



In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
Christa Brelsford

Will defend her prospectus

From Conflict to Cooperation: Institutional Change in the Las Vegas Water System

The core research objective of the proposed dissertation is to understand what social and institutional tools urban water system managers have used to respond to water scarcity, how the tools have been implemented and how effective they have been in solving water scarcity problems. In 1991 in Nevada, managers for the five Las Vegas water districts switched from conflict over water to cooperation and created a new institution designed to manage water allocation across all five districts. Using an institutional analysis, two competing theories of institutional emergence will be used to determine if the creation of the new institution resulted from distributional conflict over access to a limited supply of water, cooperation for collective benefits, a combination of the two, or neither. Subsequently, the agencies began serious efforts towards demand side management through water conservation. An extensive dataset has been gathered and will be used to estimate how much of the decline in per capita water consumption results from policy changes, and how much from other factors like newer infrastructure, more water efficient technology and changing behavior. Many of the conservation programs implemented in Las Vegas have now been adopted in other cities. The cooperative institutional changes in Las Vegas, rare in the Colorado River basin, can provide a model for managers of other water allocation settings as they seek politically feasible institutional changes that encourage more sustainable water use.

Monday, December 17th, 2012

10am

WGHL, room 401

Faculty, students, and the general public are invited.

Supervisory Committee:

Josh Abbott, Abigail York, Michael Hanemann, Tim McPherson