

**USDA CSREES Regional Water Coordination Program,
Annual Conference, EPA Region 2
May 24-25, 2005**

Day 2:

Day 2 began with EPA staff discussing emerging opportunities for research, education and extension to support watershed management. Mr. Fred Luckey discussed EPA Region 2 Great Lakes Initiative in New York State. Mr. Luckey identified several areas where the Land Grant Universities can contribute to the Great Lakes' effort. Mr. Antony Tseng presented information on the Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Authority (PRASA), Watershed Stewardship Program. PRASA is conducting a voluntary Supplemental Environmental Project (SEP) to address water quality issues, particularly in the Loiza & La Plata Watersheds. Mr. Thomas O'Connor from the EPA Office of Research and Development discussed on-going EPA research on stormwater BMPs. Mr. O'Connor presented information on various EPA projects, including the **Integrated Stormwater Management Decision Support Framework (ISMDSF), which drew much interest from the audience.** The objective of this project is to develop methodologies and decision-support tools for cost-effective placement of BMPs at strategic locations in urban watersheds, based on integrated data collection and hydrologic, hydraulic, and water quality modeling. Mr. O'Connor outlined some future needs, including: reducing the cost of monitoring BMPs effectiveness, incorporating sampling locations into BMP designs, developing an appropriate schedule for maintenance and periodic inspections, refining the understanding of model scaling and BMP placement on a watershed basis, retrofitting BMPs to built out areas, understanding BMP processes (chemical, aeration, nutrient cycling, pathogens), and incorporating habitat creation into BMP design. Mr. Richard Balla of EPA Region 2 discussed the Peconic Estuary Program. There are several estuary programs in EPA Region 2. The Peconic Program is an excellent example of uniting partners to develop cost-effective solutions to the eutrophication problems that plague the Peconic Estuary.

Ms. Deb Grantham began the next session with an introduction to the Regional Project efforts in the area of onsite wastewater treatment system management. This area has been largely successful due to Ms. Grantham and her university and agency colleagues' efforts to encourage New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands to collaborate to deal with common onsite problems in the Region. Joyce Hudson from US EPA Headquarters in Washington, DC presented the national perspective on onsite system management. Although challenged by limited financial resources, EPA realizes the importance of this issue and has pledged to work with local, state and federal partners to help address better management of onsite wastewater treatment systems. Dr. Kitt Farrell-Poe of the University of Arizona and the Chair of the Consortium of Institutes for Decentralized Wastewater Treatment gave a presentation on her work in Arizona and throughout the country to mitigate onsite wastewater treatment system management issues. The consortium that Dr. Farrell-Poe chairs is a driving force to promote research, education and extension efforts in this area.

Mr. Dale Morton from the University of the Virgin Islands concluded the session with a discussion of the most recent training session that was organized by the Regional Project. The training sessions conducted in Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands were a great success and will hopefully be the beginning of annual training programs that can be delivered throughout the region. A brief discussion of the road blocks that exist in the area of onsite wastewater treatment system management was held. Although funding constraints exist, this area is one that needs to be pushed forward due to its overwhelming importance in EPA Region 2.



The final session of Day 2 was on animal waste management. Dr. Rafael Davila led the session with an overview of the on-going efforts in EPA Region 2. Substantial work has been performed to help small farms address animal waste management in Puerto Rico. Monique Purcell of the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, Jeff Ten Eyck of the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, Marie Banasiak with Rutgers Cooperative Research and Extension, and Daniel Briggs of Dairy Nutrition Incorporated offered their varied perspectives on the environmental management challenges facing small animal farms. Small farms operators are very concerned about being regulated and often require one-on-one attention to develop the environmental management programs that are most appropriate for their operations. Clearly, “one size fits all” is not a term that can be used to address animal waste management issues in EPA Region 2. Day 2 concluded with Dr. Christopher Obropta discussing the proposed model farm at the Equine Science Center at the Rutgers’ Cook Campus facility. This model farm will serve as a research and education center to help small farms address their environmental concerns. Mr. Potent indicated that if funding could be secured, a regional symposium for faculty and agency representatives would be conducted at the model farm site in conjunction with a producer training session.

Summary:

The Annual Conference for the USDA CSREES Regional Water Coordination Program for EPA Region 2 was a great success. Over 70 were in attendance, with over 25 presenters giving their perspectives on water quality trading, onsite wastewater treatment system management, and animal waste management. Hearty discussions were held on each of these topics, outlining the next steps for the regional project. Some of these action items are listed below. We are eager for renewed funding from USDA CSREES to continue our efforts to improve water resources in EPA Region 2.