

Integrated water governance with adaptive capacity in Switzerland

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Water is one of the most valuable natural resources provided by our environment. Man exploits water, distributes and treats it and has to avert floods. Sustainable water management, in terms of a task of prime importance in politics and society, attracts widely diverging interests that need to be optimized.

Background

Current and future demands on water, but also changes in the environment can lead to problems. It is important to maintain a proper balance between society's needs, the ecological demands and the securing of resources. Different institutions driven by different objectives and rules have taken up this challenge. Thus, there is a need for improved cooperation and networking in water sectors such as supply, disposal, prevention of water pollution, power production and flood protection. An integrative approach, including the different players and allowing for collective learning, is necessary for sustainable water management.

Aims and methods

The project examines what an integrative Swiss water policy might look like. It assesses how water sectors can collaborate and how they can be suitably steered. The following aspects, which are important for the water management, prevention of water pollution and flood protection sectors, will be taken into account: geographic area, legal and political competences, organizational structures and the management of these sectors. Institutions and stakeholders will be involved in the research by means of workshops and focus groups. Strategies and instruments suitable for the support of the transition from a sectorial to an integrative water policy will also be suggested.

Significance

The project promotes an intensified collaboration and coordination between water sectors, by involving the relevant players in the research. Concepts for improved collaboration in water management as well as implementation guidelines will be elaborated together with representatives of the life and engineering sciences, of the authorities and associations and of environmental and consumer groups.