

About the Conference Organizers

The conference is jointly organized by the Watershed Development Department (WDD), Government of Karnataka, Centre of Excellence on Watershed Management (CoE-WM), University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore (UASB), Department of Land Resources (DoLR), Government of India, New Delhi, and the World Bank, New Delhi.

WDD, GoK: Is the nodal agency for planning, implementing, and monitoring watershed programs to tackle rainfed agriculture, land degradation, and water scarcity. It promotes sustainable natural resource management and rural livelihoods, adopting innovative and advanced scientific approaches. Recognized as a lighthouse partner for REWARD, WDD guides the program's expansion to other states.

Centre of Excellence on Watershed Management (CoE-WM), UAS Bengaluru: Established in 2022 at the University of Agricultural Sciences, Bengaluru – a premier institution founded in 1964 that has made outstanding contributions in teaching, research, and extension, and has thrice received the National Productivity Award for its watershed development initiatives. CoE-WM functions under the World Bank-supported REWARD program implemented by the Watershed Development Department, Government of Karnataka. Its primary objective is to mainstream Land Resource Inventory (LRI) technology and promote science-based watershed development by demonstrating applications, training line department staff, preparing technical manuals, refining decision support systems, facilitating knowledge exchange, and developing dissemination tools for scaling up the LRI approach across the country.

DoLR, New Delhi: Is the nodal agency for sustainable land management in India. It implements flagship programs like PMKSY-WDC 2.0, Desert Development Programme, and IWMP, focusing on land degradation, soil health, water use efficiency, and rainfed livelihoods. DoLR works with states, research bodies, and international partners to advance evidence-based, community-driven, climate-resilient watershed management nationwide.

The World Bank, New Delhi: Manages one of the Bank's largest global portfolios, partnering with the Government of India, states, research bodies, and civil society on poverty reduction, agriculture, water, infrastructure, education, health, and climate resilience. In watershed management, it has supported landmark initiatives like Sujala and REWARD, providing global expertise, financing, and knowledge to advance science-based, community-driven natural resource management in India.



International Conference on Watershed Resilience: Integrating Science, Sustainability, and Society

Under The World Bank assisted REWARD Program

November 26–28, 2025



Contact Details

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About the Conference

As the global population is projected to reach 9 billion by 2050, food insecurity continues to be one of the most pressing global challenges. Efforts to increase food production are severely constrained by widespread land degradation and the escalating impacts of climate change. In India alone, more than 120 million hectares—over one-third of the country's total land area—are classified as degraded. The increasing unpredictability of weather patterns has further intensified these challenges, making the twin goals of restoring degraded lands and enhancing agricultural productivity even more urgent.

The Government of India has responded by launching integrated watershed development programs, particularly targeting rainfed regions where vulnerability is highest. These initiatives not only aim to combat land degradation but also to improve agricultural productivity and rural livelihoods. Karnataka has emerged as a pioneer in implementing innovative and science-based watershed projects. Landmark initiatives such as Sujala-3 and REWARD have introduced the use of Land Resource Inventory (LRI) techniques, enabling parcel-level insights on soil nutrients, crop suitability, and water conservation measures. These innovations have transformed watershed planning and decision-making.

Against this backdrop, the International Conference will convene global thought leaders, researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to explore how science and policy can jointly advance resilient watersheds. Over two intensive days, participants will engage in discussions on emerging trends, share proven practices, and foster collaborations that bridge knowledge and action. With carefully curated sessions covering diverse themes, the conference aims to advance the agenda of building resilient watersheds, sustainable natural resource management, and prosperous rural livelihoods. In addition to the technical sessions, a full day is dedicated to a field visit to a watershed developed using Land Resource Inventory (LRI) approaches. This visit is intended to demonstrate the practical relevance of science-based methods in watershed management, offering participants a first-hand perspective on how evidence-driven planning translates into effective on-ground outcomes.

It is expected to draw around 175 delegates, representing international experts bringing global perspectives and best practices; policy leaders from the Government of India and state departments engaged in watershed management; researchers and scientists from national institutions and agricultural; and representatives from NGOs working on community-based watershed and livelihood initiatives. This rich blend of participants will enable a multi-dimensional dialogue, strengthening the linkages between science, policy, and practice in watershed management.

Dates and Venue

Dates: November 26-28, 2025

Venue: Four Seasons Hotel, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India

Conference Objective

The conference aims to foster the exchange of global knowledge and experience in watershed and landscape management. It will convene leading scientists, policymakers, practitioners, and development partners to deliberate on the use of advanced tools and technologies for land, soil, and hydrological assessment.

Discussions will focus on leveraging these innovations for scientifically designed soil and water conservation measures that enhance watershed resilience and promote sustainable livelihoods.

An additional emphasis will be placed on exploring private sector engagement and public-private collaboration models in watershed development.

Conference Format

The conference include presentations by invited speakers from India and abroad on selected topics on latest developments in land resource inventory and hydrology, a session meant to share the global experience on managing watersheds from Africa, Latin America, and international organizations such as FAO and IFAD, a panel discussion on future watershed development in India involving policy proponents and a round table on role of private sector in watershed development. A session is devoted to monitoring and evaluation as also social capital in making watersheds sustainable. Delegates will participate in a field visit to a watershed developed under the REWARD program, showcasing the application and impact of LRI-based planning in practice.

Expected Outcomes

Building on insights from the REWARD program and the deliberations during the conference, participants will:

- Assess the feasibility of adopting these technological innovations in PMKSY 3.0 projects without incurring significant additional costs.
- Recommend policy interventions that institutionalize science-based, sustainable, and participatory watershed development practices.
- Strengthen the global collaboration framework for resilient landscapes and inclusive agricultural growth.

Accommodation

Accommodation will be arranged in hotels and guest houses in Bengaluru.

About REWARD Program

REWARD stands for Rejuvenating Watersheds for Agricultural Resilience through Innovative Development. The program is being implemented in the States of Karnataka and Odisha, with funding support from the World Bank. It represents a pioneering initiative that integrates cutting-edge science, technology, and participatory approaches to strengthen watershed management in India. The salient features of the REWARD program includes (a) Generation of cadastral-level land resource inventory; (b) Understanding hydrological dynamics in relation to hydrogeology and climatic variability; (c) Development of criteria, models, algorithms, and guidelines to support evidence-based watershed planning and management; (d) Community-centric protocols for demystifying science through consultations, thereby reducing the watershed development cycle and ensuring local ownership; and (e) Evidence-based monitoring and impact evaluation of project interventions to enhance accountability and learning