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Maintaining Long-term Agency-Extension Partnerships: Wisconsin's Basin Education Initiative

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Abstract:

For Extension educators involved in water and related natural resource management issues, creating and maintaining partnership with government agencies is integral to delivering effective programs that address priority needs. Agencies provide Extension educators with financial and technical support, staff involvement in local programs, and opportunities for participation in management efforts. Extension educators offer: leadership on public engagement, outreach and education; connections to university research; educational material development; expertise on organizational development; and more. There are clear advantages to working together, yet there are also important challenges and considerations, including those related to navigating the cultural differences between extension programs and agency missions.

This oral presentation will explore experiences with agency-Extension partnerships through the example of Wisconsin's Basin Education Initiative; a ten-year-old partnership between University of Wisconsin-Extension and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. This program supports fifteen Extension Basin Educators, working with agencies, stakeholder groups, and citizens in areas delimited by Wisconsin's major river basins to address important statewide and local resource management needs. Session participants will have the opportunity to delve into questions related to: recognizing joint priorities; supporting functions that contribute to successful relationships; identifying roles for individual educators, extension "teams," specialists, and administrators; and addressing important considerations for maintaining agency relationships.

Impact Statement:

The project supports numerous statewide and local resource management partnerships in Wisconsin, in addition to contributing toward goals of the Great Lakes Regional Program. Over the past decade, the program has leveraged additional federal, state, and private funding for a variety of water resource initiatives. Lessons learned emphasize institutional aspects of Extension-agency partnerships, including opportunities to recognize issues of organizational culture and goal/performance measures.

Category: Human Dimensions

Type of Presentation: Oral Presentation