

COASTAL AND ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION IN COMPLEX MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL SETTINGS: CASE STUDIES IN INSTITUTIONAL INNOVATION

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The last two decades have witnessed a “re-birth” of interest in watershed-based approaches to resource management. This “re-birth” has been accompanied by renewed interest in water resources governance and, in particular, different types of multi-jurisdictional arrangements that can be employed to transcend “artificial” geo-political boundaries and focus laws, policies and programs on a hydrologic, or watershed, basis.

Coinciding with this renewed interest is a pronounced trend toward large scale approaches to coastal and ecosystem restoration, as evidenced by established or emerging programs in many coastal regions of North America (e.g., Chesapeake Bay, Great Lakes, Coastal Louisiana, Gulf of Mexico, Upper Mississippi, Gulf of Maine, San Francisco Delta, Puget Sound.) In these and other regions, the scientific and engineering challenges associated with coastal and ecosystem restoration can pale in comparison to the challenge of governance in “harmonizing” the efforts of many distinct jurisdictions.

Fortunately, much can be learned from historical experience with multi-jurisdictional governance arrangements. The nation’s first interstate water resources commission, in fact, was established in the earliest days of our nation’s history, and has been followed by two centuries of “institutional experimentation” offering a wealth of “lessons learned.”

The Interstate Council on Water Policy (ICWP) has recognized that innovations in multi-jurisdictional governance must keep pace with innovations in science and technology if coastal and ecosystem restoration goals are to be realized. Toward that end, ICWP embarked on an initiative to examine the historical evolution of multi-jurisdictional governance approaches to coastal and ecosystem restoration; analyze the structural and operational characteristics of different governance models; examine multiple case studies; and extract lessons learned that can be applied to today’s governance challenges.

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