

## GEF Medium-Sized Project

# Enhancing the use of Science in International Waters projects to improve project results

GEF International Waters (IW) projects aim at sustainable management of global transboundary water systems. Over one billion dollars of GEF funds, matched by over four billion dollars of cofinancing, have been invested in ca. 150 IW projects covering an exceptionally broad spectrum of systems – from lake and river basins to groundwater aquifers to near-shore and open ocean ecosystems. This portfolio has created a large amount of new scientific knowledge. However, until now, no significant and coherent portfolio-wide effort has been made to recognize, capture, analyze and integrate the scientific findings from these projects and to disseminate them across the IW portfolio and beyond.

The present project, executed by UNU-INWEH, will address this need. The project partners (UNEP-DEWA, UNESCO, SAMS, LOICZ, ELME, UNU-EHS, University of Plymouth, CWN, and UNU-INWEH)<sup>1</sup> comprise a highly specialized and interdisciplinary team, each bringing thematic institutional expertise relevant to an ecosystem class within the IW portfolio: river basins, lake systems, groundwater aquifers, large marine ecosystems and the open ocean.

The project partners, in concert with 75 world class scientific experts and key GEF project scientists (15 specialists in each of the 5 ecosystem-centric Working Groups) will systematically inventory, collate, analyze and synthesize the science experience within the IW project portfolio, then undertake a comparative review of the science outcomes and modes of scientific engagement. This will allow portfolio-wide integration of knowledge and subsequent formulation of science-based recommendations regarding critical emerging science areas, the application of science for adaptive management, and the development and use of indicators to support results-based project management.

In a parallel component, the project will establish an IW “Science Learning Network” (SLN) to share the integrated knowledge globally, both within and beyond the GEF. The SLN will consist of two integrated elements. The first will be a web-accessible, interactive database of both the science within the GEF IW portfolio and the synthesized scientific knowledge resulting from this project. The second element will be a “Community of Practice” (CoP), a virtual, interactive working space for SLN participants. Once fully operational, the SLN will provide continuity for important learning functions within the IW focal area; allow the diffusion of best practices within the IW scientific community; facilitate capacity for the cross-fertilisation of ideas, and; allow exchange and interpretation of information and effective communication of science to decision-makers.

Such an interdisciplinary, multi-system exercise will strengthen our understanding of transboundary water challenges, and enhance the exchange and uptake of knowledge and best practices for sustainable water resources management. Importantly, these findings will play a vital role in the strategic planning of the IW portfolio for the GEF-5 replenishment, and help identify future targeted research opportunities to fill gaps.

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<sup>1</sup> **UNU-INWEH** (United Nations University – International Network on Water, Environment and Health); **UNEP – DEWA** (United Nations Environment Programme – The Division of Early Warning and Assessment); **UNESCO** (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization); **LOICZ** (Land-Ocean Interactions in the Coastal Zone); **SAMS** (The Scottish Association for Marine Science); **ELME** (European Lifestyles and Marine Ecosystems); **UNU-EHS** (United Nations University – Institute for Environment and Human Security); **CWN** (Canadian Water Network)

Project contact:

**Andrew Dansie - Project Manager**

Freshwater Ecosystem Programme

United Nations University

International Network on Water, Environment and Health

UNU-INWEH

175 Longwood Rd S, Suite 204

Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L8P 0A1

Tel: (905) 667-5497

Fax: (905) 667-5510

E-mail: [dansie@inweh.unu.edu](mailto:dansie@inweh.unu.edu)

UNU-INWEH at <http://www.inweh.unu.edu>

**Dr. Ralph J. Daley**

Senior Advisor, Water Affairs

United Nations University

International Network on Water, Environment and Health

UNU-INWEH

Phone: (416) 204-1168

Fax: (416) 204-1131

E-mail: [daleyr@inweh.unu.edu](mailto:daley@inweh.unu.edu)