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Engaging People in Learning about Water Resources

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Engaging People in Learning about Water Resources

Abstract: Connections to K-12 educators and state education networks can provide vital links to the communities that our outreach, research and management strategies serve. Project WET (Water Education for Teachers) is an international program for public education related to water that can be used to engage adults and children in learning about their water resources. The program provides curricular resources, teaching aids and most importantly educator training in the science of water, the social aspects of water resources (historic through future), and the challenges we face as scientists and managers to maintain high quality and sustained utilization of this vital resource.

Project WET programs delivered through State Water Centers have as part of their mission to promote understanding of critical state and regional water management and policy issues through community outreach and public education. Interactive Project WET lessons can be used to interest people in learning about water and their water resource issues. They become the vehicles to engage people in understanding locally relevant issues. How many people understand how the ground water system works within the larger hydrologic cycle? How many people know where their water comes from, how it is treated and how it is managed for the future? How many people really know what constitutes a drought?

By determining what piques peoples' interest and how they learn and retain information, Water Centers can deliver meaningful outreach. Have you ever been to a lecture that you thought was incredible and then gone home and only been able to recall one or two reasons why? For many of us memory is triggered by active engagement. Project WET lessons, developed by specialists in the field and educators, engage people in learning by using multiple learning modalities.

Project WET programs can be an asset to a state water institute. Sponsorship can come from state, county and city governments as well as corporate partners interested in promoting hydro-literacy, intelligent water use, water sustainability and water stewardship. Many agencies' mission includes water education and outreach and they look to research based University programs to meet that mission. By connecting with your state Project WET office, centers have an opportunity to reach their citizenry with cutting edge research, the latest water management decisions and up-to-date water policy.

Project WET has programs in all 50 states, some of which are connected already through the state Institutes. This presentation will highlight some of the existing programs in the US that have successfully used Project WET as an outreach tool and look at the opportunities that exist within the Project WET network to expand its use as a connection to new public networks.

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