



Applying knowledge to improve water quality

Pacific Northwest

Regional Water Program

A Partnership of USDA CSREES
& Land Grant Colleges and Universities

Fall 2007
PNWWATER 117

2007 Survey Results:

Residents Work to Improve Water Resources

The Pacific Northwest Water Quality team just completed our second survey (the first was in 2002) to document public awareness, aptitudes, attitudes, and actions taken toward water resource issues in Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. This mail-based survey was completed by 1,012 of the 1,800 residents who were randomly chosen to take part in this effort. We were especially interested in how people have responded to water quantity and water quality issues in the region over the last five years. Consequently, this update shares information about actions people have taken to mitigate water quality and quantity concerns in the region.



Addressing Water Quantity Issues

The majority of Pacific Northwest residents have taken action to address water quantity issues during the last five years. Based on the 2007 Water Issues Survey, almost 59 percent of residents indicated that they bought or installed a water saving device in their primary residence. This is an impressive result considering that many people had already installed water saving devices prior to 2002.

Forty-six percent of respondents have changed the way they water their yards. Some planted plantings that require less water in their landscapes, while others installed drip irrigation systems. Many people just simply changed when and how often they water their landscaping to improve water use efficiency. Almost 43 percent of residents reported changes in how water is used in the home. Almost one-third of residents reported that they have changed how their motor vehicle is washed, resulting in a net savings of water.

The following are actions taken by Pacific Northwest residents in the last five years to address water quantity issues.

Home water quantity action	Percent doing
Bought or installed a water-saving appliance or device	59
Changed the way the yard is landscaped; when and how often it is watered	46
Changed how water is used in the home	43
Changed how vehicle is washed	30
No actions taken	18

Less than 18 percent of the region's residents reported that they took no actions to address water quantity concerns in the region. It is promising that over four out of five residents of Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington have proactively addressed water quantity issues since 2002.



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.html>

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 Dan Burns:
 360-392-4328

dburns@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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Addressing Water Quality Issues

A majority of Pacific Northwest residents have also taken actions to address water quality issues at the residence level in the last five years. Over 46 percent of survey respondents reported that they have chosen to dispose of household chemicals or yard waste at an approved facility or during a special trash pickup, instead of dumping them down the drain or including them with general trash. Almost one-third of the region's residents have changed the way they use pesticides and/or fertilizers in the last five years to protect water quality.

The percentage of people who changed how they deal with motor oil and other vehicle fluids (29 percent) may seem low; however, most people have been correctly disposing of these fluids (through commercial dealers) prior to 2002.

The percentages of people who have pumped their septic system (18.2 percent) and tested their drinking water (13.3 percent) also appears low. However, less than 30 percent of the region's residents are served by septic systems and private wells. Consequently, the majority of affected residents have taken the appropriate actions needed to protect water quality.

The following are actions taken by Pacific Northwest residents in the last five years to address water quality issues.

Home water quality action	Percent doing
Chosen to dispose of household chemicals or yard waste at an approved facility or during a special trash pickup, instead of dumping them down the drain or including them with the general trash	46
Changed use of pesticides, fertilizers, or other chemicals	31
Changed how motor oil and other vehicle fluids are dealt with	29
No actions taken	26
Pumped septic system	18
Tested drinking water	13

A little more than a quarter (26 percent) of the residents of the Pacific Northwest have taken no actions in the last five years to protect water quality. In general, the majority of citizens of the Pacific Northwest have been proactive toward water quality and water quantity issues on a personal basis in the last five years. This proactive stance shows that citizens of the region place a high value on their water resources.



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 Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension System.

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

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.