



USDA-CSREES 2007 National Water Quality Conference

[Enhancing Communications of Environmental Policy](#)

The Nutrient and Water Policy Update website, created and managed by the Penn State Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, serves as an educational resource for the Penn State community, educators, animal agriculture operators, agricultural and environmental interest groups, government agencies, academics, citizens, and others interested in agriculture, the environment, and community. The website byline, “resources that help Pennsylvanians understand and shape environmental policy” provides the impetus for the site’s mission, that of encouraging and enabling crucial public involvement in policy making. This website was established in 2001 and is routinely updated to provide timely information on environmental policies and their potential implications for agriculture. Monthly analyses of the number of hits on and downloads from the site provides an indication of the environmental topics of highest interest to the users, and in some cases, the level of public activity around a particular policy. This site has provided resources on emerging policies like state and federal CAFO rules, Pennsylvania’s environmental programs, water quality trading, agricultural air emissions issues, and environmental implications of emerging federal farm policy. The role of technology in communicating policy will be explored through review of this site’s use and access history. The discussion will also focus on how use of the tool by prospective stakeholders is encouraged through outreach. In addition, an evaluation of the areas of highest public interest in various environmental policies and issues based on the level of interest expressed through downloads of topic-specific documents will be discussed.

Author: Kristen Saacke-Blunk

University Affiliation: Penn State University

Co-Author(s): Abdalla C., and A. Dodd