



Applying knowledge to improve water quality

Summer 2003
PNWWATER 019

Pacific Northwest

Regional Water Program

A Partnership of USDA NIFA
& Land Grant Colleges and Universities

Building Capacity for Watershed Groups

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates there are more than 3,000 local watershed groups nationwide. The proliferation of these groups is changing the nature of environmental protection. These watershed groups are developed to provide their members a voice in decision-making processes and a responsibility in the management of these resources. The Pacific Northwest Water Quality Coordination Project is helping to build the skills and knowledge (i.e., capacity) of these citizens and watershed groups.

How will this help protect water quality?

Effective water quality protection occurs chiefly because of citizen action and involvement. Research in social psychology indicates that initiatives to promote behavior change are often most effective when they are carried out at the community level and involve direct contact with people. There is a growing understanding that programs which rely heavily or exclusively on media advertising can be effective in creating public awareness and understanding of issues related to sustainability, but are limited in their ability to foster behavior change.

Cooperative Extension utilizes its community contacts to enhance and empower citizens who wish to change their own environmental protection behavior and that of their communities. When citizens receive information, develop skills, and practice new behaviors, these actions will lead to better protection of water quality.

Example of activities to build capacity among watershed groups

Background: The EPA and Cooperative Extension, with other partners, sponsored a series of Regional Watershed Roundtables culminating in a national Watershed Forum in the summer of 2001, attended by delegates from every

region in the country. Four common needs developed as a result of the Forum: (1) access to funding; (2) increasing coordination among agencies; (3) improved access to information for all stakeholders and (4) ongoing coordination across regions and nationally.

As a result, the Pacific Northwest Water Quality Coordination Project has conducted several projects to help our region's watershed groups to build their capacity relative to the identified needs.

- ◆ For the period 2001-2003, Region 10 has led an effort to meet a variety of capacity building needs by designing and providing support for a watershed leadership institute. Watershed leaders have been identified and brought together to learn not only the technical aspects of watershed management, but also become skilled in the interpersonal and political forces that can make or break a watershed planning process. Outcomes of this effort include activities in Washington State to develop a center for consensus and public policy as well as a joint affiliation between WA Association of Counties and Washington State



University calling for local leadership training for elected officials and local government. EPA at the national level is also looking into this concept and is considering funding to establish it nationally.

- ◆ During 2002-2003, EPA funded workshops in all states of Region 10. These workshops were well received by watershed group members that attended.
- ◆ May of 2002, Extension produced a satellite downlink program that shared successful decision making techniques as presented by the watershed groups themselves. The interactive program brought many watershed groups together for this learning opportunity.



Pacific Northwest Regional Water Quality Coordination Project Partners

Land Grant Universities

Alaska

Cooperative Extension Service
Contact Fred Sorensen:
907-786-6311

<http://www.uaf.edu/ces/water/>

University Publications:

<http://www.alaska.edu/uaf/ces/publications/>

Idaho

University of Idaho
Cooperative Extension System
Contact Bob Mahler: 208-885-7025

<http://www.uidaho.edu/wq/wqhome.html>

University Publications:

<http://info.ag.uidaho.edu/Catalog/catalog.htm>

Oregon

Oregon State University
Extension Service
Contact Mike Gamroth: 541-737-3316

<http://extension.oregonstate.edu/>

University Publications:

<http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/>

Washington

Washington State University
WSU Extension
Contact Bob Simmons:

360-427-9670 ext. 690

<http://wawater.wsu.edu/>

University Publications:

<http://pubs.wsu.edu/>

Northwest Indian College
Contact Charlotte Clausing:
360-392-4319

cclausing@nwic.edu or

<http://www.nwic.edu/>

Water Resource Research Institutes

Water and Environmental Research
Center (Alaska)

<http://www.uaf.edu/water/>

Idaho Water Resources
Research Institute
<http://www.boise.uidaho.edu/>

Institute for Water and
Watersheds (Oregon)
<http://water.oregonstate.edu/>

State of Washington
Water Research Center
<http://www.swwrc.wsu.edu/>

Environmental Protection Agency

EPA, Region 10
The Pacific Northwest
<http://www.epa.gov/r10earth/>

Office of Research and Development,
Corvallis Laboratory
<http://www.epa.gov/wed/>

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The Project

Land Grant Universities, Water Research Institutes, and EPA Region 10 have formed a partnership to provide research and education to communities about protecting or restoring the quality of water resources. This partnership is being supported in part by the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA).

Our Goal and Approach

The goal of this Project is to provide leadership for water resources research, education, and outreach to help people, industry, and governments to prevent and solve current and emerging water quality and quantity problems. The approach to achieving this goal is for the Partners to develop a coordinated water quality effort based on, and strengthening, individual state programs.

Our Strengths

The Project promotes regional collaboration by acknowledging existing programs and successful efforts; assisting program gaps; identifying potential issues for cross-agency and private sector collaboration; and developing a clearinghouse of expertise and programs. In addition, the Project establishes or enhances partnerships with federal, state, and local environmental and water resource management agencies, such as by placing a University Liaison within the offices of EPA Region 10.

- ◆ Region 10 has contracted for a study of the perceived capacity building needs of watershed stakeholders. A report is expected by the end of 2003.
- ◆ March of 2003, Region 10 held a "train the trainer" program called *Tools to engage and build community support for salmon and water: Community Culture and a Sense of Place*. Representatives from EPA, local government, Tribes, Cooperative Extension and non-profit watershed groups attended. This training introduced an approach and methodology for identifying the common bonds between people's everyday concerns and environmental protection efforts.
- ◆ On a continuing basis, many Cooperative Extension programs have watershed volunteer training and management programs. In these programs, active community members learn the basics of watershed science and learn how to participate in their local watershed restoration and planning processes.

Find out more

The Pacific Northwest Water Quality Coordination Project is contributing to watershed protection through effective collaboration and innovation at the local and regional levels. To find out more about these Region 10 partnership efforts, contact Bevin Reid (206-553-1566 or reid.bevin@epa.gov) or Jan Seago (206-553-0038 or seago.jan@epa.gov).



National Water Quality Program Areas

The four land grant universities in the Pacific Northwest have aligned our water resource Extension and research efforts with eight themes of the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

1. Animal Waste Management
2. Drinking Water and Human Health
3. Environmental Restoration
4. Nutrient and Pesticide Management
5. Pollution Assessment and Prevention
6. Watershed Management
7. Water Conservation and Management
8. Water Policy and Economics

This material is based upon work supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under Agreement No. 2008-51130-04734.