



# About the *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 31 in 30 states (*map, back 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, still going strong after 14 years, 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. NEMO has a tight focus on local land use decision makers as the target audience, seeking to help them understand the links between the decisions that they make and the quality of their water (and other) resources.

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 remote sensing and geographic information system (GIS) technologies are often important elements of NEMO educational programs, the basic approach of the Network remains face-to-face workshops for local officials.

## **The Birth of the Network**

By 1995, 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 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





## Network Facts

- As of 2005, there are 31 funded Network programs operating in 30 U.S. states.
- 24 of the 31 programs are in coastal states.
- Programs range from small pilot programs operating at the town or county level to larger statewide or multi-state 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 2003: Louisiana, Mississippi, Nevada, North Carolina and California.
- New programs in 2004: Vermont, Pennsylvania (Lake Erie Region) and Illinois.
- New programs in 2005: Hawaii.
- Programs in Development: New Jersey, Florida, Kentucky and Chesapeake Bay Region.

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.

## NEMO Programs are Diverse

Institutional makeup, geographic coverage, topical focus, methodology, funding and staffing vary from state to state. All Network programs share these few key elements, however:

- 1 The method is education.
- 2 The topic is natural resource-based land use planning and site design.
- 3 The target audience is local land use decision makers.
- 4 The educational messages are enhanced by the use of geospatial technology.

## Greater Than the Sum of Its Parts

Why a national network? First, because no one has the corner on good ideas! Community leaders need as many effective and innovative approaches as possible as they struggle to balance economic growth with natural resource protection and preservation of community character. Second, because those few groups working in the arena of land use education need the assistance and support of their colleagues. Land use is largely a local issue, so federal and state agencies have few programs that directly address land use or the education of local officials.

In order to create effective educational programs, NEMO 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. More information on the Hub and Network-wide initiatives appears in the last part of this Report.