

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

POSTER PRESENTATION

Presenter(s): Caitrin Noel, University of Vermont Watershed Alliance

Title: The University Of Vermont Watershed Alliance: Using Youth Education And Service To Engage Communities In Local Water Quality

Abstract: Audience size and limited human and financial resources limit Extension ability to educate individual homeowners, landowners, local officials and others. Leverage and multiplication of effort is needed.

The Watershed Alliance (WSA), a youth water quality/watershed education, monitoring and service program, prepares youth to inform and engage communities in water quality issues. Water education often focuses on classroom education and student monitoring. WSA adds student community service and information components to enhance community understanding of water quality issues, improve access to information, and spur community action for watershed protection.

Students increase awareness and stimulate action by presenting local water quality data to select boards and town government. Student monitoring detected water quality problems in several towns. Reporting these led to a “boil water” advisory, the emergency repair of a local WWTP, revision of WWTP operations and increased community awareness of water quality. Students work with local community groups in public awareness, education and data collection. Students developed media efforts to increase local awareness and engage the public to address pressing local water quality problems.

The service component and database effort promotes local ownership and community responsibility. The database provides easily accessible and useful information in an understandable form. Because water quality data is locally collected, stored and used by students, there is ownership and trust of the data. Schools become community information resources on water quality. Communities are more responsive and engaged in water quality protection and improvement when local youth monitor, report, and educate about local waters.

Target Audience(s): Households, homeowners, local decision and policy makers

Educational Purpose: Education, Capacity Building

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