

ABSTRACT

**GETTING IT DONE FROM THE TOP-DOWN OR THE GROUND-UP?
THE TMDL PROCESS IN IDAHO AND MONTANA**

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Based on comparisons of watershed planning efforts in Montana and Idaho, this presentation offered preliminary research findings on the consequences of approaching collaborative water quality planning using participant-driven and state-structured process strategies. This research addresses several key issues, including:

- How do self-convened, ad hoc groups compare with state-convened, mandated groups for quality of participation and outcomes? Outcomes include progress toward restored watersheds and compliance with the Clean Water Act of 1972.
- How can state agencies tasked with bringing state water bodies into compliance with the Clean Water Act best work with collaborative groups?
- Which type of process best assists agencies in meeting their legal responsibilities?
- How do administrative shifts at state and national levels impact local efforts?

Findings were presented in the context of institutional histories, including US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) policies and enforcement of the Clean Water Act, state legislation and regulatory approaches to planning and implementation, and community-based collaborative efforts in each state. In addition, the effect of legal actions pressing EPA and states to have TMDLs completed in the next few years were discussed.

Data collection methods include personal interviews (e.g., with citizen participants and agency representatives), observations of planning meetings, focus group interviews, and document analysis. Insights from this research will be extended to interested parties, including local state and national entities engaged in the total maximum daily load (TMDL) process. In addition, we explored opportunities to develop educational materials for maximizing the effectiveness of collaborative approaches to water quality management.