**Syllabus subtopic:** Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

**News:** The Jammu and Kashmir UT will set up a 10-member committee that will declare Dal Lake, an Eco-sensitive Zone.

**Prelims focus:** Eco Sensitive zones- how are they declared and key provisions in this regard, about Dal Lake.

**Mains focus:** Significance and the need for these zones, and issues related to management of these zones.

**Mission:** According to a report, the area of the Dal Lake has shrunk to 24 sq km from 31 sq km and the lake has witnessed significant changes in land use and cover, apart from increasing human population.

**About Eco-sensitive zones**

The Environment Protection Act, 1986 does not mention the word “Eco-sensitive Zones”.

1. The section 3(2)(v) of the Act, says that Central Government can restrict areas in which any industries, operations or processes shall not be carried out or shall be carried out subject to certain safeguards
2. Besides the section 5 (1) of this act says that central government can prohibit or restrict the location of industries and carrying on certain operations or processes on the basis of considerations like the biological diversity of an area, maximum allowable limits of concentration of pollutants for an area, environmentally compatible land use, and proximity to protected areas.

The above two clauses have been effectively used by the government to declare Eco-Sensitive Zones or Ecologically Fragile Areas (EFA). The same criteria have been used by the government to declare No Development Zones.

**Criteria:**

The MoEF (Ministry of Environment & Forests) has approved a comprehensive set of guidelines laying down parameters and criteria for declaring ESAs.

These include Species Based (Endemism, Rarity etc), Ecosystem Based (sacred groves, frontier forests etc) and Geomorphologic feature based (uninhabited islands, origins of rivers etc).
About Dal Lake:

- Also known as the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, dal lake, which is the second largest in the state, is integral to tourism and recreation in Kashmir and is named the “Jewel in the crown of Kashmir” or “Srinagar’s Jewel”. The lake is also an important source for commercial operations in fishing and water plant harvesting.
- The lake is located in the Zabarwan mountain valley, in the foothills of the Shankracharya hills, which surrounds it on three sides.
- The lake has four main interconnected basins namely, Hazratbal, Bod dal, Gagribal and Nagin.