

# The Changing Role for Extension Specialists

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# What are the Overall Goals of Extension

- ◆ Provide science based information to the people of the state.
- ◆ Serve the citizens of the state
- ◆ Help people to help themselves
- ◆ Other



# Informal Survey of Extension Specialists

- ◆ How long have you been in Extension?
- ◆ Have you seen your role change in that time?
- ◆ What are the main reasons roles have change?
- ◆ What do you see as your main role now?



# State and Local Extension Roles

- ◆ Extension Role at the State Level
  - Still based on a specialty area
  - Working closely with research but doing more field applied research
  - Working closely with newer technology
  - Working closely with industry
  - Incorporating environmental law changes into research
  - Evaluations, outcomes and impacts part of daily language.

# State and Local Extension Roles

- ◆ Extension roles at the regional or county level
  - Started out more specialty area
    - ◆ Livestock, crop, management, etc
  - Questions coming in that make person more general and less specialty
    - ◆ Less personnel forces us to become more diverse in what we can provide
  - Changing needs of community change what we must offer

# Changing of Role of Extension

- ✦ What is causing the change in roles
  - Less personnel
  - Environmental regulations
  - Watershed emphasis for planning
  - Changes in peoples perception
  - Changes



# Changing Role of Extension

- ◆ What needs are still there that we provide?
  - Need for educational classes
  - Provide technical assistance
  - Provide information
  - Provide un-bias research based information
  - Serve the citizens of the state
  - Improve quality of life

# Role of Extension Specialists

- ◆ Demands of today require new dimensions of interdisciplinary planning, programming and evaluation.
- ◆ Possess a fundamental level of basic education as well as process and technology skills.
- ◆ Besides subject matter expertise, use new educational and information technologies to design effective and accessible educational programs.

# What roles do we fill and what roles do other agencies fill?

- ◆ Technical – NRCS, SWCD, Dept of Ag, EPA, Agribusiness, Extension, other
- ◆ Financial – NRCS, SWCD, EPA, Conservation, other
- ◆ Educational – Extension, NRCS, SWCD, Conservation, others
- ◆ Social - ??????????????
  - Much of the technical expertise and financial assistance comes from government agencies so what roles can Extension have that the others are not doing or equipped to do?



Field Days and demonstration sites are used to inform and educate local producers/citizens of what is happening



Audiences are changing to include people from different backgrounds and areas that want to know about watershed activities.



# What role do we play

- ◆ The new role is being dictated by the needs of a more diverse clientele.
- ◆ We mediate between groups with different ideas to find the common ground and bring together some understanding or the issues.
- ◆ We become facilitators who can bring the different groups together and help them devise a plan of action.

# Different factors are affecting our role as Extension specialists

- ◆ Clientele aren't just producers
- ◆ Decision making affects more than just one or two people
- ◆ People are starting to see how things are inter-related.
- ◆ Environmental concerns



# Changing Role of Extension Specialists for Watershed Planning

- ◆ Moderator
- ◆ Mediator
- ◆ Facilitator



# Moderate a panel or group concerning a public issue or concern



Watershed planning may require skills in conflict mediation that may not fall under our specialty



# Facilitating a group process concerning a community issue may become more important in the role of Extension than



# Facilitation – in a community group

- ✦ Facilitates efficient interaction between human, physical and fiscal resources in the community.
- ✦ Done to generate awareness and acceptance of the group.
- ✦ To bring the group together in consensus of the mission of the group instead of individual needs.
  - Transactional leadership/transformational leadership

# Changing Role of Extension

- ◆ People see Extension specialists in this role because:
  - No “prime directive” the way some other agency do.
  - Seen as being a neutral party
  - Generally accepted as someone from the local area that can be trusted
  - Can provide a science-base for decisions
  - They have the basic training and education for doing this or know who in the organization can assist with the process.

# What role do we play in this situation?

A community has their drinking water supplied by a lake that is surrounded by livestock and row crop production and some development.

The community administrator have been made aware that the water does not meet EPA standards. Too much atrazine and too many nutrients.

The community is calling together a meeting of urban and rural residents to discuss the issues and determine what needs to be done.

# Simple Solution:

- ✦ Don't use atrazine in the watershed
- ✦ Don't allow fertilizers to be used in the watershed
- ✦ Don't allow animals to be in the watershed
- ✦ Don't allow septic tanks or wastewater to be in the watershed
  - Are these practical?

# What to do?

- ◆ Bring group together to focus on what are the issues, possible sources of contamination, possible solutions and do it where the economic viability and environmental integrity of the area is still intact.



# The roles we may have to play:

## ◆ Resource person

- Provide information on use of pesticide and nutrients and possible sources

## ◆ Educator

- Provide classes for people on how to properly apply products and BMPs to reduce potential runoff

## ◆ Mediator

- Intervene between groups if conflicts arise

## ◆ Facilitator

- Walk group through the process of identifying concerns, developing a plan of action and working for the good of the watershed.

# How do we know what our role is?

- ◆ Are we meeting the basic needs of the people we serve?
- ◆ What are they needing that we may not be offering?
- ◆ Can we provide this service from a science-based perspective?
- ◆ Will this ultimately help the area help itself?
- ◆ Other considerations?

# Changing Role of Extension

- ✦ What has made Extension successful in the past is what will make it successful in the future.
  - We must hone our skills to meet the need
- ✦ The focus may change somewhat but the mission is the same.
  - Provide science based information to the people of the state
  - Serve the citizens of the state
  - Help people to help themselves
  - Other



# Questions???

