

The Role of Collaborative Governance in Resolving Wicked Problems

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Outline

General:

- Importance of collaborative governance for solving “wicked problems”
- Focus on agriculture and water quality

Specific:

- What are “wicked problems”?
- Why collaborative governance?
 - Key factors
- Case Study
 - Measuring success

Wicked Problems

- “Wicked” problems are common in the environment field
 - No obvious, unique solution
 - Conflicting information
 - Complex, uncertain, ambiguous
 - No clear end point
 - Many conflicting interests
 - Risk of an adverse outcome
 - “Quasi-scientific”
- Traditional risk-based decision-making using normal science has been found to be inadequate
- Need to integrate science and local knowledge, and community values to create “vernacular knowledge”



What is Collaborative Governance?

- Governance consists of the processes society uses to make decisions about environmental resources
 - Traditional, rule-based command and control approaches are not well suited to finding solutions to wicked problems
 - Often includes stakeholder networks (e.g., government, public)
 - Different flavours – energy, environmental, water
- Governance has been evolving to include more forms
 - Market-based, self-regulation, collaboration
 - Centralized, decentralized
- Collaborative governance is suited for addressing wicked problems
 - Incorporates partnerships, and encourages (ideally) development of networks of involved/interested stakeholders
 - Robust collaborative governance process defined by six key characteristics...

Accountability and Legitimacy

- Process should address two types of related concerns:
 - Accountability to members of organizations involved who may not agree with outcomes
 - Accountability to individuals who are not affiliated with an involved organization
 - May be challenging to address all concerns, but it is important to acknowledge them to improve accountability
- Important to ensure the process is seen as legitimate by the broader community
 - Ignoring dissenting positions can reduce community support, and undermine implementation
 - May not be able to address concerns, but it is important to acknowledge them

Reciprocal Communication

- Involves a multi-way flow of information
 - Between scientists, government and community interests
- Important for incorporating societal values during the creation of vernacular knowledge
- Promotes understanding of different perspectives
 - Helps state and community better understand expert science
 - Helps scientists and state interests better understand local perspectives and values
 - Helps scientists and community better understand constraints on the state
- In this way, decision making process/participants can build understanding of different positions and concerns

Stakeholder Capacity

- Focuses on increasing ability of stakeholders to understand and discuss complex technical matters
- Increased capacity can result in two outcomes:
 - Capacity for action
 - Capacity for self-determination
- Both are a normal and necessary part of collaborative decision-making
- The latter can be difficult, particularly where it takes process in an unanticipated direction
- Can also result in alternative approaches that can be more successful and more effective

Relationships

- Serves two functions:
 - Promotes collaboration between participants during process
 - Supports dissemination of information to community
- Strong relationships help:
 - Build connectedness, equity, shared values, trust
 - Reinforce accountability, legitimacy, reciprocity
- Central for encouraging collaborative thinking that is necessary for making difficult decisions
- May lay groundwork for future opportunities for collaboration

Complementary Initiatives

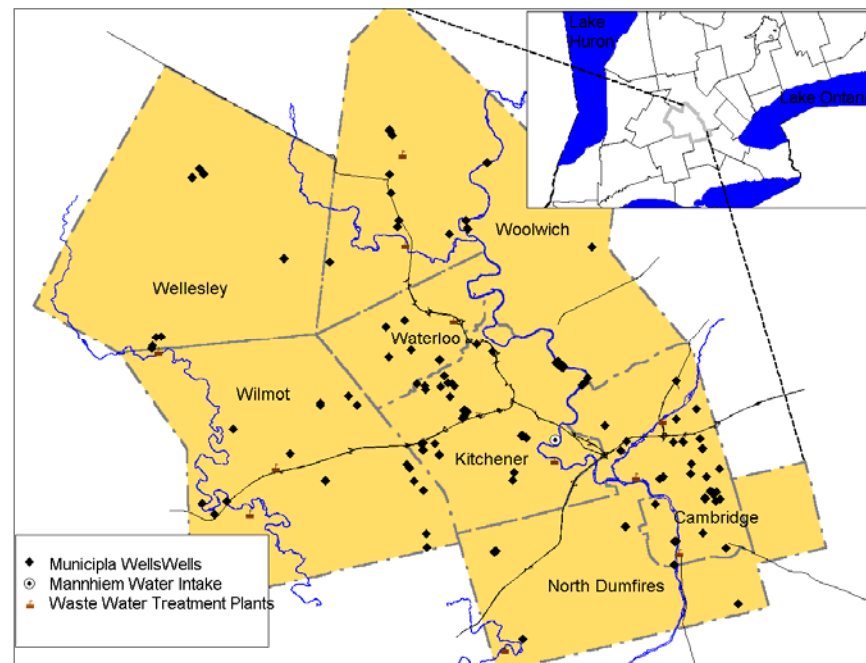
- Previous programs or incorporating existing efforts can advance decision-making efforts
- However, incorporating other programs (e.g., stewardship) outcomes may have challenges
- Necessary to understand the “culture” in which these initiatives were developed
 - Were the initiatives voluntary or confidential?
 - Important to work with involved parties to achieve level of comfort and assurance
- Possible benefits can be realized:
 - Can incorporate technical benefits and knowledge
 - Can (in effect) transfer social capital (trust, willingness to collaborate) created by complementary initiatives

Stakeholder Involvement

- Active and substantial involvement of stakeholders is of increasing importance
- Trend is to involve stakeholders in all phases of environmental initiatives
 - Design, development, and implementation
- Although sometimes complex (especially with regulatory programs), the benefits can be significant:
 - Promotes interchange of different ideas and positions
 - Encourages development of social capital
- Can lead to an outcome that is less divisive, and more likely to be accepted and implemented
- Developing “social capital” - the ability and willingness to collaborate – is critical to success

Case Study

- Regional Municipality of Waterloo
- Population ~ 508,000*
- Diverse urban and rural population
- Local water resources
 - Municipal water supply
 - 80% Groundwater
 - 20% Surface Water
 - Private water supply
 - Wastewater treatment



* Based on 2006 census for Regional Municipality of Waterloo

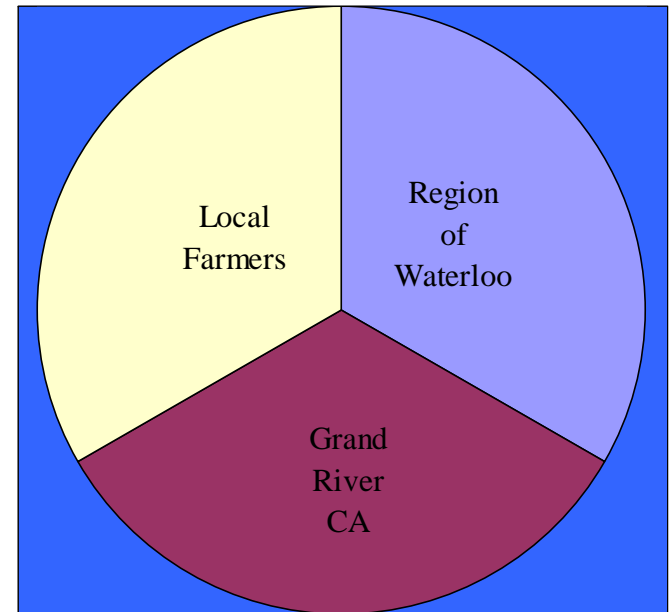
Drivers for Action

- Water Resource Protection Strategy
- Long-term capacity of Wastewater Treatment Plants
- Considerable loadings to surface water
 - Microbes, phosphorous, sediment
- Success of previous surface water quality programs
 - For example, Clean Up Rural Beaches (EFP)
- Relative cost of municipal wastewater treatment plant upgrades *versus* agricultural measures (17:1)
- Broader interest in improving surface and groundwater quality
 - Health, ecological, recreation

Rural Water Quality Program

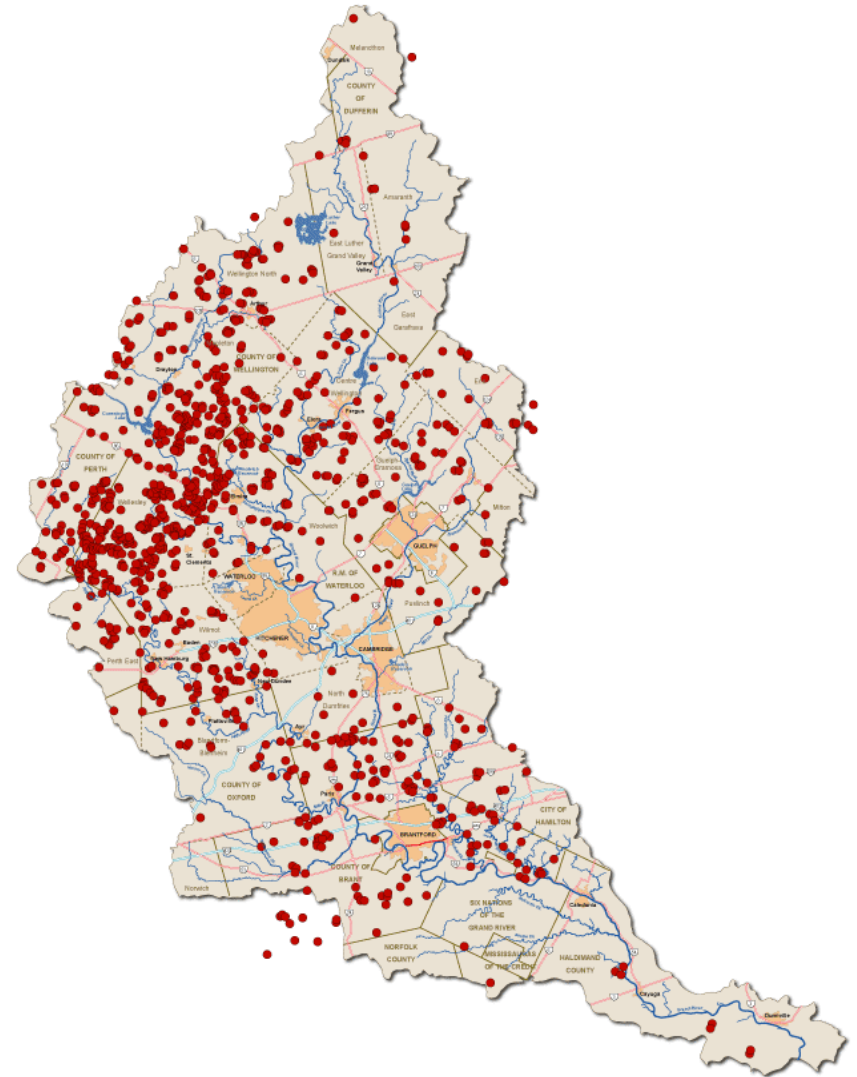
- Successful Program Approach

- Municipal Council support
- Inclusive steering committee
- Active review committee
- In-kind and cost-share funding
 - Cost-share grants
 - Performance incentives
- Extension-based approach
- Marketing, promotion and education
- Based on familiar agri-environmental programs
- Voluntary model



Measuring Success

- Tenth anniversary in 2008
- \$8.2 million in grants
- Over \$24 million invested in water quality projects
- Over 2,500 projects
 - 281 manure storages
 - 88 fuel storage
 - 80 erosion control projects
 - 305 nutrient management plans
 - 249 watercourse fences
 - 602 tree plantings
 - 312 wells decommissioned
 - 179 domestic wells upgraded



Measuring Success

- Partnerships featured prominently in development of RWQP
 - Benefited from prior relationships
 - Built on familiar programs such as CURB and the Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) programs
- Stakeholder capacity enhanced program
 - Leadership key in developing program
 - Helped integrate scientific expertise and local knowledge effectively
 - Ensured values of farm community were incorporated
- Stakeholder Agency
 - Community participated in program innovation
 - Built social capital and enhanced relationships

Measuring Success

- Vernacular Knowledge
 - Created through sharing
 - Integrated
 - Scientific expertise
 - Local knowledge
 - Community values
 - Increased program effectiveness
- Partners built on social capital from CURB and EFP
 - Relationships were strengthened by open process
 - Familiar programs provided broad level of comfort and basis for program design

Summary

- Key Benefits of RWQP:
 - Involved community in decision-making
 - Encouraged information sharing
 - Promoted consensus
 - Broadened awareness
 - Created program allies and champions
 - Developed community spokespeople
 - Enhanced community leadership and technical capacity
 - Increased existing program support

 - The success of the RWQP led to its renewal, and expansion to other communities within the Grand River watershed

An Alternative: Collaborative Governance

- Provides a format for addressing wicked problems
- Encourages greater public involvement throughout decision-making process
- Builds trust, accountability, legitimacy, reciprocity, etc.
- Builds vernacular knowledge
- Promotes creation and transfer of social capital



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...and Questions