

Giving Life to Ponds in Udham Singh Nagar: Water Conservation Efforts with MGNREGA

With water scarcity becoming a major challenge in the country, especially the depleting levels of groundwater, one solution which various water experts unanimously profess is the recourse to traditional ways of storing rainwater through ponds, recharge pits, check dams and other water storage structures.

Keeping this in view, the administration of Udham Singh Nagar district, which is an Aspirational district in Uttarakhand, launched a project in 2019 to rejuvenate about 221 ponds through MGNREGA in 7 development blocks in their jurisdiction, which had either been encroached upon or became heavily polluted.

So far, out of 221 ponds, 61 have been rejuvenated/constructed and the work on remaining 160 ponds is expected to be completed by March 2020. In addition to this, efforts to de-encroach and rejuvenate 179 other ponds is underway. With these efforts, 348 million litre of rainwater will be conserved and additional irrigation capacity of 13923 hectare will be created. Also, 1247 projects of minor irrigation have also been taken up, out of which 518 have been completed. Till now, a total of Rs 862.83 lakh has been spent on these water conservation projects.

For groundwater recharge, 155 works of construction of recharge pits, recharge shafts and soak pits have been started, out of which 28 have been completed. All these efforts are expected to contribute to recharge of groundwater levels in the district. Already, the groundwater levels have seen a rise of 4.5 meters in Kashipur city since June 2019.