

THE NATIONAL NEMO NETWORK-LINKING LAND USE TO WATER QUALITY ALONG COASTAL GEORGIA WATERSHEDS

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Abstract. On July 17, 2002, the Coastal Georgia Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials (NEMO) Program at the University of Georgia Marine Extension Service (MAREX) received its Network Charter from the National NEMO Network. The National NEMO Network is a confederation of programs that educate local land use decision makers about the relationship of land use to natural resource protection. The original NEMO program was created in 1991 at the University of Connecticut as a partnership between the Cooperative Extension System, the Connecticut Sea Grant College Program and the Natural Resources Management and Engineering Department. MAREX originally joined the National NEMO Network in October 2000 through joint efforts by MAREX, the Georgia Sea Grant College Program, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, and the National NEMO coordinators at the University of Connecticut's Cooperative Extension System. At that time, 15 NEMO programs existed. The Coastal Georgia NEMO Program is a charter member of a national program that has doubled in 2-1/2 years. Today, the program boasts 30 programs in 29 states and territories. The National

Network allows for the local transfer of information and innovative methods to benefit the people who will actually make the difference in land use options.

THE NATIONAL NETWORK

Description

The National NEMO Network is a group of affiliated projects that educate local land use decision makers about the relationship of land use to natural resource protection. Network projects are organized and staffed differently in each state, but are typically multi-agency collaborations that include University-based Cooperative Extension and Sea Grant Extension programs, state and regional natural resource and planning agencies and nonprofit organizations. NEMO Network projects are founded on the key principals that:

- Land use, which is largely controlled at the local level, is a key determinant of the economic prosperity, environmental quality and character of America's communities;
- Local land use decision makers need useable research-based information and accessible technical tools to assist them in guiding the growth of their communities;
- "On-the-ground" professional outreach education programs are an effective delivery system for providing this information and these tools to local officials.

Mission Statement

The mission of the National NEMO Network is to help communities better protect natural resources while accommodating growth. This assistance will be rendered through non-regulatory, research-based educational outreach. In fulfilling this mission, the

Network will also further the missions of a great many agencies and organizations charged with protecting natural resources, preserving community character, promoting sustainable economic growth, reducing sprawl or making remote sensing technology useable by common citizens.

Vision

We foresee the network becoming a national force in providing much-needed assistance to community decision makers. We envision robust, well-funded and staffed projects in each of America's states and territories. We picture an evolving and adapting Network that is more than the sum of its parts, leveraging the talents and resources of a long list of federal, state, regional, local, and private organizations to the betterment of the entire system. We envision an ever increasing number of American communities taking a proactive planning approach to balancing growth and natural resource protection, empowered by the information, education and tools provided to them by the National NEMO Network.

Endorsement

The Coastal Georgia NEMO program endorses the following common elements:

- Our project is a non-regulatory, educational program. Our educational materials and methods are intended for educational, non-commercial use only.
- The Coastal Georgia NEMO project was created with the knowledge and assistance of the University of Connecticut NEMO Project.
- We endorse the Network mission statement of helping communities better protect natural resources while accommodating growth. To this end, our project addresses land use issues and promotes natural resource-based land use planning and other related techniques. The primary focus of the Coastal Georgia project is the 11 Coastal Zone Management counties in Georgia and the five major river watersheds discharging into the Georgia Bight.
- Our project has a primary target audience of local land use decision makers, as defined by project partners for our area.

Agreement

As a National Network member, we have agreed to the following conditions:

- Recognize the central coordinating role of the University of Connecticut NEMO "Network Hub,"

and the importance of the two-way communication with the Hub upon which this coordination depends. Hub services include Web-based communication, Network conferences, workshops, phone consultations and liaison activities with the National NEMO Network Interagency Work Group.

- Our project recognizes and promotes our relationship with the National NEMO Network. While our projects remain principally identified with our partner organizations, we have agreed to recognize our relationship with the Network on our educational materials and products as per guidelines circulated by the Hub. We also agreed to represent the Network at meetings or conferences, when deemed appropriate by consultation between the Hub and us.
- Information and materials are shared freely with other Network projects, so that the Network becomes "more than the sum of its parts" through the multiplying effects of information sharing. Materials adopted directly from other Network projects must acknowledge the original project as deemed appropriate by that project.
- We provide information and materials to the Network Hub, for the purposes of information sharing and Network-wide reporting and marketing. The Hub will collect and organize these materials into Network publications and reports, for the use and benefit of the entire Network.

OTHER OUTREACH AND EDUCATION EFFORTS

Coastal Georgia NEMO strives to bring nationally developed land-use technology and environmental options to local coastal communities. MAREX has developed a comprehensive water quality research and outreach program. The Coastal Georgia NEMO project is the backbone of that effort. While local government elected and appointed officials and their staff members remain the target audience, other MAREX support programs are bringing water quality outreach, pollution mitigation, and technical support to the marine business community. Specifically, the Clean Marina Program, Bilge Sock Distribution Program for commercial and recreational vessels, Wetlands Education, and Marine Industry Pollution Prevention Workshops.

Clean Marina Program

In an effort to get coastal Georgia Marinas to reduce the amount of nonpoint source pollution, a Clean Marina Program was started in 2002. This is a voluntary program where each participant commits to "do their part to keep Georgia's waterways free of

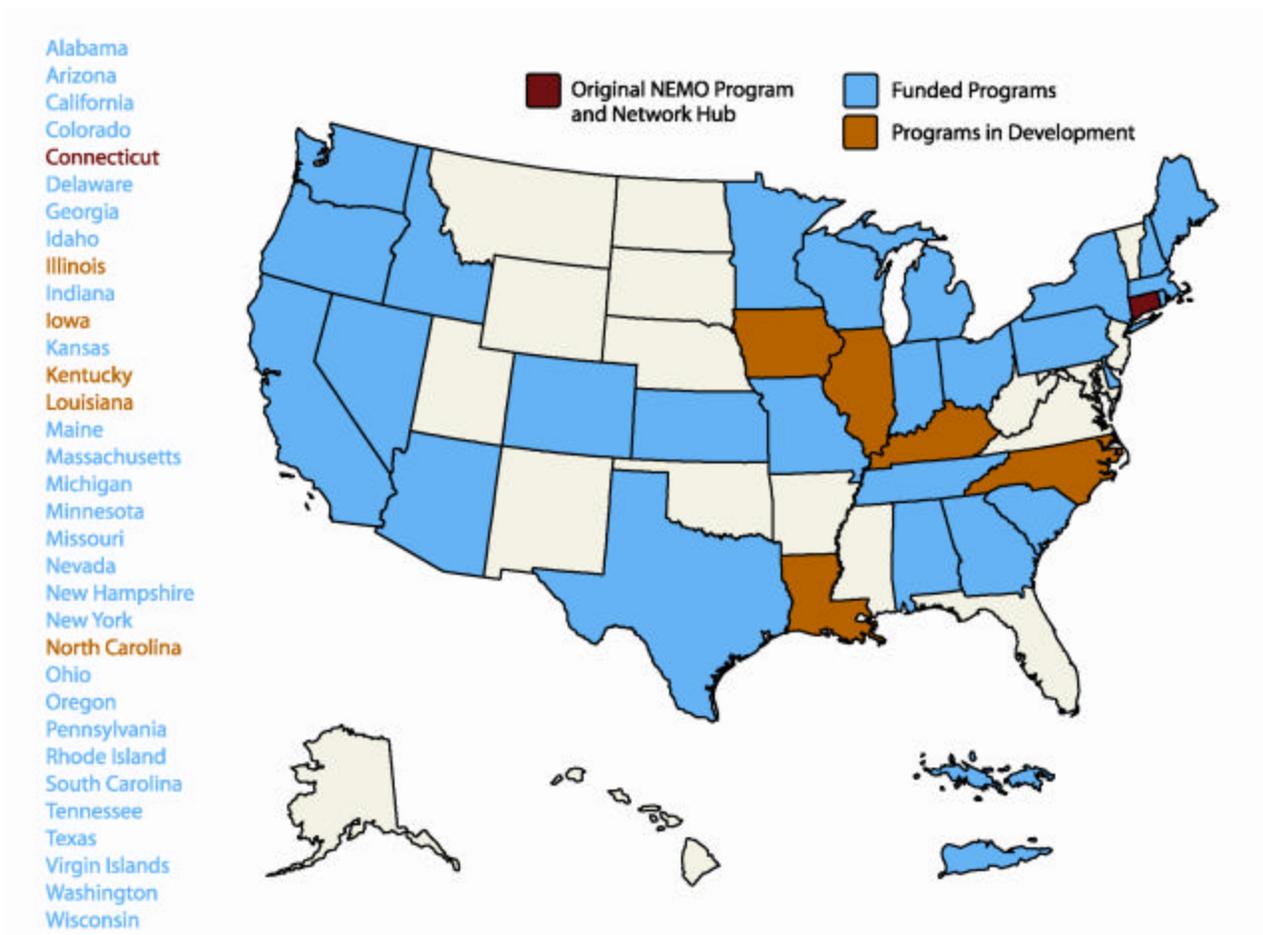


Figure 1. The National NEMO Network.

harmful chemicals, excess nutrients, and debris.” MAREX staff members are asking marinas to participate in the program and provide technical support. Project goals are (1) to help marinas prevent water pollution, (2) to recognize those marinas that improve water quality and (3) through publicity, show boaters which marinas participate in the program.

Bilge Sock Program

The project objectives are to develop, produce, and distribute boater bilge sock kits to commercial and recreational boat owners, thereby reducing bilge discharges of petroleum hydrocarbons into Georgia’s coastal waters. Plans call for 80% of Georgia’s 590 commercial inboard vessels to receive a bilge sock kit containing three bilge socks and educational materials, with the remaining bilge sock kits (1,330) being distributed to inboard recreational and pleasure boating vessels.

Wetlands Education

MAREX staff members developed a series of lectures that teach coastal Georgia citizens about the importance of salt marshes, freshwater wetlands, and watersheds and the indirect impact they have on the State’s economy. These lectures are given twice per month to middle and high school students via the Georgia State Academic Medical System (GSAMS) distance-learning classroom. Over 2,700 students are reached each year. In addition, marine specialists present talks to civic groups, sport fishing clubs, college biology classes, and elder hostel classes reaching an additional 2,000 people each year.

Marine Industry Pollution Prevention Workshops

University and regulatory specialists conduct workshops to train workers and managers of marine businesses, marinas, and boat repair facilities in best management practices to comply with environmental regulations. The outreach education provides the

opportunity for businesses to work with regulators without the threat of citations for violations. The program achieved compliance before facilities were officially inspected by the regulatory agencies.

CONCLUSION

Cooperation from a watershed perspective is paramount. Coastal Georgia can create an outstanding project, but it will be doomed without the collaboration of all water quality programs and local governments throughout the watersheds of the state. The collective efforts to improve water quality along an entire watershed determine a watershed's health. Fragmented efforts produce incomplete and unreliable results. One objective of the project is to assist in the expansion of the NEMO program to reach a statewide audience as our neighbors in Alabama, South Carolina and Tennessee have done. Through continued imaginative and effective collaboration with other University of Georgia divisions, state agencies, and local government land-use decision makers our state outreach and education efforts will continue to grow with the National Network.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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