

PART III

**PUBLIC
INVOLVEMENT IN
PLANNING**

CHAPTER 10

The Public Involvement Program

Water and related resource management programs, through their effect on the natural environment and their influence on economic development, can significantly affect the livelihood and life-styles of Okanagan residents. In recent years, particularly with the increasing concern for environmental quality, people have taken a greater interest in resource management and have expressed a desire to become more involved in the planning of water resource management programs. This was recognized and consequently a number of ways of obtaining public participation were incorporated into the Okanagan Basin Study and are reported upon in this chapter.

The analysis of early public response to water management issues served two objectives. First, it provided an overview of the perception and priorities of water resource management problems in the valley, as seen by a sample of residents with some experience in the region. This was considered to be a fundamental information base for the subsequent expansion of the public involvement program. Second, from the Okanagan Basin Agreements' specification that the comprehensive plan "meet the desires of the people for which it is designed", it was considered important to obtain early public reaction to the study plan. This information was used to support and where necessary, expand the initial scope of the study.

This review of public reaction to water and related resource management issues in the Okanagan covers the period from 1965 to early 1973, by which time most of the information on the existing resource base had been analysed and debated with the public. It begins with a discussion of the development of public concerns about water resource problems between 1965 and 1969, which set the stage for the initiation of the public involvement program. This is followed by a review of briefs submitted at public meetings held in the Shuswap and Okanagan Valleys, an analysis of results of a resident survey on water-related issues and a full description of the 'interest-based' planning model which was developed to obtain better communication between the study and the public interest groups.

10.1 EMERGING PUBLIC INTEREST IN WATER MANAGEMENT

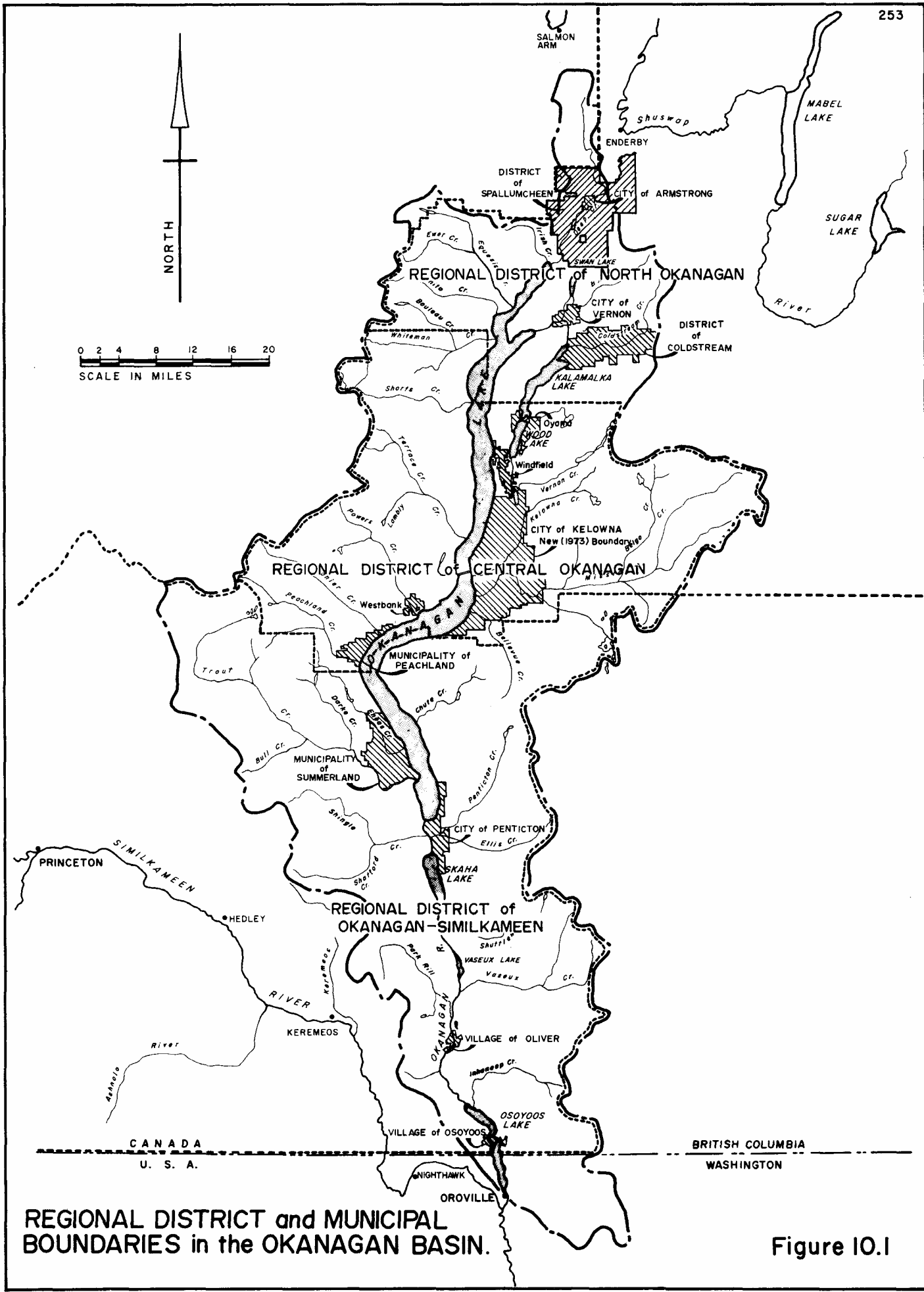
Involvement of Irrigation Districts in the development of water supplies from tributary streams and lakes has been an important factor in water quantity management. Consequently, Irrigation District officials were mainly instrumental in co-operating with the senior governments in the rehabilitation of many of the irrigation supply systems during the latter half of the 1960's. This program significantly reduced the threat of water supply failures in most irrigation systems, served from tributary streams.

Although there was growing concern on the part of many individuals towards water quality deterioration in the main valley lakes in the early 1960's, no important response by local institutions is recorded until early 1965, when the "Kelowna and District Executive Committee for Okanagan Pollution Control" was created. This committee, comprising municipal officials and local representatives of the senior governments discussed the need for water resource planning to study the condition of the main valley lakes and the control of waste disposal into surface waters. Realizing that water quality and waste management were valley-wide problems, the Committee invited officials of the 10 major Okanagan Municipalities to become involved, a move which led to the creation of the Okanagan watershed Pollution Control Council in 1966 (Figure 10.1).

The Council held four meetings in 1967, in which it debated several proposals for waste management: These included (1) irrigation of Indian Lands with secondary treated effluent from Penticton (subsequently discarded in favour of tertiary treatment by means of chemical precipitation) (2) requests to the Federal government for reduction of phosphate levels in laundry detergents, and (3) discussions with the B.C. Pollution Control Branch on discharge permits for new or expanding industries and residential subdivision. Lacking any legal authority, the Council explored, with the Provincial Government, the concept of establishing a Pollution Control Board composed of Regional District and municipal officials.

The Province responded in June 1968 with a proposal to establish the Okanagan Basin Water Board to advise the Provincial Government on the coordination of both water quantity and water quality management in the valley. The Board would consist of elected officials of the three Regional Districts and would be aided by a technical committee composed of local, federal, and provincial government officials involved in water resource management. Following clarification of its terms of reference, the Board became a legal entity in May 1969, thereby replacing the Okanagan Watershed Pollution Control Council.

The main concept behind the formation of the Okanagan Basin Water Board was to utilize local knowledge concerning water resource management issues in the basin and quickly communicate these to the appropriate government agencies. Specifically, the Letters Patent of the Water Board enable it to "receive proposals from all levels of government concerning water resources utilization and management in the best interests of man", and 'to provide communication and coordination between all levels of government and government agencies involved in water resource utilization and management'. The Water Board can also effect two-way communication by presenting "proposals and recommendations (on water resource utilization and management) to appropriate government agencies". These proposals may originate from the Water Board itself, its technical committee, or from public briefs. With its very obvious interests in good water management in the Okanagan, the Water Board established strong communication



REGIONAL DISTRICT and MUNICIPAL BOUNDARIES in the OKANAGAN BASIN.

Figure 10.1

links with the Study, and held a series of public meetings in 1971 to receive information from individuals and interest groups on their desires for future water resource management and planning. An analysis of the content of these briefs is presented later in this chapter.

Further in response to local representation over a period of some 10 years concerning the adequacy of water supply in the Okanagan Valley to meet future irrigation and other requirements, the province of British Columbia investigated a number of alternatives, including water diversion from the Shuswap watershed, as a research project under the Federal-Provincial ARDA Agreement.

This proposal sparked a response from interest groups in both the Okanagan and Shuswap-Thompson watersheds, although a canal between the Shuswap River at Enderby and Okanagan Lake had been proposed as early as 1886 in connection with navigation problems in the area. In the Okanagan, an Okanagan Water Resources Committee was formed in support of the diversion scheme, in the belief that water diversion would provide for such boat passage, as well as increasing the water supply and improving the quality of the main valley lakes. The use of diversion water for navigation and to combat lake water quality problems, though a misconception in view of the small amount of water that could be diverted without involving water export into the United States, was both popular and topical in 1968 particularly in light of the extensive algae blooms which occurred on Skaha Lake. In the Shuswap-Thompson watershed, the proposed diversion led to the formation of the Shuswap-Thompson Research and Development Association (STRRADA) in January, 1967. The main platform of this and of some other interest groups in that region was that other alternatives including more efficient management of water in the Okanagan should be examined, and there should be better communication between government and public before water resource management decisions were made.

It was in this climate of increasing public awareness and concern about water quantity and water quality management that the Canada-British Columbia Okanagan Basin Agreement was signed in October, 1969. Although the Agreement incorporated many of the interests of public groups in both watersheds, the Consultative Board felt that there was a need to improve communications between the Study and public interest groups as required in the terms of reference of the Agreement, and in 1970 the Board met with both the Shuswap-Thompson watershed interest groups and the Okanagan Basin Water Board.

10.2 PUBLIC MEETINGS

10.2.1 Shuswap-Thompson Public Meeting

The Consultative Board held a public meeting in Salmon Arm on November 6, 1970, and received briefs from 11 public interest groups and five individual citizens. The main concern expressed by most public participants was that diversion from the Shuswap River could have important impacts on the fishery

and aesthetic resources of the Shuswap-Thompson system and therefore, the comprehensive water resource study should include both watersheds. The Consultative Board noted that, in fact, the Agreement specified studies would be undertaken of the Shuswap should the diversion prove to be a feasible alternative, but added that the Okanagan Study was mainly oriented toward determining water resource management solutions within the Okanagan Valley.

This latter point was an important pivot in the communication between the Consultative Board and the public interest groups. Some of the interest groups not only opposed diversion, but also challenged the right of one basin to outgrow its own water resource base and then have to rely on adjacent watersheds to supply the necessary water to continue its economic development, possibly to the environmental deterioration of the donor watershed. The Consultative Board assured the meeting that the Okanagan Agreement required it to examine a wide range of pollution control and water quantity alternatives, including management measures that 'insure the subsequent efficient utilization of water resources' within the Okanagan Watershed. It was generally agreed by both the Consultative Board and the public that there had been a useful exchange of ideas and a better mutual understanding about the goals of the Okanagan Study. A commitment was made to keep the STRRADA informed on the progress and results of the Study.

10.2.2 Okanagan Basin Water Board Meetings

The Consultative Board met with the Okanagan Basin Water Board in Kelowna in November, 1970 and during the exchange of ideas on the objectives of the Okanagan Study, the Water Board raised the question of how public interests, values and desires would be incorporated into the development of a framework plan for the management of the water resources of the basin. It was mutually agreed that both Boards had an interest in obtaining public responses to questions of water and related resources management and that they would share the results of their respective programs.

The Okanagan Basin Water Board, in pursuit of one of its goals to promote two-way communication between government agencies and the public, held a series of six public meetings between the end of May and the end of November 1971. The meetings were held in Vernon, Penticton, Princeton, Kelowna, Osoyoos and Enderby and attracted almost 600 people plus 110 written and oral briefs presented by a variety of interested groups and individuals.

Although the original desire of the Okanagan Basin Water Board was to obtain the views of local residents on water resource management issues, the briefs ranged far beyond the confines of the intended subject. However, the views expressed did relate to the broader aspects of resources management and did help to provide both the Water Board and the Consultative Board with a wider perspective of public interest in resource planning. As is the case with

most submissions at public meetings, it was not possible to evaluate how well the views expressed by local organizations and individuals represented the feelings of the Okanagan residents as a whole. However, it was assumed that these views did represent the values of a much larger sample of residents than those actually attending the meetings.

On the basis that the number of briefs expressing views on various water resource management issues was an indication of relative public concern on these issues, water quality management was identified as the most important water resource problem facing the valley. Twenty-three briefs commented upon deteriorating water quality conditions in various locations of the basin and 31 briefs supported the need for stricter controls on waste discharge into lakes and streams. In the area of water quantity management, there was concern that increasing water requirements for consumptive use would place a strain on the supply of water to satisfy fishery, wildlife and recreation requirements, and consequently, 24 briefs urged more careful water quantity management to resolve future conflicts in water use. No briefs supported the diversion of Shuswap water and five were opposed to it.

In addition to the immediate concerns for water management, many submissions noted the generally high quality of environment in the Okanagan and expressed forebodings that this quality would not be maintained if the rapid growth of population and industrial development of the past decade continued. Fifteen briefs supported non-resource based industrial development in the valley only while 19 briefs demanded a more planned approach to economic growth. It is interesting to note that several briefs recognized some industrial growth was necessary to maintain a healthy economic environment which, in turn, was an essential ingredient to the full enjoyment of the natural environment.

Several briefs commented on the importance of agriculture in the economic and social life-styles of the Okanagan. Thirty-one statements were made in support of retaining agricultural land for agricultural purposes and/or some controls placed on sub-division of these lands for non-agricultural activities. In addition, 11 briefs noted the present marginal economic situation of some agricultural activities in the Okanagan and felt that economic support was required to supplement protection of agricultural lands. Only two statements specifically connected protection or expansion of agricultural land use with the need to supply more water which in turn creates increasing problems of managing and allocating the limited water supplies of the Okanagan amongst the competing uses. The future of the agricultural industry was seen as a resource problem in its own right, rather than as a possible problem in water resource management, the central concern of the Okanagan Basin Study.

Some participants addressed themselves to educational and institutional aspects of water management. Six briefs sought improved educational programs

in schools and regional colleges, to promote a better understanding of the water resource system in the valley, and more responsible ways of utilizing the resource for conservation and environmental management. Some organizations recognized that the water resource system encompassed the entire basin and that some institutional mechanism, transcending the regional levels of government, was required to effect coordination of water resource management with the related resource uses. It was thought that such co-ordination would be necessary to achieve a balanced approach to economic development, environment and landuse planning. The format of such a body was not clearly articulated at these public meetings but was later to become an important discussion topic in the Public Involvement Program.

In summary, briefs presented at both the Salmon Arm meeting and the Okanagan Basin Water Board meetings recognized that the water was a vital element in the economic development in the basin and a major constituent of its natural environment. Consequently, water resource planning should not occur in a vacuum, but most implicitly involve the broader issues of the type of economic and natural environment desired by valley residents in the future. Although the Consultative Board accepted this premise, it did seek confirmation that the statements on goals and values contained in the briefs did indeed represent the feelings of a majority of Okanagan residents and not just a vocal minority. To test this thesis, the Study undertook a systematic questionnaire survey of a cross-section of Okanagan households during the fall of 1971.

10.3 RESIDENT SURVEY

The main objective of the resident survey was to obtain more background information on Okanagan residents' present knowledge of water resource problems in the valley, their willingness to participate in community affairs and water resource planning in the future, and their attitudes towards certain issues raised in the public briefs concerning the future life-style of the Okanagan. These issues included the balance between economic development and maintenance of high quality environment, the decline in agricultural acreage and the increasing tourist population.

A random sample of 384 households was selected from all parts of the valley and was statistically verified as a representative cross-section of the total population using population census data (see Technical Supplement XII). This general sample was stratified into two major sub-samples. One sub-sample contained responses from residents in each of the three Regional Districts of the Okanagan (North, Central, South); the other sub-sample contained responses from residents in urban (Penticton, Vernon, Kelowna), rural-urban residents (smaller towns such as Summerland) and rural areas. Analysis of the survey results was carried out to test for differences in attitudes and opinions within these sub-samples.

The major findings of the survey are as follows.

10.3.1 Perception of Major Problems Facing Okanagan Residents

Environmental pollution was identified as the single most important problem by almost one-quarter of the sample, followed by population crowding (18%) lack of industry (15%) and decline in agricultural lands (12%). Residents in the North Okanagan tended to be relatively more concerned about pollution while their counterparts in the South Okanagan placed relatively more weight on lack of industry. A more detailed breakdown of the variations in response to this question by sub-group is presented in Table 10.1

TABLE 10.1
OPINIONS ON THE MAJOR PROBLEMS FACING
OKANAGAN RESIDENTS IN THE NEAR FUTURE

PROBLEM	GENERAL SAMPLE %	REGIONAL BREAKDOWN %			RESIDENTIAL BREAKDOWN %		
		NORTH	CENTRAL	SOUTH	URBAN	RURAL-URBAN	RURAL
Pollution	24	30	25	18	24	28	15
Population-Crowding	18	10	25	19	20	13	19
Lack of Industry	15	7	13	23	21	10	9
Decline in Agricultural Land	12	10	12	14	6	17	20

*NOTE: Percentages do not add up to 100 as some responses are not included in the table.

10.3.2 Awareness of Water Resource Problems

Almost 80% of residents recognized the existence of water resource problems in the Okanagan and about half of these were most concerned about water quality. This was stated as the most serious issue by all sub-samples except rural dwellers who were more concerned about adequate water supplies. Municipal wastes were the most frequently cited cause of water pollution (38% of the sample), compared with industrial wastes (27%) and agricultural run-off (26%). Urban dwellers tended to place more blame on agricultural practices, while rural dwellers placed most of the responsibility on the municipalities (Table 10.2).

TABLE 10.2
OPINIONS ON MAJOR SOURCES OF WASTES IN THE OKANAGAN

SOURCES	GENERAL SAMPLE %	REGIONAL BREAKDOWN			RESIDENTIAL BREAKDOWN		
		NORTH %	CENTRAL %	SOUTH %	URBAN %	RURAL-URBAN %	RURAL %
Municipal Sewage	38	46	33	36	31	44	45
Industrial Wastes	27	23	35	30	31	33	24
Agricultural Runoff	26	27	22	31	34	20	10
No Response	9	4	10	3	4	3	12

NOTE: Percentages denote the proportion of respondents in any given groups identifying a source as the most important one.

10.3.3 Attitudes on Future Life-Styles

Residents were asked to state their preferences for a range of future projections, similar to those described in Chapter 12. About two-thirds of the general sample stated their desire for planned economic growth, which created employment opportunities and yet maintained an acceptable level of environmental quality. A significant minority of residents (15%) were willing to sacrifice potential economic development in favour of maintaining a high environmental quality, while only 3% were willing to sacrifice environmental quality in order to increase the rate of economic growth.

Opinion on population growth was divided. Generally speaking, over half the sample (62%) wished for some degree of control on population growth, either immediately (44%), or in the more distant future (18%), while 34% of respondents did not want any restrictions placed on population. Relatively more residents in the North and Central Okanagan supported controlled population growth than those in the South (Table 10.3).

TABLE 10.3
OPINIONS ON POPULATION CONTROL IN THE OKANAGAN VALLEY

SOURCES	GENERAL SAMPLE %	REGIONAL BREAKDOWN			RESIDENTIAL BREAKDOWN		
		NORTH %	CENTRAL %	SOUTH %	URBAN %	RURAL- URBAN %	RURAL %
No Restrictions	38	32	34	44	41	34	32
Some Restrict- ions later	18	19	13	20	18	21	12
Planned Controls now	33	37	38	28	32	34	40
No Population Growth	11	12	15	8	9	11	16

There was a strong desire to place stricter controls on waste discharges to surface waters (69% of sample), thus supporting statements made in public briefs at the Okanagan Basin Water Board hearings. In addition, there was also general agreement to plan future industrial growth carefully thus avoiding undue environmental damage (83% of sample), to protect agricultural lands from municipal and industrial subdivision (80% of sample) and to maintain a viable tourist industry (79% of sample). On this latter issue, there was some divergence of opinion in the public briefs, in which some citizens were concerned about the crowding of facilities during the summer. Relative unanimity amongst resident survey responses on this issue could possibly be a reflection of collecting opinions during the fall when respondents would not be immediately aware of summer tourist pressures, whereas, some public briefs were prepared during the summer months.

Those interviewed were asked whether planned development, with emphasis on maintaining environmental quality, would affect their future taxation payments. Sixty percent of the respondents thought that planned growth could be achieved with no additional taxation, but rather by a re-allocation of the existing tax base. Over 30% (mainly in the higher income groups) recognized and accepted that it would cost more to live in a high quality environment. Only 10% (mainly in the lower income groups) were willing to accept some deterioration in environmental quality in order to keep their taxes down (Figure 10.2).

10.3.4 Attitudes Towards Public Involvement

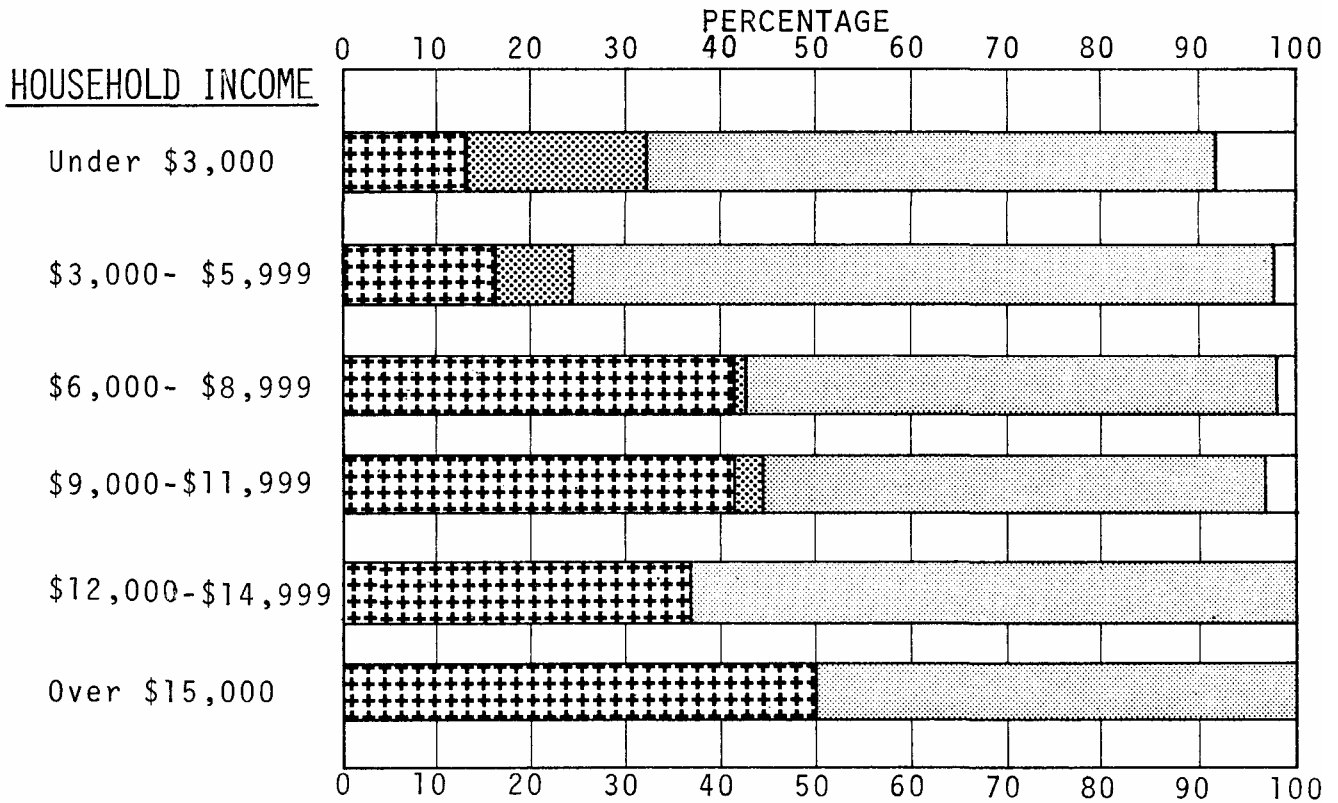
Some attempt was made to determine residents' willingness to become involved in water resource planning in the Okanagan. Of the large majority of the sample who were aware of water resource problems, about half of them were not particularly concerned about these problems, though 23% were concerned enough to initiate individual or group action. Almost 60% of residents felt that individual and/or group involvement in resource planning would be worthwhile and stated their willingness to participate or at least keep informed about the results of the Okanagan Study. About one-third of the sample was pessimistic about the effectiveness of public involvement in water resource planning, and this group was more likely to be composed of older people or those with low household incomes and levels of educational achievement (Table 10.4).

TABLE 10.4
WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE
OKANAGAN BASIN STUDY PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM


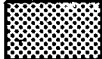


	GENERAL SAMPLE %	AGE GROUPS			INCOME BREAKDOWN		
		20-35 %	36-55 %	OVER 55 %	\$3-6,000 %	\$6-12,000 %	\$12,000 & Over %
Would Participate	63	75	69	51	51	70	82
Would Not Participate	29	19	20	41	39	24	12
Uncertain	8	6	11	8	10	6	6

10.3.5 Preferred Institutions for Water Resource Planning

Although there was little awareness of the nature and role of various government agencies involved in water resource management in the Okanagan, almost half of the respondents (46%) believed that more effective coordination of Provincial and local government agencies was required and that citizens should be given some opportunity to become involved in the decision-making process. This latter belief was felt particularly strongly by longer-term residents (over 10 years experience in the valley), and the younger age groups (under 35).



TAXATION STATEMENTS

-  - Willing to pay higher taxes.
-  - Willing to accept more pollution to keep taxes down.
-  - Re-allocation of tax revenue.
-  - No response

ATTITUDES OF VARIOUS INCOME GROUPS TOWARDS FUTURE TAXES

Figure 10.2

10.4 DISCUSSION OF PUBLIC RESPONSES

Both public meetings and questionnaire surveys exhibit important strengths and weaknesses as vehicles for soliciting public responses to resource management issues. To some extent, the strengths of one compensate for the weaknesses of the other. Public meetings, for example, generally attracted a limited cross-section of viewpoints and opinions from a community, whereas the random sample for the survey contacted a wide cross-section of opinion -old and young, rich and poor, urban and rural dwellers, new-comers and long-term residents.

The main disadvantages of a survey are that residents had little opportunity to ponder responses, had little or no information about many issues posed in the questionnaire and were not obliged to commit themselves to their replies. On the other hand, it is assumed that individuals or groups preparing public briefs had more time and resources to obtain better information on the issues to which they addressed themselves.

Despite these differences, there were many similarities in the responses at the public meetings and from the resident survey. The majority of residents in the Okanagan, and many of those who presented briefs at Salmon Arm, appeared concerned with the rapid pace of economic growth in the Okanagan, and expressed the desire that the Okanagan should grow at an orderly and planned rate to ensure a high quality environment. There was also strong support for maintaining a viable agricultural industry in the valley together with the protection of farm land and the continuation of a large tourist industry, provided this did not lead to over-congestion of local facilities.

In terms of water resource management, most individuals and groups viewed water quality deterioration as the major problem and desired stricter controls on waste discharges. No residents in either the Shuswap or Okanagan valleys expressed their support for water diversion, most favouring more efficient water utilization and management in the Okanagan. It is interesting that none of the public briefs mentioned the problem of flooding around Okanagan and Osoyoos Lakes, undoubtedly due to the infrequent occurrence of this problem in the valley. It should also be noted that these briefs were prepared prior to the 1972 flood, which was one of the highest on record.

The Okanagan Study responded to the viewpoints summarized above by examining a range of future economic growth projections and levels of agricultural landuse development and analysing the impacts of these projections on the quantity and quality of the water resource. In addition, the study continued to develop its approach to public involvement to ensure that two-way communication about water and related resource management issues would be maintained and that Okanagan residents could be given the opportunity to become fully informed as to the consequences of various framework plans for the region.

In summary, the public perceived the concept of comprehensive water resource planning for the Okanagan in somewhat broader terms of reference than those included in the Okanagan Agreement. The Board responded, in turn, by expanding the scope of economic and landuse studies and by launching into an innovative and comprehensive public involvement program.

10.5 THE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM

In light of growing public interest in the Okanagan Basin Study, a more comprehensive program of public involvement was initiated in 1971. Many problems and misunderstandings were encountered during the development of this program as public involvement was a relatively new experience for both the study personnel and the general public, and, in part, because study data were not yet available in a form that could be easily comprehended. Consequently, the program was developed through trial and error by a number of consultants with different types of experiences and approaches to this most experimental component of the Study.

In February, 1971, the Consultative Board and Study Committee held a two-day seminar in Penticton, at which numerous key individuals from the regional districts and Okanagan Basin Water Board attended. This was the first occasion that preliminary study data were available in a form that could readily be discussed and understood by non-study personnel. As a result of the public response gained at this seminar, expanded studies in the areas of sport fishing and tributary stream management were undertaken.

The Board recognized the need to obtain a wider range of viewpoints in the public involvement program and a survey of public interest groups was therefore carried out in the spring and summer of 1971. This survey provided information on who the 'public' was in the Okanagan, how various community groups were organized and the range of interests that should be involved in the public involvement program. More specifically, the roles, social structure and membership size of each interest group were determined as well as the means of communication between groups and with the various levels of government. In addition, each group's knowledge of the purpose and scope of the Okanagan Study was examined as well as its potential interest in participation with the Okanagan Study in developing the framework plan.

Altogether, 40 community interest groups were identified including regional districts, irrigation districts, service organizations, unions, industrialists conservation-ecologists, tourist facility operators, native people, chambers of commerce and student bodies.

Using this information, a number of interest groups and community leaders were contacted during the remainder of 1971 and supplied with up-to-date information on study progress and results. Video-tape and slide shows were developed to educate community groups on the scope and objectives of the

Okanagan Study and to assist in their understanding of the complexities of the planning process. This phase of the Public Involvement Program culminated with a two-day seminar-workshop held in Naramata in March 1972. Over 100 leaders of interest groups and the general public together with local government officials met with Study personnel to examine and review current information on most of the aspects of water resource management presented in this report.

Although considerable attention had been directed towards involving public groups and individuals in the planning process, by the spring of 1972, the public involvement program was still a long way from its envisaged objective. The Board recognized the need to gain the wider cross-section of public input known to exist within the community if the final plan was to reflect the desires and values of all Okanagan residents. In addition, preliminary study information had to be collated so that it was consistent and in a form that could be understood by the public. Much of this information was developed in summary form and published in six technical data bulletins dealing with most major components of the study program. These data bulletins were published in June, 1972 and were followed by other bulletins and detailed technical reports, prepared by members of the study team.

With factual information available, there was a need to expand the public involvement program and utilize a broader array of communication media to generate mutual education between the study and the total valley community.

The Okanagan Study Committee drew up new terms of reference for the program, which included the following major goal:

"To report to the Okanagan Study Committee, the preferences of Okanagan valley residents for the future development and management of the basin's water resources, based on their studied consideration of the economic, social and environmental implications of the various alternatives."

The major components of the program were identified:

1. To assimilate the results of various technical studies conducted under the Okanagan Basin Agreement.
2. To acquire, through cooperative involvement with the evaluation team a thorough understanding of water management alternatives for the Okanagan Basin.
3. To develop positive interaction between the valley residents and the Study Committee such that the residents become meaningfully involved in the Study while the Committee becomes aware of the perspectives of the residents.

10.5.1 Interest Based Planning Model

An interest-based planning model (Figure 10.3) was developed to handle information exchange with the public in a systematic and concise manner. The main purpose of the model was to bring together a wide range of community interest groups and their resources to participate in the development of the framework plan. These interest groups included those covered in the opinion survey of the previous summer along with local political structures, private corporations and other concerned individuals (Figure 10.4). Because of time limitations, it was not possible to provide information to all public groups on all the aspects of this complex study, but by establishing a rigorous timetable, a large number of interest groups were able to participate in the planning process.

Following a four month period during which all identified interest groups were informed of the interest-based planning model and brought up to date on study progress, six community Task Forces were formed. Each Task Force consisted of about 15 individuals representing a wide spectrum of community interests, and were considered reflective of the values and desires of a majority of the Okanagan residents. Four of the six Task Forces contained individuals from each of the four economic regions of the basin (Vernon, Kelowna, Penticton and Oliver-Osoyoos regions). One was a political Task Force consisting of various elected officials from the municipal centers and regional districts, and one was a "technical" group of locally based government officials and other individuals with experience in various aspects of water resource management in the Okanagan.

Each Task Force member was provided with a number of technical reports developed by study personnel as well as a series of questions concerning the type of socio-economic life-style desired by Okanagan residents over the next 50 years. Specific information on the projections of economic growth to 1980 was also made available together with the consequences of increased demand for water and waste loadings on water resource management. Using this information base, the six Task Forces produced a preliminary set of recommendations for developing a comprehensive framework plan for the 50 year planning horizon.

In April, 1973, selected members of the six Task Forces joined forces to create Task Force Seven, a valley-wide group consisting of about 24 members. Task Force Seven spent the spring of 1973 reviewing and revising the set of recommendations created by the earlier Task Forces based on new or revised study information and the continuing integration of a wide range of individual preferences and values.

To insure that Task Force recommendations did indeed reflect the values of the community at large, a general public education program was developed involving both the dissemination of information and public response.

THE "INTEREST-BASED-PLANNING" MODEL

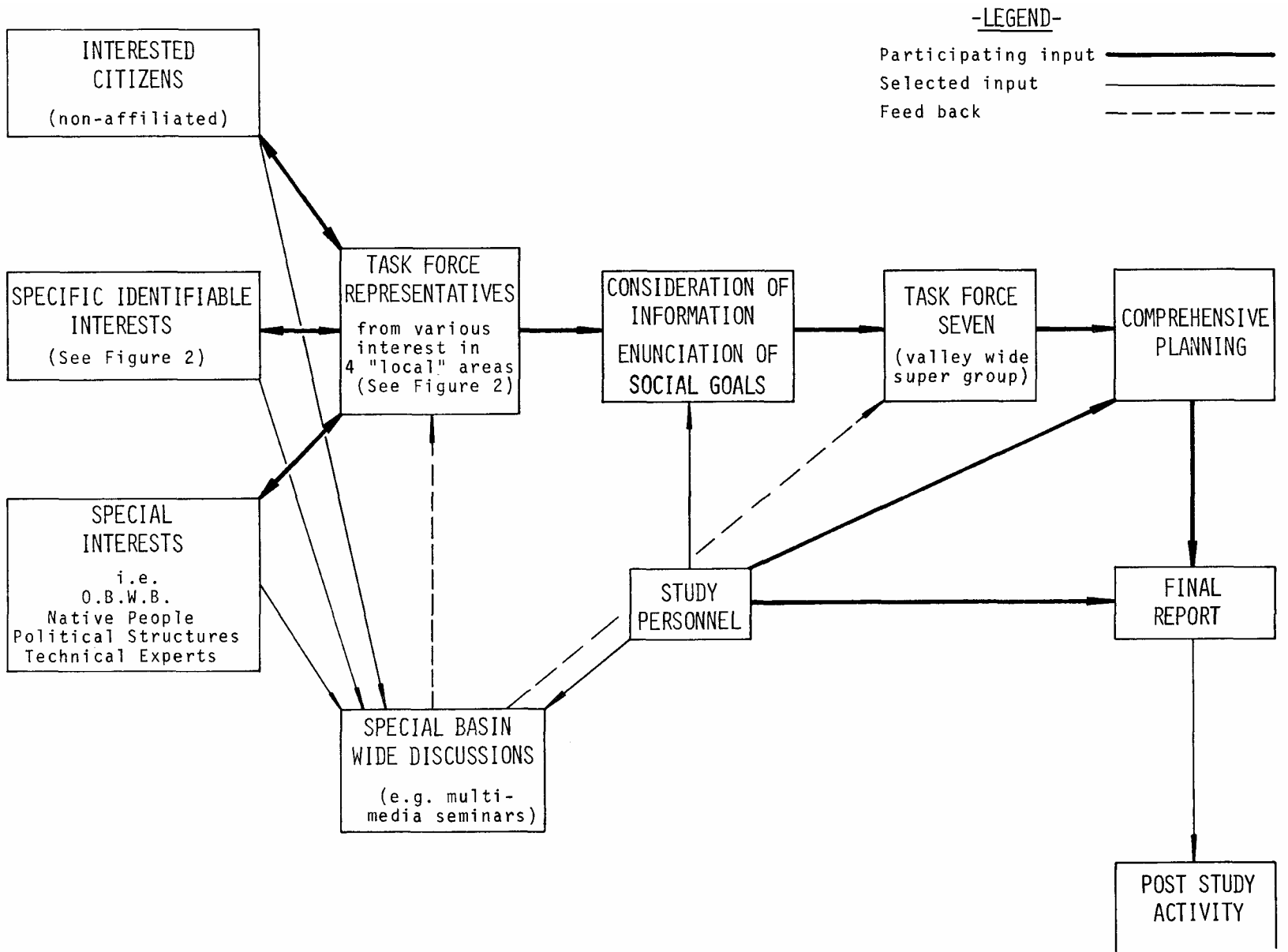


Figure 10.3

Specific Interest Groups
(in random order)

6 Task Forces
(2 Special Interests)
(4 Local Areas)

Planning Process

-Legend-

Selected Task Force Representatives —●—
 Planning Process —○—
 Participating Input —○—
 Feed Back - - - - -

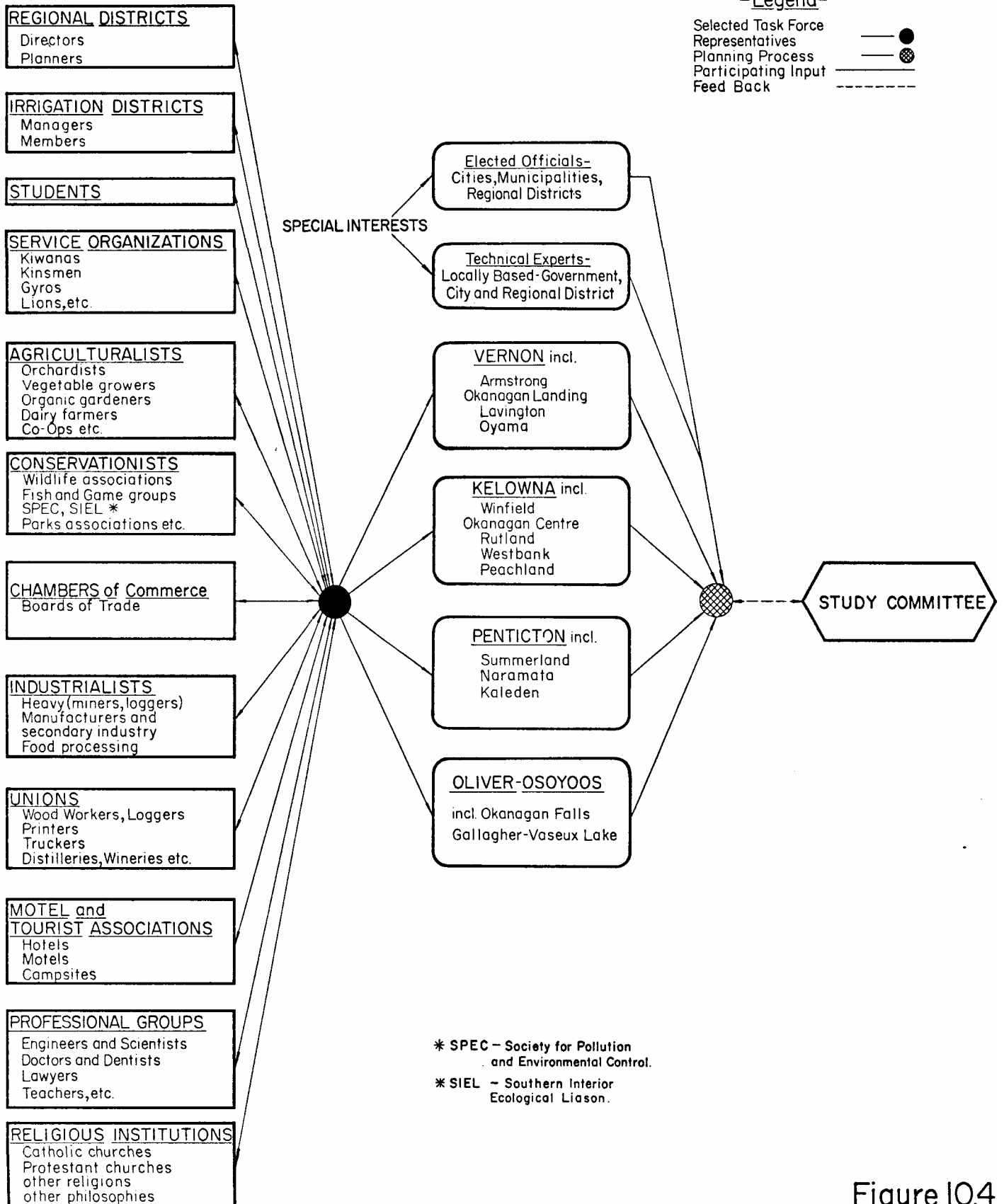


Figure 10.4

10.5.2 Public Education (Information Out)

A number of procedures were developed to translate technical information on the water resource into 'lay' terms easily understood by the general public. The most frequently used mechanism involved the use of news releases and news conferences relating to specific aspects of the Study program. In addition, two 'multi-media seminars' were presented in which the major television station and five of the six valley radio stations joined forces with the local newspapers to discuss the major components of the study. Details of the arrangements and format of these media seminars are discussed in Technical Supplement XII. Essentially, these media seminars were conducted as 'town-hall' type meetings with the advantage that no citizen had to leave his home or car, and rather than holding several sessions throughout the valley, one evening would suffice for all. Furthermore, a person at one end of the valley could hear viewpoints of a person at the opposite end of the valley on common interests under discussion.

The first media seminar was held in November, 1972 when aspects of a water management plan to 1980 were debated, and a second seminar was held in April 1973 and dealt with the preliminary recommendations of Task Forces 1 to 6. In addition to these seminars, radio, television and local newspapers prepared several special presentations on various aspects of study results and Task Force deliberations.

The second major education tool was the written word. Beginning in 1972, a series of ten data bulletins were prepared by Study personnel and disseminated widely throughout the valley. In addition, a large number of the preliminary reports resulting from the various studies on water resources were published in limited quantities to provide more technical information to interested citizens. All bulletins were made available to the public through mailing lists or at 'information locales' such as regional libraries, banks, barber shops and other public places where people have time to read. Altogether, 562 information locales were established throughout the basin, and by July 1973, the mailing list contained over 3500 persons. The preliminary reports were made available through the regional libraries in the Valley.

Two other types of documents were prepared by the public involvement personnel to supplement the above study material. The first of these was a "background working paper," containing details of primary water management alternatives written primarily for the task force members but printed in sufficient quantities to supply all libraries. The second was a "white paper" which raised either pertinent questions or provided tentative alternatives that deserved consideration by the public at large. These latter publications were printed in sufficient quantity to be distributed to the public through the mailing lists, information locales, and at group meetings or speaking engagements of P.I.P. personnel.

The placement of this material in 'information locales' also provided the opportunity for personal communication with the valley residents. In many instances, initial contacts were met with skepticism and criticism mainly due to lack of understanding of the scope of the Okanagan Study and its potential impact on the life-style of residents. Through discussions, this initial resistance was often converted into a spirit of co-operation and enthusiasm which led to more speaking engagements and many additions to the mailing lists.

Audio-visual material was utilized extensively during public workshops and at speaking engagements. Through an arrangement with the British Columbia Department of Agriculture, competent technical assistance was provided to the Study for both film and video-tape production. Two color films were produced for the Study by this group. The first dealt with the problems of conflicting use and abuse of water in the valley and was entitled WILL THERE BE WATER TOMORROW? The second film covered the complexities of comprehensive planning in regards to water management in the valley and was entitled, 'A FUTURE FOR THE CHOOSING'. These films served as valuable educational tools in the public involvement program. Video-tape and slides were also utilized but to a lesser degree to record task force proceedings for "in house" review.

Speaking engagements provided a third educational means for discussing Study information with the public. These appearances were supplemented by the two films and a slide show which illustrated some of the water resource development and management problems and possible solutions. Over 200 speaking engagements were handled by the Public Involvement Program staff and other study personnel involving high schools, service clubs and a wide variety of special interest groups. One of the benefits of these engagements was the opportunity for members of interest groups to make personal contact with study officials to obtain a better perspective of the complexity of water resource management decisions.

A major effort was undertaken to educate high school students on Study progress as they represent a significant portion of the valley population and they will inherit much of the results of the study plan. Most high schools in the valley were visited more than once and it was estimated that over 3000 students were contacted during the last 19 months of the study. Judging from the response of both students and teachers, this appeared to be a most worthwhile venture with considerable potential for further development when the Study is completed.

10.5.3 Public Response (Information In)

Public response involved receiving ideas, proposals and criticisms from valley residents concerning the development of the framework plan. Because of the extensive nature of the public education program, the public response phase overlapped the dissemination of information and often initial reactions changed in light of new or expanded information.

In a further effort to determine whether the six Task Forces' recommendations did in fact reflect the will of the community, the second multi-media seminar in April, 1973 was used as a means to discuss them publicly. In this media seminar, selected members of the six Task Forces presented and defended their recommendations during two hours of 'openline' radio discussions with the listening public. The Public Involvement Coordinator was the only Study member involved in this seminar. The results of this media seminar indicated there was little difference in the recommendations as prepared by the Task Forces and the views of residents participating in the media seminar.

At the same time a second "White Paper" which outlined, these preliminary recommendations, was also released and distributed throughout the valley. To provide an opportunity for citizens to respond to this White Paper, a series of eleven public meetings were held by the staff of the public involvement program and members of Task Force Seven in eleven valley communities in May. Few of the general public attending these meetings indicated any disagreement with the recommendations, most participants indicating their general agreement or, in some instances, their concern that some recommendations did not go far enough. Most areas of disagreement, were resolved to the satisfaction of both the petitioner and Task Force Seven members at the meeting, otherwise the issue was referred to a full Task Force meeting for further debate.

Following the public meetings. Task Force Seven continued to review and revise the set of recommendations for water resource management. A final public review was undertaken at a public workshop held in Penticton in June, 1973, hosted by Task Force Seven and attended by over 50 concerned individuals representing a broad range of community interests. During this workshop, finishing touches were made to the recommendations with much of the discussion focussing on the implementation requirements and the continued role of public involvement during the implementation phase.

These recommendations were subsequently presented to the Study Committee, representing the major input of the Public Involvement Program to the development of the comprehensive plan.

10.6 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM AND STUDY COMMUNICATIONS

Good communications between the Study Personnel and the Coordinator of the Public Involvement Program were essential if the program was to be successful. In May, 1972, the Public Involvement Coordinator was named as a member of the evaluation team, an inter-disciplinary group of experts responsible for evaluating water management alternatives. The coordinator thus gained first-hand knowledge and understanding of the study progress and results, while other members of the evaluation team were kept informed of thoughts of the valley community. In addition, the coordinator met regularly with key Study officials to discuss progress, public

news releases and on-going plans. He often attended Okanagan Study Committee meetings. As a matter of course, all senior study personnel and evaluators were provided continuing records of all major task force activities plus any special documents of interest such as major news releases.

This policy of maintaining close contact between the Study personnel and the PIP Coordinator was continued within the Task Force process itself. At most Task Force meetings at least one member of the Study team was present. These members came not only to observe the process but also to participate as they wished in the discussions. This increased the communication between the valley community and the Study and broadened the degree of mutual understanding. On the one hand, Study personnel, after attending a task force meeting, became more aware of the sincerity of the task force members and the willingness of these people to try to work out solutions most acceptable to the community. On the other hand, Task Force members, after sharing discussions with Study Personnel, gained a better understanding of the problems encountered by public officials in attempting to execute policies in the best interests of all.

10.7 SUMMARY AND DISCUSSIONS

There were three overlapping phases to the Public Involvement Program - information out, information in, and communicating public responses to the Okanagan Study Committee. These phases more or less paralleled the major steps in the planning process described in Chapter 12, namely analysis of existing conditions, projecting demands for water resources to 2020 and evaluating alternatives.

Technical information in the form of study reports, news releases or data bulletins were disseminated widely throughout the valley using the local media and multi-media seminars for more specific information packages. In addition to the printed work, information was also available on film, video-tapes and slide-shows. These visual presentations were shown at schools, community meetings and to other special interest groups.

The central part of the 'information in' or public response to this information was the Task Force process, where groups of individuals discussed study data and reported to the Study Committee through the Public Involvement Program Coordinator. Each Task Force member was expected to report back to his reference group on study issues to obtain greater citizen involvement. The general public also had an opportunity to respond to water management issues through special interest cards available at information locales throughout the valley and at public workshops, meetings and seminars held at various stages in the planning process.

In the past, public input to the planning and management of water and related resources in the Okanagan, as elsewhere in Canada, appears to have occurred on a rather haphazard basis. As a result, the Public Involvement Program associated with the Okanagan Study was both an experiment in techniques as well as a real

attempt to gain public participation in the planning process. Many approaches were tried, including public meetings, questionnaire surveys, media communications, but the most innovative and successful in this study appeared to be the creation of community Task Forces.

Although the Okanagan basin forms a unified physiographic and hydrologic unit, it is not generally perceived by valley residents as a single economic and social system. Regional differences and attitudes had developed over time, and not all of these were conducive to the development of a framework plan that served the best interests of the total community. By creating community task forces, first at the regional scale and then on a valley-wide basis, much of the original conflict in interest was overcome and, through mutual education, a broad area of consensus concerning the future of the Okanagan appeared. By providing Task Force members with opportunities to debate their conclusions with other members of the valley community via media seminars, workshops and public meetings. Task Force members, themselves, began to assume a responsibility together with study personnel in preparing a framework plan which would serve the best interests of all Okanagan residents.

In retrospect, it appears that public input must be properly directed, if it is to become an effective part of the planning process. The valley community had developed many informal communication mechanisms between interest groups and to the various levels of government on water resource management issues, and despite the lack of specific knowledge about the Okanagan Basin Study, most respondents in the resident survey had a fair comprehension of many of the real problems discussed in Part II of this report. However, there was no ready access to technical data and no forum at which these views could be debated, until the "interest-based planning model" was developed in 1972. This model provided the vehicle for a systematic and, considering the time limitations, comprehensive exchange of views on all aspects of the Study with a broad range of public interest groups and individuals.