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Clean water is a critical resource that must be protected for future security in both local communities and the larger world. Because water is distributed throughout many sectors of society, clean water policies can cause conflicts of interests in divide communities. Solutions that can help solve this issue include fostering cooperation between interest groups and rural governments and utilizing voluntary programs to supplement regulations.

It is of the utmost importance that the ideas of the whole community are evaluated when it comes to clean water policies. Having many varying perspectives from different professions, cultures, and classes will often yield potentially unforeseen solutions and obstacles. One example of a policy that has successfully utilized community feedback is the Great Lakes Compact. This compact was created using tens of thousands of comments from concerned citizens (“Great Lakes Compact”). Furthermore, all sectors of society, especially industry and agriculture, should strive to collaborate with each other and the local government to pursue clean water. An example where successful collaboration occurred was Yahara WINS (Watershed Improvement Network). This program involved the Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD) gaining the support from entities discharging phosphorus to the watershed including Publicly Owned Treatment Works (POTWs), Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System, and Yahara Pride Farms. Together with the community, they implemented an adaptive management pilot project in the Yahara Watershed that reduced their phosphorus discharge. This program found that successful collaboration between differing interest groups depends on mutual trust and policy clarity (Elzufon 17-19). Successful collaboration can be achieved if local governments sponsor community involvement and discussion between various interest groups. In addition, rural governments should also provide basic regulatory frameworks in order to standardize the nomenclature of clean water policies to foster effective communication between varying parties.

Another practice that found success in supporting clean water and uniting the community is the use of more voluntary, farmer-based programs in place of regulatory programs. A great example of this is the WAP (Watershed Agricultural Program) out of New York. This program involves providing educational programs to farmers regarding effective implementation of BMPs (Best Management Practices) and new conservation options. In 2013, over 700 farmers have attended 26 educational programs. Over 274 BMPs on 128 farms were implemented as of 2015. These programs have been found to be at least as effective as previously proposed regulations and much better received in farming communities (Elzufon 8-10). However, as previously stated, building mutual trust is essential for the success of these programs. With proper implementation, voluntary programs are productive policies for rural governments to pursue.

In conclusion, community involvement and cooperation are important ideas to consider when pursuing the goal of clean water. Voluntary programs have also shown promise in fostering positive change in water conservation and farming communities. Finally, another clean water policy that can be done individually involves a simple change in attitude. When we understand that clean water is crucial for everyone, it is easier to develop a 'we' mentality and all take responsibility for its protection.

Works Cited:

Elzufon, Betty. *Collaborating for Healthy Watersheds*. Rep Agree; NACWA; US Water Alliance, 2/15. Web 4/23/17

'Great Lakes Compact: Curbing Reckless Water Withdrawal.' *Clean Water Action*. N.p. 2/24/17. Web 4/23/17