

The Common Property Resource Digest

NO. 59 QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF COMMON PROPERTY DEC. 2001

This month's CPR Digest continues our preparations for **The Commons in the Age of Globalization: The 9th Biennial Conference of the IASCP**. In the September issue we focussed on the fifth sub-theme for the meeting: New Analytic Tools for CPR Management. In the March issue we will be concentrating on sub-theme three: Protected Areas in Constituting the Commons. This issue we are looking at sub-theme seven: Trans-boundary Natural Resource Management and the Commons.

We are fortunate to have a leading scholar in the field of international CPR management, *Oran Young*, to start us off. He examines the case of the Beringina Heritage Park and suggests a number of lessons about factors that have impeded progress in that effort. Then *Margaret Mckean* examines the question of how representative of other trans-boundary commons the Beringina case is. *Joseph Bial* points out the importance of attention to internal political dimensions when examining a nation's external management policies. The next two responses both focus on another international commons, the Mekong River Basin. *Wolf Hartmann* points out the role that regional politics in the area and the long effort that is required to set up cooperative mechanisms for management. Then *Nathan Badenoch* and *Frances Seymour* use the Mekong example reemphasize the need for an ecosystem approach to management that involves broad participation. Finally, *Monika Bauhr* wonders if Prof. Young's article justifies Bush Administration policies.

See pages 13 through 15 for lots of information about **The Commons in the Age of Globalization**. This includes a special **From the President** in which *Susan Hanna* explains the decision to hold the conference in Zimbabwe in spite of ongoing political tensions there. **Enjoy!**

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CPR FORUM COMMENTARY

Transboundary Protected Areas: Why Plans that Seem Attractive on Paper Can Go Awry on the Ground

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Meeting during 1989 under the auspices of the Joint Soviet-American Agreement on Cooperation in the Field of Environment Protection, a group of public lands managers from the two countries formed an International Park Planning Team, visited a number of sites in the Russian Far East and in Western Alaska, and developed a recommendation to create a Beringian Heritage International Park that would include units located on both sides of the Bering Strait. Conceived as a means of promoting international cooperation, protecting natural and cultural sites, and encouraging coordination in the administration of resources, the proposed park would include representative segments of Beringia or the former land bridge that joined the continents of Asia and North America as recently as 10,000 years ago in a great plain stretching 1,000 miles from north to south. A particularly appealing element of the proposal was the emphasis on protecting cultural heritage as well as biophysical systems.

Following an initial burst of excitement, the plan to create a Beringian Heritage International Park ran into obstacles. Key players on both sides remain committed to the idea (see www.nps.gov/akso/beringia). But today, twelve years on, the plan remains a proposal, a situation made all the more striking by the fact that Beringia's ecosystems are experiencing rapid changes that could trigger major alterations in this ecoregion but

The Common Property Resource Digest

Published with support from

the Ford Foundation

Editor

Douglas C. Wilson

that are poorly understood. How can we explain this situation? What inferences can we draw from this experience about the prospects for establishing transboundary protected areas (TPAs) in other parts of the world? At least six distinct sets of factors have impeded progress in the case of Beringia.

1. *The proposed park does not address the most pressing environmental issues of the Bering Sea ecoregion.* As envisioned by the planning team, the Beringian Heritage International Park would be confined to relatively small, terrestrial systems in the vicinity of Bering Strait. The Americans propose to designate an existing protected area such as the Bering Land Bridge National Preserve on the Seward Peninsula as the contribution of the United States to the international park. The thought is that the Russians would identify a counterpart area on the Chukotka Peninsula as their contribution. Without disparaging this vision, it has become clear during the last ten years that the real problems of Beringia involve large marine and terrestrial ecosystems whose solutions will require a willingness to think in terms of the whole area as an ecoregion. These problems include the depletion of fish stocks, declining populations of marine mammals and seabirds, the effects of toxic contaminants, and the impacts of climate change and variability. The Bering Sea ecoregion has become a major focus of attention at the international level as well as within the environmental communities of Russia and the United States. There is a sense in which the international park proposal, developed during the late 1980s and early 1990s, now seems like a relic from an earlier era which has given way to more encompassing perspectives on ecosystem management.

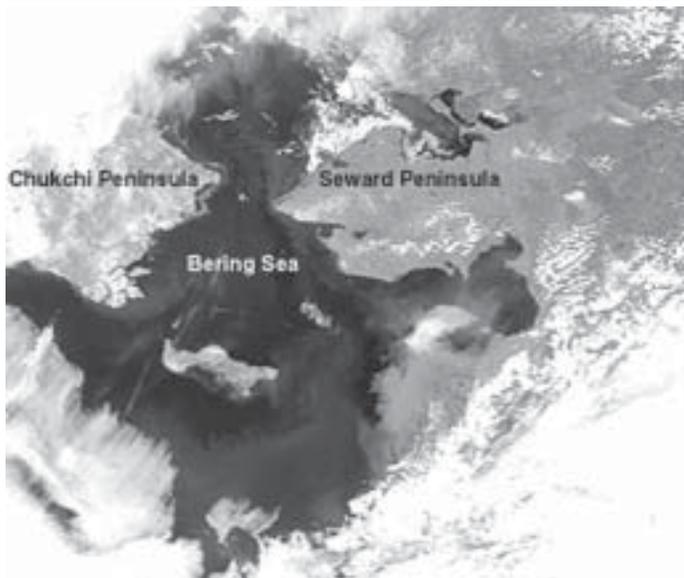
2. *The proposal for a Beringian Heritage International Park fell afoul of jurisdictional ambiguities and bureaucratic politics.* Although the proclamation of exclusive

economic zones (EEZs) during the 1970s made it possible in principle to consider creating protected areas encompassing marine as well as terrestrial systems, the two countries have little relevant experience to draw on in creating a TPA that would include onshore, offshore, and coastal elements. On the American side, the key player is the National Park Service, a venerable agency with a rather rigid management philosophy and without any significant experience in dealing with marine parks. On the Russian side, the situation is even more convoluted. In the absence of a lead agency with an explicit environmental mandate, the State Committee for Architecture and Town Planning took the lead in 1989. But this arrangement has not provided the initiative with an aura of legitimacy in Moscow, much less among the residents of the Chukotka Peninsula. More generally, any effort to expand the initiative to incorporate the idea of a Bering Sea ecoregion would require active cooperation among a number of established agencies on both sides. These agencies are well known for their efforts to protect their turf and budgets in the hurly-burly of bureaucratic politics, a stance that is hardly conducive to coordination at home much less with counterparts in another country.

3. *The initiative does not address systematically issues pertaining to people and parks, including the role of subsistence activities in the areas under consideration and the need to allow representatives of user groups to have a strong voice in management decisions.* Today, most of those seeking to establish TPAs acknowledge the importance of issues relating to people and parks. They understand the need to allow stakeholders to play a role in management practices, and there is much talk about the usefulness of comanagement arrangements, if only to



*Beringina Heritage Park Logo
Courtesy National Park Service*



Satellite Image of Bering Sea Area Courtesy the SeaWiFS Project, NASA/Goddard Space Flight Center and ORBIMAGE

increase levels of compliance among those who reside in or around protected areas. Even so, these arrangements often sound a lot better in principle than they turn out to be in practice. Those advocating the creation a Beringian Heritage International Park have exhibited a striking level of interest in the protection of cultural resources as well as natural resources. But it is one thing to take steps to preserve the cultural heritage of a region; it is another to provide meaningful opportunities for current users to have a voice in the management of protected areas. The proposal to create an international park does not have much to say about the concerns of current users.

4. *The proposal does not tackle issues pertaining to the rights of indigenous or Native peoples.* On the Alaska side, land managers may have assumed in 1989 that this problem was no longer relevant in the aftermath of the passage and implementation of the 1971 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA). But as the deepening conflicts of the 1990s over issues of subsistence harvesting and tribal sovereignty have made clear, any such assumption was woefully premature. On the Russian side, by contrast, the proposal to create an international park played some role in putting the issue of Native claims on the agenda. Whereas it was possible to avoid such issues so long as no major land use decisions were in the offing, the proposal to create a park brought these issues into focus. As a result, the proposal has evoked considerable skepticism and even opposition on the part of Native leaders in both countries.

5. *The planners have not dealt adequately with some key potential side effects of creating a Beringian Heritage International Park.* Understandably, advocates of the park have focused on the positive results expected to flow from the establishment of a transboundary protected area. But they have failed to reckon with sensitivities, especially on the Russian side, about unintended byproducts of this action. The principal concern here is that the designation of some space as a protected area could be interpreted by developers to mean that resources located outside the protected area would then become fair game for development. Under the circumstances, critics have been able to make a plausible case that the establishment of a protected area would have the paradoxical consequence of spurring efforts to exploit the natural resources of the Bering Sea ecoregion as a whole.

6. *Political turmoil and transformation in the Soviet Union/Russian Federation have derailed the proposal.* The work of the planning team took place during the waning days of the Soviet Union; its efforts were eclipsed by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the Russian Federation. Russian authorities are no less interested in the creation of a Beringian Heritage International Park than their Soviet predecessors. But the Russian Federation soon found itself struggling with the crises caused by economic decline and facing a progressive erosion of the authority of the central government in the more remote parts of the country. The scientific establishment, a major source of environmental initia-

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tives, fell on hard times, and nongovernmental environmental organizations became preoccupied with issues like the impacts of radioactive contamination. None of this suggests the emergence of hostility toward the proposed international park on the part of either governmental or nongovernmental actors in Russia. But it is easy to understand why the idea of establishing a Beringian Heritage International Park simply fell off the active policy agenda during this period of turmoil and transformation.

What does this story tell us of a general nature about the currently fashionable idea of creating TPAs? It seems clear that creating a TPA that makes a difference on the ground or water is easier said than done.

But this case also suggests three specific conclusions. There is little likelihood today that such initiatives can succeed and make a difference unless they encompass ecoregions and incorporate the principles of ecosystems management. Similarly, proposals for new TPAs are unlikely to succeed unless their proponents are sensitive to the issues of people and parks and make credible efforts to provide stakeholders with meaningful opportunities to participate in management practices. Getting the timing right is also essential. Windows of opportunity that open up from time to time often shut rapidly as the economic and political circumstances of participating countries change. There is much to be said, therefore, for being prepared to move quickly when an opportunity presents itself. Are these conclusions pessimistic with regard to the future prospects for TPAs? Not necessarily. But they do make it clear that progress in this realm is by no means assured and that success will go to those who are able to combine a sophisticated grasp of the principles of ecosystem management, a credible sensitivity to the concerns of local stakeholders, and a capacity to seize windows of opportunity that occasionally emerge in the policy process.

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CPR FORUM RESPONSE

How Representative is the Beringian Case?

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Reading Young's observations about the factors that have stalled the planned Beringian Heritage International Park made me turn to the pioneering work of Dorothy Zbicz, who has surveyed all of the transboundary protected areas on the planet to find out what promotes and impedes collaborative management (that is 136 natural protected areas straddling 112 international boundaries

and involving 176 pairs of governments). Thus Zbicz's observations concern medians and dominant patterns, and Young's observations would be similar to hers only if Beringia were typical of transfrontier protected areas, not if Beringia were itself unusual. This extreme difference in sample size ($n = 1$ versus $n = \text{all } 147$ of the 176 dyads that responded to Zbicz's survey) may seem major, but even more important is the fact that Zbicz studied protected areas that have

already been negotiated into joint existence while Young is looking at a proposal that has not yet been implemented. There may be little similarity between what it takes to create a new park and what it takes to generate day-to-day cooperative management where cooperation was already high enough to create the park in the first place.

Moreover, creation and management are not the same, as revolutions illustrate the skills and circumstances that make a revolution are actually damaging for running a smooth operation in the newly created government and achieving the good performance that supporters of the revolution wanted.

Sure enough, two of the most important factors that Zbicz identifies are irrelevant to a park that does not yet exist, particularly (a) the communication and contact that is desirable between park personnel of the two nations involved and (b) staff experience and financial resources available. But there are similarities in other findings, particularly the identification of ideas and people as critical factors. Zbicz and Young both identify shared values and a commitment to management at the ecosystem level as having critical importance. The Beringia proposal was for land only rather than the unified land-marine ecosystem



Beringian Park Landscape

Photo Courtesy US National Park Service

CPR FORUM RESPONSE

Response to Oran Young

Joseph J. Bial

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Transboundary protection areas, like the proposed Beringian Heritage International Park (BHIP) discussed in Professor Young's commentary, are plagued by many of the same problems that social and economic scientists have been documenting in other common property settings for decades. At first glance, it might seem that the collective effort in the instance of the BHIP would require no more than a symbolic handshake. After all, there are only two countries involved and a stretch of land and water that would seem to many to be inhospitable. But if collective bargaining theory has taught us anything, it is that the private interests of the few can be a formidable barrier to success for even the most reasonable of agreements.

The first step in gauging the likely success or failure of international negotiations has to be an examination of the internal politics of the bargaining countries. Many environmental agreements, including the 1980s' Law of the Sea and the current efforts to address global warming under the Kyoto Protocol, become so bogged down in internal constituency battles that the country-to-country level of bargaining is rendered moot. Professor Young indicates the presence of some of these internal battles in his discussion of bureaucratic politics. On the American side he cites the National Park Service (NPS), but others exist, with most being well-represented in national politics. For instance, there is little doubt that U.S. mining interests (including, in particular, the Alaska Miners Association) have the ear of many Beltway politicians, and it is of no small mention that miners have historically been strongly opposed to the policies of the NPS. Oil concerns will also play a role given their strong presence in the region and the tantalizing prospect of remaining oil fields on both sides of the Bering Strait. Alaskan Natives far from being excited about the prospect of reconnecting with descendants on the Chukchi Peninsula have lobbied congressional representatives to oppose the BHIP. Surely this is due in part to the fact that Native groups, as well as research institutions like the University of Alaska, have been beneficiaries of federal spending connected with park activities in Alaska. The possibility of expansion beyond Alaska could dilute funding and would be a threat to their own private interests.

and did not display the seriousness about biodiversity and ecosystem-level management that Zbicz found to be vital.

Young and Zbicz both found people of various sorts to have critical importance, but not the same people. Young thought that the failure of the Beringian park planners to consider the indigenous people in the park was a critical weakness. Zbicz found that leadership by critical individuals and that involvement of NGOs could be very important, but that the presence of indigenous peoples in a transfrontier park did not seem to affect levels of cooperation in joint management, quite possibly because indigenous peoples are usually powerless. However, it may be that when indigenous peoples are mobilized, they affect both park design and park management. In Beringia we have a severe imbalance: Inuit on the Russian side are only barely beginning to mobilize, whereas the indigenous peoples on the American side are relatively organized and experienced because of their long battles in Alaskan politics, and they will insist on being considered in park plans. Until both groups are equally vociferous, Russian and American park planners will be offering mismatched and possibly incompatible proposals for a unified park.

A final thought concerns the oddity of the Beringian situation: In all of the 147 pairs of nations involved in Zbicz's study of joint management, the two (adjoining) nations had relatively similar economic resources — both developed or both developing nations. However, the United States and Russia "adjoin" each other only because of the Seward purchase of Alaska, they have long experience as rival superpowers, that shared dominance masks the substantial differences in their levels of economic development, and today Russia is embroiled in a very distracting and painful process of political and economic reconstruction, as Young noted. Thus this pairing has got to be the most peculiar dyad in the transfrontier park business. It could not appear in Zbicz's study because Beringia is still only a plan, not a reality, but its presence in that study might have tweaked results somewhat. To be sure, Russia and the United States do have a track record of success in collaborative but narrowly focused environmental efforts with each other and others — decades of sustainable harvesting of fur seals along with Japan and Canada/Britain, and the protection of the polar bear along with Norway, Canada, and Denmark/Greenland. But even this experience is no guarantee of being able to graduate to ecosystem thinking to create a transfrontier park that incorporates land, water, and people alike.

Dorothy C. Zbicz, 1999. The "Nature" of Transboundary Cooperation. *Environment* (41:3, April 1999), 15-16.

Dorothy C. Zbicz, 1999. Transboundary Cooperation in Conservation: A Global Survey of Factors Influencing Cooperation Between Internationally Adjoining Protected Areas. Ph.D. Dissertation, Nicholas School of the Environment, Duke University.

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In Russia, the proposed international park seems to finally be gathering support, due in part to a change in the governing body of Chukotka (the Russian territory where the proposed BHIP would be located).

Chukotka's new governor favors the BHIP because it could bring tourism and much-needed development to the territory. In fact, Russia's Ministry of Natural Resources has stated its intention to provide funding in 2003 for management of the proposed park. This prospect of support is a promising development, but what does it mean in broader negotiations given the internal bureaucratic politics in the U.S.? To answer this question, the analysis must go beyond the level of internal politics and try to determine the extent of the benefits from agreement. As Professor Young points out, however, current changes in the Beringian ecoregion are poorly understood. And the depletion of fish stocks, the decline of sea populations, and the impacts of climate change are both a national and international problem, so even an agreement mimicking sole ownership of the common property by a single country not a realistic alternative, but a useful mental exercise would not necessarily improve upon the coordinated effort of the currently proposed BHIP. With uncertain benefits on the environmental and ecological margins, we are left examining potential gains from increased tourism and coordinated research. As noted above, however, these are exactly the types of activities most likely to lead to strong opposition of the BHIP among U.S. constituencies currently benefiting from the status quo.

A related concern is that the proposals to expand the park, perhaps to cover an ever-increasing ecoregion, could further frustrate coordination problems by introducing new constituencies and new issues to address. We have learned from examination of various common pool and collective action settings that those that succeed have simple, clear objectives. It could be that the BHIP is most feasible if it is made less expansive rather than more. In the final analysis, the observed delays and lack of momentum surrounding the proposed BHIP may be less of an international negotiating problem and more of the stubborn, age-old incentive problems associated with common property and national politics.

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CPR FORUM RESPONSE

Transboundary Resources, Transboundary Management or Both? Thoughts from the Mekong Basin

Wolf D. Hartmann

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The Mekong Basin is one of thirteen international basins shared by five or more countries. The River runs through six countries, from China to Myanmar and Lao PDR, and on to Thailand and Cambodia and finally to Viet Nam, where it discharges into the South China Sea. Water constitutes a significant challenge for international cooperation in the management of transboundary resources, and it is probably a more typical case for such cooperative arrangements than actual or planned transboundary protected areas as the Beringian Heritage International Park. In fact, about two-thirds of the world's 200 or so international river basins have some form of international or transboundary management regime implemented through and monitored by a basin commission. This is not different in the Mekong where such a management regime has existed since 1957. However, unlike Beringia, where the aim of transboundary cooperation is to address environmental issues through the creation of protected areas, the Mekong transboundary cooperation had and still has at its heart the development and utilization of water resources.

Although the situations are therefore quite different, looking at some of the factors mentioned by Oren Young, not so unexpectedly a number of interesting parallels and similarities come to mind which the two cases, Beringia and Mekong, have in common.

Transboundary policies change over time. The Mekong regime has developed over three distinct periods, each with its own constitutional framework, water management objectives, geopolitical realities and international assistance. The Mekong Committee (MC) era (1957-1975) of planning for integrated (jointly controlled) water management on the Mekong mainstream and major tributaries was strongly influenced by the US and the UN and aimed at regional development which would bring "peaceful relations" to the basin along the lines envisaged by the West. The Interim Mekong Committee (IMC) era (1976-1995) reflected a fundamental shift in regional geopolitics as a result of the end of the 2nd Indochina War, with more restrictive policies and largely independent water resource development by individual member

countries. The IMC's main function became to procure international assistance for water projects in Thailand, Lao PDR and Viet Nam. This made the establishment of a functional regional system for water allocation necessary, which led to the Mekong Agreement and the creation of the Mekong River Commission (MRC) in 1995, now assisted by a variety of foreign donors. In contrast to the policies of MC and IMC, the Mekong Agreement focuses on procedures and principles for cooperation rather than control of water uses and resource development by regional partners. Important instruments to this end are the formulation of rules and plans for water utilization (WUP) and basin development (BDP), which aim at providing a basin-wide framework expected to help minimizing future water conflicts and maintaining aquatic ecology of the entire Mekong region.

Cooperation in transboundary management is easier on some issues and levels than others. The ecological concerns that have gained attention under MRC are reflected in a number of projects and programs that address environmental and natural resource issues, including some related to the basin's other transboundary resource, its fish and fisheries. Since 1995, the MRC is implementing a comprehensive Fisheries Program (MRC/FIP) involving research and management directed at the basin's fisheries. These fisheries are among the most diverse and productive in the world and are an important guarantor of the basin population's food security. In doing so, The FIP addresses issues of transboundary, i.e. migratory, fish stocks as well as issues emanating from transboundary experiences, that is, experiences common to the four riparian countries, of water resources development and the provision of related infrastructure. A case in point is the development and management of reservoir fisheries, to which one of The FIP's components is dedicated. In June 2000 a Technical Advisory Body for Fisheries Management (TAB) was formed by representatives of the four national fisheries line agencies of the Lower Mekong Basin, as a step towards joint fisheries management. This may serve as an example for the much more controversial undertaking of transboundary water management to be established in the future. Among the tasks so far carried out by The FIP at the request of The TAB were studies related to the management of migratory species and habitats critical to their maintenance, such as deep pools



*Lao Fisheries Officer learning from a Mekong Fisher
courtesy Doug Wilson*

and channels in the Mekong River. However, while discussions at high level and round tables are progressing well, results from these still have to be converted into management policies and action.

No transboundary involvement of stakeholders in management yet. Incidentally, the TAB is also interested in fisheries co-management. This, it appears, is mainly due to transboundary expectations of improved rule compliance and costs savings once users are involved in the management of "their" resources. A request was made to The FIP for a regional training course in co-management of inland fisheries, which is now being implemented as a continuous and sustained training program over a period of three years. Unfortunately no request was made (so far) to develop an idea for

regional co-management of fisheries. Actual fisheries management, and more so, co-management, is still considered a local affair by government departments concerned, despite the fact that local management and users are impacted by transboundary effects from up- and downstream fisheries and water development, allocation and use, which are often beyond individual communities' geographical, organizational

and political sphere of influence. Though there might be a need and scope for transboundary co-management, users, too, are mainly active and communicate on local level only. In at least two of the member countries, empowerment of users to address local issues is still an aim, let alone national or transboundary ones.

So what do Beringia and the Mekong show us? More than environmental or even economic issues, changing regional geopolitics are often the primary force shaping transboundary management regimes. More contentious issues, such as questions of water allocation between or water development plans and actions by individual member countries in the Mekong case, take a long time to be resolved through transboundary cooperative mechanisms, even and particularly when these are the only available forms. Bureaucratic traditions and jurisdictions may neutralize understandings arrived at higher, technical levels. And finally transboundary issues are often treated as a prerogative of Governments, which frequently relegate sharing of decision-making in resource management to supposedly less important "local" questions.

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CPR FORUM RESPONSE

Transboundary Environmental Governance in Mainland Southeast Asia

Nathan Badenoch and Frances Seymour

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Professor Young draws three conclusions from his analysis of the fate of a plan to create a Beringian Heritage International Park. For transboundary cooperation efforts in environmental management to be successful, he suggests, they must incorporate principles of ecosystem management, make credible efforts toward meaningful participation by local stakeholders, and take advantage of short-term economic and political opportunities.

The transboundary environmental governance challenges of Mainland Southeast Asia provide a rich set of examples for testing Professor Young's conclusions on a broader scale. The Mekong River has come to symbolize many of the transborder environment-development dilemmas of the Mainland Southeast Asia region. The Mekong is indeed a vital resource, whether for subsistence farmers and fishermen or national development agendas. But the Mekong is only one of several international river basins in the region, defined to include Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, Burma, Vietnam, and the province of Yunnan, China.

Furthermore, management of water and watersheds is but one of several transboundary environmental challenges facing the region. Concentrations of biological diversity are found in remote forested areas spanning the borders of Vietnam, Laos, Vietnam, and China. The region's forests also support a brisk transboundary trade in timber and non-timber forest products. Not least, the social and environmental impacts of transboundary infrastructure development projects including roads, dams, and power grids pose a new generation of imperatives for regional cooperation.

Experience in Mainland Southeast Asia clearly supports the need for an ecosystem approach to environmental governance. Such an approach requires institutions that are appropriately scaled to the natural resources management problem at hand. It is often pointed out that the Mekong River Commission is constrained by its limited membership, which does not include China, even though China controls

21 percent of the basin's watershed area and contributes 16 percent of the river's water flows. At the same time, many transboundary issues are most appropriately handled by the two adjacent provinces on either side of an international border. Whether the issue is fire control or coordination of water releases from dams, over-reliance on national or regional initiatives can result in conflicting priorities and slow, inappropriate interventions. Decentralization policies currently being implemented by several governments in the region could strengthen the basis for such local transboundary cooperation.

An ecosystem approach also requires that environmental sustainability objectives be integrated into mainstream economic decision-making. However, the empirical basis of information and analysis regarding the transboundary



Village on the Mekong courtesy Doug Wilson

impacts of specific project or policy interventions is vastly insufficient in the region. Attitudes and practices of information-sharing within and between agencies and countries, coupled with low public awareness of the issues, have not yet reached a level sufficient to facilitate informed dialog among and between the public and policy-makers. Further, environmental impact assessment procedures are not yet consistently conducted

“early, integrated, and always”. A vibrant regional research community could play a larger role in supplying high-quality, timely information and analysis to decision-makers, affected communities, and other representatives of society, complementing the comparatively slow-pace of inter-governmental processes. Using new communication technologies, dialogue at the regional level can be advanced regardless of progress on political fronts.

Experience in the Mainland Southeast Asia also strongly supports the need for stakeholder participation in regional environmental governance. A number of stakeholder groups may be systematically under-represented in environmental decision-making. In the case of the Mekong Delta, the extreme dependence of farmers and fishermen on the hydrological regime is not adequately represented by provincial, national, or regional authorities. Such authorities lack the appropriate combination of capacity and incentives to address the local problems of flooding and salinity, which are manifestations of broader, ecosystem-level disturbances. In Thailand, women's issues are not making their way into the considerations underpinning the formation of sub-national river basin committees. The demonstrations by affected communities at the 2000 Asian Development Bank

Annual Meeting in Chiang Mai suggest that there are serious gaps in the representation of ethnic minorities in development decision-making at the regional and national scale.

Governments in the region have voiced commitment to implementing principles of public involvement in decision-making related to projects with environmental impacts, and regional institutions ranging from the Mekong River Commission to the Asian Development Bank have committed to increased transparency and consultation. However, translating these commitments into meaningful participation has been constrained by a variety of factors. Constraints include the confusion of “public involvement” with “NGO involvement”, questions on the part of governments about the legitimacy of NGOs, and ambivalence about the use of donor conditionality to promote improved governance practices.

Some stakeholders in the region are open to considering the adaptation of models from other regions to improve representation and participation in regional environmental governance. For example, the multi-stakeholder process approach pioneered by the World Commission on Dams at the global level provides one promising avenue for gathering a range of interests around the same table to seek common ground on controversial issues. From Europe, the Aarhus Convention offers a structure for ensuring public access to information, decision-making, and justice in environmental matters both within and across national boundaries.

With respect to Young’s emphasis on seizing “windows of opportunity” to advance transboundary cooperation, experience in Mainland Southeast Asia at the regional scale suggests a longer-term process as regional institutions and governance norms slowly evolve. The Mekong River Commission itself survived years of regional conflict, and since receiving a renewed mandate in 1995, has gradually expanded beyond its former closed, technocratic approach to embrace new roles of information-sharing and conflict mediation. The “ASEAN Plus 3” process, which involves China in regional discussions, is another step toward solidifying a Greater Mekong Sub-region identity that includes southern China. Even a shock as significant as the Asian Financial Crisis merely accelerated trends toward increased political openness and regional cooperation that were already underway.

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Note: these insights were drawn from a collaborative process of research and dialogue on Mekong Regional Environmental Governance (MREG) that was facilitated by the World Resources Institute over 18 months ending in June 2001. The objective was to advance the discussion of regional environmental governance by convening broad groups of researchers and practitioners. The MREG group included academics, activists, NGO researchers, and officials from international organizations. For more information see <http://www.wri.org/repai>

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Is President Bush Right?

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Earlier this year, the Bush administration made an important announcement: the United States would not ratify the Kyoto protocol on Climate Change. The Kyoto protocol was declared dead before birth. To give a flair of legitimacy to his rejection of the protocol Bush presents a set of arguments or shortcomings in the management of climate change. Bush’s argument has some striking similarities to the arguments highlighted in Young’s article. Bush and Young seem to agree on some important factors that impede the progress, or explain the failure, of environmental management. Bush uses problems similar to those highlighted in Young’s article to legitimise his rejection of the protocol. In doing so he effectively escapes dealing with them. What Bush chooses to overlook is that ratifying an agreement can, in itself, contribute to resolving these problems. The power of projected elite consensus is all too often underestimated. It is easy to get carried away by compelling arguments - so easy that these arguments end up being used to block potentially powerful ways to resolve the problems of climate change management.

Young argues that there are three general reasons for failure in the management of transboundary protected areas. They are a failure to encompass a relevant ecoregion and incorporate the principles of ecosystem management, a lack of participation of stakeholders and bad timing. Bush rejects the Kyoto protocol for three similar reasons. First, it does not encompass a relevant eco region. Climate change is a global problem, yet the Kyoto protocol will only be binding for developed countries. Bush argues that an agreement that is only binding for developed countries is inadequate, since it will only lead to anarchical and uncontrolled burning of fossil fuels in the developing world. Second, stakeholders have not expressed enough interest in participating in the reduction of emissions, which is easy to understand, Bush would argue, in light of the significant scientific uncertainties that surrounds the issue of climate change. The third reason is bad economic timing.

Bush’s way of using these arguments is credible. Effective climate cooperation requires both a broad inclusion of countries and wide participation, and it can successfully be argued that none of these criteria

are fully met in climate cooperation today. The “bad political and economic timing right now” argument is also always easily bought by many powerful stakeholders, regardless of the country’s relative wealth or relative stability.

What makes Bush’s way of dealing with these problems, i.e. to let them motivate the complete rejection of the protocol, effective is that it contributes to the closing of a potentially powerful way to solve these problems: the projection of elite consensus. The ratification of an international agreement may in itself contribute to the solution to these problems. The projection of elite consensus can both widen the inclusion of countries and increase participation. If the developed world, that is historically and currently responsible for the largest per capita emissions, do not take this issue seriously, the developing countries will likely not follow suit. Projected elite consensus can also spur participation. Participation is dependent both on trust in uncertain, abstract and technical information, and beliefs that an uninterested elite will not kill local efforts to deal with the problem.

A study that I just recently conducted in Sweden and Tanzania shows that expert consensus can facilitate international cooperation. The dissemination of consensual knowledge coordinates public expectations, increases trust in relevant agencies and, most importantly, encourages willingness to participate in taking action. This is achieved in spite of the radically different implications climate change has in these two countries, and in spite of differences in such things as values and risk perception. Economic, political and cultural differences can influence both the perception of new information on climate change and the conclusions drawn from it, i.e. preferred political outcomes. Yet the projection of expert consensus can both increase participation and encourage a wider inclusion of countries. The projection of expert consensus becomes more difficult when the political elite do not sanction it.

Failure in elite agreement is likely to have serious consequences both for global involvement and wide participation. Politicians use the issues Young highlights in his article to bury their heads in the sand. A more pro-active approach might solve them.

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From the President

IASCP 2000 Meeting Venue

Susan Hanna

Some IASCP members have expressed concern about the Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe location of the 9th Biennial IASCP Conference to be held June 17-21, 2002. These concerns center on two issues related to political instability in Zimbabwe: 1) the security of conference participants and 2) the notion that holding the conference in Zimbabwe is an expression of support for the current government.

The Executive Council of the IASCP has re-evaluated the Zimbabwe location and has concluded *that if conditions remain as they are there is no compelling reason to change the conference venue.*

Security of conference

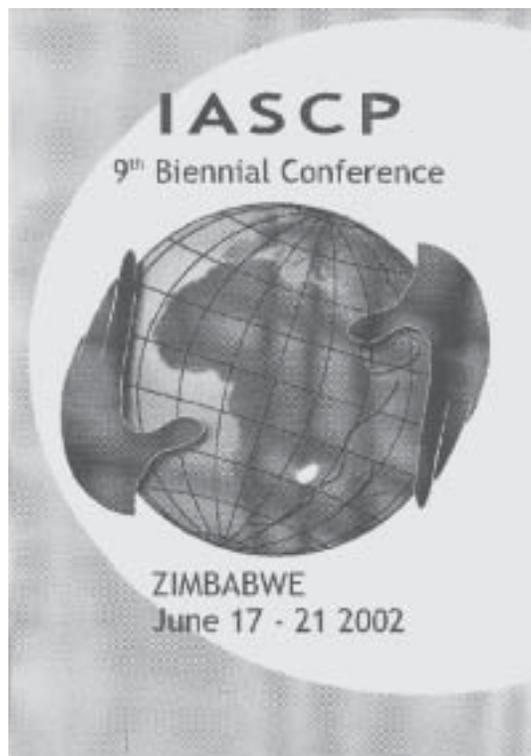
participants: after extensive consultation and discussion, the Council finds no evidence that the security of conference participants is at risk at the conference site. Victoria Falls is nearly 1000 kilometres from Harare and is not one of the areas of Zimbabwe experiencing instability. Victoria Falls has its own airport with direct flights to Johannesburg and other international destinations. Further, elections scheduled for March 2002 should be well over by June. The Council will continue to monitor the situation in Zimbabwe. Contingency plans are in place to move the meeting to another venue should conditions change and issues of safety arise.

Expression of support for the current government: the Council maintains its earlier position that a decision to hold a meeting in a country should not be construed as support for particular government policies. The conference location may, however, be construed as an expression of support for the conference sponsor – the Centre for Applied Social Sciences (CASS) at the University of Zimbabwe – and, by extension, other civil society organizations in Zimbabwe.

The Council encourages IASCP members to submit abstracts and make plans to attend the Victoria Falls meeting. Making this meeting a success will create both symbolic and practical support for building institutions of community and civil society in Southern Africa.

The 9th Biennial Conference of the IASCP
17 – 21 June 2002 in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe.
Conference Theme: ‘The Commons in an Age of Globalisation’

Globalisation is a pervasive characteristic of the new millennium and highly topical in terms of the attention now being given it in the social and ecological sciences. It is seen as the latest stage of a process where technological, economic, ecological, cultural and military trends, traditionally observable on a geographically limited scale and scope, are extended to the entire globe, leading to the emergence of new players with new and different power relationships. For the ‘developing world’, the asymmetrical power dimensions of these relationships are of particular relevance, not only in terms of the cultural and conceptual hegemony associated with globalisation.



The conference theme should be addressed from a broader perspective, not restricted to natural resources management, but to include issues of governance, economic systems and hidden values, tourism and global ideology. The central concepts of cultural diversity, marginalisation, and globalisation deserve attention in this global debate. There are issues of diversity and uniformity, scale issues and nested hierarchies that globalisation as a concept implies which ought to be addressed. Under globalisation, whose interest does the state serve and what are the related implications on traditional resource and intellectual property rights? A major challenge is the use of practical cases that offer practical solutions to the global debate on globalisation and the commons.

Sub-themes

1. Globalisation, Governance and the Commons
2. Globalisation, Culture and the Commons
3. “Protected Areas” in Constituting the Commons
4. Land/Water and Resource Tenure and the Commons in an Era of Globalisation.
5. New Analytic Tools for Common Property Resource Management
6. Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Integrity of Commons and Emerging Regimes of Intellectual Property Rights in a Globalising World.
7. Trans-boundary Natural Resource Management and the Commons

Detailed information on the theme and sub-themes can be accessed on the IASCP website; <http://www.indiana.edu/~iascp/2002.html>, while hard copies of the same can be requested from:

The Secretariat, IASCP/ CASS

5 Aberdeen Road, P.O Box A1333, Avondale,

Harare, Zimbabwe.

Telephone: 263-4-303 080/15

Fax: 263-4-307 720

E-mail: iascp@cass.org.zw.

IASCP West African Regional Meeting

In September 2001 a meeting to expand IASCP activities regionalization in West Africa took place in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. It was directed by B.A. Boubacar and Hubert Ouedraogo with contributions from Michelle Curtain, Executive Director of IASCP, Owen Lynch, IASCP Councillor and Patrick Mamimine of CASS. The participants came mainly from, Mali, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mauritania, and Niger. The meeting objectives were: to exchange ideas about thematic presentations; to develop a West African regional strategy and to set up coordination supported by a committee composed by different participants for the followup and further development of IASCP bases.

The main product of the meeting were proposals of short term activities, information dissemination, information gathering about local network, bibliographical references from French speaking countries, and encouragement of young African researches to submit presentation to the 2002 conference. For further information please contact B.A. Boubacar BA, who is helping to coordinate IASCP activities in West Africa, at eveil@afribone.net.ml

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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For membership, dues, back issues, and missing copies Michelle Curtain, P.O. Box 2355 Gary, IN 46409 USA Tel: 01-219-980-1433 Fax:: 01-219-980-2801 iascp@indiana.edu

For questions about IASCP papers and research, contact Charlotte Hess, Information Officer, IASCP, 513 N. Park, Bloomington, IN 47408 USA iascp@indiana.edu Tel: 01-812-855-9636 Fax:: 01-812-855-3150

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The IASCP maintains a simple list serve email facility for passing on announcements. This is a way to send a message to many people at one time through a single email address that the people have signed up for. Users can subscribe (or unsubscribe) by sending a message to mailserv@aesop.rutgers.edu. In the body of the message they should type: *subscribe commons*. Those wishing to send announcements to the subscribers should send the message to commons@aesop.rutgers.edu. Be sure and avoid sending subscribe and unsubscribe messages to the whole list by sending them to commons@aesop instead of mailserve@aesop.

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