

Building Capacity of Watershed Leaders

Public Value Statement

The overall goal of this project is to increase the capacity of soil conservation and watershed leaders in North Dakota to lead watershed and community-based projects that will protect water quality for future generations.

The Situation

ND Soil Conservation districts struggle to fill board positions with qualified board members. Existing board members indicated lack of understanding with their roles and a desire to become more effective while supporting soil conservation work.

Extension Response

A federal grant utilizing EPA 319 funds was received in partnership with the ND Department of Health - Water Quality Division. The grant dollars were utilized to create and develop a leadership curriculum for soil conservation leaders.

Impacts

Ninety-five people have participated in the academy, representing 53 zip codes, and 37 of the 54 Soil Conservation Districts. Sessions have been held in Bismarck, Devils Lake, Minot, Dickinson, and Valley City. Of the attendees of ND Soil Conservation Watershed Leadership Academy, participants included local North Dakota watershed project coordinators, ND Department of Health staff, Soil Conservation District board members, Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) staff members, volunteers, natural resource management students, and other partners that assist in meeting the water resource needs of the state. These groups are all involved in water and natural resource management and in many cases have been given authority for oversight.

Post survey results indicate that:

- 84% feel confident using parliamentary procedure
- 86% now feel comfortable making a motion in a meeting.
- 87% know how to access open meeting laws and how to use them

Feedback

"I feel like I am ready to go back and do my job now, I had so much uncertainty before this" Devils Lake participant

"Because of the skills and knowledge I learned about facilitation, I felt confident enough to facilitate a breakout session the next day at the Wildlife Society meeting." Matt, Sargent County Soil Conservation

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Non-Extension Collaborators

Jim Collins, environmental scientist with the North Dakota Department of Health's Division of Water Quality

Resource Links

<https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/ndssc/leadership-academy>