



Applying knowledge to improve water quality

Pacific Northwest

Regional Water Program

A Partnership of USDA NIFA
& Land Grant Colleges and Universities

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PNWWATER 148

Changing Public Behavior:

Increasing Citizen Involvement Using Target Audience Information

The Pacific Northwest Regional Water Quality Program sponsored a pilot workshop on “Changing Public Behavior” on September 24, 2008 at the Washington State University Research and Extension Center. This workshop was part of the Changing Public Behavior National Facilitation Project to improve citizen involvement in environmental stewardship. It was one of several national pilot workshops led by the University of Wisconsin Extension that is testing innovative techniques and resources for building educator skills.

During the workshop, Extension educators focused on current research, theories, and approaches to increasing citizen involvement including:

- ◆ Planning to change public behavior
- ◆ Analysing a situation
- ◆ Identifying target audiences
- ◆ Social assessment tools and uses
- ◆ Selecting target behaviors and outreach techniques
- ◆ Participatory actions to change public behavior
- ◆ Water Outreach web site resources
- ◆ Monitor



A pre-workshop needs assessment of workshop participants indicated that participants were adults who were educating volunteers, landowners, homeowners, government agencies, and students in their communities. Participants wanted to focus on water management topics including landscape management, lawn care, pesticide and fertilizer reduction, stormwater runoff, riparian restoration, home and garden water conservation, and waste management. The highest interest was in developing their social assessment and educator skills in the areas of: 1) selecting and applying a data gathering or social assessment procedure, 2) initiating a dialogue with target audiences and stakeholders, 3) using target audience information to assess the potential for behavior change, 4) developing and implementing outreach activities that influence behaviors, and 5) monitoring, evaluating, and sharing results.

University of Wisconsin workshop leaders introduced the National Extension Water Outreach Education Project. This Water Outreach Education Project is a collaboration of USDA CSREES and other public and private clean and safe water partners interested in answering the question: “Education and communication are important environmental management tools, but how do we do it well?” Whether planning a new outreach effort or revitalizing an existing one, incorporating best education practices (BEPs) into water management strategies is critical for achieving success. Extensive efforts have been put in to developing resources for educators on The Water Outreach web site at: <http://wateroutreach.uwex.edu>.



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.htm>

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 Charlotte Clausing:
360-392-4319

cclausing@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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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, individual 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.

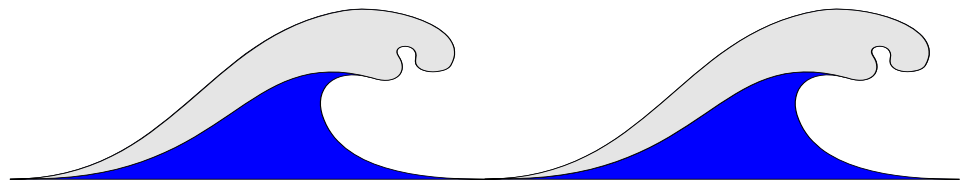
Web site resources help educators to:

- ◆ Connect the situation with the people
- ◆ Choose achievable goals
- ◆ Select relevant outreach techniques
- ◆ Get measurable results

Specific educator tools include: 1) Best Education Practices Decision Tree 2) Behavior Change Planning Tool, 3) Logic Model, and 4) Facilitation Skills.

Research supports that there is a human or social dimension to environmental problems, and that outreach efforts can only be truly successful to the extent that they are geared towards changing those characteristics of communities that are contributing towards problem behaviors. One of the effective approaches to behavior change is through "social marketing." Social marketing uses marketing principles and techniques to influence target audiences to voluntarily accept, reject, modify, or abandon a behavior for the benefit of individuals, groups, or society as a whole.

Several very successful Extension programs are based on social marketing techniques, including the Washington State University Extension (WSU) Shore Stewards. WSU Shore Stewards is regionalized to seven counties throughout Puget Sound and conducted a 2007 survey indicating significant behavior changes among participants.



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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