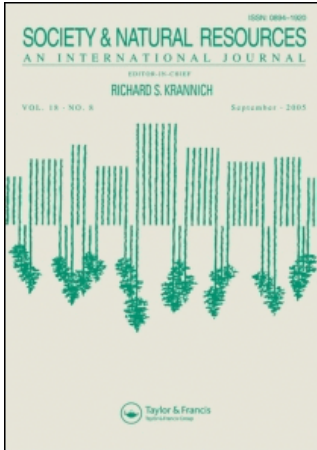


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A Review of: "Scholz, John T. and Bruce Stiftel, eds.
**Adaptive Governance and Water Conflict: New
Institutions for Collaborative Planning**

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Book Review

Scholz, John T. and Bruce Stiftel, eds. *Adaptive Governance and Water Conflict: New Institutions for Collaborative Planning*. Washington, DC: Resources for the Future, 2005. 300 pp. \$29.95 (paper). ISBN 1-933115-19-X.

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To those not familiar with the southeastern United States, tropical Florida might seem a surprising locale for studying conflicts over water. *Adaptive Governance and Water Conflict* vividly illustrates that balancing competing demands for water is no longer an issue only for the arid West but for seemingly wet regions as well. By focusing on one of the most environmentally and socially diverse states in the United States, John Scholz and Bruce Stiftel present an effective platform for examining the benefits of adaptive governance in complex social and ecological contexts. This edited volume provides a wealth of empirical data on the social, institutional, and ecological challenges facing resource management practitioners and includes a range of analytical insights that will be of interest to managers and academics alike.

Adaptive Governance and Water Conflict identifies five central challenges facing water governance systems: (1) representation (Who should be involved?), (2) decision processes (How can authorities and involved stakeholders reach policy agreements that serve them well?), (3) scientific learning (How can policymakers develop and use knowledge effectively?), (4) public learning (How can resource users and the relevant public develop common understandings as a foundation for consensual policies and policy processes?), and (5) problem responsiveness (How well do the decisions achieve natural resource management goals, including sustainability, equity, and efficiency?). Scholz and Stiftel use this set of challenges as an organizational framework for both the empirical and analytical material in this book. This approach illustrates the salience of this framework both as a heuristic for understanding common issues inherent to water conflicts and as a conceptual tool for guiding applied research on governance systems.

Some of the most intriguing information in this volume is found in the eight governance cases highlighting the array of water quality, quantity, and habitat issues facing Florida's resource managers. On the surface, the editors' decision to jump from agricultural pollution in the Sewanee Basin, to urban supply issues in Tampa, and on to water conservation in the Everglades might seem ill advised. Nonetheless, the aforementioned analytical framework provides continuity in these data and underscores the need for a governance paradigm that integrates the management of water quality and quantity as well as habitat conservation. The chapter on the Apalachicola–Chattahoochee–Flint Basin, which includes the neighboring states of Georgia and Alabama, illustrates that interstate wrangling over water, traditionally associated with western rivers such as the Colorado, is equally problematic in the

Southeast. Perhaps the most interesting case study outlines a statewide effort to manage Florida's underground aquifer. Hydrologists have long recognized the critical connections between surface-water and groundwater systems. Florida's experience highlights the need for governance structures that extend these connections to integrative surface water and groundwater management.

With this breadth of empirical information as a foundation, Scholz and Stiftel use the subsequent two sections of their book to present analytical perspectives from both practitioners and researchers. As with the case studies, the five central governance challenges provide an overarching organizational frame for presenting each author's analyses. This structure gives continuity to seemingly disparate information and enables the reader to compare and contrast assessments of the eight cases and to evaluate the effectiveness of the guiding framework as a tool for analyzing governance systems.

The four chapters written by practitioners are perhaps the most revealing and provocative in the book. They demonstrate a concerted effort to promote more adaptive and inclusive approaches to water management, while at the same time providing a sober assessment of the institutional and political challenges facing professionals in this field. Richard Hamann's chapter on the power of the status quo demonstrates the key role legal structures play in constraining governance systems, while Donald Polmann emphasizes the importance of process, strategy, and methods rather than policies, rules, and requirements. The concluding chapter in this section by Martha Rhodes Roberts illustrates the need for distinct governance approaches for the agricultural sector, the largest user of water in the state.

These practitioners' perspectives highlight the enormous tasks ahead for professionals attempting to apply adaptive approaches in their day-to-day activities. Although these practitioners embrace Scholz and Stiftel's conceptual framework, its utility for on-the-ground management seems less developed. These authors use the five analytical categories to identify systemic problems; nonetheless, how information about these challenges can in turn be employed to implement solutions is less evident. Expanding this section to include representatives from community groups, business and industry, and environmental organizations might have provided additional insights into operationalizing adaptive governance, and in particular mechanisms for broadening representation and encouraging public learning, two of the central issues identified by the editors.

The power and potential limitations of Scholz and Stiftel's adaptive governance framework is most evident in the perspectives of eight researchers found in the final section of the book. Chapters by Lawrence Susskind and John Forester, respectively, point to the insights that can be drawn from dispute resolution processes and their importance in fostering public learning, a key component of adaptive governance. Connie Ozawa does an effective job illustrating that, although scientific data is critical for adaptive decision making, science won't resolve water disputes. She argues that, ultimately, management efforts that integrate social and scientific inputs are most likely to achieve positive results. The most provocative chapter in this section is by Lawrence Rothenberg. He suggests that adaptive governance approaches that include market-based economic solutions offer the greatest prospect for successful social and environmental outcomes. Although these researchers provide in-depth analysis of and support for the overarching adaptive governance framework, this material is not as well integrated as that in the first two parts of the book, leaving the reader to sift through this extensive analysis for common themes and insights.

In the concluding chapter, Scholz and Stiftel emphasize that adaptive governance offers potential solutions for some of Florida's most intractable water management challenges. The editors make a strong argument for overhauling the governance system, stressing the benefits adaptive approaches may generate for water users and managers alike. However, because the book provides few examples of successful adaptive governance, it is not entirely clear how such an approach will function within the existing social, institutional, and policy structures.

The case study information and practitioners' perspectives suggest that adding an additional category—what I would term organizational learning—might strengthen Scholz and Stiftel's framework. The editors rightfully identify scientific and public learning as central components of adaptive governance. Nonetheless, understanding how both public- and private-sector organizations involved in water management might use context-specific science and information gleaned from participatory processes to foster institutional change would seem of equal importance.

The inclusion of expanded analysis of the internal organizational challenges faced by water management agencies would complement the material in the book that highlights the importance of decision processes and problem responsiveness. The institutional inertia described in the Florida case studies is consistent with patterns found by sociologists studying organizational behavior in other settings. Investigating how successful governance processes might lead to organizational change could generate important insights for practitioners attempting to implement adaptive approaches within challenging policy and institutional structures.

Adaptive Governance and Water Conflict tackles an enormous topic, offering an innovative examination of the benefits and challenges inherent to adaptive water governance. Scholz and Stiftel provide a platform for engaging readers ranging from graduate students interested in researching emerging water conflicts to resource management professionals attempting to implement adaptive approaches. This book also expands the existing literature on water management by providing empirical information from a diverse set of water conflicts in the southeast. After learning about the critical challenges faced by Florida's water managers, readers may find themselves thinking differently about the verdant golf course or theme park water slide on their next vacation to the Sunshine State.