
Module 8 Addressing Key Local Water Concerns

Introduction

We can all make a difference in our community by taking well thought out and carefully planned actions. But it is first important to understand the facts and different points of view surrounding a chosen water resource concern.

This module builds upon the water resource concern or issue that was chosen in Part 1. It prepares participants to fully examine water resource concerns in their own community. Through a process of questioning facts, determining points of view, collecting opinions, and summarizing data community members can be empowered to action.

In this module participants will explore selected water quality issues at a greater depth.



Issues Investigation

Human problems arise when a situation or condition exists in which someone or something is threatened. **Water quality concerns** exist when people become aware that some part of the environment is changing, usually in a negative way or a way that they do not like. Water quality problems become **issues** when two or more people or groups of people disagree about the scope, seriousness, or the appropriate solution to a problem.

The position taken by a person on an issue is directly related to personal beliefs and values. **Beliefs** are ideas that a person believes are true, even though in reality they may

not be true. Often a person's beliefs are strongly related to his or her values. A **value** is the comparative worth a person places on something. Each individual has personal values that develop in response to past experiences. Values may involve money, beauty, prestige, or other things. Beliefs and values help people make decisions and choices when the possible answers are not clearly right or wrong. The following definitions will aid you in preparing to participate in water quality issues you have selected to explore at greater depth.

Opinions: are based on logic, emotions, or philosophy. Often opinions can be based on misinformation.

Issues investigation: identify and examine opinions, beliefs, values, facts, concerns, and solutions related to a specific issue then interpret these findings by making conclusions, inferences, and recommendations.

Preservation: is the maintenance of natural systems and the plant and animal communities that thrive in them in a sustainable condition.

Conservation: is the protection and careful use of natural resources such as water, air, land, soil, and plants.

Stewardship: is the sustainable management and use of natural resources from generation to generation.

Sustainable ethic: is a mind set that views humans as a part of nature and earth as a limited supply of resources, which must be carefully managed to prevent irreparable damage.



Beliefs & Values

Personal beliefs (important ideas) and values (worth placed on things) affect the way people respond to environmental problems and shape the attitudes people hold in relation to the problem. Opinions are based on logic, emotions, or philosophy. Often opinions can be based on misinformation.

Water quality issues reflect differing human values. In fact, if there weren't different sets of values, there would not be any issues. If there weren't people who value clean water, there would be little need for health officials (and others) to be concerned about the pollution of streams, lakes, or rivers. Some of the values that may be tied up in opinions about water resource concerns or ideas are listed below:

- ▶ **Aesthetics:** the appreciation of form, composition, and color through the human senses.
- ▶ **Economics:** the use and exchange of money, materials, and/or services.
- ▶ **Ecology:** the understanding of natural systems.
- ▶ **Education:** the collection, use, and communication of knowledge.
- ▶ **Egocentrism:** a focus on self-centered needs and fulfillment.
- ▶ **Environment:** human activities in terms of quality of natural resources, e.g., plant and animal species, air, water, soil, etc.
- ▶ **Ethics/Morality:** present and future human responsibilities, rights and wrongs, and ethical standards.
- ▶ **Ethnocentrism:** a focus on the fulfillment of ethnic/cultural goals.
- ▶ **Health:** the maintenance of positive human physiological conditions.
- ▶ **Law:** a binding custom or practice of a community; the control brought about by the enforcement of such law.

- ▶ **Politics:** the activities, functions, and policies of governments and their agents.
- ▶ **Recreation:** human leisure activities.
- ▶ **Religion:** belief systems based on faith or dogma.
- ▶ **Science:** the process of empirical research; knowledge gained by systematic study.
- ▶ **Society:** shared human empathy, feelings, and status.



▶ *Discussion Points*

- ❖ Which facts do you question and why is this a concern for you?
- ❖ Are there any other points of view that could be considered on the issue that we examined in depth? Why would it be important to gather additional data on this water issue or concern?
- ❖ Who can fairly summarize data collected by community members so that it would be understood as true and authentic? Who can you trust in organizing water resources data?
- ❖ Identify the additional types and quality of data that would need to be collected in order to make a carefully thought out plan of action on the issue we discussed.



▶ *Major Points to Remember*

- ❖ Understanding water quality concerns requires all participants to carefully and thoroughly examine differing aspects surrounding the selected problem.
- ❖ Water quality problems become **issues** when two or more people or groups of people disagree about the scope, seriousness, or the appropriate solution to a problem.

- ❖ The position taken by a person on an issue is directly related to personal beliefs and values. **Beliefs** are ideas that a person believes are true, even though in reality they may not be true. Often a person's beliefs are strongly related to his or her values. A **value** is the comparative worth a person places on something.
- ❖ Each water quality issue and community is unique. Local solutions can be found that best meet identified needs when issues are carefully examined.



▶ *Journal and Evaluation*

In your journal describe the difference between a fact and an opinion in words or drawings. List some facts and opinions that you just learned, explain why the confusion takes place, or write some new fact or opinion statements that make the issue more clear and are based on logic, emotions, or philosophy. Often opinions can be based on misinformation.



▶ *Additional Activities*

- ❖ Role-play one or more of the water quality issues that a community is facing or might face in the year 2020. Have each participant react to two or more proposed solutions to the same concern or issue. Debrief the activity with a roundtable discussion by all participants.
- ❖ Prepare a dream list during a brainstorming session about water quality issues. Have the participants identify barriers, solutions, and those affected by proposed community water quality actions.

- ❖ Develop an action plan for water quality monitoring (identify the issue, identify the action to take, identify community resource people, determine funding needs, develop a timeline and make assignments, publicize the action, and do it!)



▶ *Ideas for Water Quality and Monitoring Action*

- ❖ Hold a water festival and invite the community to raise awareness about their water resource.
- ❖ Design a brochure with information on water recycling and reuse opportunities.
- ❖ Offer to help the local school in conducting water monitoring training or programs with local teachers.
- ❖ Conduct a public awareness campaign on ways to improve water quality in your community.
- ❖ Offer to assist with ongoing water monitoring efforts conducted by local, tribal, state, or federal agencies.



▶ *Links and References*

Shuman, D. et.al. (2000) Environmental Management Power: Waste Management Curriculum, Idaho Water Resources Research Institute, Moscow, ID.



▶ *Tips for Short-course Presenters*

- ❖ **Addressing Key Local Water Concerns** assumes that participants have completed an issue identification activity at the beginning of the short-course. Facilitators need to collect and present as much data as can be found on the specific issue identified by the group of learners. By using local resources, the Internet, the library, local county and city offices, and tribal, state and federal agencies, data can be pulled

together to support a sharing type program. Findings can be distributed to groups of learners so that they discover answers to their own questions or invited speakers, who can address the issues, can be brought in. Be sure and close the module with the question: **Do we have enough information to make an informed decision on this water quality issue?** The answer, of course is, **No**, and that further investigation will be needed based upon commonly identified needs and goals. This can lay a foundation for planned or ongoing water monitoring programs or assessment efforts.



Optional Training Materials

- ❖ Watershed Stewardship: A Learning Guide (1999) EM8714, OSU Extension and Experiment Station Communications, 422 Kerr Administration. Corvallis, OR 97331-2119
- ❖ Experiencing Water Resources: A Guide to Your River Basin Misc0172, WSU Cooperative Extension Publications Office, Cooper Publications Building, Pullman, WA 99164-5912

