

Moving Forward

NEMO has demonstrated that focused, innovative and research-based education can change the way that communities plan, regulate and build their landscape.

The Need Continues to Grow

The work of the National NEMO Network—educating land use officials on natural resource-based planning—becomes more relevant with each year. Just in the past five years, reports have been released that identify land use as a major influencing factor on climate change, drinking water availability, the health of our coastal waters, human health (via development patterns that promote a sedentary life style), and other critical issues.

The U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy, which is providing future direction to NOAA and other agencies, identifies NEMO as a model worth expanding. EPA's growing list of water quality programs, most notably Stormwater Phase II, Total Maximum Daily Loads and the Safe Drinking Water Program, all rely heavily on better local land use plans and regulations to meet their goals. Interest in Smart Growth and sustainable communities continues to grow. One has only to look at a newspaper to confirm that land use topics like sprawl, open space protection, farmland preservation and stormwater runoff are ubiquitous subjects at the local level.

The Network Responds

Despite this growing need, the fundamental fact that land use is local has resulted in a scarcity of agencies, programs and funding to support efforts like NEMO. And yet the Network continues to expand, even in an atmosphere where a premium is placed on demonstrable impacts. This is because through the hard work of NEMO staff in each state, NEMO has demonstrated that focused, innovative and research-based education can change the way that communities plan, regulate and build their landscape.

The National NEMO Network is currently a small effort, compared to the enormous needs of America's communities. As demonstrated in this Report, however, we are making real progress, based on our commitment to changing land use decision making one town, or one county, at a time. The individuals, agencies and organizations involved with NEMO take pride not only in these positive results, but in the fact that they are among the few groups able and willing to take on the seemingly intractable problem of local land use. Our hope is the Network will expand this success story in the future.