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Press Relations Officer: Martin Ittershagen
PR-staff: Anke Döpke, Dieter Leutert,
Fotini Mavromati, Theresa Pfeifer, Martin Stallmann
Address: Postfach 1406, 06813 Dessau-Roßlau
Telephone: +49 340/21 03-2122, -2827, -2250, -2318, -3927, -2507
E-Mail: pressestelle@uba.de
Internet: www.umweltbundesamt.de



Online now: The new *H₂O-Wissen* media database

Teaching materials on the subject of water and protection of waters available in time for back-to-school season

The Federal Environment Agency's (UBA) *H₂O-Wissen* online database is in time for the back-to-school season to offer more than 400 contributions with ideas and materials for classroom lessons. Links to materials can be located on the Internet by means of various search criteria, e.g. title, author, or topic area such as 'aquatic animals and plants', 'flooding', or 'development policy'. Teachers who are preparing lessons can do searches for materials on a specific subject or look for a certain type of media such as textbook, video or exhibition. The database not only addresses the needs of schools but also other educational institutions that may be looking for educational materials on the topic of water in a certain language.

This year's focus on water in the framework of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development provided grounds to amplify the *H₂O-Wissen* database. The goal of the global initiative is to integrate the principles of sustainable development into all national educational systems. With *H₂O-Wissen*, UBA aims to help achieve this goal. "Teachers can rouse pupils' interest in lakes and rivers and as early as primary school and get them excited about protecting bodies of water", said Dr. Christiane Markard, Head of the Division for Environmental Health and Protection of Ecosystems at UBA.

The second generation of *H₂O-Wissen* integrates online media more heavily than before. A search mask enables a search according to various criteria such as pupils' age or topic. The focus topic of flooding, for example, produces 32 contributions, and there are 185 hits for "aquatic animals and plants". In addition to a brief assessment of contents of the educational materials, teachers and other multipliers of environmental education are provided with material source information and advice on how to use the materials. A more in-depth evaluation was worked out for some of the materials by the Independent Institute for Environmental Concerns e.V. together with the Martin-Luther University in Halle-Wittenberg. Key criteria applied are, e.g., pupil-oriented approach to teaching and learning, steering of the learning process during discussion of results, or interdisciplinary approach, that is, inclusion of topics and issues that play a significant role in the life of its target audience.

The updated version of the H₂O-Wissen media database is located at www.h2o-wissen.de and <http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/wasser/index.htm>.

More information about the database is in a flyer here:

http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/wasser/veroeffentlich/H2O-Wissen08_express.pdf. Please write to us if you have developed learning materials on the protection of waters which is not yet included in the database.

You can also go straight to teaching materials issued by UBA and the Federal Ministry for Environment (BMU) at www.bmu.de/bildungsservice

Dessau-Roßlau, 18 August 2008