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Transboundary Environmental Governance across the World's Largest Border Ed. by Stephen Brooks and Andrea Olive (Review)

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Transboundary Environmental Governance across the World's Largest Border. Edited by Stephen Brooks and Andrea Olive. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2018. vii + 248 pp. Map, tables, contributors, index. \$39.95 CAD, paper.

Transboundary environmental governance concerns management of resources where “manmade boundaries ... have been inserted against nature’s will.” The book provides a significant contribution to a growing literature on transboundary governance along the Canada-U.S. border. This international border, the world’s longest border, contains 20% of the available global fresh surface water, shares numerous and diverse habitats, possesses rich and varied natural resources, and is populated by peoples with close economic ties, parallel histories, and common cultural roots. Important differences also exist, however, that lead to divergence and conflict in transboundary governance.

The aim of the editors is “to help us better understand the issues, processes, and challenges that characterize transboundary environmental governance between Canada and the United States.” They asked volume contributors to describe the state of existing relationships, governance structures, and processes of transboundary governance, to assess the adequacy of these structures with respect to environmental impacts, and to evaluate opportunities for reform, improved outcomes, and successful accommodation of emerging environmental concerns.

The editors have splendidly met these aims. I was most impressed by the coherence of the entire volume, and how each individual chapter made a significant contribution to the whole. Each contributor focused on the editor’s aims, provided an entry of similar length and depth, presented interesting case histories, and addressed common themes. Contributors had access to drafts of other chapters, and often referenced points made in other parts of the book. The volume has none of the disjointedness that can characterize edited multi-author volumes. Most chapters share a common structure with a summary introduction, a historical perspective on the development of environmental

governance, a development of those initial structures to accommodate the increasing complexity of environmental and human affairs, and selected case histories.

The volume is organized along a geographical gradient cross-cut by major resource types. The editors first provide a lengthy preface that summarizes each contribution. The first chapter reviews the International Joint Commission that grew out of the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 and formed the basis of early Canada-U.S. transboundary governance, but is now overshadowed by multi-layered regional agreements of various types. The next three chapters examine the Great Lakes Basin, each focusing on a different environmental issue: water quantity, water storage, and river navigation; fisheries management; and water quality and pollution. The fifth chapter on the Prairie Region will be of greatest interest to this journal's readers. A historical prioritization of economic development led to full allocation of water rights in a region of scarce and unreliable water resources, but now faces challenges from new voices advocating for environmental conservation and sustainability. The St. Mary, Milk, and Souris River basins are the focus of the chapter, a decision for which rational support is given. The omission of the Red River of the North Basin is disappointing, however, given its unique properties and regional importance. A chapter on the Pacific West and two chapters on energy governance follow that are also highly relevant to the Great Plains. Here, in a unique twist, Canada has been the driver for resource development, and the United States has been more resistant in its approach to resource development. The final chapter summarizes lessons learned, and looks forward to new challenges posed by invasive species, climate change, and development of the Arctic.

Numerous themes emerge from the individual chapters. Multi-layered governance has developed with a sharing of power between national, subnational, regional, and local levels of administration. New actors now bring their voices to the governance table, including environmentalists, NGOs, and Indigenous, First Nation, and tribal peoples. The early dominance of economic development interests has broadened to consider environmental quality, habitat conservation, and sustainability

perspectives. Common-pool resources require different governance structures and approaches depending upon the symmetry or asymmetry of regional benefits and costs of resource development. Transboundary governance has grown in complexity, often leading to institutional flexibility marked by a mix of binding and non-binding agreements. Climate change and globalization of energy markets present new conflicts and challenges that are not a respecter of national boundaries.

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