



USDA-CSREES 2006 National Water Quality Conference

Improving Water Quality: Beyond the Science and Technology to the Human Dimensions

Citizen Involvement in Watershed Management (CIWM) is one of three major components of the Heartland Water Quality Coordination Initiative, a collaborative project with the four Midwest states of Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska. CIWM is part of the Heartland Initiative that looks at the human dimension side of nutrient, pesticide and manure management. Managing and resolving the conflict that arises when working with collaborative watershed management planning processes becomes a major role for Extension and other agency professionals.

It is helpful to understand what makes issues so contentious in collaborative watershed management. These are public issues, ones which cross a number of traditional boundaries, such as organizational and jurisdictional; they are socially constructed by stakeholder beliefs and worldviews and there are no optimal solutions. Additionally, the types of problems which arise need to be considered in terms of whether there is agreement on what the problem actually is and what it would take to solve it.

This presentation will focus on activities specific to the CIWM component of the project, highlighting what is being done in skill-building for conflict resolution. Specific CWIM activities include building a greater understanding of the role of conflict, why it is valuable and its sources as well as how to address the role of scientific and technical information. In order to mitigate some of the contention around public issues associated with community-based watershed planning, it is critical that stakeholders in the community—from businesses to farmers to others impacted—have a voice in the planning process. Through CIWM activities, the goals are to 1) build the capacity of the four states to work together to facilitate communication, coordinate activities when possible; and 2) build the skills of professionals in community development and conflict resolution skills in order to engage communities in watershed management planning.