

## SCRAP RENUKA PROJECT

**SUBMISSION SENT TO PRIME MINISTER, DJB, MINISTRY OF WATER RES & HP GOVT**

A memorandum demanding the scrapping of the proposed Renuka Dam Project in Sirmaur, Himachal Pradesh was sent to the Prime Minister, Union Minister of Water Resources, the Delhi Jal Board, the Central Water Commission and the Ministry of Social Justice today by concerned environment groups as well as representatives of the dam affected communities. The 5 page detailed submission has made this demand on three basic grounds - technical/conceptual issues, environment implications and the social impacts of the project. Attacking the very root and concept of the project the memorandum highlights the point that the agreement that was signed in May 1994 is no longer valid, as per the opinion of the Union Ministry of Law and Justice, since Rajasthan, one of the parties, did not sign the agreement.

The Delhi Jal Board has admitted in response to an RTI application that no options assessment has been done to arrive at the least cost option before taking up the Renuka dam proposal. Without such an assessment, taking up a proposal like the Renuka dam would be completely wrong and inappropriate use of public resources. Moreover, several Studies have proved that Delhi itself is thirsty not because there is shortage of water but actually due to mismanagement and misappropriation of water. According to the Performance Audit report of the Delhi Jal Board for 2008, Delhi has distribution losses of 40 per cent of total water supply which is abnormal and significantly higher than the acceptable norms of 15 per cent prescribed by the Ministry of Urban Development.

The memorandum questions whether it is necessary for the Yamuna tributaries to be dammed when Hathni Kund and Wazirabad barrages can route and store the water for Delhi's needs. The existing dams can easily meet Delhi's needs without having to submerge 2000 hectares of forest and agricultural land in an ecosensitive area of the lower Himalayas. While the denotification and submergence of the Renuka wildlife Sanctuary has received much attention and has been subject of debate no one seems to be talking about the additional 700 hectares of reserved forest and hundreds of hectares of dense private forests which will be completely destroyed by the project. The 700 or more affected families earn a good income from selling NTFPs and other forest produce from the shamlaat forest lands apart from having a thriving agricultural economy based on producing cash crops like garlic, ginger and tomatoes.

The submission strongly criticizes the use of the draconian section 17(4) of the Land Acquisition act which imposes urgency in acquisition of land. Under section 17(4) the section 5(A) of the LAA (which provides for filing of objections by land owners with the DC office) has been disposed off. "This is completely unconstitutional and out of order when the Supreme Court of India itself in many cases has directed that the use of 17/4 should be avoided in all cases" states the memorandum. Further, the urgency of the project is unclear when the Techno-economic, forest and environment clearances and approvals (from the central government) are all yet to be granted. By initiating forced land acquisition the state government is in fact belittling the importance of these approvals and treating them as mere formalities. The Himachal Government has completely failed to deal with the issues of those displaced by these projects like Bhakhra, Pong and Kol, who are still fighting for just rehabilitation and thus it has no locus standi or moral right to displace any more people when it cannot deal with and resolve the problems of the existing displaced communities.

Concerns have also been expressed about the impacts on the nearby Renuka Lake, a religious symbol for the people and a National Wet Land which has been declared as a Ramsar site in 2005 (under the International Ramsar Convention). This fact has been completely left out of the Environment Impact Assessment Report submitted by the HPPCL. Other inadequacies in the EIA report have also been described in detail in the memorandum.

The memorandum concludes with a demand to reject the Renuka Dam proposal and suggest that the Delhi government take appropriate action to explore other, more reasonable alternatives to meet the capital's water supply shortages. The memorandum has been sent by Jan Ekta Samiti, Sirmaur; Himalaya Niti Abhiyan; Renuka Bandh Sangarsh Samiti, Lok Vigyan Kendra and Environment Research and Action Collective in Himachal Pradesh. The national groups who have signed the memorandum include South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers and People and Yamuna Jiye Abhiyan, New Delhi.

Please contact the following for full copy of the memorandum.

**For more details please contact**  
**Subodh Abbhi (09816008399)**  
**[subodh.abbhi@gmail.com](mailto:subodh.abbhi@gmail.com)**

**Manshi Asher (09816345198)**  
**[manshi.asher@gmail.com](mailto:manshi.asher@gmail.com)**

**Himanshu Thakkar (09968242798)**  
**[ht.sandrp@gmail.com](mailto:ht.sandrp@gmail.com)**