



Title: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Water Quality Education

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Organization: University of Florida

State: FL **Region:** Southern

Year of Funding: 2002

Theme: Nutrient and Pesticide Management

Situation: Florida is home to more than 16 million people, and nearly 700 new residents arrive each day. The conversion of rural to urban lands is projected to be 130,000 acres per year during the next 20 years. At the same time, Florida's diverse and competitive agricultural production is expected to remain strong. The encroachment of urban development into agricultural areas has presented new challenges to surface water management and water quality protection.

Objectives: The objective of this project is to provide extension agents and others involved in outreach with a broad basic understanding of these issues by combining classroom instruction with real world observations so they can effectively educate both agricultural and urban clientele about preventing pollution.

Methods: Two-day water quality training workshops are conducted annually. In 2002 the theme was Managing Water Quality at the Agriculture-Urban Interface, and in 2003 it was Watershed Management: Reducing Non-Point Source Pollution. Attendees were exposed to formal classroom training, demonstrations, and field trips to observe water quality improvement projects in action.

Partnerships: The University of Florida partners with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to provide these training sessions.

Research: The project is a multidisciplinary effort of the University of Florida's Soil and Water Science, Agricultural and Biological Engineering, and Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences Departments.

Resources: This project leveraged Soil and Water Science Dept. staff time.

Results: We trained more than 20 county agents and other outreach educators in each of our first two workshops. Reviews of these sessions were excellent and most attendees requested that we continue our effort in the years to come. Based on pre and post test score improvement, our attendees demonstrated a 16% knowledge gain in the subject areas covered.



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