



USDA-CSREES 2006 National Water Quality Conference

[Priority Water Issues in the Northern Plains and Mountains Region](#)

Water resources and their management are priority issues in USDA CSREES and state cooperative extension programs across the country. The national water quality program of the CSREES was recently reorganized to emphasize a regional approach to water resource education and extension programs. In response, water quality coordinators from the Pacific Northwest developed and distributed a 50- question survey designed to assess public attitudes about water issues within the Pacific Northwest Region as a whole. The objective of the survey was to collect baseline information documenting public awareness and attitudes towards water issues. In October 2004, as an expansion of the original project, a similar survey was distributed to the states of the Northern Plains and Mountains Region: Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming. The survey has 4 primary components related to water resources: 1) the environment; 2) water quality issues; 3) protecting and preserving water resources; and 4) water quality education. Some of the questions were altered from the original survey to reflect the issues of the region. The questions were designed to ascertain water resource information and education needs of various clientele within the six state region. Surveys were mailed to a statistically determined random sample group from within each state. A response rate of 50% was the target; this was met or exceeded in all states but Colorado, which had a 47% response. The survey data are analyzed with respect to the region as a whole and by comparing results among the six states. The significant findings from the survey regarding public attitudes about water issues in the region are presented. The knowledge gained from the survey will be used to direct water resource education and extension programs in the Northern Plains and Mountains Region over the next several years.

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