

Watershed Exchange and Technology Partnership

USDA Forest Service
Northeastern Area
State and Private Forestry



Tools and education to manage forested drinking water supplies

Description:

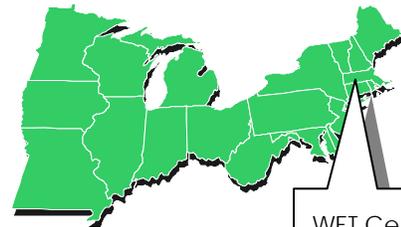
If you live in the northeast or Midwest, your faucet is “connected” to forests. Forests are critical to providing reliable supplies of safe drinking water: more than 3,500 community water systems—serving 70 million people regionwide—rely on them to safeguard water quality.

The Watershed Exchange and Technology (WET) Partnership convenes scientists, educators, field practitioners, and communities in the northeast and Midwest to share natural resource information and expertise on watershed forest management. Our main objective is to protect and manage forests critical to providing high quality water. WET and its cooperators develop and share state-of-the-art science on watershed structure, function, and biology, developing tools to assess and manage watersheds for forest, agricultural, urban, and mixed land uses. WET emphasizes practical, science-based solutions to conserving and restoring watersheds across public/private ownerships.



WET Partnership Center

The Center works with forest managers at major locations including the New York City Watersheds, the Quabbin-Wachusett Watersheds (Boston), and the Prettyboy Watershed (Baltimore), and assists small and medium-sized water suppliers and communities in cooperation with organizations such as the Trust for Public Land. Located at the University of Massachusetts–Amherst, the Center’s activities are coordinated by full time USDA Forest Service staff, in coordination with university faculty and students, other Federal and State agencies, and private groups.



WET Center
Amherst, MA

In cooperation with the University of Massachusetts, the USDA Forest Service provides:

- Information and Analysis – Communicating the importance and value of forests to water quality and drinking water supplies.
- Watershed Planning and Analysis – Identifying priority forests for watershed protection and to incorporate forests as green infrastructure in land use planning.
- Innovative Forest Management – Showcasing techniques to better manage forests to protect water quality and improve forest health.
- New tools and technology – Assisting forest managers with protection and management strategies.
- Learning – Assisting forest managers, decision makers, and communities, using publications, workshops, distance learning, and watershed stewardship exchanges to advance the understanding and application of watershed science.

Key Issues:

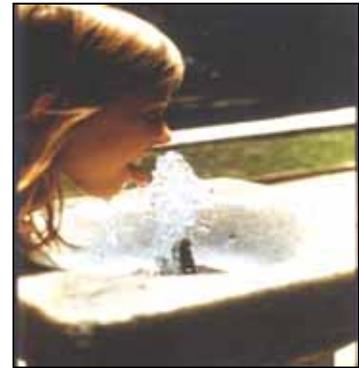
- Fewer than 40% of Americans know what a watershed is or how forests protect drinking water.
- Forested watersheds are at risk from suburban encroachment and lack of management. More needs to be done to evaluate and document the effects of land use and management on watershed condition.
- Technology and tools are available to help small and medium size water providers better protect and manage their lands, but this information is not delivered effectively to this audience.

- Professional foresters who manage forests for municipal water supplies need more information about the importance of forests to watersheds and drinking water and how to improve management practices.

Accomplishments:

In 2006, the WET Partnership:

- Designed and completed a regional assessment of the connections between forests, drinking water, and people, evaluating and ranking current and future conditions and identifying priorities for conservation and on-the-ground stewardship.
- Completed a draft Watershed Forest Manual Guidebook for watershed forest managers that describes: (1) functions and values of forests for protecting water supplies; (2) effects of natural change and disturbances on forests and water; and (3) managing to enhance the health and resilience of watershed forests. The guidebook will be an on-line, electronic-only publication.
- Designed and completed the Watershed Forest Management Information System (WFMS), a software program to aid water supply systems with fewer than 500 acres with the complexities of planning and implementing harvesting and road maintenance operations.
- Completed the final draft of a book: *Land Use Effects on Streamflow and Water Quality in the Northeastern United States* and contracted for publication.
- Completed data management and analysis software for the Northeastern Area Regional Forestry Best Management Practices Monitoring Protocol (BMP) and supported its application in NA States.



Budget History

Watershed Exchange and Technology Partnership (<i>\$ in thousands</i>)				
Funding Source	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006
Forest Stewardship	\$30	\$30	\$30	\$30
Urban and Community Forestry	20	20	20	0
US Environmental Protection Agency	0	25	30	0
Totals	\$50	\$75	\$80	\$30

Future Direction

The following activities are planned for 2007:

- Publish the *Forests, Water and People* final report and accompanying maps, online and in print; customize data and maps for NA states' use.
- Build capacity to deliver watershed forestry technology via the internet, such as posting expert advice from the northeastern watershed forest managers group (NEAWFM) on www.wetpartnership.org to assist watershed managers and consulting foresters.
- Complete the user's guide and outreach for the Watershed Forest Management Guidebook and Watershed Forest Management Information System.
- Complete the planning and develop the program for a 2008 "Liquid Assets: Forests to the Faucet" international conference for watershed forest managers.
- Publish the *Land Use Effects on Streamflow and Water Quality in the Northeastern United States* book; develop distribution plan; post key findings on WET website.

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