



Project Title: Preservation of Rural Watersheds and Drinking Water Resources

Presenter Name: Ann T. Lemley

Email: atl2@cornell.edu

Institution/Agency: Cornell University

State: NY **(EPA) Region:** 2 **Theme:** Drinking Water and Human Health

CSREES Project Type: Integrated Research, Education, and Extension

Year of Funding: 2000

Summary:

In New York State there are many small water systems serving mobile home parks, campsites, restaurants and other small businesses. The majority of these small systems are in rural areas or small villages and hamlets that do not have a municipal water supply. Small water system operators in these areas can be key stewards of water resources. Materials were developed to educate these small water system operators about drinking water protection and water pollution. Tools were developed to help these water operators assess and identify risks to drinking water and take action to minimize identified risks. Topics included hazardous chemical products, grounds maintenance, pesticides, on-site wastewater treatment systems, fuel storage tanks, and drinking water wells. Materials were piloted in a variety of ways, including two sets of individual site visits with draft materials and further individual visits and a workshop with revised materials. Evaluation of the one county pilot effort indicated that the participants were very conscientious about source water protection. The water operators worked well with their county health agency in most cases, and they viewed the health agency as a partner in the process. Their motivation to participate in the overall educational program provided by this project, including one-on-one site assessments, varies widely and ranges from personal growth to a need for certification units. The operators who participated in the pilot project reported an increase in knowledge about pollution prevention and a strong motivation to protect our water resources. After the pilot effort, materials were extensively reviewed by an advisory committee of extension educators and government officials. Based on these reviews, changes were made. The materials and the program will be introduced to educators throughout New York State via a satellite videoconference in the third year of the project. In addition, the concept and the materials will be adapted for a small tourist industry water operator group located in a sole source aquifer watershed as part of a larger project for estuary protection.



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