

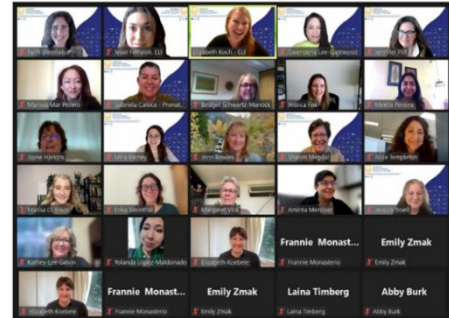


# Women in Water Diplomacy Network North American Community Consultation After-Action Report<sup>1</sup> January 29, 2024 | Online



## Summary

The **Women in Water Diplomacy Network** is an informal community of practice comprised of both formal and informal women decision-makers and experts, representing a wealth of collective experience and expertise in transboundary water management and decision-making engaged in some of the most water insecure regions of the world. [The North American Network was formally launched on December 13, 2023](#), at the Colorado River Water Users Association (CRWUA) annual conference in Las Vegas, Nevada. Building on the momentum of the launch, the Environmental Law Institute (ELI) and partners convened an online community consultation on January 29, 2024.



Screenshot of session attendees (not all pictured)

The first community consultation for the North American Women in Water Diplomacy Network was held online on January 29, 2024, from 8:30-10:00 MST. The event was hosted by ELI's Women in Water Diplomacy Network Process Support Team members Elizabeth A. Koch and Jesse Ferraioli and attended by 35 participants from across a diversity of North American communities, including representatives of Indigenous Nations and local, state, and federal organizations.<sup>2</sup> The objective of the initial community consultation was to re-introduce the Women in Water Diplomacy Network, describe the Network's working objective for North America, and explore key questions regarding the future trajectory of the North American Women in Water Diplomacy Network following the December launch and consider resourcing challenges for the Network's development.

### Key takeaways from the session:

- The session hosts contextualized the North American Network within the broader global Women in Water Diplomacy Network and outlined the working objective.
- The session explored key questions including the geographical scope of the Network, the stakeholder communities that should be represented, how participants would like to engage with the Network, and ideas for resource mobilization.
- Participants emphasized the importance of inclusive representation and suggested various engagement activities for the Network.
- Session hosts described the need for funding and partner support to sustain the North American Network.

<sup>1</sup> This After-Action Report was written by Jesse Ferraioli, Research Associate, Environmental Law Institute and Elizabeth A. Koch, Senior Manager, Environmental Law Institute and Process Support Team Lead for the Women in Water Diplomacy Network.

<sup>2</sup> Participants who were invited, present at the Network launch event, or requested to join North American engagements were invited to attend this community consultation. If you are interested in participating in future activities please contact Elizabeth Koch at [koch@eli.org](mailto:koch@eli.org).



WOMEN IN  
WATER DIPLOMACY  
NETWORK & PARTNERS



ENVIRONMENTAL  
LAW • INSTITUTE®





## North American Community Consultation Session Detail

**Dr. Sharon B. Megdal**, Director of the Water Resources Research Center at the University of Arizona extended a warm welcome to all participants and outlined the session's objective: to chart the course forward following the landmark launch of the North American Network at the Colorado River Water Users Association (CRUWA) Conference in December 2023. Dr. Megdal emphasized the significance of understanding the Network's purpose by offering population estimates for Mexico, Canada, the U.S., and indigenous communities, underscoring the importance of determining representation and goals for the Network across a large and diverse geographic region.

**Elizabeth A. Koch**, Senior Manager at the Environmental Law Institute and Process Support Lead for the Women in Water Diplomacy Network provided background on the inception and development of the Network since 2017, tracing its origins to the Nile Network's efforts to address the low representation of women in water diplomacy. The Women in Water Diplomacy Network initiative expanded globally, with networks established in Central Asia, Southern Africa, and now in the Americas. Elizabeth then pivoted to the proposed North American Network working objective: *"to establish a Women in Water Diplomacy Network across Mexico, Canada, U.S. anchored in the Colorado Basin with strong Indigenous leadership; adapting and adopting the global strategy for North American contexts and communities."* She outlined a proposal for an inception and development period for the North American branch of the global Women in Water Diplomacy Network and invited inputs.

**Jennifer Pitt**, Director of the Colorado River Program at the National Audubon Society, and **Gabriela Caloca Michel**, Waters and Rivers Coordinator at Pronatura Noroesta, led an exploration of key questions regarding conceptual development, process support and resource mobilization. These questions included defining the geographical scope of the Network, identifying the stakeholder communities that should be represented, discussing how participants would like to engage with the Network, and brainstorming ideas for resource mobilization.

**Network Scope and Representation:** Many participants advocated for initiating the Network's scope within the Colorado River Basin, although other suggestions included the Red River, Platte River, Tijuana River, Rio Bravo/Rio Grande, Mississippi River, and Delaware River basins. Participants emphasized that representation in this Network should include indigenous communities, economically vulnerable populations, individuals from early and mid-career stages, and youth perspectives.

The first screenshot shows a poll question: "What is your preference for the initial geographical area of focus of the network? E.g. entire North American region, the Colorado River Basin, etc." The word cloud highlights "Colorado River Basin" as the most frequent response, along with "North American region", "Mississippi", "Columbia River basin", "Rio Bravo/Grand", "Arkansas River", "Platte River", "Tijuana River Basin", "Rio Grande", "Great Lakes", "Western region", "Southeast", "Red river basin", "Major waterways", "Major teams-border basins", "Most water stressed basin", "Delaware River basin", "Colorado river", "Rio Bravo/Grand", "Large basins", "All major basins", and "North America in general".

The second screenshot shows a poll question: "What kind of representation do we want to emphasize in this network? What are the key stakeholder communities that should be represented?" The poll includes filters for "Indigenous", "Water", "Community", "Youth", "Women", "Governance", and "Leadership". The responses listed are: "Anonymous: Any women", "Anonymous: Young people", "Anonymous: Interconnectedness - a diversity of ages and backgrounds in water policy and management", "Anonymous: Any woman wanting in water", and "Anonymous: Be inclusive. Don't know who will be future diplomats."

The third screenshot shows a poll question: "How would you like to engage with this network in the next year?" The word cloud highlights "Online and in person" as the most frequent response, along with "Mentoring", "Side events", "Institutions", "Trainings", "Workshops", "Tours / virtual tours", "Facilitation", "Joint projects", "Interactive sessions", "Science work group", "Form interest groups", "Virtual forums", "Networking with other org", "Study tours!", "Tours / virtual tours", "In person", "Side events at big events", "Project collaboration", "Connecting (IRL or zoom)", "Mentorship", "Small participatory zooms", "Indigenous Peoples", "In-person meetings", "Workshops", "Touring waterways", "Project collaboration", "Online + events like CRUWA", and "Virtual forums".

Screenshots of participant responses to key questions.



**Engagement:** Participants expressed their ideas for engaging with the Network in the coming year, including both online and in-person activities such as trainings, conferences, tours of waterways, networking with other organizations, and holding events near water bodies. Suggestions were also made for organizing webinars on transboundary issues and the lexicon differences for discussing water issues, presenting on the water issues in different regions of North America, and forming work groups by region.

**Resource mobilization:** The need for funding and partner support to sustain the Network was highlighted. Elizabeth describes some challenges in securing funding for the North American Network. Suggestions were made to explore corporate and philanthropic support, as well as alternative types of assistance beyond monetary contributions, such as lending staff time and hosting events in institutional spaces.

**Gwendena Lee-Gatewood**, Co-chair of the Indigenous Women's Leadership Network (IWLN) shared that the Second Global Network Forum in Vienna, Austria will feature 13 participants from North America. She also gave an update on the collaborative proposal submitted by the Indigenous Women's Leadership Network and the Environmental Law Institute. Expressing her enthusiasm for the developing partnership between the IWLN and the Women in Water Diplomacy Network, Gwendena said, *"A little stream may not have a powerful force, but when that stream joins another and they join another, they have force and capacity, and will arrive at their destination. The women here are part of such a wonderful and unique opportunity."*

**Dr. Faith Sternlieb**, Associate Director for Engagement for the Internet of Water Initiative at the Lincoln Institute's Center for Geospatial Solutions provided closing remarks. Reflecting on Gwendena's earlier quote, she underscored that it is us who drive this movement and momentum forward. She concluded by encouraging participants to contemplate their potential roles and contributions to the North American Network and to fill out the exit survey.

## Results of Session's Exit Poll

**Methodology:** The exit poll aimed to gather insights from participants on the inception and development of the North American Network. In the exit survey, 14 responses were received out of 35 participants, indicating a 40% response rate. Highlights include:

- **Ways to Support:** Participants suggested various ways to support the Network, including Networking/capacity building, providing in-kind staff time, writing articles, white papers, and op-eds, assisting with grant writing, and hosting events at affiliated institutions.
- **Funding Sources:** Suggestions for funding sources included requiring membership dues, The World Bank, regional water organizations, the National Science Foundation (NSF), Mackenzie Scott, and the Skoll Global Threats Fund.
- **Key Partners:** Key partners suggested for collaboration included organizations like The Center for Rural Enterprise and Environmental Justice (CREEJ), American Water Works Association (AWWA), Blue Peace, The Nationwide Water Congress (NWRA), IHE Delft, The National Science Foundation (NSF), and The World Bank.
- **Other Suggestions:** Participants recommended forming a committee focused on grant writing and brainstorming funding opportunities to enhance financial support for the Network.



### Resources for ongoing learning about the Women in Water Diplomacy Network

- Women in Water Diplomacy Network LinkedIn page: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/women-in-water-diplomacy-network>
- Publications, event details and more <https://www.eli.org/women-water-diplomacy-network>
- North American Women in Water Diplomacy Network [inception and development proposal](#)

### Resources for ongoing learning about the Indigenous Women's Leadership Network

The Indigenous Women's Leadership Network (IWLN) is a recent initiative catalyzed by the Water & Tribes Initiative. One of the core values of IWLN is the important role that women play in tribal communities. The intent is to connect and support Native women working in the areas of water, natural resources, and the broader environment within the Colorado River Basin. IWLN seeks to engage past, present and future Native women leaders – to learn from each other, mentor one another and support one another.

- Website: [Indigenous Women's Leadership Network \(iwln.org\)](http://Indigenous Women's Leadership Network (iwln.org))
- Survey to join the network: <https://docs.google.com/forms/u/1/d/e/1FAIpQLSefmNqrMoESzSgQsxFqRdcV2q-v2lg13xSVIZFRL6ujtZ-oGA/viewform>
- Instagram: [Indigenous Women's Leadership Network \(@iwln\\_2023\)](#) • [Instagram photos and videos](#)
- LinkedIn: [Indigenous Women's Leadership Network: Overview | LinkedIn](#)

### ***For additional details on how to support the Women in Water Diplomacy Network please contact:***

**Elizabeth A. Koch**, Senior Manager, Environmental Law Institute  
Process Support Team Lead, Women in Water Diplomacy Network  
[koch@eli.org](mailto:koch@eli.org)