

**For immediate release:**

## **Aghanashini Estuary designated as Ramsar wetland of international importance**

**New Delhi, 10th March 2024:** In a significant stride towards environmental preservation and sustainable development, India has added five Ramsar sites to its existing portfolio, bringing the total count to 80 across the country. Ramsar sites are wetlands designated to be of international importance under a convention signed in 1971 in Ramsar, Iran, under the auspices of UNESCO. On January 31, 2024, the Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change, Government of India unveiled these five new sites, expanding the area covered under the Ramsar Convention to an impressive 1.33 million hectares nationwide.

“The designation of Aghanashini Estuary underscores the importance of cross-sectoral and community-focused partnerships in delivering results for conservation and restoration efforts. The Global Alliance is proud to support the effort of all stakeholders in protecting and preserving the Aghanashini estuary for posterity, and we look forward to catalysing further opportunities for sustainable development in the area.”

- *Satya S. Tripathi, Secretary-General, Global Alliance for a Sustainable Planet*

The Aghanashini Estuary, the largest among the five newly designated sites, covers an area of 4801(48 sq kms) hectares, located at the confluence of the Aghanashini River with the Arabian Sea. Originating in the Western Ghats, the river flows 117 kilometres westwards before merging with the sea in Kumta taluk, Karnataka. The Aghanashini is amongst the last of the free-flowing (undammed rivers) in the country. The brackish water ecosystem plays a vital role in flood and erosion risk mediation, biodiversity conservation and livelihood support. Mangroves within Aghanashini estuary act as a nursery for fish and prawns and are considered important breeding and spawning areas. The estuary's mangrove areas store significant organic carbon, contributing to climate change mitigation efforts. Apart from sustaining livelihoods of 6000-7500 families engaged in activities such as fishing, agriculture, and aquaculture, the site offers an array of unique opportunities for responsible tourism.

“We welcome the addition of the new Ramsar sites in India. The overarching objective of sustainable development at Aghanashini Estuary is anchored on three pillars: Enhancing Ecology, Fostering Community Development, and Driving Economic Growth. This holistic approach will ensure sustained conservation efforts while uplifting local communities and aligning with the broader goal of achieving harmony between development and conservation.” - *Prof. T.V. Ramachandra, Indian Institute of Science*

Panchabhuta Conservation Foundation ([panchabhuta.org](http://panchabhuta.org)), along with its institutional partners Integrated Design ([integrateddesign.org](http://integrateddesign.org)) and the Global Alliance for a Sustainable Planet ([gasp.world](http://gasp.world)), and knowledge partners Energy & Wetlands Research Group, CES at Indian Institute of Science (IISC) and World Wildlife Fund(WWF), wish to support Karnataka Forest Department and other government agencies in this endeavor. They have collectively applauded the announcement and strongly feel that the international recognition of Aghanashini Estuary as a site of ecological significance will attract global wetland conservation efforts, international best practices, funding, and technical expertise.

“We celebrate the inclusion of Aghanashini Estuary in the Ramsar list. Through collaborative efforts with the Government agencies and a comprehensive framework, we can ensure the long-term preservation of the estuary's ecological integrity while fostering the well-being of local communities. We have a great opportunity to demonstrate this balanced approach and a successful model for other wetlands and ecological hotspots.” - *Mangal Shetty, Co-founder, Panchabhuta Foundation*

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