

# What is the rationale behind Cauvery panel's decision on release of water to Tamil Nadu? | Explained

The committee took into account net inflow to the four reservoirs in Karnataka during the current season and compared it with 30-year data. CWRC chief Vineet Gupta told The Hindu that there is a 60% shortfall in the reservoirs

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If the quantity of 3,500 cusecs of water from Cauvery is available throughout the day for 15 days, the quantum of water that Tamil Nadu would get is about 4.5 thousand million cubic feet (tmc ft). File | Photo Credit: K. Murali Kumar

The story so far: The Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA), at its meeting on Thursday in New Delhi, endorsed the Cauvery Water Regulation Committee's (CWRC) order, issued on July 28, that Karnataka release 3,500 cubic feet per second (cusecs) to Tamil Nadu for 15 days, starting from July 29. If the quantity of 3,500 cusecs is available throughout the day for 15 days, the quantum of water is about 4.5 thousand million cubic feet (tmc ft).

What is the brief for the CWRC in tackling the Cauvery dispute?

The CWRC functions within the ambit of the Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA), which constitutes the implementation mechanism for the final award (2007) of the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal as modified by the Supreme Court in 2018.

The committee is headed by the Member (Water Resources) of the CWMA, Vineet Gupta, and has as its members the Chief Engineers of all the basin constituents and a representative each of the India Meteorological Department, Central Water Commission, and Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare.

According to a notification issued by the Union Jal Shakti Ministry in June 2018, the committee monitors daily water levels, inflows and storage at each of the reservoirs – Hemavathy, Harangi, Krishnarajasagara (KRS) and Kabini (all in Karnataka), Mettur, Bhavanisagar and Amaravathy (Tamil Nadu), and Banasurasagar in Kerala. It is to ensure 10 daily releases of water on a monthly basis from the reservoirs as directed by the authority.

It is also to prepare seasonal — southwest monsoon (June-October 15); northeast monsoon (October 16-January 31) and hot weather (February-May) — and annual reports of the water account.

During either of the monsoons, the CWRC ordinarily holds meetings once in 15 days in a hybrid mode. As there has been scanty rainfall in the Cauvery catchment this time and Tamil Nadu pressing its demand for the release of its share of water, the CWRC met on July 28 to review the

situation. It will meet again on August 11.

## How does the committee arrive at decisions in times of distress?

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/cauvery-water-release-cwrc-rationale-karnataka-tamil-nadu-explained/article712>

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Compliance with the decision and directions issued during the previous meeting is also reviewed at the next meeting.

## What else was considered by the CWRC in fixing the quantum of water release?

The committee took into account net inflow to the four reservoirs in Karnataka during the current season and compared it with the 30-year data. Mr. Gupta, in a conversation with The Hindu on Wednesday (July 29, 2026), said the shortfall suffered by the reservoirs was to the extent of 60%.

The CWRC considered the flow of the river water at Biligundulu and in the intermediate catchment — between KRS-Kabini and Mettur, both of which presented a gloomy picture. At Biligundulu, the deficit was 90%.

Given that the Meteorological Department did not give an optimistic outlook for the subsequent weeks, the CWRC, according to its chief, had arrived at the decision that would make Karnataka comfortable to release the water. As on July 29, the combined storage of the four reservoirs in the upper riparian State was 64.15 tmc ft against the total capacity of 114.57 tmc ft.

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## What were the reactions of the two riparian States?

As Karnataka has not commenced water supply for irrigation this time in view of deficient rainfall, it is naturally upset at the decision. The State's Water Resources Minister, K. Ramalinga Reddy, said his government would examine the possibility of filing an appeal before the CWMA against the CWRC's order. The Federation of Karnataka Farmers' Organisations urged the State government to persuade the Cauvery Management Authority (CWMA) for a reconsideration of the order based on the "distress formula".

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In Tamil Nadu, where the authorities have not commenced the water release for irrigation in the Cauvery delta, there are no takers for the committee's move. The quantum is viewed as insufficient. There is a view that the CWRC should have ordered Karnataka to release the entire deficit of 9.8 tmc ft, as worked out by it.

By an estimate, the water requirement of the State during the ongoing kuruvai cultivation season is at least 100 tmc ft, assuming that the coverage is four lakh acres. The storage in Mettur is around 36 tmc ft, of which 10 tmc ft has to be kept apart for drinking water needs and dead storage.

## What is the way forward?

The two riparian States, as Mr. Gupta also pointed out, has to evolve a distress-sharing formula.

This issue can be covered in the proposed visit of Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay to Bengaluru to persuade the Karnataka government to release his State's share of the Cauvery river water. The CWMA may also meet before the next meeting of the CWRC, wherein the two States can pursue the idea of a formula.

