

Faculty and Students Empower Communities to Manage Water Resources

Nothing is more essential to life on earth than water. Every living animal and plant requires an adequate supply of high-quality water, and throughout human history there has been a clear, direct relationship between the abundance of clean water, population density, and quality of life.

New Jersey has historically been blessed with adequate surface and groundwater supplies, and this water has facilitated industrial, agricultural, and residential development throughout the state, resulting in the highest average population density in the United States. However, this population density and concomitant development have resulted in the contamination of water supplies, depletion of groundwater aquifers, and disruption of normal hydrologic cycles leading to an increase in both drought and flooding events. While approximately 11 percent of water bodies in the nation are listed as impaired or failing to meet designated uses, over 40 percent of assessed water bodies in New Jersey are impaired for various pollutants. As human-induced climate change results in intensification of the hydrologic cycle and a continued rise in sea level, these problems will worsen unless solutions are developed rapidly.

A Water Resources Program has been created at Rutgers University that integrates research, education, and extension activities to solve real-world problems that our stakeholders in New Jersey are struggling to address. The program has created several watershed restoration and protection planning efforts. In addition, various initiatives, such as Community-Project-Based Learning and Stormwater Management In Your Backyard, engage various New Jersey residents, from school children to senior citizens, to work together to fix the water problems of the state. Rutgers undergraduate and graduate students are incorporated in all aspects of these projects, providing important learning experiences while allowing them an opportunity to give back to their communities.

If you would like to support the Water Resources Program and help improve water quality and address flooding issues in New Jersey, please contact The Office of Development at 732-932-9000, ext. 576 or development@njaes.rutgers.edu.

For more information, visit us at www.njaes.rutgers.edu.

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