



International Waters: Learning Exchange and Resource Network (IW:LEARN)



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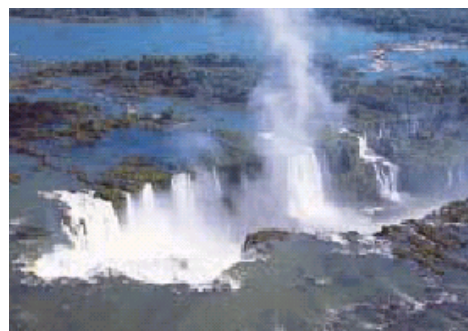
BUILDING IW CAPACITY ON-LINE AND IN-PERSON IN LAC REGION

In a major thrust to support capacity-building activities in the Latin American and Caribbean LAC region, IW:LEARN successfully implemented two multi-lingual hybrid on-line/face-to-face knowledge-sharing activities over the past several months:

In July, IW:LEARN convened its first round of sharing lessons learned across the GEF's International Waters (IW) projects in Latin America. The [GEF-IW-LAC](#) electronic forum currently includes over 40 managers and technical co-ordinators who have sent about 30 messages per month in Spanish, Portuguese or English. At particularly active times, IW:LEARN has provided weekly summaries of substantive contributions in all three languages.

Introductory activities on-line laid the groundwork for IW:LEARN's 2-day "Inter-American Water Resource Managers' Forum" in Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil. In Iguaçu, over 30 managers from GEF IW and UNEP water projects presented difficulties they faced. Thereafter, the group identified and prioritized key lessons and challenges before problem solving in small groups

how to effectively address their top challenges: public participation in project development and management; integrating local, technical, national and regional priorities; and continuity of projects and financing. The results of this process were presented by Javier Lopez Medina (Nicaragua, Rio San Juan Project) to a room full of current and potential GEF IW project managers at [the 4th Inter-American Dialog on Water Management](#) in Iguaçu.



Iguaçu Falls

The forum's moderator, IW Fellow Pablo Suarez, summarized participants' evaluations: "The most important contributions to the LAC community are the creation of a community of water managers, the exchange of information and ideas, and the awareness of similarities and complexity of water projects and the need to ensure their continuity." The Forum's final report is

IW:LEARN's mission is to build an Internet-based "global knowledge community" to protect, restore and sustain the world's aquifers, great lakes and river basins, coastal zones, seas and oceans. Sponsored by the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) and its United Nations and World Bank partners, IW:LEARN specifically builds capacity among transboundary water resource projects worldwide. A project of the Tides Center.

currently under review by the on-line group and to be released publicly soon.

In October, IW:LEARN's 2001 [IW Web Developers' Workshop](#) began in virtual mode, with over 20 participants' self-introductions and collaborative assessment of projects' technical needs and capacities. Face-to-face training in Panama City was lead by IW:LEARN staff, regularly accompanied by participants with skills or experience in the themes of specific sessions. One major output was [60-day implementation plans](#) for realising actual Web products to serve the IW community. In virtual mode, participants continued to collaborate to realize their respective plans before 2002. The experiences in LAC this season led IW:LEARN to envision a more prominent needs-based approach to assisting GEF-IW projects; increasing IW:LEARN's facilitator/broker role in promoting peer-to-peer knowledge sharing and technical assistance across all regions of the GEF's IW programs.



“DLIST” COASTAL MANAGEMENT WORKSHOPS SET TO START IN SW AFRICA

In partnership with the World Bank, IW:LEARN trained 4 representatives from EcoAfrica Associates, a regional NGO, to develop a regional stakeholder process for communities along the Benguela Current coast. The resulting Distance Learning and Information Sharing Tool ([DLIST](#)) will assist local planners' and capacity to plan and implement effective integrated coastal management solutions along Namibia and the Northern Cape of South Africa. DLIST aims to improve regional and local outreach through enhanced communications for training, lesson-sharing and collaborative planning. DLIST's early focus is on the tourism, fisheries and mining sectors, and will be implemented through a network of local and regional multi-

purpose resource centers, and within each of the participating governments.

Following the 2-week DLIST workshop in August, World Bank-IW:LEARN shipped hardware and software to EcoAfrica to develop a test-server environment and customize training content. EcoAfrica has begun implementing cooperative agreements with four separate regional Integrated Coastal Management Committees.

DISTANCE MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAM MOVES BEYOND PILOT PHASE

In fall 2000, 5 students from the GEF International Waters community graduated from the distance MSc degree pilot program co-sponsored by IW:LEARN and Royal Holloway College, University of London (RHUL). Addressing the need for more cost-effective capacity-building mechanisms for advanced degree seekers in developing countries, the [Distance MSc Program](#) since moved from pilot status towards a permanent RHUL program. IW:LEARN's virtual recruiting across multiple electronic lists and communities nearly tripled responses over the summer of 2001. With over 40 queries from 30 countries, the number and caliber of applicants significantly exceeded expectations. Regions with the greatest higher education constraints represented the majority of applicants: over 50% were from Africa and the Pacific Islands. Most are professionals already employed in the environmental management sector.

Financing for both the distance learning MSc program and its participants in developing countries remains the biggest obstacle to implementation. Despite the relative cost efficiency of distance-based education, applicants faced significant challenges to pay for tuition and related expenses. Within this context, IW:LEARN will continue to explore, test and promote innovative financing mechanisms for IW distance learning.

“I-TEAM” GROWS BY 40%

Eight new members have joined IW:LEARN’s Implementation Team (the “[I-team](#)”) forum since June 2001, bringing the team to almost 30 members across 5 continents plus small island developing states (SIDS). Launched in 1998, the I-team consists of country-based professionals with IW:LEARN training, skills and equipment to facilitate distance learning activities within their respective (IW) project regions. I-team member Yu Fei, a Tumen River Project alumna and current graduate student at Princeton University, had this to say about the team: “I’m very glad that I’ve rejoined the I-Team, which is an excellent place to learn about the latest of international waters.”

As a result of IW:LEARN’s most recent workshop, an additional 20 I-team members from Latin American and Caribbean region will be welcomed into the I-team. Soon-to-join participants represent 4 additional GEF IW projects (Caribbean Sea, Meso-American Barrier Reef System, Rio de la Plata and Rio San Juan) and over a dozen countries. Meanwhile, workshop participants are hard at work implementing their respective plans to realize specific products to benefit international waters within 60 days!



IW Web Developers’ Workshop in Session

Through I-team feedback, many lessons have been learned: peer-to-peer training and technical assistance is well-received across projects and regions; members respond better to specific requests for problem-solving technical assistance than

open-ended discussion questions; and both face-to-face and on-line interaction is important to cement lasting team relationships.



INTERNATIONAL WATERS FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM LAUNCHED

Short-term incentive-based fellowships can transform proactive I-team members and savvy graduate students into important contributors to GEF’s inter-project knowledge sharing activities and catalysts for IW community building. To institutionalize this lesson, IW:LEARN launched its IW Fellowship program in July 2001. IW Fellowships engage those with specific sets of talents and skills to work with IW:LEARN to carry out key components of its inter-project activities. Thus, IW:LEARN creates in-country “experts,” and in return the fellows gain additional specialized experience and training. Recent highlights of IW Fellows’ activities include:

- Documented knowledge from the World Bank-IW:LEARN’s DLIST workshop to share with other GEF IW projects.
- Moderated and facilitated multi-lingual dialog among GEF IW project managers in the LAC region, both on-line and in-person
- Contributed to preparation of GEF IW projects’ documents for discovery and access through IW:LEARN’s upcoming “International Waters Resource Center” Web site.
- Helped IW:LEARN to characterize relative costs and sustainable financing mechanisms for distance-based training of IW personnel from their home countries.

Fellows are selected based on numerous criteria such as location, IW project experience, level of education and specific expertise. To date, selected IW Fellows

have all come from areas with active GEF IW projects, 2 of 5 have worked directly in IW Projects, and 4 are currently pursuing graduate or doctoral-level education. Additional IW Fellows with appropriate technical expertise are likely to be recruited through the I-team forum and other mechanisms in early 2002.

LOOKING DOWNSTREAM

IW:LEARN is testing forward-looking methodologies for IW knowledge sharing, and coordinating their use among knowledge providers, IW projects and implementing agencies (IAs). In 2002 IW:LEARN and its partners are also planning to offer distance learning courses on themes such as:

- Marine Protected Areas
- Nutrient Management
- Coastal Zone Management
- Marine Pollution Control
- Middle East Water Management

- Transboundary Diagnostic Analyses and Strategic Action Programs

Additional electronic forums have been established to document and archive resources for IW distance learning (iwlearn-edu) and information and communication technology (ICT) tools (iwlearn-tools). In addition, the GEF Secretariat is using an IW:LEARN-moderated list to engage projects in follow-up to the GEF's most recent [International Waters Program Study](#) and to prepare the agenda for its 2002 International Waters Conference in Dalian, China.

Finally, IW:LEARN is currently laying groundwork for future knowledge sharing and distance learning initiatives related to IW public-private partnerships and environmental negotiation, respectively.

RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS

- ✓ Delivered African DLIST workshop
- ✓ Identified IW-related best practice initiatives
- ✓ Built Web framework for International Waters Resource Center, on-line resources database and virtual office
- ✓ Coordinated IW LAC Managers Forum on-line and at Dialog IV
- ✓ Organized GEF IW knowledge sharing event at Global Plan of Action (GPA) intergovernmental meeting
- ✓ Revised Student Financing Strategy
- ✓ Pursued funding opportunities to support an IWL on-line IW course catalog and financial aid center
- ✓ Submitted proposals to co-develop distance learning course modules for Black Sea nutrient management, Red Sea marine protected areas, and others

WINTER GOALS

- Prepare for distance delivery of at least 3 GEF IW training modules
- Develop and validate emerging distance learning tools
- Establish criteria and incentives for populating IW best practices database
- Launch on-line Projects and Contacts, Needs and Resources databases
- Develop and test advanced GEF IW global knowledge network tools
- Assist the GEF to address IW projects' needs via on-line forums and at its 2002 International Water Conference
- Formally launch the on-line "IW Community Resource Center"
- Publish 2001 collaborative know-ledge sharing products
- Facilitate peer-to-peer technical assistance and knowledge sharing across the IW community
- Develop a project concept paper for Phase II of IW:LEARN

