

B14 - Planning & Communicating Adaptive Management in the Face of Climate Change

Presentation title: Cross-jurisdictional institutions and adaptability of a Fraser River flood management regime

Presenter:

Erica Crawford Boettcher - University of British Columbia / Environment Canada

Speaker Abstract

In the spring of 2007, residents all along the Fraser River Basin in British Columbia, Canada were placed on alert as officials and community members prepared for potentially catastrophic flooding. Some thirty-three million dollars in funding was released by the province and directed towards last-minute fortifications of structural flood protection measures, while communities readied themselves to battle the rising waters. In the end potential disaster was averted for most areas in the basin due to a fortunate change of weather, but dramatic images from the flooded Skeena Valley and the frantic preparations undertaken by all communities at risk brought a great deal of attention to issues of flood hazard mitigation and planning in the near- and long-term. Changes to streamflow and flood patterns are among the expected changes associated with climate change, at the same time that population, infrastructure and economic activity continue to increase in floodplain areas. This challenge is emerging in B.C. just as significant shifts in the relationships between First Nations and non-First Nations governments and institutions are taking place. These dynamics raise important questions about the capacity of existing environmental management regimes to adapt to an uncertain and changing set of conditions. This study poses the question: how does coordination across governments influence adaptability of a flood management regime in the Fraser Valley? I take a case study approach, looking at the City of Chilliwack and neighbouring Sto:lo First Nation communities. These communities must contend with, and collaborate on, many of the same issues in managing the flood threat but differ importantly in their institutional arrangements (ie: the rules, norms and values that structure decision-making processes across governments). Based on the developing research on resilience and adaptability, a description of ideal characteristics for an adaptable flood management regime will be presented. The case study, based largely on interviews with practitioners and decision-makers about their experience during the 2007 freshet, will be used to outline the cross-jurisdictional institutional arrangements affecting flood management in this area. The significance of these arrangements for adaptability of the flood management regime will be discussed, with relevance for the many communities in B.C. that have to manage flood risks.

Speaker Biography

Erica Crawford Boettcher is currently pursuing her Masters' degree in Planning, looking at interdisciplinary and intergovernmental challenges of climate change adaptation, with a focus on flood risk and resilience. She was a research assistant with the Adaptation and Impacts Research Division (AIRD), Environment Canada in 2007-2008, contributing to projects on climate change adaptation planning for communities. Her past research experience includes working with governments, First Nations and organizations on environmental issues in B.C., Ontario, Quebec and Panama.

Presentation # 2 title: Communicating in a Climate of Change: Lessons Learned from Successful BC Communities

Presenters:

Megan Shaw - McGill University

Alex Boston - HB Lanarc Consultants

Abstract

This conference session will focus on the importance of engaging communities and rethinking institutions to deal with climate change mitigation and adaptation. Two related presentations will offer land management professionals an invaluable set of lessons learned from engaging in processes of change

occurring in BC. First, a case study of flood management on the Fraser River will be used to outline cross-jurisdictional institutional arrangements. The significance of these arrangements for adaptability of the flood management regime will be discussed, with relevance for the many communities in B.C. that have to manage flood risks. A second presentation will discuss examples of diverse BC communities that have successfully engaged citizens and elected officials to advance action on climate change and sustainability. A moderated discussion on engaging communities and rethinking institutions for climate change closes the session. This will strengthen the learning experience of participants and allow professionals from diverse backgrounds to share their challenges and successes and contribute to a greater understanding of leading practices for taking collective action on climate change.

SUMMARY FOR PART 2 OF SESSION Communities in BC are currently facing a sea change in land use patterns which will affect many aspects of daily life. Traditional approaches to land use planning are no longer acceptable; communities across the province need to adapt. This change is occurring both because of increased legislation at the provincial level that forces individuals, industry and local governments to take action on climate change, and also because of the simple reality of ever increasing energy costs. Professionals working with land use issues also need to adapt to this new reality. However, the planning principles being put forward by professionals are often not well received on the ground and are met with resistance from developers, councilors and citizens. This is despite the commonly held belief among land management professionals that moving towards compact, complete communities will improve the quality of life socially, economically and environmentally in BC. Several communities have already taken action on climate change and sustainability and addressed the initial opposition from their communities, councils and developers. How can we learn from these successes around the province? This presentation will review some of the best practices in community engagement on planning for climate change and explore some examples of BC communities that are successfully implementing strategies to take action on climate change and move toward more sustainable development.

Speaker Biography

Megan is currently completing a Master of Urban Planning at McGill University, focusing on community engagement and sustainability. Having grown up in the sprawling suburbs of Nanaimo, she has a deep understanding of the need for change to the dominant principles of land management as well as the importance of engaging citizens and decision makers in all corners of the province about change. During her internship with HB Lanarc Consulting, she facilitated the development of a web-site to assist local governments to reach their goals of creating more complete, compact communities and achieving carbon neutrality in their operations. Her experience working in communications at CMHC has enhanced her appreciation of the critical importance of communication in advancing a sustainability agenda and her passion for BC's unique communities motivates her to ensure the lessons learned from around the province are widely shared.

Alex Boston Before directing Climate Protection and Sustainable Energy with HB Lanarc, Alex Boston led climate and energy policy at the David Suzuki Foundation. He works with municipalities and developers to strengthen climate protection programs and policies, and senior governments to harness capacity towards these ends. He is currently leading engagement and research for the BC Government-UBCM Green Communities Committee, established to provide direction to the province and local governments on going carbon neutral and developing complete, compact communities. Alex worked with the US Green Building Council, US Conference of Mayors, Clinton Climate Initiative, City of Seattle and leading local governments across the US to develop strategic climate action guidance through the website GreenPlaybook.org. He has been an advisor to all 14 provincial government departments in establishing their internal GHG management strategies. He led the Canadian outreach and educational activity of the Great Lakes Climate Impacts initiative of the Union of Concerned Scientists. He was lead researcher for the Prime Minister's Advisory Committee on Cities and Communities and a British Council Scholar at Oxford's Environmental Change Institute where he earned his MSc. Alex's best practice knowledge across many jurisdictions is reinforced by an appreciation of best process. He combines strategic planning, meaningful engagement, governance know-how, technical knowledge, and innovative policy to design pragmatic, high-impact programs. He grew up in Chilliwack. When not working to protect the climate, Alex revels in its magnificence around the rainforested BC Coast where he lives.