

Reviews/Comptes rendus

Resource and Environmental Management in Canada: Addressing Conflict and Uncertainty. Bruce Mitchell (ed.). Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 1995, 445 pages.

The central theme of this collection of papers is conflict and uncertainty in Canadian resource management. This book is a revised and expanded version of Mitchell's earlier book, *Resource Management and Development*. The articles in the book do an excellent job of illustrating both the complexity of resource management issues and the importance of conflict and uncertainty in resource management.

Mitchell's introduction sets up the themes of conflict and uncertainty in resource management and introduces the precautionary principle as outlined at the U.N. Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

Following this useful introduction, the book is divided into three sections. The first section addresses "emerging concerns" in resource management. This section has been greatly expanded from the first edition with chapters on First Nations, Gender, and NAFTA added to the original chapters on climate change and waste management. The theme of uncertainty is well illustrated in Hare's article on climate change which discusses the difficulty in finding indisputable evidence for human induced climate change and the problems this uncertainty presents for politicians and the public in determining the need for action. The new chapters on gender by Nesmith and Wright and first nations by Wolfe-Keddie are important and timely as they recognize the changing roles and increasing importance of these perspectives in resource decision making today. The impact of government decisions in non-environmental areas is the subject of Gale's chapter on NAFTA which questions the view that GATT, the FTA and NAFTA are trade agreements and "do not really concern environmental matters" (pp.107).

Section two deals with the traditional resource sectors of fisheries, agriculture, forests, wildlife, parks, water resource management, energy and minerals, and hinterland development in the Canadian context. The new chapters focus on fisheries and hinterland development. The chapters in this section present good overviews of the various resource sectors. Although there is some variation in emphasis, the papers address the economic importance of each sector, the environmental impacts of development, conflicts between users, the cost of insufficient knowledge and the need for ecosystem based approaches to resource management.

The final section entitled "responses" considers the environmental assessment process in Canada, sustainable development and returns to the original theme with a paper that outlines

strategies for coping with conflict and uncertainty in resource management. Meredith's paper on environmental assessment outlines the evolution, information needs and methodologies of environmental assessment and explores how environmental assessment contributes to the decision making process. Nelson discusses sustainable development as a planning tool, in conjunction with conservation strategies to cope with present and future uncertainties. Finally, Mitchell outlines a management strategy consisting of a balance between interest, ecosystem approaches, adaptive decision making and teamwork to "BEAT" conflict and uncertainty in resource management. The paper then illustrates this approach through a number of case studies.

In my opinion, Mitchell has taken a very valuable approach to resource management as this collection of papers illustrates the immense complexity of resource management decision making. Resource decisions impact not only the physical environment but have enormous social, political and economic implications in a world characterized by uncertainty and a great diversity of interests.

This book meets a demand for material relevant to Canadian students. Mitchell suggests the book would be useful for both introductory and upper year university students and my second year students have found the material interesting and informative. At the same time, they did suggest the regional coverage of resource issues should be more balanced.

Diane J.F. Martz
Department of Geography
University of Saskatchewan

Contact the journal at: dwsolve@nb.sympatico.ca