

Managing Across Multiple Jurisdictions – Summary

During the second week of discussion we asked participants for ideas about how to best manage very large watersheds across multiple jurisdictions. The Saskatchewan River Basin was presented as a case study by our guest moderator, Mr. Robert Halliday. We received a number of comments, suggested guidelines for managing across watersheds, and some helpful case studies.

Guidelines for Managing Across Multiple Jurisdictions

Manage the basin as a whole.

There was general agreement that, when possible, managing on a basin-wide scale is the most effective approach to watershed management, although there are a number of challenges. As Ralf Ludwig suggested, some basins may simply be too large to manage as a whole. The Nelson River Basin, of which the Saskatchewan River Basin is a part, is more than one million square kilometres in area. Robert Halliday suggested that a basin of this size is perhaps too large and complex to manage as a single entity at this time. Yet even smaller basins present significant challenges, such as finding basin-wide maps and data or creating a basin-wide management unit. In all cases, there is also the challenge of establishing collaboration across multiple jurisdictions. As Ralf Ludwig, Ilke Borowski, and Luc Vescovi pointed out, the relationships created in the process of collaboration are as valuable as the agreements that may result. Stakeholders who know each other are more likely to be responsible for the quantity and quality of water they pass downstream. Borowski suggested that developing relevant water quality standards to which everyone agrees may be a good place to start this collaborative process.

Share the responsibility for funding.

Shared funding – municipally, provincially, and nationally – was suggested as a good approach to basin-wide management. Shared funding spreads the financial responsibility across multiple levels of government and helps build early working relationships.

Build a multi-stakeholder platform.

Ilke Borowski argued that all major stakeholders – including industry and agriculture – should be able to meaningfully discuss their watershed's management. To determine who should be considered as a stakeholder Borowski suggested considering: 1) who is interested in changing the regime of the river basin, 2) how are the various stakeholder groups organized, 3) how does the broader public look at it. Borowski's well-received research on "social learning" is referenced in the resource section below.

Engage locally first.

Any basin-wide institution or project with multi-stakeholder involvement will involve people and institutions from a variety of places. However, participants suggested that it was important to engage local communities in the importance of managing the basin. This local engagement should be part of ongoing stakeholder dialogue. Local engagement was also discussed during the third week of discussion in the context of Alberta's Water for Life strategy.

Confront the challenge of multiple jurisdictions.

Robert Halliday explained some of the challenges of managing watersheds in Canada – not the least of which is that individual Provinces have a constitutional right to manage their own resources. They are not legally obligated to collaborate or share resources with other provinces. Ilke Borowski and Ralf Ludwig agreed that, in this case, cross-jurisdictional collaboration is difficult but not impossible. Borowski pointed out that the Danube River Basin, for example, deals with more than fifteen nations and the Elbe River Basin alone with four countries. During the third week of discussion, Lorne Taylor suggested that where trans-national or inter-provincial collaboration is difficult, local jurisdictions should take responsibility for initiating planning.

Suggested Resources

South Saskatchewan River Basin – Brief Case Study

<http://www.banffcentre.ca/mountainculture/mtnforum/econferences/rosenberg/week3.asp#message2>

Map of the basin.

http://www.banffcentre.ca/mountainculture/mtnforum/econferences/rosenberg/images/sask_basin.jpg

Partners FOR the Saskatchewan River Basin

<http://www.saskriverbasin.ca/>

Harmonizing Collaborative Planning (HarmoniCOP)

<http://www.harmonicop.info>

Learning together to manage together – Improving participation in water management:

Harmonizing Collaborative Planning (HarmoniCOP) Handbook

<http://www.harmonicop.info/handbook.php>

European Water Framework Directive (EU-WFD): integrated river basin management for Europe

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-framework/index_en.html

Grand River Conservation Authority

<http://www.grandriver.ca/>