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Federal Rivers

Managing Water in Multi-Layered Political Systems



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Table of conversions

	Litres	Cubic meters	Megalitres	Acre feet
1 litre	1	1×10^{-3}	1×10^{-6}	8.1×10^{-7}
1 cubic metre	1 000	1	1×10^{-3}	8.1×10^{-4}
1 megalitre*	1 000 000	1 000	1	8.1×10^{-1}
1 acre foot	1 233 482	1 233	1.233	1

*1 Gigalitre is 1000 megalitres

Cubic metres are the international standard. *Acre feet* tend to be used in the US. *Megalitres* and *gigalitres* are used in Australia.

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Preface

The territorial division of power in federations, plus the interconnected politics at the national and regional levels, present a classic governance test for waters shared across multiple political jurisdictions. This is increasingly important as democratic transitions have introduced or invigorated federalism across diverse contexts affecting more than 300 major river basins, including approximately 50 per cent of the world's international rivers.

In April 2012, the University of Oxford hosted an international workshop on *water security and federal rivers*. The workshop convened 35 delegates from 12 countries to exchange lessons learned from water reforms in federal countries. Highlights included the development of a set of case studies anchored in the insights about river basin management and federalism from multiple perspectives across public policy, economics, history and complexity science.

A keynote presentation by Dr Jerry Delli Priscoli of the US Army Corps of Engineers chronicled the history and models of river basin management in the US – the world's oldest federation – to demonstrate the elusive quest for integrated strategies and the significant potential for solutions matched to local and regional circumstances. Case studies across the Americas, Asia, Africa, Europe and Australia highlighted the extent and diversity of federal rivers, identifying alternative pathways to share risks and manage conflicts. The workshop culminated with a preliminary synthesis and comparative reflections by George Anderson, President Emeritus of the Forum of Federations, who noted the need to learn from both success and failure: while some federations have succeeded in putting in place river basin authorities and achieving integrated management, the story more generally is one of failure. He observed that river basin organizations seem to function most effectively when water management is salient enough to merit the organizational effort but not so politically fraught that the conflict must be handled directly by politicians.

The core contribution of this edited volume is to deliver a complementary set of case studies to learn lessons from the water management experiences in nine federal countries and China. The case studies were chosen to develop both the breadth and depth of comparison. Given the spread