



Natural resources strategic plan update Phase 1 Engagement: Information gathering

Updating the county's Natural Resources Strategic Plan

- Guides the county's work to improve, protect, and preserve natural resources, including our role as the Soil and Water Conservation District.
- Includes science and data-based information to help staff in addressing the technical issues facing surface waters, groundwater, natural resources, wildlife, and soils.
- Provides a framework for our natural resources policies, programs, and partnerships for the next decade.

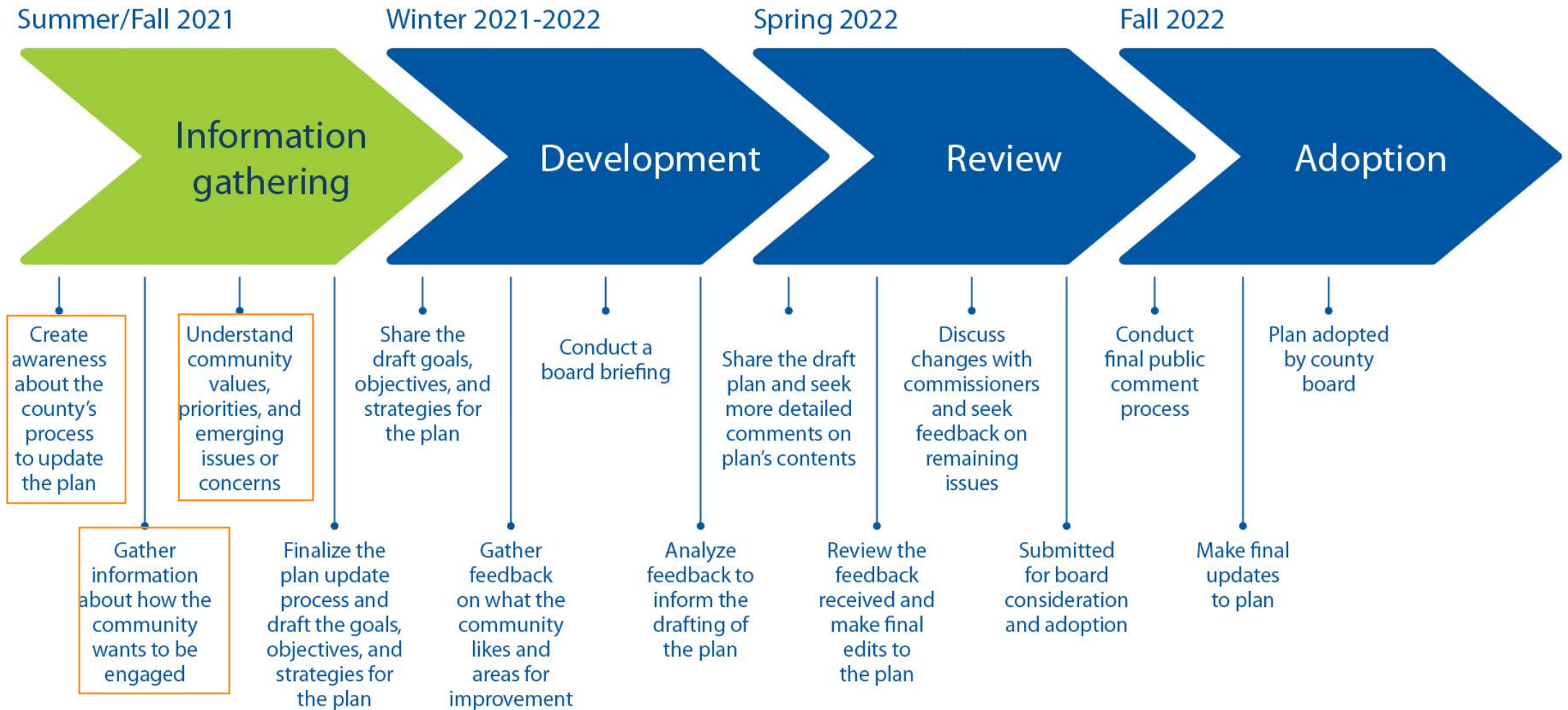


Hennepin County Natural Resources Strategic Plan 2015 - 2020



Hennepin County
Public Works
Environmental Services

Plan update process and timeline



Phase 1: Information gathering

Summer/fall 2021

- Create awareness about the county's process to update the plan and gather information about how the community wants to be engaged in the plan update.
- Listen to understand what the community values about natural resources, learn about their priorities, and identify emerging issues or concerns that should be considered in the plan.
- Engage with internal staff and reflect on existing plan

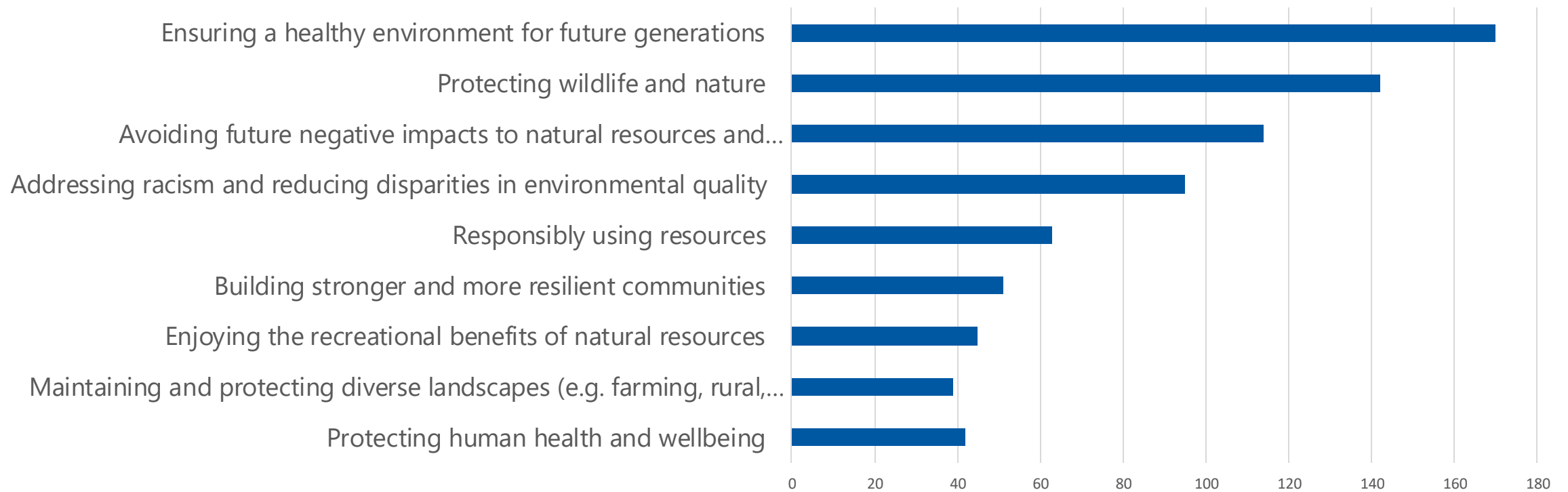
Engagement tactics

Tactics	Metrics
Email updates	437 emails at project start 925 subscribers (to date)
Online survey (Available in English, Español, Hmoob, Soomaali)	260 (English), 4 (Spanish)
Community group presentations	5 presentations 55 attendees
Tabling at community events	10 events, 1,186 attendees
Social media posts Facebook, Twitter, Instagram	2,841 impressions (English) 319 Español, 333 Hmoob, 351 Soomaali
Web page	58 unique external views (July to November)
Internal staff engagement – reflection on the existing plan and small group mtgs	14 staff; 6 to 7 meetings

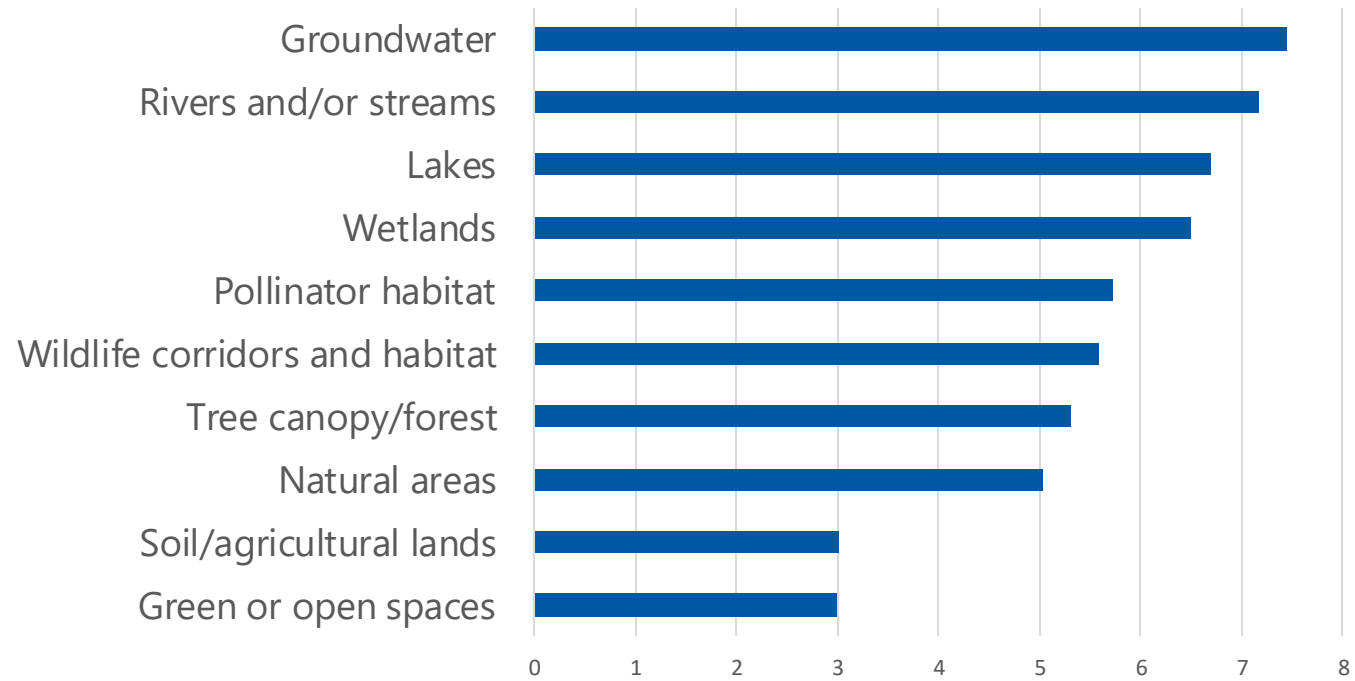
Shaping priorities for natural resources online survey

- Emails – Plan update, Green Notes, Green Partners
- Social media channels
- Promotional materials to cities, trusted messengers, community liaisons

Values for natural resource protection

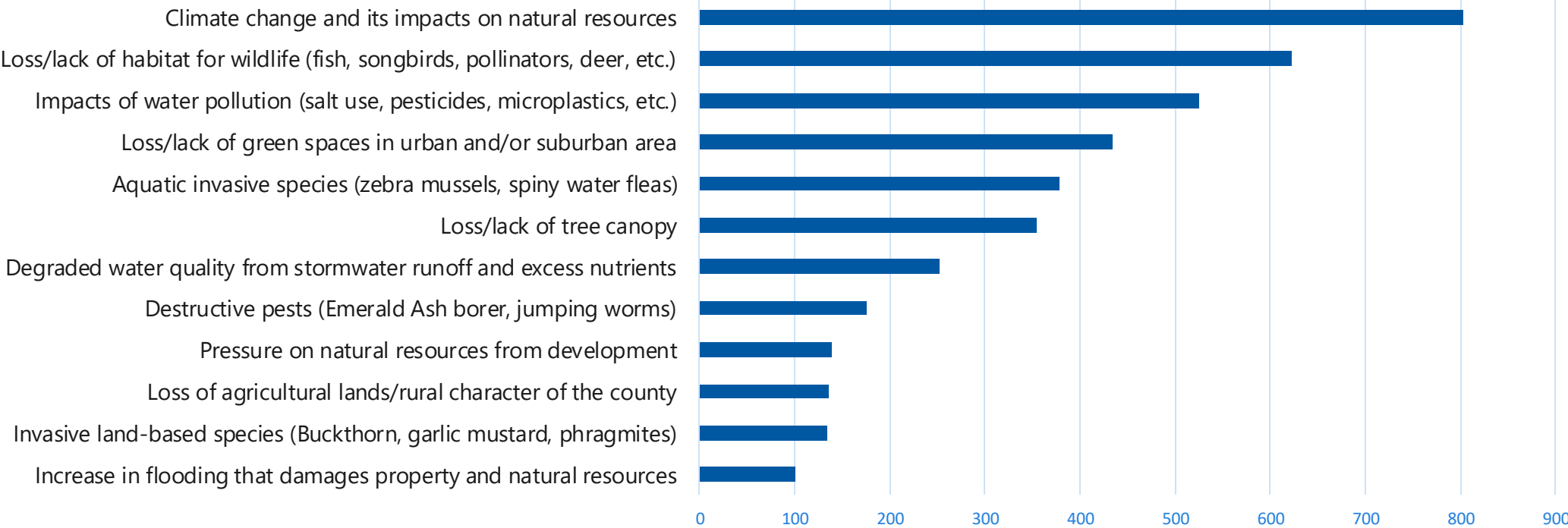


Priorities for natural resources protection



Ranked score

Concerns about natural resources



Source: Events and online survey data combined. Reflects concerns from 1,446 residents



Themes of responses from open-ended questions

It's all about climate

- Climate was a top issue consistently, across various demographics and engagement tools. People called on the county to:
 - Match the response to the urgency of the issue – we have no more time to waste.
 - Specifically connect climate change to protecting water resources.
 - Take action on both mitigating climate impacts and adapting to a changing climate to protect natural resources.
- A few comments to the contrary – expressing climate change is overblown or too politicized to frame natural resource protection within.

Equity and disparity reduction

- A significant number of comments were about centering equity and environmental justice, including involving most impacted communities and marginalized voices at a greater extent than we have before in this plan.
- Intentionally engage and work with the community in updating plan so that it incorporates all the diverse people calling this place home.
- Center the plan on history, acknowledging whose land we are on, what came before colonization, the racist origins of "conservation" and "preservation," and honor the way indigenous people are stewards of the land.

Protect remaining natural resources and limit development

- Use incentives but also major penalties to limit destruction of natural resources
- Expect more from companies and developers
- Due to its size, the county is well positioned to address large scale initiatives, such as wildlife corridors.
- Prioritize limiting development of natural areas and/or developing strategically to avoid negative impacts on ecologically distinct areas.
- Consider degrowth options

Educate and act

- Good natural resource management promotes environmental stewardship.
- Provide more outreach to landowners akin to a traditional soil and water conservation district.
- Activate more of the local community through grassroots groups.
- Make the public more aware of what is at stake. We are losing in habitat and species extinction every day, and people can't miss what they never knew was there.
- Educate residents on what actions they can take.
- Continue to partner with other organizations – both public and private – as we are in this together.

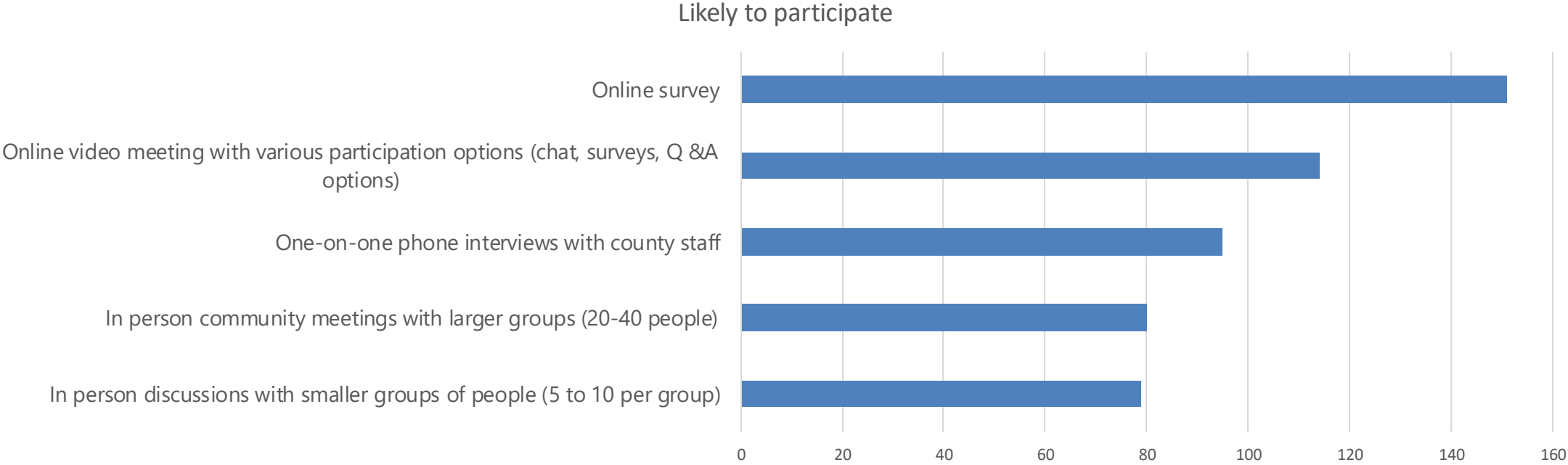
Specific issues of personal interest

Many of the respondents used the open-ended response question to elevate specific issues of high importance to them. The most cited issues include:

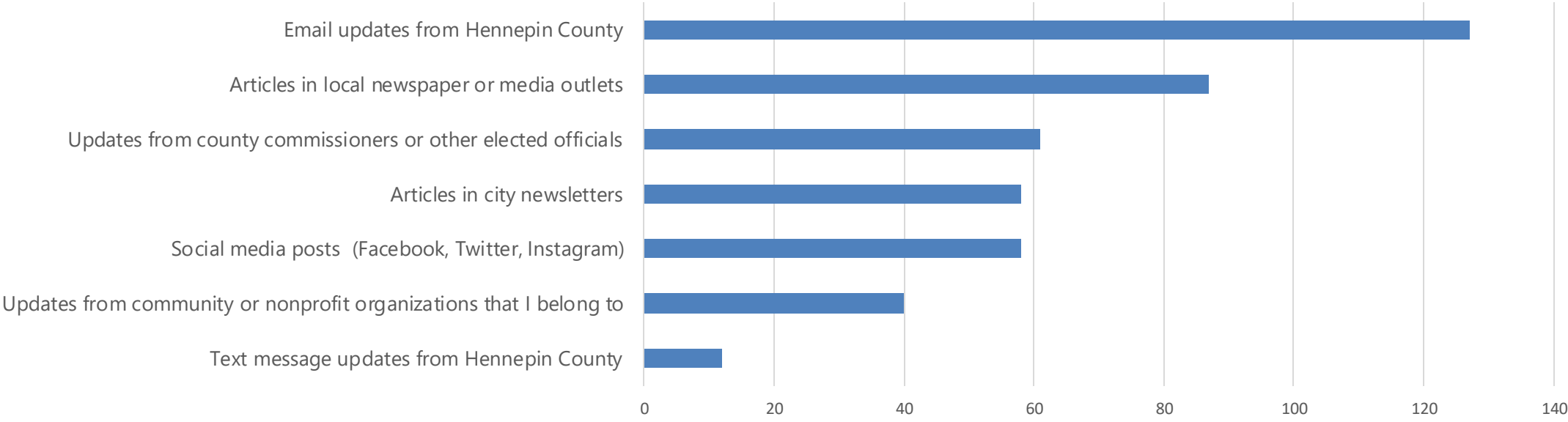
- Pesticide use
- Reducing lawn/turf and replace with native plants
- Bird and butterfly protection
- Urban agriculture

Preferences for future engagement

Preferences for future public participation processes



Preferences for staying informed



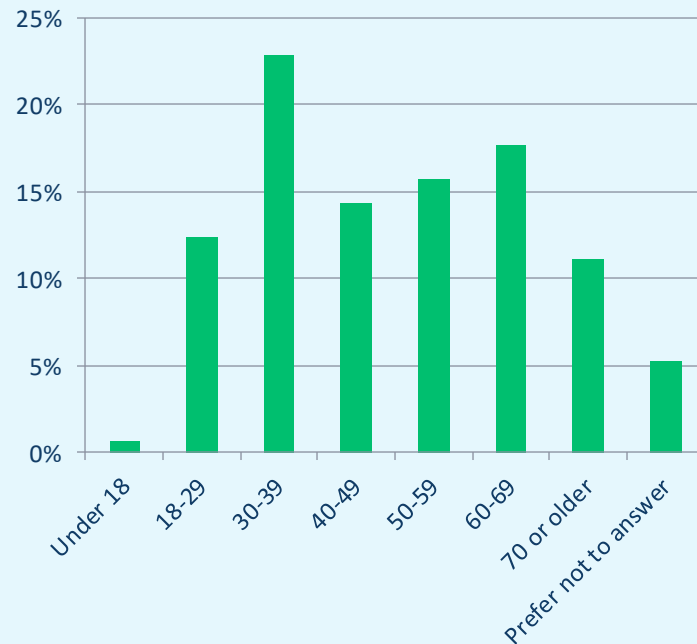
Survey demographics

260 individual respondents

Communities represented

Bloomington	Medina
Brooklyn Park	Minneapolis
Crystal	Minnetonka
Deephaven	Plymouth
Eden Prairie	Richfield
Edina	St. Anthony
Golden Valley	St. Louis Park
Hopkins	Shorewood
Long Lake	Wayzata
Maple Grove	

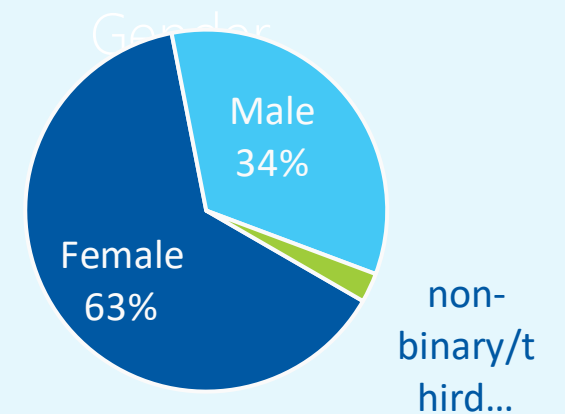
Age



Race

88% white; 3.5% POC

Gender



Event outreach

Staff tabled at community events selected to reach a more diverse group of residents.

Events were prioritized based on ability to reach people of color and rural residents, who were underrepresented in survey respondents.

Talked to 1,100+ residents at events

- Brooklyn Park River Park grand opening
- Share the River Northeast Minneapolis
- U of MN Sustainability Fair
- Monarch Festival – Nokomis Park
- Medina Celebration Day
- WE Mural Sunset Block Party (Bloomington)
- Project Sweetie Pie Garden Party (North Minneapolis)
- Heidi's Growhaus Octoberfest (Corcoran)
- Freshwater Society Confluence of Stewards
- Midtown Farmers' Market (Minneapolis)

Hennepin County



Insights from events



- Issue Voting

- People were given 3 bottle caps to vote on issues most critical to them
- Issues aligned with those in the online survey

Insights from events



Natural Resource Issue	Average % of Votes
Aquatic Invasive Species	4.6%
Climate Change	18.0%
Destructive Pests	3.0%
Development	5.4%
Flooding	2.6%
Invasive Plants and Weeds	2.8%
Loss of Agricultural Lands	3.7%
Loss of Green Spaces	9.7%
Loss of Habitat for Wildlife	13.4%
Loss of Trees	8.8%
Poor Water Quality	10.7%
Water Pollution	11.8%

Vote Aggregation: By Similar Issues

Natural Resource Issue	Average % of Votes
Climate Change	18.8%
Invasive Plants and Animals	10.6%
Land Use Changes	20.5%
Loss of Habitat and Natural Resources	23.8%
Water Related Challenges	26.4%

Insights from events by demographics

Event	Top issues
Participants leaned toward older residents	Loss of habitat, water pollution, climate change
Participants leaned toward younger residents	Climate change, loss of habitat, water pollution
Participants leaned toward people of color	Climate change, poor water quality, water pollution
Held in urban areas	Climate change, loss of habitat, water pollution
Held in suburban area	Climate change, loss of habitat, water pollution
Held in rural area	Loss of habitat, climate change, poor water quality

Presentations to community-based partners

- County staff community liaisons
- County contract trusted messengers
- Project Sweetie Pie
- Northside Redevelopment
- Urban Strategies
- Minneapolis Lao Center
- Minneapolis Southside and Northside Green Zone citizen advisory groups

See connection between health of our natural resources and the health of ourselves and our communities

- Need more education about what the county means when we talk about natural resources, the work the county does in natural resources, and its connection to protecting human health.
- Natural resources are not as narrowly defined for residents as they are for natural resource professionals – clean water, clean air, and healthy food are core to natural resources for residents.
- Help people who are in survival mode relate to natural resources.
- Want more action and advocacy – especially on climate change

Acknowledge history and first stewards of this land

- Acknowledge wrongdoing of the past and how the decisions of the past result in inequities for Indigenous people.
- Recognize that actions that have resulted in persistent inequities are still upheld in our systems today.
- Ensure eliminating disparities guides policy, programs and projects.
- Ensure plan development efforts include engaging, listening and responding to Indigenous communities.
- Decolonialize language and approaches to work.
- Support Indigenous-led stewardship work to protect natural resources.

Foster long-term community engagement that takes a social and environmental justice lens

- Invest in trust-building
- Pursue effective outreach strategies, including local media (translations and BIPOC media a must), local events, and connecting with specific groups - schools, youth groups, community groups
- Provide learning and professional opportunities such as paid training and internships
- Engage residents who aren't homeowners
- Support the work that is already being led by community

Overarching themes

People we heard from:

- Value ensuring a healthy environment for future generations and protecting wildlife and nature.
- Are most concerned about the impacts of climate change on natural resources and prioritize protecting water.
- Want the county to protect and preserve natural areas, especially amid the pressures from development.
- See the connection between the health of our natural resources, ourselves and our communities but called for more education to help people understand what natural resources are, what work the county does to protect natural resources, and what actions we can all take.
- Called on the county to focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion, specifically to acknowledge how past decision-making has resulted in persistent racial inequities – especially among Indigenous people who were the first stewards of our natural resources – and ensure that eliminating disparities guides policies, programs, and projects.
- Asked the county to foster long-term community engagement, invest in trust-building, provide learning and professional opportunities, and support work already being led by the community.
- Encouraged the county to work collaboratively with public entity and community partners to advance natural resource priorities.

Next steps

Phase II: Develop the plan

- Draft goals, objectives and strategies
- Gather feedback on what community likes and what needs improvement
- Incorporate feedback and share with commissioners

