



Applying knowledge to improve water quality

Pacific Northwest

Regional Water Program

A Partnership of USDA CSREES
& Land Grant Colleges and Universities

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2007 Citizen Survey Results:

Priority Water Issues in the Pacific Northwest

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 prioritized water resource issues in the region. Consequently, this update shares information about importance people place on 10 different water resource issues in the region. It is interesting to note that residents of Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington share very similar views when prioritizing water resource issues.



As part of the water attitude portion of the 2007 survey, residents were asked about 10 specific regional water issues. Respondents were asked to label each water issue as not important, somewhat important, very important, extremely important, or having no opinion. The sampling error of the survey was +/- 3 percent.

When the *very important* and *extremely important* responses were added together a majority of respondents in 2007 considered nine of the ten issues as having *high priority* and will be described as such throughout this newsletter. Over 90 percent of the respondents considered clean drinking water, clean rivers, and clean groundwater as high priority (Table 1). Seventy-seven percent of the 2007 respondents indicated that having enough water for agriculture was high priority despite the fact that over 85 percent of Pacific Northwest residents live in urban areas.

Table 1. The percent of survey respondents living in Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington that ranked the following issues as very or extremely important in 2002 and 2007.

Issue	Very or extremely important		
	2007	2002	Change
Clean drinking water	99	99	--
Clean rivers	94	94	--
Clean groundwater	93	93	--
Water for agriculture	77	84	-7
Prevention of salmon extinction	74	69	+5
Loss of wetlands (wildlife habitat)	73	69	+4
Watershed restoration	72	68	+4
Water for power generation	71	72	-1
Water for economic development	65	70	-5
Water for recreation	49	58	-9



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/>

For more information contact
Jan Seago at 206-553-0038 or
seago.jan@epa.gov

Over two-thirds of Pacific Northwest residents in 2007 indicated that prevention of salmon extinction, loss of wetlands, watershed restoration, and water for power generation were high priority items (Table 1). Water for economic development was considered high priority by almost two-thirds of respondents, while slightly less than 50 percent of people who completed the survey considered water for recreation a high priority item.

When the 2007 and 2002 survey responses are compared it is obvious that water priorities in the region have changed very little over the past five years (Table 1). The three highest priority issues (clean drinking water, clean rivers, clean groundwater) were rated identically in both surveys. Using the value of four percent as a statistically significant level of change between the 2002 and 2007 surveys, prevention of salmon extinction, loss of wetlands, and watershed restoration have become more important to the public in the Pacific Northwest. Conversely, water for agriculture, water for economic development, and water for recreation have become less important today compared to 2002.

Water for agriculture has probably become less important because the demographic shift toward urbanization has continued to accelerate in the last five years. Conversely, as the region has become increasingly urbanized water for recreation has become less important to a larger percentage of the region's residents.

The demographic factors of state of residence, race, occupation, educational level, and length of residence in the region did not impact how people viewed water issues; however, gender and age did influence answers to several of the water issues. Based on this survey, females were more likely to place a high priority rating on seven of the ten water issues contained in the survey. Younger respondents were more likely to consider loss of wetlands, prevention of salmon extinction, watershed restoration, and water for recreation as high priority issues than respondents older than age 50.

The results of the 2007 version of the Pacific Northwest Water Issues Survey are important because they show that water resource issues are very important to the public. Based on this survey, water resource issues are as important today as they were five years ago.



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.

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

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.