Module 17 Options for Citizen Involvement

Introduction

In the previous modules of this guide many "ideas" were presented for short-course participants to act upon. In Part Five we bring the "Learn-Plan-Act" process to life by providing web sites and exemplary programs that are the next step for short-course participants. These opportunities should be discussed before the field program, during the lunch break on the field day as a debrief section, or during a follow-up session after the short-course is completed.

In this module participants will review: *Over 20 web sites and programs that can assist in acting upon water quality or monitoring issues, federal EPA drinking water source assessment information, debrief with short-course organizers, and evaluate the program.*

Options to Help You with Water Quality and Monitoring

A variety of programs can be used to get citizens involved in water quality monitoring, assessment, and protection. Following is a partial list of these programs:

Groundwater Guardian: 800-858-4844

The Groundwater Foundation supports, connects, and recognizes communities taking voluntary steps to protect local ground water supplies through its Groundwater Guardian program. Communities enter the program by forming a team of interested citizens, business, and agriculture representatives, educators, and local government representatives. The team plans, adopts, and implements Result Oriented Activities to earn Groundwater Guardian designation. Teams are encouraged to adopt activities that

are exciting, interactive, and easy to initiate. As activities are completed, the communities are encouraged to build on their early success by tackling projects that have wider impacts, involve more people, and/or are more complex. For more information contact the Groundwater Foundation at 1-800-858-4844 or guardian@groundwater.org or visit the Web site at www.groundwater.org.

Farm*A*Syst / Home*A*Syst: 608-262-0024

Farm*A*Syst and Home*A*Syst are two powerful tools communities and private well owners can use to involve individuals in pollution prevention. Farm*A*Syst and Home*A*Syst's action-oriented system of education promotes voluntary actions that can significantly reduce threats to drinking water. Through an assessment similar to a home energy audit, individuals use Farm*A*Syst and Home*A*Syst to discover conditions on their property that may threaten drinking water supplies. Homeowners, renters, and farmers learn how problems may originate in their own backyards. They can then make improvements to protect their family's health, property values, and their neighborhood environment. Together these individual actions contribute significantly to drinking water source protection. For more information contact the Farm*A*Syst / Home*A*Syst national office at 1-608-262-0024 or farmasyst@macc.wisc.edu or homeasyst@macc.wisc.edu or visit the Web sites at www.uwex.edu/farmasyst and www.uwex.edu/homeasyst.

Clean Water Action: 202-895-0420

Clean Water Action is a national citizens' organization working for clean, safe and affordable water, prevention of health-threatening pollution, creation of environmentally-safe jobs and businesses, and empowerment of people to make democracy work. Clean Water Action organizes strong grassroots groups, coalitions, and campaigns to protect our environment, health, economic well-being, and community quality of life. For more information contact Clean Water Action at 1-202-895-0420 or visit the Web site at www.cleanwateraction.org.

Walk Your Watershed: 800-666-0206

Everyone works and plays in a watershed, and everyone can help improve local water quality. Watershed festivals are an excellent way to educate people of all ages about their watershed and what they can do to protect it. A watershed festival celebrates the unique aspects of a given watershed through a gathering of educational activities, exhibits, and entertainment. It is an opportunity for stakeholders to learn how their actions can impact water quality throughout a watershed. A watershed festival can result in better water quality for your community, and it is also a chance to have fun. For more information contact the Water Environment Federation at 1-800-666-0206 or visit the Web site at www.wef.org.

Source Water Mentor Program: 540-788-3274

The Source Water Mentor Program recruits senior volunteers to serve as auxiliary technicians or mentors to help communities develop and implement drinking water protection programs. Senior volunteers are trained to work as teams to provide a broad range of assistance, including helping communities to progress through the five basic steps of protecting community drinking water supplies. More information about the Source Mentor Program can be found by calling 1-540-788-3274 or by visiting their Web site at www.easi.org.

Know Your Watershed: 765-494-9555

Know Your Watershed offers a variety of resources and strategies to educate citizens about their watershed. For more information contact the Know Your Watershed program at 1-765-494-9555 or kyw@ctic.purdue.edu or visit the Web site at www.ctic.purdue.edu/KYW.

GREEN: Global Rivers Environmental Education Network: 313-761-8142

GREEN's mission is to improve education through a global network that promotes watershed sustainability. It is a resource to schools and communities that wish to study their watershed and work to improve their quality of life. GREEN works closely with educational and environmental organizations, community groups, businesses, and government across the United States and Canada, and in over 130 countries around the globe to support local efforts in watershed education and sustainability. You can contact GREEN at 1-313-761-8142 by phone or 1-313-761-4951 by fax or visit the Web site at www.earthforce.org/green/.

The League of Women Voters: 202-429-1965

The League of Women Voters supports:

- water resource programs and policies that reflect the interrelationships of water quality, water quantity, groundwater and surface water and that address the potential depletion or pollution of water supplies;
- measures to reduce water pollution from direct point-source discharges and from indirect nonpoint sources;
- policies to achieve water quality essential for maintaining species diversity and populations of aquatic species, including measures to protect lakes, estuaries, wetlands, and in-stream flows; and
- stringent controls to protect the quality of current and potential drinking water supplies, including protection of watersheds for surface supplies and of recharge areas for groundwater.

More information from the League of Women Voters can be obtained by calling 1-202-429-1965 or by visiting their Web site at www.lwv.org/where/natural.html.

Unified Watershed Assessments

States and tribes have worked together with the public to identify those watersheds that do not meet water quality and other natural resource goals. These Unified Watershed Assessments represent the first coordinated statement of water quality priorities in the history of our clean water programs. For more information visit the Unified Watershed Assessment section on the Environmental Protection Agency Web site at www.epa.gov/owow/uwa/.

Watershed Assistance Grants

River Network has provided mini-grant under the Watershed Assistance Grant (WAG) program, supported by EPA. The grants will enable organizations to support local watershed coordinators, build watershed partnerships and advance watershed restoration efforts. The grants will support short-term organizational development projects; amounts range from $1,320 to $30,000. If you have further questions about WAG, please e-mail them at wag@rivernetwork.org or visit the Web site at www.rivernetwork.org/howwecanhelp/howwag.cfm.

Adopt Your Watershed

The Adopt Your Watershed campaign challenges thousands of citizens and organizations to join federal agencies and others who are working to protect valuable rivers, streams, wetlands, lakes, ground water, and estuaries. To encourage stewardship of the nation's water resources, EPA is building a voluntary, national catalogue of organizations involved in protecting local water bodies, including formal watershed alliances, local groups, and schools that conduct activities such as volunteer monitoring, cleanups, and restoration projects. More information can be found at the Adopt Your Watershed Web site www.epa.gov/adopt/.

National Watershed Awards

The Action Plan calls for federal agencies to help expand watershed awards. In that spirit, CF Industries honored three communities and one corporation in their annual National Watershed Awards in 1999. Recipients were recognized for innovative local partnerships that seek to improve water quality by balancing a watershed's environmental and economic needs. You can receive more information about the National Watershed Awards by email at

contact@cfindustries.com or by visiting the Web site at www.cfindustries.com/commrelations/watershed/watershed.htm.

Inventory of Watershed Training Programs

The Inventory of Watershed Training Courses is developed to help readers find training/educational opportunities on watershed protection. This document provides one-page summaries of 180 watershed-related training courses offered by federal and state agencies, as well as resource professionals in the private sector. More information is at the Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Wetlands, Oceans, Watersheds Web site www.epa.gov/owow/watershed/wacademy/catalog.html.

Project Wet

The goal of Project WET is to facilitate and promote awareness, appreciation, knowledge, and stewardship of water resources through the development and dissemination of classroom-ready teaching aids and through the establishment of state and internationally sponsored Project WET programs. Project WET believes:

- water moves through living and nonliving systems and binds them together in a complex web of life;
- water of sufficient quality and quantity is important for all water users (energy producers, farmers, ranchers, fish, wildlife, manufacturers, recreationists, and rural and urban dwellers);
- sustainable water management is crucial for providing tomorrows children with social and economic stability in a healthy environment; and
- awareness of and respect for water resources can encourage a personal, lifelong commitment of responsibility and positive community participation.

Visit the Web site at http://www.montana.edu/wwwwet.

Beach Watch Program

EPA has initiated a new Beach Watch Program to help states, tribes, and local governments more effectively monitor and address public health risks posed by contaminated beach water. Government agencies at all levels will work together to strengthen beach water quality standards and testing methods. EPA will improve laboratory test methods for detecting contaminants in beach water, invest additional resources in testing methods research, and help state, tribes, and local governments develop routine water quality monitoring programs. An Internet site makes available information about beach water quality and potential health risks. More information is at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Water, Office of Science and Technology Web site www.epa.gov/ost/beaches/.

The Watershed Information Network

The Watershed Information Network (WIN) is an Internet-based tool that can be used to find and exchange environmental information needed in activities to sustain and restore water quality. WIN provides data on water quality and specific watersheds as well as information on how to network with others, what resources are available, how to start a watershed group, the condition of watersheds, and who is at work in watersheds. More information can be found at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Web site www.epa.gov/win/.

Fish Consumption Advisories

EPA sent letters concerning fish consumption advisories to the heads of all State Environmental Agencies, State Public Health Agencies, and Natural Resource Management Agencies, and to the leaders of all tribes that operate the national water program. The letters are the next step in implementing the Action Plan's goal to have nationally consistent processes for monitoring fish tissue and communicating fish consumption advisories. The letters emphasize the importance of a risk-based fish consumption advisory program for protecting public health, especially the health of women of childbearing age, children, and people who for economic or cultural reasons eat large amounts of locally-caught fish. The letters ask the states and tribes to review their existing fish advisory program and compare it to the EPA's National Guidance on Fish Consumption Advisories. More information can be found at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Water Web site www.epa.gov/ost/fish/.

Multilingual Brochures on Fish Consumption

The brochure "Should I eat the fish I catch? A Guide to Healthy Eating of the Fish I Catch," was developed by EPA and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, United States Public Health Service. The brochures are available in English, Spanish, and Hmong. More information can be found at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Water Web site www.epa.gov/ost/fish/brochure.html.

National Commercial Shellfish Resources

A report and CD-ROM on the status of national shellfish bed conditions and the factors leading to harvest limitations was released in 1999. The national shellfish registry assessed more that 4,000 shellfish growing areas around the country and identified measures needed to reopen closed or restricted shellfish beds. More information is at the Web site www-orca.nos.noaa.gov/projects/95register/.

Beach Action Plan

The Beach Action Plan is a multi-year strategy released in March, 1999, for reducing the risks of infection to recreational water users through improved water quality programs, risk communication, and scientific advances. It recognizes that authorities need the flexibility to respond to local and regional variations in factors such as pollution sources and climate that affect recreational waters. The Beach Action Plan describes activities to accomplish two primary objectives: to enable consistent management of recreational water quality programs, and to improve the science that supports recreational water monitoring programs. More information is at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Water, Office of Science and Technology Web site www.epa.gov/ost/beaches/.

Stream Corridor Restoration Handbook

This document is a result of an unprecedented cooperative effort among fifteen federal agencies and partners to produce a common reference on stream corridor restoration. It responds to a growing national and international public interest in restoring stream corridors. This document encapsulates the rapidly expanding body of knowledge related to stream corridors and their restoration. It includes the full range of possibilities facing restoration practitioners, including no action or passive approaches, partial intervention for assisted recovery, and substantial intervention for managed recovery. More information may be found at the Web site www.usda.gov/stream_restoration/.

Stream Corridor Restoration Demonstration Projects

Twelve demonstration project sites were designated in 1999 to showcase modern stream corridor restoration technologies. The sites represent a variety of geographic location and conditions, with projects designed to improve multi-stakeholder partnerships, local communities, and the environment. More information may be found at the Web site www.epa.gov/owow/showcase/.

For more information about drinking water source assessment and protection contact:

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water. Web site: www.epa.gov/safewater
- Safe Drinking Water Hotline: 800-426-4791
- National Drinking Water Clearing House: 800-624-8301 or 304-293-4191
- Your regional EPA office (obtain via Safe Drinking Water Hotline)
- Your state EPA office (obtain via Safe Drinking Water Hotline)
- Your local utility and/or health department (locate on water bill or in the government pages of the telephone book)

Discussion Points

- What other programs currently exist that may help citizens in your community get involved in the water quality monitoring, assessment, and protection process?

- Which of the programs that we reviewed best fits your community and would support future "Learn-Plan-Act" processes to benefit local water quality.

Journal and Evaluation

In your journal write down three of the Citizen Involvement Programs that are most interesting to you and describe why they might work in your community. Check out the web sites for these programs or interview a representative by phone.

Links and References

Protecting Your Groundwater: Educating for Action (1994) League of Women Voters Education Fund, 1730 M. Street NW, Washington, DC 20036.

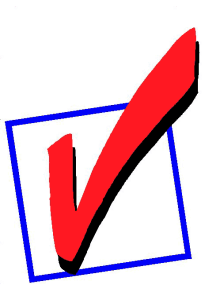
Project WET Curriculum and Activity Guide (1995) Western Regional Environmental Education Council, 4014 Chatham Lane, Houston, TX 77027.

Short-course Presenters

Part Five is the wrap up of the Learn-Plan-Act aspect of water quality and monitoring for participants. This short-course launches them into an opportunity to put their knowledge to work. When they review their journals, or look at the Guide they hopefully will be able to find the ideas that sparked their interest during this short-course. Presenters in a debrief section need to encourage the participants to act on the ideas and plant some seeds for further investigation. This section presents a selection of programs that can improve water quality in each community.

In presenting this module three items need to be accomplished: a debrief of the short-course; an invitation to action; and the completion or distribution of the post-test. Set out an agenda for future programs that will build upon what participants have learned. This is the time to discuss the planned follow-up activities, mailing or e-mailing lists related to water quality, and any of the national programs that could work in your community with volunteer assistance. This debrief is very important.

At some pilot sites the post-test was given at the conclusion of this module, while in others its was distributed with postage paid self-addressed envelopes. The post-test is an important teaching tool in that it gives each participant a chance to revisit what they have learned and will provide organizers with evaluation information. Completion certificates can also be discussed at this time. At the pilot sites certificates were promised in return for the completed post-tests.



Tips for Short-course Presenters

Contact the organizations listed above and obtain resources to share with the workshop participants. Capitalize on their enthusiasm and get involved right away!