

Leveraging digital technology for lake monitoring

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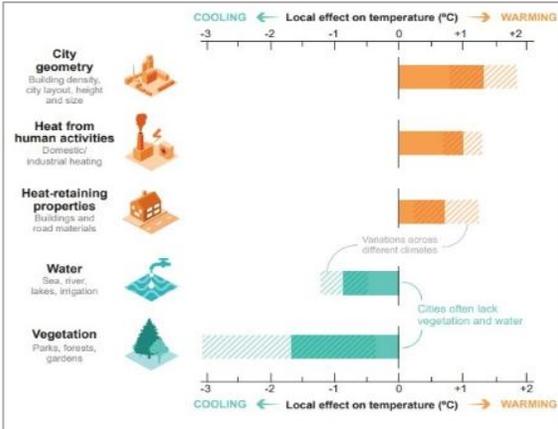
Gates Foundation

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Focus on Lake Management – Increasingly important for climate change

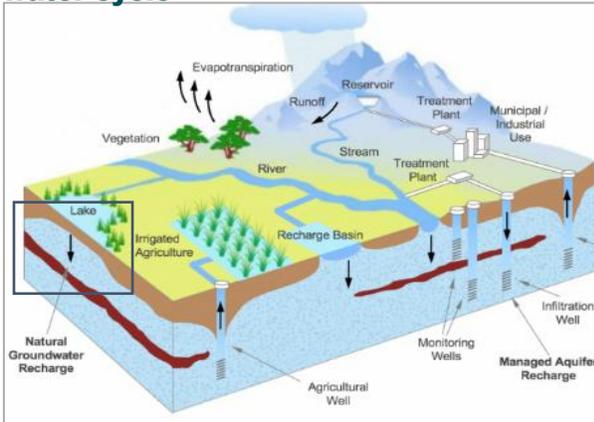
Lakes critical for adaptation and mitigation efforts

Regulating urban temperatures



Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), (2023). Linking Global to Regional Climate Change. In Climate Change 2021 – The Physical Science Basis: Working Group I Contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (pp. 1363–1512). chapter, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Groundwater recharge and maintaining water cycle



INOWAS, accessed from inowas.com, Feb 2025. (adapted from California Department of Water Resources)

Disappearance and degradation of lakes requires urgent attention!

- 70 % of surface water in India is unfit for consumption due to water pollution and contamination issues.
- **50 % of lakes across the globe** have **shrunk** from 1992 – 2021
- Degradation of lakes also linked to food insecurity and loss of livelihoods

Ahmedabad

204 lakes in 1960 to 134 lakes in 2021

70 lakes become extinct in 6 decades!!



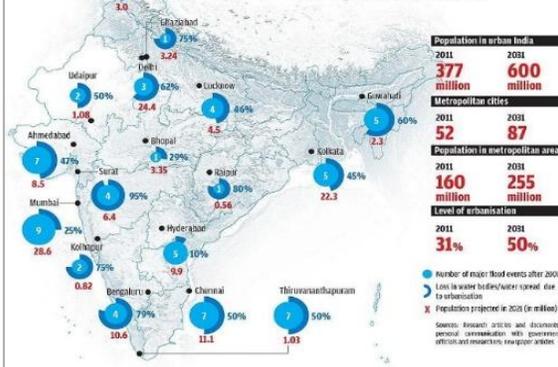
Lakhudi Talav area

Where is the talav????!!

Source: 1. "Water Pollution is Killing Millions of Indians. Here's How Technology and Reliable Data Can Change That." World Economic Forum, October 2019. 2. Yao, Fangfang, et al. "Satellites Reveal Widespread Decline in Global Lake Water Storage." Science, vol. 380, no. 6646, 2023, pp. 146–150, May 2023. 3. Nayak, P.K. Fisher communities in transition: understanding change from a livelihood perspective in Chilika Lagoon, India. Maritime Studies 16, 13 (2017)

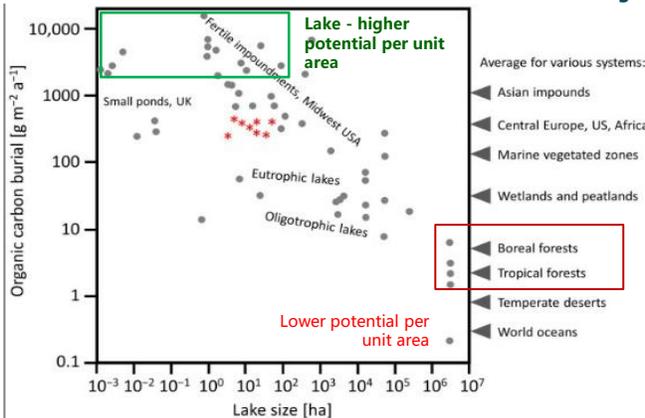
Stormwater drainage and reduced risk of flooding

Loss of water bodies to urbanisation is increasing the number of flood events



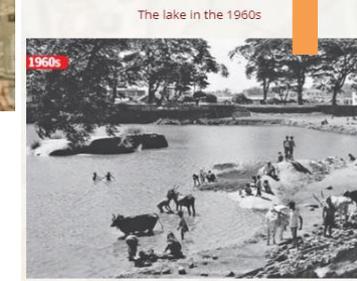
Source: Two sides of the same coin: Shrinking water bodies and urban floods, Down to Earth, August 2020

High potential of carbon sequestration - nature based solutions for carbon neutrality?



Skwierawski A. (2022). Carbon Sequestration Potential in the Restoration of Highly Eutrophic Shallow Lakes. International journal of environmental research and public health. 19(10): 6308. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19106308>

Bangalore



The lake in the 1960s

Parameters to define “health” of a lake?

Lake health is defined as the overall ecological, physical, and chemical state of a lake, which determines its ability to support biodiversity and sustain its functions over time. A healthy lake maintains a balanced ecosystem, supports diverse aquatic life, and provides clean water for various human and ecological needs.

“presence” of water

- Does the lake dry out in certain months?
- Is the dry period increasing?
- Is the average surface area coverage decreasing annually?
- Is the lake perimeter protected?
- Is the lake recognized in local land-use plans?

Use-case fitness

Nutrient load, biomass

Water quality index

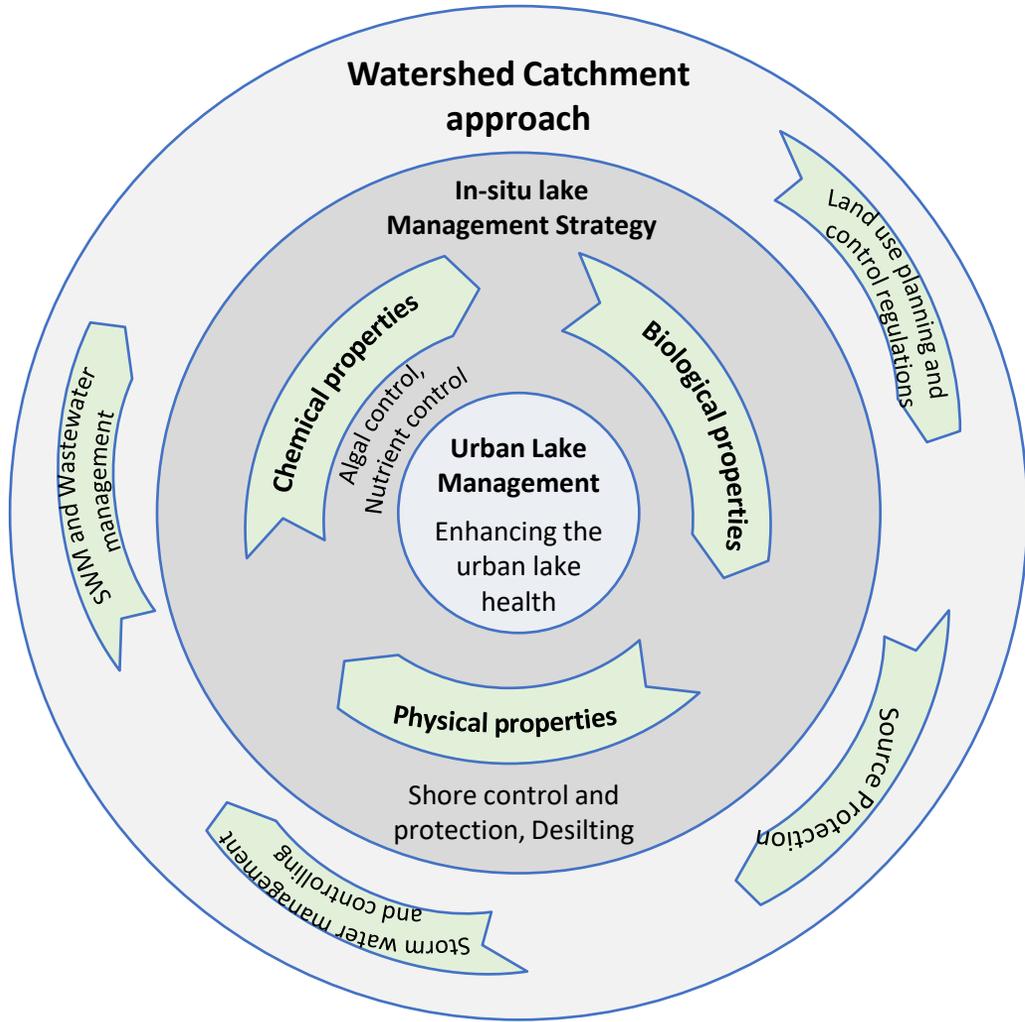
Too scientific for urban decision makers!
 Water quality studies and boundary monitoring – resource intensive exercises!
 Can we simplify for stakeholders with technology?

WQI value	Water Quality	Remarks
63-100	Good to Excellent	Non-Polluted
50-63	Medium to Good	Non-Polluted
38-50	Bad	Polluted
< 38	Bad to very Bad	Heavily Polluted

	disinfection	≤ 3 mg/l
D	Propagation of Wild life and Fisheries	- pH: 6.5 – 8.5 - Dissolved Oxygen ≥ 4 mg/l - Free Ammonia (as N) ≤ 1.2 mg/l
E	Irrigation, Industrial Cooling, Controlled Waste Disposal	- pH: 6.0 – 8.5 - Electrical Conductivity at 25°C (µmhos/cm) ≤ 2250 - Sodium Absorption Ratio ≤ 26 - Boron ≤ 2 mg/l
<E	Not meeting A, B, C, D & E criteria	-

Eutrophic	60	20.0	0.20	1.2
	70	40.0	0.40	2.0
	80	80.0	0.82	3.4
	90	160	0.34	5.6
	100	320	0.58	9.0

Envisioning a system that enables decisions

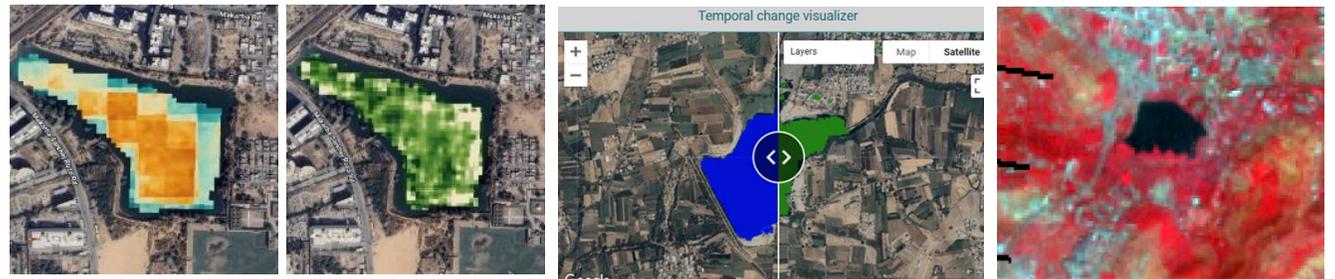


Surface area of this lake is reducing year on year – **Check for encroachments**

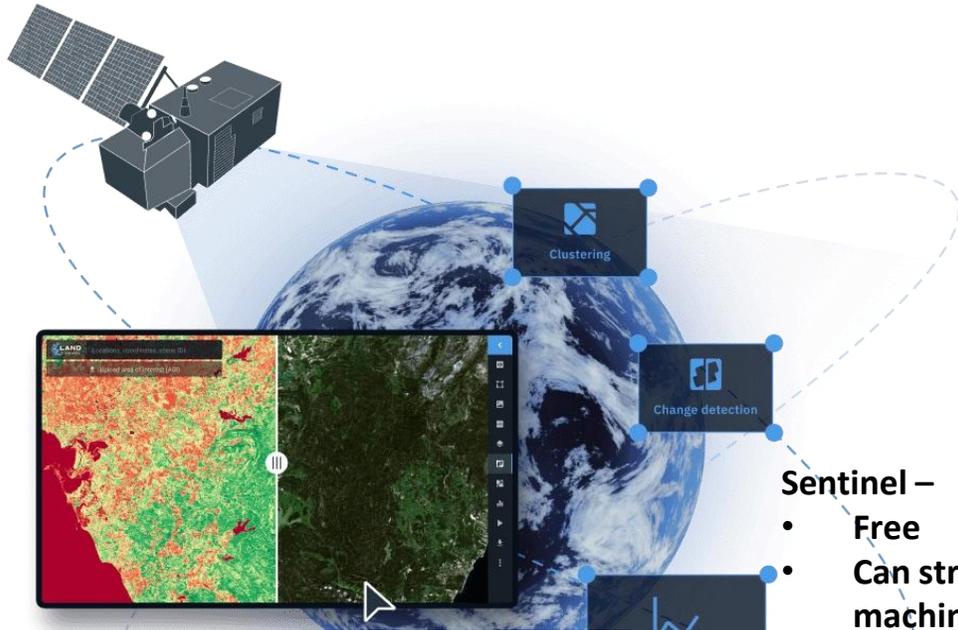
High Nitrogen detected – **Check sewage outflows**

Dry lake this year – **Check for stormwater blockage**

WQI increased



Remote sensing



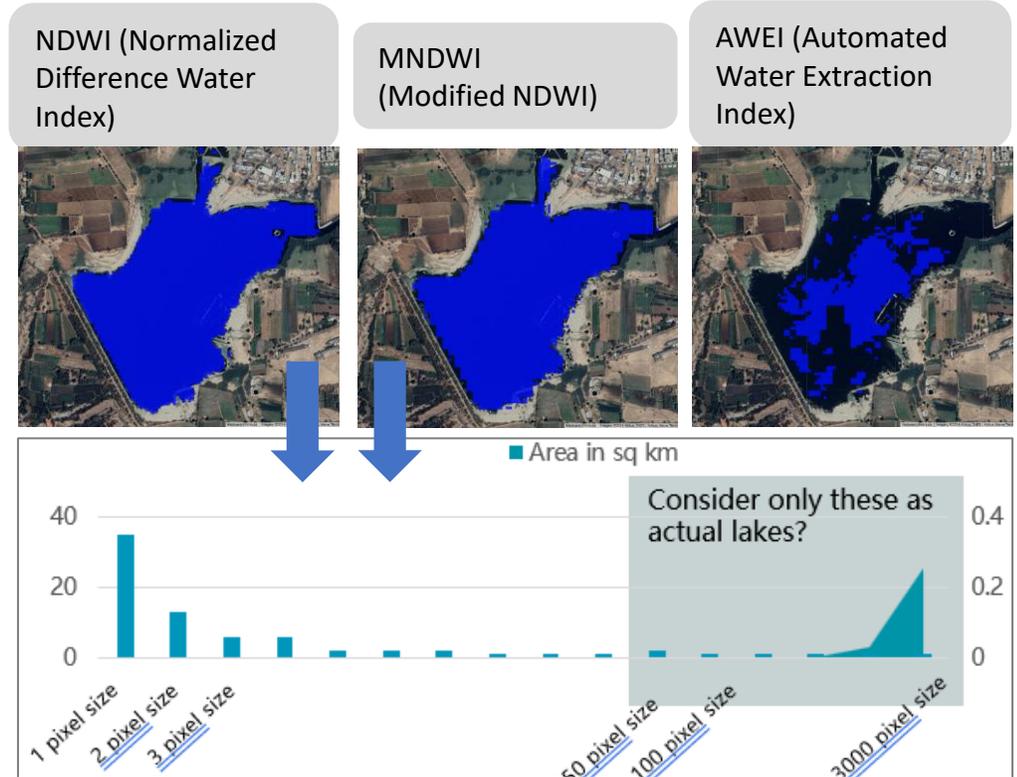
Sentinel-2 Bands	Central Wavelength (µm)	Resolution (m)
Band 1 - Coastal aerosol	0.443	60
Band 2 - Blue	0.490	10
Band 3 - Green	0.560	10
Band 4 - Red	0.665	10
Band 5 - Vegetation Red Edge	0.705	20
Band 6 - Vegetation Red Edge	0.740	20
Band 7 - Vegetation Red Edge	0.783	20
Band 8 - NIR	0.842	10
Band 8A - Vegetation Red Edge	0.865	20
Band 9 - Water vapour	0.945	60
Band 10 - SWIR - Cirrus	1.375	60
Band 11 - SWIR	1.610	20
Band 12 - SWIR	2.190	20

- Sentinel –**
- Free
 - Can stream / import directly into machine learning software
 - Has SAR bands available – non-visible spectrum

What can be done through satellite images?

- Water
- Vegetation
- Area
- Water Quality

Building Module 1- “Detecting” water bodies

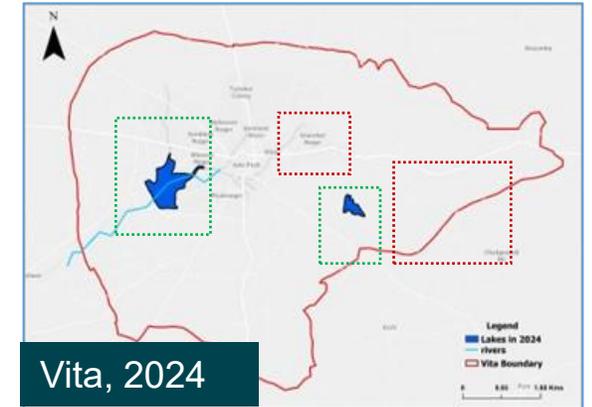
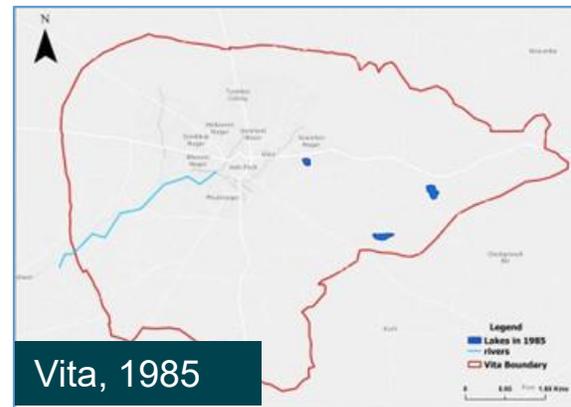
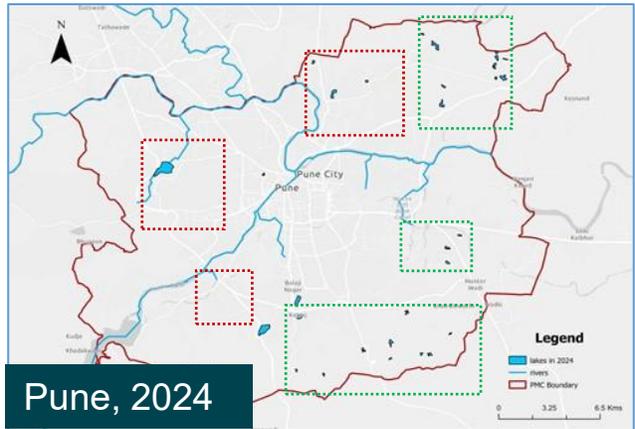
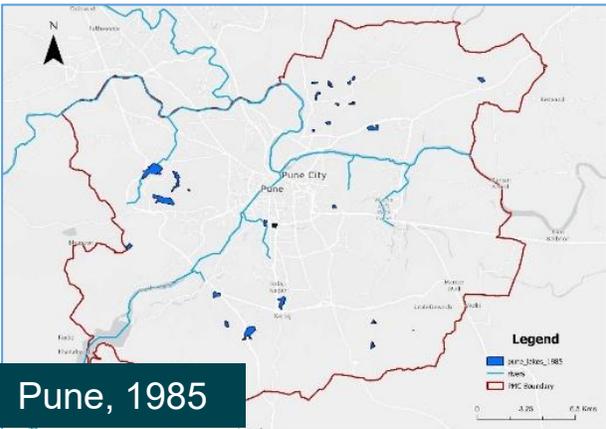
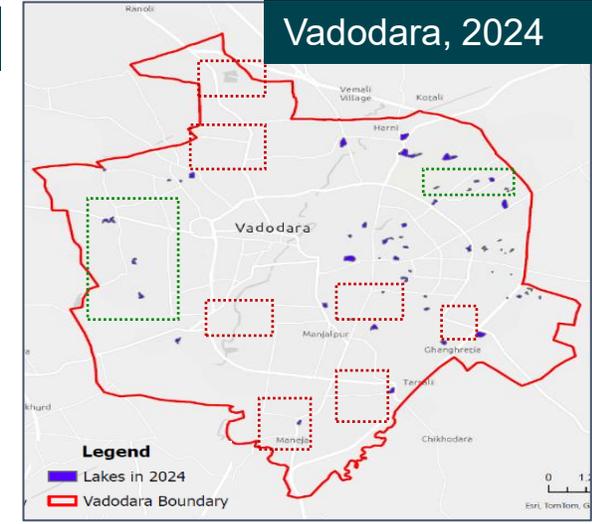
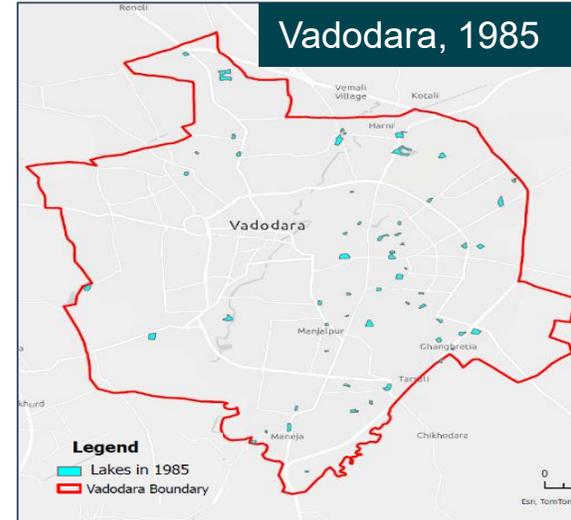
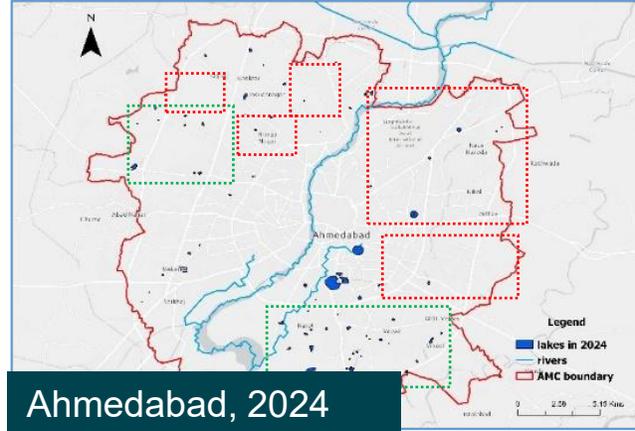
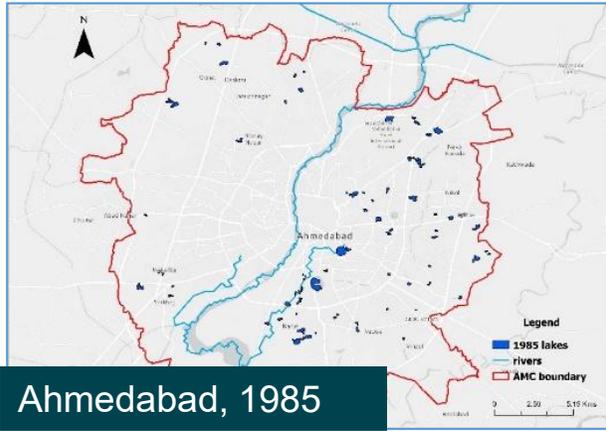


Stacking results and cross checking with Open Street Maps to remove detection of artificial pools

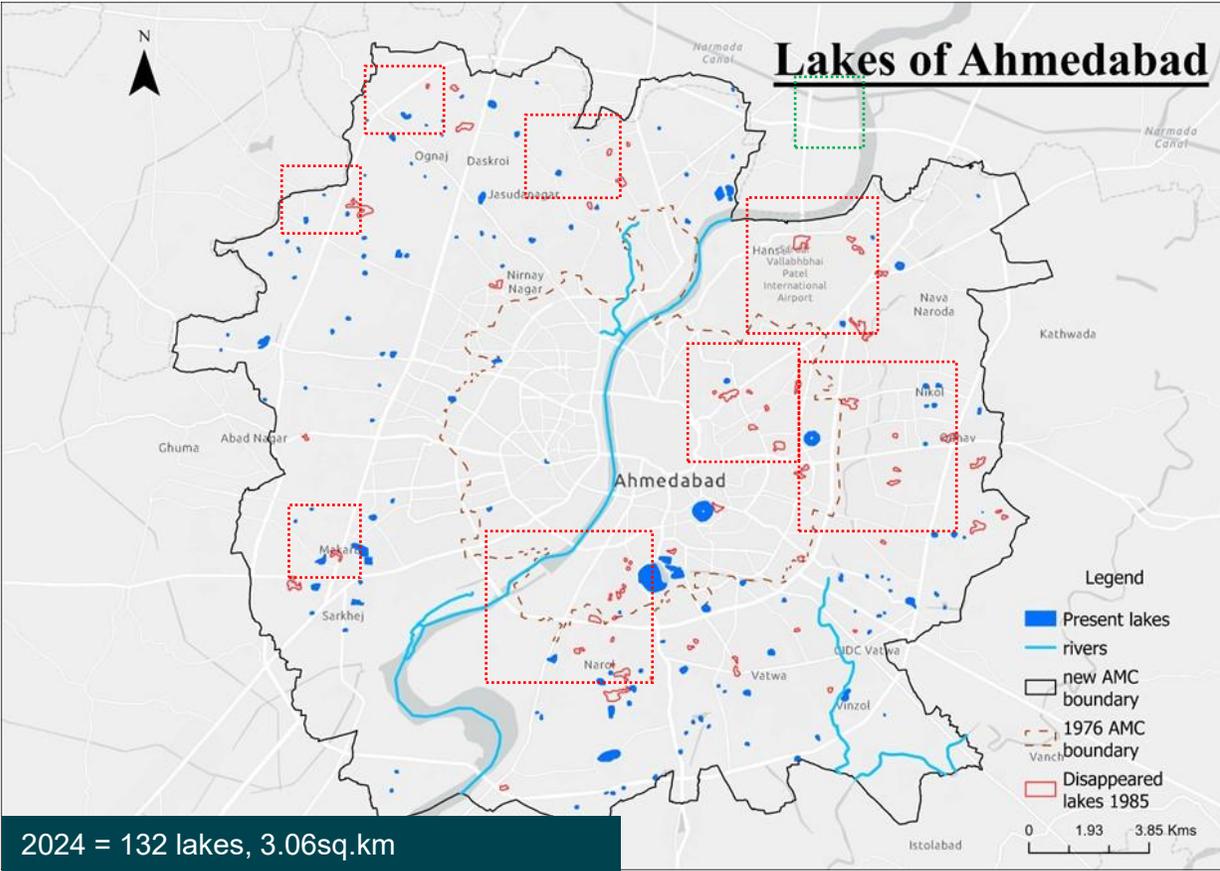
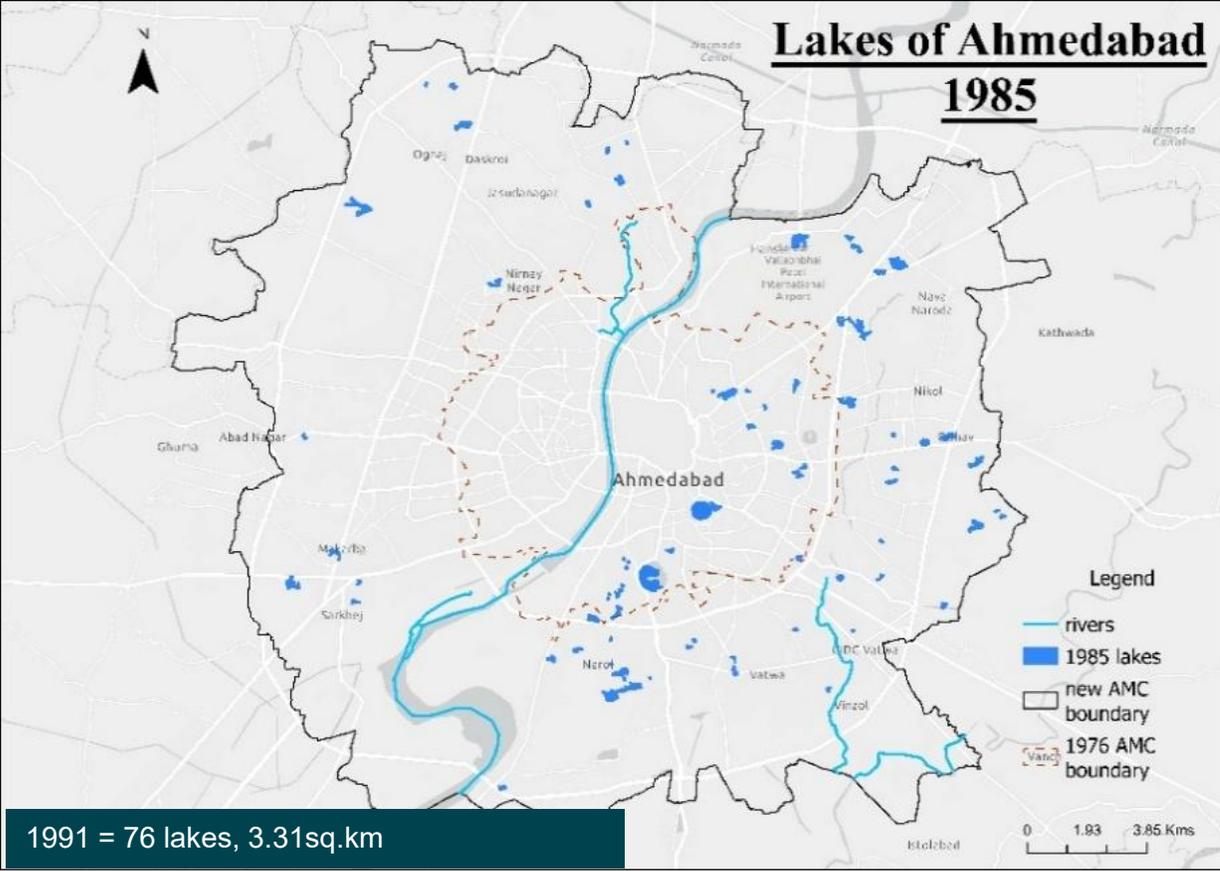
Improve by selection of localized threshold values – generate consistent and unbroken boundaries, accurate number of water bodies

Results from Module 1 – Many cases of disappearance

...but also, visible cases of lake conservation



Module 1 - In Ahmedabad – Higher count of lakes over the years but many big and ecologically significant lakes disappeared



The lake count has increased but area has decreased over the years, significant large perennial lakes are not preserved.

Reasons for degradation /disappearance?

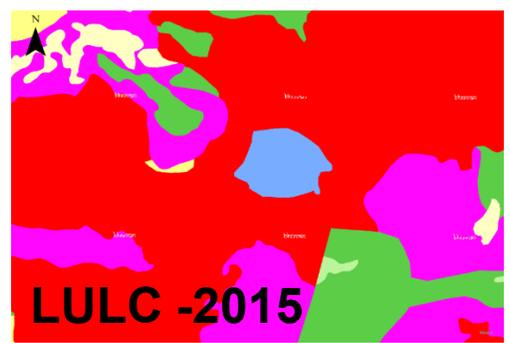
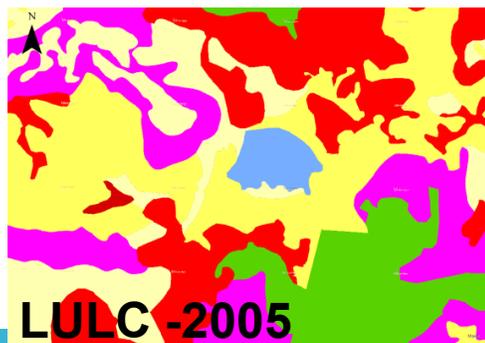
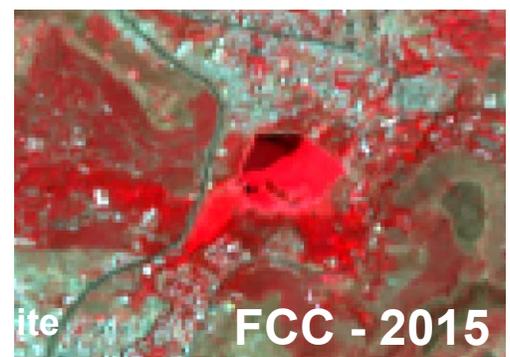
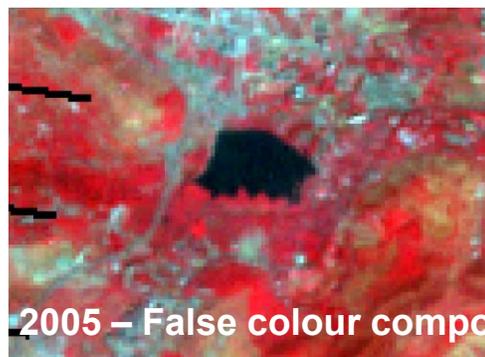
Dried up lake or real estate??

A case of a vanished Lake in Vadodara...

The Lake in the Bhayli area was converted into a residential project.



Landuse change around the lake affected health- Case of Pashan Lake in Pune where the surrounding land use has changed from agricultural to built-up leading to eutrophication of lake. The surface area remains the same



Why and how do lakes disappear?

Case 6: Kamal Talav, Naroda – 2 lakes divided by drainage, one lake encroached, not recognized in DP



Case 1: Kanetri lake, Nikol - Lake land encroached, not recognized in DP



Case 2: Thaltej lake - construction of boundary wall and removal of encroached areas.



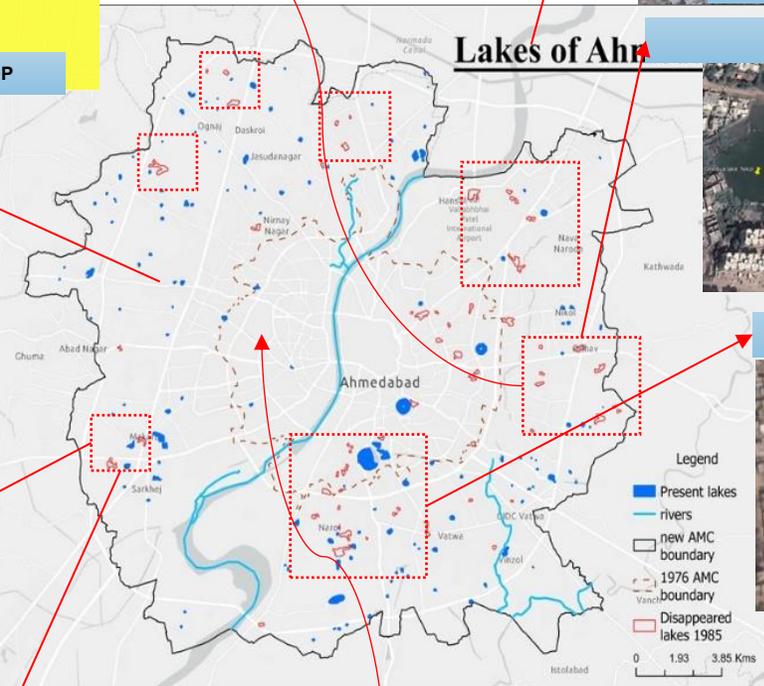
Case 7: Two lakes in Nikol – interrupted topography due to built up in center



Case 3: Navu Talav – Encroached & degraded lake, recognized in DP but no actions for maintenance



Case 8: Sunthal Talav, Narol – Solid Waste Dumping, lake shrunk & dried



Case 5: Memnagar lake, maintained boundary but no inflow!



Case 4: Sakri lake – Shrunk due to less inflow



The issue with 4 major lakes (Vastrapur, Memnagar, Thaltej, and Sola) also recognized by the **National Green Tribunal in a suo motu cognizance and notice to district officials, CPCB, GPCB - total area of 4 major water bodies decreased by 46%**. Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/ahmedabad/ngt-report-ahmedabads-disappearing-lakes-10116651/>

- An internal report by AMC concluded that a major issue is lack of inclusion of water bodies in statutory plans.
- Another report by High Level Committee (HLC) on Urban Planning in Gujarat also noted that “redevelopment in most cases has happened by reclamation of lake land effectively reducing the overall water spread of the lake.”

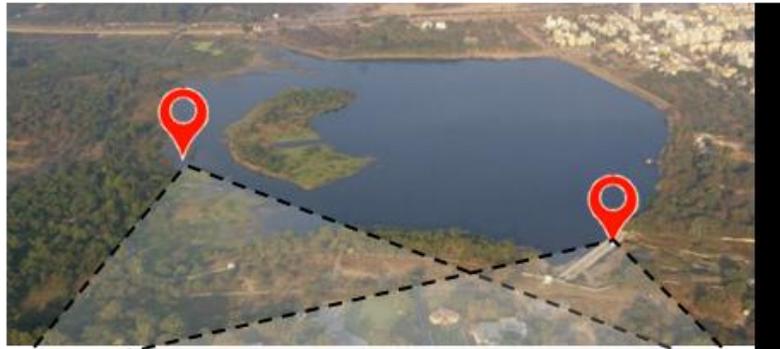
Next - Remote sensing techniques for assessing water quality in lakes

No.	Parameters	Research paper title	Source
1	pH	Satellite Imagery for Monitoring and Predicting Water Quality in Kutch Region	https://www.omdena.com/blog/satellite-imagery-for-water-quality-monitoring - April 2022
2	Dissolved Oxygen (DO)	Satellite Imagery for Monitoring and Predicting Water Quality in Kutch Region	https://www.omdena.com/blog/satellite-imagery-for-water-quality-monitoring - April 2022
3	Chlorophyll-A	Normalized difference chlorophyll index: A novel model for remote estimation of chlorophyll-a concentration in turbid productive waters	https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rse.2011.10.016 - Sachidananda Mishra, Deepak R. Mishra, November 2011
4	Total Suspended Solids (TSS)	Calibration and validation of a generic multisensor algorithm for mapping of total suspended matter in turbid waters	https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rse.2009.11.022 - B. Nechad, K.G. Ruddick, Y. Park, January 2010
5	Dissolved Organic Carbon (DOC)	Estimation of water quality in a reservoir from Sentinel-2 MSI and Landsat-8 OLI sensors	https://doi.org/10.5194/isprs-annals-V-3-2020-401-2020 Fernanda M. C. Pizani, Philippe Maillard, Adrielly F. F. Ferreira, Camila C. de Amorim, August 2020
6	Colored Dissolved Organic Matter (CDOM)		
7	Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD)	Water quality change in reservoirs of Shenzhen, China: detection using LANDSAT/TM data	https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2004.02.020 Yunpeng Wang, May 2004
8	Turbidity	Satellite remote sensing of water turbidity in Alqueva reservoir and implications on lake modelling	https://doi.org/10.5194/hess-16-1623-2012 M. Potes, M. J. Costa, R. Salgado, June 2012
9	Alkalinity	Surface pCO ₂ variability in two contrasting basins of North Indian Ocean using satellite data	https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dsr.2021.103665
10	Surface temperature	Algorithm for Automated Mapping of Land Surface Temperature Using LANDSAT 8 Satellite Data	https://doi.org/10.1155/2016/1480307 Ugur Avdan, February 2016
11	Salinity	Mapping water salinity using Landsat-8 OLI satellite images (Case study: Karun basin located in Iran)	https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asr.2019.12.007 Mohsen Ansari, Mehdi Akhondzadeh, December 2019

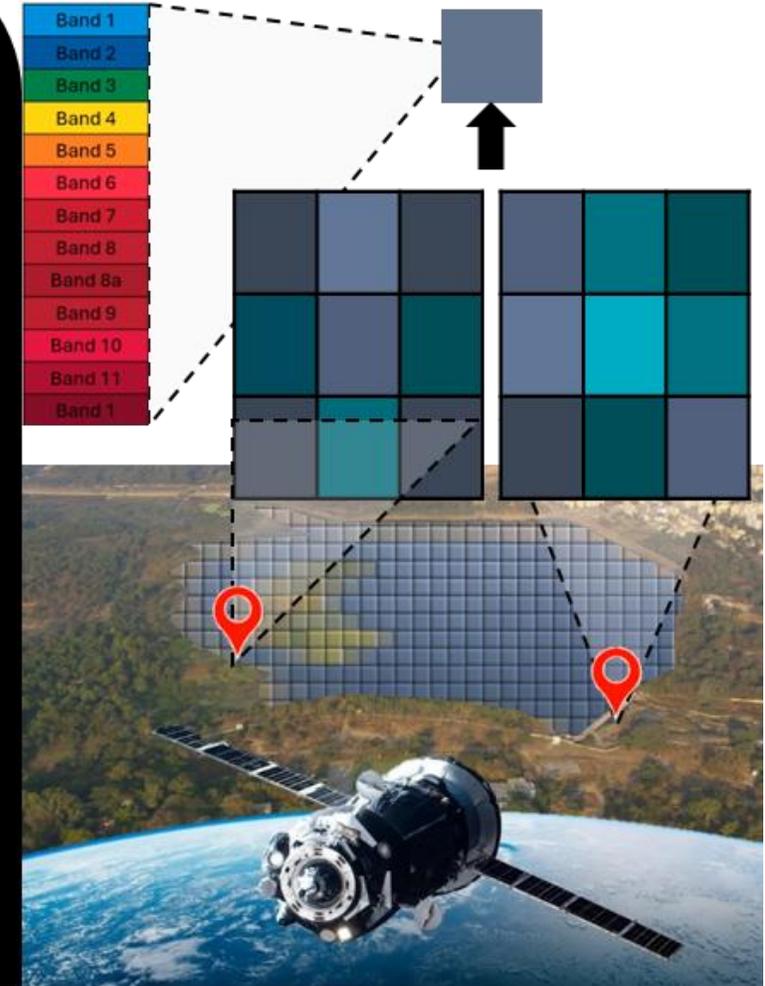
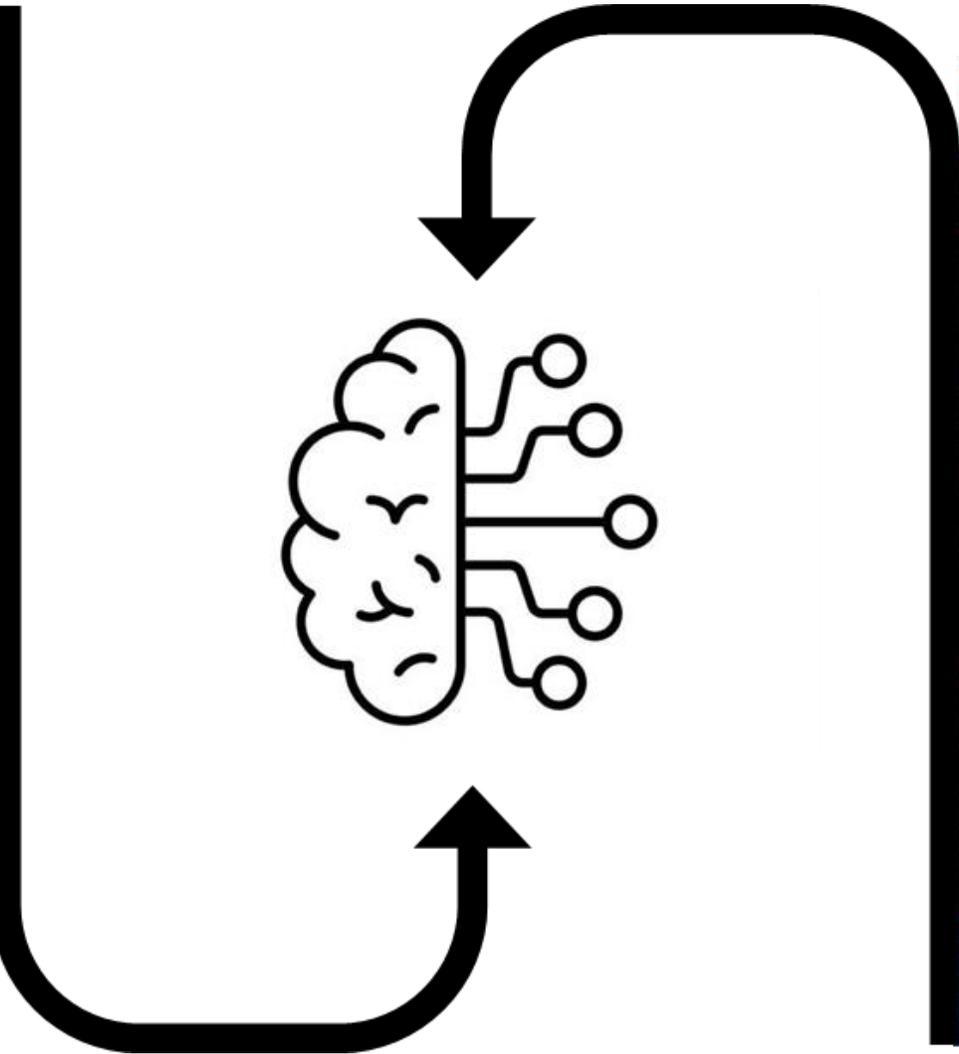


Such formulas only successful in local contexts...

Machine learning - Equating known water quality values with pixel colors in satellite images to build relationships



ph	DO	TDS	TSS
DIC	DOC	Nitrate	Phosphate
BOD	COD	Chlorophyll	Salinity



Selection of 23 lakes across 6 cities for studying lake health

Based on the Geography and Climatology, population and accredited labs availability

Ahmedabad

Makarba lake

Isanpur lake

Shilaj lake

Chharodi lake

Malek Saban lake

Pune

Pashan lake

Katraj lake

Jambhulwadi lake

Vita

Vivekanad lake

Karve lake

Gandhidham

Kidana lake

Shinay lake

Galpadar lake

Antarjaal lake

Anjar

Sawasar lake

Satapar lake

Toral lake

Vadodara

Gotri lake

Harni lake

Tarsali lake

Mahadev lake

Vasna village lake

Sama lake

Quality Samplig

To understand lake health, water quality tests covering 21 water quality parameters. To understand the seasonal characteristics conducted from December 2025 to January 2026.

- From each lakes, two distinct points (opposite sides of the lakes) have been selected.
- For some of the larger lakes **three individual samples were collected.**



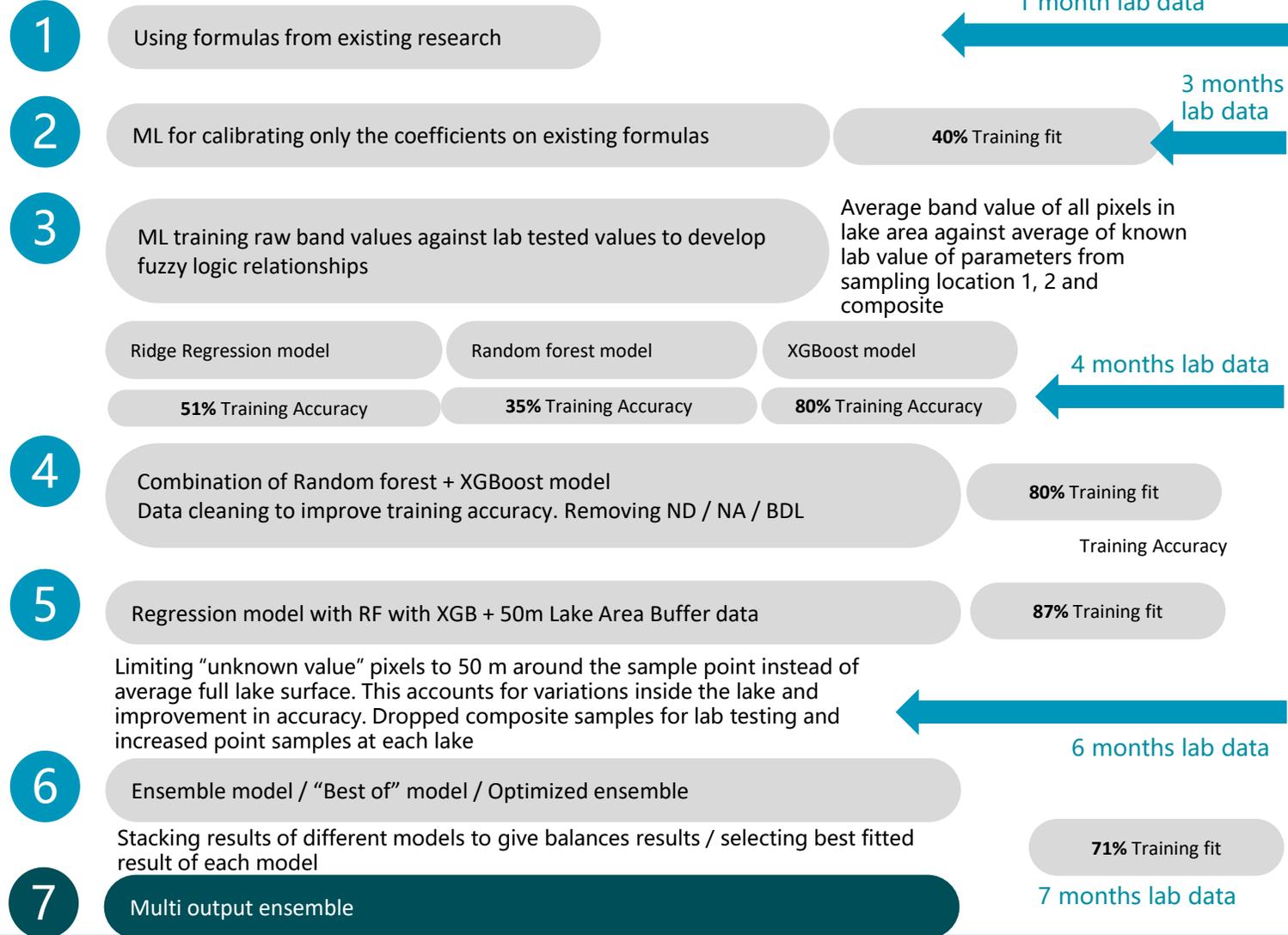
Challenges –

- **Frequent cloud cover** during Monsoon – difficulty in sampling schedule.
- **Composite sampling points did not provide consistent results**; hence, it was discontinued, and a **new distinct sampling location, P3** was introduced.
- Due to algae growth and solid waste littering collection was bit difficult which was changed for specific locations.

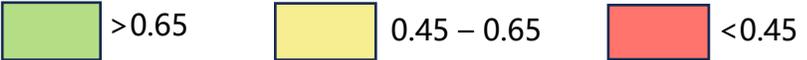


Testing different workflows to achieve accuracy

Estimating water quality



Parameters	Train R2	Test R2
Temperature	0.96	0.94
Dissolved Oxygen (mg/L)	0.96	0.89
Total Organic Carbon (mg/L)	0.86	0.88
BOD (mg/L)	0.92	0.87
pH	0.98	0.86
COD (mg/L)	0.88	0.84
Dissolved Organic Carbon (mg/L)	0.88	0.81
Total Dissolved Solids (mg/L)	0.83	0.78
Potassium (mg/L)	0.79	0.74
Total Inorganic Carbon (mg/L)	0.74	0.72
Salinity (mg/L)	0.76	0.68
Total Suspended Solids (mg/L)	0.71	0.68
Turbidity (NTU)	0.63	0.59
Total Nitrogen (mg/L)	0.66	0.59
Dissolved Inorganic Carbon (mg/L)	0.64	0.58
Chlorophyll-A (mg/L)	0.58	0.48
Total Phosphorus (mg/L)	0.47	0.47
Fecal Coliform (MPN/100 ml)	0.17	0.12
Colored Dissolved Organic Matter (mg/L)	0.12	0.08
Nitrate (mg/L)	0.053	0.03



Water quality testing dashboards to understand trends and lab data

By Water Quality Index,

The lake health can be analyzed by Water Quality Index values which is based on water quality parameters like calculation of pH, BOD, %DO Saturation, Fecal coliform and DO score.

WQI value	Water Quality	Remarks
63-100	Good to Excellent	Non-Polluted
50-63	Medium to Good	Non-Polluted
38-50	Bad	Polluted
< 38	Bad to very Bad	Heavily Polluted

Lake Name	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr - May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Makarba										
Chharodi										
Isanpur										
Malek Saban										
Shilaj										
Pashan										
Jambhulwadi										
Katraj										
Sama										
Gotri lake										
Vasna Village										
Mahadev lake										
Tarsali										
Harni lake										
Sawasar										
Toral Lake										
Satapar										
Vivekanand										
Karve lake										
Galpadar										
Shinay										
Kidana										
Antarjaal										

By Central Pollution Control Board, India

Depending on the water quality parameter ranges, their dedicated usage is allotted, and the lake health is monitored. CPCB has categorized 5 classes of lakes mentioned below.

CPCB class	Designated Best-Use
A	Drinking Water Source Without Conventional Treatment after Disinfection
B	Outdoor Bathing
C	Drinking Water Source after Conventional Treatment and disinfection
D	Propagation of Wildlife and Fisheries
Below D	Irrigation, Industrial Cooling, Controlled Waste Disposal

Lake Name	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr-May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Makarba										
Chharodi										
Isanpur										
Malek Saban										
Shilaj										
Pashan										
Jambhulwadi										
Katraj										
Sama										
Gotri										
Vasna Village										
Mahadev										
Tarsali lake										
Harni lake										
Sawasar										
Toral Lake										
Satapar										
Vivekanand lake										
Karve lake										
Galpadar										
Shinay										
Kidana										
Antarjaal										

- An interactive dashboard has been developed for lake-wise and city-wise analysis. It presents the Water Quality Index (WQI) and CPCB classification based on key parameters such as DO, pH, BOD, COD, Total Coliform, and Fecal Coliform.
- The analysis shows that the water quality of most of the lakes in July month improves. Though water quality of some of the lakes remain bad during the same season.

Lake Water Quality Testing Results

Select city: **Ahmedabad**

Select Lake: **Makarba**

Lake Type: **Eutrophic**

Solid Waste Dumping: **Minor dumping**

Algal Bloom: **None**

Boundary status: **Embankment lined**

Surrounding Landuse: **Slums, Residential and Commercial**

Fauna: **Fishing activities, Alive Fish**

Flora: **Tree around perimeter**

Liquid Pollution: **Sewage inflow**

Image 1:

Image 2:

Image 3:

	December	January	February	March	May	June	July
CPCB Class	C	C	B	B	B	D	D
WQI	41.21	47.81	42.81	50.89	49.86	32.52	39.55
TSI	77.88	82.79	80.79	78.39	80.82	78.4	72.82

Water Quality Index based on CPCB methodology

Tropical Status Index

Carbon sequestration Potential in tCO2/year

pH

DO

Turbidity

Chlorophyll

Quality

TDS

BOD

COD

DOC

Nitrate

Total Nitrogen

Chlorophyll

TIC

DIC

TSS

CDOM

Fecal Coliform

Ahmedabad - Assessing case of fish death in Asarwa lake

Reason unknown: AMC begins cleanup operation days after several dead fish found floating on Asarwa lake

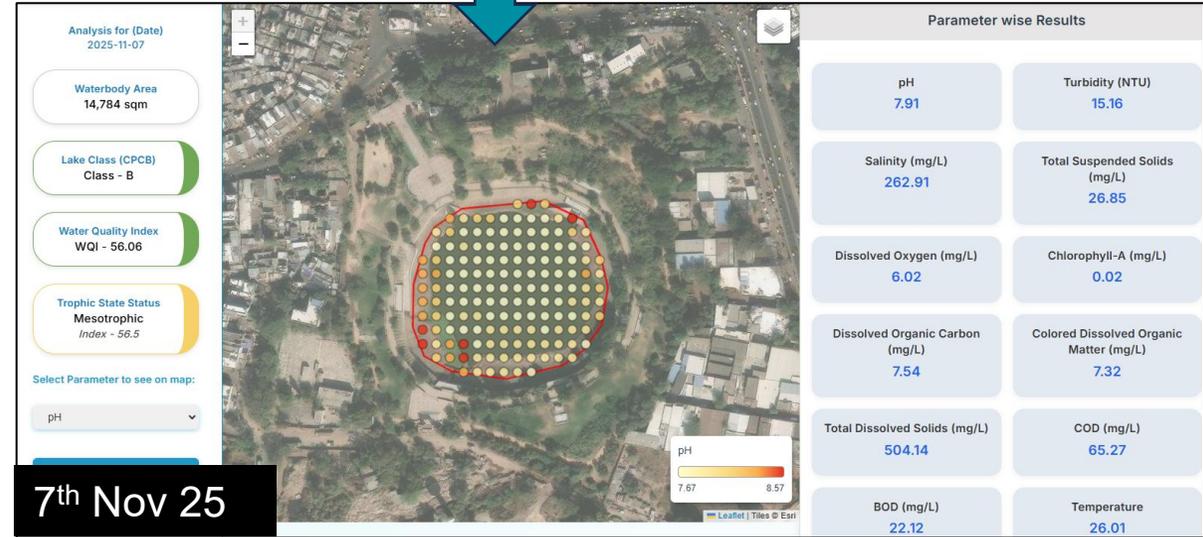
GPCB, FSL, AMC collect water samples, residents cite delayed action by authorities concerned.



Officials of the AMC's central zone administration began the cleanup operation, removing loads of dead fish and algae layer on the lake, after local residents took up the matter with the municipal commissioner and the Gujarat Pollution Control Board.

Reduction in DO and temperature, increase in algal bloom, turbidity and major reason for death of aquatic life..

- It is the only large water body in the Central Zone of the city.
- **Fish death** in this lake was **first reported on October 26..**
- As per the visit by Govt team there was **no sign of industrial pollutants** in the lake. However, there was a **thick layer of algae on top of the water**. The sudden temperature drop due to the unseasonal rain might have led to the fish deaths.
- After demands, the **Ahmedabad Fire and Emergency Services (AFES)** had **sprayed a tanker of water in the lake on October 27**, but after that, **no further action** had been taken **till November 1**. Later, AMC Officials began the cleanup operation, removing loads of dead fish and algae layer on the lake, after local residents took up the matter with the municipal commissioner and the Gujarat Pollution Control Board (GPCB).



*Information from progressively developing ML model

Ahmedabad - Assessing case of fish death in Asarwa lake



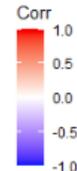
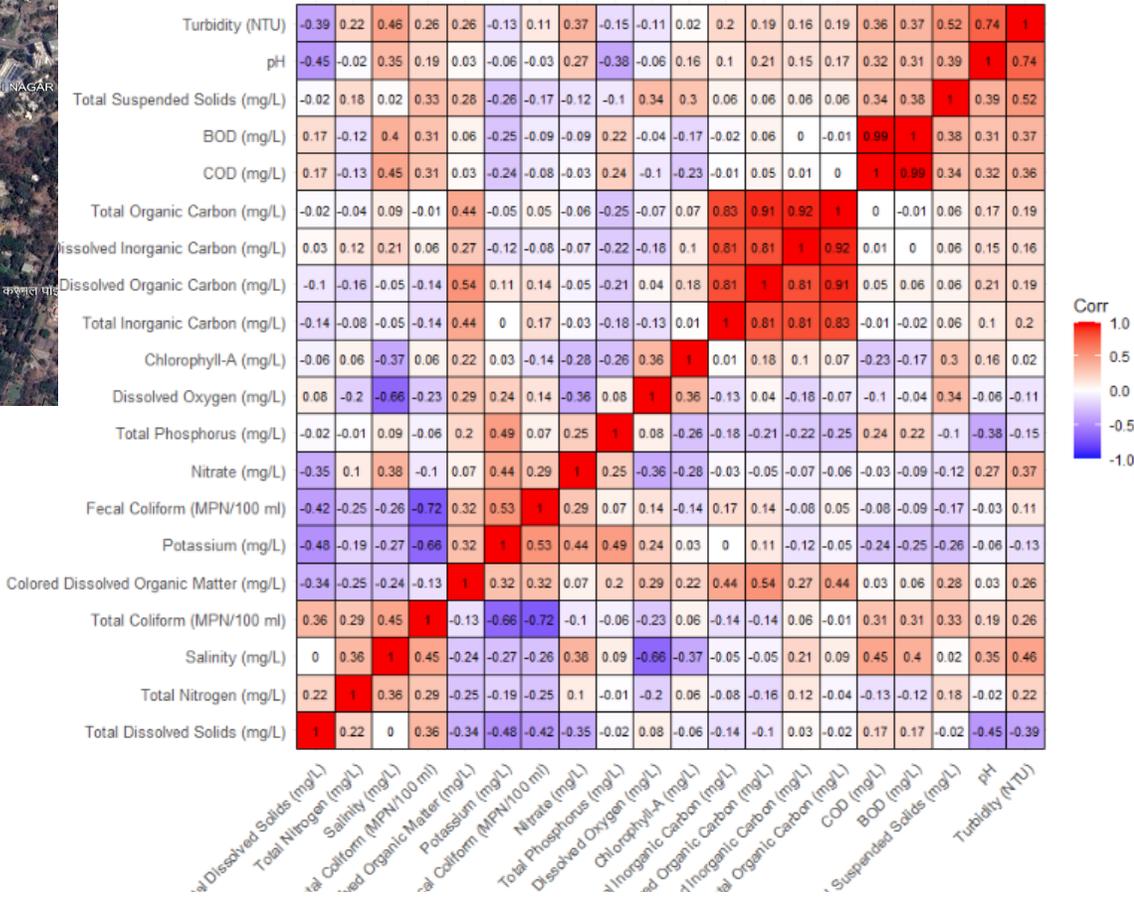
19/11/24



13/03/25

- **In Jan-** Very low Chlorophyll-a and low DO indicate minimal algal activity possibly due to cold weather and less photosynthesis
- **In Mar-** Chlorophyll-a and DO increased which resulted into higher photosynthetic activity, possibly from algal blooms
- TN drops possibly due to consumed by fast-growing algae and Nitrate increased due to possible runoff or sewage discharge
- Slight raise in BOD indicates increased organic pollution due to decomposition of algal bloom and sewage discharge
- Total coliform increased means potential discharge of sewage into lake
- Lake shows eutrophic to hypertrophic tendencies in March 2025

Pune and Vita lakes from March to June



- **In Jan-** Very low Chlorophyll-a and low DO indicate minimal algal activity possibly due to cold weather and less photosynthesis
- **In Mar-** Chlorophyll-a and DO increased which resulted into higher photosynthetic activity, possibly from algal blooms

Module 3 - Temporal prediction - Will more lakes disappear in Ahmedabad?

Checking temporal change in water spread for Ahmedabad - Selected 122 lakes

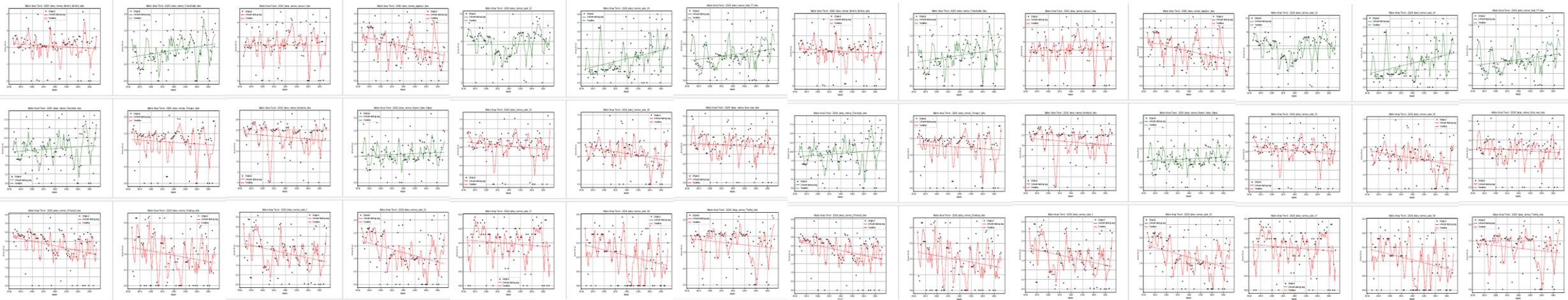


For each lake plotting monthly water surface area visible from 2018-2025 using NDWI nodule



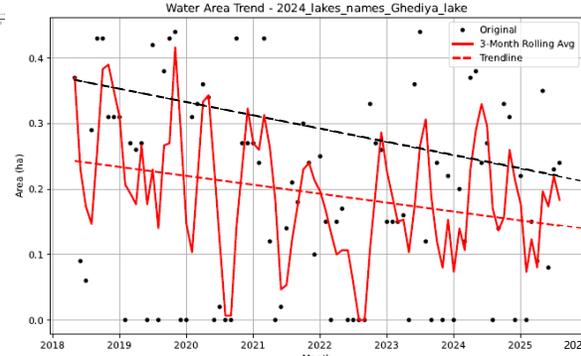
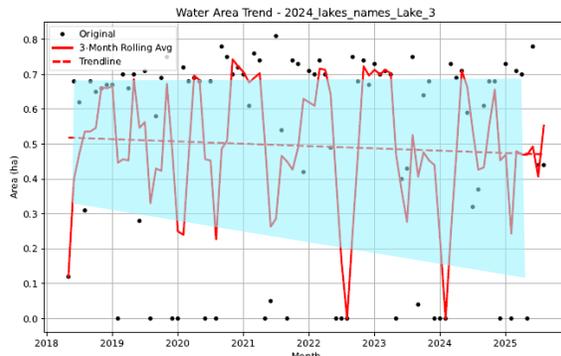
49 Lakes are showing positive trend (Increasing surface area)
73 Lakes are in danger (decreasing surface area trend)

May 2018- Sep 2025

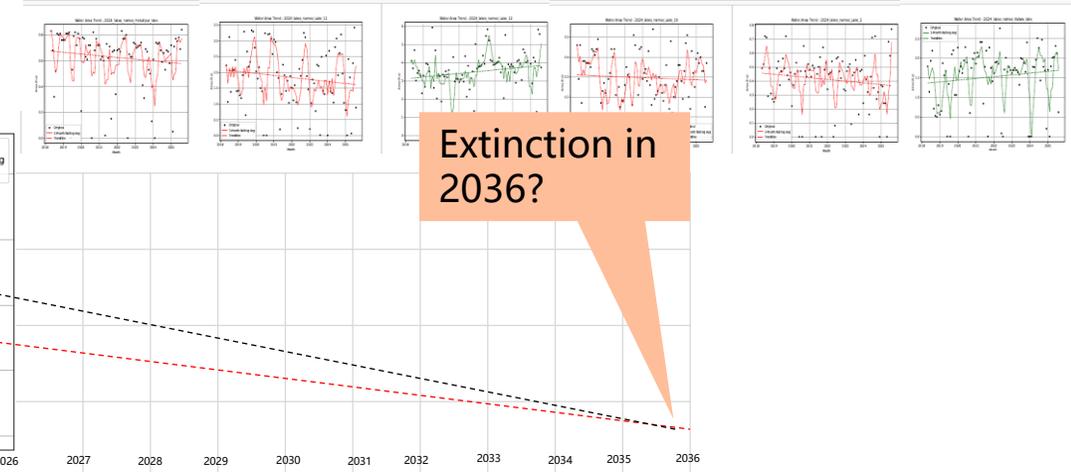


Widening gap between peaks and valleys, peaks relatively stable – becoming a seasonal lake

Decreasing peaks, downward average slope and common dry periods – shrinking at fast rate

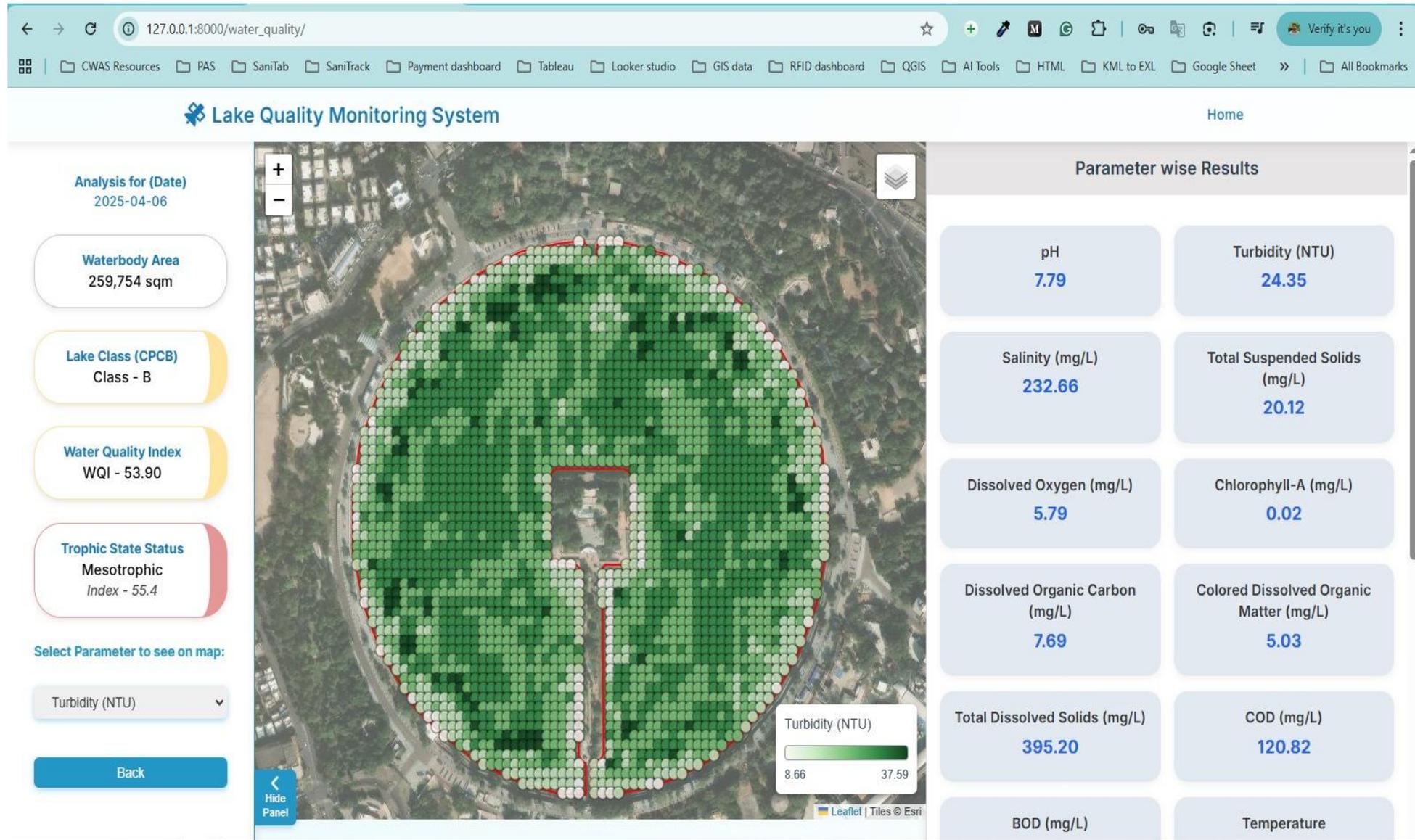


Extinction in 2036?



Developing a user-friendly front end

Tool showing water quality as per CPCB class, Water Quality Index (WQI) and area of the waterbodies identified as per satellite imagery.



Analysis modules in the tool

Spatio-temporal analysis – “detect” lakes



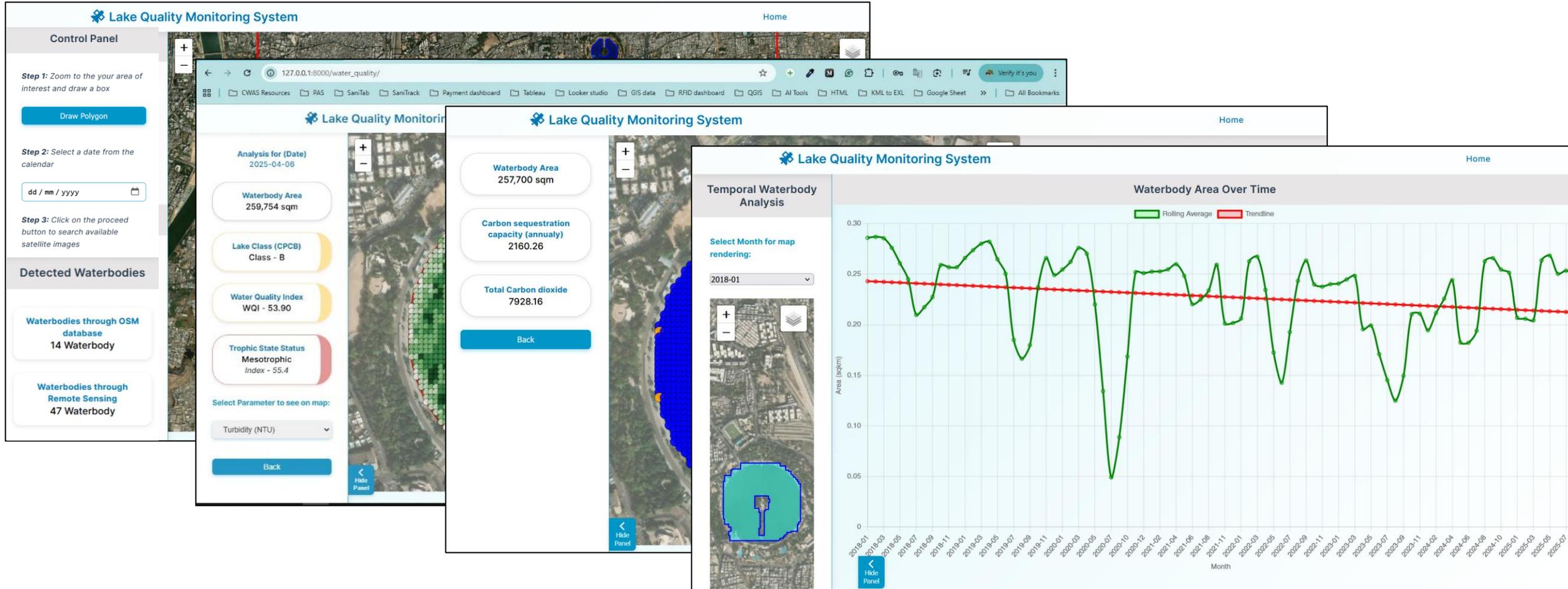
Water quality estimation



Sequestration potential calculation

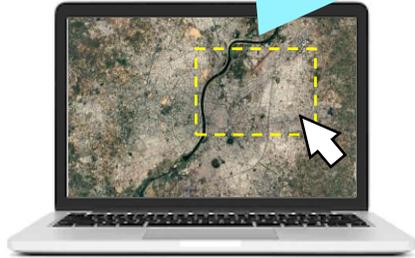


Temporal prediction



Module 4 - Moving towards actionable insights that enable conservation measures

Select your area of interest



Remote sensing modules run in the background



Actionable insights translating results

Surface area of this lake is reducing year on year – **Check for encroachments**

High Nitrogen detected – **Check sewage outflows**

Dry lake this year – **Check for stormwater blockage**

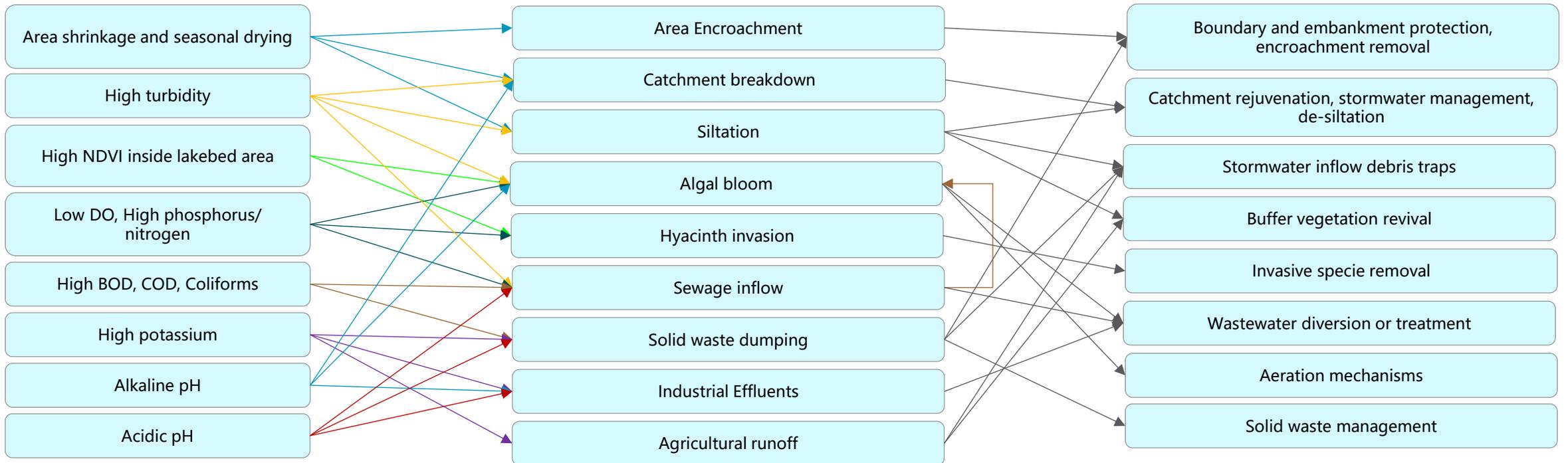
Prompting field visit, priorities in improvement planning and action by city



Measurable parameter

Potential cause

Potential improvement action

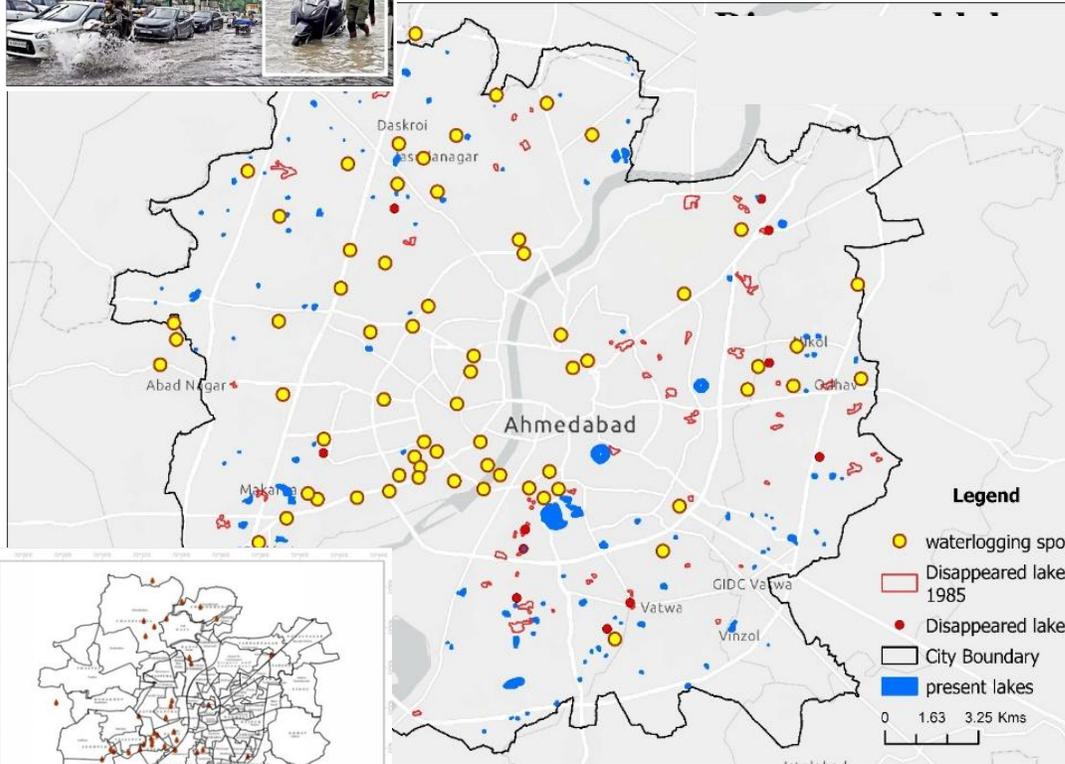


Further climate analysis possible for researchers

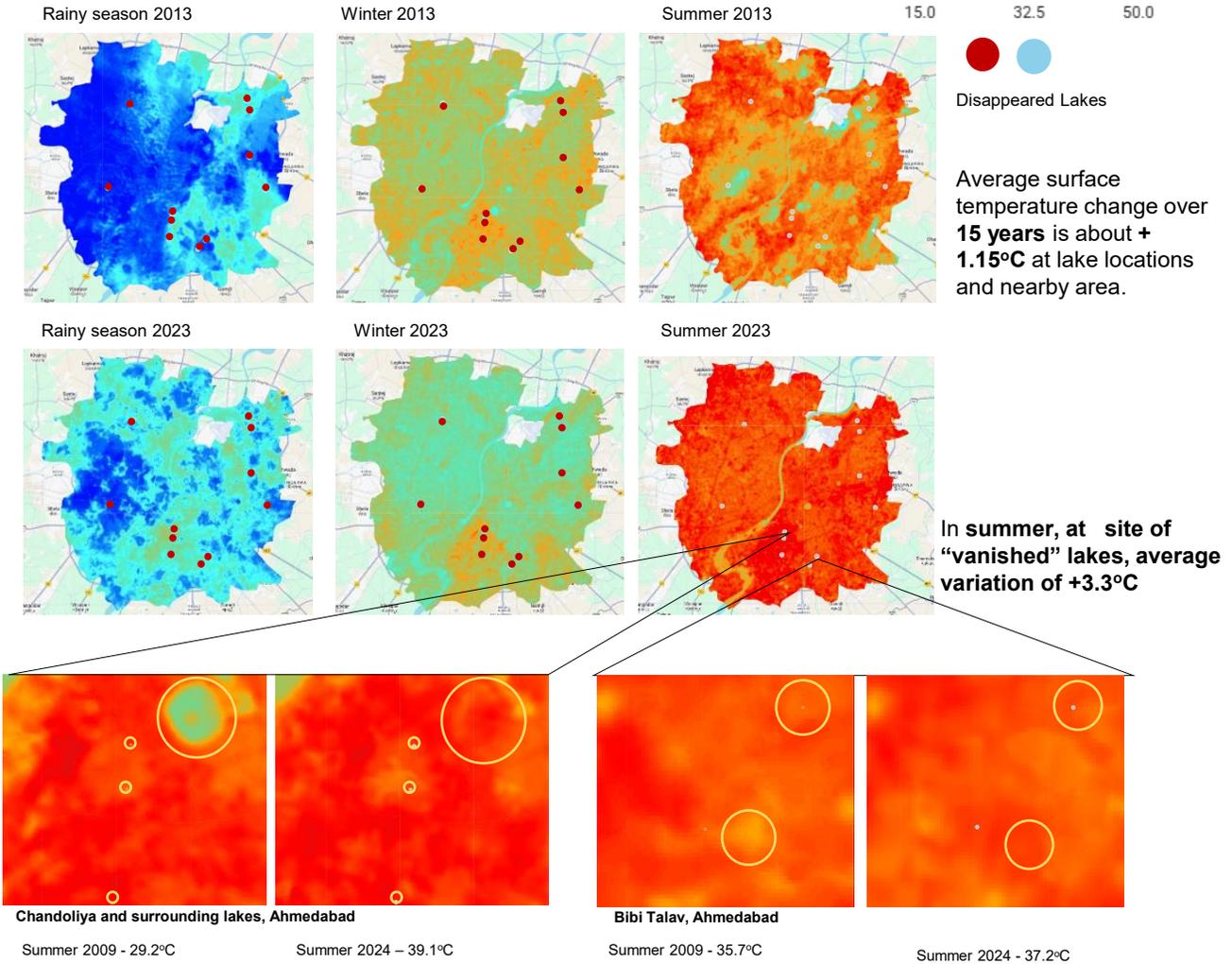
Lakes related to flood vulnerability?



Localities without lake buffers face flooding in monsoons



Urban temperatures linked to disappeared lakes?



Source1: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/ahmedabad/32-new-waterlogging-spots-in-ahmedabad-exacerbate-monsoon-troubles-for-residents/articleshow/113006828.cms> | Source2: <https://portfolio.cept.ac.in/2022/M/1/geovisualization-and-spatial-analysis-studio-ge4004-monsoon-2022/study-of-flash-floods-a-case-study-of-ahmedabad-monsoon-2022-page22459>

Thank You

Global South Academic Conclave on WASH and Climate 2026

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