



## 2008 USDA-CSREES National Water Conference Sparks, NV

### **Building Institutional Capacity – the Ripple Effect of Regional Coordination**

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#### Abstract Text:

The Heartland Regional Water Coordination Initiative develops and strengthens networks that build institutional capacity through enhanced communication, coordination and resource integration within the four-state region. Heartland's regional, issue-based working groups, roundtables, workshops and publications have added value to water quality and watershed programs of land grant university partners, state and federal agencies and voluntary organizations with water quality missions. The poster highlights short-, medium- and long-term capacity building impacts. Changes in knowledge and awareness have included increased networking among related agency and institutional programs, and increased resource sharing both within and among states. These changes are documented by workshop feedback and focus group research, and have been recognized by an award from the U.S. EPA Region VII Regional Administrator. Partners and stakeholders have also changed their behavior as a result of participating in Heartland activities. Agencies and organizations recognize Heartland as convener and facilitator of regional work on priority water issues, as well as providing access to research-based knowledge and implementation assistance on water resource programs. Workshops have increased partnerships between technical and community development (human dimension) professionals in watershed efforts. Changes in conditions have resulted from the establishment of regional working groups on priority issues. Funds have been leveraged from research and agency programs, including an EPA investment that will improve states' assessment of stream conditions and targeting of management practices. Organizations are taking action based on knowledge of citizen awareness and attitudes toward water resources provided by Heartland survey research. Principles and methodologies resulting from Heartland efforts are also influencing nutrient management planning and regulatory compliance for livestock producers.

#### Impact Statement:

The principal objectives of the Heartland Regional Water Coordination Initiative logic model have focused on institutional impacts. Many of these flow directly from facilitation of networks and partnerships within and among agencies and institutions across the four states. Regional coordination led by land grant university extension teams has improved organizational effectiveness through increased integration of regional programs and resources, broadened vision and leadership among staff, improved targeting and achievement of organizational goals and increased responsiveness to stakeholders on priority water issues.