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**Environmental Justice and Public Participation:
Implementing Source Water Protection in Eastern Ontario**

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**Environmental Justice and Public Participation:
Implementing Source Water Protection in Eastern Ontario**

Natasha Crane B.A.

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
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ABSTRACT

Increased public awareness of environmental issues has led to greater public demand for involvement in environmental decision-making. The value of public participation has been recognized by academics and government authorities alike. Relevant public participation and environmental justice literature suggest that successful participation can help to achieve a heightened democratic governance system, uphold citizenship rights and, in turn, reduce environmental injustice. Although some might argue that public participation has already been integrated into the Canadian governance system, it is suggested that the legitimacy of public participation must be solidified with improved regulations and guidelines for process design.

This research call is explored through the lens of the Ontario Source Water Protection (SWP) Initiative in the Raisin Region Source Protection Area. As Source Water Protection is ongoing, it provides an outstanding opportunity to observe the implementation of public participation within a decision-making process. Specifically, the objectives of this research were to examine Source Water Protection stakeholder perceptions of public participation and to explore any variation in perceptions that exist between stakeholder groups. Stakeholder groups included SWP Process Architects, SWP Provincial Process Managers, SWP Local Process Managers, and SWP Community Members.

Results show that the stakeholder groups have similar understandings of public participation objectives and effective characteristics. At the same time, there was limited understanding of participation design with regards to mobilization strategies, instrument sensitivity and

process evaluation. This has resulted in significant differences in stakeholder perception of the *Clean Water Act (2006)* and the role of the Source Protection Committee. These findings uncover perceived Source Water Protection process strengths and weaknesses, information that can be used to facilitate improvements to public participation practices. In the end, these findings will also help inform public participation processes in other decision-making domains.

RÉSUMÉ

Les problèmes environnementaux deviennent de plus en plus pressants dans l'œil du public canadien, ce qui a provoqué une demande pour une participation publique plus directe relative à la gestion des ressources environnementales. La valeur de la participation publique est reconnue par le milieu universitaire ainsi que par les autorités gouvernementales. La littérature de la participation publique et de la justice environnementale suggère qu'une participation bien réussie, qui est efficace et authentique pour les participants et le gouvernement, peut avoir comme résultat non seulement un système de gouvernance démocratique élevé, mais aussi une augmentation des droits des citoyens et une réduction des injustices environnementales. Même si certaines sources d'information signalent que la participation publique a déjà été intégrée dans le système de gouvernance canadien, il est suggéré que la légitimité de cette participation soit renforcée par rapport à l'amélioration de la réglementation et des directives qui guident sa construction.

Nous examinons, dans le présent document, l'initiative pour la Protection des sources d'eau (PSE) de l'Ontario au Raisin Region Source Protection Area. L'initiative qui se déroule présentement constitue une occasion importante d'observer l'application de la participation publique dans notre système de gouvernance. Dans ce contexte, les objectifs de cette recherche sont de comprendre les perceptions des parties intéressées de la Protection des sources d'eau et de comprendre les variations entre eux.

Cette analyse a pour but de voir comment la participation publique est perçue par les groupes impliqués dans les processus de création et de planification de la Loi de 2006 sur l'eau saine.

Les parties intéressées sont les architectes du processus de PSE, les gestionnaires provinciaux du processus de PSE, les gestionnaires locaux du processus de PSE, et les participants communautaires du processus de PSE. L'analyse finale montre que les parties intéressées ont une compréhension semblable des objectifs de la participation publique et des qualités qui la rend efficace. Malgré cette compréhension détaillée de la théorie de participation publique, la compréhension de sa construction est souvent différente. Plus particulièrement, la compréhension de la mobilisation, la pertinence des instruments et l'évaluation du processus de conception, varient entre chaque groupe de parties intéressées. Les variations de compréhension, au niveau des connaissances de la construction de la participation publique, a comme résultat la création des perspectives différentes sur la Loi de 2006 sur l'eau saine et le comité de protection des sources connexe. Les résultats de cette recherche mettent en lumière les perceptions des points forts et points faibles de la Protection des sources d'eau, information qui peut être utilisée pour améliorer l'exercice de la participation publique. Ces résultats pourront aussi guider l'exercice de la participation publique dans d'autres processus de gouvernance.

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These last three years have had their ups and downs but in the end I have come out a stronger person. Not only have I learned about public participation and environmental justice, but I have learned a great deal about myself, including patience, independence and confidence in my abilities. I would have never learned these lessons without the support of many people. As such, I would like to propose a toast and cheers those who humored my questions and guided me through this great adventure.

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arms. I never would have been able to experience public participation first hand without your indulgence and warm smiles.

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Here's to you. Cheers.
Natasha Crane

ACRONYMS

CS – Community Stakeholders

LPM – Local Process Managers

MOE – Ministry of the Environment

PA – Process Architects

PPM – Provincial Process Managers

RRCA – Raisin Region Conservation Authority

RR SPA – Raisin Region Source Protection Authority

R-SN SPA – Raisin-South Nation Source Protection Authority

R-SN SPC – Raisin-South Nation Source Protection Committee

SPC – Source Protection Committee

SWP – Source Water Protection

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Indeed, where citizens are fully engaged in the policy process, their sense of empowerment is increased, their capacity to act as democratic citizens is enhanced, and the policy options available to government actively reflect the emotive and factual motivations of their constituents. The result: better citizens and better policy.

(Department of Justice Canada, 2007)

Since the Walkerton Crisis and the passage of the *Clean Water Act (2006)* there has been appreciable public unrest within rural Eastern Ontario communities. To prevent another tragedy like Walkerton the provincial government has developed more rigorous environmental and water resources legislation, including the *Nutrient Management Act (2002)*, the *Safe Drinking Water Act (2002)* and the *Clean Water Act (2006)*. These efforts, however, are proving to be a challenge given the resistance shown by public stakeholders. Hansard, the official transcription of the Social Policy Committee of the Ontario Legislature, reveals stakeholder concerns regarding the *Clean Water Act's (2006)* approach to protecting source waters (Government of Ontario, 2006). The tension that has arisen among government officials, watershed planners and managers and public stakeholders may be addressed by evolving public participation practices. As such, this research is an investigation of public participation as it unfolds through the implementation of the *Clean Water Act (2006)* and its Source Water Protection (SWP) Initiative within the Raisin Region Source Protection Area of Eastern Ontario.

1.1 Purpose Statement and Central Research Question

An increase in public awareness of environmental issues, as a result of events such as the Walkerton Crisis, has instigated a demand for greater public opportunity to participate more directly in environmental decision-making (Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, 2003). Relevant public participation and environmental justice literature suggest that successful public participation can help to achieve a heightened democratic governance system, that in turn reduces environmental injustice and enhances community satisfaction with governmental policies and programs (Abelson *et al.*, 2003; Carr & Halvorsen, 2001; Frewer & Rowe, 2000; Frewer *et al.*, 2004; Halvorsen, 2003; Petts, 2001). In order to achieve such a goal, it is suggested that the legitimacy of public participation must be solidified through improved regulations, including focused attention on public participation design and evaluation. The recognition of citizenship rights through public participation processes are believed to further support the theoretical tenets of public participation and help legitimize it in the eyes of decision-makers. As such, it is believed that the tenets of a carefully crafted public participation process must reflect the characteristics of environmental justice as well as fully developed citizenship rights.

The investigation into public participation, including its relationship with environmental justice and citizenship rights, is viewed through the lens of the Ontario Source Water Protection Initiative and is guided by the following central objectives: to understand Source Water Protection stakeholder perception of public participation and to reveal any variations that may exist between these perceptions. In order to achieve these objectives, the research shall proceed as follows: firstly, investigate what constitutes effective public participation

and from this develop a conceptual framework summarizing its key messages; and secondly, probe Source Water Protection stakeholders regarding their understanding of public participation particularly within the context of the *Clean Water Act (2006)*.

1.2 Research Development

In order to achieve the identified research objectives several methods have been chosen. To begin, an extensive literature review was conducted, including the study of environmental justice, citizenship rights, public participation, watershed planning and management, Ontario Source Water Protection, and the study of perception and attitudes within qualitative research methods. A comprehensive and practical public participation conceptual framework was created from the results of this process summarizing its main messages. The role of public participation within a decision-making process was study through an investigation of Ontario Source Water Protection. Specifically, SWP stakeholders were asked to discuss how they perceive public participation based on their experiences.

1.3 Research Justification

The potential benefits of public participation are numerous. Successful participation helps to create community networks, partnerships and sustainable resources for long term cooperation and efficient decision-making. In the long term, the participation of local peoples helps to achieve greater civic literacy and an educated and engaged citizenry. There is also a greater understanding of environmental issues and problems where, ideally, successful public participation garners a greater satisfaction of community needs thanks to balanced and equitable priority setting. In addition to community benefits of public participation, there are

also benefits for decision-makers. Reaching a cooperative consensus helps build community trust in local authorities and their agendas, therefore, improving environmental management (including watershed planning and management) as well as enriching other forms of decision-making more generally within a democratic system (Ableson *et al.*, 2003; Canadian Policy Research Network, 2000a; Carr & Halvorsen, 2001; Commission on Resources and Environment, 1995; Guthrie & McCool, 2001).

Although the benefits of public participation are, in theory, widely accepted, it is felt that there is a lack of knowledge regarding effective public participation design particularly among academics and community stakeholders who have expressed concern regarding tokenism (Chess & Purcell, 1999; Frewer *et al.*, 2004; Krueger *et al.*, 2001; Petts, 2001; Phillips & Sewell, 1979). This lack of knowledge has hindered the evolution of the democratic system and, thus, compromised public participation's potential contribution to decision-making processes. By investigating the implementation of public participation within Ontario Source Water Protection, insights will be provided regarding its true potential in practice. The insights are hoped to inspire decision-makers to re-examine the role of participation in this particular initiative, as well as, other decision-making scenarios.

1.4 Thesis Organizations

This study is organized in seven chapters. Chapter 2 (Literature Review) is a comprehensive literature review, including an examination of seven relevant theoretical domains related to this research. This exercise begins with an examination of environmental justice and citizenship rights and is followed by a comprehensive look at public participation. Moving

on to case study themes, the historical role of public participation in Ontario watershed planning and management is explored, followed by a closer look at the Ontario Source Water Protection Initiative. Finally, the study of perceptions and attitudes is examined to better understand their role in environmental management and qualitative studies.

Chapter 3 (Public Participation Conceptual Framework) is a summary of public participation theory in the form of a conceptual framework. The content of the conceptual framework describes both the *theoretical underpinnings* and *design elements* of a contemporary public participation process as described by relevant literature. The conceptual framework is designed to be a discussion guide for the field research process.

Chapter 4 (Setting the Stage) takes a closer look at Ontario Source Water Protection and the *Clean Water Act (2006)*. It begins by providing a brief historical account of watershed planning and management in Ontario including the role played by Ontario Conservation Authorities and the Walkerton Crisis in setting the stage for Source Water Protection. This is followed by an introduction to the case study area, the Raisin Region Source Protection Authority and its jurisdiction.

Chapter 5 (Methodology) outlines the research methodology which includes three stages: the preparatory, design, and implementation and analysis stages. It describes the primary research method, the semi-structured interview, including its advantages and disadvantages. This is followed by a discussion of the analysis process.

Chapter 6 (Research Results) presents findings and interpretations of the thematic content analysis of the interview data. The first step to the analysis process involved an examination of stakeholder perception of public participation as related to Source Water Protection. The second step is to compare the perceptions of each stakeholder group against the perceptions of the other groups in order to uncover any variations that may exist. Finally a moment is taken to reflect on key messages that are revealed as a result of the analysis process.

Chapter 7 (Research Conclusions) summarizes the findings and conclusions drawn from this study. The major substantive, methodological and theoretical contributions are then discussed. Finally, future research directions are highlighted.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Throughout history, all too many factors relating to people's race, gender, status, income, education and health, have prevented some citizens from gaining as much influence over the public realm as others. Whether the pursuit of democracy moves forward or not depends on how effective we are in empowering citizens to participate as equal members in shaping their polity.

(Brannon *et al.*, 2007, pp. 26)

2.1 Literature Review Strategy

Several literature domains constitute the broad themes that support the content of this research. The first two domains, environmental justice and citizenship rights, champion the role public participation plays within the construction of democratic and human rights. The second two domains include public participation and its historical development within Ontario watershed planning and management. The third literature domain relates to Source Water Protection and outlines the legislative foundation surrounding the research case study. The final literature domain, which contributes to the comprehension of public participation, is perceptions and attitudes. This field of study helps to clarify stakeholder views of environmental management, governance and public participation.

2.2 Environmental Justice

The environmental justice movement has grown in recent years attracting the attention of academics from a variety of fields, including geography, environmental sciences, sociology and political sciences. A thorough literature review has revealed a range of perspectives from which environmental justice is understood: civil rights, distributive justice and ethics,

public participation, social justice and ecological sustainability (Bryner, 2002). Table 1 gives a basic outline of each perspective from which environmental justice can be viewed.

Table 1. Environmental Justice Perspectives

PERSPECTIVES	DESCRIPTION
Civil Rights	• Identify disparate impacts due to discrimination. • Civil rights laws provide legal tools and concepts.
Distributive Justice and Ethics	• Distribute benefits and burdens fairly or equally. • Public policies should produce fair outcomes.
Public Participation	• Devise fair procedures that give voice to all members of the community. • Ensure all groups have the social capital to participate effectively.
Social Justice	• Comprehensively assess the interaction of economic, political, social, and cultural power. • Address disproportionate risks and harms.
Ecological Sustainability	• Require pollution prevention and the conservation of resources. • Eliminate, rather than redistribute, environmental problems.

Source: Bryner, 2002

Numerous definitions of environmental justice exist in the literature, most of which focus on the consequences of environmental management on disenfranchised communities. Mitchell's (2002) definition embraces the notion of sustainable environments that are managed in a way which acknowledges various social needs in order to promote community empowerment. According to Mitchell (2002) environmental justice is

the right to a safe, healthy, productive and sustainable environment for all, in which 'environment' is viewed in its totality, and includes ecological (biological), physical (natural and built), social, political, aesthetic, and economic components. Environmental justice refers to the conditions in which such a right can be freely exercised, through which individual and group identities, needs, and dignities are preserved, fulfilled, and respected in a way which provides for self actualization and personal and community empowerment.

Although this definition is comprehensive in its meaning, it is limited in its understanding of the intrinsic value of nature outside of an anthropogenic perspective.

The relationship between environmental justice and public participation stems from the acknowledged importance that all community members have an opportunity to provide input in decision-making through fair and equitable procedures (Bryner, 2002). The literature shows that acknowledgement of environmental justice tenets, particularly those of public participation, help to reduce the frequency of victimization, as such, redirecting focus from discrimination and victimization to empowerment facilitated by public participation (Agyeman, 2005; Anand, 2004; Bryner, 2002; Connelly & Richardson, 2005; Corburn, 2002; Sapat *et al.*, 2002; Schlosberg, 2004). Experts agree that inclusive representation and equal access to decision-making are critical to the success of a meaningful public participation process. In fact, the literature suggests that unbalanced public participation exaggerates the ability of some stakeholder groups to have a disproportionately large influence over decision-making and, thus, increase the potential for environmental injustice. (Abelson *et al.*, 2006; Ascentum Inc & Canadian Policy Research Network, 2005; Beattie *et al.*, 2003; Breitbart & Kasperson, 1974; Citizen Engagement, 2004; Department of Justice Canada, 2007; Environment Canada, 1996; Hanna, 2005; Tuler, 1999).

The discourse surrounding environmental justice, and its relationship with public participation, critiques the essence of the Western governance system of democracy suggesting that our democratic system has evolved to include more than basic voting and a right to organize. It also includes meaningful opportunities to actively participate in decision-making (Abelson *et al.*, 2003; Anand, 2004; Agyeman, 2005; Connelly &

Richardson, 2005; Faber & Krieg, 2004; Hillman, 2002; Kurtz, 2005; Schlosberg, 2004). Herein lays the foundation of public participation as a fundamental tenet of environmental justice. The literature denotes a link between public participation and democracy, as understood through the lens of environmental justice, including a relationship with citizenship rights. In fact, it has been suggested that the environmental justice movement has been fueled by ineffective and token opportunities for communities to meaningfully participate in the development of their environment (Allan & Hanson, (1972); Bay & Walker (1975); Lowe and Goyder (1983); Shragge (2003): Silvey (2003))

2.3 Citizenship Rights

The study of citizenship has been undertaken by great thinkers such as Aristotle, Rawls, Hobbes and Marshall (Denhan & Slawner, 1998; Reisman, 2005; Young, 1989). Its complexity is both philosophical and practical in nature. The initial philosophical understandings of citizenship included concepts of balance, equality, affection, community and compensation (Denhan & Slawner, 1998; Reisman, 2005). Rawls would later introduce the notion of justice (Denhan & Slawner, 1998). The connection between citizenship and justice would prove to include that of environmental justice in a contemporary setting as citizenship rights evolved (Marshall, 1963).

The gradual evolution of democratic systems led to the creation of T.H. Marshall's model of citizenship (Marshall, 1963). The Marshallian Trilogy of Citizenship has greatly influenced the notion of citizenship within Western government systems as we know them today. Created in the seventeenth century, Marshall's Trilogy describes the gradual development of

citizenship rights as influenced by economic progression (Marston & Mitchell, 2004). The components of the trilogy include civil rights, political rights and social rights. Reisman (2005, pp. 183) dissects Marshall's definition and states that "the civil element is composed of the rights necessary for individual freedom – liberty of the person, freedom of speech, thought and faith, the right to own property and to conclude valid contracts, and the right to justice". The institutionalization of civil rights would eventually lead to the natural inclusion of political rights (Marshall, 1963). Political rights encompass "the right to participate in the exercise of political power, as a member of a body invested with political authority or as an elector of the members of such a body" (Reisman, 2005, pp. 188). The final installation of citizenship rights, according to Marshall (1963), is social rights which include the right to educational and social services. Marshall's Trilogy is the basic foundation which constitutes the notion of citizenship in Britain and North American as we know it today (Marston & Mitchell, 2004).

In a contemporary context, the meaning of citizenship is greatly debated. Critics of Marshall's theory have suggested that it is narrow-minded, "westocentric" and dated (Marston & Mitchell, 2004; Pearson, 2002; Reisman, 2005; Young, 2006; vanGunsteren, 1998; Yuval-Davis, 1999). Globalization and transnationalism have forced the expansion of citizenship theory to look beyond the nation-state (vanGunsteren, 1998). In addition, social, gender, race, class and environmental movements have pushed citizenship theorists to investigate the inclusion of discrimination and public participation within the notions of civil, political and social rights (Brodie, 2002; Law, 2003; Mahtani, 2002 Mitchell, 1997; Rocco, 2002; Young, 2006; Yuval-Davis). In light of this evolutionary thinking, Marshall's Trilogy has inspired the inclusion of citizenship rights within the context of this research where

justice is viewed as a civil right, public participation is viewed as a political right, and a healthy environment is viewed as a social right.

In order to bring citizenship theory into the 21st Century, contemporary academics refer to “re-energizing citizenship” (Brannan *et al.*, 2007). Re-energizing citizenship suggests that being a citizen is more than a legal status. It means behaving as an active member of the community, including participating in decision-making (Brannan *et al.*, 2007). As such, in addition to environmental justice, citizenship rights support the claim of this research that public participation is an inherent part of a democratic system. These social ideologies, and their inclusion of discrimination and public participation, often make up what is the foundation of environmental justice. It is here where citizenship rights and environmental justice connect.

As related to the focus of this research, it is suggested that environmental justice lacks legitimacy and, therefore, must be realized through enhanced institutional support. Citizenship theory helps to strengthen voids which have hindered environmental justice from being meaningfully institutionalized in governance today. Within the context of this research, it is suggested that the right to clean water and the right to influence the management of resources through public participation are basic citizenship rights.

2.4 Public Participation

Public participation is an expansive field of study. Relevant literature can be found within environmental studies, geography, political science and sociology, among others. A variety

of public and private institutions have also taken interest in the process, including federal, provincial, public and corporate organizations (Drew *et al.*, 2004; Government of Canada, 1992; Hanna, 2005; Health Canada, 2000; IA2P, 2004; Ministry of the Environment, 1990; Ministry of the Environment, 2006b). The literature reveals a variety of themes, or perspectives, that encompass the meaning of public participation, including: social cohesion, democratic rights, citizen empowerment and environmental justice, and design. These perspectives are described in Table 2. For the purposes of this research, public participation is defined as “a key component of management whose objective is the promotion of democracy and accountability through the communication and engagement of an involved citizenry”.

Table 2. Public Participation Perspectives

PERSPECTIVES	DESCRIPTION
Social Cohesion	• Community building. • Identification of common goals and objectives. • Foundation of community networks/partnerships.
Democratic Rights	• Pluralism approach. • The right to know and participate. • Trust, accountability, legitimacy.
Citizen Empowerment Environmental Justice	• The empowerment of citizens to have influence over their environment. • The equal consideration of the needs and wants of all stakeholders. • The equal distribution of environmental benefits and burdens.
Design	• Enshrined or dedicated opportunity to participate within legislation. • Structured design. • Capacity building.

In light of its theoretical foundation, the literature has identified several benefits of public participation including the enhancement of civic literacy, decision-making efficiency and effectiveness, an educated and engaged citizenry, networks and partnerships, balanced and

equitable priority setting, satisfaction of constituency needs and social and environmental justice. These benefits are clearly recognized within environmental justice, government decision-making and watershed planning and management (Abelson & Gauvin, 2006; Ascentum Inc & Canadian Policy Research Network, 2005; Cooper, 2003; Drew *et al.*, 2004; Jackson, 2002; MacKinnon, 2006; Jansky *et al.*, 2005; Sadler & Syme, 1994). Despite the acknowledgement of such benefits, it is widely accepted that low-income, minority and rural communities continue to have little opportunity to meaningfully participate in local decision-making, thus leaving them vulnerable to rights violations (Bryant, 2003; Bryner *et al.*, 2002; Drew *et al.*, 2004; Sapat *et al.*, 2002; Shapiro, 2005).

Although one might argue that opportunities to participate in decision-making are found throughout the governance system, their authenticity and effectiveness are questioned. A closer examination of public participation literature reveals gaps within the comprehension of public participation process design, instrument selection and evaluation science (Chess & Purcell, 1999; Frewer *et al.*, 2004; Krueger *et al.*, 2001; Petts, 2001; Phillips & Sewell, 1979). It has been suggested that “much of the current emphasis on participation methods is “a response to the prevailing view that methods used in the past are no longer appropriate for current decision making processes or for a more educated, sophisticated and less deferential public” (Abelson *et al.*, 2003, pp. 239). As such, this emerging public is demanding that public participation methods provide interactive two-way dialogue. In order to better understand what academics describe as effective contemporary public participation practices, a conceptual framework has been constructed summarizing their key messages (see Chapter 3).

2.5 Public Participation and Watershed Planning and Management

2.5.1 *The Evolution of Ontario Conservation Authorities*

Conservation Authorities have played a critical role in the planning and management of Ontario's watersheds. Local conservation efforts were initiated by the Ontario Conservation and Reforestation Association and the Federation of Ontario Naturalists in 1941 (Richardson, 1974; Powell & Thomson, 1992; Shrubsole, 1990). Province-wide conservation efforts originally began as a part of the Department of Planning and Development and would later be integrated into the mandate of the Ministry of Natural Resources (Richardson, 1974; Powell & Thomson, 1992; Shrubsole, 1990).

The *Ontario Conservation Authorities Act* was passed in 1946 to solidify the impact of conservation in Ontario and legitimize the mandate of the Ministry of Natural Resources (Richardson, 1974; Powell & Thomson, 1992; Shrubsole, 1990). The Act focuses on flood and erosion control as well as environmental conservation. In light of natural disasters such as Hurricane Hazel, watershed planning and management became a greater priority for the provincial government, in particular by placing specific emphasis on flood and erosion control (Richardson, 1974; Powell & Thomson, 1992; Shrubsole, 1990).

Since the establishment of the *Ontario Conservation Authorities Act (1946)*, Conservation Authorities have become an integral part of Ontario's communities. According to Conservation Ontario, Conservation Authorities are environmental protectors, water resource managers and environmental educators (Conservation Ontario, 2005b). Conservation

Authorities stress the importance of environmental education and awareness (Conservation Ontario, 2005b).

2.5.2 Public Participation and Watershed Planning and Management

The evolution of watershed planning and management in Canada has proven itself to be interdisciplinary, multi-sectoral, inter-governmental and inter-jurisdictional, and plagued with social complexities. Source Water Protection, for instance, impacts several different sectors, including industry, business and municipal governments, and its scale extends to include not only Ontario but Quebec and the United States as well. Coming to grips with these complexities and “overcoming this gridlock is challenging, but possible – through an understanding of individual barriers and their inter-relationships, and with the active participation of all stakeholders” (Brandes & Kriwoken, 2006, pp. 85). As its management is better understood, the value of community involvement has increased in importance (Beattie *et al.*, 2003; Bessette, 2006; Brandes & Kriwoken, 2006; Jansky *et al.*, 2005; Sewell, 1969; Sadler & Syme, 1994). As such, the management of water resources is increasingly understood as a holistic effort, encompassing both physical and social sciences. In order to fully comprehend the social parameters of watershed planning and management the inclusion of meaningful public participation is necessary.

Although the role of community members has been widely discussed as related to watershed planning and management, there has been little progress in the integration of public participation into the discipline. In the 1970s Doerksen and Pierce (1976, pp. 4) stated that, “many of the political ramifications of current proposals for increased public participation in

water resources planning have not been explored fully by either proponents or opponents”. Nearly twenty years later Khan and Sellars (1993, pp. 469) demonstrated a continued lack of interaction between authorities of different disciplines when dealing with watershed planning and management as they claim an “often cramped vision from within narrow disciplinary boundaries including mutual ignorance between social scientists and technologists and a reluctance to explore a no-man’s land between disciplines”. In a contemporary context, Jansky *et al.* (2005, pp. 3) suggest that

equitable allocation and stewardship of water resources also require[s] detailed understanding of interrelated hydrodynamic, socio-economic and ecological systems. Such knowledge is often sorely lacking among those responsible for water decisions at the local, provincial and national scales.

It is evident that experts continue to call for the inclusion of public participation in watershed planning and management. It is suggested that the tension in Eastern Ontario among stakeholders of the Source Water Protection Initiative is a prime example of this void in democratic practices.

2.6 Ontario Source Water Protection

There is limited published academic literature pertaining to the Ontario Source Water Protection experience (Berg & de Loe, 2006). Existing documentation is primarily governmental and is focused on describing the evolution of science and policy. These documents are founded upon the reports written by the Honourable Justice O’Connor outlining his investigation into the Walkerton, Ontario Crisis of 2000. There are two parts to this inquiry. Part One describes the unfolding of the crisis itself and Part Two describes a set of recommendations including the protection of Ontario’s source waters and the integration of community involvement (O’Connor, 2002b). The Ontario Source Water Protection

Initiative and its corresponding legislation, the *Clean Water Act (2006)*, are an attempt made by the provincial government to address Justice O'Connor's recommended watershed-based solution to water management (O'Connor, 2002b). Generally speaking, Source Water Protection is described as an ecosystem approach focused on the conservation of water quality and quantity on a watershed scale. Its multi-stakeholder mentality stresses the need for local coordination and cooperation through public participation as implemented through the use of the Source Protection Committee (SPC). It is clear that the government recognizes the value of public input as the role of public participation becomes more significant with the publication of each document (Ministry of the Environment, 1993; 2004a; 2004b; 2004c; 2006, 2007)

Since the passing of the *Clean Water Act (2006)* many new documents have been released providing guidance for both Source Protection Authorities, via regulations, and communities, via educational materials such as brochures, pamphlets and websites, enabling both groups to adapt to this new approach to watershed planning and management (Ministry of the Environment, 2006e). The document most relevant within the context of this research is the "Stakeholder Engagement Reference Material for the Drinking Water Source Protection" (Paterson, J & Ardea Research & Consulting, 2007). By defining stakeholder engagement, outlining its major objectives and describing key challenges to its implementation, the objective of this document is to provide guidance for Source Protection Authorities, their committees, the Ministry of the Environment (MOE), the Ministry of Natural Resources, Conservation Authorities and municipalities alike when designing public participation.

A review of this document reveals a comprehensive understanding of public participation theoretical underpinnings on the part of the MOE. Many of the messages, provided in Part One, are similar to those outlined in the conceptual framework (see chapter 5) developed for this research. For instance, the MOE recognizes the different degrees of public participation including: compliance, information (communication), consultation, involvement (contribution) and collaboration (Paterson, J & Ardea Research & Consulting, 2007). As a reference guide, this document also outlines the different decision-making stages and the different levels of engagement needed at each stage; within the public participation conceptual framework this is called phase sensitivity (see Chapter 3). Furthermore, this document encourages the evaluation of public participation process and outcome.

In addition to design guidance, the reference material also explains the objectives of public participation in effort to educate the SPC and its Management team about its benefits. According to the document, public participation aims to promote public support and ownership in watershed management (Paterson, J & Ardea Research & Consulting, 2007). It also aims to encourage fair, transparent and democratic decision-making which is accountable to all those involved (Paterson, J & Ardea Research & Consulting, 2007). In order for public participation to achieve these goals it must include all interests and promote equity between participants (Paterson, J & Ardea Research & Consulting, 2007). This document also provides information regarding possible challenges to achieving its full potential (i.e., time, cost, misperception etc.).

Part Two of the Stakeholder Engagement Reference Material for Drinking Water Source Protection provides “tips, tools and techniques” about public participation design (Paterson, J

& Ardea Research & Consulting, 2007). Included in these tips is the notion that public participation instruments must consider the objectives of the engagement process, the projected participants, the issues at hand, resource limitations etc. (Paterson, J & Ardea Research & Consulting, 2007). Despite the addition of this type of information, this research suggests that public participation construction, or design, is critical to the success of a participation process and, therefore, requires more comprehensive instruction than that included in this document.

The Province of Ontario Hansards have also greatly contributed to the increased comprehension of Source Water Protection in Eastern Ontario. Hansards are the hearing minutes as recorded from the Standing Committee on Social Policy Hearings which took place in the summer of 2006 (Government of Ontario, 2006). Hearings were held to provide opportunity for the public to inject their opinions regarding Source Water Protection into the *Clean Water Act (2006)*. In the end, these documents reveal the concerns and frustration of the agricultural community, and indicate the need to include extensive public participation in the decision-making process. The amendments, made as a result of these hearings, are also available to the public (Ministry of the Environment, 2006a). The evolution of Source Water Protection has resulted in the development of other government documents, including *Clean Water Act (2006)* regulations and guidance documents, all of which have enriched the researcher's understanding of the case study.

2.8 Qualitative Research Methods and the Study of Perceptions and Attitudes

The study of perceptions and attitudes is key to understanding public participation. An individual's contribution to decision-making is affected by their perceptions and attitudes toward the environment and government. Within the context of this research, the study of perceptions and attitudes contributes to the researcher's capacity to conduct thematic content analysis.

The study of perceptions and attitudes has a long tradition in the fields of natural resources management and geography more generally (Burton & Sewell, 1971; Jarrett, 1968; Mitchell, 1989; Saarinen, 1969). Influenced by many outside sources, perception is a culmination of values, moods and social circumstances/expectations (Mitchell, 1989); each of these being affected by past and present stimuli (Saarinen, 1969). Attitudes, on the other hand, are "the collection of feelings (affects) and beliefs (cognitions) which predispose an individual to react in a certain way to the object of these affected cognitions" (Burton & Sewell, 1971, pp. 8). In short, an attitude affects one's perception and reaction to a stimulus and vice versa (Burton & Sewell, 1971). Within the context of this research, a stakeholder's feelings about the rural lifestyle may influence his/her perception and attitude regarding environmental issues and interaction with government agencies. For example, many local farms have been in operation for generations and, thus, have garnered a sense of property entitlement making them defensive when told how to maintain their land in light of Source Water Protection.

Generally speaking, the understanding of local perceptions and attitudes towards water resources management is directly related to public participation. Basing water resource

management solely on the perceptions and attitudes of government managers can lead to the creation of policy which is heavily influenced by party and professional affiliation, as well as other outside pressures (i.e., non-governmental organizations and lobby groups). In the end, this may leave community stakeholders feeling neglected (Burton & Sewell, 1971; Mitchell, 1989). Engaging the public in a more interactive manner is said to help decision-makers better understand community values and needs, and in doing so inform policies more suited to the context. It is also said to educate the public regarding environmental management and government policy agenda. In the end, there is less resistance to government initiatives and local peoples are empowered through the reduction of tokenism (Burton & Sewell, 1971). Given frequent shifts in community goals, as well as perceptions and attitudes, there is a need for systematic and entrenched public participation (Mitchell, 1989).

Environmental justice and citizenship rights can only be upheld with the incorporation of meaningful public participation in all types of decision-making. The evolution of watershed planning and management in Ontario, and across the country, supports and highlights the need for more meaningful public participation; however, it also reveals deficiencies in our understanding of participation process design. Learning from past experiences in watershed planning and management, the Ministry of the Environment recognizes the value of public input and is attempting to rectify previous weaknesses in public participation by creating an institutionalized process through the Source Protection Committee. In light of the literature review, public participation is shown to be complex encompassing many different elements. Chapter 3 is an introduction of the public participation conceptual framework which summarizes how academics view public participations and its various facets. .

CHAPTER 3

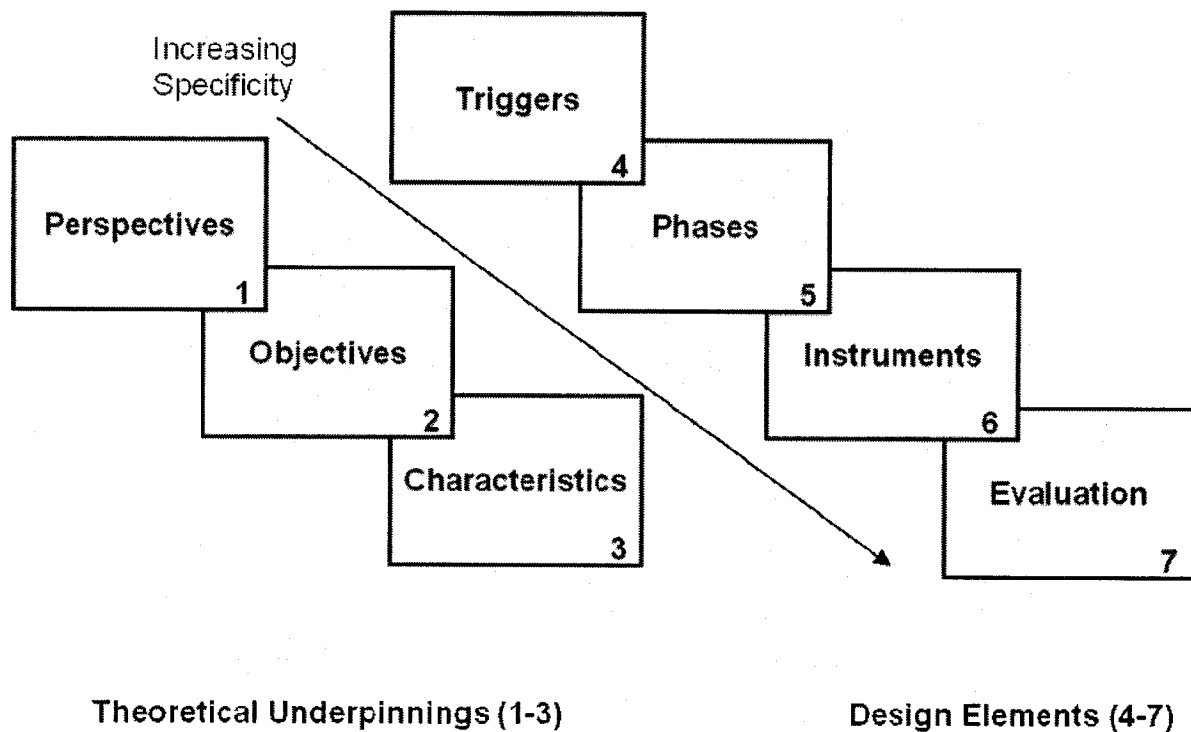
THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The major question remains: how useful is increased public participation? Unfortunately, there is a scarcity of objective evaluation of past and ongoing methods and levels of participation. Although government agencies have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on participation programmes, they have generally been unwilling to allocate any funds to the evaluation of the effectiveness of such ventures.

(Phillips & Sewell, 1979)

Public participation is a component of management which affects all decision-making domains. As discussed in Chapter 2, academics clearly define a collection of public participation benefits for both stakeholders and decision-makers. Stemming from an extensive literature review, a conceptual framework has been constructed in order to organize and summarize complex public participation theory in a manageable fashion for the purposes of this research. The framework is comprised of seven inter-related components: *perspectives, objectives, characteristics, triggers, phases, instruments and evaluation*. The components can be further organized by theoretical underpinnings and public participation design elements (Figure 1). The following pages describe the theory behind public participation and discuss key elements of meaningful design.

Figure 1. The Public Participation Conceptual Framework



3.1 Public Participation Conceptual Framework Components

3.1.1 Theoretical Underpinnings – Component #1 Public Participation Perspectives

The *public participation perspectives component* illustrates the philosophical or theoretical domains that help define its meaning. The literature defines public participation as encompassing the following perspectives: democracy, social cohesion, citizen empowerment and environmental justice, and design.

Beginning with democracy, this perspective suggests that within a democratic system a citizen has the right to know, the right to participate, and the right to have influence over government decision-making (Drew *et al.*, 2004; Krueger *et al.*, 2001). From the perspective of social cohesion, public participation is described as promoting a heightened sense of

teamwork and community (Jackson, 2002). The citizen empowerment and environmental justice perspective is as an extension of the democracy and social cohesion perspectives, stating that all citizens must have equal access to environmental decision-making where their needs and concerns are considered with equal weight (Bryner, 2002; Commission on Resources and Environment, 1995; Goldenman & Zaharchenko, 2004; Hartely & Wood, 2005; Krueger *et al.*, 2001). Finally, the design perspective states that decision-makers must be cognizant of key design features when creating public participation in order for it to be meaningful and effective (Health Canada, 2000).

These perspectives describe the social implications, as well as the design elements, of public participation. By understanding the different ways in which public participation is viewed one can better understand its value and objectives. *Component #2 – Public Participation Objectives* further explores each of these Qualities.

3.1.2 Theoretical Underpinnings – Component #2 Public Participation Objectives

The second component of the conceptual framework, *public participation objectives*, outlines the goals of participation. Here, attention is directed towards three primary areas: social objectives, management objectives and community objectives (Goldenman & Zaharchenko, 2004; Guthrie & McCool, 2001; Krueger *et al.*, 2001). The literature suggests that each of these objective sets contribute to environmental justice and decision-making efficiency.

Referring first to social objectives, meaningful opportunities to participate in decision-making encourage democracy through the enhancement of a pluralistic governance system (Abelson *et al.*, 2006; Carr & Halvorsen, 2001; Cooper, 2003; Dyck, 2004; Krueger *et al.*, 2001; MacKinnon, 2005; Goldenman & Zaharchenko, 2004). In the case of environmental decision-making, meaningful public participation encourages environmental justice, reduces victimization and encourages community empowerment (Bryner *et al.*, 2002). Its subsequent promotion of community networks and partnerships, therefore, encourages a heightened sense of social cohesion. Successful public participation is a perpetuating cycle as it encourages citizens to participate in future decision-making. This, in the end, further enhances these attributes (Abelson *et al.*, 2003; Canadian Policy Research Network, 2000a; Carr & Halvorsen, 2001; Commission on Resources and Environment, 1995; Guthrie & McCool, 2001).

From a management perspective, public participation creates a more efficient decision-making system. It is suggested that communities are less resistant to government policy agendas if they have had an opportunity to provide meaningful input and if the final decision-making is tailored to their needs (Drew *et al.*, 2004). Ideally, meaningful participation is also believed to increase public trust and legitimacy in institutions as decision-makers openly acknowledge and respect the concerns of citizens (Canadian Policy Research Network, 2000b; MacKinnon, 2004).

Finally from a community perspective, public participation provides many benefits to individual citizens. Providing opportunities for citizens to become involved in decision-making promotes greater civic and environmental literacy (Abelson & Gauvin, 2006). In

addition to increased awareness, meaningful public participation allows for more balanced and equitable priority setting, where all stakeholder perspectives are viewed with equal weight. As such, public participation helps citizens feel empowered as they have been able to influence decision-making to satisfy their personal needs. The end result is an overall sense of community pride and ownership (Mitchell, 2002).

Public participation objectives reveal the goals and benefits of a meaningful public participation process. These objectives are clearly outlined in the literature and are commonly accepted by academics and decision-makers alike. Although these benefits, and their contribution to environmental justice, are not debated, traditional methods of public participation have been the subject of much discussion and criticism (Chess, 2000; Chess & Purcell, 1999; Frewer et al., 2004; Petts, 200; Phillips & Sewell, 1979). The literature suggests that increased attention to process design, including instrument sensitivity and evaluation, would increase the likelihood of successful public participation. These components of public participation are discussed in the following sections.

3.1.3 Theoretical Underpinnings - Component #3 Public Participation Characteristics

The final component included within the conceptual framework *theoretical underpinnings* is *public participation characteristics*. This component describes the characteristics that public participation design must possess in order to be meaningful, environmentally just, and generally speaking, worthwhile for those involved (i.e., decision-makers and participants). Five main characteristics of process design have been identified as imperative to the achievement of participation objectives: systematic, representative, communicative, substantive and evaluative.

Describing public participation as systematic implies a degree of design structure. In order to create an efficient process, participation must be planned in advance, well organized and executed in a timely manner. (Abelson *et al.*, 2006; Ascentum Inc & Canadian Policy Research Network, 2005; Jackson, 2002). An important part of public participation structure is balanced representation. Given the power and influence possessed by lobby groups and industrial representatives, it is important that decision-makers ensure all stakeholder groups have equal influence over decision-making for participation to be viewed as fair (Abelson *et al.*, 2006; Citizen Engagement, 2004; Tuler, 1999). Public participation structure must also include a complete communication strategy. Proper attention to communication techniques helps produce stakeholders who are better able to make meaningful contributions to the decision-making process. In the end, stakeholders who are fully informed and who have participated in a transparent process are less likely to resist projects whose objectives they may have otherwise misunderstood (Hanna, 2005; Lukasik *et al.*, 2006; Roy, 1998; Watling, 2006). In addition to education, it is suggested that personal contact and two-way dialogue are the single greatest factors in increasing the likelihood of cooperation (Carpini *et al.*, 2004).

In order for it to be worthy of the time and financial resources it expends, public participation must also be substantive, or considerate of all factors (the economy, the environment, and local cultures, among others) (Beattie *et al.*, 2003; Breitbart & Kasperson, 1974; Department of Justice Canada, 2007; Environment Canada, 1996; Hanna, 2005). In addition, participant input must bear weight on the final decision-making or the process may be perceived as

tokenism (Ascentum Inc & Canadian Policy Research Network, 2005; Petts, 2001; Phillips & Sewell, 1979). Once implemented, participation must be evaluated in order to assess its strengths and weaknesses. Evaluation helps to make participation more efficient for decision-makers, as they learn with each experience, and convenient for participants, as the process can be adjusted to their needs. (Ableson, *et al.*, 2006; Breitbart & Kasperson; Chess, 2000; Frewer *et al.*, 2004; Frewer & Rowe, 2000; Tuler & Webler, 2000).

By ensuring that participation is systematic, representative, substantive, communicative and evaluative, stakeholders are better able to make substantial contributions to decision-making processes, processes that are more efficient and convenient for authorities. In the long term, attention awarded to such details also encourages environmental justice.

3.1.4 Design and Design Elements – Component #4 Public Participation Triggers

Although public participation is a key component of democratic decision-making, not all projects warrant major participation efforts. There are seven main scenarios that trigger the need for public participation. Public participation can be triggered voluntarily, by statutory requirements, by demand from constituents, by an institution's mission statement, under special circumstances or by the scale and/or objective of a project.

A voluntary trigger takes place not out of legislative obligation but out of respect for the community if they expressed interest in the proposed project (Benidickson, 2002). In contrast to a voluntary trigger, public participation may also be initiated by a statutory requirement (Hanna, 2005; Government of Canada, 1992; Ministry of the Environment,

2006b). Participation can also be initiated as demanded by particular local stakeholders who may be more heavily impacted by a proposed project. Further, an institution's mission statement, or mandate, may refer to the importance of the public in the implementation of its efforts (Ministry of the Environment 2008; Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, 2008; Ministry of Natural Resources, 2008). Participation can also be triggered ad hoc where special circumstances may warrant its application (Benidickson, 2002). The final triggers that may instigate public participation are a project's scale or objective. In terms of scale, public input may be necessary if a project's magnitude extends to a large geographic area and/or too many stakeholder groups (Government of Canada, 1992; Ministry of the Environment, 1990). A project's objective, on the other hand, may affect the local economy or individual lifestyles, as such, demanding the need for public input into the decision-making process. In such cases, participation helps to ensure that decision-making reflects social values and priorities.

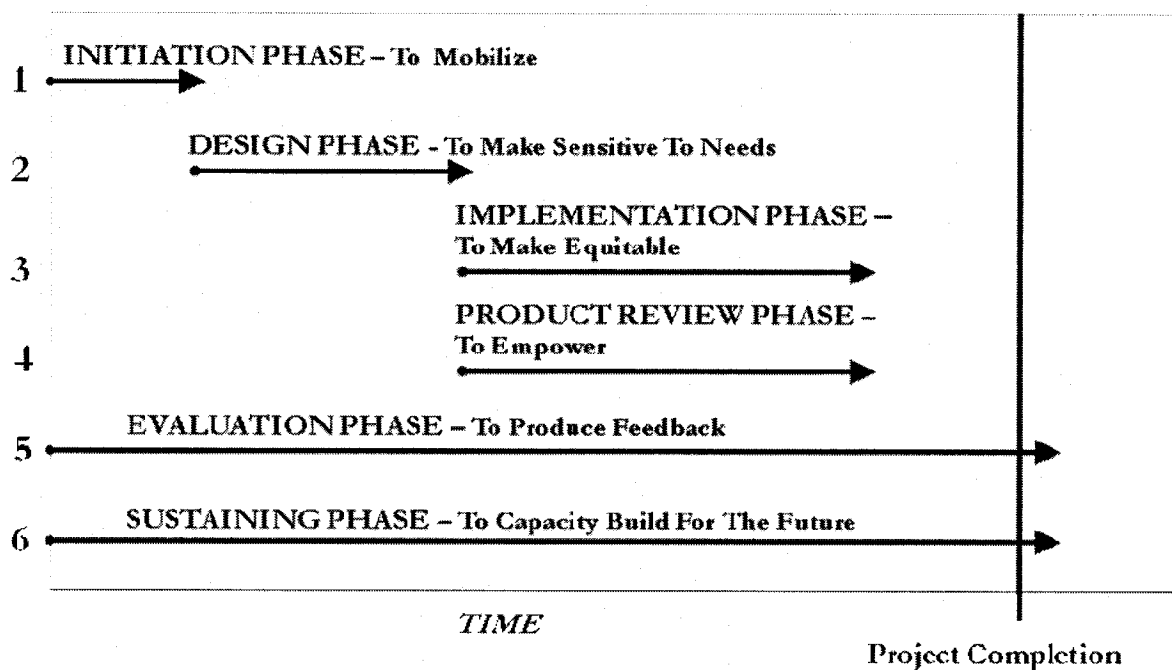
It is important for the sake of time, money and participant fatigue that public participation processes be triggered in circumstances that warrant the public's attention. It may not be necessary in projects that are commonly undertaken and whose impacts are negligible and well understood. Understanding the way in which participation is triggered ensures that resources are used in the most effective way possible.

3.1.5 Design Elements - Component #5 Phases

In order to ensure that public participation is at its most efficient and effective, decision-makers must be aware of the different phases involved in its design. There are six phases in the public participation design process: the initiation phase, the design phase, the

implementation phase, the process review phase, the sustaining phase and the evaluation phase (Brown & Duram, 1999; Health Canada, 2000; Orsini & Phillips, 2002). The proper implementation of each phase helps to ensure optimal resource planning, effective collection of input and community satisfaction. Figure 2 illustrates the progressive nature of public participation design process.

Figure 2. Public Participation Phases



Public participation begins with the initiation phase. This is the decision-makers opportunity to mobilize the community while building networks and partnerships with stakeholders. Initiation includes both the announcement of environmental decision-making and participation events. The creation of a communication strategy helps to ensure that attempts made to connect with the public are as effective as possible. Communication efforts, including public education, also help prepare stakeholders for the participation process. It is

important that messages of local relevance be clearly relayed; otherwise, the decision-making process may not grab the attention of the community.

Next is the design phase. During this period public participation objectives are set, stakeholder groups are identified and instruments are chosen. It is important to involve the public in the design of the participation process in order to ensure that it is sensitive to the needs of the community, helping to engage stakeholders more effectively. Once the participation process has been designed it can be implemented. During the implementation phase the decision-makers genuine intentions are revealed and participants will gauge whether their inclusion is tokenism or authentic. As such, it is important that decision-makers focus their efforts on representation, two-way engagement and substantive influence over decision-making. Participants may be more willing to hear other points of view and work in a cooperative manner if they have had positive interactions with other stakeholders.

The fourth phase is the process review phase. Occurring alongside the implementation phase, this is an opportunity for participants to assess their participation experience. Providing opportunities for participants to express their concern or dissatisfaction regarding the participation process allows adjustments to be made in the moment when the participants can benefit from the changes. Unlike the informal process review phase, the evaluation phase is formal in nature and assesses the participation process, as well as the final outcome, as seen by participants and decision-makers. The evaluation results help to modify the public participation process in hopes of avoiding the repetition of inefficiencies in future events. More importantly, evaluation, and process review help to empower participants to feel valued in the decision-making process, as will be discussed in section 3.1.7.

Finally the sustaining phase outlines the need for capacity building. This phase starts at the beginning of the public participation process and continues until it ends. Capacity building is the maintenance of networks and partnerships garnered by decision-makers during the participation process. Maintaining such relationships may help mobilize the public for future participation processes as connections have already been established.

Following these six public participation phases will help ensure that the process is complete reducing the potential for tokenism. A systematic approach to public participation demonstrates a decision-makers genuine interest in engaging community concerns, ultimately creating greater confidence in the process and less resistance to government policy agendas (Citizen Engagement, 2004; Halvorsen, 2003; Jackson, 2002).

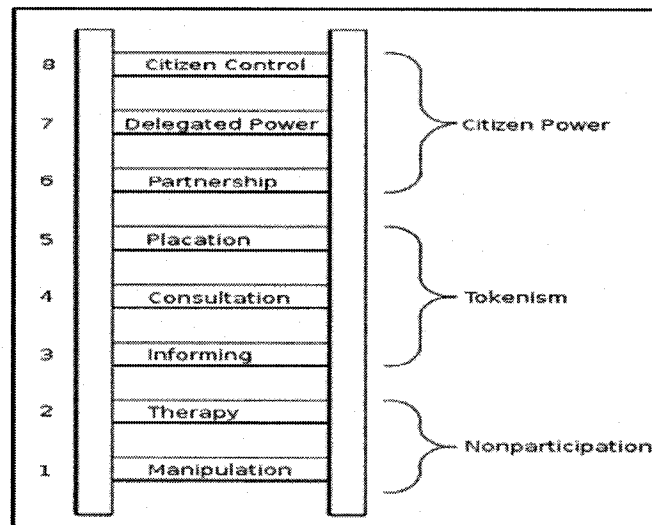
3.1.6 Design Elements - Component #6 Public Participation Instruments

Selecting instruments is a critical step in public participation design dictating both the quality of information collected and the satisfaction experienced by all participating parties. There are many types of instruments to choose from. However, the needs of a given project are unique and, therefore, require individual attention when selecting the appropriate instruments. More specifically, when choosing an instrument one must consider the phase of public participation for which it is being used as well as the audience by whom it will be received; these considerations are called phase and stakeholder sensitivity.

Many public participation experts have outlined the different levels of engagement found in public participation. These range from basic communication to fully engaged partnerships.

Shelley Arnstein created one of the most sourced public participation engagement models in relevant literature. This model depicts eight levels of engagement: manipulation, therapy, consultation, placation, partnership, delegated power, citizen control. Arnstein's Ladder is illustrated in Figure 3. Arnstein further classifies the eight levels of engagement as non-participation, tokenism and citizen power. This model has greatly influenced the way public participation is viewed. More commonly, experts describe public participation engagement levels in a more simplified manner: communication, consultation and participation (Abelson, Gauvin, MacKinnon, Watling, 2006; Commission on Resources and Environment, 1995; Frewer & Rowe, 2005).

Figure 3. Arnstein's Ladder of Public Participation Engagement Levels



Source: Arnstein, 1969

Contemporary studies of public participation process design and instrument selection suggest that enhanced communication and greater stakeholder ability to influence the decision-making process helps participants feel respected by decision-makers and, therefore, more willing to participate in the future (see section 3.1.3) (Frewer & Rowe, 2005). The ability

to collect higher quality information also enhances the decision-makers' understanding of community values, thus, allowing them to develop policy that is more appropriate.

3.1.7 Design Elements – Component #7 Evaluation

Evaluation is described by academics as imperative to the positive progression of public participation practices (Aucoin & Turnbull, 2006; Carr & Halvorson, 2001; Frewer & Rowe, 2005; Jackson, 2002; Phillips & Sewell, 1979). Its exercise is to be conducted by decision-makers and participants. Evaluation is an assessment of both process and outcome. The characteristics of an effective participation process have already been outlined in Component #3. In order for its overall outcome to be effective, participation must be institutionalized and promote empowerment. A major barrier hindering public participation from being fully embraced is decision-maker and stakeholder perceptions of its value. The following section describes the importance of institutionalization and empowerment and explores the persistent perceptions that act as barriers to participation's true success.

According to Aucoin and Turnbull (2006), public participation must be institutionalized or incorporated into all levels of government. A lack of regulation has left its design to the discretion of decision-makers (Hanna, 2005). Therefore, it is suggested that legislation needs to include regulation outlining detailed process design to ensure that public participation is created in a way that is satisfactory for all parties in a constituency (Ascentum Inc & Canadian Policy Research Network, 2005). If participation design includes the required characteristics for an effective process (i.e., transparent, fair and equitable) stakeholders will ultimately feel empowered and more inclined to participate in future decision-making (Carr & Halvorson, 2001; Jackson, 2002; Phillips & Sewell, 1979).

Despite the fact that the characteristics of meaningful public participation are well documented, participation implementation is not always successful. A major barrier prohibiting participation success is the cynicism held by many decision-makers and stakeholders regarding its value. Some decision-makers believe that the public does not possess the technical and legal knowledge required to participate in government decision-making (Abelson *et al.*, 2006, pp. 12). It has also been suggested that citizens are apathetic and too busy with work and family to make dedicated contributions to such processes (Aucoin & Turnbull, 2006). Furthermore, it has been argued that government officials are elected specifically to make decisions, thus relieving any obligation to participate (MacKinnon, 2005).

In terms of the public, many citizens have shown little faith in the intentions of decision-makers and the capacity of the system to satisfy community needs (Ascentum Inc & Canadian Policy Research, 2005). Public apathy towards participation is fueled in part by decision-makers' resistance to allow them to participate. In turn, this same apathy fuels decision-makers' resistance to employ the energy and resources it takes to conduct public participation; thus perpetuating the cycle. The literature suggests that a lack of trust and confidence in our governance system has left the public longing for greater accountability on the part of elected officials and government officials (Ascentum Inc & Canadian Policy Research Network, 2005).

The complex nature of public participation has made defining the meaning of successful participation difficult. Without a definition of success evaluation cannot be applied (Chess,

2000; Chess & Purcell, 1999; Frewer et al., 2004; Petts, 200; Phillips & Sewell, 1979). According to Chess and Purcell (1999), “drawing conclusions about ‘what works’ *vis a vis* public participation is difficult because of the limited empirical research and great variation in the criteria for success”. As evaluation is rarely implemented, a lack of knowledge regarding successful participation process design has halted the evolution of meaningful public participation (Rowe *et al.*, 2004). Regularly including formal evaluation in participation would uncover process weaknesses and help participation grow within our governance system.

Having reviewed the public participation theory, attention can now be directed to the case study, Source Water Protection in Eastern Ontario. The following chapter begins with a historical study of watershed planning and management in Ontario, including the repercussions of the Walkerton Crisis. This is followed by the introduction of the Raisin Region Conservation Authority and Source Protection Authority.

CHAPTER 4

SETTING THE STAGE

Best practices in natural resources management research and development point to situations in which community members, research or development team members and other stakeholders jointly identify research or development parameters and participate in the decision-making process. This process goes beyond community consultation and participation in activities identified by researchers or programme managers. In best case scenarios, the research or development process itself generates a situation of empowerment in which participants transform their view of reality and are able to take effective action.

(Bessette, 2006, pp. 4)

4.1 Institutional Context: The Watershed – The Laboratory

The 1946 *Ontario Conservation Authorities Act* was passed in response to natural disasters, such as Hurricane Hazel, and the disruption that come with them. The purpose of the Act was to better manage the province's water resources, as well as to prepare for future environmental crises (Conservation Ontario, 2005a; Hartig & Zarull, 1992; Mitchell & Shrubsole, 1994; Richardson, 1974). Since the passing of the legislation, 36 Conservation Authorities have been established across the province. The Authorities' mandate includes watershed planning and management, natural resource conservation and public education (Conservation Ontario, 2005a; Mitchell & Shrubsole, 1994; Richardson, 1974).

Since the Walkerton Crisis, the mandate of Ontario Conservation Authorities has become "super charged". It was in May 2000 when the Walkerton water supply system was found to be contaminated with a strain of e-coli that killed seven people and made 2300 others ill. The event forced the Ontario Government to improve current watershed planning and management practices, particularly within the context of nutrient management and source

water protection. The Walkerton Crisis changed the way in which Ontarians view their water resources and the government. Many believed that both human neglect and a lack of provincial standards led to the tragedy. In light of the crisis, the provincial government requested that Justice Dennis O'Connor investigate the case. The investigative report consists of two parts outlining the details of the event and a recommended course of action.

As outlined in Part One, Justice O'Connor spoke with 114 witnesses, including residents of the town, local officials, senior civil servants, two former members of the MOE, and the Premier in order to complete his investigation (O'Connor, 2002a). In the end, a substantial lack of training and expertise on the part of Walkerton water treatment facility operators was found to be a major factor contributing to the contamination of the local water supply (O'Connor, 2002a). His investigation revealed that

for years, the PUC operators engaged in a host of improper operating practices, including failing to use adequate doses of chlorine, failing to monitor chlorine residuals daily, making false entries about residuals in daily operating records, and misstating the locations at which microbiological samples were taken. The operators knew that these practices were unacceptable and contrary to MOE guidelines and directives. (O'Connor, 2002a, pp. 4)

In addition to the operators disrespect for water regulations and standards, the Inquiry suggested that the local public health unit did not adequately communicate the boil water advisory leaving some residents at risk (O'Connor, 2002a). Also acknowledging the responsibility of the Province, Justice O'Connor ascertained that the inspection program established by the Ministry of the Environment failed to recognize the "improper treatment and monitoring programs" at the Walkerton facility (O'Connor, 2002a). He suggested that significant budget reductions, during the years of Mike Harris' Conservative Government,

resulted in program cuts ultimately weakening the overall efficiency of the water treatment system.

Based on his investigation, Justice O'Connor developed a series of recommendations aimed at enhancing the provincial water supply system and minimizing the possibility of such a tragedy from re-occurring. According to the Inquiry,

the risk of unsafe drinking water can be reduced to a negligible level by simultaneously introducing a number of measures: by placing multiple barriers aimed at preventing contaminants from reaching consumers, by adopting a cautious approach to making decisions that affect drinking water safety, by ensuring that water providers apply sound quality management and operating systems, and by providing for effective provincial government regulations and oversight (O'Connor, 2002b).

In summary, the Part Two Report categorizes the recommendations into five areas:

Source Protection:

A watershed-based approach to protecting source waters regulated by the Ministry of the Environment and implemented by Ontario Conservation Authorities, in agreement with local stakeholders. (O'Connor, 2002b)

Standards and Technology:

Updated watershed management technology and monitoring, stressing the importance of transparency when making these changes. (O'Connor, 2002b)

Municipal Water Providers:

A quality management approach for water supply systems and the need for municipalities to house "an accredited operating agency (either internal or external) and...an approved operational plan for their water system" (O'Connor, 2002b). Emphasis is placed on the need for improved training for water supply operators. (O'Connor, 2002b)

Provincial Oversight:

A recommended need for improved provincial regulations. The adoption of a *Safe Drinking Water Act (2002)*, to oversee both watershed planning and management and water supply systems is suggested. (O'Connor, 2002b)

Special Cases:

The recognition of unique characteristics of small waters systems (i.e. rural homes, campgrounds etc.) as well as the traditional water uses of First Nations peoples. (O'Connor, 2002b)

Within these five categories there are 121 recommendations, some of which are relevant to the study of public participation. Recommendation #2 suggests that

the Ministry of the Environment should ensure that draft source protection plans are prepared through an inclusive process of local consultation. Where appropriate, this process should be managed by Conservation Authorities. (O'Connor, 2002b)

A public participation process that embraces active consultation opportunities must also include comprehensive education as stated in Recommendation #8: "Conservation Authorities...should be responsible for implementing local initiatives to educate landowners, and the public about the requirements and importance of drinking water source protection" (O'Connor, 2002b). Finally, Aboriginal people are recognized as possessing unique cultures and water needs and, therefore, are to play an important role in Source Water Protection (O'Connor, 2002b). In light of these recommendations, Conservation Ontario acknowledges the benefits of public participation as it is believed to help

define the problems more effectively; access information and understanding that fall outside the scientific realm; identify alternative solutions that will be socially acceptable; and, create a sense of ownership for the plan or solution, which facilitates implementation. (O'Connor, 2002b)

Adopting the recommended measures would not ensure complete safe water distribution. However, if something should go wrong, the entire distribution system will not be disrupted (O'Connor, 2002b).

The events of the Walkerton Crisis, and the subsequent O'Connor Inquiry, have greatly influenced environmental and natural resource management in Ontario. Watershed planning and management has become a priority for the Ministry of the Environment, with the Source Water Protection Initiative as its most recent undertaking (Ministry of the Environment, 2002a; Ministry of the Environment, 2002b; Ministry of the Environment, 2002b). In order

to solidify its commitment to Source Water Protection, the government has recently passed the *Clean Water Act (2006)* (see section 2.6). The following section describes the case study's contextual setting: Source Water Protection in the Raisin Region.

4.2 Contextual Setting

4.2.1 Source Water Protection in the Raisin Region

The Raisin Region Conservation Authority (RRCA) is located in Cornwall, Ontario (Raisin Region Conservation Authority, 2007). The Raisin Region Conservation Authority is located, for the most part, in the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry (Raisin Region Conservation Authority, 2007). Established in 1963, the RRCA serves a population of 110, 399 citizens and has jurisdiction over the Raisin River and several sub-watersheds, municipalities and conservation areas (see Table 3) (Raisin Region Conservation Authority, 2005). The RRCA Board is comprised of municipal representatives who define policy. The Authority's staff members include a set of 19 experts. Each member specializes in a particular area of environmental conservation ranging from a Fish and Wildlife Specialist to a Communication Coordinator to the Source Water Protection Project Manager (Raisin Region Conservation Authority, 2007).

In order to fulfill its mandate, the RRCA 2007 annual budget was \$4,126,824 derived from municipal levies at 14.8% (based on population size and property assessment), government grants, 67.5%, and monies collected from services and user fees, 17.8% (Raisin Region Conservation Authority, 2007). In light of the funding provided by the municipalities and

their tax payers, it is understandable that the Authority includes dedicated education and public participation within its mandate.

4.2.2 Raisin Region Demographics

The Raisin Region is socio-demographically diverse and possesses several characteristics that can influence the effectiveness of local public participation. Statistics are presented at the census division level which corresponds to the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry.

Economic Profile: The study area's economic base lies predominantly within the agricultural sector (Raisin Region Conservation Authority, 2005). In addition to agriculture, other local industries include forestry, mineral extraction and manufacturing (Raisin Region Conservation Authority, 2005). Culture, lifestyle and values, including those related to rural living, are often influenced by one's profession, and vice versa, and, therefore, may play significant roles in the formation of perceptions and attitudes captured in public participation (Mitchell, 1989). As such, knowledge and appreciation of the traditional rural lifestyle is critical in understanding the success of public participation in Source Water Protection.

Education Profile: Education statistics in the Raisin Region reflect a labour-oriented work force. Statistics show that a significant portion of the adult population over 15 years of age (29.1%) does not possess a high school diploma (Statistics Canada, 2007). The provincial average of individuals not possessing a high school diploma is 22.2% (Statistics Canada, 2007). The percentage of those with a university degree is also less than the provincial average where the local average is 9.5%, compared to 20.5% provincially (Statistics Canada,

2007). These statistics are relevant as education levels are said to influence civic and environmental literacy (Abelson & Gauvin, 2006). An area's education profile may also influence the effectiveness of communication and, therefore, the quality of public participation (Hanna, 2005; Lukasik *et al.*, 2006). As such, the literature suggests that communication methods must be refined to reflect education level of the average citizen (Hanna, 2005; Watling, 2004).

Language Profile: Language abilities also influence public participation. 22.2% of residence in this area are French speaking only (Statistics Canada, 2001). This significant number of French speaking citizens must be taken into consideration when politicians, as well as planners and managers, communicate with the public or try to engage them in decision-making processes (Hanna, 2005; Watling, 2004).

Additional factors affecting the effectiveness of public participation include location of residence, computer access, cultural background etc. One's location of residence, for example, may influence their access to information as well as physical access to participation venues. Computer access may affect an individual's ability to become informed and participate via the internet as often times information and opportunities for comment are provided online. An individual's cultural background may affect their perception of the government or their values regarding the environment (Abelson *et al.*, 2006; Ascentum Inc & Canadian Policy Research Network, 2005; Carr & Halvorsen, 2001; Jackson, 2002; MacKinnon, 2004; Phillips & Sewell, 1979). Finally, one's understanding of public participation would be incomplete without also acknowledging the roles played by ethnicity, age and religion. Statistical characteristics of the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and

Glengarry that have the potential to influence the public participation process are summarized in Table 3. Ultimately these considerations influence public acceptance of water related projects and, therefore, the effectiveness of natural resources management, including Source Water Protection (Agnew *et al.*, 2006; Brandes *et al.*, 2006).

Table 3. Characteristics of the Raisin Region Conservation Authority and its Watershed Jurisdiction

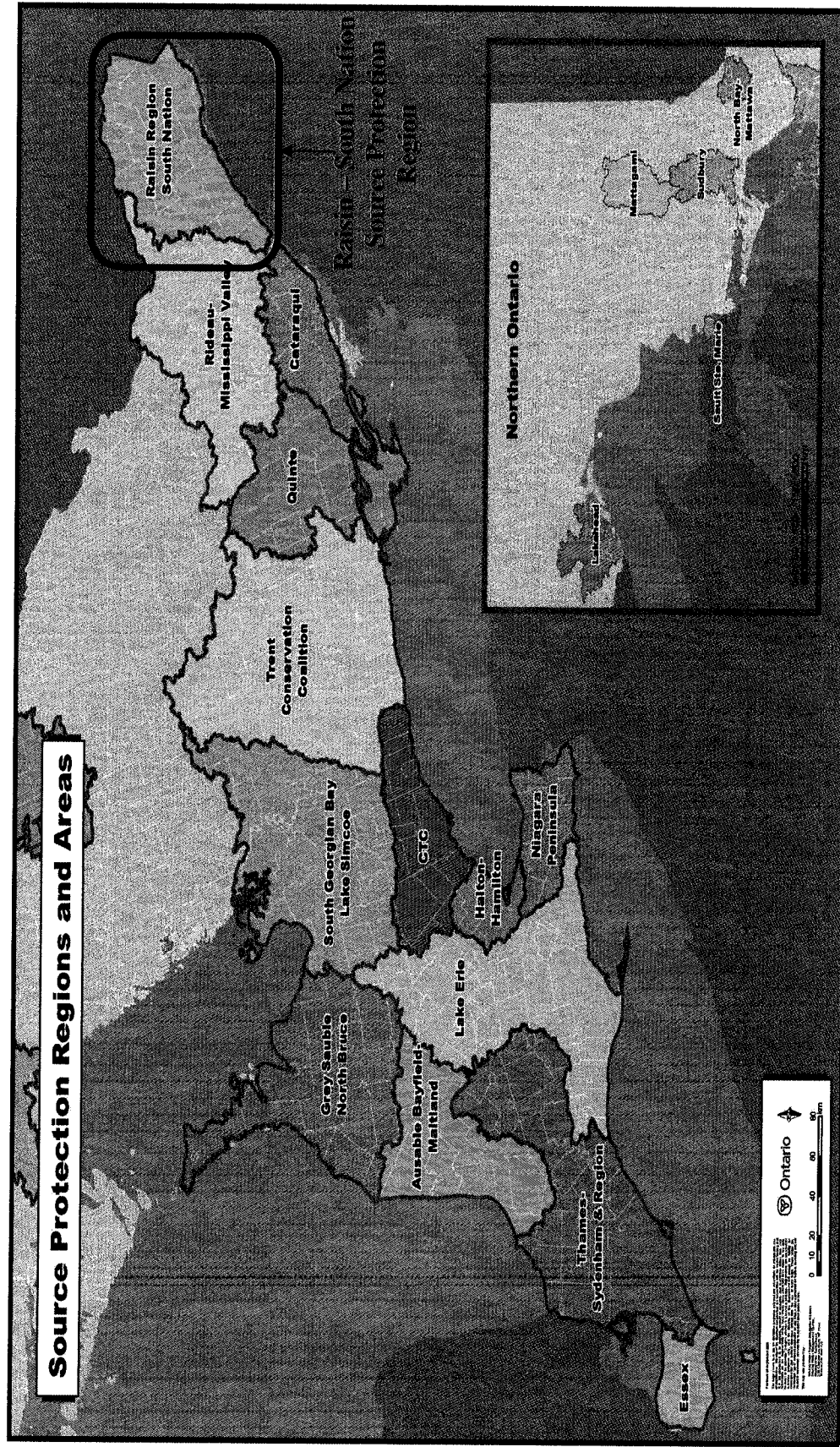
Area of Jurisdiction (km2)	1,680
Authorities Board of Directors Members	8
Permanent and Part-Time Staff	17
Watershed Jurisdiction	Raisin, South Raisin, North Raisin, Beaudette, Delisle Rivers, St. Lawrence Waterfront
Wetland Jurisdiction	Cooper's Marsh, Gray's Creek, Upper Canada Migratory Bird and Sanctuary
Conservation Areas	Cooper Marsh Conservation Area, Gray's Creek Marina and Conservation Area, Garry River Management Area
Participating Municipalities	City of Cornwall, Township of South Glengarry, Township of South Stormont, Township of North Glengarry, Township of North Stormont – the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry
Watershed Population	110,399
Largest Populated Area	Cornwall – 45,965
Population Change (2001-2006)	0.8%
Aboriginal Identity Population	2.2%
Visible Minority Population	3.0%
Main Economic Base	Agriculture and other Resource-Based Industries – Total Number of Farms – 434 Average Age of Operator – 52
Other Local Industry	Forestry, Mineral Extraction, Manufacturing, Retail Trade, High Technology
Median Income in 2005 (all census families)	\$57,766
Population Age	Median Age – 42.7 Over 45 Years of Age – 54.4%
Knowledge of Official Language	English Only – 70.4% French Only – 22.2% Bilingual – 1.3%
Level of Education Attainment for Individuals 15 years of Age and Over	No High School Graduation Certificate – 29.1% High School Certificate – 28.8% Apprentiships, Trade Certificate or Diploma – 10.5% College – 19.5% University – 9.5%
Religion	Catholic -56.9% Protestant – 32.2%

Source: Raisin Region Conservation Authority, 2007; Statistics Canada 2007

4.2.3 The Raisin Region Source Protection Authority

Under the *Clean Water Act (2006)*, the RRCA watershed jurisdiction has recently been given the additional title of Source Protection Area (Ministry of the Environment, 2006b). As such, the Conservation Authority has also been given the mandate of Raisin Region Source Protection Authority (RR SPA). The RR SPA now is responsible for implementing the broad objectives of the provincial government's Source Water Protection Initiative in their jurisdiction (Ministry of the Environment, 2006b). Within Eastern Ontario, the Raisin Region and South Nation Source Protection Authorities have amalgamated to form the Raisin-South Nation Source Protection Authority and Region (R-SN SPA) in order to include entire watersheds under one management team (Raisin Region Conservation Authority & South Nation Conservation, 2007). Figure 4 shows the amalgamated Source Protection Areas. Although the two areas work in cooperation, each Authority remains independent having its own Management Board. Together, the Raisin Region Conservation Authority Board and the South Nation Conservation Authority Board make up the Source Protection Authority.

Figure 4. Ontario Source Protection Regions with a Focus on the Raisin-South Nation Source Protection Region



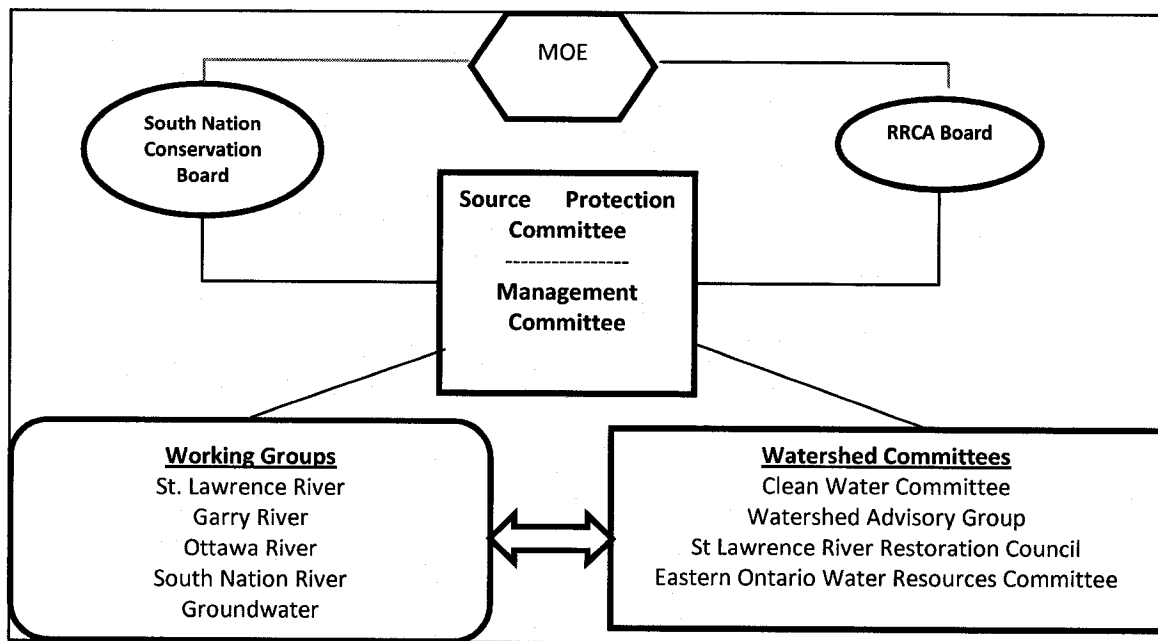
Source: Conservation Ontario, 2005b

4.2.4 The Raisin-South Nation Source Protection Public Engagement

In addition to the Source Protection Authority, the Ministry of the Environment has created regional Source Protection Committees (SPC) within the *Clean Water Act (2006)*. Essentially, the SPCs are a form of institutionalized public participation. It is a group of stakeholders representing local interests within a given region (Ministry of the Environment, 2006b). SPCs bring together representatives from municipalities, agriculture and industry/business. In order to create a balanced process these stakeholder groups are divided into thirds with additional positions for members of the general public and local Aboriginal groups (Meek, 2007; Ministry of the Environment, 2007). Its membership composition is based on watershed demographics, including population size and economic activities. It is interesting to note the large portion of representation allotted to the agricultural community. The agricultural community plays an important role in the regional economy (Raisin Region Conservation Authority, 2005). These property owners possess large areas of land and, therefore, may bare significant financial burdens in light of Source Water Protection efforts. Given the potential for negative impacts, this stakeholder group has been actively vocal regarding their concerns (Government of Ontario, 2006). Although the potential for disproportionate impacts may justify the presence they have been awarded on the Source Protection Committee, it is done at the expense of other stakeholders. Within this area there are a total of 505 farm operators, represented by three committee members, as compared to the one municipal representative who speaks on behalf of 90,610 individuals (over the age of 15) who reside in the area and who also may be impacted by the legislation (Statistics Canada 2007). The true balance of stakeholder representation on the Source Protection Committee will be fully revealed once the Assessment Report is complete and the individuals who will be impacted by Source Water Protection have been determined.

The SPC is guided by a Management Committee comprised of a chair, a project manager, a communications specialist and an administrator. It is also guided by the expertise of existing local working groups and watershed committees. The Raisin-South Nation Source Protection Committee (R-SN SPC) has a total of fifteen members representing the different community sectors, as well as local liaisons (i.e. representatives from the local health unit, the Raisin Region and South Nation Conservation Authorities, and the Ministry of the Environment). Figure 5 illustrates the structure of the Raisin-South Nation Source Protection Authority and its partners.

Figure 5. A Structural Diagram Representing the Raisin Region / South Nation Source Protection Team



Source: Meek, 2007

This type of institutionalized public participation proposed by the *Clean Water Act (2006)* requires a clear local public engagement strategy. Based on guidance material provided by the province, the Raisin-South Nation communication specialist, created a document outlining the SPC's strategy to engage their community (Raisin – South Nation Source Protection Authority, 2008).

To encourage public participation, four open houses have been held to date. These events sought to gathered public input regarding the R-SN SPA draft Terms of Reference. The *Clean Water Act (2006)* requires a minimum of one open house after the composition of every major draft document outlining the direction of Source Water Protection. These documents are the Terms of Reference, the Assessment Report and the Source Protection Plan (Ministry of the Environment, 2006b). Held throughout the month of April, the open houses took place across the region to connect with as much of the population as possible (Allaire, 2008). Public notices for the open houses were provided through newspaper and radio advertisements, beginning two weeks prior and continued until the date of the event (Allaire, 2008). Unfortunately, the open houses were typically not well attended, although, the last venue saw more participants as that particular community had a stronger vested interest in Source Water Protection and a more vocal stakeholder base (Allaire, 2008). It was suggested that public apathy, inconvenient timing and a lack of interest in the Terms of Reference may explain the poor attendance (Allaire, 2008). More citizens are predicted to participate during the drafting of the Source Protection Plan as this document will identify individual properties that will be affected by the Act (Allaire, 2008).

In addition to open houses, the Source Protection Management Committee has performed a series of visioning exercises with local interest groups who have requested more information. A visioning exercise is an opportunity for stakeholders to openly discuss their interpretations of the *Clean Water Act (2006)*, thus allowing the Management Committee to clarify any misunderstandings and answer any questions stakeholders may have (Allaire, 2008). During this type of exercise the Management Committee can also learn the most effective ways of communicating with the group in the future. The Source Protection Committee monthly meetings are also open to the public (Allaire, 2008).

Chapter 4 has depicted the evolution of watershed planning and management in Ontario, including the Walkerton Crisis. It has also set the stage for the research case study, introducing Ontario Source Water Protection and the Raisin-South Nation Source Protection Committee. With the theoretical and contextual foundations established, the following chapter (Chapter 5) will describe in detail the methodology that was followed in order to fulfill research objectives.

CHAPTER 5

METHODOLOGY

While community development concepts have been applied to economic and broader community issues..., they have seldom been applied in an environmental or resource management context. This approach encourages people to work together to identify issues and develop a community response by focusing on direct public initiative, participation, and action. It invokes increased local autonomy and enhances local choices and options by focusing on the process of enabling people to collectively achieve goals and influence action.

(Agnew et al., 2006, pp. 16)

Choosing an appropriate and rigorous methodology prior to beginning the research process influences the quality of information collected and, therefore, the quality of final conclusions. To recap, the objectives of this research are to understand SWP stakeholder perception of public participation, as well as to uncover any variations that may exist between these perceptions. In order to ensure that research results are of the utmost quality three major stages guided its process: the preparation, the design, and the analysis stage. This chapter describes the details of each particular stage.

5.1 The Preparatory Stage

5.1.1 Field Observation

The first step in conducting research is to identify an approach and become fluent in relevant themes. As a case study approach is at the core of this research, field observation allowed the researcher to become better acquainted with Source Water Protection in Easter Ontario. Observing stakeholders in their environment helped the researcher understand their perspective and the situation as a whole. Within the context of this research, field observation provided insight into the dialogue surrounding Source Water Protection in an

informal manner, including the tensions that exist between decision-makers and community stakeholders.

Numerous opportunities to practice field observation were realized, including attendance at a Bill 43 (now known as the *Clean Water Act (2006)*) Standing Committee on Social Policy Hearing; participation in the St. Lawrence River Conferences 2007 and 2008; and, ongoing contact and discussion with experts of the Raisin Region Source Protection Authority. The subjects observed were stakeholders, directly involved in the case study, including watershed residence, interest groups and different levels of management (i.e. municipal and provincial bureaucrats). This technique was conducted concurrently with all other research stages. In the end, field observation provided context to statements made by stakeholders during the interview process (see Chapter 6 – Research Results) informing results and conclusions. Table 4 lists realized opportunities to observe Source Water Protection stakeholders first hand.

Table 4. Observation Sessions

May 18, 2006	St. Lawrence River Institute Conference – Source Water Protection
August 23, 2006	Standing Committee on Social Policy Hearing – Bill 43
July 6, 2006	Discussion with Chris Critoph of the Raisin Region Conservation Authority
November 21, 2006	Canadian Water Network Conference
February 9, 2007	Discussion with Karla Maki-Esdon and Rob McCrae of the Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority
February 19, 2007	Raisin Region Conservation Authority Stewardship Appreciation Lunch 2007
March 27, 2007	Attended a presentation made by Mark Mattson on environmental justice
April 5, 2007	Meeting with Chris Critoph of the Raisin Region Conservation Authority
May 15-17, 2007	14th Annual International Conference on the Great Lakes / St. Lawrence River Ecosystem
May 28, 2007	St. Lawrence River Restoration Council monthly meeting
February 28, 2008	Raisin – South Nation Source Protection Committee Monthly Meeting - Chesterville
March 27, 2008	Raisin – South Nation Source Protection Committee Monthly Meeting – Nation Township
April 30, 2008	Ministry of Natural Resources Southern Region Natural Heritage Forum
May 6, 2008	15 th Annual International Conference on the Great Lakes / St. Lawrence River Ecosystems
May 29, 2008	Raisin – South Nation Source Protection Committee monthly meeting – Johnstown
June 13, 2008	Raisin Region Conservation Authority Watershed bus tour
June 25, 2008	Discussion with Dan Allaire the Raisin – South Nation Source Protection Committee Communications Specialist
June 26, 2008	Ministry of Natural Resources Supervisors Workshop
July 15, 2008	Teleconference with Dan Allaire, Communications Specialist of the Raisin-South Nation Source Protection Authority

The field observation process unveiled a contextual setting rich with demographic complexity (as described in the Contextual Setting section of Chapter 3). Source Water Protection in Eastern Ontario is shown to encompass an extensive network of both governmental (i.e., Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Natural Resources, Raisin Region Conservation Authority) and non-governmental (i.e., local Landowner's Associations) stakeholders. This extensive network of stakeholders brings with it a rich ledger of issues and problems, including distrust of the local Conservation Authority and senior government as well as difficulty balancing stakeholder needs. Although there is

scepticism between stakeholders regarding their ability to cooperate and compromise in the implementation of the *Clean Water Act (2006)*, it is clear that all stakeholder groups support the need to protect our source waters. Field observation has also revealed public participation to play an integral part of water conferences, as experts acknowledge the social complexities of watershed planning and management initiatives such as Source Water Protection.

5.1.2 Constructing the Public Participation Conceptual Framework

Public participation as understood by academics has been summarized into a conceptual framework. The content of the conceptual framework outlines public participation theory and design. Its purpose is to organize public participation theory in a digestible manner. The structure of the conceptual framework guided the interview process helping to ensure that all facets of public participation were discussed by each respondent.

5.2 The Design Stage

5.2.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

The complexity and interpretative nature of perceptions and attitudes requires multiple research methods (Mitchell, 1989). Therefore, in addition to field observation, semi-structured interviews were conducted and acted as the primary research method. Within the context of this research, semi-structured interviews aimed to underline the perception of individual stakeholders regarding public participation, particularly within the context of Source Water Protection. Its informal nature allowed both the interviewer and the respondent to explore complex issues without being limited by restrictive, detailed questions.

As such, the respondent had the opportunity for creative self-expression which allowed for the potential revelation of unanticipated findings (Berg, 1998; Longhurst, 2003; Jones, 1996; Neuman, 1994). Given the controversial nature of Source Water Protection, this technique helped create a personal rapport between the respondent and the researcher.

Although the semi-structured interview is the most appropriate for this case, the researcher was also aware of its disadvantages. For instance, this data collection technique may bare monetary costs for both the researcher (i.e., travel time and other expenses) and the respondent (i.e., possible time off work) (Neuman, 1994). In order to minimize financial burdens, many interviews were conducted via teleconference at the researcher's expense. The interviews that were conducted in person where done at the convenience of the respondent. The researcher was also sensitive to the fact that the interview process may encroach upon a respondent's privacy more so, for example, then a survey technique (Neuman, 1994). The potential to violate a respondent's privacy was minimized by avoiding the use of proper names during the analysis process. Respondent privacy was also ensured by limiting access to the data to the researcher and supervisor only. Given the strengths and weaknesses of the semi-structured interview, the pros outweigh the cons making this technique the most appropriate.

In order to help guide the discussion, an interview template was created. The template included a brief respondent profile, general themes to be discussed and a list of probing questions partnered with qualitative statements to aid in clarification (see Appendix A – Interview Template). The questions were based on the public participation conceptual framework (see figure 1, Chapter 3) ensuring that all facets of the topic were discussed. The

template was sent to each respondent prior to the interview. In order to ensure that it was clear and understandable, the template was pilot tested with individuals who were neither academics nor involved in watershed planning and management or Source Water Protection.

5.2.2 Respondent Identification and Recruitment

The respondents chosen were identified as being the main stakeholders within Source Water Protection of the Raisin Region Source Protection Area and, therefore, those in the best position to provide the greatest insights into related research themes (Berg, 1998; Jones, 1996). Several methods were used to identify a pool of potential respondents from within each stakeholder group. Some of the respondents were identified during field observation exercises. Other respondents were identified as being active in the Ontario Provincial Government or key local opinion leaders through a review of Hansard records. It is interesting to note that field observation proved to be particularly effective as it provided opportunities for networking. Having a wide variety of perspectives is considered key to achieving the most accurate results. As such, four different stakeholder groups were identified as being the most pertinent: the Source Water Protection Process Architects, Source Water Protection Provincial Process Managers, Source Water Protection Local Process Managers, and, Source Water Protection Community Stakeholders. Three stakeholders were interviewed per stakeholder group for a total of twelve respondents.

The Source Water Protection Process Architects (SWP Architects) are individuals responsible for the normative elements of Source Water Protection legislation and policy creation. Two of the respondents chosen from this stakeholder group are members of the Ontario Legislature, or regional MPPs, serving on its Social Policy Committee. The 12

member committee held public meetings across Ontario in 2006 to canvas public reaction to Source Water Protection in advance of the *Clean Water Act (2006)* passage. The Committee's work was said to contribute to the Act's content including the design of the Source Protection Committee. The third SWP Architect is a bureaucrat with the Ministry of the Environment who participated in the writing and development of the legislation. The perception of these stakeholders regarding public participation may have greatly influenced the value allotted to public participation within the *Clean Water Act (2006)* and, thus, the construction of the Source Protection Committee.

The Source Water Protection Provincial Process Managers include two full-time public servants of the Ministry of the Environment who contribute to the development and implementation of public policy. This group of stakeholders is responsible for the strategic elements of legislation and, therefore, provide direction to Source Protection Authorities regarding the implementation of the *Clean Water Act (2006)*, including its Source Protection Committee. The third respondent in this stakeholder group is a member of Conservation Ontario, the lead agency that acts as a liaison between Conservation Authorities and the Ministry of the Environment. This individual was heavily involved during the creation of the Act particularly with regards to the authority awarded to Conservation Authorities.

The Source Water Protection Local Process Managers include two members of the Raisin Region Source Protection Management Team, as well as a member of a regional Source Protection Working Group. Those who act as members of the Management Team are responsible for the operational elements of Source Water Protection legislation and policy implementation. They provide the guidance and coordination for local watershed

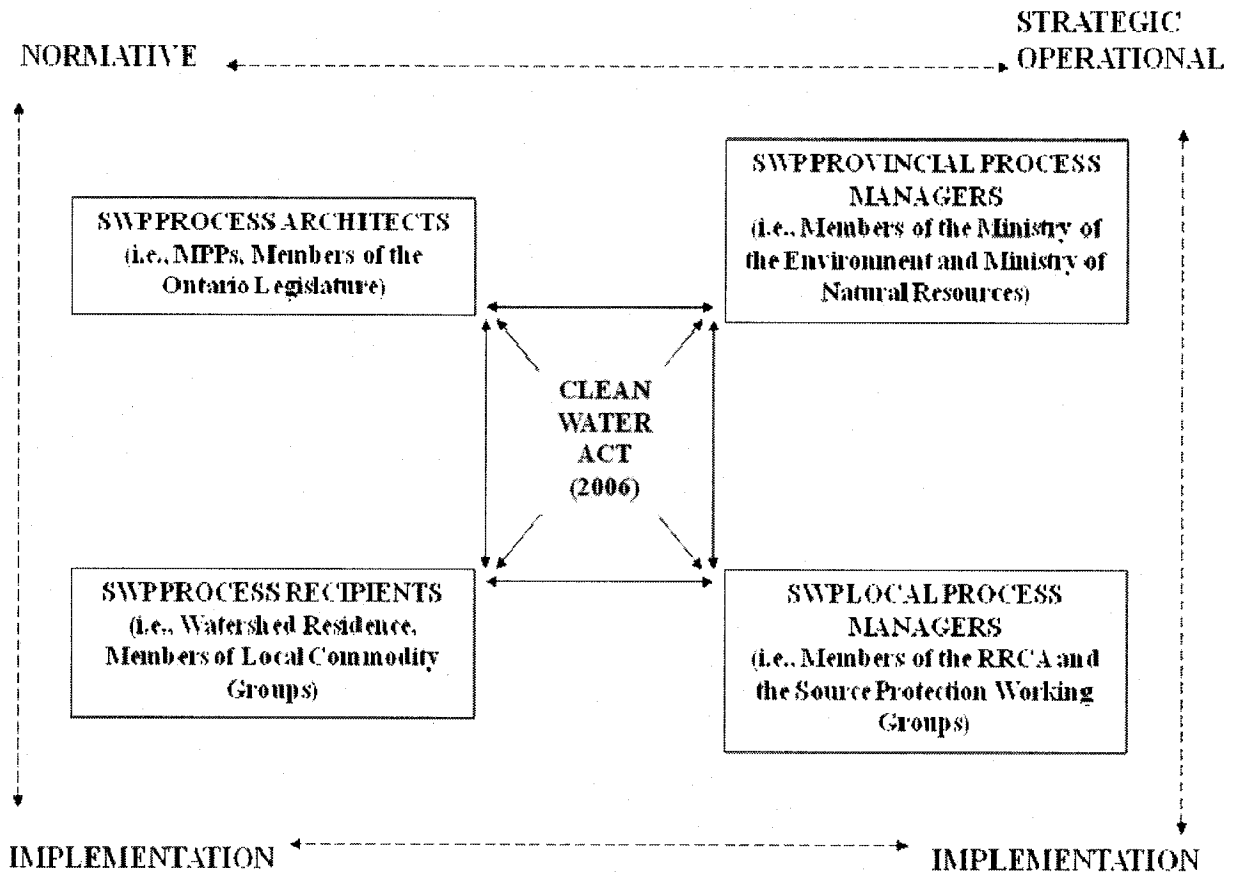
implementation, including the development of area-specific public participation. The individual who is an active member of a Working Group has a great degree of experience with creating and implementing public participation in their community. More importantly, from their professional perspective, this individual will be affected by decisions made by the Source Protection Committee, including input from its general public outreach strategy.

The Source Water Protection Community Stakeholders are community members who may be affected by the Act and whose participation in Source Water Protection is necessary for its success. The first respondent is an opinion leader in local agriculture and rural interest groups. Rural landowners in this area have identified themselves as being particularly impacted by the Source Water Protection Initiative. The second respondent is an individual who participates in several local environmental interest groups and who has had significant experience as both a participant and creator of public participation in the area. Finally, the third respondent is a Source Protection Committee municipal representative. This individual does not only actively participate in the Committee itself, but also is frequently involved in the creation and implementation of public participation within their municipality. As the *Clean Water Act (2006)* depends heavily on the cooperation of these individuals, the support of Community Stakeholders is essential to its success.

The selection of multiple stakeholders possessing varying perspectives is called triangulation. Triangulation is a method where three or more different and independent respondents are selected in order to compare and contrast perceptions (Singleton & Straits, 1999). As such, during the analysis stage the responses given by each SWP stakeholder

group were compared and contrasted with the perceptions of the other stakeholder groups. Figure 6 depicts the different stakeholders and their relation to each other.

Figure 6. Interview Respondents



Interviews were conducted at the respondent's place of work, at a location most convenient (i.e., public restaurant or their residence) or via teleconference. Scheduling was also left to their discretion. The researcher used an audio recorder, when permitted by the respondent, in addition to note taking. Note taking focused on capturing verbal and non-verbal cues that struck the researcher as being of particular importance and that might not come through on the audio recording.

5.3 The Analysis Stage

5.3.2 *Thematic Content Analysis*

Coding helps make the data more manageable for analysis by systematically identifying key characteristics (Berg, 1998; Cope, 2003; Jones, 1996; Neuman, 1994; Singleton & Straits, 1999). When coding, there are several categories of characteristics to be considered: words, themes, characters, paragraphs, items, concepts and semantics (Berg, 1998). As public participation is discussed from many different perspectives, thematic content analysis was determined to be the most appropriate coding system. Coding was facilitated by a thematic content analysis template which corresponds to the interview template and the components of the public participation conceptual framework (as previously described) (see Appendix B – Thematic Content Analysis Template). In order to complete the coding exercise, NVivo8 software was employed.

The next step of the research process was to analyze the coded data. To facilitate the analysis process, a comparative analysis matrix was constructed (see Figure 7). Thematic relations are investigated between conceptual framework components as discussed by individual stakeholders. This is represented horizontally within the comparative analysis matrix (see Figure 7). Thematic relations are also examined among the different stakeholder groups for each given component. This is represented vertically in the matrix (see Figure 7). The horizontal and vertical analyses contributed to the creation of final messages regarding stakeholder perception of public participation in Source Water Protection. It is from these interpretations that conclusions are made regarding the perceived role of public participation within Source Water Protection.

Figure 7. Comparative Analysis Matrix

	Perspectives	Objectives	Characteristics	Triggers	Phases	Instruments	Evaluation
SWP Process Architects			Horizontal Analysis Among Themes				
SWP Provincial Process Managers							
SWP Local Process Managers		Vertical Analysis Among Stakeholder Groups					
SWP Community Stakeholders							

Chapter 5 has outlined the methodological process followed to gather the information required to complete the objectives of this research. The remaining chapters provide concrete results stemming from the practice of such methods. Chapter 6 presents the results of the semi-structured interview process by summarizing SWP stakeholder perceptions of public participation and the Source Protection Committee, and includes an investigation of the variations between these perceptions.

CHAPTER 6

RESEARCH RESULTS

The demand for this type of authentic, community-based participation comes out of the experience of disenfranchisement, a result of mis- or malrecognition. To challenge a range of cultural, political, and structural obstacles constructed by cultural degradation, political oppression, and lack of political access, communities are coming to demand a voice and authentic participation.

(Schlosberg, 2004, pp. 523)

This chapter investigates the insights provided by SWP stakeholder groups regarding their perceptions of the different facets of public participation (*perspectives, objectives, characteristics, triggers, instruments, phases, evaluation*). The insights provided by individual stakeholder groups are then compared to each other in order to build a comprehensive understanding of public participation within the context of Source Water Protection. Four groups of SWP stakeholders were identified as critical players in the development of the *Clean Water Act (2006)* and as such are seen as the best able to provide insight into the role of public participation in the initiative: SWP Process Architects (PA1, PA1, PA3), SWP Provincial Process Managers (PPM1, PPM2, PPM3), SWP Local Process Managers (LPM1, LPM2, LPM3) and SWP Community Stakeholders (CS1, CS2, CS3). In order to maintain their anonymity, each stakeholder is identified by stakeholder group and number (i.e., PA1 – Process Architect Respondent #1).

6.1 Public Participation Perspectives

To begin the interview, the discussion first addressed the perspectives that help define the meaning of public participation. When asked to identify such perspectives, many of the

respondents made implicit references to democratic rights, social cohesion, citizen empowerment and environmental justice (to a lesser degree).

One of the major perspectives identified by the conceptual framework as defining public participation is democracy (see section 5.2.1). The interview process revealed an inherent understanding by all respondents that public participation is a natural component of our democratic system. Each respondent suggested that it is a necessary part of decision-making. PPM3 explains that “public society has evolved a lot in the last 20 years, probably longer than that, around this whole issue. That ability to have a command-and-control type of government oversight, which may have been acceptable at one point in time, isn’t anymore to a lot of the public”. PA2 further suggested that today’s public is more educated and, therefore, more “interested in coming out and being involved in participating in a dynamic way with government”. On the other hand, CS1 is concerned that public complacency has negatively influenced the development of public participation in our decision-making system: “It’s our fault we are the ones who let the problems develop to inactivity, complacency, laziness, whatever it might be. It’s great to go and blame the politicians and so forth. But hey today it’s our responsibility and we’ve let go of that responsibility”. Public complacency and apathy were discussed by several respondents. However, it is important to note that the literature suggests an unwillingness to participate is not necessarily a result of apathy or complacency, but a result of dissatisfaction with participation opportunities (Aucoin & Turbull, 2006). As a politician, PA3 suggested that,

in principle, what we have now is ideal to accommodate citizen participation more so than a dictatorship for example. ... Beyond that the other constraints are nobody's got time to go to meetings, not everybody goes on blog sites, or listens to the clock radio, or reads the newspaper, or goes to coffee shops. A very large number of people are not involved and I guess that's fine as long as they are being properly represented.

CS1 further suggested that our democratic system is also weakened by the creation of ministries and bureaucracies "that are unaccountable to people and largely unaccountable to our politicians". The need to enhance government accountability was shared by many respondents. It is interesting to note that CS3 was the only respondent who refuted the relationship between democracy and public participation:

When I think about democracy I think of a political process and I'm not thinking public participation. ... I'm thinking of genuine concerns and input that the individual person may have with that issue. So I'm not really sure how to fit it into the democracy debate or promotion.

The second perspective identified by many of the respondents was social cohesion and the influence public participation has on one's sense of community belonging. CS2 explained,

that public participation about an issue can change the way the public lives its life, how the person or the family handles its actual social life, its economic life and its environmental life. It's during a public participation process that they learn new ideas and new ways of looking at something. ... And quite often it's a case... a person can also ... clarify what they think about an issue because they have to, in participating, put their ideas and their thoughts of what they know, what they learned into words. And so, therefore, they actually clarify for themselves and helps them change, maybe in some ways, change the way they work with other people, their economic situation and their relationship with the environment.

There was a consensus among all respondents that public participation helps build relationships and "foster[s] trust and understanding in what you [the decision-maker] are doing depending on how you do it" (LPM1). In the end, public participation is believed to encourage teamwork and build a sense of ownership in those who participate. PPM2 suggested that within the Raisin – South Nation

you can start to see that [partnerships] evolve on the Source Protection Committee. Some of them have had five meetings now. They initially sat down as very different groups or individuals that seemed to represent very different interests and as they learn more about the process, about concerns, you can see them evolving into a so much more coordinated committee that has a common goal.

Highlighted themes of teamwork and ownership not only reveal the influence of public participation on social cohesion, but also refer implicitly to its contribution to citizen empowerment and environmental justice.

Despite the literature available about public participation, and despite the government's acknowledgement of its benefits (as shown in the conceptual framework), there remains a disconnect between participation practices and stakeholder perception of its contribution to democracy and social cohesion. In contrast to the optimistic tone surrounding the discussion of public participation perspectives, participation was often described as disappointing and ineffective in practice. This shift in tone becomes more evident as the interviews progressed and respondents discuss public participation design. A second indication of this disconnect is the implicit nature of the perspectives discussion. In fact, these themes were most often referred to explicitly in the context of public participation *objectives* rather than *perspectives*. This research suggests that there is a lack of communication between decision-makers and academics given the respondents' inability to explicitly answer this question. One respondent, who acts as a SWP Manager, went as far as to say that they were "grounded in Source Protection and the end goal of ownership" and, therefore, had little comment regarding public participation perspectives (PPM2).

6.2 Public Participation Objectives

In order to enhance democratic rights and accomplish social cohesion, the respondents collectively describe several *public participation objectives*. From a democratic perspective, the consensus shows a need for evolved public participation, including higher levels of engagement in the decision-making process. According to many respondents, meaningful public participation is a dialogue between decision-makers and stakeholders that educates and engages all parties helping to create policy that is sensitive to constituency needs. PA2 explained that public participation is “basically the expressions and the interests of the public, and the results of those consultations, that are very helpful in providing us with the feedback to get legislation through, ... and to make sure that the public is not impacted in a negative way with regards to it”. As a politician, PA3 echoed this sentiment and explained that “information and education is a much better tool rather than just passing a law and trying to enforce it”. Participants CS1 and CS2 suggested that properly educating the public allows those who choose to participate to contribute in a more meaningful fashion. From a Manager’s perspective, PPM2 further suggested that decision-makers are beginning to acknowledge the value of education as a critical component of public participation because of its contribution to environmental literacy and compliance (PPM2) as well as civic literacy (CS2), in the end, enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of decision-making. In order to incorporate these ideas into the Source Water Protection Initiative, PPM1 stated that significant time and money have been provided to SPCs “so that they can hire people literally to go door-to-door” to educate the public regarding the need to protect our source waters.

In the case of meaningful public participation, participants are said to be much more accepting and supportive of decisions even if it is not reflective of their input as “they can understand there has been a good discussion about it and their points of view were recognized” (CS2). This response was supported by all respondents. PA3 explained:

To make decisions or to craft legislation or to accomplish certain things it has to be based on knowledge. And the question is knowledge from what. You can read something in a book but when you're trying to develop whether it's laws, rules or regulations, or trying to eliminate rules or regulations, you have to strive to come up with answers that truly represent what society wants.

From this perspective, public participation is seen as not only garnering public support but also as promoting stakeholder cooperation and compromise. Although public support, or buy-in, is important for effective decision-making, it is suggested that decision-makers sometimes focus too much on buy-in and not enough on the meaningful contribution of participants in decision-making. Reflecting on this observation, PA3 warned that sometimes bureaucrats “use public participation as a tool to achieve [their] goals and sometimes it's a bit of a window dressing, it's a manipulative way of doing things”. Buy-in and manipulation can create a sense of tokenism among community stakeholders (Beattie *et al.*, 2003; Breitbart & Kasperson, 1974; Department of Justice Canada, 2007; Environment Canada, 1996; Hanna, 2005). Within the context of Source Water Protection, PPM3 expressed concern regarding the genuine inclusion of community stakeholders in the implementation of the *Clean Water Act* (2006):

the Clean Water Act says ... you must consult the public at three steps after you release the terms of reference, after you release that watershed assessment report, after you release the draft plan. In other words, here's what we've done, what do you think? It's not giving the public an opportunity to participate in the evolution of the process.

The question is: will this affect stakeholder opinion of Source Water Protection as the public participation process progresses?

As previously described, many references were also made regarding the contribution of public participation to social cohesion. LPM3 explained that as a result of the increased influence awarded to the public in a meaningful participation process, participants “feel more important in terms of there’s a greater degree of empowerment”. Public participation is also said to promote balanced and equitable priority setting and, as such, builds respect and understanding between conflicting stakeholder values. The end result is believed to be community partnerships and an individual sense of ownership, both of which are important for participants and decision-makers. PA1 suggested that the SPC was constructed in hopes of building trust and partnerships, between stakeholders, communities and the government as the MOE emphasizes the implementation of a community driven process. Unfortunately, tension continues to exist between decision-makers and several agricultural interest groups.

PA2 explained that

it was not the intention of the government to go out fighting against landowners. It was the intention of the government to go and work with landowner’s and work with farmers and work with anybody associated with... protecting well heads and protecting our water sources. You know I think some of the landowners take it as another regulation and another opportunity to fight. And that was not the intention at all.

This tension was also apparent during field observation.

In light of these commonly identified public participation objectives, it is interesting to note that each stakeholder group emphasized different objectives when discussing Source Water Protection specifically. In particular, differences were identified between upper (SWP Process Architects and SWP Provincial Process Managers) and lower (SWP Local Process Managers) levels of management. As upper level managers, the priorities of SWP Process

Architects' and SWP Provincial Process Managers' for public participation focused primarily on the promotion of the democratic system. These stakeholders placed particular emphasis on the importance of enhancing the common good through governance. Within the context of Source Water Protection, PA2 explained that the SPC "has to be broad-based and taking in a wide-scope of opinion from the positive to the negative and bring it in so that you can build a consensus and come to a successful conclusion". As bureaucrats involved at the strategic level of decision-making, the SWP Provincial Process Managers stressed the importance of effective policy implementation that is facilitated by balanced and equitable priority setting. In terms of the *Clean Water Act (2006)*, they focus their efforts on regulating water quality and quantity through a "participatory democracy", including locally based decision-making and the development of contextually sensitive policy (PPM1). PPM2 explained that "it goes back to providing an opportunity for people to input into a process, to create an end support for a product. It's to ensure that there is credibility from a public perspective in these plans that are going to be developed in five years". On the other hand, as a Provincial Manager who works outside of the MOE, PPM3 suggested that the SPC has been bound with "so much structure around it that there isn't going to be any discretionary decision-making ability" for the SPC which may lead to "antagonism and hostility" between local stakeholders and the provincial government.

The SWP Local Process Managers, lower level managers who work directly with communities, also emphasize the creation of contextually sensitive policy and its effective implementation. In addition, these respondents stressed the importance of respectful and trustworthy relationships with community stakeholders as they are the authorities who interact with them directly. From their perspective as a Local Manager, LPM2 suggested

that often “all they [stakeholders] wanted to do is vent. That’s why the Lord gave us one mouth and two ears because he wants you to listen twice as much as you talk”. Given the negative reaction of some stakeholder groups to the *Clean Water Act (2006)*, the SWP Local Process Managers recognized the value of locally-based decision-making which enables concerned citizens to influence the implementation of the Act in their region. LPM1 stated that “without public participation you’re just shooting in the dark. You’re going to get a report at the end of the day but you have no understanding or assurance that what you produce is actually going to be palatable for the community”. As such, the respondents view public participation as helping create policy that is contextually sensitive and, perhaps, helping reduce some of the controversy.

The perspectives of the SWP Community Stakeholders were similar to those of the SWP Local Process Managers, focusing primarily on the quality of interaction they have with decision-makers and the weight of influence (or lack thereof) they have on decision-making.

CS2 stated that

whoever’s running the meeting has to go back and think about, and talk about, in their group, everything that was brought up. But I think perhaps one of the things that doesn’t happen very often is a clear indication, at the end of the meeting, about how the public participation and the information that was heard is going to be handled.

Given this suggested lack of communication, CS2 explained that participants are often left feeling dissatisfied with the process. Each of the Community Stakeholders stressed the need for open and transparent communication in order to garner trust in decision-makers and minimizes the level of tokenism. CS3 further suggested that not only must the government provide opportunities for open public participation, but they must also make efforts to encourage the public to get involved:

...governments in the past have always said ‘we gave them a chance, we gave the public a chance to participate and they chose not to come’. I’m not sure that that’s good enough. I think we should say ‘not only did we give them a chance but we provided every opportunity and we went looking for it in such a way that facilitated that input.

In order to prevent the future creation of token participation processes, the conceptual framework describes a series of key characteristics that encourage the design of meaningful participation. The following section summarizes what the SWP respondents reveal as effective characteristics.

6.3 Public Participation Characteristics

In order to achieve the identified objectives of meaningful and effective public participation, the respondents have described the need for public participation processes to be representative, communicative, systematic and substantive. The need for proper representation and communication are awarded particular value by each stakeholder group.

There is an overall consensus that a representative process is critical to the success of public participation. For example, many references were made regarding the need for enhanced dialogue that represents all interests between decision-makers and stakeholders. LPM3 suggested that “we live in a very pluralistic society with different groups and different objectives”, therefore, in order for policy to be reflective of this diversity, public participation processes must be inclusive of all perspectives. This view was echoed by all respondents. Within the context of Source Water Protection, PPM2 described full representation as “pivotal”. In order to ensure a fair process, PPM1 explained that SWP

decision-making is to be done on a “consensus basis”. Although Provincials Managers view the SPC as a balanced representation of community interests, CS3 suggested that its representation is limited:

You have an agricultural rep who will provide a lot of agricultural type comments and concerns and input. The municipal reps will have some of that because usually there’s agricultural designations within a municipality, but it’s not going to be the same as the guy who lives right next to the manure thing. ... I think you need to give the... average person an opportunity to say what they think.

Like CS3, CS1 also expressed concern regarding the SPC’s range of representation; however, this respondent suggested that some reps appear to have been selected “from a certain segment of opinion”. CS1 strongly believed that the individuals chosen in their Source Protection Region (the neighboring Mississippi Valley) were selected specifically under the assumption that they are pro Source Water Protection and pro *Clean Water Act* (2006).

Communication was also identified as key to public participation’s success, particularly from the point of view of the SWP Community Stakeholders. The open and transparent sharing of information, with regards to the issues and the decision-making process, was reported to be imperative for producing informed participants who have trust in the government. PA2 explained that for public participation to be effective and for decision-making to be successful,

any communication with the public on Source Water Protection has to contain a good message on what our government wants to do and what we hope the public can do to make that happen, what they can do to be helpful in the process.

Many respondents stated that communication must clearly relay messages of relevance in order to grab the public’s attention and mobilize them to participate. PPM1 suggested that “it is really hard to engage the public because mostly they have a short attention span and

they don't understand the link to themselves". LPM1 further explained that communication has to be

plain and simple especially in the work we're doing [SWP]. ... If you really want the general public to understand what you're saying you have to say it as simple as possible. You have to repeat it constantly, ... It has to be diverse, I mean in terms of different types of communication whether it's print or voice or media or whatever.

When choosing a communication instrument CS2 explained that "these days there are such a variety of ways of doing it, but it is to make it available to them in a form that they will find...interesting". In addition, PA3 suggested that this mix of instruments must be appropriate given the context, or the process may be viewed as tokenism:

It is very important to have the right mix, the right process rather than just a dog and pony show meeting and then people can check it off 'well we did it and we are fine'.

Some respondents also suggested that communication strategies that include the use of a variety of instruments help to connect with as many people as possible. LPM3 stated that "different mechanisms accommodate different needs". LPM3 further explained that using a mix of instruments helps to maximize understanding and minimize apprehension and skepticism.

The interview process also revealed that the interaction between decision-makers and participants must include a two-way dialogue where input has weight on the final decision-making process. Within the SPC, LPM2 explained that "if you really genuinely want the public to drive it [Source Water Protection] then you've got to spend the time to identify the problem through communications, through public dialogue". LPM1 also made this claim and suggested that "it's not just information out but it's also opportunities for dialogue and feedback from the public as a means to improve or incorporate broad perspectives that

hopefully will result in more appropriate public policy”. In order to prevent tokenism, two-way interaction between decision-makers and stakeholders must be initiated at the beginning of decision-making and continue throughout the process. PPM3 explained that based on their personal experience, participants often question their contribution in a purely consultative process as it appears that the decisions have already been made. They further suggested that the public should be engaged at the beginning of decision-making in order to garner support: “[the public is] not going to buy the solution when they haven’t even bought that there is a problem”. It was widely felt that citizens who are engaged at the beginning and who are well informed are better equipped to make a meaningful contribution to the decision-making process (PA2, PA3, PPM1, LPM1, LPM2, CS1, CS2). The emphasized need for effective communication and instrument selection also implies the need for decision-makers to systematically design public participation that is appropriate for their communities. It is important to note that some of the respondents continue to describe traditional consultative public participation, such as the mandatory open house included in the *Clean Water Act (2006)*, as effective (PA2 and CS3). Consultative public participation is conducted after a proposal has been prepared and often does not include two-way dialogue. Other respondents describe such instruments as dated and ineffective. In fact, LPM3 went as far as to say that these instruments are “out of date by about 20 or 30 years”.

The insights provided by the SWP stakeholders groups, in most cases, stressed the value of public participation for both decision-makers and participants. If each stakeholder group appears to be in agreement regarding these public participation qualities, why then does public participation continue to be perceived as ineffective by practitioners and community stakeholders? This study suggests that a lack of guidance regarding contemporary public

participation design has hindered current practices of public participation from realizing its full potential. The interview process has, indeed, revealed a traditional and dated approach to public participation design within each stakeholder group.

6.4 Public Participation Triggers, Phases, Instruments and Evaluation

Up to this point, respondents have provided insights into their perception of public participation with regards to its *theoretical underpinnings*, including its *perspectives*, *objectives*, and effective *characteristics*. Turning the focus now to public participation *design elements*, the last four components of the public participation conceptual framework are *triggers*, *phases*, *instruments* and *evaluation*.

The first design component discussed was *public participation triggers*. A large majority of respondents suggested that the *Clean Water Act (2006)* and its Source Protection Committee were a political reaction to the Walkerton Crisis of 2000 (see section 3.1). This tragic event, and its subsequent public outrage, resulted in a strong government commitment to implement the recommendations set out by Justice O'Connor in his Inquiry (see section 4.1). According to PA2,

everybody in basically the world knew that we had a problem in Ontario, in a town called Walkerton, and what was the province going to do. Well, the province had an inquiry, there were results of the inquiry and there was something that developed from that. So that was a trigger. But I think it was the human reaction that was the trigger and that was the alert to all of us whether it be municipal leaders, provincial leaders, people who work in conservation authorities, people that work in water and wastewater plants in communities.

In light of public outrage, the respondents also suggested the *Clean Water Act's (2006)* approach to public participation reflects a public demand for the government to be held

accountable for the tragedy. A small minority of respondents, described the *Clean Water Act (2006)* as “overkill” (LPM3), “a knee jerk reaction” (LPM2), and “blown out of proportion” (CS3). It is interesting to note that LPM1 did not describe Walkerton as the primary trigger but suggested that the Ministry of the Environment had simply learned from previous holistic watershed planning and management experiences and, therefore, incorporated some of the same principles in the *Clean Water Act (2006)*, including locally-based decision-making.

In addition to the political and constituency triggers, the scale and objectives of the Source Water Protection Initiative were also identified as significant triggers for the *Clean Water Act's (2006)* ambitious approach to public participation. For instance, PA1, PA2, LPM1 and CS1 each suggested that because the Act is far reaching and impacts many sectors of the community, its scale demands the coordination of different stakeholder groups to facilitate smooth implementation. In terms of its objectives, PPM2 explained that the *Clean Water Act (2006)* includes “managing people’s properties to protect something that’s really not on their property. It’s property specific action to protect the common good”. PA1 and CS1 provided similar responses as they explained that this legislation demands public outreach and education efforts in order to engage the individual citizens who will be directly involved in the implementation process. Finally, PA3 suggested that the controversial nature of the *Clean Water Act (2006)* has led much of the agricultural community to be “very leery of who might be running it [the program]. They didn’t want bureaucrats alone to be making all the decisions”. Thus, some public stakeholders felt it was important that they be involved in the decision-making process given their lack of trust in the government’s ability to distribute the burden of protecting our source waters equally among the public.

Thus far respondents have demonstrated a similar and cohesive understanding of *public participation theory* and triggers. Despite the consensus, it was during the discussion of the *phases, instruments* and *evaluation components* that stakeholders revealed diverging perceptions, particularly within the context of Source Water Protection. Most respondents reported a fairly traditional outlook on process design phases. PA2, LPM1, LPM3, CS2, CS3, those respondents who have been directly involved in either or both public participation design and implementation, described a specific design structure which includes four main phases: the identification of stakeholders and communication strategies, the identification of participation objectives, the identification of instruments and implementation. In particular, emphasis was placed on the importance of public mobilization or the initiation phase. The quality of mobilization, including communication and education, is said to be critical to the success of a participation process (see section 3.2.3). As a SWP Community Stakeholder, CS1 explained that

there has to be information. The information is not there, and when it is, it's not always complete. In fact it's usually not always complete. ... Certain bits of information that won't, for example, make the Clean Water Act sound like the best thing we could possibly ever do for everybody.

CS1 went on to suggest that the SWP decision-making process “appears to be designed in a matter that will attract only certain people... through lack of information, making other people feel as though it’s not a concern to me”. In terms of mobilization, LPM3 also explained that the “thing that really effects public participation [mobilization] is the degree of notice you give people. Typically in public type of projects, there’s a newspaper ad people may read or they might ignore. If you go well beyond that then that will dictate the level of public participation right there”. PPM1 agreed that information and education play a key role in the decision-making process and explained that education has been built into the

Clean Water Act's (2006) timelines and a significant amount of funding has been allocated toward implementing these efforts. When asked about communication, LPM2 stressed the need for transparency and dialogue, stating that “we [the Raisin – South Nation Source Protection Management Committee] want it [decision-making] to be totally transparent. We definitely want input from the public in whatever stage we are at”. Given the acknowledged importance of transparency, all documents are made available to the public, including the SPC code of conduct and their draft reports. Transparency is carried through to the selection of SPC members where each identified stakeholder group is given the authority to choose their own representative (LPM2).

Although the initiation, design and implementation phases of a public participation process have been clearly identified by the respondents, they neglected three additional phases outlined by the *phases component* of the conceptual framework: the process review, sustaining and evaluation phases. As previously described, the sustaining phase is the maintenance of resources and networks for the use in future public participation events (see section 5.1.5). The lack of value allotted to the sustaining phase is surprising given the concern expressed regarding limited resources in the literature (Brown & Duram, 1999; Drew *et al.*, 2004; Hartely & Wood, 2005) as well as by numerous respondents. It is also interesting that no stakeholder discussed the value of sustaining networks and partnerships post-participation, although many did identified relationship building as one of its key objective. With regards to process review and evaluation, these exercises were not identified as critical phases of public participation. However, as will be shown, evaluation was described as valuable.

The next public participation component explores *instruments*. As outlined in the conceptual framework, phase and stakeholder sensitivity must be considered when choosing public participation instruments (see section 5.1.6). Each of the SWP stakeholders reiterated this sentiment in the context of the *Clean Water Act (2006)*. PPM3 suggested that “you need to allow the public to be involved in a way that works for them”. According to the SWP Provincial Process Managers, the legislative requirements outlining the SPC’s public participation strategy are minimal, allowing the communication specialists the opportunity to create public participation that is appropriate for their region. PPM1 explained that the MOE’s strategy was to “allow each of those committees [SPCs] to go out and use the approaches that makes sense in those communities to engage the public”. In order to ensure a contextually sensitive process, LPM1 stated that the Source Protection Management Committee uses the SPC as a “sounding board for how they think their particular part of the world reacts to different venues and styles”. Although these respondents claimed that SWP public participation is contextually sensitive, LPM2 revealed that in the Raisin-South Nation Source Protection Region “the biggest concern everybody had was timelines with the farmers getting out on the fields in the spring and they’ve got deadlines in June”. LPM2 further suggested that the MOE may “adjust the timelines” in order to make the process more realistic and convenient for that region. This finding suggests that including the public in the process of selecting instruments facilitates contextually sensitive design. The interview process revealed that some respondents agreed with this statement and some did not, suggesting that this exercise would only further exhaust limited resources.

The final component of the public participation conceptual framework is *evaluation*. The conceptual framework reveals a comprehensive understanding of the benefits surrounding

public participation *evaluation*. Although there is a plethora of information available regarding *evaluation*, the interview process has revealed that decision-makers and active community stakeholders continue to underestimate its potential contribution to the participation process. In fact, a SWP Provincial Process Manager acknowledged that the MOE, generally speaking, does not “measure public success in terms of does the public feel protected, is the public part of the decision-making, is the public aware? ... What that shows is generally abysmal” (PPM1). It is important to note that although most respondents admitted to not practicing formal evaluation, many agreed that it would be valuable to public participation, particularly within Source Water Protection. Some respondents suggested that the informal internal reflection of process strengths and weaknesses is sufficient and commonly practiced. For instance, PPM2 stated that, within the context of Source Water Protection, “checks and balances are built into the process itself versus being something that sits on the side to monitor it”. Other respondents found it surprising that formal evaluation is not included in this process. Only two respondents, LPM2 and CS1, were unfamiliar with the concept of process evaluation. However, when the researcher explained the concept of evaluation, and its role in public participation, both respondents strongly agreed that it would be valuable, particularly within the context of the Source Protection Committee.

Although the respondents share similar perceptions of basic fundamental process design, the interview process has revealed that each stakeholder group possesses a different set of public participation priorities within the context of Source Water Protection. More specifically, it is clear that stakeholder perceptions of process design become more comprehensive the more connected one is to grassroots decision-making. It is not surprising that the more hands-on

experience one has with public participation, and the more direct contact one has with a community, the more they understand about effective public participation process design.

As the creators of the *Clean Water Act (2006)*, the SWP Process Architects discussed the normative value of public participation focusing their efforts on democratic governance. They suggested that the Act was constructed through a democratic process (the Social Policy Hearings) and is reflective of democratic qualities in that its institutionalized public participation (the Source Protection Committee) is designed to promote teamwork and compromise.

The SWP Provincial Process Managers revealed more practical priorities with regards to participation design. They focused more on the construction of the SPC and its public participation strategy. In order to facilitate a truly locally-based approach, they stressed the importance of providing only basic regulation guiding the design of an SPC's public participation strategy, therefore, allowing each SPC the authority to make choices that are contextually sensitive to their region. Interestingly, this is in contrast to the detailed, structured regulations outlining the construction of the SPC itself. Some stakeholder groups have identified the rigid instructions of the SPC design as being a hindrance to the locally-based decision-making approach. One respondent, who acts as an upper level manager, warned that this new "influenced-based" approach, where local stakeholders are educated and then allowed to make the decisions, may be compromised as it is overshadowed by persistent regulation limiting the decision-making power awarded to the SPC (PPM3). According to some SWP Local Process Managers, the institutional culture of the Ministry of the Environment to regulate and enforce compliance has prohibited the Source Protection

Committee (see section 3.2.4 for SPC) from realizing its full potential as a bottom-up decision-making body. LPM1 explained that the MOE has retained a significant amount of decision-making power as they dictate the funding received by the SPC:

They're trying to reverse the scenario where they don't just give us [the SPC] the money and then ask us how we'll spend it, we're supposed to try and forecast our need and then they'll give us the money.

LPM2 further suggested that

there's no individualism at all when it comes to [SWP]... other regs are going to be even more stringent by leading you... down one path. Your focus is going to be on that path, ... You have to go where they tell you to go.

Given the SWP Local Process Managers perceptions, if this matter is not considered seriously in the long term, the SPC participants may increasingly perceive the process as tokenism.

As previously described, the SWP Local Process Managers priorities are grounded in the local implementation of Source Water Protection and its SPC. As such, this stakeholder group stressed the need to design a participation strategy that is appropriate for promoting meaningful locally-based decision-making. Although they clearly outlined several required *characteristics* of meaningful public participation process design, limited resources require them to be creative and frugal. The interview process has revealed differing opinions regarding the amount of resources that are required to create a meaningful public participation process between the SWP Local and Provincial Process Managers.

Given the approach of the SWP Provincial Process Managers to leave the participation regulation flexible and to the discretion of the local SPC, it is interesting to note the lack of attention to design as perceived by the SWP Community Stakeholders. These respondents

expressed concern regarding the communication efforts made by the managers of Source Water Protection, describing a lack of transparency and an inability to simplify complicated legislation. The SWP Community Stakeholders also described the inclusion of participants in the design process, as well as the need for equitable local representation within the SPC, as critical to achieving an effective outcome. Although described as a positive change to the usual Ministry of the Environment approach to public participation (i.e., the Environment Bill of Rights and its Environmental Registry), many SWP Local Process Managers and SWP Community Stakeholders question the SPCs true potential to satisfy the needs of both decision-makers and stakeholders.

6.5 Varying Perceptions of Source Water Protection

It can be concluded from the results of the interview process, that public participation is seen as playing an important role in Source Water Protection. Its inherent role in our democracy system and its benefits to society, including the perceived benefits to Source Water Protection, justify the creation of the highly ambitious Source Protection Committee. Although the need for public participation within this context is generally undisputed, there remains room for improvement, including a need for greater communication among stakeholders. The following section addresses some conflicting messages that were revealed during from the interview process and explores varying stakeholder priorities of public participation.

The interview process revealed contrasting ideas of how or if public participation is beneficial. For example, where many respondents acknowledged increased public interest to

participate in our pluralistic governance system (PPM3, LPM3), it was suggested that public apathy makes participation difficult. As a decision-maker, LPM1 has experienced public apathy first hand: "You can stand on your head and juggle fireballs or something and they're still not going to come. You can spend an awful lot of time and money trying to get people out and be very disappointed in the turnout I guess is what I'm saying". CS3 further suggested that "unless it [decision-making] affects them [the public] directly ... they would rather not participate".. Many respondents also explained that public buy-in has become a major objective for decision-makers when conducting public participation, however, some also acknowledge that the public is becoming more and more skeptical regarding government intentions. As a Local Manager, LPM3 explained that often decision-makers seek public buy-in late in the decision-making process resulting in public distrust in government:

The traditional approach is to use what's called the bombshell approach. You do your project. You do all of your technical studies which no one understands, no one cares about, and you go ahead and have your one public meeting. People don't understand, rumours go around. It goes terribly."

LPM3 further suggested that "public participation is one of the keys to success in terms of getting your project accepted", however, it must be implemented early in the decision-making process and its design must reflect genuine willingness to engage the public. As a participant, CS2 has also witnessed public skepticism: "The outcome is given and then the person walks away saying 'well I gave my opinion, it wasn't taken into consideration... because I'm jaded from this one bad experience I don't think I'll continue to participate". To summarize, there is increased interest to participate, yet, the public is apathetic. Decision-makers focus heavily on buy-in, yet, the public remains skeptical. Messages such as these are reiterated in the literature (Ascentum Inc & Canadian Policy Research, 2005; Aucoin &

Turnbull, 2006; Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, 2003; Drew *et al.*, 2004; Krueger *et al.*, 2001). These conflicting messages reflect a lack of communication between decision-makers and other stakeholder groups. In order for public participation to evolve decision-makers and community stakeholders must communicate and understand each other's expectations.

The interview process also revealed conflicting messages regarding public participation in theory versus public participation in practice. During the interview process the respondents described similar outlooks on public participation theory and design when discussing it hypothetically. However when discussing their own personal experiences, participation was often described as ineffective. If public participation is described as beneficial in theory, why does it continue to be described as ineffective in practice? The SWP respondents revealed three main messages that the researcher believes to negatively impact the potential success of public participation. Firstly, the public participation instruments that are most commonly used are dated. Although the respondents identified contextual sensitivity and the use of diverse instruments as important, when discussing their actual experiences with participation design, most referred mainly to dated instruments such as open houses, community meetings and surveys. Even though these instruments are the most commonly used by many of the respondents, they are also described as ineffective at attracting participants. For example, LPM1 suggested that traditional public participation instruments, such as open houses and surveys are "just not that effective. For whatever reason people... in my experience, and maybe it's just the field that I work in, but they're not that interested... Not a lot of people come to them unless it's going to cost [them] money and then they'll show up. I guess it depends on your purpose". Field observation revealed the

persistent use of dated instruments and its resulting participant dissatisfaction. Secondly, the interview process revealed varying perceptions of stakeholder priorities with regards to the role of public participation in Source Water Protection. According to SWP Process Architects, the role of public participation is to help promote democratic governance. The SWP Provincial Process Managers focused heavily on creating an initiative that could be effectively implemented and that is reflective of Justice O'Connor's recommendations. Like the Provincial Managers, the Local Managers were concerned with effective implementation, however, for them this meant creating a respectful relationship with Community Stakeholders. Finally, the Community Stakeholders focused their attention on making a meaningful contribution to the Source Water Protection decision-making process. SWP stakeholder priorities of public participation are clearly distinct. Without understanding the priorities of their counterparts, it may be difficult for stakeholders to empathize and compromise.

Varying stakeholder perceptions of Source Water Protection public participation was reflected in their perceptions of participation design, particularly regarding effective communication and inclusive representation. In terms of communication, CS1 described a lack of transparency and access to information within Source Water Protection. CS1 further suggested that limited access to information, or fractured information, leads to "fractured responses" and the appearance that "there are certain outcomes that are wanted" by decision-makers. The perceived lack of transparency and ineffective communication are reflected in the continued tension that lies between much of the agricultural community and decision-makers, as uncovered during field observation. It is interesting to note that Provincial

Process Managers and Local Process Managers stressed the importance of transparency and suggested that Source Water Protection was designed to possess these qualities:

When we [members of the MOE] sat down as a working group, it really went back to the concept of having the Committee have formal processes in place to make sure that whenever something was voiced by a member of the public, or somebody trying to represent their sectoral group at the Source Protection Committee, or at a public meeting, that there was a very transparent process in place to record, respond and provide some sort of evaluation to that particular person on how their concerns would be addressed or how their suggestion would be addressed" (PPM2).

Ineffective mobilization efforts, including nontransparent communication, may prove to have negative consequences in the long term, as persistent conflict among stakeholder has the potential to make decision-making difficult.

Balanced representation was also perceived differently among stakeholder groups. As a participant, CS2 stated that stakeholders who are confrontational have the ability to monopolize the discussion, overpowering the voices of others. It was further explained that certain SWP Community Stakeholder groups have, in fact, been confrontational and intimidating to other participants. CS2 explained that people who are

willing to participate ... but don't want to be in a confrontational mode, will just back off. And quite often the people that are positive about an environmental issue that are an ordinary person will back off. Now, frankly, even myself, if I thought I was going to a public meeting in which I knew the leaders of the landowners Association were going to be there ... I'm not sure how much I would want to get involved, to put it bluntly.

CS1, a member of an agricultural interest group and an individual who feels particularly affected by the *Clean Water Act (2006)*, also had concerns regarding representation. This respondent described the Source Protection Committee's structure as unable to represent local interests equally and feared that the agricultural community will be "outvoted" and shut out of the decision-making process. It is interesting to note, however, that field observation

showed CS1 and their agricultural stakeholder group to be highly educated, organized and vocal. LPM3 expressed similar concerns, stating that “inherently you get certain groups that will seek much greater participation that will influence the process and the product”. In contrast to these statements, the SWP Provincial Process Managers, have a positive outlook on SWP stakeholder representation. According to these stakeholders, SWP is driven by a diverse group of stakeholders, as represented by the SPC, and includes the addition of working groups, local individuals who contribute to the SPC decision-making process (see section 4.2.4). PPM2 explained that “there is no regulations around how many working groups that can be set up or not set up”. The flexibility surrounding the creation of working groups is suggested to allow any individuals or groups of stakeholders to participate if they feel as though their interests are under-represented. Going back to the literature, environmental justice experts suggest that unbalanced stakeholder opportunities to influence decision-making are not uncommon. As such, in order to avoid aggravating existing tensions, and to avoid environmental injustice, SWP Managers must be aware of the access they award various stakeholder groups to the decision-making process.

Finally, field observation revealed varying perceptions regarding the necessity of the *Clean Water Act (2006)*. One of the major concerns of Community Stakeholders, particularly the agricultural community, is that they are being portrayed as abusers of the environment. In contrast, they describe themselves as stewards of the land and, as such, insist that they do not need to be regulated in order to protect source waters. Provincial and Local Managers, on the other hand, believe that to protect the state of Ontario’s water, it must be governed. The varying perceptions of SWP public participation, and the necessity of the *Clean Water Act (2006)*, have lead to stakeholder frustrations and unwillingness to compromise. Although

there are disagreements, field observation and the interview process have shown that all stakeholder groups are concerned about the health of source waters and, thus, are willing to work together in some capacity.

Within the context of Source Water Protection, there is also conflicting perceptions of what constitutes bottom-up decision-making. Where the SWP Process Architects and SWP Provincial Process Managers believed they have made great strides in improving public participation efforts by creating a locally-based decision-making process, Local Managers and Community Stakeholders described the SPC instrument as bound by regulations and lacking effective communication. Even though concerns have been expressed by those directly involved in its implementation (Local Managers and Community Stakeholders), these same stakeholders do describe the SPC as a positive step toward meaningfully engaging their communities.

The role of public participation in the Ontario Source Water Protection Initiative has proven to be complex. Conflicting understandings of public participation and varying perceptions of Source Water Protection have resulted in tensions between decision-makers and community stakeholders. This discussion of the issues has provided insights to the underpinnings of Source Water Protection and will hopefully enlighten those involved regarding the expectations of their counterparts. If this is the case, perhaps, stakeholders will be more willing to come together and work as a team for the sake of healthy source waters.

CHAPTER 7

RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

Since a spectator citizenry threatens modern democracy, the failures of participation demand special efforts to restore broad citizen participation in public affairs.

(Breitbart & Kasperson, 1974, pp. 517)

7.1 Concluding Statements

As a component of our democratic system, and the management of our environmental resources, public participation is critical to the promotion of environmental justice and effective decision-making. In order to ensure that the public's needs are reflected in legislation, community stakeholders must be awarded the opportunity to inform and critique government policy proposals. Policy that is reflective of community values helps to reduce victimization and empower its citizens (Agyeman, 2005; Anand, 2004; Bryner, 2002; Connelly & Richardson, 2005; Corburn, 2002; Sapat *et al.*, 2002; Schlosberg, 2004). Meaningful public participation holds considerable promise as a means to rectify environmental injustice. While some degree of public participation is found in Canadian federal and provincial environmental legislation, its authenticity has been questioned by both academics and groups who regard consultation as token involvement (Government of Canada, 1992; Hanna, 2005; Health Canada, 2000; Ministry of the Environment, 1990; Ministry of the Environment, 2006b).

In order to further solidify the rights of citizens to seek environmental justice, this research has demonstrated the interconnectedness of environmental justice, citizenship rights and public participation where democracy is shown to be evolving towards a higher degree of

public participation through deliberative decision-making (Brannan *et al.*, 2007; Brodie, 2002; Law, 2003; Mahtani, 2002 Mitchell, 1997; Rocco, 2002; Young, 2006; Yuval-Davis). Given these modern understandings of citizenship rights, it is clear that environmental justice is not the only philosophical domain concerned with injustice and victimization. Government's acknowledgement of the triangular relationship between citizenship rights, environmental justice and public participation would be a positive step in creating a truly democratic society of inclusion and community acceptance.

In order to fully embrace environmental justice and citizenship rights within our governance system, current methods of public participation must be brought into the 21st Century. From a contemporary perspective, effective public participation design is said to play a key role in our democratic system helping to promote social cohesion and environmental justice (see section 3.1.1) (Bryner, 2002; Canadian Policy Research Network, 2000b; Commission on Resources and Environment, 1995; Drew *et al.*, 2004; Dyck, 2004; Hartely & Wood, 2005; Jackson, 2002; Krueger *et al.*, 2001; Watling, 2002). Meaningful public participation is also said to improve civic and environmental literacy as well as help empower citizens in their communities. The empowerment of a pluralistic society, in the end, is said to enhance decision-making effectiveness and efficiency as citizens, who feel acknowledged and respected, are more likely to support the government's agenda (Abelson & Gauvin, 2006; Canadian Policy Research Network, 2000b; Carr & Halvorsen, 2001; Cooper, 2003; Drew *et al.*, 2004; Goldenman & Zaharchenko, 2004; MacKinnon, 2004; Krueger *et al.*, 2001; Mitchell, 2002). In order to achieve these *objectives*, public participation must be systematic, representative, substantive, communicative and evaluative (see section 3.1.3) (Abelson *et al.*, 2006; Ascentum Inc & Canadian Policy Research Network, 2005; Beattie *et*

al., 2003; Breitbart & Kasperson, 1974; Citizen Engagement, 2004; Department of Justice Canada, 2007; Environment Canada, 1996; Hanna, 2005; Jackson, 2002; Phillips & Sewell, 1979; Tuler, 1999). In order to create a public participation process that is reflective of these qualities, more attention should be given to process design. With more effort awarded to process design, it is believed that individuals will be more open to listen to their counterparts and therefore, more will to compromise.

For the purposes of this research, a conceptual framework was created in order to organize and summarize the complex characteristics of public participation. The structure of this framework was then used to guide the investigation of public participation as it is found within Source Water Protection in the Raisin – South Nation Source Protection Region of Eastern Ontario. More specifically, the researcher aimed to understand SWP stakeholder perception of public participation and to understand any variations that may exist between these perceptions.

The *Clean Water Act (2006)*, as implemented by the Raisin - South Nation Source Protection Committee, has revealed unique insights into the evolution of public participation within watershed planning and management. SWP Process Architects, SWP Provincial Process Managers, SWP Local Process Managers and SWP Community Stakeholders are at the core of this process. According to SWP stakeholders, public participation can be perceived as authentic and genuine or it can be perceived as tokenism. They suggested that meaningful public participation creates an educated and engaged citizenry. It is described as beneficial for decision-makers by helping them create policy that is contextually sensitive and, thus, more likely to be supported by the community. Although the benefits for decision-makers

are recognized, most respondents focused primarily on the benefits for participants, stressing the need for local opportunities to express concerns.

In order for public participation to be truly meaningful and effective, results suggest that public participation must be communicative, representative, systematic, and substantive. Communication and representation were identified as particularly critical characteristics by each stakeholder group. The respondents have revealed conflicting perceptions of effective communication and balanced representation within Source Water Protection. If SWP Managers do not acknowledge these differing opinions, what is hoped to be a fair and equitable participation process may, in the end, only aggravate existing tensions.

In light of the comprehensive insights of *public participation objectives* and *characteristics*, it is unfortunate that most respondents were unable to connect these qualities to broader philosophical understandings of participation, particularly the decision-makers (SWP Architects, SWP Provincial Process Managers, SWP Local Process Managers) as they are responsible for its development and implementation. It is suggested that this lack of knowledge regarding *participation perspectives*, specifically its contribution on a larger social scale (i.e., social cohesion, democratic rights, environmental justice and design), minimizes the value awarded to participation in the decision-making process.

Moving from the theoretical to the practical, respondents identified three basic phases of public participation design: mobilization, instrument selection and implementation. The emphasized need for extensive communication, contextually sensitive instruments and inclusive representation implies the need for a systematically designed participation process.

Although the value of evaluation is widely accepted by academics, it is suggested that evaluation is often neglected. The Source Water Protection respondents confirm this claim as they revealed the absence of evaluation in the *Clean Water Act (2006)*. It is interesting to note that although most respondents agreed that it would be valuable in the context of Source Water Protection, many admit to not practicing this exercise formally.

Despite their similar insights regarding *public participation theory* and *design*, it is clear that each stakeholder group awards different priorities to public participation, particularly in the context of Source Water Protection. From the perspective of SWP Process Architects, Source Water Protection public participation is an exercise of democracy. From the perspective of SWP Provincial Process Managers, the SPC instrument is designed to represent the major regional Source Water Protection stakeholder groups. These groups of stakeholders have been brought together to develop a watershed management approach that is appropriate for their individual regions.

Unlike the SWP Process Architects and Provincial Process Managers, the SWP Local Process Managers are directly involved in the implementation of the *Clean Water Act (2006)* in their community. Although they acknowledge the province's attempt to create a bottom-up decision-making system, they are concerned that rigid regulations are hindering its true potential. Regulations are seen as limiting the authority of the SPC to develop truly locally-based watershed management. The SWP Community Stakeholders also appreciate this new direction of environmental management, as presented by the Ministry of the Environment, however, they too expressed concern regarding the Ministry's approach. According to these

respondents, the SPC must be inclusive of its stakeholder representation and communicate openly and transparently with their community.

Given the varying insights provided by each stakeholder group, it is clear that the notion of perception is important. The respondents revealed several conflicting messages and varying perceptions of public participation in Source Water Protection. If stakeholders better understood each other's perception of public participation, and the role of the Source Protection Committee, they may be more willing to work as a team to protect our source waters. The Source Protection Committee and its public participation process are central to the implementation of the *Clean Water Act (2006)*. If the SPC is unsuccessful in its attempt to promote meaningful participation it may compromise future attempts made by the province to engage the public.

7.2 Research Limitations and Future Investigations

There are a number of limitations to this research that require some discussion. For instance, although the semi-structured interview technique facilitated an informal atmosphere in which respondent and interviewer were free to discuss ideas, it created some time constraints limiting the number of follow-up questions that could be asked. While this meant certain themes were not probed as thoroughly as might have been appropriate, in most cases it was not a significant problem. A second limitation to this research stemmed from the use of academic jargon during the interview process. Although many of the stakeholders are responsible for public participation design and implementation, it became clear that their knowledge of its theory, and the vocabulary surrounding it, is limited. However, the

repercussions of this methodological flaw were minimal as it only came to play during the initial discussion of public participation perspectives. Finally, a relatively small number of respondents were interviewed per stakeholder group. During the analysis process, it was found that certain stakeholders within the same stakeholder group possessed different perspectives based on their varying professional backgrounds. Perhaps a larger number of respondents would have led to a more comprehensive understanding of stakeholder perception of public participation in Source Water Protection.

Given the complexity of the research topic, and in light of research limitations, there are additional elements to be investigated regarding public participation and its role in Source Water Protection. The role of public participation within the *Clean Water Act (2006)* encompasses a greater scope than was possible to include within the span of this research. In addition to the Source Protection Committee, the general public has been, and will continue to be, engaged in the decision-making process as outlined in the Raisin-South Nation Public Engagement Strategy. Beyond the SPC, the public was also engaged in the development of the Act through a series of Social Policy Hearings conducted by the Ontario Legislature. In order to understand why stakeholders perceive public participation in the way they do, research should be expanded to examine how past experiences with participation, including these venues, have influenced their perception. An examination of the public participation processes conducted by the Raisin Region Conservation Authority, and its influence over stakeholder perception, would also provide valuable insights regarding the development of these perceptions. Finally, the comparison of this research, and its conclusions, to the development of other Acts, including but not limited to pieces of environmental legislation such as the *Nutrient Management Act (2002)* and the *Safe Drinking Water Act (2002)*, would

help to gain further insight regarding the role of public participation in the decision-making process.

7.3 Research Contributions

SWP stakeholders have provided many intriguing insights regarding their perceptions public participation, particularly within Source Water Protection. Understanding how they perceive public participation, and further understanding how these perceptions differ, has revealed process strengths and weaknesses. This information can now be used by decision-makers to facilitate the enhancement current SWP public participation practices to create a more effective and environmentally just decision-making process. On a larger scale, the lessons learned from this particular case can be applied to other public participation scenarios helping contribute to its overall positive evolution in all decision-making domains.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW TEMPLATE

**The instrument is to be distributed to respondents in advance of the interview.*

Respondent's Profile

Name:

Affiliation:

Residency:

Age:

Educational Attainment:

Occupation:

Approximate Household Income:

Experience with Public Participation (Yes/No), (Positive/Negative/No Opinion):

Affiliation with Source Water Protection:

Interview Logistics

Date:

Time:

Place (Geographical Location, Venue):

Duration:

I. GENERAL OVERVIEW – DISCUSSION DIRECTION

- Value of public participation
- Value of public participation in water resource management
- Value of public participation in a rural setting
- Characteristics of successful processes
- Characteristics of unsuccessful processes
- Essential characteristics
- Overall impression of public participation within Source Water Protection to date

Q1. What do you believe to be public participation perspectives as related to Source Water Protection?

...Capturing the institutional/organizational philosophy, frame of reference, mission statement of public participation...

Q2. What do you believe to be public participation principles as related to Source Water Protection?

...Capturing the institutional/organizational ambition or goals regarding public participation...

Q3. What do you believe to be public participation rules or guides as related to Source Water Protection?

...Capturing the rules guiding process design and implementation of a public participation process...

Q4. What do you believe to be public participation triggers as related to Source Water Protection?

...Capturing conditions that sustain and start the process...

Q5. What do you believe to be public participation phases as related to Source Water Protection?

...Capturing the progression of critical design features...

Q6. What do you believe to be public participation instruments as related to Source Water Protection?

...Capturing characteristics of the tools used...

Q7. What do you believe to be the role of public participation evaluation as related to Source Water Protection?

...Capturing the manner and means of assessment...

APPENDIX B

THEMATIC CONTENT ANALYSIS TEMPLATE

**The instrument is to be used as a coding tool during the implementation of the content analysis technique.*

I. GENERAL OVERVIEW – DISCUSSION DIRECTION

- Value of public participation
- Value of public participation in water resource management
- Value of public participation in a rural setting
- Characteristics of successful processes
- Characteristics of unsuccessful processes
- Essential characteristics
- Overall impression of public participation within Source Water Protection to date

II. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS - THE SPECIFICS

A. Perception of Institutional/Organizational Perspective or Philosophy

...Capturing the institutional/organizational philosophy, frame of reference, mission statement of public participation...

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| • A1 - Social Responsibility and Justice | • A4 - Process Design or Design |
| • A2 - Democratic Accountability | • A5 - Instrument Selection |
| • A3 - Supporting Resources | • A6 - Other |

...Relation to Source Water Protection...

B. Perception of Institutional/Organizational Principles or Goals

...Capturing the institutional/organizational ambition or goals regarding public participation...

- | | |
|---|--|
| • B1 - Civic literacy | • B6 - Balanced and Equitable Priority Setting |
| • B2 - Decision-Making Efficiency | • B7 - Public or Constituency Needs |
| • B3 - Decision-Making Effectiveness | • B8 - Social and Environmental Justice |
| • B4 - Educated and Engaged Citizenry | • B9 - Other |
| • B5 - Networks and Partnerships Building | |

...Relation to Source Water Protection...

C. Perception of Procedural Rules or Guides

...Capturing the rules guiding process design and implementation of a public participation process...

- C1 – Systematic
- C2 – Representative
- C3 – Respectful
- C4 – Substantive
- C5 – Communicative
- C6 – Evaluative
- C7 – Other

...Relation to Source Water Protection...

D. Perception of Process Triggers

...Capturing conditions that sustain and start the process...

- D1 – Voluntary
- D2 – Statutory
- D3 – Constituency Induced
- D4 – Mission Statement
- D5 – Ad hoc
- D6 – Project Scale
- D7 – Project Type or Kind
- D8 – Other

...Relation to Source Water Protection...

E. Perception of Design Phases

...Capturing the progression of critical design features...

- E1 – Initiation (to mobilize)
- E2 – Design Elements (to satisfy community needs)
- E3 – Implementation (to make equitable)
- E4 – Process review (to empower)
- E5 – Sustaining Capacity (to capacity build for the future)
- E6 – Evaluation (to produce feedback)
- E7 – Other

...Relation to Source Water Protection...

F. Perception of Instruments

...Capturing characteristics of the tools used...

- F1 – Tradition
- F2 – Innovation
- F3 – Institutional Culture
- F4 – Goals
- F5 – Information Value
- F6 – Other

...Relation to Source Water Protection...

G. Perception of Process Evaluation

...Capturing the manner and means of assessment...

- G1 - Capacity in Place
- G2 - Procedures in Place
- G3 - Goals Defined
- G4 - Criteria Defined
- G5 - Dissemination of Results
- G6 - Capacity to Implement Results
- G7 - Other

...Relation to Source Water Protection...