Decision Making, Policy And Financing

J.P. WOLFLIN**,** R.C. RUSSO, S. BURAK, N. KARAKAYA, A. ORBI, A. RAZINKOVAS, B. TOKTORALIEV, G. UZUN, J. SALAS, M. AMANALIEV, **M. MESSAHEL,** M. HACI, V. LAGUTOV, Y. TORUN.

Abstract: The most critical situation facing the health of water resources and aquatic ecosystems is not the result of a single activity on or near a lake, river, or stream. Instead, it is the combined and cumulative result of many individual activities throughout a waterbody's entire natural drainage area, catchment area or watershed. A watershed is the area of land where all of the water that is under it or drains off of it goes into the same place. John Wesley Powell, U.S. scientist and geographer, put it best when he said that a watershed is: …that area of land, a bounded hydrologic system, within which all living things are inextricably linked by their common water course and where, as humans settled, simple logic demanded that they become part of a community. World-wide watersheds supply drinking water, provide recreation and respite, and sustain life. Throughout the world, countries depend on clean water and healthy watersheds for food, fiber, manufactured goods, and tourism. This natural capital is the basis for social economic systems in developed and developing countries and the building block for the future in undeveloped countries. In the United States more than $450 billion in food and fiber, manufactured goods, and tourism depends on clean water and healthy watersheds. Watersheds come in all shapes and sizes. They cross county, state, and national boundaries. No matter where you are, you are in a watershed! As we all live in a watershed, our individual actions can directly affect it. The cumulative effects of all the individual actions of everyone within a watershed may be, and often are devastating to the quality of water resources and affect the health of living things including humans. Management for sustained use of water and other ecosystem resources requires a watershed based approach.