

**Best Education Practices (BEPs) for Water Outreach Professionals**  
**Defining BEPs, Refining New Resources and Recommending Future Actions**

***POSTER PRESENTATION***

**Presenter(s): Taralyn Fisher, Department of Animal and Range Sciences, Montana State University**

**Title: Montana Beef Environmental Management Systems Pilot Project**

Abstract: In an effort to address potential sources of surface water pollution from beef cattle ranches in Montana, a pilot project was conducted to determine the effectiveness of using an environmental self-assessment. Montana is largely a rural state with a land area of 93 million acres and 11,400 beef cattle enterprises ranging in size from a few to 10,000 head. Only 55 of these operations are licensed concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFO), which leaves the remaining as cow/calf rangeland operations or small to mid-size lots. Many of these livestock operations were established near surface water sources, and in present day society there are increasing concerns about the compatibility of livestock agriculture with environmental quality, especially that of water. The Montana Beef Environmental Management Systems (EMS) Project focused on facilities related to beef cattle ranching such as corrals, winter feeding grounds, back-grounding lots, and calving areas to develop a self-assessment Guidebook and Workbook to lead producers through the process of identifying priority environmental issues, assessing potential environmental risk, and developing a plan to mitigate risk. The tool was pilot tested on 23 ranches across Montana, as well as on 3 research farms. Pre- and post-surveys were completed to assess rancher attitudes before and after identifying environmental risks on their own operation, and to evaluate their experience with the self-assessment. Overall accomplishments and outputs of the project will be discussed as well as lessons learned regarding the selected approach for dealing with environmental issues on ranching operations, and survey results will be presented.

Target Audience(s): Agricultural Commodity Groups Farmers

Educational Purpose: Capacity building

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