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Top 9 Forms of Communication With a Farmer - Plus 7 Ways to Win Friends and Influence Farmers to use Ag BMPs

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Abstract Text:

Individual communication, in 9 forms, has been determined as the most successful method to get farmers to agree to adopt Best Management Practices and make management changes. These 9 will be delivered in detail during this presentation, using photographs, video, and role-playing. These forms of personal communication have been used successfully in Pond Creek Watershed, in Southeast Tennessee, which was determined by TVA to be the only watershed in the entire Tennessee River to improve in water quality in 2006. Within these 9 forms of communication, will be the 7 Ways to Win Friends and Influence Farmers. These tips are important in gaining trust and acceptance from the farm community. Only after those are achieved will the farmers take action. Other communication methods for reaching clientele include: newsletters to watershed residents, the "famous" calendars, watershed landowner meetings, presentations to local groups, youth water camp, television, website, and even YouTube. Examples of these will be used in this presentation. However, these mass communication forms are only auxiliary to face-to-face contact as far as making progress with landowners in the watershed. Pond Creek Watershed is a ridge and valley area approximately 17 miles by 4 miles, located across McMinn, Monroe, and Loudon Counties. The project is conducted by UT Extension Area Specialist, Lena Beth Carmichael and supervised by Dr. Forbes Walker of UT Biosystems and Soil Science Department. The watershed is a rural agricultural valley with very little development. The creek is on the 303(d) list for bacteria, sediment, and nutrients. Therefore, dairy and beef operations were targeted for improvements. Human waste was also discovered as a problem, with a major renovation project now completed. The steps in water quality improvement are evidence that individual communication works.

Impact Statement:

The Tennessee Valley Authority determined that Pond Creek Watershed was the only watershed in the entire Tennessee River to improve in water quality in 2006. TVA's Inventory of Biotic Integrity completed in 2001 and 2006 showed increases in fish species from 13 to 17, and increases in fish numbers from 214 to 718. These improvements results in the overall rating being raised from Poor/Fair to Fair.