



## USDA-CSREES 2006 National Water Quality Conference

### Sharing water quality best education practices: Reducing time and cost of new water quality protection projects for northern New England lakes

Non-point source (NPS) pollution from lakefront development and residential watershed land use threatens water quality in northern New England lakes. The threat of misuse or overuse of pesticides, nutrients and amendments increases as agricultural and forested land is converted to residential property, and landowner objectives change from profitability to visual and aesthetic concerns. Existing education efforts have begun to address rural road runoff, septic systems maintenance and water resource monitoring in New England lakes. However, residents of lakeshore communities and their watersheds remain unaware of their contributions to NPS pollution. At the same time, lakeshore associations are often ill prepared, lacking technical and extension/outreach skills, effective educational materials and available volunteers to be effective in NPS pollution prevention and mitigation. The New England Regional Lake Education and Action Program (LEAP) has identified the elements of NPS education and outreach developed by the extension programs in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont. The three states have successfully exchanged a number of programs, reducing the time, effort and cost of introducing new pollution prevention education programs. Successful shared programs include:

- Lake Stewards/Lake Leaders: Education, training and support to strengthen lake association capability to engage landowners in NPS pollution prevention and reduction.
- Youth Action Teams: Summer programs for youth to assist lake associations and landowners in identifying and correcting NPS pollution sources.
- Watershed Alliance: Student-led water quality monitoring and service in lake watersheds, contributing to expanding local volunteer water monitoring and NPS assessments to drive local actions.

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