

Navigating Institutional Challenges to Cross-border, Water-related Research

Robert G. Varady

**Udall Center for Studies in Public Policy
The University of Arizona**

Presented at the
Researcher - Managers Workshop on
**Water and Energy Sustainability with Rapid Growth
in the Arizona - Sonora Border Region**

**Tucson, Arizona
June 1, 2009**

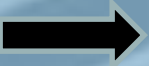
Crossing the U.S.-Mexico Border: *What's Similar?*

- Climate, esp. extremes
- Landscape
- Environment, **water availability**, habitat, wildlife
- Traditional economic mainstays (mining, farming, ranching)

Crossing the Border: *What's Different?*

- Culture, language, demographic trends
- Economy, infrastructure
- Energy base
 - Petroleum-dependent & hydrocarbon-based power generation in Mexico
 - Coal, hydro, nuclear, nonconventional in U.S.
- Political systems and legal traditions
- Education systems & research establishments
- Governmental organization, autonomy of local/regional governments, indigenous societies
- Relative vigor of civil society
- Vulnerability and ability to cope with environmental stress

Institutional Challenges

- Insufficient understanding of conditions & institutions
- Difficulty of obtaining compatible information
- Incompatibility between hydrological & political world views
- Poor match between research priorities & decisionmaking
- Difficulty in overcoming bureaucratic inertia
- Weak partnerships with mutually-interested researchers
- Barriers to sharing resources and credit
- Poor binational relations  suspicions of motives, inability to forge close working relations with agencies, communities, colleagues

What Matters Most for Research on Transboundary Governance?

- **Good relations between neighboring countries**
- **Access to appropriate government agencies**
- **Comparable & compatible agency priorities**
- **Easy access to research sites, information & informants**
- **Availability of data in comparable units, scales, accuracy**
- **Partnerships with researchers & stakeholders**
- **Availability of funds & other resources**
- **Ability to communicate effectively**
- **TRUST**