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## **The Community Based Watershed Management Planning Approach for Nebraska Watersheds**

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### **Abstract Text:**

Nonpoint source pollution is the major cause of water quality problems in Nebraska lakes, creeks and rivers. The Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality has designated the community based watershed management planning process as the desired approach to addressing these problems in both rural and urban watersheds. The community based approach to the development of a watershed management plan is a concept whereby local people lead the planning process based on locally identified needs. Local people determine the watershed resource issues, and then implement a planning process that will help to achieve the desired resource conditions.

Forming a partnership among Extension, agencies, and watershed stakeholders is a key component of the planning process. Extension, agencies, programs, and others form a technical advisory team to provide technical and financial resources to help implement solutions and solve those needs. Local watershed stakeholders serve as the decision makers in the planning process. The partnering of local watershed stakeholders and the technical advisory team results in a technically sound watershed management plan that addresses the specific resource concerns of the watershed.

The planning process includes an awareness phase, decision making phase and an implementation phase. Local citizen involvement is very important in each of these phases. Watershed stakeholders help to identify and prioritize resource concerns, develop a "vision" for the watershed, establish project goals and objectives and form a watershed council. The watershed council and the technical advisory team work together to compile and evaluate resource data and to formulate alternatives to address resource problems and to meet the project goals and objectives. The watershed council determines which alternatives are practical and applicable to the watershed. During the implementation phase, citizen support and review of the progress of the project is important to the plan's success.

### **Impact Statement:**

The community based watershed management planning process has been used in both rural and urban Nebraska watersheds. 17 community based watershed management plans are being implemented in Nebraska. The planning process has resulted in stronger partnerships with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension and other state, district and local agencies, governmental entities and organizations. Local citizens have taken leadership roles to solve local watershed problems. Involving citizens in the planning process has helped to avoid controversies, encourage more diverse ideas and solutions and improve the likelihood of a successful project.