

An aerial photograph of a city with a wide river. A dam is visible in the foreground, with water flowing through it. The city is densely packed with buildings, and there are green spaces along the riverbank. The sky is blue with some clouds.

# River and Lake Chief System : a New Model of Water Control in China

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# 01 Brief Summary





# 1. Brief Summary

China's River and Lake Chief System, a general term of River Chief System and Lake Chief System, is an innovative practice for ecological progress in which responsible **leaders of the Communist Party of China (CPC) committees and governments at all levels** serve as river and lake chiefs, responsible for organizing and leading the management and protection of corresponding rivers and lakes.

**clear  
responsibility**



**coordination  
and order**



**strict  
supervision**



**strong  
protection**



It provides institutional guarantee for maintaining the healthy life of rivers and lakes and realizing the sustainable utilization of river and lake functions.



An aerial photograph of a wide river valley. A large concrete bridge spans across the river in the foreground. The riverbanks are lined with green fields, some residential houses, and golf courses. In the distance, there are rolling hills and mountains under a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds. A semi-transparent dark blue triangle is overlaid on the top left corner of the image.

# 02 Origin and Development





## 2. Origin and Development

Rivers and lakes are the cradle of human civilization, and the river and lake management needs collaboration from different regions and sectors, which was a complex issue of many parts in China.

The birth of the river and lake chief system is not only the inheritance and promotion of Chinese excellent water control culture, but also an innovation based on the national and water conditions of China in the new era.







## 2. Origin and Development

### Historical and Cultural Inheritance:

- There were many river chiefs and lake chiefs in Chinese history, and the story of "King Yu tamed the flood" is widely spreaded. **Wang Jing** in the Eastern Han Dynasty presided over the governance of the Yellow River and the Bian River, and **Su Dongpo** in the Song Dynasty appointed himself as "lake chief" to clean up the silt of the West Lake.
- The Ming and Qing governments specially set up management bodies directly under the central government - **river governor**, which was also the prototype of today's river and lake chief system.



"King Yu tamed the flood"



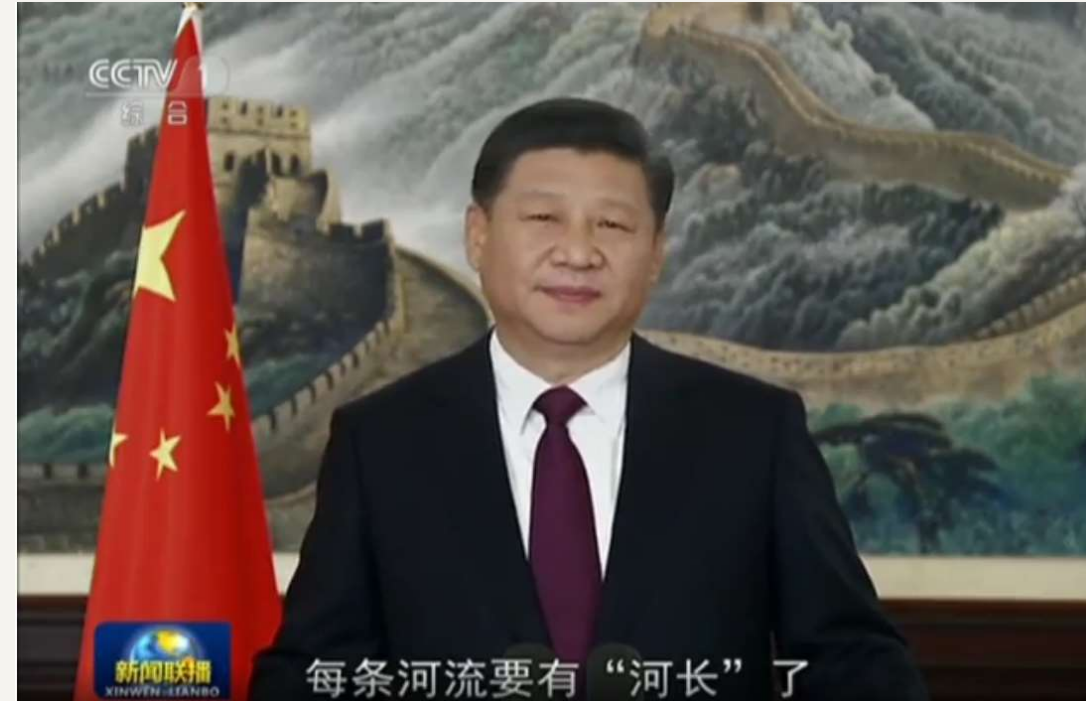




## 2. Origin and Development

### Based on National and Water Conditions:

- The river-and-lake-chief system is a major reform initiative **personally planned, designed and promoted by General Secretary Xi Jinping**. It is a fundamental and pioneering major institutional innovation in the field of river protection and management.
- The comprehensive implementation of the river-and-lake-chief system has become a strong starting point for solving China's complex water problems and ensuring national water security.







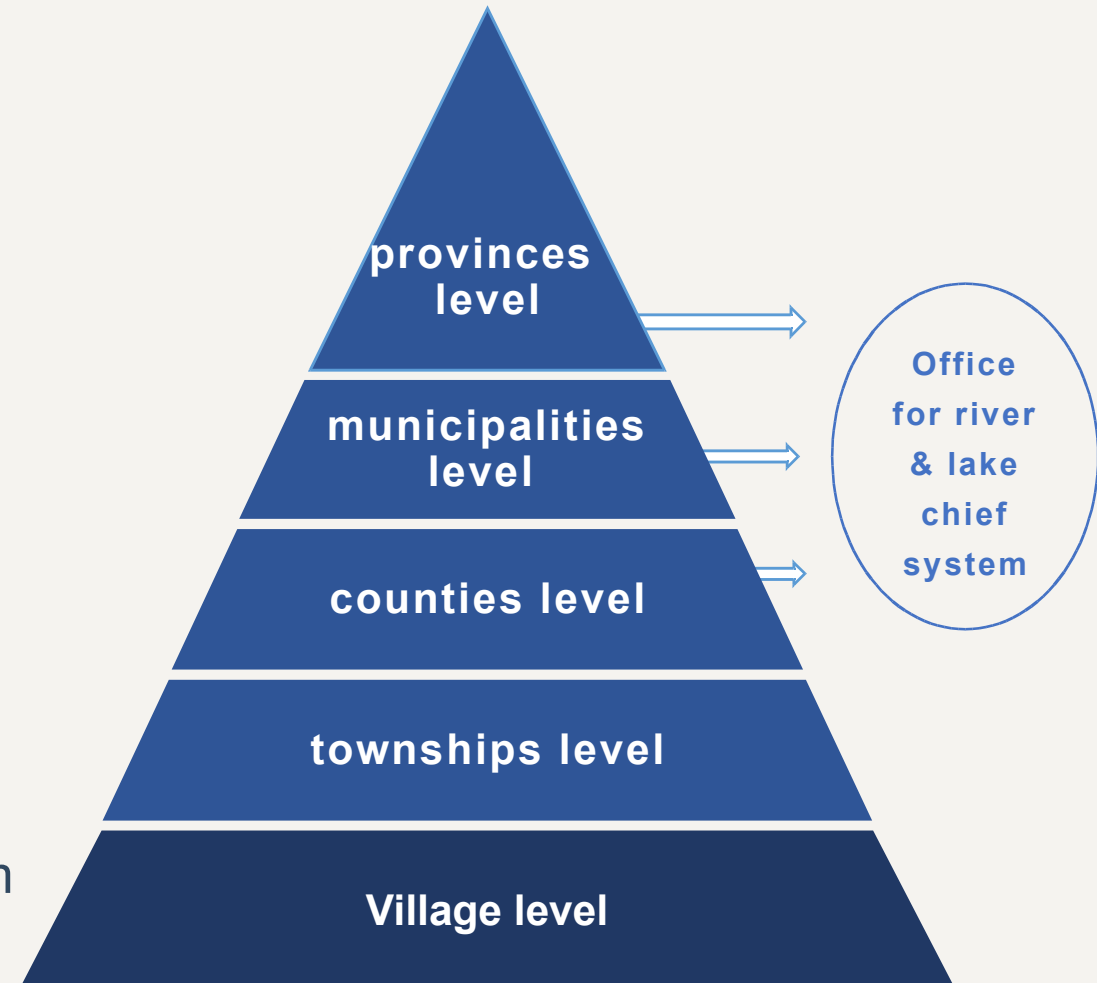
# 03 Structure and Tasks





### 3. Structure and Tasks

- A four-tier river and lake chief system covering **provinces, municipalities, counties and townships** is established comprehensively.
- All localities set up **village-level** river and lake chiefs according to local conditions.
- An office for river and lake chief system is set in administration **over township**.

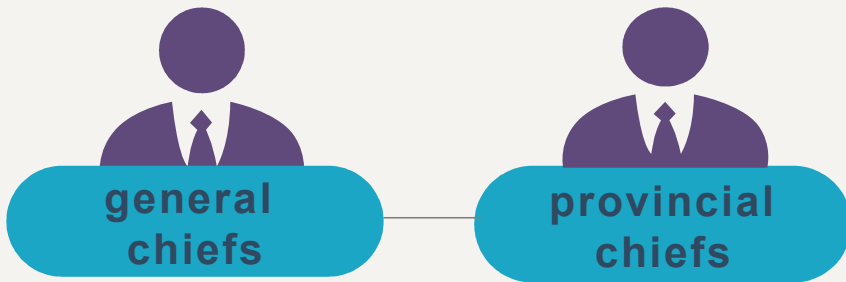






## 3. Structure and Tasks

### Provincial level



A **general river and lake chief** is designated for all provinces, acted by a **main principal of the CPC committees and government**;

A **river and lake chief** is designated for main rivers and lakes within the administrative region of each province, acted by a **provincial principal**;

### Municipal, County & Township level



A **river and lake chief** is designated for each level and section/zone of each river or lake in the respective city, county and township, acted by a **principal of the same level**.



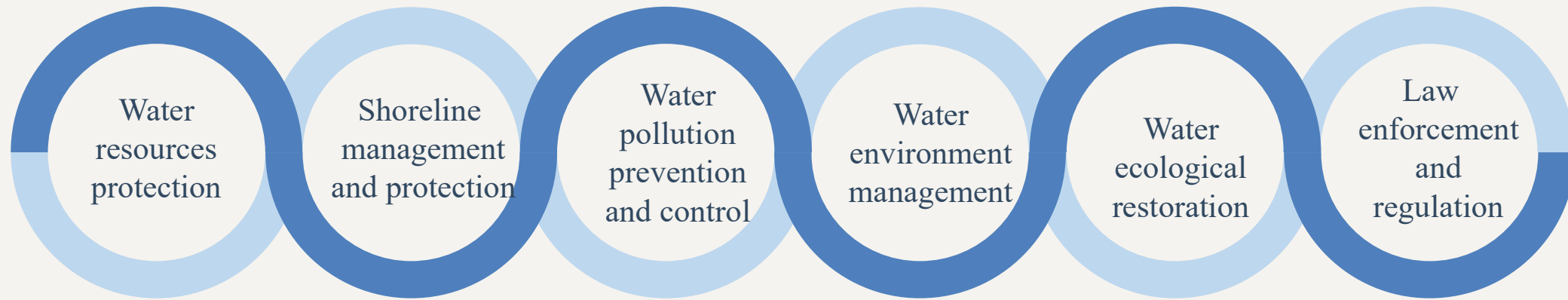


### 3. Structure and Tasks

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## Tasks of River and Lake Chiefs System

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River chiefs at every administrative level are responsible for organizing and leading corresponding river and lake management and protection work, taking the lead to rectify outstanding problems, and coordinating to solve major problems; coordinating the implementation of joint prevention and control of upstream and downstream, and the left and right banks; supervising the performance of duties of relevant departments and river and lake chiefs at the next lower level.





# 04 Implementation Status





## 4. Implementation Status

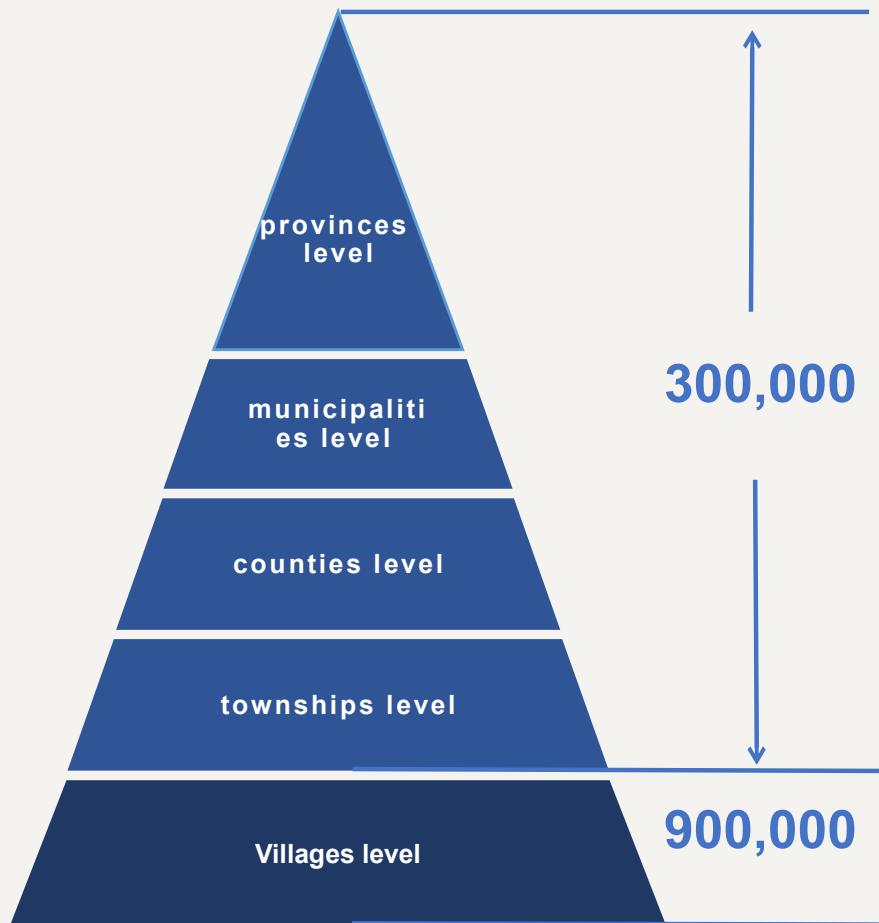
Over the past seven years, China's Ministry of Water Resources (MWR), together with various regions and departments in the country, has promoted the solving of many tough problems in the protection and governance of rivers and lakes that were long on the agenda but never resolved, bringing historic changes to rivers and lakes in China. The people's sense of fulfillment, happiness and security has been significantly enhanced, and the river and lake chief system is full of vitality.







## A comprehensive responsibility system has been established.



- Since 2018, China has established the system of river and lake chiefs across the country. Under the system, **major leaders of the Communist Party of China (CPC) committees and governments of 31 provincial-level** regions in the country have been appointed as **general chiefs** responsible for all rivers and lakes in the region.
- By designating a total of **300,000** river and lake chiefs at **provincial, municipal, county, and township levels** and more than **900,000 village-level** river and lake chiefs (including river patrol personnel and river rangers), China has made sure the responsibility for the management and protection of all the rivers and lakes has been assigned.



## The working mechanism has been continuously

### National Level

The State Council of China has initiated an **inter-ministerial joint conference on the comprehensive implementation of the system**, established and improved mechanisms covering the fulfillment of responsibility by river and lake chiefs, supervision and inspection, evaluation and accountability as well as positive incentives to promote the implementation of the system.

### Basin Level

The country has also established **provincial-level joint conference mechanism for river and lake chiefs** to coordinate efforts for waterway protection as well as a **joint pollution prevention and control mechanism** for the seven major river systems — comprising Yangtze River, the Yellow River, Huaihe River, Haihe River, Songhuajiang & Liaohe River, the Zhujiang River and the Taihu Lake.

### Local Level

- establish **joint prevention and control mechanism for coordination and collaboration** between personnel in charge of the upstream and downstream section and the right and left banks of rivers and lakes;
- inter-departmental joint response mechanism
- the system of river patrol personnel and rangers
- the system of folk river chiefs
- joint governance mechanism for all sectors of the society, which leads to the forming of a powerful synergy for the conservation of rivers and lakes.





## Continuous improvement in the river and lake features has been seen.

- Local governments across the country have established archives and formulated targeted policies for each river, and clearly defined the boundaries of 1.23 million kilometers of rivers and 2,057 lakes for management and control for the first time.
- Local governments have also carried out a special campaign to regulate illegal riverside occupation, mining, heap and construction, addressing prominent problems.



Sampling for river and lake health assessment



Patrol the river and lake with unmanned aerial vehicle & ship



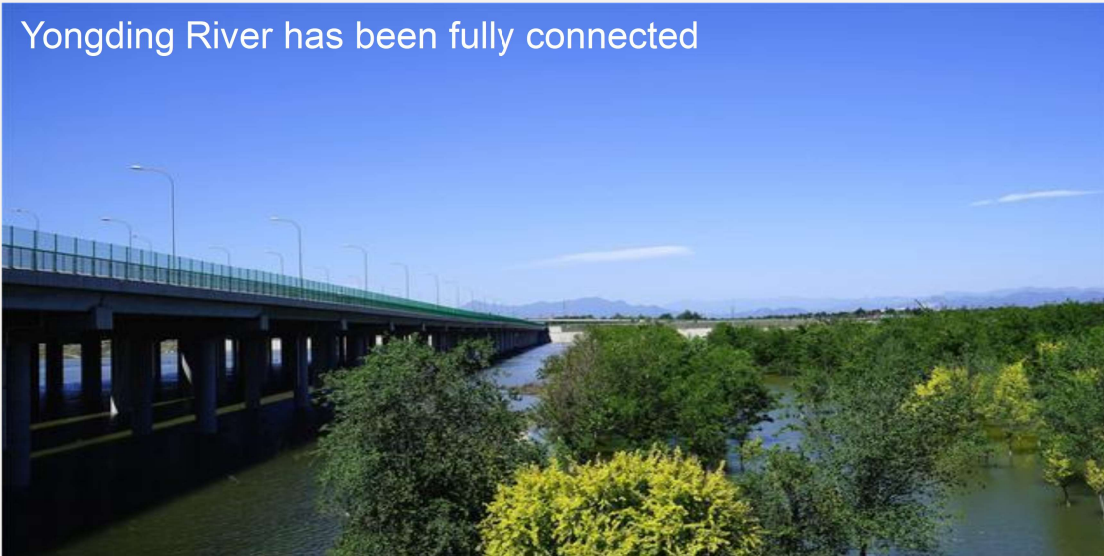
Illegal riverside occupation regulation ( before & after )



## Continuous improvement in the river and lake features has been seen.

- Groundwater levels in northern China have stopped falling and started to rise, many river courses in North China which had been cut off for years, such as Dayun River and Yongding River, have been fully connected, and the Baiyangdian Lake in North China's Hebei province has regained its beauty.
- All cities at or above the prefecture level have basically eliminated all of their *black and odorous* water bodies. In 2022, the proportion of water sections with excellent or good surface water (Class I to Class III) increased by nearly 20.1 percentage points from 2016.

Yongding River has been fully connected







## People's awareness of caring for rivers and lakes has increased significantly.



To promote the system of river and lake chiefs into enterprises, campuses, communities, and rural areas, a number of "**enterprise river chiefs**", "**folk river chiefs**", and "**women river chiefs**" have emerged from all over the country, and the atmosphere of the whole society's concern and participation in river and lake protection and governance is increasingly strong.



# 05 Lessons Learned

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## 5. Lessons Learned

China's practice in the past seven years has fully proven that the implementation of the system of river and lake chiefs across the board

- Completely in conformity with the country's national and water conditions.
- A fundamental and groundbreaking policy on the protection and governance of rivers and lakes.
- A major institutional innovation with strong vitality.





## 5. Lessons Learned

### People-centered Philosophy of Development

meet the realistic requirements of promoting high-quality development and creating a high-quality life, and lay a solid ecological foundation for promoting common prosperity.

### prioritize ecology and green development

safeguard the health and safety of rivers and lakes, and provide strong support for promoting comprehensive green transformation of economic and social development and achieving high-quality development.

### Problem orientation

work hard to solve prominent problems such as frequent water disasters, water resource shortage, water ecological damage, and water environmental pollution, in order to comprehensively improve the national water security capacity.

### System Philosophy

protect the rivers and lakes and address their degradation at the source in a coordinated way, to achieve the fundamental improvement of river and lake appearance.

### All-round considerations and arrangements for the nation as a whole

establish a river and lake management and protection pattern of basin planning, regional coordination, and departmental linkage, and gather wisdom and strength from all aspects.





## Protecting and improving rivers and lakes remains a long and arduous task.

The Chinese government will continue to strengthen the river and lake chiefs system, form a mechanism for river and lake protection and management under the leadership of **the Party and government, the leadership of water conservancy, coordination of departments and social governance**, so as to restore the life of rivers and basins and make more and more rivers and lakes benefit the people.

