

Taking Management Costs Seriously: a North American Great Lakes Case

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The Great Lakes of North America constitute a unique chain of sweetwater seas which reflect many of the management problems and issues found in enclosed coastal marine seas. An effort to implement a Remedial Action Plan (RAP) to restore beneficial uses of water resources in Green Bay, Wisconsin (on the northeastern shore of Lake Michigan) is the focus of this case. More specifically, this paper reviews a unique local effort to guide continuing ecosystem restoration in Green Bay -- the Analysis Team of North East Wisconsin Waters for Tomorrow (NEWWT).

NEWWT is a nonprofit organization, created by concerned local citizens to advocate cost-effectiveness in water resources planning. This local concern for costs developed out of the realization that: (1) local sources will increasingly be relied upon to fund environmental programs; and (2) costs of achieving environmental goals will rise in the future, due to population and economic growth. Thus, NEWWT was formed to address the painful reality that environmental protection is, from fundamental ecological as well as social and political economic necessity, the responsibility of local citizens.

In the summer of 1992, the NEWWT Board of Directors hired an interdisciplinary analysis team to determine the least cost management strategy to achieve water resources objectives in lower Green Bay and the Fox-Wolf watershed emptying into it. Preliminary results, presented in July, 1993, suggest that: (1) significant alterations of land use practices in selected areas of the watershed will be necessary to achieve water quality objectives at least cost; (2) future demand for recreation will outstrip the capacity of the resource to accommodate it, necessitating more intensive management of recreation; and (3) meeting habitat objectives will require additional measures to protect wetlands on private land vulnerable to development.

Many of the lessons learned by the Analysis Team relate to institutional and methodological aspects of carrying out a cost-effectiveness study over a large watershed area. Such issues include not only the structure of the Team and its operation, but also the relationship of the Team with ongoing management activity being carried out by various agencies and different levels of government. Careful consideration of these issues are crucial for the results to affect policy.

In the face of the fiscal and moral collapse of central government and its resources and authority around the world it is clear that waiting for central funding to support the rather weak existing mandates is a plan for maintaining the status quo. The RAP and NEWWT reflect North Eastern Wisconsin's aggressive search for more. The overall purpose of this paper is not only to explain the utility of NEWWT, but to increase the efficacy of similar efforts elsewhere.