



UN
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UN 2023 Water Conference Side Event

Mobilizing for Healthy Watersheds: What's your next move?]

Broadcasted on March 20th, 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM EDT

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IyG3BtRw37w>

Organized by: Conservation International with IHE Delft Institute for Water Education, IUCN, International Water Management Institute (IWMI), WWF, The Nature Conservancy, Microsoft & PepsiCo

Background on the event (one paragraph)

Managing water holistically is of foundational importance to food security, economic development, health, and well-being. Moving towards it requires mobilizing a community representative of the diverse interests in water: appreciating issues beyond siloed ones and not just anticipating trade-offs, but actively managing them. This narrative is familiar in nearly every watershed in the world and invariably a conundrum. Shaped by the local complexity in hydrology, management, and policy, the path to healthy watersheds for each place will be unique but framed by common challenges, requirements, and aspirations. In this virtual side event, we opened a space to share lessons learnt from approaches being adopted in different watersheds across the world, by diverse actors, to foster participatory and collaborative processes that bring multiple stakeholder groups together, focused on attaining agreed targets and objectives.

Water Action Agenda (one paragraph, if possible, please include the link to your commitment in the [Water Action Agenda database](#))

The virtual side event aligns with [our commitment](#) to support the [Freshwater Challenge](#). The Freshwater Challenge is a country-driven initiative that aims at leveraging the support needed to bring 300,000 km of rivers and 350 million hectares of inland waters under restoration by 2030. CI with its collaborators will contribute to the collective goals both through its work with countries to directly restore freshwater ecosystems, and through its work assimilating data and developing tools that assess watersheds' ecology and their capacities to deliver ecosystem services, and that assesses water governance.

Key Issues discussed (5- 8 bullet points)

- The discussion touched on characteristics of a healthy watershed that are evocative of “good health” as an intuitive feeling and state. These cover physical, social, spiritual, economic, and institutional aspects as well as resilience and long-term sustainability of the “health” of a watershed.
- A key consideration for both mobilization and building collaborations is the alignment of values between local stakeholders, governments, international organizations to corporations. And these ideas interact with and build on the shared vision of a healthy watershed.
- The case studies presented explored the collaborations being developed at multiple levels – landscape, community to the basin – for watersheds from Asia, Africa, and Latin America.
- In the context of healthy watersheds then, valuation and business case of multiple benefits, beyond volumetric or replenishment benefits, continues to be an area deserving further attention.
- Concurrently, freshwater ecosystems and the benefits they provide will increasingly be shaped by a changing climate, with a significant impact on local communities and their way of life.
- An arising question is the steps required to make sites and corporations “action-ready” to move ahead with and collaborate on healthy watersheds.

Key recommendations for action (5 - 6 bullet points)

- Benefits of a healthy watershed are felt by many in different ways; hence justice to each group becomes a key criterion, and mitigation of risks requires stakeholders involved in inclusive collaborative spaces.
- Different types of data and information are required to help shape these collaborations, including ecology, hydrology but also incorporating local/indigenous understanding of the watersheds.
- As we develop financial mechanisms and long-term investments that incorporate the principles of healthy watersheds in practice, adaptability will be required with the changing baseline of climate.
- Learning from policy implementations -- in parts of the world where work on healthy watersheds has moved further ahead -- needs to be transmitted to other parts of the world. And mechanisms, centres of learning and partnerships are needed to help in this dissemination.
- Locally shaped and country-led action will be key in moving towards healthy watersheds, with private corporations, NGOs, etc. playing key roles in voicing requirements and supporting this.