

2015 Wisconsin Extension Wetlands Education Assessment

Key Survey Findings

The goal of the Wetlands Education Assessment was to guide the Land Use and Wetlands Training Team to support educators in statewide wetland programming.

March 2015 Survey Respondents

This survey was sent to 338 Extension educators and 173 responded (51% total response rate).

Response rates were similar for CNRED and ANRE program areas. WGNHS responses were merged with ANRE due to their small sample size.

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CNRED: Community, Natural Resource and Economic Development

ANRE: Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension

WGNHS: Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey



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Funder:



Team:



Center for Land Use Education
College of Natural Resources
University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point

Wetlands education is relevant – a majority of respondents already engage in it and there is room to be more proactive.

Educators agree that:

Wetlands are a “moderately” or a “very” important topic to address.

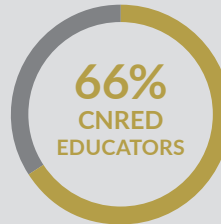
(87% CNRED, 80% ANRE educators)

Wetlands education is part of UWEX’s role.

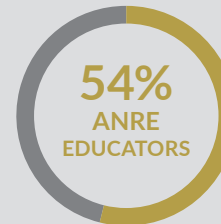
(82% CNRED, 68% ANRE educators)

Their outreach involves or has the potential to involve wetlands education.

(73% CNRED, 60% ANRE educators)



have engaged in wetlands education. Most spend about 5% of their time on the topic. (range = 1-80% FTE).



have engaged in wetlands education. Most spend about 5% of their time on the topic. (range = 1-26% FTE).

Main areas where educators see wetlands education fitting into their programming: (3 most common responses from each program area)

Agricultural

Best Management Practices

(74% ANRE educators)

Water Quality

(71% ANRE & 66% CNRED educators)

Land Use

(60% CNRED educators)

Water Resource Planning/Policy

(51% CNRED educators)

Adapting to Climate Change

(46% ANRE educators)

Ways educators are involved in wetlands education:

Referring community members to an agency expert

(47% CNRED, 46% ANRE educators)

Referring community members to an Extension colleague

(43% CNRED, 39% ANRE educators)

Providing information based on their own knowledge

(41% CNRED, 20% ANRE educators)

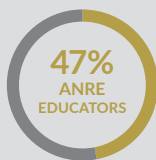
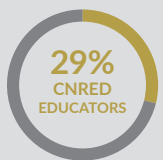
Proactively educating their community about wetlands

(28% CNRED, 16% ANRE educators)

Educators believe many wetland needs are unmet – they would like to increase their own knowledge of wetlands and learn how to communicate the values of wetlands in ways that are relevant to their stakeholders.

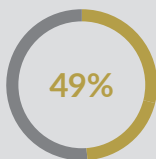
Educators identified three main barriers to providing wetlands education.

- 1. Wetlands are not perceived as a priority issue for local communities.**
(44% CNRED, 40% ANRE educators)
- 2. Educators feel they do not have adequate knowledge of wetlands to provide education.** (28% CNRED, 45% ANRE educators)
- 3. Educators feel they do not have enough time to work on the issue.**
(24% CNRED, 20% ANRE educators)

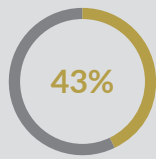


believe they have low levels of wetlands knowledge.

Percentages of educators saying the following would be valuable in their work:



Wetland outreach materials



Expert-led, field-based training in their community

Areas where educators want to increase their wetlands knowledge:

How to communicate the benefits of wetlands to their audiences

How to protect, restore, or manage wetlands

Knowing when a wetland expert is needed

How to find and secure the assistance of a wetland expert

How to recognize wetland extent and functions in the field

How to track and apply new wetland science

How to conduct wetland planning

91%

Why wetlands are important

84%

How wetlands are protected

83%

The extent and impact of wetland loss

76%

How to manage wetlands

75%

How or where to restore wetlands

73%

How to recognize wetlands on the landscape

64%

How to acquire and use wetland maps and data

45%

39%

34%

30%

21%

20%

Most educators identified multiple topics that could improve audience understanding of wetland issues:

About the Team

The Land Use and Wetlands Training Team is a collaborative effort of the University of Wisconsin-Extension, Center for Land Use Education, Environmental Resources Center, and Wisconsin Wetlands Association. The Team was established in 2013 based on a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The long-term goal of the team is to support voluntary wetland protection and restoration by developing and delivering Extension-based, local government programming. Recent activities include:

Developing and delivering field-based *Reading the Wetland Landscape* workshops for County Planning and Zoning staff.

Delivering wetland information to local land use decision-makers through *Plan Commission and Zoning Board Workshops*.

Hosting a *Summit on Wetlands and Watershed Planning*.

Evaluating Extension educators' wetland education and training needs.

Next Steps

To help educators begin to address wetland education needs and barriers, the Team applied for and received a second round of funding from EPA in 2015. Activities under this two-year project will include:

Providing a two-day field-based learning opportunity for Extension educators.

Soliciting additional feedback on wetland materials and information to support educator needs.

Piloting approaches to integrate wetlands into ongoing Extension work by delivering placed-based training and technical support to two Wisconsin communities.

Hosting a second *Wetlands Summit* that will bring together educators, wetland experts, and local land use decision-makers to provide updates on new wetland data, tools, and materials and discuss how to promote their use and understanding.

Contact Information

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Environmental Resources Center

www.uwex.edu/erc, 608-262-0020, erc@cals.wisc.edu

General Wetland Resources

Outreach materials including factsheets, handbooks, and a model ordinance to help private landowners, community organizations, and land use decision-makers protect and manage Wisconsin's wetlands are available at: www.wisconsinwetlands.org

Wisconsin Wetland Inventory maps, regulatory information, and science and outreach materials are available on the DNR website at: <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/wetlands>.

Tools for identifying wetlands, planning for wetlands, and strengthening wetland policies are described in a newsletter at:

www.uwsp.edu/cnr-ap/clue/Documents/Tracker/TrackerSummer2013.pdf

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