



Applying knowledge to improve water quality

Pacific Northwest

Regional Water Program

A Partnership of USDA CSREES
& Land Grant Colleges and Universities

Winter 2004
PNWWATER 032

Citizens Take Part in Water Stewardship



The majority of residents of the Pacific Northwest have made an effort to conserve household water use and correctly dispose of spent household chemicals. Almost 80 percent of Pacific Northwest residents use at least one water saving appliance in their home (Table 1). Over two-thirds of the region's residents also report that they have made an effort to reduce their overall household water use. Sixty percent of residents have reduced the amount of water and/or chemicals they use in their yard in the past 10 years. Forty-three percent of residents report that they use less water washing their car today compared to 10 years ago. Over 60 percent of residents also report that they protect water quality by recycling used motor oil and correctly dispose of household chemicals. Female respondents were more likely than males to have participated in water conservation efforts.

Table 1. Water conservation and preservation efforts identified by residents of Alaska, Idaho, Oregon and Washington in the water issues survey.

| Effort | Percentage of respondents |
|--|---------------------------|
| Use of a water saving appliance | 78 |
| Reduced household water use | 68 |
| Reduced water and/or chemical use in yards | 60 |
| Conserving water when washing car | 43 |
| Recycle used motor oil | 62 |
| Correctly dispose of chemicals | 69 |



One-third of the residents of the Pacific Northwest have participated in environmental activities more than once (Table 2). Forty-four percent of residents have never participated in an environmental activity. Residents that have attended college for at least two years are more than twice as likely to have participated in an environmental activity.



The PNW Water Survey

A 50-question survey was developed by the Pacific Northwest water quality team to document public awareness, aptitudes, attitudes and actions toward water quality in Alaska, Idaho, Oregon and Washington. Demographic data about the survey respondents were also collected. This statistically designed survey was completed by over 50 percent of the 1,800 residents who were solicited for this study. Several questions in this survey dealt with peoples' actions toward water resources. The sampling error of these survey questions was +/- 3 percent.



Pacific Northwest Regional Water Quality Coordination Project Partners

Land Grant Universities

Alaska

Cooperative Extension Service

Contact Fred Sorensen:
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<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.html>

Oregon

Oregon State University

Extension Service

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University Publications:

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Washington

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WSU Extension

Contact Bob Simmons:

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University Publications:

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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,

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<http://www.epa.gov/wed/>

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Table 2. Participation frequency in environmental activities by residents of Alaska, Idaho, Oregon and Washington in the water issues survey.

| Activity frequency | Percentage of respondents |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Yes, often | 5 |
| Yes, more than once | 28 |
| Yes, once | 14 |
| I'm not sure | 8 |
| No, never | 44 |

First hand observation appears to have the greatest impact on how a resident of the region views an environmental issue (Table 3). Almost 60 percent of the region's residents report that personal conversations have an important influence on how they view an environmental issue. News coverage of an environmental issue has influenced the views of almost half of adults in the Pacific Northwest. Classes, presentations and financial considerations have influenced environmental views by 38 percent of respondents. Public meetings have influenced 27 percent of respondents. Speeches by elected officials had the least impact as only 11 percent of respondents reported being influenced in this manner.

Table 3. The influence of media, educational opportunities and observation on the changing opinions about environmental issues based on the water issues survey.

| Resulted in opinion change | Percent of respondents |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| Observation | 75 |
| Conversations | 59 |
| News coverage | 49 |
| Classes / presentations | 38 |
| Financial considerations | 38 |
| Attending public meetings | 27 |
| Speech by elected official | 11 |

The data presented in this update shows that people in the Pacific Northwest have and are taking actions to conserve and protect their water resources.



CSREES is the Cooperative States Research, Education, and Extension Service, a sub-agency of the United States Department of Agriculture, and is the federal partner in this water quality program.