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The Power of Partnership: The Great Lakes Regional Water Program

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Abstract Text:

The Great Lakes Regional Water Program is a seven-year partnership between the CSREES National Water Program and the University of Illinois, Purdue University, Michigan State University, the University of Minnesota, the Ohio State University, and the University of Wisconsin. Our primary goal is to increase the impact of water research, campus-based education, and outreach programs initiated by the land grant universities and our federal, state, and local partners through development and implementation of collaborative initiatives in Animal Waste Management, Drinking Water and Human Health, Nutrients and Water Quality, Water Policy and Economics, and Watershed Management. Participating universities and our partners say the program has 1) increased communication across states and organizations, 2) increased collaboration on projects, research, and training, and 3) that they have a better understanding of existing efforts and more respect for the work of people in other organizations.

Impact Statement:

Social Component of Nonpoint Source Evaluation – This project is changing the way nonpoint source projects are evaluated in the Great Lakes Region by incorporating human dimension indicators. This enables projects that need to change human behavior to demonstrate progress and to increase the environmental impact of interventions. The project has developed a set of 13 core indicators, and is in the final phases of developing a handbook and data management and analysis system for recipients of Section 319 funding. Partners include Great Lakes Region universities, state environmental agencies, and USEPA Region 5.

Social Dimensions of Private Well Testing - This project has increased our understanding of what private well owners need to make informed decisions about testing their well water and the indicators that explain well testing behavior. When asked where they would look for information to managed the safety and quality of their well water, the top three responses were “online” (23%), “local health departments” (23%), and “water testing labs” (16%). Nine percent of respondents indicated they would turn to Extension. When asked about the main reasons they had not tested their well, the top three responses were “No problems so far” (54%), “Do not know what to test for” (34%), and “Do not know how to test” (32%).