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Title: Does Collaborative Governance Lead To Environmental Improvements? An Empirical Assessment Of The Critical Elements Affecting Watershed Partnerships' Capacity To Achieve Their Environmental Improvement Goals

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ABSTRACT

Collaborative governance has long been advocated by policy makers and researchers alike as a means to improve the natural environment. However, determining the effectiveness of collaborative governance as a management strategy for improving environmental outcomes has proven difficult. Addressing this gap has significant bearing on environmental policy as governments at all levels have relied on collaborative governance as a primary way to address complex environmental issues that have not been satisfactorily addressed by conventional regulatory approaches and that are outside the scope of a single agency. Through the empirical assessment of survey data collected from watershed partnerships engaged in collaborative governance and assessments of longitudinal water quality data collected by US Environmental Protection Agency's National Monitoring Program, this study offers early evidence verifying positive relationships between elements of collaborative governance and improved environmental outcomes. In addition, the findings of this study offer empirical evidence linking collaborative outputs with outcomes, providing guidance to public managers when deciding upon useful proxy measures to use when environmental outcome data is unavailable.