



INDIANA UNIVERSITY BLOOMINGTON OSTROM WORKSHOP

RESEARCH SERIES

Michael Roberts

University of Massachusetts Amherst, Ostrom Visiting Scholar

Wednesday, March 17: 12:00 – 1:00 pm ET

Virtual via Zoom: [Click here for link to Zoom meeting](#)



Uncharted Groundwater: How A California County Made Sense of a Mandate to Manage Groundwater

In this paper, I offer an interpretive account of how county staff and elected officials engaged in organizational sensemaking to co-construct a collective response to a mandate to manage groundwater. In 2014, the California state legislature signed the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). Under SGMA, county governments were placed in the unique position of being the presumed managers for un-districted portions of groundwater basins. Historically, counties in California were not directly involved in groundwater management and thus individual county organizations had to decide whether or not to assume their new authority. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork, I present an initial account of how staff and elected officials in one county made sense of their role as potential groundwater managers. By highlighting the lived experience of policy making processes during periods of organizational change, I illuminate the sometimes messy process and contested understandings attached to “sensible” and “rational” policy pathways.

Michael Roberts is a second year Ph.D. student in the Department of Environmental Conservation at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Adopting an ethnographic lens, Michael’s dissertation research examines inter-agency coordination and organizational behavior in the context of mandated groundwater governance in California. Michael’s prior research highlighted the lived experience of public participation in county planning processes. Michael holds a M.S. degree from the University of Massachusetts.

Ostrom Workshop
513 N. Park Ave
Bloomington, IN 47408

ostromworkshop.indiana.edu

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all Ostrom workshop presentations will be virtual until further notice. Join instantly using the link above. For questions, contact Allison Sturgeon (sturgeon@iu.edu)