Abstract: Administrative fragmentation among departments in local governments has been a critical public administration problem. In the Chinese context, water governance has historically suffered from administrative fragmentation, in which multiple agencies are tasked to manage similar policy areas, a phenomenon typically described as “multiple dragons govern water” (in Chinese: 九龙治水). This study investigates the political and administrative motivations for the administrative reform to address the functionally fragmented water management. Two approaches to address administrative fragmentation are investigated in this study: agency consolidation and network governance. This study first examines the motivation for local governments to form a consolidated water affairs bureau based on a national sample of 256 prefecture level cities during 2001 and 2010. In the second part of the study, I investigate the vertical and horizontal connections of local water agencies embedded in a policy network, with a case study of Dongguan City, Guangdong province.

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