



# *The Environmental Pathogens Information Network (EPI-NET)*

GREAT LAKES  
REGION



## **National Themes:**

Drinking Water and Human Health  
Pollution Assessment and Prevention

## **Project Description**

The challenges associated with managing microbial contamination of water resources and the roles that science plays in addressing those challenges are at the forefront of water policy discussions across the country. The Environmental Pathogens Information Network (EPI-NET) is a stable, centralized source of environmental microbiological contamination information that provides a reliable point of reference (methods and data interpretation) on which to develop a coherent national research agenda and good public policy.

In addition to providing the scientific and user communities with a centralized source of information about environmental pathogens, EPI-NET encourages information sharing and cooperation among stakeholders, regulatory officials, and technical experts to the benefit of both the scientific and regulatory communities. EPI-NET also helps the general public understand the science and possible environmental consequences of pathogenic microbes in the environment as well as suggesting prevention approaches. Their website (<http://www.epi-net.org>) provides visitors with valuable references and the recent news related to pathogen contamination and detection in water and food.

## **Project Goals**

The overarching goal of EPI-NET is to develop and then transfer the fullest possible understanding of how microorganisms enter into and function in watersheds so that we can properly manage and prevent the spread of microbial pathogens and the diseases they cause. To reach that goal, a series of workshops and information packages, as well as a comprehensive project website, have been developed.



Participants take part in the lecture portion of a recent workshop, "Use of Indicators for Monitoring Microbial Water Quality: A Hands-on Experience," held at the UGS Microbiology Laboratory in Columbus, Ohio.

## PROJECT CONTACTS

### Ron Turco

Department of Agronomy  
Purdue University  
West Lafayette, Indiana, 47907  
Phone: (765) 494-8077  
Email: rturco@purdue.edu

### Militza Carrero-Colon

Department of Agronomy  
Purdue University  
West Lafayette, Indiana 47907  
Phone: (765) 496-7737  
Email: carreroc@purdue.edu

## PROJECT PARTNERS

EPA Region 5

USGS Microbiology Laboratory, Columbus, Ohio

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

## Outcomes

The project establishes a foundation for collaborative education and outreach efforts to facilitate a widespread understanding of how pathogenic microorganisms behave in the environment. In 2008, a workshop series was held to help promote that understanding among conservation and environmental professionals, government officials and other interested stakeholders.

These workshops featured topics such as: pathogens in the environment; emerging pathogens, including Cyanobacteria; and microbial source tracking. Staff from government agencies (EPA, USGS, state governments), universities and nonprofit environmental organizations have participated in the workshops.

The workshops have had a great impact on the attendees. The hands-on workshops, in particular, have been very well received. These are set up as laboratory classes, where attendees participate in practical exercises to learn about environmental pathogens.

Participants were enthusiastic in their evaluations of the workshops, and most found them useful for their research and professional careers. EPI-NET is developing another workshop series for the upcoming year.



Participants performing sample filtration and bacterial counts during the workshop, "Use of Indicators for Monitoring Microbial Water Quality: A Hands-on Experience," held at the UGS Microbiology Laboratory in Columbus, Ohio.



[www.uwex.edu/ces/regionalwaterquality](http://www.uwex.edu/ces/regionalwaterquality)

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