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Global and Local Visions of Collaboration in Water Resources Management

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Brook Ann Zanetell was born and raised in the rural Colorado town of Gunnison. A childhood spent amid snow-capped mountains and crystal streams instilled in Brooke a love for nature and a passion for environmental preservation. She has a BA in Biology (Summa Cum Laude) and a BA in Environmental Conservation from the University of Colorado in Boulder. For several years she worked at the Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory in Colorado as an aquatic ecosystem researcher and as the public programs manager responsible for environmental outreach and education. In 1997, Brook became a member of the Human Dimensions Research unit in the Department of Natural Resources at Cornell University and received a master's degree for her research as a Fulbright Scholar in Venezuela on community-based fishery management, willingness to participate, and participatory methods for collecting local ecological knowledge. Her doctoral dissertation, titled "Global and Local Visions of Collaboration in Water Resources Management," describes research she conducted with the assistance of the United Nations Division of Sustainable Development (Protection of Freshwater Branch) and funding from the Inter-American Foundation. She will earn a PhD in Natural Resources from Cornell University in May 2002. To enhance her understanding of, and influence on, water resources management, she intends to begin law school in the fall of 2002. In Colorado and beyond, Brooke's family and the Western water and landscapes she holds dear are an enduring inspiration.

ABSTRACT

Collaboration has gained popularity as an approach to decision-making and stakeholder involvement in water resources management. Its widespread application, however, is outpacing our understanding of how to evaluate when it is appropriate or when it is successful. To develop both widely applicable and site-specific collaboration guidelines, we conducted two concurrent Delphi studies from October 2000 to May 2001. These were intended to produce 1) an expert-generated Global Vision of collaboration in water resources management and 2) a stakeholder-informed Local Vision of collaboration in Guatemala, Central America.

The inter-disciplinary and multi-cultural Global Vision reflects that achieving sustainable water management cannot be done through national policies alone but requires a shared international vision enacted at local-levels. A Global Vision must therefore compliment and be sensitive to local visions of collaboration in a variety of management contexts. To highlight site-specific challenges of water management we developed a local vision of

collaboration in Guatemala's Lake Atitlán watershed. It is a highly complex management context in which the interests of indigenous Mayan populations, tourists, small and large-scale farmers, NGOs, and government agencies all compete in one of the world's most beautiful and unique natural settings. Culture, politics, and history chart Lake Atitlán's course as much as the mutual desire of Guatemala's government and civil society to preserve water quality and availability along with lake biodiversity.

Three iterative surveys were given via email to the 14-member global panel and orally to the 16-member Lake Atitlán panel to facilitate mutual learning among participants and the formulation of group opinions about collaboration in water management. The Global Vision panel comprised the highest caliber of researchers, politicians, planners, and attorneys, as well as top-level representatives of the United Nations and the World Conservation Union. Governmental and non-governmental stakeholders participated on the Local Vision panel. Qualitative and quantitative data were gathered on 1) the appropriateness of collaboration; 2) the benefits and risks of collaboration; and 3) the elements of a successful process and a successful outcome of collaboration. Panelists also deliberated on the components of stakeholder involvement: 1) sufficient representation, 2) meaningful participation, and 3) fair influence.

The Global Vision and the Local Vision of collaboration in water resources management that resulted from these data will be presented including:

- assessment frameworks for determining when engaging collaboration is appropriate;
- evaluation frameworks for judging the outcomes of a collaborative process; and
- stakeholder involvement guidelines.

These results have theoretical and practical applications. Theoretically, the data identified criteria characteristic of the processes and outcomes of successful collaboration from a global and a local perspective. Practically, the assessment frameworks can be used by citizens and local stakeholder groups considering whether or not to engage in a collaborative process. The evaluation frameworks can be used by natural resource managers to determine whether or not collaborative outcomes will gain institutional/government endorsement. Lastly, stakeholder involvement guidelines enhance our ability to optimize stakeholder representation, participation and influence in collaborative water resources management.