

A River Loved

Facilitating cooperative negotiation of transboundary water resource management in the Columbia River Basin through documentary film

Julie Elkins Watson
Oregon State University

<http://www.youtube.com/watsonjae>

Go here to view
the film online!

introduction

In this study, I test the effectiveness of documentary film as a facilitation tool in the Columbia River Basin (CRB) to examine whether it facilitates understanding, promotes constructive dialogue, and sparks brainstorming of new alternatives for the basin. This study can shed light on the potential of integrating dynamic media into water resource facilitation, which in turn, can help facilitators and water resource professionals fine-tune facilitation techniques.

background

The Columbia River Treaty & the 2014/2024 Review

The Columbia River Treaty, ratified in 1964, has been in effect for over 45 years, but its future is uncertain. In 2024, the flood control provisions of the treaty expire, defaulting to “called upon” flood control. Additionally, 2024 is the first year that either the U.S. or Canada can terminate the treaty, provided 10 years prior notice. Thus, 2014 has become an artificial deadline for a terminate-continue-modify decision.

The treaty- which manages for hydropower and flood control- is an outstanding example of transboundary cooperation; however, contemporary values for the river are not reflected in its framework. Furthermore, many stakeholders and sovereigns (i.e. tribes and First Nations) were left out of the original negotiation process.

The approaching changes in flood control in 2024 and the potential for treaty termination have served as an impetus for dialogue regarding alternatives for future management of the Columbia. Federal entities on both sides of the border are conducting public participation processes, while cross-border dialogue happens through informal channels, such as the Universities Symposia on Columbia River Governance.

Conflict Transformation

The success of this process is contingent upon a comprehensive understanding of the “basket of benefits” in the Columbia Basin. Accordingly, the stakeholders and entities must have meaningful dialogue that goes beyond positions to identify underlying values and interests in the basin. For facilitators, this requires the development of a process that facilitates mutual understanding and respect.

(Dore, Robinson, & Smith, 2010)

competitive negotiation

- Positions
- Distribution of fixed quantities
- Win-lose
- Inequalities

cooperative negotiation

- Interests & values
- Expanded pie
- Win-win
- Inclusion & engagement

filming

Interviews

12 interviews

- Tribes & First Nations
- Federal agencies
- Community members
- NGO/nonprofit representatives

Locations

- British Columbia
- Oregon, Washington, & Idaho

Debut

*Third Annual Symposium on Transboundary
River Governance in the Face of Uncertainty:
The Columbia River Treaty 2014*

- Kimberley, British Columbia
- October 5, 2011

data collection

Pre-film Web Survey

- N=11 past Symposium attendees
- September 28 – October 4, 2011
- Qualitative & Quantitative
- Values & goals for Symposia

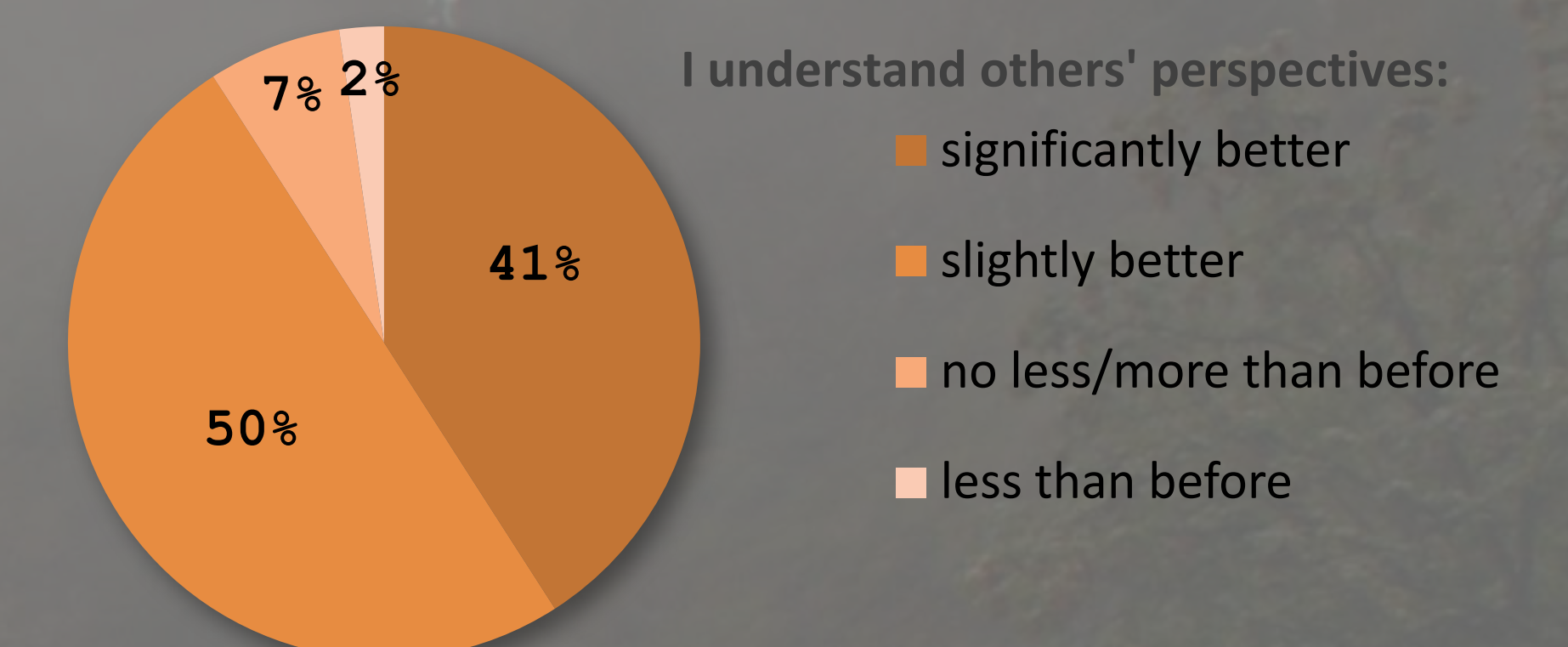
Post-film Paper Survey

- N=44 attendees of the 2011 Symposium
- October 5, 2011: post-film debut
- Qualitative & Quantitative
- Values & film feedback

results

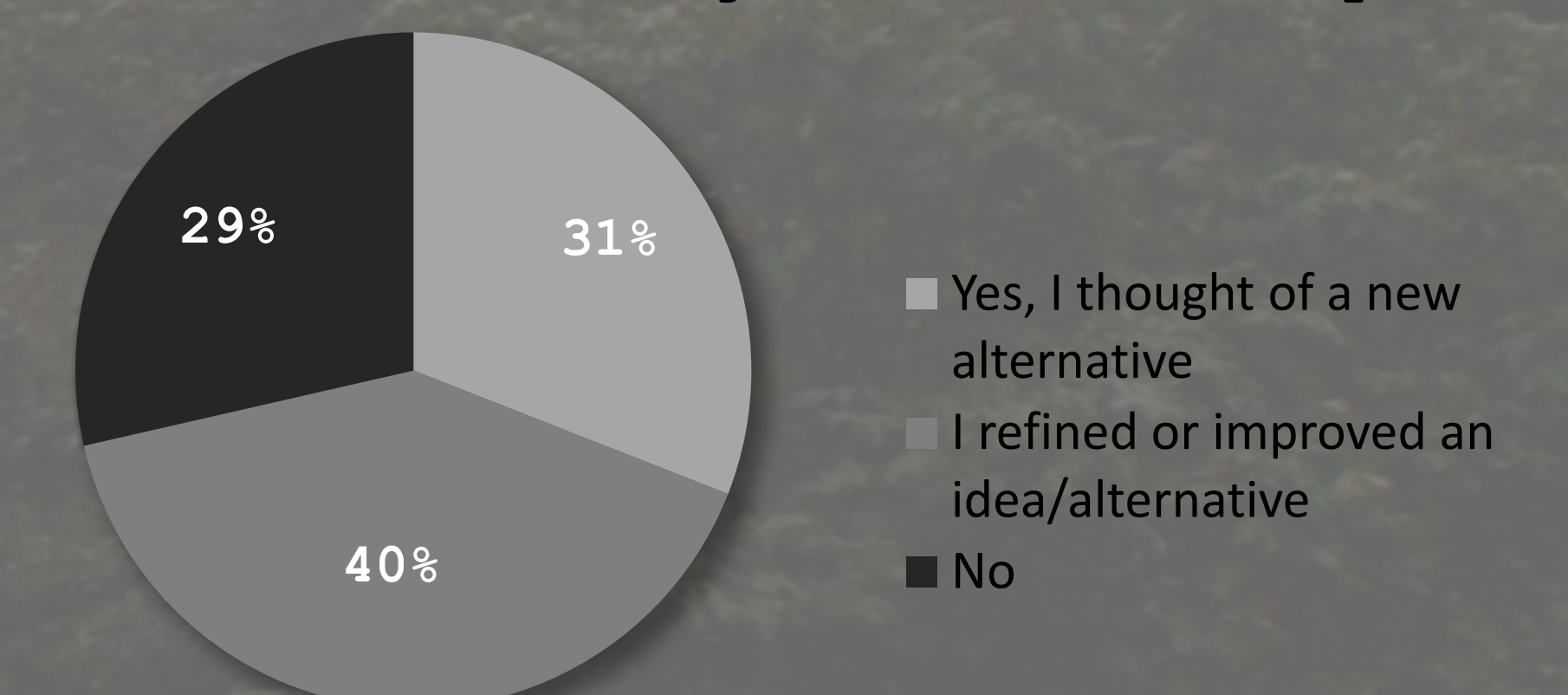
- 91.91% of respondents claimed they understood others' perspectives “slightly” or “significantly” better after watching the film. n= 44

Do you think that watching the documentary helped you to understand other stakeholders' perspectives and values better?



- 71.43% of respondents claimed they developed or refined an idea/alternative for Columbia River management. n= 42

Did you brainstorm any new ideas/alternatives for Columbia River management during the documentary or while reflecting on the documentary?



- 92.68% of respondents believed that others will understand their point of view better after watching the film. n= 41

discussion

Based on these preliminary results, it seems that the film helped stakeholders to understand one another better. This improved understanding is a step towards enhanced cooperation in the Columbia River Basin.

The results of this study show promise that “facilitative” documentary film can be a helpful tool for water conflict transformation.

References:

Columbia River Treaty: Treaty relating to cooperative development of the water resources of the Columbia River Basin (with Annexes), Signed 17 Jan 1961. Ratified 16 Sept 1964. Dore, D., J. Robinson, and M. Smith, eds. (2010). *Negotiate: Reaching agreements over water*. International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) Water & Nature Initiative, IUCN Publications: Gland, Switzerland.

Acknowledgements:

Aaron Wolf- Oregon State University, The Institute for Water & Watersheds, The Universities Consortium on Columbia River Governance (see film for full acknowledgements)

Oregon State
UNIVERSITY