

Book Report 'Eau Canada' : The Future of Canada's Water, Edited by Karen Bakker -Gracia Janes NCWC VP Environment

Despite its weighty index, listing a broad range of water issues, written in essay form by experts in multiple disciplines, the title Eau Canada, reflects what one finds out over the days spent reading - that this is a book that one can hardly put down! It is a must read for those who care about the "Future of Canada's Water" and want the ammunition to raise the alarm bells. It is also a very good tool for educators and others who care about this vital life element and wish to make a difference.

From the 'get go', editor Karen Bakker's foreword compels the reader to dig right into the water issue, as she emphatically states ***"Canadian's relationship with water is rife with contradictions. We are fiercely protective of our water, yet hugely wasteful with it, using more water per capita than any nation in the world, except the United States (Boyd 2001). Images of pristine water are Canadian icons, yet we are one of the very few developed countries not to have legally enforceable water quality standards. Canadians are highly resistant to the notion of exporting water, yet Canada is on the largest diverters of water in the world for hydro power (Day and Quinn 1992)"***

In her brief but cogent and powerful introduction to Eau Canada, Bakker not only invites readers to investigate the "contradictions" of our attitudes about water, but challenges them to be open to changing their opinions, under the weight of carefully researched and clearly presented arguments of the book's 24 essay authors. In turn, these experts clearly and succinctly attack, illuminate, and suggest solutions to a variety of water problems in five broad categories i.e.

1. MUDDY WATERS HOW WELL ARE WE GOVERNING CANADA'S WATERS?,
2. WHOSE WATER? JURISDICTIONAL FRAGMENTATION AND TRANS BOUNDARY MANAGEMENT
3. BLUE GOLD :PRIVATIZATION, WATER RIGHTS, AND WATER MARKETS
4. WATER WISE: PATHWAYS TO BETTER WATER MANAGEMENT
5. WATER WORLD VIEWS: POLITICS, CULTURE AND ETHICS

Within each of these sections, there are from three to four essays, with equally catchy titles, that raise the issue/problem and engage the reader. To give only a few titles here would do an injustice to the rest, so a list is a must (along with the authors) as follows:

- Great Wet North? Canada's Myth of Water Abundance. John B. Sprague
- On Guard for Thee? Water (Ab)uses and Management in Canada. Dan Shrubsole.Diane Draper
- Out of Sight, Out of Mind? Taking Canada's Groundwater for Granted. Linda Nowlan
- Challenging the Status Quo: The Evolution of Water Governance in Canada .Rob Deloe.Reid Kreutwser
- Is Canada's Water Safe?- a Photo Essay (a variety of photographers and sources interspersed with cartoons)

- Whose Water? Canadian Water Management and the Challenges of Jurisdictional Fragmentation. Owen Saunders and Michael M. Wang
- Drawers of Water: Water Diversions in Canada and Beyond. Frederic Lasserre
- Thirsty Neighbors: A Century of Canada-US Transboundary Water Governance. Ralph Pentland. Adele Hurley
- Commons or Commodity? The Debate Over Private Sector Involvement in Water Supply. Karen Bakker
- Liquid gold: Water Markets in Canada. Theodore M. Horbulyk
- Trading our Common Heritage? The Debate over Water Rights Transfers in Canada. Randy Christensen. Anastasia Lintner
- A Tangled Web: Reworking Canada's Water Laws. Paul Muldoon. Theresa McClenaghan
- Are the Prices Right? Balancing Efficiency, Equity and Sustainable Water Pricing. Steven Renzitti
- Moving Water Conservation to Centre Stage. Oliver Branddes. David Brooks. Michael M'Gonigle
- The Land is Dry: Indigenous Peoples, Culture and Environmental Justice. Ardith Walkem
- Half Empty or Half Full? Water Politics and the Canadian National Imaginary. Andrew Biro
- Rising Waves, Old Charts, Nervous Passengers: Navigating Toward a New Water Ethic. Cushla Matthews. Robert B. Gibson. Bruce Mitchell
- Conclusion: Governing Canada's Waters Wisely. Karen Bakker

With such a diversity of authors and subjects there is bound to be some overlap, as in the areas of law and governance- and some divergence of view e.g. Theodore M. Horbulyk's opinion in his essay, Liquid Gold, Water Markets in Canada. Here, he notes that, "**Greater integration within and across Canada and American markets is applying additional market pressure, both directly and indirectly on the allocation and management of water resources**", but that there may be a silver lining in this increased integration of markets as they "**may also provide an opportunity for increased cooperation in the management of transboundary water resources as well as an opportunity to share experiences in such areas as improving governance and community participation.**" This view, which draws upon the development in the US of many small environmental groups who are using easily accessed and very good information re stream flow and hydrology data (unlike in Canada) to protect water sheds, seems to be countered by several other contributors, who argue strongly that the provinces, territories and the federal government must take lead roles, in cooperation with individual states and the US. Government where cross boundary waters are involved, to protect this vital resource. Where all views meet, is in the recognition that if water is to be protected there must be complete and easily accessible information for all to use to better inform the public, the regulators and the policy makers, so they may do a far better job of protecting water resources.

Again, this book is a must read for those who care about this vital resource-Canada's water- and want to make a difference!

