Thinking Like a Watershed
Ecological governance concepts, trends and applications

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The challenge ahead

In a healthy society, economy always follows ecology, and education precedes them both

Ken Carey
Starseed
The Third Millennium, Living in the Posthistoric World
Presentation overview

- Ecological governance
- Setting a new course in British Columbia-governance options
- Comparison of MoE and POLIS discussion papers
- Education and engagement
- Conclusions and next steps
Foundations

**Governance**

...guide, steer, control, manage to achieve desired outcomes

**WHO** - decision makers and accountabilities

**WHAT** - bases for decisions

**HOW** - decision making process
Ecological governance - principles

• Economy is a subset of the ecosystem
• Ecological resilience is a priority
• Manages watersheds as whole systems
• Manages for risk and uncertainty
• Includes all interests—civil society, resource sector, all levels of government
• Reconnects humans (and communities) to the natural world
Key Watershed Governance Factors

- Changing climate will significantly affect watershed function
- Carbon reduction is all about **Mitigation**
- Ecological governance is about **resilience**
- International best practices in watershed governance are addressing these challenges
- Lengthy delays in decision making
- Governments have constrained resources
- Lack of involvement by affected parties
Watersheds, catchments and basins

- Integrators of the landscape and the source of key *ecological goods and services*
- Valuing ecosystems strengthens the *business case* for ecosystem resiliency
- Watersheds have long been recognized as the appropriate scale for *management* and increasingly for *governance*
‘Thinking like a Watershed’

Examples of integrated decentralized collaborative watershed-based governance:

- France’s Water Agencies and “Water Parliaments” (European Union)
- Murray-Darling Basin Initiative (Australia)
- Conservation Authorities (Ontario)
Collaborative Governance

- Watershed governance involves all levels of government
  - Federal: fisheries, CEAA
  - Provincial: resources, water allocation and quality
  - Local: zoning, flood control
  - First Nations: traditional rights and obligations

- Governments don’t function as whole systems
Governance Options

**POLIS proposals**
- Status Quo
- Enhanced Provincial
- Regional District
- Watershed Agency

**MoE proposals**
- Centralized
- Centralized
- Shared
- Decentralized
Evaluation Criteria for Comparing Models

- Achievement of ecological governance principles
- Accountability for achieving roles and responsibilities
- Funding and fiscal capacity
- Assessing strengths, weaknesses and realistic governance changes
Key Outcomes for Good Governance

- Establish and monitor key indicators for functioning, healthy watersheds
- Protect community drinking water sources
- Require legally enforceable instream flow requirements
- Establish groundwater control regulations
Education

• Engagement of all interested parties
• Evaluate international best practices in watershed governance
• Improved education in ecological governance in schools and universities
• Undertaking pilots to demonstrate new approaches
Attributes of Effective Governance

- Monitor indicators for key outcomes
- Shift from current sector focused resource management to whole systems approach
- Evaluate cumulative effects
- Coordinate and integrate individual decisions across governments
- Provide independent oversight and reporting
- Include and engage those affected by decisions
Conclusions

• Status quo option does not meet effective governance attributes
• Watershed agency model represents best practice
• Need transformative change in governance to meet future challenges
• Polis to undertake thoughtful analysis of ecological governance options
• Report by the end of 2010