# Policy Changes on Canadian Rivers: Different but not Isolated

# Questions

- Do policy changes occur differently in Canada than in the U.S.?
- Are those changes isolated from American influence?

# Policy Change

Comparative analyses of policy change in Canada and U.S.

- Not abundant despite the similarities and common bonds
- Some anticipate little cross-national variation (eg. Borins)
- Differences between Canada and the U.S. anticipate differences in policy change

# Primary Change Agents

- U.S.: Interest groups, agencies, media, advocacy coalitions (Bosso, Sabatier)
- Canadian differences
  - Federalism decentralized (Hoberg, Rabe)
  - Federal agencies weaker (Doern, Howlett)
  - Interest groups local (VanNijnatten, Wilson)
- Hypothesis: crucial role for sub-national bureaucrats

# Likelihood of Significant Change

- Traditional incrementalism (Lindblom)
- Substantial change (Baumgartner and Jones, Birkland, Kingdon)
- Less likely in Canada
  - Institutional reluctance
  - Eg. env policy (Harrison, Paehlke, Rabe)
- Hypo: need a fortuitous convergence

# Diffusion of Innovations

- Changes spread across state borders (Mooney, Rogers, Walker)
- More dispersed in Canada
  - Wide variation between provinces, regions
  - Weaker institutional actors to spread ideas (federal agencies or interest groups)
- Hypo: slower diffusion of innovations

# National Isolation?

- Role of ideas (Blyth, Goldstein and Keohane, Lieberman, Parsons)
- Canada not isolated from U.S.
  - Traffic across border
  - No language barrier
  - Explicit institutions like IJC
  - Scholarly exchanges (like ours)
- Some cross-national fertilization of scientific ideas

# Hypotheses of Policy Changes

- Crucial role for provincial bureaucrats
- Dependent on fortuitous alignments
- Innovations widely dispersed
- Not developed in isolation but influenced by flow of ideas

# River Management in the U.S.

# Policy Evolution in U.S.

- Traditional management
  - Manage rivers for economic utility
  - Structural engineering with dams, dikes, levees, and other modifications
  - Supported by sub-governments
- Questions and challenges since 1970s

# Minimum instream flows

# Dam Removal

# River Management in Canada

# Traditional Management

- An abundance of powerful rivers
- Long history of use
  - Primarily irrigation and hydropower
  - Hydropower: 64% of Canada's electricity
  - 48,000 dams, 793 designated as large
- Legal battles over Oldman Dam
  - Controversy in 1980s
  - Substantive change?

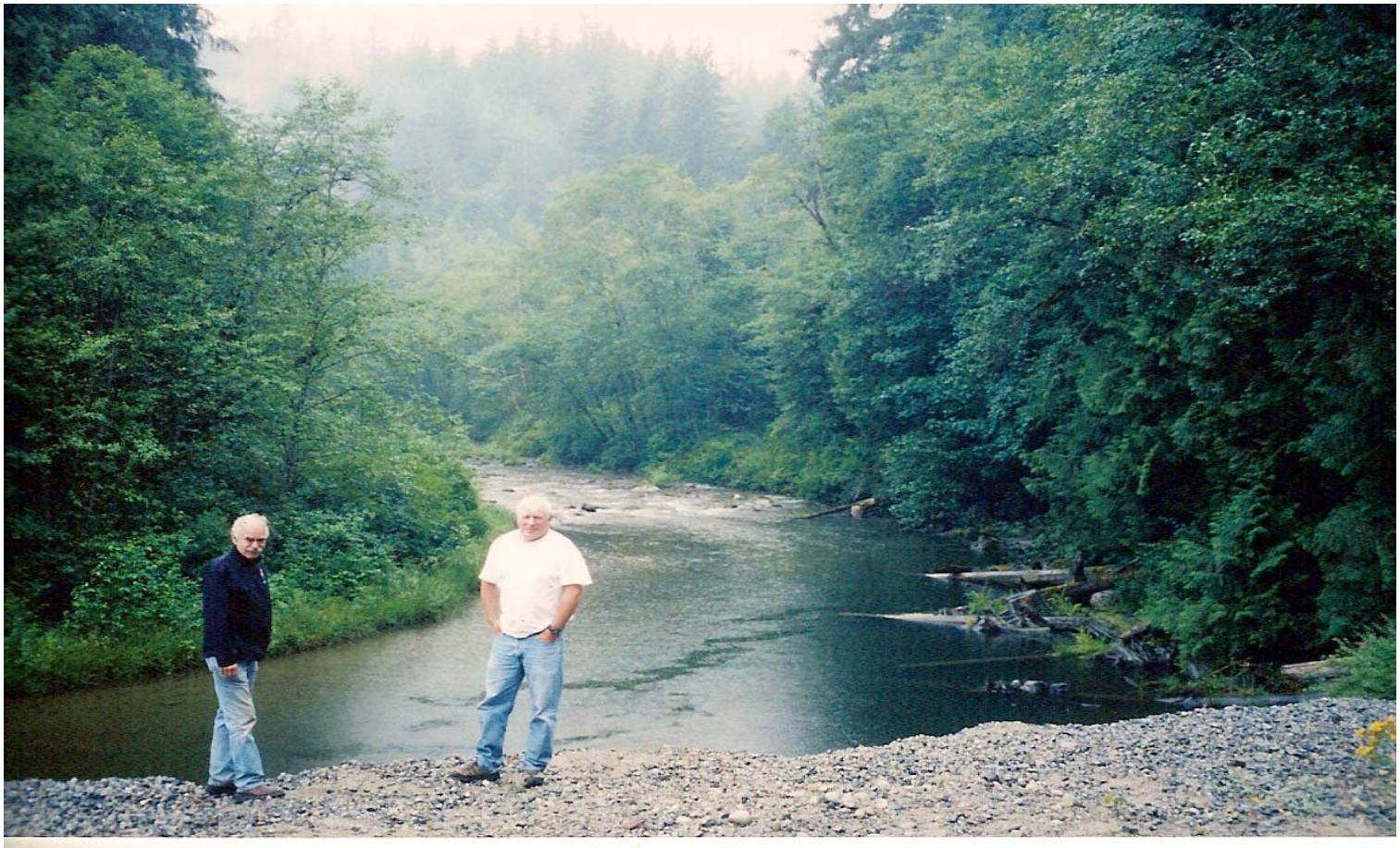
# British Columbia Rivers

- Intensive use (esp. hydropower)
- BC Hydro primary user
  - 41 generating plants on 27 rivers
  - 3 of 10 largest hydro plants in Canada
  - Contributes > $500 million per year to provincial government
- Operations rarely questioned until….

# Change Efforts in B.C.

- Review uncovers flow abuses (1990s)
- Small coalition pushing change
  - Scientists with Ministry of Environment
  - Grass-roots activists
  - Media-savvy advocates
- Idea: Instream Flow Incremental Methodology
- Water Use Plans

# Pilot project: Alouette River



# Ontario Rivers

- Less intensive use than B.C.
- Still, over 2,000 dams in province
  - Hundreds for hydro
  - Hundreds for logging operations
  - Structures part of traditional life
- No discussion of removal for environmental reasons until late 1990s

# Change Efforts in Ontario

- “We saw a tape of the Edwards removal”
- Environmental Assessment process
- Small coalition for change
  - Bureaucrats in MNR
  - Scientists and engineers
- Candidate: Finlayson Dam on Big East River

# Big East River

# Changes still Isolated

# Conclusions

- Policy changes depend on small groups of mid-level bureaucrats
- Changes can be dramatic but occur only “when the stars line up”
- Diffusion of innovations slower in Canada than in U.S.
- Changes are not isolated from U.S. but affected by transfer of ideas