



WATER IN ACTION

Partnerships

Knowledge

Solutions

Water School – a learning environment for next generation water consumers

Water supply and sewerage are fundamental, but often underappreciated, to the well-being of modern society. Clean water runs from our taps and dirty water flows away down our drains. Often the existence of water and waste water works is only noticed when problems occur. These include water scarcity, which is a growing problem in many countries including those of the EU, and pollution caused by the discharge of waste water into the environment. There is, therefore, a need for better information and education about both water-saving and water disposal.

Borealis, through its Water for the World programme actively seeks to raise awareness of the water challenge in local communities. In Finland Borealis, together with WANDER Nordic Water and Materials Institute and the Finnish Water and Waste Water Works Association, has launched a ‘virtual’ Water School – a web-based learning environment directed to schoolchildren.



Finland is well-served with both surface water and groundwater resources. Approximately 10% of Finland's surface area is covered by water, accounted for by 187,888 lakes and ponds larger than 500 m², and by rivers with a total combined length of 25,000 km. Groundwater is found in virtually every part of the country and makes up around 60% of the supply distributed by Finland's water utilities.

Nevertheless, despite this abundance of water, informed, intelligent usage is essential to its sustained, safe and economic exploitation. Therefore, creating greater awareness of water and waste water issues has an important role to play in shaping society's water-use behaviour. To help raise the level of awareness, Borealis, together with WANDER Nordic Water and Materials Institute and the Finnish Water and Waste Water Works Association, has developed a virtual Water School.

Water School aims to facilitate children's understanding of how they themselves can affect the condition of the environment and to show them how they can contribute to more efficient water use through some simple changes in their behavior. Ultimately, it is hoped, this will lead to their adoption of ecological values they will carry with them throughout their lives.

Complex issues made interesting

The Water School material was prepared in close co-operation with experts from WANDER and Finnish Water and Waste Water Works Association as well as with teachers. The challenge was to make difficult and complex issues understandable to children and do so in a fun way that caught their imagination and held their interest.

Water School explains how water is acquired, purified to drinking quality and distributed to households. It informs about global water scarcity and the limitations on availability of clean drinking

water to people in many parts of the world. The sections on waste water focus on the harmful compounds it contains, its disposal, how it is treated and its effects on the environment. On the positive side it also explains that the sludge, resulting from the treatment of waste water, is a possible source of energy and nutrients which after further treatments can be reclaimed and reused to society's benefit.

A pilot website was first established and tested in selected schools. Based on the feedback gained from the teachers on its usability and content, the site was refined and improved. And, with separate pages for 10-11 and 14-15 year-olds in both Finnish and Swedish, the virtual Water School was launched nationally in November 2009.

Appreciated by children as well as their teachers

"In responses to-date and based on the survey we have performed among teachers, they feel that Water School is clear and easy to use," said Niina Vieno Project Manager from WANDER. "They also like the fact that the material is freely available on the internet and that it combines theory with practice in an interesting and understandable way. Overall, Water School is considered to be a valuable addition to the normal teaching of the subject."

According to Kirsikka Männistö, Borealis Communications Specialist for Finland: "The Finnish Water School initiative is an example of how we as a company, together with our business partners and local authorities and communities can contribute solutions to a global challenge. Creating awareness and understanding, as well as starting to influence the behaviour of the upcoming generation, is vital to ensure more sustainable use and preservation of our environment. I am glad that our idea came to fruition and pay tribute to our partners for their good co-operation throughout the development of the project and their contribution to its success."



WFW CAST 5/12/GB 2010 03



To learn more about the Water School visit:
www.vesikoulu.fi (in Finnish)
www.vattenskolan.fi (in Swedish)

To learn more about the Water for the World visit: www.waterfortheworld.net

For more information on this project
contact: info@borealisgroup.com



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