Applying knowledge to improve water quality

Pacific Northwest Regional Water Program

A Partnership of USDA NIFA & Land Grant Colleges and Universities

Summer 2007
PNWWATER 114

6th Annual Satellite Conference:

Targeted Watershed Initiative Grants: Pacific Northwest Success Stories

Targeted Watershed Grants: Successes in the Pacific Northwest is the sixth in the award winning Watershed Issues Series, and the fourth that focuses on the work being done in the region by our neighbors. Please check with your local Cooperative Extension office to see if they are available October 17 to host a viewing of this program. For further information, please contact Jan Seago at seago.jan@epa.gov or 206-553-0038.

Returning to the Pacific Northwest, the Watershed Issues Series gives a glimpse into the workings of three basin-wide partnerships that are making a difference in the water quality of their streams. Dedicated landowners, fishermen, timber owners, and ranchers have met at tables in Montana, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington to find their common interests and are working toward sustainable industries and habitat futures.

The Siuslaw River historically was the channel that moved logs from some of the heaviest logged forests in the west. Early settlers had drained, ditched, and diked riverside lowlands for farm plots. This same river had one of the largest populations of returning Chinook salmon and Lamprey eels in the lower 48. How could all of these activities work together and maintain the health of spawning habitat? That was the question that we asked everyone.

Fascinating new metrics for measuring habitat health are being investigated. Mark your calendars now, so you do not miss this exciting search for a sustainable Siuslaw.

The Clark Fork River watershed is huge; 26,000 square miles of Idaho and Montana are drained into the river that feeds Lake Pend Oreille and the Pend Oreille River into Washington then flows north to meet the Columbia River in British Columbia. Tri-State Water Quality Council has gathered groups from the Blackfoot, Bitterroot, and Flathead Rivers that are working in their own sub-watersheds, to make the entire river system better.

You will meet one rancher who bought 2,000 acres for conservation. An artesian spring on the land had been degraded through unwise grazing practices. That spring runs clear and cool again and the adjacent wetland is healthy and full of wildlife. Reserve a seat on October 17 to see how this far-flung partnership works to return habitat for trout and a flyway stop over for migrating birds.

Washington State University

Oregon State University OSU

University of Idaho
A LEGACY OF LEADING

Northwest Indian College

UAF University of Alaska Fairbanks

United States Environmental Protection Agency

National Institute of Food and Agriculture
USDA

Pacific Northwest Regional Water Quality Coordination Project Partners

Land Grant Universities

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907-786-6311
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University Publications:
http://www.alaska.edu/uaf/ces/publications/

Idaho
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Contact Bob Mahler: 208-885-7025
http://www.uidaho.edu/wq/wqhome.html
University Publications:
http://info.ag.uidaho.edu/Catalog/catalog.htm

Oregon
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Contact Mike Gamroth: 541-737-3316
http://extension.oregonstate.edu/
University Publications:
http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/

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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, 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, indivudual 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.

Skagit River is the lifeline for Salmon and eels, supports diversified farming, and brings Tribal fisherman and farmers to the table to plan restoration projects that compliment the two lifeways. This area was ditched and diked to keep fields dry for crops, beginning in the late 1800s. Tidegates hold Puget Sound waters from inundating fields leaving little of the estuary available for salmon rearing grounds. Renovating tidegate construction to allow tides to enter former field areas is underway. In one instance, dikes and ditches are being rerouted to open an unproductive farm parcel to tidal influence, returning it to estuary. Do not miss the October 17th airing of this and the other accounts of partnership building and habitat restoration.

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

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