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Needs Assessment: A Report on Seven Focus Groups in Ohio: Report Summary

Kevin O'Brien
Cleveland State University, k.e.obrien@csuohio.edu

Daniel BaracsKay

Wendy A. Kellogg
Cleveland State University, w.kellogg@csuohio.edu

Michael McGoun

Claudette Robey
Cleveland State University, c.robey@csuohio.edu

See next page for additional authors

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Authors

Kevin O'Brien, Daniel BaracsKay, Wendy A. Kellogg, Michael McGoun, Claudette Robey, Michael J. Tevesz, and Kirstin S. Toth

Key Findings (continued)

- ✦ Enhanced information about the economic aspects of coastal resources management and protection.
 - ✦ Information to be organized in a more useful way, including information relevant to a particular local situation or issue.
 - ✦ Enhancement of the ecological literacy of the public to provide key support for programs.
 - ✦ Coordinate information sources concerning coastal and watershed resource and management issues through an information clearinghouse.
 - ✦ The non-provider groups also desired a mix of resource-oriented and management knowledge. Additionally, the provider group wanted formal training in specific areas.
- *Training Program Design*
 - ✦ Designing optimal lengths of time for training sessions, thus minimizing time away from job responsibilities.
 - ✦ Practical outcomes to training sessions, rather than merely receiving new information.
 - ✦ Training sessions that deliver what is advertised and carefully focused rather than too broadly cast.
 - ✦ Removal of the term “coastal” from literature and training programs, due to the fact that it is confusing to many participants.
 - ✦ Identification of resources that allow organizations to take advantage of training programs.

Key findings resulting from the non-provider groups are:

- ✦ Training delivery locations should be “closer to home” to make attendance more convenient.
- ✦ Trainers should have practical, current experience and the ability to deliver this experience effectively, and for “train the trainer” programs to be developed to this end.

Prepared by

The Great Lakes Environmental Finance Center
Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs
Cleveland State University
1717 Euclid Ave., Suite 120
Cleveland OH 44115
216/687-2188
<<http://www.glefc.org>>



The Urban University Program is a unique network linking the resources of Ohio's urban universities with the communities and students they serve, in a cooperative effort to improve the state's urban regions.

Cleveland State University



Coastal Resources Training Needs Assessment: A Summary of the Focus Group Results

March 2003



Old Woman Creek National
Estuarine Research Reserve



This is the second of a two-phase project sponsored in conjunction with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) Coastal Training Program, prepared by the Great Lakes Environmental Finance Center (GLEFC) for the Old Woman Creek National Estuarine Research Reserve, Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR), and Ohio Sea Grant.

Background

The Great Lakes Environmental Finance Center (GLEFC) of the Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs at Cleveland State University was engaged by the Old Woman Creek National Estuarine Research Reserve and its partners (Ohio Department of Natural Resources and the Ohio Sea Grant College Program), recently to conduct a *training needs assessment* that would guide them in developing a *comprehensive training program on coastal resources management* for the Lake Erie basin.

Overview

Coastal decision-makers and training providers in the Ohio Lake Erie basin participated in seven focus groups to generate information on coastal resources knowledge and training needs. Six of the focus groups were comprised of a cross-section of professionals who make decisions affecting watershed areas or Lake Erie coastal areas (non-providers); the seventh was comprised of training providers (providers). Discussions centered on two main areas: **core knowledge needs** and **training needs**.

This *summary* outlines the *results* of the seven focus groups. If you would like a complete copy of the report, you may download it (PDF format) from our web site at <www.glefc.org>.

Training/Information Desired by Focus Group Participants

Individuals participating in the non-provider and provider focus groups completed a questionnaire rating their level of agreement on coastal resources management knowledge priorities and whether or not additional information was desired on certain topics. Both groups were asked about two broad types of knowledge -- Resource-oriented Knowledge and Management-oriented Knowledge -- with subcategories of environmental issues organized under each knowledge heading.

With regard to Resource-oriented Knowledge, the non-provider and provider groups considered Lake/Water Resources issues and Land Use/Infrastructure issues as priorities, and also indicated that they would like additional information and formal training in these areas.

Relative to Management-oriented Knowledge, the non-provider groups indicated that issues of Laws and Regulations and Best Management Practices were top priorities, and also expressed an interest in receiving training and information in these areas. With the provider group, the issue of Public Outreach/Education was rated a top priority. The provider group, however, indicated a collective interest in receiving information on all issues, and receiving training on the Use of New Communications Technologies and Partnership Opportunities.

Focus Group Themes

Several common themes emerged from discussions in the six non-provider focus groups.

- *Core Knowledge Needs*
 - ✍ To understand the economic impact and value of coastal and watershed protection.
 - ✍ To establish a central clearinghouse for the initiation, exchange, retrieval and dispersal of information.
 - ✍ To educate the public on basic watershed impact issues.
- *Training Needs*
 - ✍ Training that is locally focused to participants' needs.
 - ✍ Assistance in locating funding to conduct training.
 - ✍ Problem-solving, consensus-building and communication skills training.
 - ✍ Training programs that are convenient and accessible.
 - ✍ Training programs that deliver what is marketed or advertised.

Several common themes also emerged from discussions in the provider focus group.

- *Core Knowledge Needs*
 - ✍ A basic understanding of scientific concepts.
 - ✍ Knowledge of communications and problem-solving techniques.
 - ✍ A central clearinghouse for disseminating information and directing inquiries.
- *Training Needs*
 - ✍ A data collection, management and distribution system to more effectively and efficiently relay information to audiences.
 - ✍ An integrated understanding of the Lake Erie basin and watershed as an entire ecosystem.
 - ✍ Training that educates decision-makers regarding their responsibilities for stewardship of the watershed.

Key Findings

Several key findings were identified from a synthesis of information from the focus group discussions as well as the questionnaire results. These findings fall into two main areas: core knowledge needs, or **Knowledge Development**, and how training venues should be established and managed, or **Training Program Design**. Findings for both the non-provider and provider groups are as follows:

- *Knowledge Development*
 - ✍ Quality, better organized and territorially targeted training programs that would integrate knowledge across topics and be more focused on regional resource issues and management problems.

Project Sponsor Contacts

Ohio Department of Natural Resources
Office of Coastal Management
105 West Shoreline Drive
Sandusky, OH 44870
(419) 626-7980 / email: yetty.alley@dnr.state.oh.us

Linda Feix, *Education Coordinator*
Old Woman Creek National Estuarine Research Reserve
2514 Cleveland Road East
Huron, OH 44839
(419) 433-4601 / email: linda.feix@noaa.gov

Jeffrey M. Reutter, Ph.D., *Director*
Ohio Sea Grant College Program
1314 Kinnear Road
Columbus, OH 43212-1194
(614) 292-8949 / email: reutter.1@osu.edu