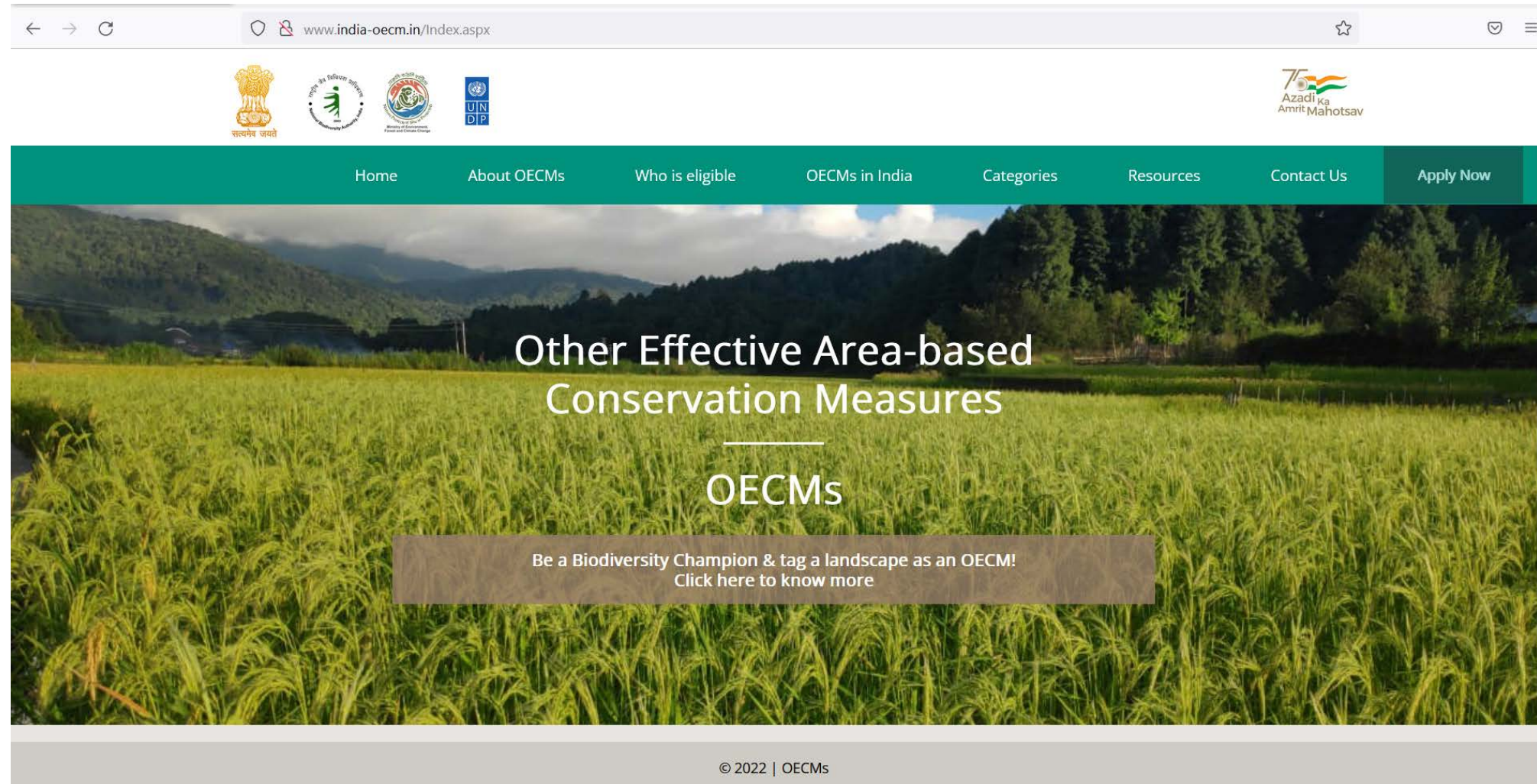
Waterbodies are defined as areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six meters.

### Inland Waterbodies

8	<b>Lakes and Ponds</b>	<p>Bodies of standing water occupying distinct basins. These waterbodies occur in natural depressions and normally fed by streams/ivers. Both natural and artificial lakes can qualify as potential OECMs.</p> <p><b>Specific guidelines:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Only lakes and ponds existing outside forest areas mapped by FSI or PAs (National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries, Reserved forests, etc.) can qualify as OECMs.</li><li>2. The waterbody is either primarily managed for biodiversity conservation, or for water resource management, and such management delivers effective ancillary conservation due to restricted access leading to effective protection of habitats and species.</li><li>3. The waterbody is known for its biodiversity values for providing habitat - including special habitats (such as, breeding grounds) to threatened, and or endemic flora and fauna; stopover of migratory birds; fish breeding grounds etc.</li><li>4. There are sufficient management provisions and safeguards to ensure that structure of waterbody would be maintained for achieving its primary objective, and use of the lake would not be changed in the near future.</li></ol>
9	<b>Riverine Waterbodies</b>	<p>Riverine waterbodies are those systems that are contained within a channel (e.g. river, creek or waterway) and their associated streamside vegetation. They can be natural or artificial and may connect to lacustrine, palustrine, estuarine and marine waterbodies.</p> <p><b>Specific guidelines:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Only waterbodies existing outside forest areas mapped by FSI or PAs (National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries, Reserved forests, etc.) can qualify as OECMs.</li><li>2. The waterbody is either primarily managed for biodiversity conservation, or for water resource management, and such management delivers effective ancillary conservation due to restricted access leading to effective protection of habitats and species.</li><li>3. The waterbody is known for its biodiversity values for providing habitat - including special habitats (such as, breeding grounds) to threatened, and or endemic flora and fauna; stopover of migratory birds; fish breeding grounds etc.</li><li>4. There are sufficient management provisions and safeguards to ensure that structure of waterbody would be maintained for achieving its primary objective, and use of the waterbody would not be changed in the near future</li></ol>
10	<b>Artificial Waterbodies</b>	<p>An artificial waterbody is a body of surface water created by human activity. Although their primary objective is water resource management, they also provide habitat to many fish, birds, aquatic mammals, and reptile species.</p> <p>This category will include all artificial waterbodies apart from canals, including dams and reservoirs that have been left out from Wetland Rules.</p> <p><b>Specific guidelines:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Only artificial waterbodies existing outside forest areas mapped by FSI or PAs (National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries, Reserved forests, etc.) can qualify as OECMs.</li><li>2. The artificial waterbody management delivers effective biodiversity conservation, even if as an ancillary function, leading to effective protection of habitats and species.</li></ol>

11	<b>Canals</b>	<p>Canals are long channels of water used for irrigation or transportation to a bigger body of water. They can be natural as well as artificial. Larger canals have the land on either side owned by irrigation departments. They are linear but can harbour significant biodiversity. The availability of water and biodiversity make as potential OECM.</p> <p><b>Specific guidelines:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Only those canals existing outside forest areas mapped by FSI or PAs (National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries, Reserved forests, etc.) can qualify as OECMs.</li> <li>2. The canal management delivers effective biodiversity conservation, even if as an ancillary function, leading to effective protection of habitats and species.</li> <li>3. Only those canals which are not in use for the purpose of transportation qualify as OECMs.</li> <li>4. The canal must not be contributing to environment harming activities.</li> </ol>
<b>Coastal Waterbodies</b>		
12	<b>Important Coastal Biodiversity Areas (ICBAs)</b>	<p>ICBAs include interface or transition areas between land and sea that hold ecological value. The area can also be socio-economically important with significant ecosystem and cultural functions.</p> <p><b>Specific guidelines:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Only those important coastal areas will qualify as OECMs which have not been mapped as forest areas by FSI and or recognised as PAs.</li> <li>2. The management of the area delivers effective biodiversity conservation, even if as an ancillary function, leading to effective protection of habitats and species.</li> <li>3. Areas existing within Critically Vulnerable Coastal Areas (CVCAs) that do not fall under PA network will qualify as OECMs under this category.</li> </ol>
<b>Marine Categories</b>		
13	<b>Important Marine Biodiversity Areas (IMBAs)</b>	<p>Important Marine Biodiversity Areas (IMBAs) are defined as discrete portions of habitat, important to marine biodiversity, that have the potential to be delineated and managed for conservation. IMBAs consist of areas that may merit place-based protection and/or monitoring. 'Important' in the context of the IMBA classification refers to any perceivable value, which extends to the marine species within the IMBA, to improve the conservation status of those species or populations of interest.</p> <p><b>Specific guidelines:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. IMBA existing outside PAs (National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries, Reserved forests, etc.) qualify as OECMs.</li> <li>2. IMBA existing outside 'Designated Area' for marine protection under the Territorial Waters, Continental Shelf, Exclusive Economic Zone and Other Maritime Zones Act (Maritime Zones Act), 1976 qualify as OECMs.</li> <li>3. IMMA or IBA or EBSA, etc that are outside 'Designated Area' (Maritime Zones Act), 1976 qualify as OECMs as IMBA.</li> <li>4. IMBA should serve as site for marine biodiversity conservation reserve</li> <li>5. IMBA should have been managed for long duration for delivering effective in-situ conservation of biodiversity and ecological services to the nation.</li> <li>6. IMBA can include Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs) .</li> <li>7. IMBA can cover marine islands and reefs.</li> </ol>
14	<b>Ecologically/Culturally Significant Coastal &amp; Marine Areas (ECSCIMA)</b>	<p>ECISMAs are those coastal and marine areas which have been identified as aesthetic, historic, archeological, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations. This will also include the submerged archeological heritage sites in the country.</p> <p><b>Specific Guidelines:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Only those coastal and marine areas will qualify as OECMs which have not been recognized as PAs.</li> <li>2. ECISMAs should have been managed for long duration for delivering effective in-situ conservation of biodiversity.</li> </ol>

# India-OECMs Web Portal



Visit: <http://www.india-oecm.in>



# Some Potential OECMs Identified in India



Jabarkhet Nature Reserve,  
Dehradun, Uttarakhand



Save Animals Initiative,  
Karnataka



Aravalli Biodiversity Park,  
Haryana



Gadoli and Manda Khal Fee Simple Estates,  
Uttarakhand

# Some Potential OECMs Identified in India



**Apatani Landscape,  
Arunachal Pradesh**



**Zabo Farming System,  
Nagaland**



**Saffron Heritage System,  
Kashmir**



**Coromandel Birds  
Paradise, Andhra Pradesh**



**Godrej's Pirojshanagar  
Mangroves, Maharashtra**



**TVS Motor Company Nature  
Conservation  
Reserve, Tamil Nadu**



**Chadva Rakhal,  
Gujarat**



**Jagatpur Lake,  
Bihar**



**Kadwa Kosi Floodplains,  
Bihar**




# Challenges...

- ③ Lack of awareness on OECMs - Stakeholders, Facilitators, Line Depts, other involved agencies
- ③ Use of the *case-by-case* approach
- ③ Reporting OECMs to WCMC-WDPA
  - Legal aspects *viz* governance and ownership of OECMs
  - Identification of key resource persons and communication with stakeholders and facilitators
  - Spatial information from local stakeholders
  - Lack of validation and verification procedure and capacity building
- ③ Managing and monitoring OECMs
- ③ Measuring management effectiveness of OECMs



# The Way Ahead...

- ③ Continue the PAN-India process of **identification and dossier preparation** on potential OECMs
  - ③ Organize in-country “**Orientation Meetings**” for various target groups particularly
    - Corporates
    - Academic and Research Institutes
    - State Biodiversity Boards and State Forest Departments
    - Defence Cantonment Boards
    - Others
  - ③ **Financial resources** for support to OECMs
  - ③ Reaching out to more potential OECMs through **India Biodiversity Awards**
  - ③ Engage **MoEFCC-NBA-UNDP Biodiversity Samrakshan Internship Programme (BSIP)** interns for promoting conservation activities
- 

The background of the image shows a pond with several ducks swimming. In the foreground, a swan stands on a grassy bank with its wings spread wide. A white-bordered rectangular inset is centered over the swan's wings, containing the text "Thank You!".

**Thank You!**