



2007 Report: Great Lakes Radio Consortium's *The Environment Report* Brings "The Great Coast" to Millions

GREAT LAKES
REGION



National Themes:

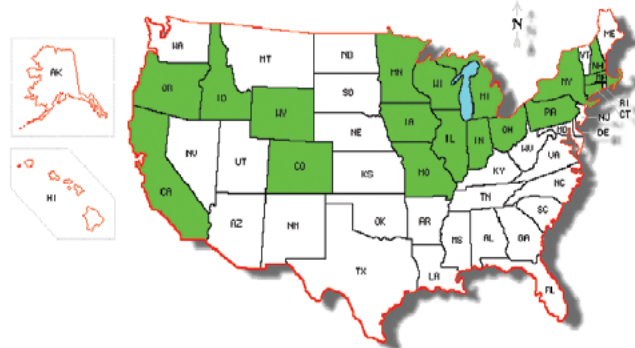
Conservation and Agricultural Water Management
Watershed Management

Project Description

The Environment Report, a Great Lakes Radio Consortium (GLRC) production at Michigan Radio, creates a free, weekly 29-minute satellite news feed of environmental reports that is used by more than 160 public radio stations in 18 states (see map). Because of the size and demographic makeup of the public radio audience, *The Environment Report* is uniquely positioned to inform the American public about land use and water quality. These public radio listeners come from a cross-section of political beliefs and are among America's most educated, most influential, and most civic-minded individuals. As these listeners learn about the relationship between water quality and agriculture through high-quality journalism, they are able to make informed decisions with respect to the environment.

Under its most recent grant from the United States Department of Agriculture, the staff at *The Environment Report* is producing and distributing 120 public radio stories focused on the dynamic relationship between the agricultural sector and water quality in the Great Lakes watershed and in other watersheds in the eight Great Lakes states and beyond. The ultimate goal of these reports is to educate policy makers, farmers, landowners, community leaders, and the general public about the relationship of agricultural policies and actions to regional water quality.

The reports are also posted on *The Environment Report's* website (<http://www.environmentreport.org>) and packaged in two weekly podcasts. Each week, 570,900 listeners throughout the country hear *Environment Report* stories (Radio Research Consortium Fall 2006 National Estimates).



States in green have member stations. *The Environment Report* is heard on 160 public radio stations in 16 states.

PROJECT CONTACTS

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PROJECT PARTNERS

Illinois Farm Bureau

National Public Radio

Partners include over 160 radio stations in 18 states. Please visit www.environmentreport.org for the most recent station list and for story archives and links.

For more information about the Great Lakes Regional Water Program, please contact:

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Outcomes

Under the previous USDA grant held by *The Environment Report*, comparative surveys (in 2002 and 2004) by the independent firm Market Trends Research showed:

- a 14 percent increase in the number of listeners who considered themselves well-informed about environmental issues; and
- listeners reported greater awareness of the following issues: loss of farmland due to urban sprawl, the effect of pesticides on water quality, the effect of fertilizer or nitrogen on water quality, and the effect of animal feed operations on water quality.

During the current USDA funded project, *The Environment Report* is expanding its evaluation of listener knowledge and attitudes. An initial phone survey has been completed and focus groups have been held. A comparison phone survey will take place this year (2008). Focus group participants reported that they were likely to take some type of action after hearing the reports. These actions ranged from changes in shopping habits, contacting government representatives, seeking out more information, and sparking more conversation with family and friends. Advisory Committee member John Hawkins of the Illinois Farm Bureau has praised *The Environment Report's* work, saying, "I'm always impressed by the quality and depth of the news reports produced. I hear them regularly on several NPR affiliates across Illinois during my morning commute and travels. The stories are usually topical and very current and give listeners a good picture of what's happening in agriculture these days."



Reporter Rebecca Williams profiled this farm in rural Iowa in her story "Farmers Respond to Peer Pressure." Photo by Rebecca Williams.

The Environment Report continues to expand its efforts to reach more people. More content and features have been added to the website. As a result, the web audience has more than doubled in the last year alone. The site now logs more than 146,000 audio story downloads each month. *The Environment Report* will work to stay on the forefront of such expanding technologies in order to reach more listeners with high-quality environmental news.



www.uwex.edu/ces/regionalwaterquality

<http://www.environmentreport.org>