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**Examining the social dynamics of watershed governance: lessons from  
Kansas**

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Abstract:

Water quality management in the Cheney Lake Watershed is the product of a joint effort between the city of Wichita, Kansas and the Cheney Lake Watershed Citizens Management Committee. A dialogue between city and agricultural stakeholders resulted in this rural-urban partnership for watershed-level governance between these potentially contentious users. Through dialogue, these partners recognized the value of prevention over remediation, and the value of collaboration and cooperation. Farmers voluntary implementations of water-quality management practices mitigate agricultural pollution and sedimentation to the city water supply. In addition, the city recognized the additional costs of these practices to farmers and agreed to pay partial reimbursement of structural costs and to contribute to financial incentives for improved management practices. Long-term successful water governance, however, will require management practices to continue even without incentives. Drawing on interviews with farmers and state water agency officials, this research seeks to identify the social factors (e.g., cultural background, family tradition, sense of ownership/responsibility, income, work load) that contribute to successful implementation and maintenance of water conservation practices and to cooperation between the agricultural and urban community partners, and to evaluate the necessary support structures that affect the success of the Cheney Lake Watershed management.

Impact Statement:

This research project is part of an on-going cooperation with the non-profit watershed management organization Cheney Lake Watershed Inc. The research attempts to identify the social factors that influence the adoption and maintenance of current conservation practices. Analysis of interview data will allow us to add some fine-grained detail about farmer behavior at the field scale, and to the modeling and outreach efforts at the watershed scale. The research will also help to determine if the watershed management organization can use these social factors to encourage strategic placement of conservation practices.

Category: Human Dimensions

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