

# Helping HELP with limited resources: The Luquillo experience<sup>#</sup>

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## Abstract

By definition the HELP approach involves the active participation of individuals from a wide range of disciplines and backgrounds, including representatives of industry, academics, natural resource managers, and local officials and community leaders. While there is considerable enthusiasm and support for the integrated HELP approach, a central problem for all HELP basins is how to effectively engage individuals and groups with few, if any financial resources. In the Luquillo HELP project we have managed this issue by focusing our efforts on holding small, public meetings and workshops with technocrats and managers who are engaged in local water resource management. To date several forums have been organised, including: technical meetings with the directors of natural resource agencies; presentations and panel discussions at the meetings of local professional societies, including the societies of Civil Engineers and Architects, the Commonwealth Association of Tourism, the Association of Builders and Developers, and the Puerto Rican Association of Lawyers. During these forums HELP specialists gave presentations and led discussions on how integrated watershed management can help resolve local problems. Because the audience are directly involved with these issues, they are quite responsive to these discussions and have often provided unique solutions to common problems. Technical workshops are co-sponsored by local municipalities – these day-long workshops are hosted by a municipality and include managers from other municipalities, the local water authority, and local community leaders. Additional activities include: technical advice on water infrastructure projects is given; there are educational exchanges between local and international students, scientists, natural resource managers, and community leaders; and synthesis publications relevant to integrated water resource management are produced. Other activities have included compiling oral environmental histories and organising watershed restoration activities. This paper describes these activities and discusses the benefits and costs of each approach.

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