



WATER RESOURCES RESEARCH GRANT PROPOSAL

Title: Director's Office, Information Transfer and Student Projects

Focus Categories: M&P

Descriptors: Information transfer, Education, Water quality management

Duration: March 1, 2000 - Feb. 28, 2001

FY 2000 Federal Funds: \$6,500

FY 2000 Non-Federal Funds: \$28,065

Principal Investigators: Keith S. Porter, Director, NYS Water Resources Institute

Congressional district: NY 26

The Director and staff of the NYS Water Resources institute carry out numerous public service activities each year. Most of them are done in conjunction with multidisciplinary projects funded outside of the Water Resources Research Act context. In order to cross-link the WRRRA activities in this program to many other NYS WRI activities, a small portion of WRRRA resources are devoted to information transfer and student training functions.

Information Transfer to and from New York State Entities

NYS WRI staff participate in several New York State agency work groups and committees related to water quality management. Some of these are:

- New York State Soil and Water Conservation Committee - statutory body that oversees and funds certain activities by County Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Among many other functions, this body coordinates activities by New York's County Water Quality Coordinating Committees that deliver several State water quality management programs to municipalities and businesses.
- NYS Nonpoint Source Coordinating Committee - an interagency committee of State and local government representatives who advise about delivery of New York's nonpoint source management program through local government. Since its founding, NYS WRI has been a member of the steering committee of the body and NYS WRI staff serve on several standing work groups.
- NYS DEC Water Management Advisory Committee - a cross section of private and non-profit interest groups that advises the NYS DEC Water Division about all programs within the Division, primarily related to the Clean Water Act. NYS WRI originally

represented New York's higher education community when the committee was founded and now co-represents with a colleague from the State University of New York at Buffalo.

- New York State Health Department Safe Drinking Water Advisory Committee - a body that advises this water supply regulatory agency about all aspects of public water supply supervision under the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act. This was reactivated in 1998.

Besides presenting many opportunities to link university research work to agency staff, the committees are invaluable means to ensure that NYS WRI's public service projects and WRA activities are as close as possible to New York's higher priority water management needs.

WRA funds cover a portion of the travel, communication, and staff salary costs for NYS WRI to participate in these committees.

Student Public Service Activities

Besides the financial assistance to graduate and undergraduate students within projects, NYS WRI interacts with students in several ways:

- NYS WRI routinely employs three to eight undergraduate student assistants to work on projects. Project assignments balance project needs with student career and academic interests. Most of NYS WRI's student staff remain in environmental science fields or go on to graduate school in such a field. One or two of these students within a "vintage" are paid from WRA funds to offset the fact that none of NYS WRI's primary sponsors (typically regulatory and planning programs of US EPA and New York State agencies) have student education as a goal. The most successful recent student activity was a 1998 demonstration of how county entities could perform Source Water Assessments effectively and efficiently; four WRI student staff and a student from Juniata College in Pennsylvania performed all of the technical work on four pilot assessments with coaching from County staff and water suppliers.

- NYS WRI staff create opportunities for Masters level students in professional programs, such as the Master of Engineering Program in Cornell's School of Civil and Environmental Engineering, to perform public service projects to help fulfill their curriculum requirements. The students typically work in teams of two to four on a project topic negotiated among a NYS WRI governmental cooperator, the student faculty advisor, and the students themselves. The government agency cooperator provides data and acts as the "client" to whom the students report results. NYS WRI staff coach the students on project operation tactics, data interpretation, diplomacy with the client, and other aspects that a realistic project requires. NYS covers incidental costs such as travel, telephoning, and copying. Typically these projects match with an activity NYS WRI staff are already performing for a grant project with the governmental cooperator, so the students can take advantage of the larger mass of related activity.

· In 1999 NYS WRI staff catalyzed a class project analogous to the professional masters projects, with Cornell's Department of Landscape Architecture. The students performed an environmental land use design project for a municipality in the New York City watershed. This is likely to be repeated in subsequent semesters.

WRRRA funds cover salaries for one or two student interns, student project expenses, communication and travel costs, and a small amount of NYS WRI staff salaries.