

# **Making Our Nonpoint Source Pollution Education Programs Effective**

## ***Case Study Presentation***

Based on a research paper by:

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### **Abstract**

In Wisconsin, nonpoint source pollution has been identified as the greatest cause of water quality degradation affecting over 75% of inland lakes, many of the harbors and coastal waters on the Great Lakes, and substantial groundwater resources. The majority of this problem is attributed to agricultural land use. Pervasive water quality problems are the symptom – the primary cause being the failure to implement existing remedial technologies. Although education is often a major part of watershed protection programs, education strategies vary greatly from project to project and from educator to educator. Educational programming, often referred to as information and education (I&E) strategies, provides information to landowners in order to promote environmentally beneficial actions such as the installation of best management practices on farms. Prior research in Wisconsin's Priority Watershed Program has shown that I&E strategies, especially those that seek to reduce nonpoint source pollution from agriculture, generally rely on a combination of two approaches: 1. Diffuse communication campaign efforts; 2. One-on-one information transfer techniques such as on-farm visits, individual farm trials, and individual farmer consultation. To assess the effectiveness of these two approaches, this research compares the rate of adoption of nutrient management strategies by farmers in two different Wisconsin watersheds over the same five-year period of 1990 to 1995. This research supports an integration of a diverse set of educational approaches such as on-farm visits, and small group demonstrations, and workshops. An over-reliance on diffuse information dissemination may come at the expense of interpersonal information transfer through direct farmer contact.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Editor's Note: This paper was published previously and not available for publication as part of the Symposium Proceedings ((Shepard, 1999).

## References

Shepard, R. (1999). Making Our Nonpoint Source Pollution Education Programs Effective. *Journal of Extension*, 37. <http://www.joe.org/joe/1999october/a2.html> (accessed June 2004).