



USDA-CSREES 2007 National Water Quality Conference

Educating the Expanding Urban Hispanic Community on Water Quality Issues in Northwest Arkansas

Intense urban expansion is a major concern regarding nonpoint source pollution in Northwest Arkansas. With exponential urban development and the accompanying population growth, water quality education projects related to urbanization have become increasingly important. Northwest Arkansas is under scrutiny to improve water quality in both the agricultural and the quickly expanding urbanized areas, however, past and current educational efforts have neglected a significant portion of the population. The rate of the Hispanic population increase in Arkansas is among the highest in the nation. Twenty-five of the seventy-five counties in Arkansas ranked in the top one-hundred counties in the nation for percent increases in Hispanic population – generating increases between 262 and 1,420 percent between 1990 and 2000 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2001). During that time period, the Hispanic population in Benton, Carroll, Madison and Washington Counties grew from 3,190 to 29,308, an increase of 891, 1,174, 293 and 747 percent in the four counties, respectively. As the onset of Hispanics to this area continues, so does the increased desire of these residents for Spanish language educational resources. Although an estimated 80% of Hispanics in Northwest Arkansas are bilingual, a large number prefer to get their information from Spanish language mediums such as newspapers and radio stations. Tailoring fundamental pollution prevention messages to these mediums allows for the information to become more relevant to the Hispanic culture and lifestyle. Nearly all of the current water quality educational material used in Arkansas is available in English only. This leaves many Hispanics without the information they need to evaluate their impact on their communities and the local waterways. Without this basic information, many are unable to identify potential pollutants at their jobs, in their neighborhoods, and even those connected to their everyday activities. The mission of the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service is to provide research-based information through non-formal education to help Arkansas improve their economic well-being and the quality of their lives. While several Extension education programs have targeted the Hispanic community and materials such as nutrition, budgeting and parenting have been translated into Spanish, water quality education programs have lagged behind. This project addresses the need for greater Hispanic public awareness and education of watershed dynamics and nonpoint pollution prevention in Northwest Arkansas.

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