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The Birth of a Watershed Alliance in the San Pedro Basin of the U.S. – Mexico Border Region

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Robert Varady is deputy director and director of environmental programs at The Udall Center for Studies in Public Policy at The University of Arizona. He is also associate research professor of environmental policy at the Udall Center, associate research professor of arid lands studies, and adjunct associate professor of hydrology and water resources. Varady holds BS and MS degrees in Mathematics from the City College of New York and the Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute (now Polytechnic University), respectively, and a PhD from The University of Arizona in Modern History. At the Udall Center since 1989, Varady's work mostly has addressed US-Mexico border environmental and water-management policy, much of it sponsored by the Ford Foundation. Varady also has directed environmental and agricultural projects in West Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia. He has published essays on environmental history and policy, agricultural development, information management, and transportation systems.

Anne Browning-Aiken joined the Udall Center in August 2000 as a postdoctoral fellow, where she works with Bob Varady on the Thrust Area 5: Sustainable Water Resources Management Project for The University of Arizona's (UA) Science and Technology Center. She is part of a team assessing the potential utility of a water-basin model to be used in water-resource planning and water-rights disputes. She is investigating the historical context of water rights disputes in the Gila and Salt River areas and determining the main issues and trends in the Arizona General Stream Adjudication settlements. Her goal is to identify the social, cultural, and economic issues that Native American and other water stakeholders consider essential to the construction of a Gila Basin model and to determine how those stakeholders might use the model. Browning-Aiken completed her doctoral program in Cultural Anthropology with a focus on the Southwest in December 2000. A UA Dean's Fellow, she has done fieldwork in Sonora, Mexico, and has written a dissertation on the impact of economic policy changes on the lives of people in the mining community of Cananea, Sonora. She has worked on projects related to infrastructure development, food security, and the role of gender in development in Mexico, the American Southwest, Albania, and Egypt. She is also interested in how labor and organizational management in the borderlands are shaped by changing development policies and by US-Mexico financial aid and political diplomacy. Recently Browning-Aiken facilitated regional environmental planning efforts in the San Pedro Basin and the preservation of historical documents for borderlands researchers. She is currently supporting the organization of a San Pedro.

watershed association in Sonora, Mexico, and facilitating the sharing of information and watershed planning between the Sonoran and Arizona portions of the San Pedro Basin. Her environmental education program, ECOSTART, has been awarded a Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration (CONAHEC) Border Pact Grant. This grant will enable teachers from Cananea and Naco, Sonora, to attend GLOBE environmental education workshops, revise their science curriculum to reflect a community focus on the San Pedro River, and to exchange classroom visits and field trips with their Arizona counterparts along the San Pedro River. In addition to her work at the Udall Center, she has presented numerous papers on development issues, political ecology, social memory, and labor conflict at local and regional conferences in the United States and Mexico. She also has extensive teaching experience, including curriculum planning and supervision of teacher interns.

ABSTRACT

The US-Mexico border region is a laboratory for studying transboundary environmental processes within dissimilar societies. Binational watersheds like the San Pedro Basin illustrate marked differences in management regimes. Economic development, embedded in disparate legal and institutional frameworks, impacts quality of life and prompts resource conflicts. In such a setting, watershed councils offer a promising management model. Following the HELP (Hydrology for Life, Environment and Policy) framework, the work of The University of Arizona's Udall Center for Policy Studies links policy-relevant research in the social and physical sciences by addressing water-allocation conflicts in the US and water-quality concerns in Mexico. The effort promotes citizen participation in research, management, and decision making to help improve communication and coordination on water issues in both the US and Mexico. One result has been the bottom-up emergence in the United States of a watershed council, the Upper San Pedro Partnership. To further guide future research and policy, the Center has completed and disseminated a binational survey of public perception of water issues. The work is part of an NSF-funded program, SAHRA (Sustainability of semi-Arid Hydrology and Riparian Areas); and complements SALSA (Semi-Arid Land-Surface-Atmosphere), a global-change research project, and GAPP (GEWEX America Prediction Program).