News: The government has finalised a committee to draft a new National Water Policy (NWP). The committee is expected to produce a report within six months.

Prelims focus: Overview of NWP 2012.

Mains focus: The need for and significance of the new policy.

National Water Policy 2012:

- The NWP currently in force was drafted in 2012 and is the third such policy since 1987.
- Among the major policy innovations in the 2012 policy was the concept of an Integrated Water Resources Management approach that took the “river basin/ sub-basin” as a unit for planning, development and management of water resources. 
- Minimum levels: It also proposed that a portion of river flows ought to be kept aside to meet ecological needs. Such an approach led to the government, in 2018, requiring minimum water levels to be maintained in the Ganga all through the year and hydropower projects, therefore, to refrain from hoarding water beyond a point.
- The policy also stressed for a minimum quantity of potable water for essential health and hygiene to all its citizens to be made available within easy reach of households.
- The policy also noted that inter-basin transfers of water should be considered on the basis of merits of each case after evaluating the environmental, economic and social impacts of such transfers.

Need for revision:

There have been a lot of changes which need to be addressed and the prioritization of the water usage needs to be defined.

1. Spring sets in Himalayas have been decreasing without any active step by the government.
2. Revitalisation of rivers needs to be brought in focus because many of our rivers and rivulets are drying and the policy parameters need to be set up accordingly.
3. Technological innovations like censors, geographic information systems (GIS) and satellite imagery need to be introduced to modulate the water and track the flow.
4. Budgeting needs to be done in a way that it covers all levels from the basin to sub basin.