



Applying knowledge to improve water quality

Great Lakes

Regional Water Program

A Partnership of USDA CSREES & Land Grant Colleges and Universities

Winter 2009

The Environment Report Brings "The Great Coast" to Millions

GREAT LAKES REGION



National Themes:
Conservation and Agricultural Water Management
Watershed Management

Project Description

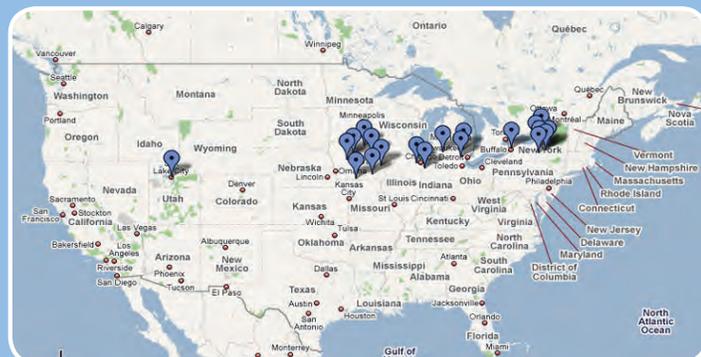
The Environment Report, a production of Michigan Public Media based at the University of Michigan, creates free, weekly satellite news feeds of environmental reports that are broadcast by more than 130 public radio stations in 20 states and the District of Columbia (see Figure 1a). The news service provides three to four features and four to five news spots every week. In October 2008, *The Environment Report* launched a new, daily, four-minute report hosted by Senior Editor Lester Graham. Since its October launch, the report has been picked up by 19 public radio stations, including stations in Detroit, Chicago, Salt Lake City, and Buffalo (see Figure 1b).

Because of the size and demographic makeup of the public radio audience, *The Environment Report* is uniquely positioned to inform the American public about land use and water quality. *The Environment Report* reaches an audience tuned in for general news reports. Unlike an audience tuning in to an environmentally or science-based show, this audience is not necessarily seeking environmental information. The public radio audience comes from a cross-section of political beliefs and is one of America's most educated, most influential, and most civic-minded audiences. As these listeners learn about the relationship between water quality and agriculture through high-quality journalism, they are able to make informed decisions. Under its most recent grant from the United States Department of Agriculture, the staff at *The Environment Report* is producing and distributing 120 public radio stories focused on the

Figure 1.



a. Stations airing stand-alone news service stories from *The Environment Report*.



b. Stations airing the new, daily *Environment Report* hosted by Senior Editor Lester Graham.

PROJECT CONTACTS

Mark Brush

Senior Broadcast Producer
GLRC's Environment Report
Michigan Radio
535 West William Street
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48103
Phone: (734) 764-9210
Email: brush@glrc.org

PROJECT PARTNERS

Illinois Farm Bureau

National Public Radio

Partners include over 130 radio stations in 20 states and the District of Columbia. Please visit www.environmentreport.org for the most recent station list and for story archives and links.

For more information about the Great Lakes Regional Water Program, please contact:

Rebecca Power

University of Wisconsin
Regional Water Liaison
Phone: (608) 263-3425
rebecca.power@uwex.edu

dynamic relationship between the agricultural sector and water quality in the Great Lakes watershed and in other watersheds in the eight Great Lakes states and beyond. The ultimate goal of these reports is to educate policy makers, farmers, landowners, community leaders, and



Hawthorne Valley Farm. Photo by Kinna Ohman.

the general public about the relationship of agricultural policies and actions to regional water quality. In addition to the stand-alone reports and the daily show, the reports are posted on *The Environment Report's* website (<http://environmentreport.org>) and packaged in a daily podcast (this NPR partnership podcast averages 15,000 downloads per month). Each week, 447,000 listeners throughout the country hear *Environment Report* stories (Radio Research Consortium Fall 2007 National Estimates). This estimate does NOT include the audience for the new, daily show (audience data for the daily report is being compiled at the time of this writing).

Outcomes

During the current USDA funded project, *The Environment Report* has expanded its evaluation of listener knowledge and attitudes. An initial phone survey was completed in 2006. A comparison phone survey was conducted in 2008 and found the following:

In 2006 a total of 37% of respondents reported making more environmentally friendly purchases. In 2008, 65% indicated that they were making more environmentally friendly purchases – an increase of nearly 30% in two years.

In 2006, 31% said that they have purchased more foods that have a lower environmental impact. In 2008, 48% reported this purchasing behavior, an increase of 17% in two years.

The independent research firm, Market Trends Research, reached the following conclusion: "Public radio, including *The Environment Report*, remains an extremely influential and credible source of environmental information for these listeners. The most concrete and convincing evidence of the significance of public radio environmental reporting is: In 2008, 84% agreed that environmental reports on public radio affect their attitudes about the environment."



www.uwex.edu/ces/regionalwaterquality

<http://www.environmentreport.org>