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# **WATER SOFT PATH (WSP) AND NOVA SCOTIA'S WATER FUTURE**

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# The Vision of Soft Paths

*Grew out of energy soft paths (1970s) – crisis to reduce energy use.*

*The future lies with restricting demand, not increasing supply!*





## Principles of WSP

- Considers water as service, not as a product or end
- Integrates ecological security upfront
- Matches quality of water delivered to need (potable, non-potable)
- *Plans backward - from future to present (backcasting)*





# What is Water Soft Path?

- **An innovative analytical tool to plan water use that integrates the best of efficiency, ecological security and human ingenuity (triple bottom line- equity, environment, efficiency)**
- **Promotes promising practices such as water recycling, rainwater harvesting, greywater use, xeric landscaping, building designs with built-in water conservation and more**
- **Promotes changes in lifestyles, livelihoods and values. Challenges and charts water consumption habits.**





# What do we mean by “Soft”?

- **Soft, similar to concept of software, in that it uses ingenuity and innovation (the brains)**
- **Because it will typically reduce the need for new infrastructure, it requires less “hard” material, e.g., steel and concrete**
- **Asks “Why” use water rather than “How” to and how much water do we need**
- **Works with nature rather than against it**
- **Gets the public involved**

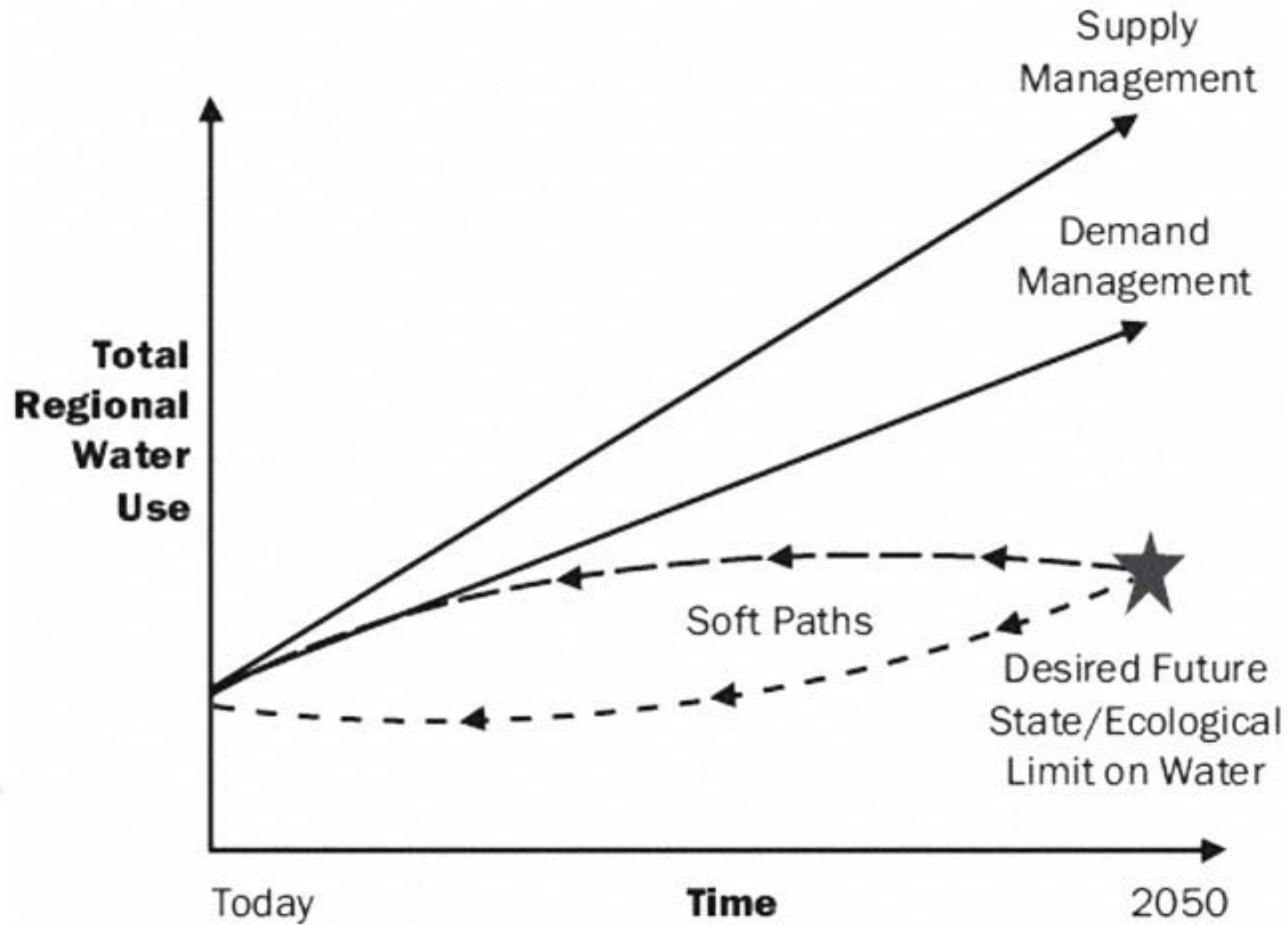




# STEPS IN A WSP ANALYSIS

1. **Develop a community water profile and vision for a water sustainable future. Data are collected on water use, services and water systems.**
2. **Compile information on water demands and sources.**
3. **Establish growth projections for future water uses based on population growth (or other relevant estimate).**
4. **Build scenarios.**
5. **Backcast the scenarios to identify measures and timeframe to put them in place.**
6. **Evaluate scenarios taking into account the vision.**
7. **Reach out to the community.**







## HOW IS IT DONE?

- Define Social and Environmental Goals (vision for desired water future)
- Identify Water Services in detail
- Create Business-as-Usual Projection
- Build Standard Demand and WSP scenarios
- Analyze water quantity options and propose places where can be used
- Match water quality to needs of use
- Backcast
- Identify actionable plans, activities, incentives and policies





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# FOE`s Nova Scotia Proposal for 2009

- **An intensive Water Soft Path Process for a province-wide analysis to feed into Water Strategy**
- **Municipal level workshops to walk water planners through WSP guidebook**

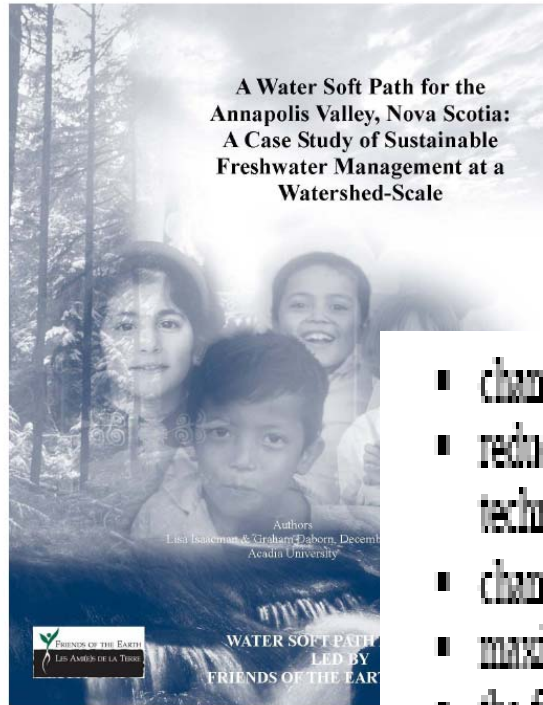


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# 2007 Annapolis Valley Study

- changes to water-conscious behaviours, habits, and attitudes;
- reductions in overall water needs through conservation, efficiency measures, and waterless technologies and practices;
- changes in population, economic, and agricultural activities and growth patterns, where needed;
- maximization of the benefits from extracted water through wastewater recycling and reuse; and
- the full exploitation of renewable low impact sources such as rainwater and surface runoff.

However, a successful watershed-scale soft path initiative, and ultimately the achievement of a sustainable water future, requires a strong political and social commitment to sustainable water management. The following section outlines some potential barriers to and opportunities for the implementation of watershed-level soft paths in Canada, based on experiences from the Annapolis Valley/Nova Scotia context.



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# FOE guidebook

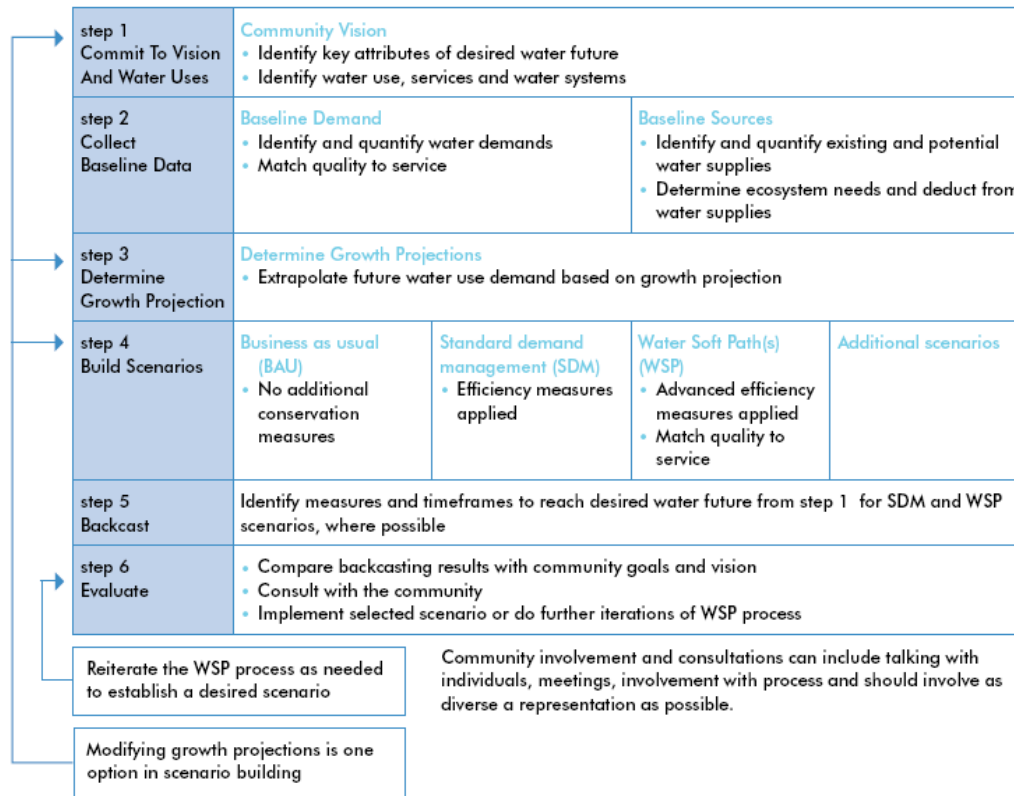


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FIGURE 1

### WSP Analysis For Sustainable Water Resource Management





# Backcasting

## Main Activities

- a) Identify conservation measures needed to meet the demands.
- b) For each scenario (except BAU) list activities and those responsible, that would be needed to reach the calculated goal. This would include programs, policies, education, and other actions that need to be taken.
- c) Estimate where in the timeline the measure should be initiated and completed (i.e., in place).
- d) Arrange these activities on a timeline.

## Key Outputs:

- a) For each scenario, a draft outline of a plan that can be taken to the public for consultation. Detailed implementation and action plans can be developed based on the finalized scenario.







# Start Thinking Soft Path

## Benefits include:

- **Avoided costs (e.g., no new infrastructure)**
- **Reduced pumping rates**
- **A “no-new-water” policy**
- **Water protection is also land and biodiversity protection**
- **Addresses climate change**
- **Build new policies and public awareness**





# Resources

- ***The Soft Path for Water in a Nutshell* (August 2007), Friends of the Earth Canada & POLIS Project, 26 pp.**
- **Reports on research studies (province, municipality, watershed – (Annapolis Valley) in *Lexicon of Water Soft Path Knowledge* (2007)**
- ***Alternatives Journal* (July 2007), 33(3).**
- **Developing water soft paths in Canadian Municipalities (2009)**
- ***Living with the Water We Have: The Soft Path Approach to Water Management* (London: Earthscan, 2009).**

