The South Asian Forum for Environment (SAFE), is a civil society organization working in the science society interface towards environmental conservation and poverty alleviation. SAFE has been an active part of the UNEP billion tree campaign, a global tree planting initiative that was launched by UNEP in November 2006, at the climate change conference held in Nairobi. Its initial goal was to catalyze the pledging and the planting of trees every year as a way of giving public expression to the challenges of climate change and also forest and ecosystem degradation. UNEP raised its target to seven billion trees - about one tree per person in time.

History of SAFE partnership with PWC
SAFE has been carrying out plantation programs in partnership with corporate stakeholders towards the conservation of the East Kolkata Wetlands. Tree Plantation has been SAFE’s flagship program in its efforts to save these precious wetlands in the course of which PWC India had collaborated with SAFE in Natar Bheri located in the EKW in the year 2008-09. SAFE had organized this plantation drive with the senior staff of PWC through their CSR initiative. This campaign had the employees of PWC planting more than 50 trees including fruit trees such as mango, jackfruit, guava etc. This plantation has matured over the years and has made the area green and added to the beauty of the wetland. This partnership is greatly acknowledged and recognized by SAFE and has been a landmark in our history to save the wetlands. We would like to recall this partnership and take it a step ahead by reigniting it through yet another plantation drive in the same area so that our corporate partners can witness the fruit of their conservation efforts and see for themselves the results of the last plantation drive.

Background and Justification: Why Plantation at East Kolkata Wetlands?
East Kolkata Wetlands, (EKW) an area of 12,500 hectare, is unique ecosystem, one of its own kinds in the world; it treats 980 million litre of sewerage per day in a 30 day retention time cycle. It also produces 11,000 metric ton fish and 5000 metric ton vegetables per year, sustaining the livelihood of more than 90,000 people. Obnoxious increase in pollution levels and soil erosion is one of major issues to be addressed in conservation of the EKW. The area needs plantation as part of the restoration of this unique eco-system. The East Kolkata wetlands provide a habitat for a variety of flora and fauna and living organisms that are locally endangered. EKW play an essential role in the waste recycling process that is so unique to the city, by the biological decomposers present in the food chain of the ecosystem for production of fish food from waste. Wetlands also serve as flood control areas by holding water and reducing flow. Wetlands act as holding areas for the local water table and play a very important role in water quality improvement. Wetland biodiversity can be increased by planting native trees and shrubs around existing wetlands or allowing the edges to naturalize on their own. Woodlots or plantation around the wetlands play a very important role in the conservation of the wetland. The woodlot can be a habitat for many wetland species. These green belts provide many unique ecological features. They function as transition areas where land meets water, providing important wildlife habitat for species that need both land and water to survive.
Objectives of the program

- To establish and manage hamlet plantations in East Kolkata Wetlands towards conservation of the wetlands.
- To sequester carbon dioxide through hamlet woodlots, generating high quality emission reductions in greenhouse gases (GHG) that can be measured, monitored and verified.
- To increase overall awareness on plantation and conservation of the wetlands.
- To reduce soil erosion into the wetlands with tree cover thus restoring buffer areas and slowing run off.
- To carry out enhancement of biodiversity through plantation of native and indigenous species of plants and fruit tree species that prevents soil erosion as well as provide food and cover for wildlife species.
- To promote overall environmental and wetland specific restoration.

Proposed Activity

Brief Introduction to the East Kolkata Wetlands followed by TREE plantation program will be jointly implemented by PWC & SAFE, at East Kolkata Wetlands at Natar Bheri.

- Timings : 9am -1.00pm. (Suggest changes if any)
- Employee : 50 heads. (Please confirm number of employees)
- Refreshment : Tea & snacks (Arranged by SAFE)

Outcome : SAFE promotes Green Ownership

SAFE believes that the task is not just limited to tree plantation, but also to increase active participation, adaptive attitude and innovative comprehension in building a chain of sustainable development for the nation. More participation today for green activities is essential, as this will have its impact on the environment paving way for the success of sustainability mission.

Maintenance of plants:

SAFE in partnership with the local community will ensure the care and upkeep of the saplings till full maturation. A local community person will be appointed for this task with required equipments, gears and organic manures.

Future Impact

The tree plantation program is an event of its own in bringing such a value addition to the Integrated Waste Management project, titled, ResolveT2C. As a spin off effect East Kolkata Wetlands, area will be greener; accounting better carbon credits and such participatory program will help create widespread awareness about the forgotten wetlands. This kind of event will facilitate mutual relationship to develop a win-win situation to bring a sustainable development.

It is very encouraging to see a leading corporate house such as PWC relooking at SAFE as partners towards conservation. We look forward to furthering our partnership with PWC towards greener Kolkata.