



2009 CSREES National Water Conference; St. Louis, MO

Great Lakes Regional Water Program

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Abstract:

The Great Lakes Regional Water Program is a eight-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:

Outputs: Selected outputs in 2008 include 1) Social Indicators: A handbook and a data management and analysis system (SIDMA) that will help NPS managers integrate social indicators into NPS planning, implementation, and evaluation. 2) E.coli volunteer monitoring: 17 workshops, training 75 volunteers. These volunteers logged over 2700 volunteer hours. 3) The Midwest Cover Crop Council website for their organization (<http://www.mccc.msu.edu/>). The organization has posted peer-reviewed cover crop publications and Extension materials from across the region on the website. Outcomes: Selected outcomes include: 1) Social Indicators: Watershed leaders across the Great Lakes Region have increased their skills and capacity to use social information to target watershed interventions. 2) E. coli volunteer monitoring: This project increased awareness about using volunteer collected data for screening priority areas, in watershed planning, or TMDL development, and helped build credibility of volunteer monitoring to partners. 3) The Midwest Cover Crop Council has already increased knowledge about cover crops across the region, and built significant capacity within participating universities to use cover crops to reduce soil erosion and nutrient loss from farm fields.

Partnerships: The Great Lakes Regional Water Program has strengthened regional partnerships with state and federal agencies such as state environmental agencies, USEPA Region 5, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the US Geological Survey through the State Water Resources Research Institutes. The Program has also worked with the drainage water management industry and private sector farm consultants as part of the drainage water management and conservation professional training initiatives. For more information about partnerships, please visit our publications page at <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/regionalwaterquality/publications.htm>.

Leveraged Resources: The most valuable leveraged resources have been ideas, people, facilities, and other built capacity, such as the skills to develop successful multi-state programs in a university setting. The Great Lakes Regional Water Program would not be successful without a focus on these leveraged resources. This focus has resulted in leveraged funds at a 9:1 ratio with state environmental agencies (28%), Extension and universities (18%), and private sector (16%) sources providing the greatest percentage of leveraged financial resources.

Lessons Learned: 1) Regional initiatives need to be broad enough to build multi-state capacity, but focused enough to have short-term outcomes and impacts. 2) Committed leadership is essential for the success of multi-state initiatives. Initiative leaders need to be committed to the value of building multi-state capacity as well as impacts in individual states. 3) If there is not a person available to champion an initiative in a state, success in other states may help demonstrate value and lead to participation at a later date. 4) The Great Lakes Regional Water Program provides an institutional structure for exchanging resources across states. This structure is important for coordinating

and streamlining administration of multi-state initiatives. Without it, multi-state initiatives can devolve into multiple single-state projects.

Category: Committee for Shared Leadership

Type of Presentation: Oral Presentation