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Testing a system for Social Indicators in NPS Programs in the Great Lakes Region

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Abstract Text:

State Nonpoint Source (NPS) programs in the Great Lakes Region (USEPA Region 5) have been working collectively for the past few years to incorporate social indicators into NPS project planning and evaluation. Social indicators provide information about the social context, capacity, awareness, attitudes, and behaviors of individuals, households, organizations, and communities. Applied to NPS issues, they can help project staff identify appropriate combinations of technical, financial, and educational assistance for those making land management decisions that influence water quality. They can also provide consistent measures of change across projects, states, and regions.

Since 2005, a project team, consisting of university researchers and staff from state environmental agencies and USEPA (and convened through the CSREES Great Lakes Regional Water Quality Program), has developed a set of core indicators to help focus project planning and measure social change due to NPS projects along with a system for collecting, analyzing, and using indicator data. The project is now moving into a 3-year pilot-testing phase to assess the indicators, the effectiveness of alternative methods for their collection, and the overall usability and utility of the indicators system for NPS projects and state programs.

This poster will describe the indicators, how they will be collected, and what we expect to learn from the pilot phase.

Impact Statement:

This project is enabling state and local watershed managers to focus their planning and evaluation for nonpoint source pollution control efforts through measures for social factors expected to lead to water quality improvement and protection. The social indicators provide a consistent set of regional metrics that complement longer-term water quality measures.