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Integrating Water Research, Education, and Extension in the Northern Plains

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Abstract Text:

Water is a significant defining element in both economic and environmental terms in the Northern Plains and Mountain Region. Its presence (or lack of) impacts not only local, state, and regional economies, but also the appearance of the natural environment. Furthermore, human manipulation of water resources determines the productivity of the agricultural lands as well as the location and size of communities. Therefore, the management of water quantity and quality is a very high priority in the Northern Plains and Mountain Region. New demands on the natural resource base, changes in agricultural production methods, and increasing in-migration, require new responses in water resource management. The objectives of the regional water project are to: monitor, analyze and interpret water resources data for natural resources management and education of all age levels; facilitate best management practices for production agriculture; provide research and education on drinking water for human and livestock health; and preserve the quantity and quality of local and regional water resources by engaging in water conservation and protection in agricultural, small acreage and urbanizing environments. The project has also built a water quality team that communicates frequently to share resources, collaborate on programming, as well as conduct appropriate research, education and outreach across the region to address water quality issues.

Impact Statement:

The NPM Regional Water Program has improved irrigation water management and increased irrigation water delivery efficiency, as well as improved water quality monitoring plans and data collection throughout the region. The project has educated landowners on ways to monitor their land and water resources in areas of coal bed methane development and been influential in the revision of water quality standards for produced waters in the region. Furthermore, the regional team has developed an arsenic educational network within region and educated agricultural producers on the proper handling and disposal of AFO/CAFO animal wastes.