



USDA-CSREES 2006 National Water Quality Conference

[Rural Homeowners Educated through the Master Well Owner Network](#)

The voluntary management of private wells can create numerous problems. Most importantly, rural residents may be exposed to health related pollutants without their knowledge. Homeowners with private wells typically neglect water supply management unless obvious water quality symptoms occur. Unfortunately, most health-based pollutants have no obvious tastes or odors in water. Uninformed homeowners may also fall victim to scare tactics used by treatment vendors and spend thousands of dollars on un-needed treatment equipment.

Penn State Cooperative Extension has a long history of educating well owners in Pennsylvania but the large target audience has made this a difficult task. In an attempt to more efficiently educate well owners, the applicants received federal funding to create the Master Well Owner Network (MWON).

MWON was initiated in Pennsylvania in the fall of 2003. MWON is a network of volunteers located throughout the state that assists Penn State Cooperative Extension with educating rural homeowners regarding proper construction, location, and management of their drinking water supply. Currently, 243 MWON volunteers have been trained with representation in 55 of 67 counties in Pennsylvania. The goal of each volunteer is to spread education about private water system management to people within their community. Since April 2004, our volunteers have reported educating over 6,500 people by personal contact and another 28,100 people through varying media sources.

Surveys were sent randomly to individuals educated by MWON volunteers to determine their effectiveness. Returned surveys indicate that the majority of those educated by MWON volunteers find this program very helpful and they have taken some action to improve their drinking water supply as a result of their interaction.

This program has had tremendous success with educating private well owners in the state resulting in its imminent expansion into Virginia, Maryland and Delaware in 2006.

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