



*2009 CSREES National Water Conference; St. Louis, MO*

## **Using Social Data to Target and Increase the Effectiveness of Nonpoint Source Outreach Strategies**

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### Abstract:

Extension programs that address water resource issues have many purposes and intended outcomes. There is a growing emphasis in Extension programs and from our public and private sector partners on the human or social dimensions of solving water resource management problems in ways that sustain food and fiber production. A team of professionals from USEPA, state environmental agencies, and Great Lakes Regional Water Program Land Grant universities are using a suite of social indicators to help watershed leaders 1) understand how social data can inform the development of outreach strategies; 2) target outreach methods and messages to improve program effectiveness, and the effectiveness of the overall watershed management process; and 3) to document the outcomes and impacts actually achieved. This presentation will describe the process being used to apply social data to nonpoint source program planning. Four watersheds in the Great Lakes Region have used the process to develop nonpoint source outreach plans. The presentation will also discuss preliminary successes and limitations encountered in using social data designed primarily to assess program performance to plan outreach strategies.

### Impact Statement:

Outputs: 1) a system to collect, analyze and store social data for watershed projects at the watershed, state, and multi-state levels; 2) a process watershed leaders can use to incorporate social data into watershed management; 3) four watershed outreach plans developed with social survey data and existing local knowledge; 4) workshops and associated materials for teaching the use of social information to watershed leaders, both volunteer and professional. Note that these outputs are still being tested in a pilot phase.

Outcomes: As a result of the outreach portion of this project, watershed leaders: 1) express a greater understanding of the human dimensions of NPS program, basic principles of behavior change, and connections between social indicators and watershed planning; 2) express an increased ability to plan more effective interventions. This project is creating a systemic change in the way we plan, implement, and monitor the progress of nonpoint source projects.

Partnerships: USEPA Region 5, state environmental agencies and Land Grant universities in every Great Lakes Region state, and local watershed leaders.

Leveraged Resources: Each partner has contributed extensive fiscal and human resources to this project, totaling over \$1 million. Resources have enabled a participatory system development process that will be functioning throughout the region more quickly and effectively than if the system had been developed without substantial and continuous input. In addition to Great Lakes Regional Water Program funds, the project team was awarded a Section 406 integrated watershed grant to test the system and the refine the process of using social data.

Lessons Learned: Watershed leaders benefit from having more rigorously collected social data and a process for using that data to target outreach strategies. There are challenges in using a social data system to both monitor performance across local, state, and multi-state scales and to help individual projects develop outreach plans.

Category: Human Dimensions

Type of Presentation: Oral Presentation