

Two-Day Freshwater Alliance Convening Unites Experts to Strengthen Collaboration and Conservation Efforts

Rivers are the arteries of our planet; when they run dry or polluted, life itself begins to falter.

With this sentiment in mind, a two-day convening of the **Freshwater Alliance** brought together nearly **75 participants** from across the country, representing a wide range of expertise in water resource management, freshwater biodiversity, watershed restoration, environmental law, and community-based conservation. With over 50% of India's freshwater biodiversity categorised as threatened and the ecosystems facing mounting pressures from pollution, encroachments, and over-extraction, the convening sought to inspire collective solutions and strengthen regional partnerships.

The first half of **Day 1** set a lively tone, as participants delivered **five-minute presentations** introducing their work and the unique challenges they encounter in conserving freshwater ecosystems. This rapid exchange of ideas offered a sweeping view of ongoing initiatives—from restoring community tanks and wetlands and ecosystems to addressing the legal complexities of freshwater degradation and encroachments.

In the **second half of the day**, participants split into **two working groups**. The **solutions group** identified actionable measures, such as strengthening local governance, integrating biodiversity into water management, improving



data transparency, and fostering youth engagement. The **collectives group** discussed persistent barriers, including fragmented institutional coordination, inadequate enforcement of existing laws, and the limited visibility of freshwater ecosystems in broader conservation discourse.

Day 2 opened with presentations from both groups, which synthesized their discussions into key takeaways. The emphasis was on enhancing regional coordination, creating knowledge-sharing mechanisms, and building capacity at the grassroots level. Participants underscored that freshwater systems are not just ecological entities but also vital lifelines that sustain rural livelihoods, cultural heritage, and biodiversity.

The **second half of Day 2** delved into **thematic discussions** on freshwater biodiversity, exploring how art, creative expression, and storytelling can inspire public awareness, how policy frameworks can better integrate biodiversity and watershed management, and

how regional alliances can function more effectively as catalysts for change.

The convening concluded with a **brainstorming session** on how the **Freshwater Alliance** could continue supporting its members—through collaborative research, advocacy, and a shared platform for amplifying local voices. By the end of the two days, participants agreed that a united freshwater movement must blend science, policy, community, and creativity. A closing quote to beautifully capture the convening is *“Protecting our waters is not just an environmental act—it is an act of preserving life’s continuity itself.”*

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Citation: Iyer, P. (2025). Two-Day Freshwater Alliance Convening Unites Experts to Strengthen Collaboration and Conservation Efforts. In: *Zoo’s Print* 40(10): 38–39.





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