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Public Participation in Watershed Management and the TMDL Process: Evaluation and Improvement

Abstract:

Public participation in watershed management and the TMDL process: evaluation and improvement

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Situation:

Despite the fact that working relationships among local communities, public agencies, and scientists have been identified as a key to successful watershed management, not much guidance is available regarding stakeholder group involvement in the watershed management process.

Objectives:

Based on existing examples and literature recommendation, examine pros and cons of alternative forms of public participation, and develop a "road map" for public involvement for TMDL development and implementation

Methods:

We will review the existing information on public participation in approved/developing TMDL and watershed management plans in Mid-Atlantic and other states. Based on the review and literature recommendations we will develop criteria to judge effectiveness of public involvement in the TMDL process. In future, suggested principles of public involvement will be tested for the case study of TMDL implementation in the Opequon Creek watershed, Virginia.

Partnerships:

The study facilitate partnerships among professionals from different disciplines (economics, environmental scientists and engineers), states (PA, VA, WV) and stakeholder groups (scientists, extension agents, and policy makers), with the ultimate objective of developing a general scheme for a systems approach to watershed management.

Resources:

A combination of seed money available through a competitive "mini-grants" regional water quality program, leveraging existing resources, and utilizing

partnerships already developed under the auspices of the regional (Mid-Atlantic) water quality program.

Integration of Mission Areas:

An interdisciplinary team approach will be utilized. Team members represent a wide range of disciplines; in addition, they represent all three land-grant mission areas (research, teaching and extension).

Results:

Major principles to facilitate public involvement in the watershed management process are summarized, and a database of highlighted case studies that incorporate many of the listed principles is developed.

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