



POLLUTION IDENTIFICATION AND REPORTING



The Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership (PREP) is a collaborative watershed program that works in New Hampshire and southernmost Maine to protect and restore the Great Bay Estuary and Hampton-Seabrook Estuary. PREP encourages coastal watershed communities and citizens to work with their state agencies to improve the environmental health of the region's estuaries. One way to do this is to enlist citizens and municipal workers in water pollution identification and reporting efforts. However, interviews with state agency personnel revealed that citizens often can not accurately identify pollution incidents and many do not know who to contact when a problem is identified.

THE NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM IN ACTION

To address these issues, PREP developed an outreach program to help identify pollution incidents, especially those that require immediate action, and to provide clear information as to what state or local agency is responsible for addressing a particular incident. Materials created to convey this information included large posters for municipal offices, bookmarks for libraries, a website, and a 32-page interpretive guide to surface water conditions. Outreach was targeted to municipal public works departments and Conservation Commissions, with secondary audiences including

municipal building inspectors, health officers, watershed organizations, and the general public. The entire effort was part of PREP's broader "Be Part of the Solution" campaign that encourages watershed stewardship.

The water pollution identification field guide describes 22 conditions that commonly can be found in or around surface water in the coastal watershed, including oil sheens, brown water, orange slime, trash, rotten egg smell, and foam. For each condition, likely causes are explained as well as the environmental/social impacts, corrective actions,

and preventive actions. An extensive listing of resources is presented to help readers learn more about the conditions. Emergency situations are highlighted and clear response procedures are provided.

The guide was designed for the layperson who works or recreates outdoors. Easily understandable interpretation of surface water conditions helps readers distinguish a pollution incident from a natural phenomenon. Clear reporting procedures are offered for pollution incidents. The guide also suggests actions that communities can



Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership

EFFECTIVE



EFFICIENT



ADAPTIVE



COLLABORATIVE

take to prevent water pollution and protect vital water resources. The campaign has reached thousands and encouraged effective cooperation among many stakeholders to manage critical natural resources.

More than 1,700 guides and 900 posters and bookmarks have been distributed. In addition to being well received by the target audiences, some unintended audiences have found the materials particularly useful. Watershed advisory groups, lake associations, and volunteer water quality monitoring groups have showed particular interest in the guides and distributed them as part of their volunteer training programs. An informal survey of municipal public works departments revealed that the attractive posters were often placed in high visibility areas, such as lunch rooms and maintenance garages, that were frequented by work crews and office staff. Interviews with state agency

personnel suggest that the outreach efforts likely improved the quality and quantity of pollution incident reports; however, a correlation between outreach efforts and the number of pollution reports is inconclusive. It is clear that the interpretive guides, posters, and bookmarks contribute to a stewardship ethic regarding water resources that highlights everyone's responsibility to maintain shared resources. The outreach project reinforces the notion that water resource protection is every citizen's responsibility and that each individual can be an important part of the solution to our environmental challenges.

Visit **www.prep.unh.edu** to learn more about this and other PREP efforts.

EPA's National Estuary Program (NEP) is a unique and successful coastal watershed-based program established in 1987 under the Clean Water Act Amendments.

The NEP involves the public and collaborates with partners to protect, restore, and maintain the water quality and ecological integrity of 28 estuaries of national significance located in 18 coastal states and Puerto Rico.

For more information about the NEP go to www.epa.gov/owow/estuaries.

