

Building Institutional Capacity – the Ripple Effect of Regional Coordination

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. Roundtables, workshops and publications implemented by multi-state, issue-based working groups 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 Heartland logic model has focused on institutional impacts. Many of these flow directly from facilitation of regional networks and partnerships. Increased capacity brought about by regional coordination improves 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.



Capacity – Awareness and Knowledge

- Networking, communication and working relationships among university, agency and institutional partners.
- Resource sharing within and among states.
- Regional stakeholder surveys.

Focus group research documents that Heartland is recognized as a facilitator of regional networks and partnerships as well as a source of research-based knowledge. Agency staff and researchers report greater awareness of related work in other organizations and states. Participants report that Heartland has given them increased access to EPA staff and programs. In 2007 these contributions were recognized by an award from the U.S. EPA Region VII Regional Administrator.



The 2007 Heartland Regional Water Issues survey and key informant surveys in 75 Iowa and Missouri watersheds are providing up-to-date information on public perceptions and attitudes about water. Results have been presented to and used by agency and extension partners across the region.



Capacity – Behavior

- Technical specialists integrate human dimension elements for more successful programs.
- Survey information has influenced extension and agency program planning.
- Workshops promote action.

The Heartland Animal Manure Management (AMM) and Nutrient and Pesticide management (NPM) teams have integrated the Community-based Watershed Management team (CWM) into their workshops. Participants consistently rate “Human Dimension” presentations among the most relevant information. The teams also collaborated with a 406 integrated project, “Pollution and Economic Decision Support Tool” to conduct a workshop “Stakeholder Involvement in Watershed Management in Eastern Nebraska” for technical professionals and educators.



Survey information influenced ISU Extension program teams in their development of the 2008-2012 Plan of Work. The new Plan, which places greater emphasis on environmental stewardship education, affects water education for all Iowans.

In feedback from the AMM 2008 Annual Workshop, respondents indicated they expected to take action: to share information with colleagues (77%), to communicate with increased confidence with the AFO industry (65%), to share information with new contacts in other organizations (50%); to incorporate new regional resources into their programs/procedures (44%); and to engage policy makers in their state (43%).

Capacity – Conditions

- Watershed BMP targeting.
- CAFO nutrient management.
- Citizen involvement.

As a result of the NPM Targeting workshop, EPA R7 allocated funds to provide all Heartland states with computer programs and training for stream assessment. EPA’s investment will improve watershed management planning throughout the region.

As a result of Heartland workshops, more ISU Extension field staff are facilitating citizens’ watershed councils.

The AMM team facilitated a regional response to the draft EPA CAFO proposal and a sample CNMP planning document. The revised CAFO regulations include an option based, in part, upon the Heartland proposal. This should produce a policy more consistent with land grant university recommendations and more likely to be implemented by animal producers.

Collaborative research and demonstration involving the AMM team has also resulted in EPA R7 acceptance of states’ permitting Vegetative Treatment Systems for the first time in over 30 years of CAFO regulation.

The NPM and AMM teams facilitated the review, and modification in some cases, of state-developed P Indexes and CNMP formats. At least 6,000 livestock operations that use the P Index to meet agency nutrient plan requirements will be impacted by principles and methodologies resulting from Heartland efforts.



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