Participants’ evaluation of the 2013 Shale Network workshop

Part of the 2013 Shale Network workshop included asking participants to complete an evaluation of the workshop and get feedback about how to improve it in upcoming years.

Overall, respondents had very favorable views of the workshop itself, particularly the opportunities to network and learn about HydroDesktop, the computer software used to track water quality data. A main criticism of the workshop related to the need for more interaction among participants, including time for groups to present and discuss their own work.

A total of 38 people completed some part of the evaluation out of 65 who had registered to attend. Of those registered, 27 were from universities, 13 were high school students, 12 were community organization representatives, five were state office employees, three were officials from nonprofit organizations, three were county government employees and two were municipal agency representatives.

Here is a snapshot of the evaluation findings:

* When asked what the most useful parts of the workshop were for them, the top two answers were seeing a demo of the HydroDesktop software and networking. Those were followed by break-out sessions and a chance to learn more about Shale Network.
* On the subject of HydroDesktop, participants found the demonstration useful and informative, but many suggested the need to improve the interface and the data entry procedures so that the public and volunteers could engage more fully.
* Participants would like to see industry represented at the workshops to provide information about well data.
* Participants would also like more hands-on and interactive opportunities at the workshop.
* About one-quarter (24%) indicated they were not comfortable discussing ideas and perspectives during the workshop.
* The vast majority of participants plan to work with the Shale Network in the next year in some capacity, including providing data, analyzing data, working with Shale Network researchers, and attending future workshops.
* Key suggestions for the Shale Network include: clarifying goals of the network; developing a means to maintain communication in between annual workshops (such as a list-serve, newsletter or speakers); conducting analyses using the data and publishing those results; improving the HydroDesktop interface; and conducting more outreach with key stakeholders.

The evaluation and other feedback will help organizers plan Shale Network initiatives, including the 2014 workshop. For more information about the conference evaluation, contact Kathy Brasier at: kbrasier@psu.edu.