



## Cauvery Water Sharing Dispute

**For Prelims:** [Cauvery and its tributary Arkavathi](#), Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal, [Central Water Commission \(CWC\)](#)

**For Mains:** Interstate water disputes, Diplomacy in resolving interstate water disputes, Water governance

[Source: TH](#)

### Why in News?

The [Cauvery water dispute](#) has once again taken center stage, as Tamil Nadu appeals to the [Supreme Court of India](#) for intervention in **ensuring the release of 24,000 cubic feet per second (cusecs) from its reservoir's water by Karnataka.**

- Tamil Nadu also urged the Court to direct **Karnataka to ensure the release of 36.76 TMC (thousand million cubic feet) stipulated for September 2023** as per the **Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal (CWDT)'s final award of February 2007** that was modified by the SC in 2018.

What Led to Tamil Nadu's Appeal to the Supreme Court?

- **Tamil Nadu's Appeal to SC:**
  - The issue arose from Karnataka's refusal to abide by previously agreed-upon water release quantities.
    - Tamil Nadu advocates for the release of **10,000 cusecs of water for the stipulated 15-day duration.** On the other hand, Karnataka has suggested a reduced **water release of 8,000 cusecs for the same 15-day timeframe.**
- **Karnataka's Explanation:**
  - Karnataka cites **poor inflow due to reduced rainfall in Cauvery catchment, including origin point Kodagu.**
    - Karnataka highlights a **44% rainfall deficit in Kodagu from June to August.**
  - Karnataka rejects Tamil Nadu's distress-sharing formula demand.
- **Implications:**
  - Tamil Nadu's farmers await Karnataka's response, as the Mettur reservoir **holds only 20 TMC, lasting ten days.**
  - The Supreme Court's decision holds significance in resolving the complex dispute.
  - Collaborative solutions are crucial for equitable water management and conflict resolution.

### How is the Cauvery Water Being Shared?

- A carefully crafted monthly schedule governs the distribution of water between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, the two riparian states of the Cauvery basin.
  - In a **"normal" water year**, Karnataka is bound to **release 177.25 TMC (thousand million cubic feet) of water from June to May to Tamil Nadu.**

- This annual **quota includes 123.14 TMC** allocated during the monsoon months from June to September.
- The ongoing southwest monsoon season often triggers disputes when rainfall falls short of expectations.

## What is the Cauvery River Dispute?

### ▪ River Cauvery (Kaveri):

- It is known as '**Ponni**' in Tamil and is a sacred **river of southern India**.
- It **rises on Brahmagiri Hill** of the **Western Ghats** in southwestern Karnataka state, flows in a southeasterly direction through the states of **Karnataka and Tamil Nadu**, and descends the **Eastern Ghats** in a series of great falls and **drains into Bay of Bengal** through **Pondicherry**.
- **Left Bank Tributary:** Arkavathi, Hemavathi, Shimsa, and Harangi.
- **Right Bank Tributary:** Lakshmantirtha, Suvarnavati, Noyil, Bhavani, Kabini, and Amaravathi.



### ▪ The Dispute:

- As the river originates in Karnataka, flows through Tamil Nadu with major tributaries coming from Kerala and drains into the Bay of Bengal through Pondicherry the **dispute therefore involves 3 states and one Union Territory**.
- The genesis of the dispute is **150 years old and dates back to the two agreements of arbitration in 1892 and 1924** between the then **Madras presidency and Mysore**.
- It **entailed the principle that the upper riparian state** must obtain consent of lower riparian state for any construction activity viz. reservoir on the river Cauvery.
- The Cauvery water dispute between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu began in 1974 when Karnataka started diverting water without Tamil Nadu's consent.
  - After several years, the **Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal (CWDT)** was established in 1990 to resolve the issue. It took 17 years for the CWDT to reach a final order in 2007, which outlined the sharing of Cauvery water among the four riparian states. In distress years, water would be shared on a **pro-rata basis**.
  - CWDT issued its final award in February 2007, specifying **water allocations among the four states in the Cauvery basin**, considering the total availability of 740 TMC in a normal year.
    - The allocation of water among the four states is as follows: **Tamil Nadu - 404.25 TMC, Karnataka - 284.75 TMC, Kerala - 30 TMC, and Puducherry - 7 TMC**.
- In 2018, the Supreme Court declared the Cauvery a national asset and largely upheld the water-sharing arrangements determined by the CWDT.
  - It also directed the Centre to notify the **Cauvery Management Scheme**.
  - The central government notified the 'Cauvery Water Management Scheme' in June 2018, constituting the '**Cauvery Water Management Authority**' and the '**Cauvery Water Regulation Committee**'.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

### **Prelims**

**Q. Which of the following Protected Areas are located in Cauvery basin? (2020)**

1. Nagarhole National Park
2. Papikonda National Park
3. Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve
4. Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary

**Select the correct answer using the code given below:**

- (a) 1 and 2 only  
(b) 3 and 4 only  
(c) 1, 3 and 4 only  
(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

**Ans: (c)**

### **Mains**

**Q. Constitutional mechanisms to resolve the inter-state water disputes have failed to address and solve the problems. Is the failure due to structural or process inadequacy or both? Discuss. (2013)**

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtiias.com/printpdf/cauvery-water-sharing-dispute>