

Perspectives on Sustainable Development in Water Management: Towards Agreement in the Fraser River Basin (Vol. 1), ed. Anthony H. J. Dorcey. Vancouver: Westwater Research Centre, University of British Columbia, 1991. xi, 592 pp. Illus., maps, tables. \$25.00 paper.

This is a very big book. It consists of 592 pages and 22 chapters of academic analysis (mostly by UBC scholars) on sustainable development of and for the Fraser River Basin. Sustainable development is a difficult concept anyway. In a book with twenty contributors, it gets used as part metaphor, part environmental indicator, and part prescriptive method. In some contributions, it barely rates a passing mention. And the book is also densely packed with factual information, especially the eight chapters on "Resources" of the Basin.

So is the book worth reading? The answer is yes, for a number of reasons (parenthetically, the book is worth buying; it is only \$25). For the student of British Columbia, some of the chapters provide valuable syntheses of empirical information: about resources, institutions, economies, and societies in the Basin. With the possible exception of Jean-Pierre Savard's chapter on "Birds of the Fraser Basin in Sustainable Development," the chapters tend to rely on previously published material.

For the student of sustainable development, the book provides an interesting series of interpretations and applications. The contributions were, in fact, prepared as background papers to help guide the research program of Westwater Research Centre on sustainable development for the Fraser. There is not much new theory in these background papers, but the eclectic understandings of the concept of sustainable development contribute (by default) to ongoing scholarship on the kind of basic logic that is needed to explain and to measure the concept. The editor, in his introductory and concluding chapters, attempts to summarize and integrate these understandings. That he succeeds only partially is still a credit to his synthesizing skills.

Thirdly, the book should be read by natural resource management specialists. Many of the chapters extend our knowledge in critical areas. For example, Tony Scott provides a fascinating history and analysis of water rights in British Columbia. Such contributions do not need the brief references to sustainable development to merit publication in their own right.

Space does not permit an extended critique of every chapter in the book. The format of the book and (measured) comments on the major themes will, however, be presented. The introductory chapter by Dorcey was

written before the remaining papers were commissioned. It reviews many of the different interpretations of sustainable development, and emphasizes how the concept is best understood as an evolving ethic about the interdependencies between the biophysical and human systems. This interpretation thus makes possible the wide range of understanding of sustainable development that follow in the next four parts to the book.

Part I consists of two chapters, one on native Indians and one on Vancouver. The former, by Michael Kew and Julian Griggs, attempts to show that native Indian culture is historically compatible with sustainable development principles. The latter, by Thomas Hutton and Craig Davis, provides both systematic evidence and intelligent guesses about how far the regional economy of Vancouver also meets such principles. Both contributions, and later ones too, emphasize the virtues of local decision-making, and the theory connecting this to sustainable development is often missing. So too are analyses of the many other "white" settlements in the Fraser Basin.

Part II comprises eight chapters on different resources and resource uses. As mentioned, many are valuable aggregations of empirical evidence on sedimentation, floodplains, salmon, birds, forests, energy, and Vancouver's point source waste disposal. Particularly useful to this reader were Slaymaker's summary of sedimentation and Henderson's summary of the salmon resource. A major lacuna in this section is the lack of contributions on secondary manufacturing of resources and on residuals management during their many stages from extraction to final consumption. This may arguably be a generic weakness in B.C. books.

Part III consists of five chapters on institutions, more particularly regional governance, non-governmental organizations, water rights, water pricing, and regulatory compliance. There seems to be no particular rationale for the choice of these five topics, given the wide range of institutional arrangements that exist for different resource uses. Indeed, this is arguably the weakest section, as some contributors prefer prescription to both description and analysis.

Part IV is called "Outlooks," and it brings together another article on water pricing and related tools, and articles on the ecosystemic approach to both the environment and the economy, on redistribution of wealth, and on aboriginal rights. These pieces could have been better integrated with Parts I and III. As they stand, they provide encapsulated articles on the writings of economists Peter Pearse and Donald Tate, and of ecologist Bill Rees. Some bolder editorial work might at least have helped the other two articles.

Finally, Dorcey writes two concluding chapters attempting to synthesize the work in the book and look forward to Westwater's own volume (yet to be published). He argues, unconvincingly to this reviewer, that there is increasing consensus on the meaning and practice of sustainable development.

We now await Westwater's own work. Westwater and particularly Dorcey have always managed to pose theoretical problems in such a way so as to understand and prescribe better management of water and related resources. This is a methodology that should have been emulated for the book under review. Instead, theory and practice remain largely disconnected. This is an ironic conclusion to make about a book on the concept of sustainable development, a concept that could help to integrate theory and practice in a number of academic disciplines.

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