



POLIS Project on Ecological Governance

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Water Sustainability Project Historical Highlights

2003 Eco-Research Chair Michael M'Gonigle and Project Leader Oliver M Brandes establish the Urban Water Demand Management (UWDM) Project with support from the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation. Researchers Tony Maas and Keith Ferguson join the project to examine urban water use in Canada and to investigate ways to improve water use efficiency and conservation through demand management.

2003 The UWDM Project publishes *Flushing the Future: Examining Urban Water Use in Canada* and *What the Experts Think: Understanding Urban Water Demand Management in Canada*. These research reports examine urban water use and provide a prescription for water management reform in Canada.

2004 Ellen Reynolds joins the UWDM Project as Communications Director. The UWDM Project publishes *The Future in Every Drop: The Benefits, Barriers and Practice of Urban Water Demand Management in Canada*, a research report with action plans for all levels of government to implement a comprehensive approach to sustainable water management.

2004 BC Ministries of Water, Land and Air Protection, Community Services and Sustainable Resource Management engage the UWDM Project team in a series of presentations on provincial strategies for implementing a comprehensive approach to demand management, including a formal presentation to the intergovernmental Deputy Ministers' Committee on Drought.

2004 David Boyd, Oliver M Brandes and David Brooks jointly submit a briefing note to the Prime Minister's Office, "Federal Fiscal Policies to Link Infrastructure Funds to Water Demand Management Programs."

2004 The applied research report, *Developing Water Sustainability through Urban Water Demand Management*, is commissioned and presented at the Environment Canada workshop, Charting the Course for Sustainable Water Use in Canada: Challenges and Opportunities in the Urban Sector. Recommendations are used to establish priorities for the newly formed Sustainable Water Use Branch.

2004 The UWDM Project presents its research to the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME) Water Efficiency Task Force to focus action priorities around water sustainability.

2004 Oliver M Brandes is appointed to the Capital Regional District (CRD) Water Advisory Committee, where he promotes the soft path and a "no new water" priority for the region through several presentations, reports and motions to the Regional Water Supply Commission.

2005 The UWDM Project changes its name to the Water Sustainability Project (WSP) to reflect its broader focus. The WSP teams up with the University of Victoria's Environmental Law Centre to release *At a Watershed: Ecological Governance and Sustainable Water Management in Canada*.

2005 Oliver M Brandes and Lynn Kriwoken of BC's Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection present the discussion paper "Changing Perspectives – Changing Paradigms: Taking the 'soft path' to Water Sustainability in the Okanagan Basin" at the Canadian Water Resources Association Annual Conference: Water - Our Limiting Resource in Kelowna BC. A revised version is later published in the *Canadian Water Resources Journal*.

2005 The WSP, in partnership with David Brooks of Friends of the Earth – Canada, publish *The Soft Path for Water in a Nutshell* and initiate the first ever pan-Canadian study that examines the soft path for water at the community, watershed and provincial scales.

2005 With renewed funding from the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation, the WSP sets out an ambitious multi-year plan of research and policy advocacy. This more applied phase of work focuses on water management best practices outlined in the publication *Thinking Beyond Pipes and Pumps: Top 10 Ways Communities Can Save Water and Money* and the publication of *Watershed Governance – A Concept Background*.

2005-2006 Smart Growth on the Ground (SGOG) partners with the BCWWA Water Sustainability Committee and POLIS to initiate a community engagement project in the Okanagan Basin on a water-sensitive "smart growth" plan for the region. Workshops and public events using the WSP research and briefing materials culminate in the development of the South Okanagan Regional Growth Strategy and a water conservation program for the Town of Oliver.

2006 *The Soft Path for Water in a Nutshell* is used by the Falls Brook Centre to create a governance toolkit for a project on the development of water catchment institutions in peri-urban communities in Honduras.

2006 Oliver M Brandes serves on Pollution Probe's advisory committee guiding the National Water Policy Workshop Series: five pan-Canadian workshops with representatives from all levels of government, scientists, academics, First Nations, policy experts, the private sector, and NGOs to examine the state of water policy in Canada, which leads to the release of *Towards a Vision and Strategy for Water Management in Canada*.

2006 POLIS co-sponsors Water in the City, an international conference on sustainable water management in Victoria, BC hosting over 500 delegates including politicians, senior water managers and leaders in the field. The WSP team makes numerous presentations and organizes panels and discussion sessions. The conference helps launch Convening for Action – Vancouver Island (CAVI) a major regional water sustainability initiative, and Oliver M Brandes joins the CAVI Leadership Committee.

2006 The WSP team presents its watershed governance work at Freshwater for the Future – Conference on Freshwater Policy, a national conference on water policy in Canada hosted by the federal government's Policy Research Initiative in Gatineau, Quebec.

2006 Oliver M Brandes and Tony Maas present the discussion paper “What We Govern and What Governs Us: Developing Sustainability in Canadian Water Management,” and Oliver presents “Next Steps Toward Sustainability” at the keynote closing plenary session of the CWRA 59th Annual Conference in Toronto, Ontario.

2006 Carol Maas joins the WSP as Innovation and Technology Director to launch the energy-water nexus research theme and further develop the POLIS Soft Path Water Conservation Calculator and Scenario Builder, with funding from the Ontario Ministry of Environment. The calculator is updated to integrate the potential reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from water conservation.

2007 Michael M’Gonigle, Oliver M Brandes and David Brooks co-author a chapter in *Eau Canada* edited by Karen Bakker (UBC Press), a leading book on water governance in Canada.

2007 The WSP publishes two cutting edge research summaries: *A New Path to Water Sustainability for the Town of Oliver, BC – A Soft Path Case Study* and *Urban Water Soft Path: ‘Back of the Envelope’ Backcasting Framework*.

2007 In partnership with Jon O’Riordan (former BC Deputy Minister of Sustainable Resource Management), Oliver M Brandes develops the position paper “Water Policy in BC: Directions and Possibilities” for the BC Real Estate Association which is presented to key BC Government Ministries.

2007 Friends of the Earth-Canada, the Faculty of Environmental Studies at the University of Waterloo, Acadia University’s Arthur Irving Academy for the Environment and the WSP release results of Canada’s first pan-Canadian water soft path study. Summary articles and research results are published in a special issue of *Alternatives Journal*. The WSP co-founds the National Soft Path Leadership Council.

2007 As part of the Prairie Water Coalition, the WSP Research Associate Tony Maas is lead author on *The Prairie Citizens’ Water Directive*, a report directed at Canadian provincial and federal governments that presents citizens’ expectations and strategies for sustainable water management.

2007 The WSP leads a soft path workshop and initiates a water conservation and soft path pilot project with the Grand River Conservation Authority. Oliver M Brandes presents “A New View of Infrastructure” at the annual conference of the Conservation Authorities of Ontario.

2007 Oliver M Brandes, David Boyd and Tony Maas help found The Gordon Water Group of Concerned Scientists and Citizens (GWG). The GWG led by the Sierra Club of Canada publishes *Changing the Flow: A Blueprint for Federal Action on Freshwater*.

2007 Oliver M Brandes presents a webinar on *Thinking Beyond Pipes and Pumps* hosted by the Canadian Federation of Municipalities for practitioners and municipalities across Canada.

2008 Susanne Porter-Bopp joins the WSP as Community Water Coordinator and launches the Building Capacity & Leadership to Promote Water Sustainability Program to enhance water conservation capacity for communities across the country. The position includes a partnership with Waterlution to deliver youth engagement workshops in BC.

2008 The WSP helps inform and catalyze the development of BC’s *Living Water Smart* strategy through a series of briefing notes, consultations and presentations.

2008 Oliver M Brandes joins the Collaborative Watershed Governance Initiative to provide recommendations to the steering committee for governance reform in BC.

2008 The WSP is an academic partner in three separate Canadian Water Network initiatives running through 2012: A Canadian Water Security Index led by Dr Karen Bakker of UBC; Governance for Watershed-Based Source Water Protection in Canada: A National Assessment led by Dr Rob de Loë of University of Waterloo; More Value from the Same Water: Maximizing Water’s Sustainable Contribution to the Canadian Economy led by Dr Diane Dupont and Steven Renzetti of Brock University.

2009 The WSP publishes *Greenhouse Gas and Energy Co-benefits of Water Conservation* by Carol Maas, the first study of its kind in Canada outlining the significant and untapped opportunity to reduce energy use, save municipal dollars and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions through water conservation.

2009 The WSP launches its research, policy and governance reform theme “Future of Water Law and Governance in Canada,” including key strategic publications: *Going with the Flow? Evolving Water Allocations and the Potential and Limits of Water Markets in Canada* (in partnership with the Conference Board of Canada); *Setting a New Course in British Columbia – Water Governance Reform Options and Opportunities* (prepared for the BC Ministry of the Environment – Water Stewardship Division); *H2Ontario: A Blueprint for a Comprehensive Water Conservation Strategy*; and *Public Trust Doctrine – Potential in Canadian Water and Environmental Management*.

2009 Elizabeth Hendriks joins the WSP as Outreach Coordinator to lead outreach and to develop a series of water conservation “roadshow” events across Canada to develop capacity for water managers and practitioners.

2009 The book *Making the Most of the Water We Have – The Soft Path Approach to Water Management* (Earthscan) edited by David B Brooks, Oliver M Brandes and Stephen Gurman is released. It is the first book to comprehensively present and apply the water soft path approach locally and globally, with a focus on Canadian studies and water soft path research at POLIS.

2009 In partnership with the Sierra Club of Canada and the Royal Bank of Canada’s Blue Water Project, the WSP launches H2OAction, a two-year campaign to implement comprehensive water conservation in communities across Canada.



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