



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Institute for Water Resources

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March 20, 2014

AWRA Interview of USACE IWR's Dr. Delli Priscoli Highlights the 1965 Water Resources Planning Act

ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA. Dr. Jerome Delli Priscoli, a senior advisor at the Institute for Water Resources (IWR), was recently interviewed for the American Water Resources Association (AWRA) "Windows on Water Management" series. Mark Dunning, President of AWRA, posed a series of questions about the 1965 Water Resources Planning Act.

During the interview, Delli Priscoli spoke about the history of the 1965 Water Resources Planning Act and its importance, both at the time it was enacted and its importance in shaping water policy that persists today. The Act was an attempt to reach a compromise in U.S. water policy between coordination and planning aspects and operational aspects of water resources management, he explained. It is considered one of the seminal water resources acts in the 20th century U.S.

The Act created a water resources council and six river basin commissions, and it authorized federal assistance to states. It was intended to support frequent assessments of the nation's water supplies, relate river basin plans to larger regional development issues, establish uniform principles and standards for analyzing projects, and make project recommendations and appraisals. However, it was later defunded.

Two national water assessments, which Delli Priscoli said are still relevant and useful today, were conducted under the Act. River basins were studied in order to help build a consensus on the overarching vision for managing each watershed. Such studies were a precursor to today's emphasis on integrated water resources management (IWRM) by USACE and many other institutions in the U.S. and around the world that is focusing on the sustainable development and use of water resources at the river basin level. Work under the Act also included the creation of principles and standards that are analytical guidelines for integrating different values (e.g., social, ecological) into water resources planning processes.

"Water is political," said Delli Priscoli. "Today we use the term IWRM, integrated water resources management. The messages of integration, even when we speak of them in purely technical terms, are really messages of distribution and redistribution of political power. That is the way that those we are advising see it."

"We must have serious systems of managing that tension between the political and technical, of which this Act was one attempt, and this is highly relevant in today's world," he stated.

After hearing the AWRA interview, the IWR Director, Bob Pietrowsky, remarked how timely Dr. Delli Priscoli's remarks were. "The IWRM approach is not only central to USACE's Campaign Plan, the current Civil Works (CW) Strategic Plan and the ongoing CW Transformation," said Pietrowsky. "But it is foundational to international water and natural resources management around the globe that also emphasize stakeholder participation, inter-sector coordination and a wide range of innovative tools to work towards sustainable outcomes."

Pietrowsky added, “Significantly, the same kind of systems planning envisioned in the 1965 Water Resources Planning Act resonates in today’s practice of IWRM, which reinforces the interconnection of natural and human systems; water quality and quantity; ground and surface waters; coastal, estuary and riverine flows; the land-water interface and the water-energy-food-transportation and health “Mega Nexus”; and, the absolute relevance of the ecological, biological and geomorphic aspects of environmental sciences which have manifested “ecohydrology” as a critical component of water and natural resources management”.

AWRA is hosting the "Windows on Water Management" interview series as part of its 50th anniversary celebration. The series explores the perspectives of leaders in the field of water resources management.

Dr. Delli Priscoli is a senior advisor at the USACE Institute for Water Resources. For over 35 years he has designed and run social assessment, public participation and conflict resolution research and training programs. He serves on the Board of Governors and the Bureau of the World Water Council, and is the editor in chief of the peer reviewed journal *Water Policy*. Dr. Delli Priscoli also serves on the board of the Inter-American Water Resources Network and works with, and has helped found, several other world associations such as the International Association for Public Participation, the Global Water Partnership, and the World Water Council itself. He is a senior water policy advisor to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Headquarters, the World Bank and the United Nations water-related agencies. Dr. Delli Priscoli works closely with many of the Water Ministers throughout the world. He was an original member of the U.S. delegation to the middle-east peace talks on water, and is often in demand as a commentator on water and politics on media shows.

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