

Appendix D: Site Visit Listening Sessions Summary

There were two methods used to gather broader input from additional stakeholders who were identified as having interest in the outcome of the strategic plan but who were not identified as subject matter experts, including the general public. In addition to the survey described in Appendix C, the other method was via in-person events during the LCCMR Site Visits, which took place September 11-12 and October 15-16.

At the LCCMR Site Visits, LCCMR staff advertised opportunities for interested people from the local community to come talk with LCCMR members about Minnesota's environment and natural resources. Different methods were used, depending on the time and location, but all engagements gathered input from participants on questions that mirrored those in the public survey:

- What are your biggest concerns for the state's environment and natural resources? Or, what is the biggest threat to the state's environment and natural resources?
- What should be done about those concerns?
- What is your bold idea for protecting Minnesota's environment and natural resources?

Based on evaluation forms that were completed by participants, at least 90 people participated in an input session during LCCMR Site Visits, which included specific discussions that were held just for invited subject matter experts. Of those who submitted an evaluation form at the end of one of the events, a little over 80% reported that they work for or are affiliated with an agency, organization, or program that works on issues related to the environment or natural resources. Among those with such an affiliation, about 70% reported that the organization, agency, or program has received ENRTF funding. As noted previously, these evaluation forms also included those collected during specific events for subject matter experts, and it was not possible to determine these percentages just for the listening sessions open to the general public.

During the listening sessions, participants comments were hand written either on a large poster paper by participants themselves, or on a piece of paper by LCCMR members who were leading discussions. The individual comments recorded during Site Visit listening sessions were analyzed using the same themes from the general public survey.

Below, a summary analysis of the comments from the listening sessions is provided in a set of tables. Each comment was considered separately and was coded only once. So, each comment was only counted once, based on the overall most significant theme found in the comment. These counts may, in some cases, be over-representations of what was said at the listening sessions, if more than one comment form or note was submitted capturing the same conversation.

Listening session participants' areas of biggest concern

Of the comments recorded during listening sessions that could be coded into one of the categories from the general public survey, the majority of comments regarding participants' biggest concern or what they thought was the greatest threat to Minnesota's environment and natural resources had to do with wildlife habitat and management (including birds and pollinators). This was followed by comments about water quality, agricultural practices, and climate change.

Table 1. Number of comments from listening sessions coded by area of biggest concern or greatest threat

Wildlife habitat and management	17
Water quality	15
Agricultural practices	14
Climate change	12
Water quantity	7
Energy	5
Environmental education	5
Outdoor recreation and open spaces	5
Air quality	1
Aquatic habitat and management	1
Other	21

Several comments could not be coded into one of the categories, and instead were coded as “other.” Some of these other issues were very general, or identified philosophical issues behind different approaches to addressing challenges. Others were outside the bounds of the ENRTF’s authority and mission, such as comments about mining or corporate accountability.

Listening session participants’ recommended strategies

Of the comments recorded during listening sessions that could be coded into one of the categories from the general public survey, the majority of comments regarding what participants think should be done to address their biggest concerns or the biggest threats, the majority of comments reflected a desire to see strategies that pilot, demonstrate, or implement innovative solutions.

Table 2. Number of comments from listening sessions coded by type of strategy to address biggest concern

Pilot, demonstrate, and implement innovative solutions	41
Increase education and public awareness	18
Conduct research to develop new tools, practices, or other solutions	9
Collect and analyze data to better understand causes and status, or to measure progress	3
Other	25

Several comments could not be coded into one of the categories, and instead were coded as “other.” Some of these comments recommended things like collaboration, better planning, sustainable funding, or other things, some of which seemed outside the bounds of the ENRTF’s authority and mission, like enforcement.

Listening session participants’ big, bold ideas

Finally, listening session participants were also asked about their big, bold idea for protecting Minnesota’s environment and natural resources. These comments were included in the analysis of the general public survey, which asked the same question of respondents, and are visualized in the word cloud that is part of Appendix C.