



**Title:** Water Outreach Education--A National Facilitation Project

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**Theme:** Pollution Assessment and Prevention

**Situation:** Clean and safe water federal agency plans are designed to improve water quality in communities across the nation. Community involvement has been identified as the key to successfully implementing these plans. Water Outreach Education: Facilitating Access to Resources and Best Practices, a USDA/CSREES National Facilitation Project, will connect natural resource professionals with resources and best education practices needed to help citizens improve their understanding of water issues and develop water stewardship skills.

**Objectives:** The goal of the Water Outreach Education Project, also known as the Best Education Practices or BEP Project, is to help natural resource management and outreach professionals choose appropriate education techniques and resources for their water management programs. Project objectives includes translating research into practical strategies; providing electronic access to education materials; identifying audience specific best education practices; and bringing nationally recognized water educators together to address gaps in BEP target audience research.

**Methods:** We conducted a study of provider needs and consulted with knowledge management experts to develop a BEP pilot Web site that provides access to water outreach and education information, materials, and best education practices. The following BEP Project products may be accessed on the pilot Web site: A repository of audience specific, best education practices for water outreach professionals; a tool to assist natural resource professionals in finding and using outreach/education strategies; an on-line short course for water management professionals; and a researchers' guide to writing the outreach/education component of grant proposals. The BEP Symposium will be held June 3-4, 2004 to engage national Extension water quality coordinators and key stakeholders in fine-tuning BEP Project products and marketing strategy to best assist natural resource professionals in meeting their water management objectives.

**Partnerships:** The BEP Advisory Team includes representatives from the US EPA Offices of Water and Environmental Education, the Groundwater Foundation, the Water Education Foundation, and Extension professionals from California, Nebraska, Ohio, and Wisconsin.

**Research:** Resources developed for the Water Outreach Education project are dependent on integrating research into everyday questions that professionals have about how to do their job. The project has conducted a provider study to learn more about what natural resource professionals prefer and what they need. Education practice recommendations are built from summaries of education theory and key points established in natural resource and education peer reviewed literature. The BEP web site is built around the eight water theme topics identified by Extension Water Quality state contacts.

**Resources:** All of the organizations represented on the Advisory Team have contributed substantial time and resources to building the underlying knowledge for the best education practice recommendations. The US EPA Office of Water and the University of Wisconsin Extension computer services are donating expertise for building the knowledge management system.

**Results:** Detailed efforts have identified water outreach provider needs and preferences, a list of target audiences of most interest to water professionals, a summary of education and outreach theories applicable to water outreach education, and a variety of strategies leading to particular audience needs. We have also studied knowledge management principles and E-Extension recommendations to determine the most useful method of organizing information we have developed.



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