
Preface

The idea for this broad-ranged, comparative examination of stakeholder participation in decision making on watershed policies began in 1999 when two of our authors, Will Focht and Marty Matlock, and one of their colleagues, Tom Webler, approached Barbara Levinson, then water and watersheds program coordinator at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. She was interested in bringing together the findings of a number of STAR (Science to Achieve Results) grants funded by the EPA that involved stakeholder participation in watershed decision making. Levinson asked them to synthesize the information about stakeholder participation in decision making from these and other studies, and make it available to other interested scholars and practitioners. To support this effort, the EPA provided a supplemental grant of \$29,873 to the Texas A&M STAR grant to provide funding for travel, working conferences, and other support to facilitate the book project and bring it to completion. A guiding consideration behind this effort was the belief that in difficult, conflict-prone policy areas such as this one, stakeholder participation in debating and selecting policy options would probably be crucial to building acceptable, workable policy solutions. This belief led to questions about how this participation should best be structured, how scientific information should be incorporated into the process, what personal and interpersonal attributes facilitate cooperation, how representative this participation should be, and ultimately what difference this participation makes for community welfare and environmental quality.

To examine these questions, Levinson asked Focht, Matlock, and Webler to pull together a team of researchers from around the country who were working on these issues and weld them into a team to write a state-of-the-art book on this topic. From this nucleus, first Arnold

Vedlitz and Zev Trachtenberg were added to the team. With their help, Paul Sabatier and Mark Lubell were recruited. As the project ideas developed, Tom Webler withdrew, leaving the core team of Sabatier, Focht, Lubell, Matlock, Trachtenberg, and Vedlitz.

Each of these scholars brought a specific set of experiences and qualifications to the team. Focht and Trachtenberg had hands-on experience with a specific watershed stakeholder decision-making process in Oklahoma. Matlock and Vedlitz had hands-on experience linking science information to watershed decision making in two stakeholder watershed planning processes in San Antonio. Sabatier had systematically gathered detailed stakeholder information on dozens of stakeholder watershed processes in Washington State and California. And Lubell had gathered national data on stakeholder participation in twelve National Estuary Program (NEP) sites and ten comparable non-NEP sites.

For more than three years, this team of six project leaders engaged in joint creativity, debate, and compromise to determine this book's outline, goals, interconnections, and conceptual framework. A key event in this process was a two-day workshop at Texas A&M in October 2000 in which initial drafts were discussed and advice sought from a group of knowledgeable practitioners. A second workshop was held in October 2002 at the University of California, Davis, in which subsequent drafts were reviewed and the concluding chapter was written. While only chapters 1 and 9 were written by all six authors in concert, the remaining chapters were evaluated and encouraged by the whole team.

The project leaders' joint efforts at guiding and framing this book have been complemented by their individual efforts on the chapters for which they are lead authors. And their work has been enhanced by the invaluable contributions of other scholars on their research teams. These authors and additional coauthors are credited on their respective chapters.

This book is an unusual blend of team collaboration and individual expertise, very much like the collaborations necessary to address the complex watershed management problems facing our society.

The project leaders dedicate this book to Barbara Levinson, for many years the program director of the Water and Watersheds Program, funded primarily by the U.S. EPA with assistance from the National Science Foundation and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Levinson

was critical in getting the project started, providing the funding for the two workshops, and “encouraging” us to complete the project.

We thank the practitioners who participated in the Texas A&M workshop and provided us with a wealth of very useful advice about how to frame the book and the individual chapters so that they would be accessible—and perhaps even attractive—to practitioners:

- Michael R. Bira, environmental scientist, Environmental Protection Agency Region 6
- Shannon Phillips, senior technical writer/water quality analyst, Oklahoma Conservation Commission
- Gail Rothe, environmental planner, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (formerly Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission)
- Mark P. Smith, director of water policy, Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs

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At the end of the day, all of these folks have helped us produce what we promised Barbara Levinson several years ago: a state-of-the-art analysis of collaborative watershed processes in the United States.