



USDA-CSREES 2006 National Water Quality Conference

Extending the Master Well Owner Network From Pennsylvania to the Delmarva Peninsula

Unlike homes that are served by public water systems, homeowners with private water systems are responsible for all aspects of water system management including routine maintenance, water testing, interpreting test results, and solving water quality and quantity problems. Rural homeowners are generally uninformed about water quality issues and who to contact when problems are suspected. As a result, many private water wells have never been tested and rural residents may be exposed to health related pollutants without their knowledge.

MWON was initiated in Pennsylvania in fall 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 private drinking water supply. Over 240 volunteers have been trained with representation in 55 of 67 counties in Pennsylvania. Since April 2004, our volunteers have reported educating over 6,500 people by personal contact and another 28,100 people through varying media sources.

The proven success of MWON in Pennsylvania has driven its attempted expansion into the Delmarva Peninsula in 2006. In this new area, a pilot of MWON will be initiated in hopes of providing the needed assistance and expertise to rural homeowners throughout that region. Volunteers recruited in the Delmarva Peninsula will also attend a training workshop and they will be asked to educate others in their community about proper private water well construction, location, and management. The goal is to target individuals both in the private (well owners) sector and government agencies (extension specialists and field agents). Particular attention will be given to recruit trainees from those counties in the Delmarva with higher percentages of underserved population. Most residents in these communities obtain their drinking water from hand-dug wells that are shallow often without adequate protection. Water quality education in such communities is sorely needed.

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