

# National *NEMO* Network

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The National NEMO Network is a confederation of programs that educate local land use decision makers about the links between land use and natural resource protection. Network programs are patterned after the original **Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials** (NEMO) Program developed at the University of Connecticut, but each program is a unique entity, typically operated as a multi-organizational consortium. The University based USDA Land Grant and NOAA Sea Grant systems are the most common institutional homes of NEMO programs, although lead organizations also include state agencies and nonprofit groups. These programs, now numbering 27 in 26 states and territories (*map, front inside cover*), have joined together of their own accord to create a unique national network that is sharing information, educational methods and technical tools across state and agency lines.

## **What is NEMO?**

The 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. A major objective in the

development of NEMO was to demonstrate the effectiveness of using remote sensing and geographic information system (GIS) technologies to inform and enhance educational programs linking local land use decisions to water quality issues.

The most important aspect of the NEMO model, however, is its tight focus on local land use decision makers as the target audience. Because of this, and because land use issues are complex, multifaceted and often political, there is no substitute for the give-and-take of direct communication with local officials. Thus, although the use of geospatial technology is often an important element of NEMO educational programs, the basic approach of the Network remains face-to-face workshops for local officials.

## **The Birth of the Network**

News of the NEMO Program quickly spread to other states through articles, conferences and word-of-mouth. By 1995, interest in the program had evolved into requests for assistance in adapting NEMO to other areas. Connecticut NEMO staff began to conduct workshops to assist their colleagues in other states to plan, organize and initiate NEMO adaptations. By 1997, with the



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number of NEMO programs growing and with the advice of an Interagency Work Group that included USDA, NOAA, EPA and NASA, the idea of a national network began to take hold. In October 2000, 15 NEMO programs from across the country met for the first time to share experiences and expertise, and to discuss ways to better collaborate. It was during this first NEMO conference, dubbed NEMO University or “NEMO U,” that the National NEMO Network was truly founded.

### **Greater Than the Sum of Its Parts**

Why a national network? Because no one has the corner on good ideas! Land use practice is in need of as many effective and innovative approaches as possible to help address the diverse challenges

communities face as they struggle to balance economic growth with natural resource protection and preservation of community character. In order to create effective educational programs to help disseminate these new ideas, educators need access to resources and expertise that may not exist in their home institutions or state.

The National NEMO Network allows for the transfer of innovation and information so that it can benefit the people who will actually make the difference—land use decision makers. Communication and coordination for the Network comes from the Connecticut “Hub,” and member programs demonstrate their commitment to the Network by signing a Charter (*page 29*).

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## **Network** *Facts*

- As of early 2003, there are 27 funded Network programs operating in 26 U.S. states and territories.
- 19 of the 27 programs are in coastal states.
- Programs range from small pilot programs operating at the town or county level to larger statewide programs, many operating at the watershed level.
- Network programs have given over 500 presentations to local officials in the past two years.
- New programs in 2000-2001: Tennessee, Virgin Islands, Minnesota (Twin Cities area), Michigan, Washington and Pennsylvania.
- New programs in 2002: Colorado, Texas, Delaware and Arizona.

