

Understanding Collaborative Water Governance in China

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Water for All:

Harmony between **Humans and **Nature****



Brief review on China's water governance

- Significant investments in water management and infrastructure
- Reforms and pilots
- Institutional setting

China has implemented the fastest change in its water governance system in recent decades (Jia and Zhang, 2011).



Special attention to lakes

- 2,621 natural lakes (over 1 km²) and in total a surface area of 82302 km² (2020).
- Lakes are valuable resources for people in a variety of ways.
- Lakes are an important part of the water cycle.
- Hot spots of Human-Nature disharmony:
 - Rapid population growth
 - Excessive lake reclamation and development activities
 - Climate change



Reconsider Lake and People



Policy shifts have rescaled hydro-social relations and brought new actors in water governance.

- **Ostrom: Governing the Commons and collective action**

- A decentralized approach to decisions and resource management.
- Local institutions for governing commons and polycentric governance.

- **Water Governance in China's State-society Relations**

- State-centric approaches rely on administrative measures, and governments take leading responsibilities (Jia & Li, 2021).
- “State-led civil society” and “Consultative authoritarianism” in China.
- Private sector's engagement could improve the coverage, quality and efficiency of water-related ecosystem services (Newborne, 2012).
- Mass media promotes environmental activism and public participation, but facing increasing censorship (Dai & Spires, 2018).

Why Collaborative Water Governance?

- Ineffective coordination due to complex interjurisdictional interactions aggravate water conflicts among different stakeholders.
- Collaboration between state and non-state actors is **desirable**.
- Viewing collaborative water governance as a solution to predominantly technical and managerial problems **overlooks the social and political processes** that shape the different forms and performance of water governance.
- Mentioned in various water policies (national, provincial and local) and also as a discourse, but no systematic investigation at the **implementation level**.

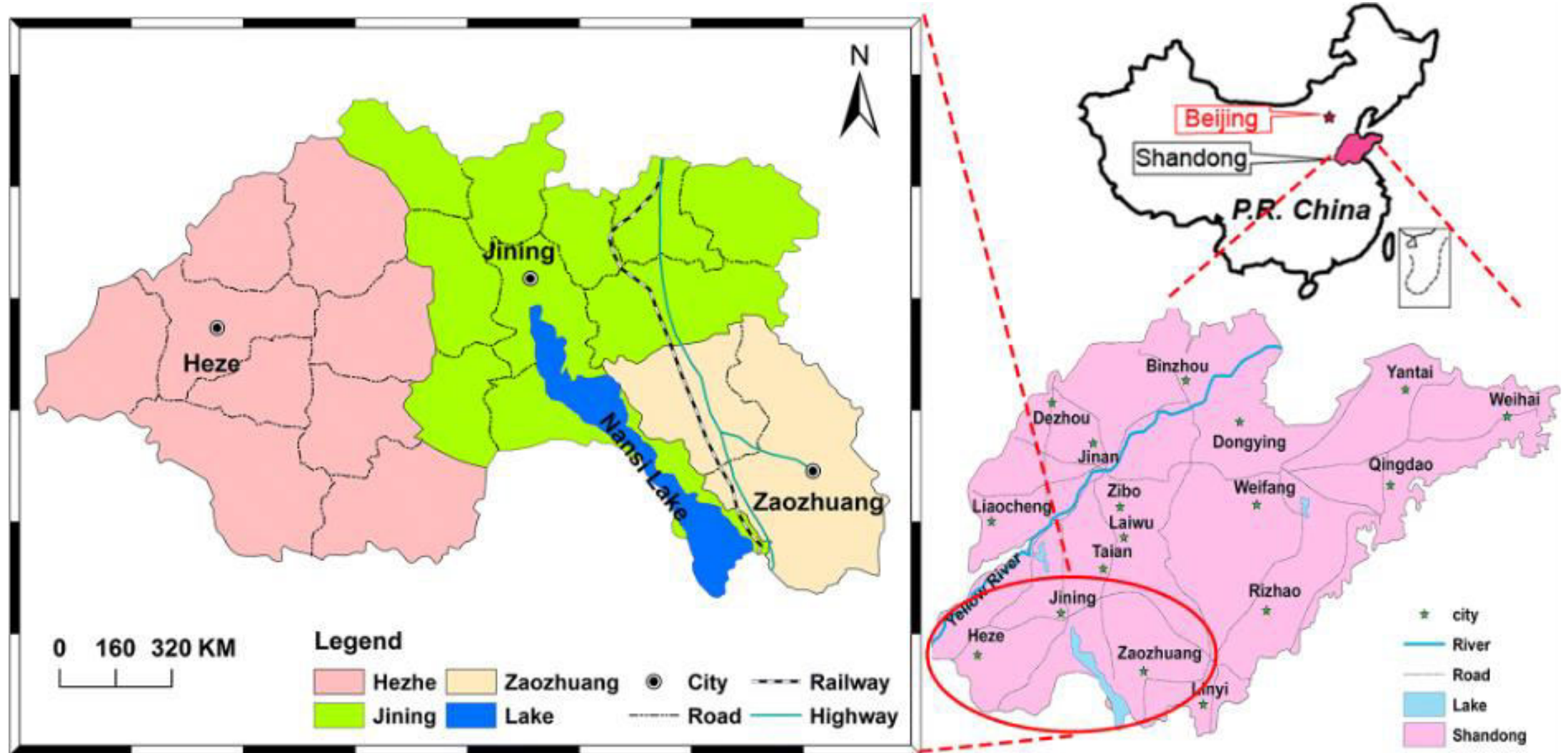
The Constitution of the PRC (1982)	Formally and essentially defined Chinese citizens' rights to participate in the management of national affairs.
The Law of the People's Republic of China on Environmental Impact Assessment (2003)	Explicitly conferred citizens' environmental rights and interests, and further elaborated on the scope and procedures of public participation in EIA.
Civil Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China (2013)	Explicitly defines litigation for public interest in Article 55.
Environmental Protection Law of the People's Republic of China (revised in 2014)	Incorporate public participation into the basic principles and detailed the related content of information disclosure and public participation, including the right to know, the right to participate, the right to supervise, and the right to litigate, thus enhancing the status of public participation.
The Measures for Public Participation in Environmental Protection (2015)	Provide specific institutional norms for public participation in collaborative environmental governance.
Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Water Pollution (2015)	Provide the public and social organizations with training and consultation on water pollution prevention and control laws and regulations, encourage them to participate in environmental law enforcement and water pollution incident investigations throughout the process, improve the reporting system, and actively promote environmental public interest litigation.
Opinions on Full Implementation of the River Chief System (2016)	Expand public participation channels in the basic principles and proposed specific measures to strengthen social supervision.

The principle of public participation/collaborative governance is only generally touched upon but not highlighted.

Who are the stakeholders?



Nansi Lake Basin





Institutional evolution of Nansi Lake governance

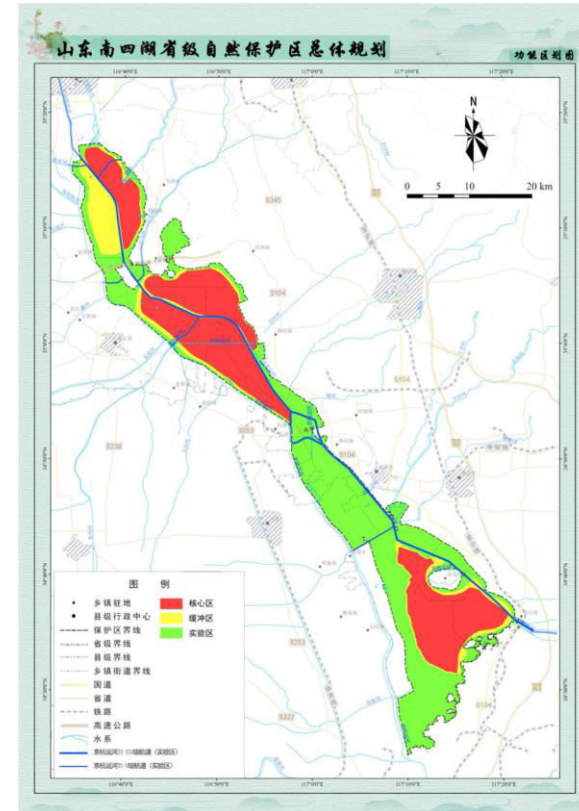
Closely related to national strategies:

- South-to-North Water Transfer Projects (East Route)
- Grand Canal Culture Belt
- Ecological Protection and High-quality Development Plan of the Yellow River Basin

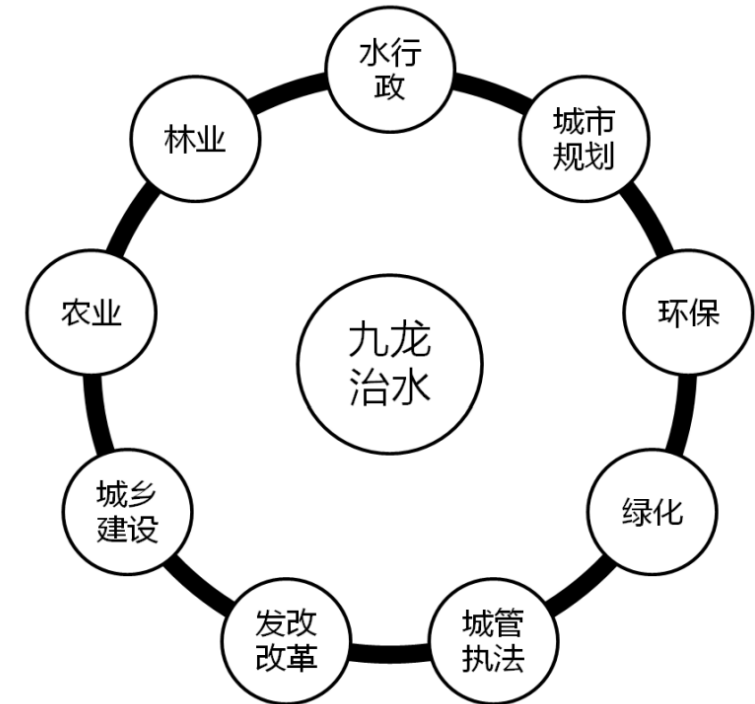
Nansi Lake Provincial Nature Reserve - National Forestry and Grassland Administration

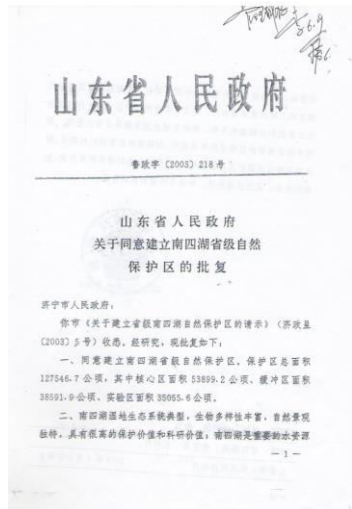
The Huaihe River Commission of the Ministry of Water Resources – Ministry of Water Resources

River/Lake Chief System - top leaders at all levels of local governments



- Jining City Nansi Lake Basin Management Office
- Nansi Lake Nature Reserve Service Centre
- Jining City Development and Reform Commission
- Jining City Civil Affairs Bureau
- Jining City Finance Bureau
- Jining City Natural Resources and Planning Bureau
- Jining City Ecological Environment Bureau
- Jining City Housing and Urban-Rural Construction Bureau
- Jining City Transportation Bureau
- Jining City Urban and Rural Water Bureau
- Jining City Agriculture and Rural Affairs Bureau
- Jining City Culture and Tourism Bureau





1982: Nansi Lake Nature Reserve

水利部准行政许可文件

许可文号〔2021〕107号

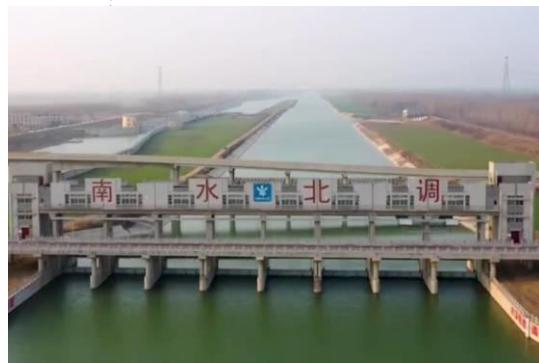
水利部淮河水利委员会关于济宁市南水北调供水有限公司南四湖地表水供水项目取水许可延续行政许可决定书

济宁市南水北调供水有限公司：
你公司《关于济宁市南水北调供水有限公司南四湖地表水供水项目取水许可延续行政许可决定书》（济水行委〔2021〕107号）收悉。经研究，现批复如下：
一、同意你公司延续取水许可。

济宁市生态环境局文件

济环字〔2021〕13号

对市政协十三届五次第135278号提案的答复



2003: STNWT



Public Consultation

Horizontal Eco-compensation



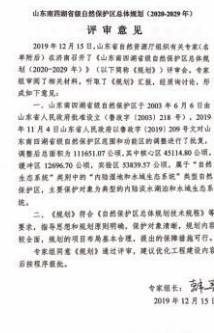
PPP



National Environmental Protection and Supervision



Cross-department coordination



Expert argumentation



APP



River/lake chief system



“iron hand”

- Fragmentation of functional department
- The boundary of power and responsibility is unclear
- The incoordination between the responsibilities and powers:
 - cross departments
 - cross jurisdictions
 - cross levels
- Limited space and mechanism for expert argumentation, private sector engagement and public participation

Returning fishponds to lake (RFTL) project (2018-2020)



- Livelihood was greatly affected under constrained development
- Rural exodus
- Vulnerable groups / uneven eco-compensation
- “Sacrifice for the country and environment”
- Local community’s participation is limited at the end, without proper consultation
- Ignore local knowledge

Local communities' participation for sustainable water governance after RFTL



Thank you!

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