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Lessons from North and Central American UNESCO-HELP Basins

ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA. The U.S. National Committee for the International Hydrological Programme (IHP) of UNESCO has issued a Monograph on the Science and Practice of Integrated River Basin Management: "Lessons from North and Central American UNESCO-HELP Basins." The report arose from the North American-UNESCO-HELP workshop held at Portland State University, Portland, Oregon, May 10-12, 2010.

Hydrology for the Environment, Life and Policy (HELP) is a cross-cutting component of the UNESCO-IHP. The goal of HELP is to facilitate dialogue among hydrologists, social and economic scientists, water resource managers, water lawyers, policy experts, and river basin stakeholder communities in setting a physical and social science research agenda that is driven by local management and policy issues. HELP seeks to improve the benefits to society by applying the principles of integrated water resources management to complex, interdisciplinary challenges within catchment basins. Catchment basins, also referred to as watersheds, are regions where all water drains to a single point or outlet at a lower elevation.

The Portland workshop brought together scientists, managers and stakeholders from six North American basins (San Pedro, Willamette, Upper Washita, Lake Champlain, Iowa-Cedar, Luquillo) and one Central American basin (Panama Canal) participating in HELP. The participants exchanged ideas and "lessons learned" in various applications of integrated water resources management. Three major themes were examined:

- Climate change: creating watershed resilience
- Use of social learning in integrated water resources management
- Knowledge and information management for integrated water resources management

These themes are explored and enhanced in the monograph with case studies of integrated water resources management applications from the participating HELP basins.

The International Center for Integrated Water Resources Management (ICIWaRM), under the auspices of UNESCO, was a co-sponsor of the 2010 workshop and has continued to play a role in HELP. The ICIWaRM team has sponsored HELP sessions and working sessions at other conferences, such as the AWRA 2011 Summer Specialty Conference. USACE has played an ongoing, strong role in the Iowa-Cedar River HELP basin. ICIWaRM funded participation of USACE Rock Island District's Jason Smith to present on the Iowa-Cedar River Basin at the HELP International Symposium 2011, "Building Knowledge Bridges for a Sustainable Water Future." And, in 2012, ICIWaRM signed an agreement with Scotland's University of Dundee to facilitate collaboration between ICIWaRM and Dundee's UNESCO HELP Centre for Water Law, Policy and Science.

More about ICIWaRM

ICIWaRM is a Category II UNESCO center located at the USACE Institute for Water Resources (IWR). ICIWaRM is a consortium of U.S. Government agencies, university departments and non-governmental organizations committed to working together in support of the strategic program objectives of UNESCO's International Hydrological Programme (IHP). ICIWaRM works closely with the U.S. National Commission for UNESCO, the U.S. National Committee for the IHP, and category 2 centres in other nations.

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