



Berkshire NEMO Program

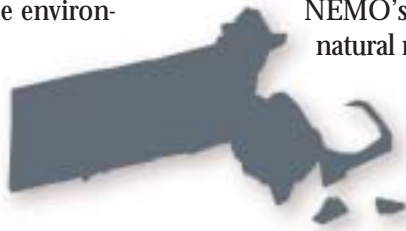
While most NEMO programs are formed in response to rapid growth, in the Berkshire Mountain region of Massachusetts quality of life issues brought the program forward. Western Massachusetts is a rural region with a relatively stable population base; however, local concerns over the environmentally stressed Housatonic River caused the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) to investigate NEMO as a way to address development issues in the region. The program, dubbed Berkshire NEMO, focuses on local issues related to second home development and open space planning.

BRPC works directly with the communities in its region, and also partners with local watershed associations. This working relationship between the planning agency and the watershed associations has been strengthened over the last few years due to collaboration on the Berkshire NEMO Program.

To date, most funding has been from the state Executive Office of Environmental Affairs through the Massachusetts Watershed Initiative Program, and from the Department of Environmental Management. Additional funds for program delivery have come through the

federal Section 319 Nonpoint Source Grant Program.

Although a relatively new effort, Berkshire NEMO has made much progress in the area. A suite of educational workshops has been developed, based loosely on NEMO's recommended steps of natural resource-based planning.



Sixteen presentations have been made during this pilot phase of the program, reaching community planning boards, select boards and conservation commissions as well as lake associations and local conferences. In collaboration with the Maine NEMO Program, a new module has been developed that focuses on lake management from both the community and individual property owner's perspective. This module has been very well received by water resource professionals and is in demand not only locally, but throughout the National NEMO Network.

The accomplishments of these efforts are still accumulating, but already one community has started the open space planning process as a consequence of several NEMO presentations. Berkshire NEMO attended the Network's *Open Space Boot Camp* and is currently developing a new educational module that will focus on open space planning.

"This is the kind of information our board needs. It gives very specific examples and recommendations."

- Williamstown Planning Board Member

"We were all impressed with the material and the presentation of it, and have suggested to our Zoning Board of Appeals and Selectmen that they [request a presentation]."

- Great Barrington Planning Board

Program Partners

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

Local Watershed Associations

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Berkshire NEMO is a charter member of the National NEMO Network.

