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Putting the Diplomacy Back in HydroDiplomacy

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Key Points

• Interstate environmental problems are likely to be large and complex
• Decisions about large, complex environmental problems are always hard – but difficulty is compounded if issues cross state lines
• States have legitimate reasons for different points of view – it’s not just politics
• If we identify the reasons why states disagree, we can address them and increase the likelihood that states will work together
Why Decisions are Hard

• Uncertainty about problems
  – we don’t have enough data
  – the models aren’t perfect
  – we don’t fully understand the problem’s causes
  – we don’t fully understand the contribution of each cause
  – We don’t have complete information about the problem’s extent
Why Decisions are Hard (con’t)

• Uncertainty about solutions
  – we don’t know how far we need to go (how much overall reduction/treatment/remediation is needed)
  – we don’t know how to allocate responsibility among sources
  – we don’t know how well different solutions will work
Why Decisions are Hard (con’t)

• Concern about cost
  -- cost of remedy is high
  -- affordability issues
  -- cost-benefit issues
Why Decisions are Hard (con’t)

• Political concerns

  -- Is there political will to address the problem?

  -- Is there political opposition to the remedy?
How well do we understand the problem?

- **know little**
  - wait and see; further study
- **know a lot**
  - take action
Decision depends on more than one factor

How well do we understand the problem?

Cost of solution

- low
- high

Know little

Know a lot

Take action

Wait and see; further study
Cost of solution
Uncertainty about extent
Uncertainty about cause
SEVERITY OF PROBLEM

COST

POLITICS

UNCERTAINTY RE: CAUSE

UNCERTAINTY RE: EXTENT

UNCERTAINTY RE: SOLUTION
SEVERITY OF PROBLEM

- COST
- POLITICS
- UNCERTAINTY RE: CAUSE
- UNCERTAINTY RE: EXTENT
- UNCERTAINTY RE: SOLUTION
- UNCERTAINTY RE: EXTENT
SEVERITY OF PROBLEM

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RE: EXTENT

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UNCERTAINTY RE: EXTENT

UNCERTAINTY RE: SOLUTION

POLITICS

SEVERITY OF PROBLEM

UNCERTAINTY RE: CAUSE

COST
Downstream state:

• Need to fix the problem
• We know enough to act (even if there are uncertainties)
• Cost is affordable
• Can’t let upstream sources evade responsibility
Upstream state:

• There are too many uncertainties – need further study
• Don’t know relative contributions of different sources
• Don’t know how effective different actions would be
• Don’t fully understand extent of problem
• Acting too quickly could waste resources
• Costs are high – need more data before investing in solutions
• Downstream sources haven’t done enough to address their contribution
Disagreement is normal

• Level of confidence in data – don’t trust other side’s data as much as your own
• Analysis of data includes judgment calls – influenced by which side you’re on
• Cost estimates – more conservative if it’s your money
• Political consequences different for each side
How to bridge the gap?

- Collaborate re: data collection and analysis
- Start early – before positions get dug in
- Downstream state must aggressively address their own contribution to the problem
- Cooperate re: strategy to address problem, especially sequencing of actions in both states (treat as *regional* problem)
- Consider phased approach / adaptive management
Remember:

- It’s supposed to be hard
- Expect disagreement
- Take early steps to facilitate states working together