



USDA-CSREES 2005 National Water Quality Conference

Great Lakes Regional Water Quality Coordination Program

Abstract: Extension State Water Quality Coordinators (SWQCs) in the Great Lakes region provide successful water quality programs and recognize the advantages of coordinating and sharing programs among states with similar water quality challenges and opportunities. The Cooperative States Research, Extension and Education Service National Water Quality Program has made resources available to assist in coordination efforts and increase opportunities to leverage funds for collaborative water quality improvement projects.

Objectives: This program 1) Provides regional coordination of research, education, and extension efforts addressing regional water quality problems, 2) prioritizes programming needs and opportunities on a regional scale, 3) builds continuing education and professional development programs that address water quality issues, and 4) offers an entry point for state and federal agencies, commodity organizations, and other non-government organizations to the Land Grant Universities to promote collaborative water quality improvement approaches.

Methods: Methods for accomplishing regional objectives include 1) using organizational development and effective facilitation to foster implementation teams comprising Extension SWQCs and partners with research, education, extension, and other expertise within the Great Lakes region, 2) promoting and securing funding for collaborative projects through diverse communication and networking strategies, 3) supporting the implementation of multi-state water quality programming and pilot projects that may lead to multi-state efforts, 4) conducting regular evaluation progress in process and program areas and integrating results into team strategies, and 5) communicating project successes.

Partnerships: Key partners in Great Lakes initiatives include federal and state agencies (EPA and NRCS relationships being the most active), Land and Sea Grant institutions, industry and producer groups, government officials, and non-profit organizations.

Resources: Over \$6 million has been leveraged from local, state and federal agency partners, land grant institutions and private sources.

Integration of Research, Teaching, and Extension: Water quality initiatives supported by this program are required to integrate research and extension; integration of undergraduate and graduate education is encouraged. Extension SWQCs in the region have strong technical skills and good relationships with faculty researchers at their respective institutions and state agencies. Program Theme Teams bring research, education, extension, and other expertise to bear on water quality problems. The program regularly networks with research and outreach groups within and outside of the Land Grant structure.

Results: This effort has increased communication and collaboration among

agencies, Land Grant institutions, and other organizations engaged in water quality programming. Products include regular coordination among Extension State Water Quality Coordinators, a multi-interest strategic prioritization process based on six regional Themes, multi-state projects that provide professional development for conservation planners and manure haulers, technical assistance in developing indicators of success for Section 319 projects across the region, multi-state coordination of volunteer water quality monitoring efforts, and an evaluation process to support regional coordination efforts nationally.

Author: Rebecca Power