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Social Indicators as a Planning and Evaluation Tool for Non Point Source Projects

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Abstract:

Recognizing the influence of individual management and behavioral decisions on non point source (NPS) pollution, state and federal programs fund projects that directly address environmental management, such as the installation of various best management practices, as well as more socially oriented projects that increase individual and community capacity to manage water bodies to meet designated uses. Many involved with NPS projects have expertise and knowledge necessary to plan, implement, and evaluate their projects' physical and environmental components, yet addressing and evaluating the social and human-dimension components presents new challenges.

In response to this situation, EPA Region 5, state environmental agencies, and the CSREES Great Lakes Regional Water Quality Program (GLRWQP) have initiated a project to incorporate a social component into NPS project planning and evaluation for the region. The effort involves an inter-organizational team drawing from EPA, state environmental agencies, land grant universities in the CSREES Great Lakes Region, and others. The team has developed a framework for tracking indicators of individual change, such as knowledge, awareness, capacity, constraints and behavior. The team has entered into a three year pilot phase with the six states in the region. This paper will describe this regional project and its components including a related research project funded by USDA-CSREES.

Impact Statement:

Project has led to publication of a 169 page handbook for watershed projects in USEPA region 5, the development of an online tool for watershed projects, and two published journal articles. Partnerships between the Great Lakes Regional Water Quality team, USEPA and state water quality agencies have been strengthened.

Category: Human Dimensions

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