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GeoDay Abstract

**Water Conflict Prevention and Scale:
The Tale of Two Rivers - the Mekong and Columbia**

The Mekong River Basin shared among six countries covers over 795,000 square kilometers, originating at over 4500 meters in the Qinghai province in China and travels 4800 kilometers to the South China Sea. The Mekong faces some monumental challenges in the years to come - over 21 percent of the basin is eroding, only 31 percent of its original forests are left with only five percent under protection. Combined with the rapid surge in water development in the basin (dam building) a projected two percent population growth over the next 50 years, many predict severe and negative impacts to stream flow, pollution, loss of habitat, fish populations, and community health of those who rely on the Mekong for their livelihoods. Previous research at OSU indicates that conflict over water at the basin level is more prevalent if rapid changes in a basin outpace institutional capacity of the basin. The primary focus of this research is to determine whether or not these assumptions at the basin scale hold true at the national, provincial, and community scales. Analysis is done using two competing frameworks – a water security approach and systems resilience theory. Data is collected from environmental “hotspots” in the Mekong region, using events, interactions, and interview to support research claims. The key will be to explain variations in conflict and cooperative trends, rather than create a comprehensive multi-scalar model of outcomes. The research also uses a comparative study of development regimes on the Mekong and Columbia River Basins.