Applying knowledge to improve water quality

Pacific Northwest

Regional Water Program

A Partnership of USDA NIFA
& Land Grant Colleges and Universities

Fall 2009
PNWWATER 176

Regional Video Conference:

Preventing Stormwater Pollution Through Education

On September 15, 2009, more than 1,000 people at over 100 Pacific Northwest sites participated in a video workshop called "Stormwater Management: One Backyard at a Time." This was the seventh in a series of video workshops designed and delivered by the Pacific Northwest Regional Water Resources Team. The goal of this workshop was to prevent pollution in developing areas. Participation in these annual conferences has grown from 300 people in 2003 to over 1,000 in 2009. This workshop included video segments filmed in Ketchum/Sun Valley, ID; Bend, OR; and Whidbey Island, WA. These segments included interviews with six home/business owners who had chosen to utilize Low Impact Development (LID) or Leader in Energy and Efficient Design (LEED) concepts to manage stormwater to prevent pollution.

Permeable asphalt absorbs rain water at the rate of 100 inches per hour.

The video workshop consisted of three regionally filmed video segments, a panel discussion led by experts from Washington State University and Oregon State University and an open forum call-in mechanism for people to ask questions in real time. The video portion of the program was composed of builders, designers, and property owners speaking about the strategies that they implemented within the home, land-, and hard-scaped components. Vegetated roofs, use of rain chains to help divert un-downspouted roof runoff to bio-swales, rain gardens, dry wells, and other infiltrative strategies were all featured in the case study videos. The whole program lasted two and a half hours. This video workshop is available online at: http://eces.wsu.edu/video/stream.html.

The audience included city and county planners, engineers, students, members of watershed groups, county/city/federal co-hosts, extension personnel, members and staff of soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs), Master Gardeners, policy makers, and interested folks with a heart for the environment. Viewers came from all four Pacific Northwest states – Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. This workshop followed the model of providing environmental regulators, protectors, and end-users of natural resources with a forum that centered on local application of pollution prevention strategies. Several of the audience sites included a brown-bag lunch and open discussion with local experts as moderators.

The Panel Discussion and Open Forum in the last hour of the workshop was packed with phoned-in and e-mailed questions from audiences around and beyond the Pacific Northwest. There was so much interest that the panel was not able to respond to all questions on the air.

Several hundred evaluations have been received from program attendees. The evaluations are still arriving and will be added to the database that is developed from workshop information. To date, the questions about general over-all rating of the case studies and how informative and interesting were they are on a sliding scale of 1 to 5, (5 being the

Pacific Northwest Regional Water Quality Coordination Project Partners

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University Publications:
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Water Resource Research Institutes
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http://www.uaf.edu/water/

Idaho Water Resources Research Institute
http://www.boise.uidaho.edu/

Institute for Water and Watersheds (Oregon)
http://water.oregonstate.edu/

State of Washington Water Research Center
http://www.swwrc.wsu.edu/

Environmental Protection Agency
EPA, Region 10
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http://www.epa.gov/r10earth/

Office of Research and Development, Corvallis Laboratory
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The Project
Land Grant Universities, Water Research Institutes, and EPA Region 10 have formed a partnership to provide research and education to communities about protecting or restoring the quality of water resources. This partnership is being supported in part by the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA).

Our Goal and Approach
The goal of this Project is to provide leadership for water resources research, education, and outreach to help people, industry, and governments to prevent and solve current and emerging water quality and quantity problems. The approach to achieving this goal is for the Partners to develop a coordinated water quality effort based on, and strengthening, indivudual state programs.

Our Strengths
The Project promotes regional collaboration by acknowledging existing programs and successful efforts; assisting program gaps; identifying potential issues for cross-agency and private sector collaboration; and developing a clearinghouse of expertise and programs. In addition, the Project establishes or enhances partnerships with federal, state, and local environmental and water resource management agencies, such as by placing a University Liaison within the offices of EPA Region 10.

highest), shows the workshop at about a 4.5 average. The evaluation form also requested that topics of interest be listed for future workshops. The initial partial listing indicates high interest in a 'how-to-build' workshop on rain gardens and other on-site BMPs. Evaluation data about usefulness of information and applicability of knowledge acquired at the workshop was also collected. Follow up surveys will be done to query the short/mid-term impacts on attendees three to five months in the future. In general, the reviews were very good to excellent. In addition, the fact that the number of attendees has continued to grow for this annual regional video conference series suggests that the regional program is successfully meeting an educational need for a high priority water issue.

Based on initial evaluations many viewers expressed that although interesting, the highlighted stormwater management strategies were very costly. Several evaluators suggested that a program featuring more modest homes and low-cost effective retrofitting with LID and LEED strategies would be welcomed. Based on these comments a search is under way to find sites in the Pacific Northwest that might fulfill this criteria for documentary filming. If any reader of this update lives in a community or neighborhood that has collaborated on retrofitting streets/gutters/lawns to be more permeable, please email seago.jan@epa.gov. The neighborhood you suggest could be next year's case-study!

The Pacific Northwest Regional Water Program (www.pnwwaterweb.com) partners with Washington State University video production specialists, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, the Land Grant system's five PNW institutions, and a wide range of state, local, and federal agencies to obtain relevant information to produce these video workshops.

National Water Quality Program Areas

The four land grant universities in the Pacific Northwest have aligned our water resource Extension and research efforts with eight themes of the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

1. Animal Waste Management
2. Drinking Water and Human Health
3. Environmental Restoration
4. Nutrient and Pesticide Management
5. Pollution Assessment and Prevention
6. Watershed Management
7. Water Conservation and Management
8. Water Policy and Economics

This material is based upon work supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under Agreement No. 2008-51130-04734.