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Water Soft Paths: Fresh Water and Ecological Security

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Presentation Overview

1. Explain Concept *(Vision)*
2. Current Study *(Analysis)*
3. Getting Started *(Planning)*

From thinking globally to working locally!

PART ONE:
EXPLAINING THE CONCEPT

The Vision of Soft Paths

The future lies with restricting demand, not increasing supply!

(Not just water)

Four Distinguishing Principles

- Treat water as a service, not an end
- Make ecological security an absolute criterion
- Match quality of water delivered to that required by end use
- *Plan backward - from future to present*

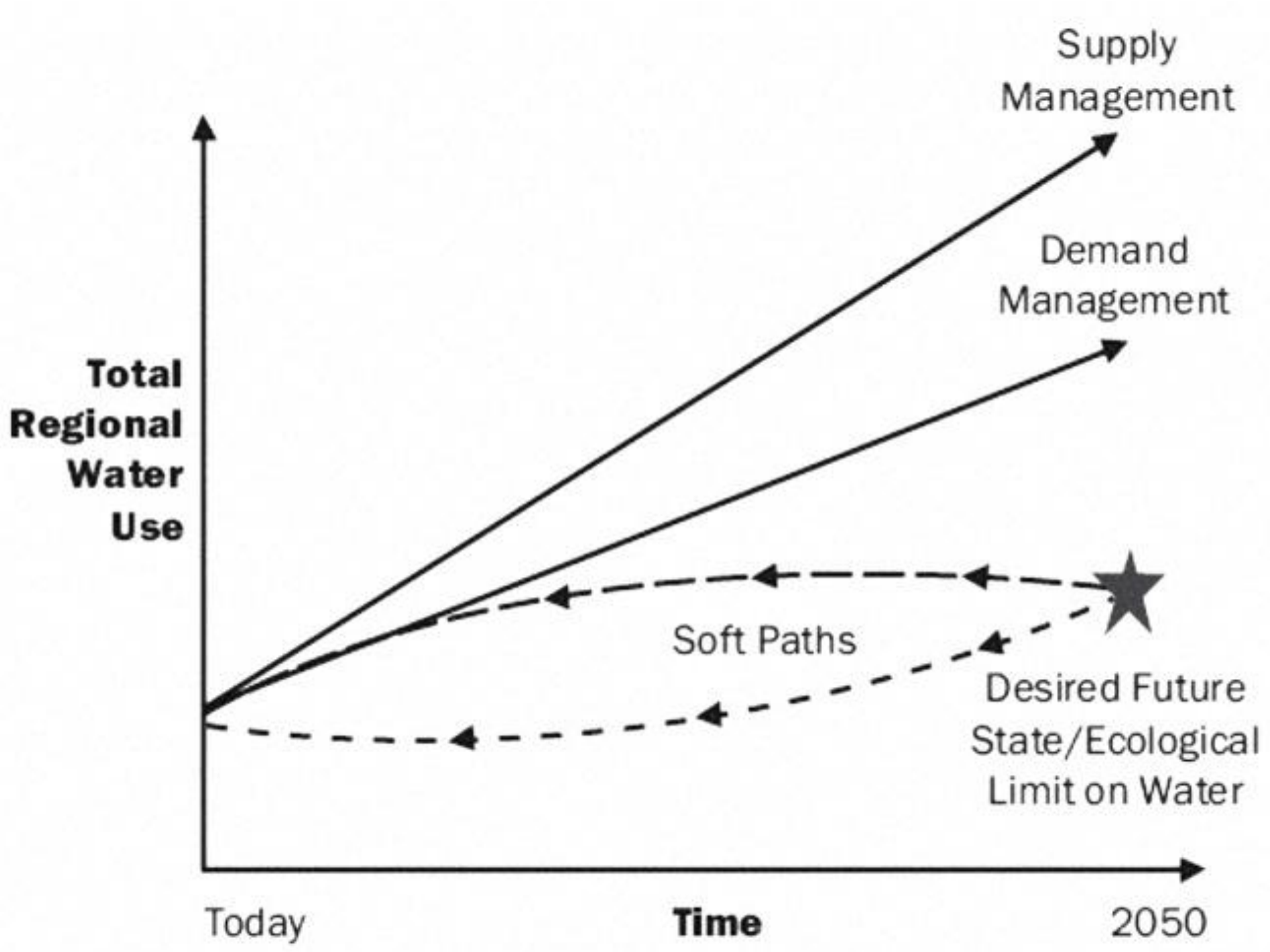
Why a "Soft" Path?

- Requires less steel and concrete
- Solves natural resource problems through ingenuity and innovation
- Asks "Why" rather than "How"
- Works with nature rather than against it

Demand Mgmt vs. Soft Paths

- Efficiency Driven
- Cost-Effectiveness Definitive
- Environmental Econ
- Reduce Use 1/3
- Low Risk
- Implementation Decentralized

- Triple Bottom Line
- Cost-Effectiveness Just One Criterion
- Ecological Econ
- Reduce Use 2/3 +
- Intermediate Risk
- Decentralization + Lower Growth


Supply
Management
Demand
Management
Total
Regional
Water
Use
Soft Paths
Desired Future
State/Ecological
Limit on Water
Today
Time
2050

PART TWO:
REVIEW FRIENDS OF THE EARTH CANADA STUDY
(2006 – 2009)

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Water Soft Path Policy Study

- Three Levels / Components
  - Provincial (ON): U of Waterloo
  - Watershed (NS): Acadia U
  - Municipal (BC): POLIS Project (UVic)
- Special Studies (for example)
  - Pulp and Paper Industry
  - Diet and Water
  - Institutional Barriers

Selected Results

- NS could cut water use by >50%
- ON could absorb industrial growth with no new water through at least 2031
- Urban water use can drop by 45% despite 50% growth in population
- Fully recycling Pulp & Paper Mills can cut water use by 95% *But*
- Dietary changes cut water by >1/3 *But*

Gaps & Limitations

- No change to existing economic or population growth projections
- Limited data on water use
- Agriculture included but no prairie study
- Inherently long term
- No control on export demands

Overall Conclusion

NOT BAD FOR A WORLD FIRST!

Results Are Indicative, Not Definitive

PART THREE:
NEXT STEPS

To Do Right Now

- Go After Low-Hanging Fruit (homes)
  - Toilets (30% of household use)
  - Low / No Water Greenery (50% in summer)
  - Porous parking lots and laneways
- Price *All* Water Use by Volume
- Price Wastewater by Volume & Quality
- Invest in Water Use Reporting

Start Thinking Soft Path

- Focus on avoided costs (80%)
- Propose conservation tariff structures
- Impose “no-new-water” policy for towns and cities
- Convert land-use decisions into water-use choices
- Protect environmental water

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Sustainable development depends not only on sustainable production, but also on sustainable consumption

A Water Soft Path charts the course to sustainable consumption

Sources (from least to most)

- Brandes & Brooks (2007). *The Soft Path for Water in a Nutshell*. Friends of the Earth Canada & POLIS Project, 26 pp.

- Brooks & Brandes (2011). Why a Water Soft Path, Why Now, and What Then? *International Journal of Water Resources Development* 27 (2): 315 – 344.

- Brooks, Brandes & Gurman (2009). *Living with the Water We Have: The Soft Path Approach to Water Management* (London: Earthscan), 272 pp.