

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

**RESEARCH PAPER PRESENTATION**

**Presenter(s): John Vickery, Palmer Land Trust**

**Title: Application Of Marketing Techniques To Extension Programming Decision Making: Minnesota Livestock Producers, Etc.**

**Abstract:** A combination of focus groups and pre-discussion survey with livestock producers was employed to identify preferred Extension education methods and topics. The focus groups took place in the spring and summer following a winter education program conducted at the county level that focused on manure application practices, nutrient management, and protection of sensitive areas. By exploring issues in detailed discussions with small groups of producers, we gained information and valuable insights that can guide future information, communication, and education efforts to serve this audience. We were also following an important principle of adult education: the audience or participants should have the opportunity to inform the topics or issues covered, as well as the media or format. By discussing and surveying the practices they employ and the reasons for not adopting recommended practices, we also gained knowledge about the topics or issues that ostensibly should be addressed—through Extension outreach and/or through regulatory, incentives-based, or social-marketing approaches. We found that among seven suggested ‘educational items or opportunities’, the preferred format was ‘publications’. We present some advantageous features of the focus group–questionnaire combination of approaches, including the fact that by beginning with the questionnaire, participants had time to reflect on the questions prior to entering into discussion. We conclude that the combination is effective. However, the resources required for employing both methods is significantly higher than for one method alone, suggesting that the use of the combination is more appropriate for relatively larger projects or Extension programs.

**Target Audience(s):** Farmers

**Educational Purpose:** Information, education and communication

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