

# Stakeholder Input Meetings on the Biennial Budget Process: Results and Common Themes

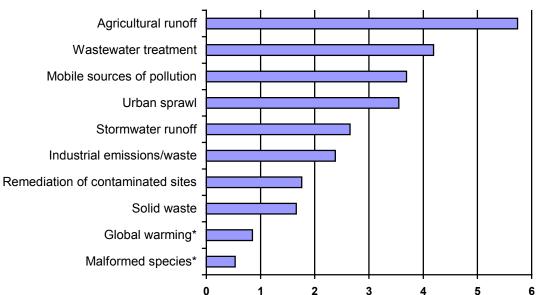
#### **Background**

This summer, as part of the biennial budget development process, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) held a series of meetings throughout the state with interested stakeholders, including citizen, business, environmental, farming, and local government representatives. The purpose of the meetings was to share the MPCA's ideas and get others' ideas on the most important environmental problems and MPCA resource needs, and how to meet those needs. A total of 120 people attended the ten stakeholder input meetings held throughout Minnesota (see Figure 1). Geographically (using our district boundaries) we had the following attendance: South—34%; Metro—42% (which includes many of the environmental group and local government representatives); North—24%. In terms of sector the largest group was "local government" (32%) and the smallest was "citizen" (2%, which is just two people). The others were "business or industry" (29%), "environmental group" (21%), "elected official" (9%), and "all other government" (9%).

#### **Environmental Priorities**

Participants were asked "When you think of the threats to the environment, now and in the future, on which of the following issues should the MPCA focus their attention?" Ten issues were listed, and the participants were asked to choose their top three (in order). The computer software then boiled down the choices into an overall rank order. A summary of the results is shown in the following graph. Results by location and sector group can be seen in Attachment A.





<sup>\*</sup> Many participants commented that while these are important issues, they are better addressed on a national level or by an entity other than the MPCA.

Notable locational differences included:

- The Metro group ranked mobile sources 1<sup>st</sup> and remediation of contaminated sites 2<sup>nd</sup>. The business community group ranked mobile sources higher then any other location.
- Somewhat similar rankings for these two issues occurred in Duluth.
- The Brainerd group ranked agricultural runoff the lowest (along with malformed species) and urban sprawl highest.

Following this question, participants were asked what issues that they feel are important were missing from the list of ten options. These ideas were listed on a flip chart, and can be found in Attachment B. The following issues were identified at multiple meetings:

- Feedlots (commentors wanted to be sure this issue was included in "agricultural runoff")
- Water quality (overall, and nonpoint source and surface water issues in particular)
- Construction (erosion, roads, subdivisions)
- Pollution prevention (including product stewardship)

Many participants commented that there was overlap and linkages between many of the 10 listed priorities.

#### Resource Needs

Following a brief presentation on the objectives of the meeting, background information on the MPCA's budget and a brief comment on each of the MPCA-identified resource needs, the meeting participants were next asked for their reaction to those needs. The question "considering the list of 10 priority needs, how important is

?" was asked for each of the MPCA-identified resource needs, using a 1 to 5 scale with 1 being "low importance" and 5 being "high importance." The overall results, by average score, are summarized in the following table.

Resource need area (identified by the MPCA)	Avg. Score
Accessible Information for Decision-Making	3.8
Water Quality Program: permitting, compliance, phase II stormwater	3.8
Measuring Basin Health through Comprehensive Monitoring	3.8
MPCA Feedlot Program Staffing	3.7
Water Management Unification through Basin Management	3.7
Mobile Source Pollution Prevention	3.6
Feedlot Cost Share	3.5
Air Toxics	3.4
Implementation of Lake Superior Lakewide Mgmt Plan (LaMP)	2.8
Continued Research on Malformed Frogs	2.1

Locational differences were limited. However, the Metro group rated the air toxics and mobile source issues in the 3.7-3.8 range and rated the basin issues in the 3.3 range.

Sector differences were not terribly dramatic. Local governments and elected officials were less supportive than the other groups on air toxics and mobile sources. Those in state/federal government (i.e., the "all other government" category) were far more supportive of the Lake Superior LaMP than the other sectors (score=4.5).

#### Stakeholder-identified needs:

An extensive list of additional needs was generated during the meetings (see Attachment C). The following needs were mentioned at two or more meetings:

- Increased timeliness of permitting
  - > "Sometimes it takes so long to get a feedlot permit that the landowner is no longer interested in the project."
  - "We need to move at the pace of business, not at the pace of MPCA resources." Business can't plan without knowing the permitting time frame—there is too much uncertainty.

- ➤ "It is not just water permits that have a backlog air quality Title V do as well"
- Translating and distributing information/better communication
  - > "The MPCA needs to do a better job of communicating. It is refreshing to be here today—you need to do both education and regulatory actions. You need to do a better job of telling your story."
  - > "Communication needs to be a priority ... hire 'translators' for the information."
- Funding for citizen monitoring
  - There is a vast pool of talented people that simply need the training and tools to conduct volunteer monitoring."
- Full implementation of the phase I stormwater program prior to advancing phase II
  - ➤ "We haven't even finished phase I and now we are moving on to phase II."
- Keeping up to speed with developments in other states and on the federal level
  - The MPCA should keep up with research (at other states and the federal level). Right now we have to educate MPCA staff so we can operate with the most current information."
- Septic systems/unsewered communities.

#### Other notable comments/suggestions:

- Several participants commented that some of the resource needs are more regional in nature (either in reality or in perception) and some are more statewide.
- At several meetings, participants commented that the MPCA should stick to its "core" activities, like permitting and enforcement.
- "The MPCA should not be a research organization."
- "The county commissioners here truly feel the need for the feedlot cost share."
- "By working on issues, like malformed frogs and mobile sources, the MPCA is micro-managing a problem. MPCA should shift to higher-priority needs like stormwater, which then helps malformed frogs. Deal with bigger issues; don't get lost in a swamp of research projects."
- "Agencies don't seem to consolidate information. For example, I have to go to seven different agencies to get groundwater data."
- The legislature needs to give some serious support and funding for ambient monitoring of air and water.
- "At the legislature, agencies are at least implicitly competing with each other. Instead, they need to cooperate to design programs that will meet their multiple objectives."
- The state should carefully decide when it is prudent for Minnesota to lead the way or adopt more stringent regulations then other states.

#### **Options to Meet the Needs**

Following the polling and discussion about MPCA resource needs, the participants were asked the following question about how to meet the needs: "What option do you prefer the MPCA pursue in providing resources for unmet needs?" and were given four options:

- 1. Drop a lower-priority activity or program
- 2. Shift some resources from lower-priority activities or programs to higher-priority needs
- 3. Request additional funding from current sources or establish a new funding source
- 4. Other

This question was intended mainly to prompt a discussion, but for the record 53% favored dropping or cutting back low-priority programs and 29% said to seek out more funding. The rest chose "other", often suggesting we use all the listed options. There were some interesting differences in the responses of various sectors:

- Participants who are elected officials and those representing business or industry favored shifting resources from low- to high-priority activities (50% of elected officials chose this option, as did 44% of business/industry representatives—and 41% of business/industry representatives favored dropping lower-priority activities). This option was also favored by local government, but to a lesser extent (34%).
- Representatives from environmental groups and all other government (i.e. state, federal, tribal) most often chose the option of requesting additional funding from current or new sources (55% for environmental group representatives and 43% for all other government). The two attendees in the "citizen" category also chose this option.

This question also spurred an involved discussion around each of the funding options, which is summarized on the following pages.

#### 1. Drop a lower-priority activity or program (21% overall):

#### Common themes:

- The MPCA should drop frog research. While several groups qualified that the research is important, they said this is a national issue that the MPCA should not be the lead on.
- Several participants suggested there might be areas of overlap between agencies that could be eliminated, thereby freeing up resources. Examples included monitoring, research that could be done by colleges and universities, and other agencies that could take the lead on an issue rather than the MPCA (e.g. Dept. of Health could lead the air toxics effort).
- A few participants said they don't like the idea of dropping a program. One participant suggested that the MPCA put end dates on programs at the outset and communicate this information, so everyone knows when to move on.
- Other participants suggested that the reality is you have to drop something, because finding a new funding source will be very difficult.

#### Other notable comments/suggestions:

- There must be small programs that could be cut, or where you could gain seasonal savings.
- There seem to be a lot of planners shift them to writing permits. Spend less time at the capital lobbying your perspective.
- Repeal the Listed Metals Program
- "I'd be more concerned about malformed people than malformed frogs."

#### 2. Shift some resources from lower-priority activities or programs to higher-priority needs (32%):

#### Common themes:

- Participants commented that in reality it would be easier to phase-down a program or shift resources than to actually eliminate something.
- Funding flexibility: There were basically two opinions on this issue—that fees should only be used for the activity that they were collected for, and that funding flexibility is a good idea for the MPCA. Often both opinions were expressed at the same meeting. If anything, more participants expressed the former opinion, that fees should be used for the "dedicated" activity only.
  - If people are paying a fee for something there is an expectation that the fee will go back to that issue."

    "Dedicated fees should stay where they were intended. If there is a new problem, look for new fees."
  - > "It is a great idea to divert some of the fees. It would be an uphill fight but it is worth pursuing." "More flexibility would be great to the extent you can get it."

#### Other notable comments/suggestions:

- Avoid using the term "flexibility" when talking about the use of certain funding sources for other environmental issues. Work to educate people on the need for shifting resources within the MPCA and why this is a worthwhile strategy to employ.
- > Funding flexibility breaks down internal constraints, but is not a major solution. The MPCA will still have to make choices.
- We need funding flexibility to shift to emerging issues.
- Pick what you can do well and focus on it. You need a flagship.
- ➤ If the MPCA can objectively assess a program, then shifting resources is OK. However, politics and the shifting sentiments of the Legislature heavily influence the MPCA. Empower the people so they will come to the MPCA's defense.
- > Training might have some efficiency that can be gained.
- Perhaps some money could be shifted from remediation.

### 3. Request additional funding from current sources or establish a new funding source (29% overall): Common themes:

- Several participants commented that the MPCA should pursue additional funds if there is a clear need, and educate the public and others about that need.
- Participants at several of the meetings were intrigued by/supportive of the impervious surface surcharge idea. One participant urged caution based on the experience of the City of Duluth with such a fee system.
  - > "I like the idea of impervious fees. This could lead to incentives to do the right things."
- Many other ideas were brought forth for potential funding sources. They include:
  - ➤ Property tax accountability tax properties that cause pollution at a higher rate than those that prevent pollution
  - Existing sources: LCMR, Conservation Re-Investment Act (if it passes), Coastal Zone Management, Minnesota Fund, leverage more federal funding
  - New fees: tennis-shoe tax to benefit the outdoors, a slight fee on watercraft to pay for surface water efforts, a fee on bottled water, a fertilizer tax
  - Make current fees reflect the true cost of doing business
  - Tax rebates should go to the environment

#### Other notable comments/suggestions:

- "I hope the MPCA is challenging the notion that the state surplus all be used for a tax cut...now is the time to invest in our natural resources"
- Recent polling shows incredible public support for spending the state surplus on water issues.
- "New funding won't happen unless there is public demand. The MPCA needs to do a better job of explaining the problem...the word at the MPCA is 'no problem, we're in good shape' environmentally."
- "Polluter pays" can go too far. There are general benefits to environmental protection and restoration, so some of the funding should be from the General Fund.
- If you are requesting additional funding from existing or new sources, make it clear what expectations won't be met if the funds aren't made available.
- Do your budget region-by-region and let the regions decide their priorities a high priority here might not be a high priority elsewhere (and vice versa). At times it feels the needs of Greater MN get dropped or lost in the shuffle.
- Get rid of WIF, there are major problems with this idea. The public policy implications are huge. This is very disruptive and potentially could cause alienation between governments (the haves and the have-nots). It is a state responsibility. Look at re-targeting current local aids to solve this problem. Money should be set aside now.

#### 4. Other (18% overall):

#### Common themes

- Participants at all the meetings agreed that a combination of all three funding options should be pursued to meet resource needs.
- Several specific ideas were suggested at the meetings, including the following:
  - ➤ Increase the efficiency of feedlot permit issuance—streamline engineering review, look at a one-step permit, etc.
  - ➤ Delegate more to the local level, especially in the nonpoint area and feedlots. Provide guidance, but don't actually carry out the program—look to the Wetland Conservation Act for an example.
  - Prevent overlap between city, county and state efforts.
  - Perhaps propose fee reform as a part of a larger water quality initiative (to meet both the expectations for reform and environmental needs)
  - > Build more support with legislative and Governor's Office liaisons, as well as with the public.

#### Other notable comments/suggestions:

- The environmental landscape has changed. Maybe the MPCA's role is to facilitate action within the community. Look outside the box and think of other options for funding.
- The Governor needs to assign an overall coordinator of the environmental agencies.
- Perhaps the time has come to consolidate environmental fees. It is a headache and inefficient to get invoices trickling throughout the year.
- These meetings are good only if you follow through and bring this information up the chain.

#### **Overall Observations/Common Themes:**

The following four themes were heard repeatedly at the stakeholder meetings:

Core regulatory programs (esp. permitting) – The need for the MPCA to improve its core regulatory programs came up repeatedly during the meetings, especially in regards to permitting backlogs. In general, permittees focused on the need for better service from the MPCA, while non-permittees commented that the MPCA needs to ensure that it is handling its core responsibilities well.

Enhanced communication – Participants at all the meetings brought forward various needs for improved communication, including greater availability of raw data, the need for the MPCA to interpret and explain data, more education and technical assistance, and the desire for continuing opportunities for two-way communication with the MPCA.

Coordination among state agencies, and between MPCA and local government – Many participants expressed frustration over what they saw as a lack of coordination among state agencies, and between state agencies and local government. There was confusion about who does what, a perception that there is much overlap and duplication of effort, and concern about coordination and availability of data as well as oversight of state programs delegated to the local level.

Leadership on statewide issues – Several participants at various meetings commented that they look to the MPCA for leadership on statewide issues (including information on how to prioritize environmental issues), but do not necessarily support the MPCA taking the lead on nationwide issues.

#### **MPCA Name Change**

In addition to discussing the biennial budget process and environmental priorities, the MPCA used the opportunity of these stakeholder meetings to get input on a potential MPCA name change. This input is part of a broader effort to investigate the possibility of a name change. The results of this investigation, including the input from these stakeholder meetings and additional citizen and stakeholder research, will be summarized in a report to the Legislature, which the MPCA anticipates completing in November 2000. If you would like a copy of that report, please contact Assistant Commissioner Kristen Applegate at 651/296-7354 or kristen.applegate@pca.state.mn.us to be added to the mailing list.

#### MPCA Northeast Region Phone Survey, 1997

- 1. Survey Tool: Telephone survey with 600 persons randomly selected from four geographic regions: The WLSSD service area, the Iron Range, International Falls and the Lake Superior North Shore. Survey was conducted between June 30 July 11, 1997.
- 2. Principal Findings: The survey primarily indicates that, although respondents have very strong ideas about the environment, they do not have a clear idea of MPCA's lines of authority. As a group, they recognize that government has a role to play in the planning of environmentally sensitive projects and in the enforcement of rules. However, they seem unaware of MPCA's activities in these matters. They are generally in favor of coming down hard on violators. The respondents do not want to cut taxes at the expense of the environment. Water quality is their primary concern.

#### Minnesota State Survey Results MPCA Questions 1991-2000

#### 1. Questions the MPCA has asked every year:

#### A. "Do you have an idea what the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency does?"

Year	Yes %	No %	Maybe
1991	64	32	5
1994	57	36	7
1995	52	40	7
1996	51	39	10
1997	56	34	10
1998	64	31	5
1999	63	32	6

# B. "Overall, how do you think the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency does at protecting the environment....excellent, good, fair or poor?"

Years	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
1991	4	48	42	5
1994	4	44	44	8
1995	5	52	36	6
1996	5	50	39	6
1997	5	44	43	8
1998	8	55	32	6
1999	8	48	38	6

# 2. Minnesota Survey Quality of Life Question – 1995, 1997 and 1998 (The MPCA did not pay for this question):

# "In your opinion, what do you think is the single most important problem facing people in Minnesota today?"

	1998 %	1997%	1995%
Economy	19	16	16
Taxes	18	13	12
Social Issues	14	15	15
Crime	11	17	24
Education	10	7	4
Family	8	7	5
Health care	7	5	12
Environment	4	6	3
Other	4	5	3
Government	3	6	5
Transportation	1	2	0
Housing	1	0	0
Food	0	0	0
War	0	0	0
Energy	0	-	-

#### 3. 1991 Question:

## "How well do you think the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency does at {read list} .... excellent, good, fair or poor?"

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Protecting air quality	4%	53%	35%	8%
Protecting water quality	5%	42%	38%	15%
Resolving solid waste issues	8%	41%	44%	12%
Regulating hazardous wastes	5%	41%	41%	14%

#### **4. 1992 Questions**

### A. (Both 1992 and 1996 results) "What do you think is the single most important environmental problem facing Minnesota in the next five years?"

Environmental problem	1992 Percent %	1996 Percent %
Polluted lakes	12.9	12.5
Landfills	9.5	1.6
More recycling	9.2	3.1
Motor vehicle pollution	8.2	8.8
General air pollution	6.9	5.4
General water pollution	6.6	10.1
Acid Rain	4.6	
General solid waste	4.6	
General Pollution	4.3	5.8
Groundwater pollution	3.8	1.8
General hazardous waste	2.5	
Population control	.1	5.6
Agriculture runoff	.9	3.3

### B. (1992) Please tell me if you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the following statement:

#### "Protecting the environment usually has a negative effect on the economy"

	Percent %
Strongly agree	_8
<u>Agree</u>	30
<u>Disagree</u>	45
Strongly disagree	17

#### Review 5

#### Notes from an EPA priority document are included in this section.

**EPA Document** 

- 1. The document summarizes findings of a group charged with identifying research priorities for the EPA for the next 20 years (foresight analysis).
- 2. Three methods were utilized for foresight analysis.
  - 2.1. Scanning: gathering information about trends and events that may be relevent to the future. Helps to think beyond individual disciplines.
  - 2.2. Delphi: an iterative process of gathering and analyzing expert opinions. Helps to involve stakeholders.
  - 2.3. Scenario development: synthesizing hard data and speculative judgements in a set of stories showing how different assumptions or events might lead to different futures. Starts conversations between analysts and decisionmakers.
- 3. Some things to consider in foresight analysis:
  - 3.1. Economics;
  - 3.2. Social changes;
  - 3.3. Technological changes (for example, telecommuting, our ability to monitor).

- 3.4. Human health
- 4. Research findings relevent to the EPA task:
  - 4.1. The largest challenges will be changing/overcoming institutional and social barriers. It is difficult to sway people to invest in the unknown. People and institutions tend to deal with what is known and immediate.
  - 4.2. Foresight analysis can be used to restructure the Agency, particularly with respect to improving the Agency's mobility.
  - 4.3. Foresight analysis must have application within the next few years, otherwise it will be abandoned.
- 5. Opening statement in Chapter 1: "For a decade and a half, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has tried-and generally failed-to turn its attention away from the crises of the day and, instead, anticipate the environmental problems and management opportunities of the future."
- 6. In 1995 it was recommended to the agency that they build an early-warning system to identify potential future environmental problems.
- 7. Presenting scenarios to managers may be more effective than a technical document.
- 8. There have been conflicts within the EPA's ORD regarding its mission/responsibilities. It has had to collect information that would support the regulatory programs, primarily in development of new rules. Other tasks included advancing the science and application of risk assessment and risk management and addressing emerging environmental issues.
- 9. A major obstacle is having knowledge of research being conducted by others, including others within the Agency.
- 10. It was recommended to institutionalize a scientific planning process and make sure the process was multimedia

#### Notes

- 1. We first need a system for identifying environmental priorities.
- 2. Technical staff would play a small role in identifying environmental priorities. We also need information on the following:
  - 2.1. Demographics
  - 2.2. Lifestyles
  - 2.3. Technology changes
  - 2.4. Regulations
  - 2.5. Economics
  - 2.6. Public opinion
- 3. How do we include this other information.
- 4. Some roles of technical staff might be
  - 4.1. Identifying trends
  - 4.2. Identifying new chemicals
  - 4.3. Modeling (scenario development)
  - 4.4. Effectiveness monitoring
- 5. The process of priorities setting will take time. Some of the parts include:
  - 5.1. Establishing the mechanism
  - 5.2. Assigning tasks
  - 5.3. Gathering information
  - 5.4. Analyzing information
  - 5.5. Developing scenarios
  - 5.6. Refining the process
  - 5.7. Adjusting the process over time
- 6. Identifying priorities and emerging issues should focus on social aspects and how these might relate to environmental quality.

- 7. The Agency should establish a lateral team that employs judgement methods of foresight analysis. The goal of this team is to identify emerging issues through personal contacts with experts, literature reviews, etc. The lateral team would be across Divisions and probably should include people outside the Agency on issues such as social, economic, etc.
- 8. Who is determining the direction for the Data Integration Unit.
- 9. The Quarterly Report continues to summarize information related to the number of sites where some sort of activity (permit, enforcement, etc.) took place.

#### 1992 Questions - cont.

# C. (1992) "How likely is it that you would believe information from {insert name} about a controversial environmental issue affecting your community ... very likely, somewhat likely, somewhat unlikely, or very unlikely?"

Organization	Very likely	Somewhat likely	Somewhat unlikely	Very likely
State environmental agency staff	20	55	18	7
Environmental groups	24	52	16	8
Industry representatives	5	36	34	25

#### 5. 1994 Question:

"How likely is it that you would believe information from {insert name} about a controversial environmental issue affecting your community ... very likely, somewhat likely, somewhat unlikely, or very unlikely?"

Organization	Very likely	Somewhat likely	Somewhat unlikely	Very likely
Agency staff	17	58	16	8
Environmental groups	16	52	20	11
Industry representatives	5	39	36	20
The media	11	48	28	13
Elected officials	3	36	36	23

#### 6. 1995 Question:

# A. "How likely is it that you would believe information from {insert name} about a controversial environmental issue affecting your community ... very likely, somewhat likely, somewhat unlikely, or very unlikely?"

Organization	Very likely	Somewhat likely	Somewhat unlikely	Very likely
Agency staff	17	60	16	7
Environmental groups	18	51	22	9
Industry representatives	4	37	37	21
The media	7	52	24	17
Elected officials	4	40	34	24

# B. (1995) "Have you ever contacted the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency for information, attended one of their public meetings or workshops, visited their booth at the State Fair, or had any other contact with them?"

	Yes	No
Contacted for information	13%	87%
Attended meetings/workshops	8%	92%
Visited booth at State Fair	18%	82%
Had other contact	8%	92%
Through work or work related	4%	96%

## C. (1995) Follow-up question, "If yes to above question, How would you rate the service that you received from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency ... excellent, good, fair or poor?"

Percentage	Service
10	Excellent
54	Good
26	Fair
10	Poor
26	Good Fair

#### **7. 1996 Questions:**

# A. "What do you think is the single most important environmental problem facing Minnesota in the next five years?"

Environmental problem	Percent %
Polluted lakes	12.5
General water pollution	10.1
Motor vehicle pollution	8.8
General Pollution	5.8
Population control	5.6
General air pollution	5.4
Agriculture runoff	3.3
Preserve forests	3.3
More recycling	3.1
General solid waste	3.0
Drinking water safety	2.9
Loss of wetlands	2.8
Industry discharge	2.3
BWCA protection	2.3
Groundwater pollution	1.8
Landfills	1.6

#### B. Follow-up question (1996)

"What is it about this problem or issue that makes it so important to you?"

Why environmental problem is important	Percent
To protect human health	30.9
To protect future generations	12.0
To protect the resources	8.4
To protect recreation opportunities	7.8
To protect plants and animals	6.4
To protect quality of life	6.3
It is important	5.6
To protect natural beauty	5.0

# C. (1996) "Do you think that scientists and citizens generally agree or disagree about which environmental problems are the most important?"

Agree	Disagree
45%	55%

D. (If disagree) "When they disagree, should the state focus more of its attention on the environmental problems that citizens say are most important, or on the problems that scientists say are most important, or don't you have an opinion on this?"

Focus	Percent
Citizen concerns	36
Scientist concerns	23
No opinion	29
Other	2
Both	10

E. (1996) "How helpful would information about (read list) be to you ... very helpful, somewhat helpful, not very helpful or not at all?"

	Very helpful	Somewhat helpful	Not very helpful	Not at all helpful
The amount of pollution that is now		•	-	-
in the air, water, and soil	46	41	10	4
The effect of pollution on the health				
of animals and plants	46	41	11	2
The effect of pollution on human				
health	59	34	5	2

#### **8. 1997 Questions:**

A. "Minnesota state agencies plan to increase use of the Internet to answer citizens' environmental and natural resource questions and information needs. To do that effectively, they would like to know what kind of information or data citizens want. What are the most important information or data you would like to have about Minnesota's environmental and natural resources?

	Grouped	First	Second
	responses (%)	response	response
		(%)	(%)
Water Quality	16.5	19.8	15.6
Other	8.4	8.1	7.2
Recreation areas	7.9	9.5	6.8
Air pollution	7.0	4.7	9.7
Protect resources	6.9	6.7	8.6
Wildlife	4.7	3.2	6.8
Don't use internet	4.3	8.1	
Forests	3.5	2.3	5.0
Recycling	3.3	4.0	3.0
Environmental cleanup	2.9	4.0	1.9
Natural resources	2.7	3.6	1.5
Agriculture	2.6	1.5	4.2
Business polluters	2.2	2.9	1.4
Voluntary opportunities	2.2	1.2	2.3
Policy decisions	2.2	2.4	2.9

B. (1997) "Would this information help you in your work, at school, in your civic or volunteer activities, in planning a vacation trip, or in some other way?"

	Yes (%)	No (%)
Work	28	72
School	19	81
Civic or volunteer activity	32	68
Planning a vacation trip	50	50
Other	18	82
Info would not help	7	93
(volunteered)		
Info in general would help (volunteered)	8	92

C. (1997) "Do you have access to information on the Internet at work, at home, or somewhere else?"

	Percentage
Yes, at work	19
Yes, at home	18
Yes, both	16
Yes, other	3
No Internet access	36
Yes, at library	2
Yes, at friends	4
Yes, at school	3

D. (1997) {If respondent was not in the area five years ago, go to next question}

"Compared to ten years ago, is the quality of Minnesota's air in your area better today, about the same or worse?"

	Percentage
Better	12
About the same	63
Worse	21
Not in the area 10 years ago	4
(volunteered)	

E. (1997) "Compared to ten years ago, is the water quality for fishing and swimming in the lakes and rivers in your area better today, about the same, or worse?"

	Percentage
Better	14
About the same	29
Worse	57
Not in the area 10 years ago	4
(volunteered)	

F. "Compared to ten years ago, is the soil in your area less contaminated today, about the same or more contaminated?"

	Percentage
Less contaminated	11
About the same	58
More contaminated	31

#### **Met Council Customer Research Project**

- General Public
- City Officials and Staff
  - Industrial Users
- Other Government Agencies

#### • General Public

1. Survey Tool: 1997 Twin Cities Area Survey

A total of 803 telephone surveys of adults, age 18 and over, who reside in the seven County Twin Cities metropolitan area, were completed for the 1997 Twin Cities Area Survey. Data collection was conducted from November 1997 to February 1998 by the Minnesota Center for Survey Research at the University of Minnesota.

2. Purpose: To get the customers' point of view in assessing Met Council's customer service responsiveness.

#### 3. Results:

- Quality of Life and Water:
  - a) Regarding the environment, respondents indicated the most important activity for regional government to be increased environmental protection, followed closely by public education.
  - b) Respondents were more satisfied with the quality of their drinking water than with the water quality of area lakes and rivers.
- Water Quality Improvements:
  - c) Protection of lakes and rivers and reduction of agricultural runoff were named most often as the most important way to improve water quality.
  - d) Respondents indicated strong support for use of a "set aside" from residential sewer bills to fund activities to improve water quality and the addition of a water pollution charge to the cost of lawn fertilizers
- Public Information and Communications
  - e) Respondents rely heavily on the media (newspapers, TV, radio) and prefer it for information about water quality and the environment, although they believe the media does not change their attitude about water quality.

#### • City Officials and Staff

1. Survey Tool: A total of 206 interviews were conducted with mayors, city managers directors of finance, public works and development staff.

#### 2. Purpose:

- Determine water resource priorities and regional needs
- Assess reactions to revenue issues

#### 3. Results:

- Water Resources Issues
  - a) Non-point sources of pollution frequently were identified as significant sources of metro area pollution and improvement efforts are warranted.
  - b) Groundwater quality and aquifer management are seen as priorities which may benefit from a regional approach.
  - c) Few believe their community has a long term water supply problem.
- Revenues, Budgeting and Rates
  - d) Use of service availability charge, industrial waste charges and sewer user fees for broader purposes has limited support among respondents
  - e) Cities are receptive to user-based fee concept.

#### • Industrial Users

- 1. Survey Tool: A sample of 497 customers were drawn and a total of 290 interviews were conducted.
- 2. Purpose: To conduct more in-depth analysis with one of their major customer groups.
- 3. Results:
  - Water Resource Issues
    - a) Groundwater quality, swimmable lakes and aquifer management are seen as priorities which may benefit from a regional planning approach.
    - b) Non-point sources of pollution frequently were identified as significant sources of metro area pollution and opportunities to address this issue appear viable.
    - c) Continued industrial waste management, coordinated with other water, air and land use programs, is needed for overall environmental protection.
  - Respondent Water Quality Effects
    - d) A wide range of pollution prevention in the last two years was reported. Most frequently mentioned were changes to reduce volume or to pretreat wastes.
    - e) ISO certification prompted few respondents to change waste treatment processes
    - f) Consistent enforcement and standards development were the most important regulatory concerns.

#### • Other Government Agencies

- 1. Survey Tool: In-depth, face to face interviews were conducted with 10 Local, State and National Agencies t provide a broad sampling of the various government perspectives. Twenty-five interviews were conducted between July 2 through August 18,1998.
- 2. Purpose: To conduct more in-depth analysis with one of their major customer groups.
- 3. Results:
  - Common Interest Areas
    - a) Sustainable development is an emerging issue area for several agencies
    - b) Restructuring and organizational development along a geographic, cross-functinal basis is an emerging trend
  - Success Factors For Joint Efforts
    - c) Several potential areas for cooperation and coordination were identified; priority areas to pursue include areas of overlap related to data gathering, public education and planning.
    - d) Outcome-based reporting and use of a coordinated, systems approach provide a basis for effective, cooperative efforts.

#### 2000: Citizen Environmental Values Research (re urban sprawl)

This was a literature review and analysis conducted by David Wall of the Dept. of Geography of St. Cloud State University. The idea was to focus on Minnesota-related information, but include national data where relevant. The basic contents were:

#### PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

- What Minnesotans Think About Sprawl: Minneapolis-Saint Paul, the Metropolitan Regional Perspective
- What Minnesotans Think About Sprawl: The Perspective from Individual Cities and Counties

#### BEHAVIORS, ATTITUDES AND VALUES

- What attributes of neighborhood, community, housing amenities do Minnesotans value?: Results from Fifteen Metropolitan Communities
- Transportation habits and choices
- Who is using what mode of transportation and for what reasons?
- Trade-offs in transportation behavior
- How do people's beliefs compare with actual behavior?
- Beliefs and Behavior: Americans and the Environment
- Beliefs and Behavior: Minnesotans and the Environment
- How do Minnesotans Compare with Other Regions?

#### SOURCE AND NATURE OF OPPOSITION

(note: This project was too lengthy to summarize – if you're interested in any of the above-mentioned subject areas in the report, contact Chris Zadak 297-8613.)

#### 1999: Report on the Governor's Forums: Citizens Speak Out on the Environment

This was a series of forums conducted around the state in May 1999. We polled over 400 Minnesotans on what they see as the top environmental priorities and asked specific questions about the performance of the agency.

#### Key ideas from Forums and Potential Follow-Up Questions

#### Brainerd - priority issues: Lakes & rivers, septic systems, wetland destruction

- Development: A major threat
- Perception that septic systems are largely to blame for declines in WQ
- PCA's role: Strong calls for education and enforcement
- "We like regulation for other people to follow."
- Potential follow-up questions: How should the Agency address the perception that septic systems are a big problem for water quality, when our watershed studies indicate that septic systems generally are a small component of the total watershed load--significantly less than other sources like agricultural land, etc.? Septic systems are, however, a key component of the stewardship/ personal responsibility element of watershed management. How then do we use this information to improve our programs? Do we increase our efforts and priority related to septic systems, educate people about the true environmental impact to change their perception, or .......?

#### <u>Detroit Lakes</u> – priority issues: Well water quality, lake quality, erosion control

- WQ stressors: P fertilizers, septic systems
- Call for more education, information
- Pesticides, industrial-scale farming among the other concerns
- "I'm more willing to point out what someone else should do."
- **Potential follow-up questions:** Many of the participants at this forum did not know the MPCA had a Detroit Lakes Office. Their opinion of the MPCA's work came from coverage in the Mpls./St. Paul papers, most notably the *Star Tribune* and the Koch story. Clearly the metro media is the most significant factor of the public's view of the Agency's work across the state. How can we use this information to improve our communication strategy?

#### Duluth – priority issues: WQ, toxins, lack of a conservation ethic

- Main stressors: Over-development and pervasiveness of toxins
- Lack of responsibility by manufacturers; distrust of gov't (conspiracy theory...)
- Need for more rigorous regulation/oversight by state
- **Potential follow-up questions:** It was clear at this forum that the participants did not trust government or business. Knowing this for this area, should it impact how we do communication and carry out regulatory activities? How can we approach issues regarding trust, and address communication concerns?

Arden Hills - priority issues: WQ, industrial air emissions, HW & SW

- Vehicles and the environment: different standards for SUVs; emissions testing should be kept, but modified; would pay \$1 more per gal of gas if it would improve the environment.
- <u>Varied discussion: HW drop-off sites; urban sprawl--problem or not?; tax "bads" not "goods"; overall environmental decline in TC in last 5 yrs.</u>
- Potential follow-up questions: At these meetings we saw people willing to support ideas that you would not expect or even believe, such as the willingness to pay \$1 more per gallon of gas. When we find provocative ideas should the Agency follow up and with additional and broader research to determine if there is public support for these kinds of initiatives?

#### Minneapolis - priority issues: AQ, WQ, vehicle emissions

- Strong support for improved public transportation
- More environmental education
- Tax environmentally-damaging activities
- "When I came here transit was not high on my list, but it is now much higher because I realize it's connected to so many things--WQ, AQ, etc."
- **Potential follow-up questions**: There was a clear desire for more environmental education. What role and level of involvement should the Agency have in delivering this?

#### Marshall - priority issues: Rivers and drinking water, industrial bioloading, declining rural quality of life

- Agriculture dominated, but no finger-pointing
- Willing to pay more tax to help farmers protect environment
- More environmental education
- **Potential follow-up questions:** "Declining rural quality of life" was one of the top three environmental issues named at this forum. How can this information help us understand and communicate the Agency's role in rural MN? How could we use this knowledge to help leverage our environmental efforts?

#### Rochester - priority issues: Municipal "legal" river dumping, fertilizers and pesticides, feedlots

- Strong belief by farmers that they're unfairly being targeted for WQ problems (a "double standard")
- Farm size makes a big difference
- Break-through moment: "Both urban and rural share responsibility; we need to work together."
- Potential follow-up questions: 1. There was a strong perception that the "real" environmental problem is the dumping of sewage into the river by municipalities. People in attendance were convinced the metropolitan wastewater treatment plants are still dumping raw sewage. Obviously the success story hasn't reached much of Minnesota. 2. The MPCA is also feared by farmers, who tell stories of MPCA staff showing up at "somebody's farm" and acting like a tyrant. These rural legends are shared and passed on, though nobody in attendance had direct experience with a situation like this. As LL said "Until we deal with their fear, we won't make any headway".

#### Stakeholders and Partners - priority issues: Statewide land planning/urban sprawl, pesticides, feedlots

- Ag issues dominated ("farming: a sacred cow")
- Pesticides (+other toxins): too many/too compl. to ever know potential effects
- Strong call for "simplified, coordinated reporting"
- PCA needs to improve most in: setting/upholding regulations, promoting innovation and conducting research/monitoring.
- **Potential follow-up questions:** The stakeholders and partners attending this forum were more interested in the "how" instead of the "what." What might this mean given the Agency's focus on outcomes rather than process? This may not be surprising knowing our own preoccupation with process, but this may prove to be barrier to the Agency moving to an outcomes focus if our key partners are also process focused and aren't ready to make the change. How does knowing the stakeholders/partners viewpoints help us?

#### 1997-1999: The National Environmental Education & Training Foundation

A review of this website: <a href="http://www.neetf.org/reportcard/index.htm">http://www.neetf.org/reportcard/index.htm</a> reveals a range of findings on public knowledge, misperceptions, level of support for environmental protection, etc. Here are some highlights from surveys from '97-'99:

- Only 23% of Americans are able to identify run-off as the leading cause of water pollution. (Twice that number believe factories are the main source.)
- Only 33% of Americans know that burning fossil fuels is America's primary method for generating electricity, or what impact this has on air quality. (Nearly half believe dams produce most of our electricity).
- Americans have been very consistent over the past six years in their belief that the environment and economy can go hand in hand, and four to one reject polarized positions on the environment.
- Increased knowledge of the environment helps people notice more compromises and lessen their overall support for certain types of environmental regulation as the *only* solution to environmental problems.
- Environmental knowledge makes people less inclined to think we might face an environmental catastrophe in the next ten years.
- Individuals who know the major source of water pollution are more likely to take action to prevent it.
- Childless adults who know that cars are the major source of air pollution in the U.S., and who have alternative transportation available, are more likely to use the alternative.
- Fully 95% of adult Americans and 96% of parents support children being taught environmental education in the schools.

#### Statewide Phone Survey, April 1999

This survey was conducted by C.J. Olson Market Research, Inc. for the MPCA in April of 1999. The consultant divided the state into three nearly equal areas (Metro, north and south) and surveyed 814 Minnesotans by telephone. The research was done to gather the views and values of the state's citizens as they relate to the environment. Also to determine Minnesotans' awareness of the causes of pollution, discover what environmental information the public wants and how they want to receive that information. We intended to use the results to establish priorities, plan educational outreach and develop communications.

#### Summary

#### Awareness of the Causes of Pollution

Awareness of the causes of pollution was measured by the perceived seriousness of various threats to the Minnesota environment. Overall, the top three environmental threats rated most serious were agricultural runoff, vehicle exhaust and industrial chemical waste.

When different parts of the environment were looked at specifically, awareness of the causes of pollution became apparent.

- Minnesota residents perceived the most serious threats to lakes and streams to be urban storm water runoff, agricultural runoff, leaking septic systems and discharges from waste water treatment plants.
- The most serious threats to air quality were perceived to be emissions from factories and refineries, vehicle exhaust and the burning of coal, oil and garbage to produce electricity.
- Industrial chemical waste was perceived to be the most serious threat to clean soil and groundwater.

#### **Environmental Values**

This study revealed the Minnesota public believes the most important reason for protecting the environment is to keep it clean for future generations.

Current water quality was considered to be between fair and good and, overall, it was expected to stay about the same in the next ten years. However, the breakdown of the actual responses was as follows: 42% said "get worse;" 34% said "stay the same;" and 20% said "get better." Current air quality was considered to be good. It was expected to stay about the same in the future.

Overall, mercury in fish was the environmental problem about which the public was most concerned. Minnesota residents indicated they were somewhat concerned about the parts of the environment they never see or visit, like a rare plant or a remote river.

When asked how well the Minnesota government was protecting the environment, respondents gave a mean rating that was between not doing enough and doing the right amount.

#### Environmental Information Wanted and Preferred Sources

Survey participants were asked if they would be interested in learning more about sources of pollution in Minnesota, how to help prevent and reduce pollution and/or health risks from known pollution in Minnesota. For each of the topics, over half of the survey participants indicated they were interested in learning more about the subject. The preferred sources of information were brochures/newsletter/fact sheets, newspapers, and TV or radio.

#### Voices and Views: Listening Posts Across Minnesota, MN Planning April 2000

Minnesota Planning organized "listening posts" in ten development regions in the state between December 1999 and April 2000 to determine what rural Minnesota saw essential to their future. These public-participation opportunities

were hosted by Regional Development Commissions and cosponsored by the United States Department of Agriculture-Rural Development. A total of 630 citizens, of which 16 were state senators or representatives, attended the listening posts.

#### S<u>ummary</u>

The overwhelming impression gained from the listening posts was that Minnesotans are proud of their regions, value their quality of life, and want safe, welcoming, economically-viable communities. Many of the attendees shared the following views:

- Most rural areas are experiencing a decline in population and that population is aging.
- There is a need to create viable economies that encourage more young people to move out of the Twin Cities to rural Minnesota.
- Job creation is a major concern. Higher-functioning and better-paying jobs are needed to retain young people.
- Rural Minnesota needs greater access to higher education with training being responsive to the evolving job market.
- Welcoming minorities to rural communities would help the region thrive economically.
- Rural communities want to work with the state to encourage businesses, especially high-tech businesses and financial institutions, to relocate to rural areas. Large businesses can be encouraged to expand into rural Minnesota by awarding them tax breaks or economic assistance.
- The state should move some state government jobs to rural Minnesota.
- Local businesses must be helped to grow and the development of niche markets in rural areas is important.
- Rural communities should not import what can be produced locally.
- Regional planning should take a holistic approach.
- An inter-district dialogue should be encouraged.
- Agriculture is still at the heart of the rural economy but must be made viable. We need fewer corporate farms, more family-run farms of 200 to 400 acres and a free market for agriculture.
- New uses for agricultural products must be sought.
- Government has turned its back on production agriculture.
- Tourism is a viable option in many areas.
- Good telecommunications access is essential for economic development. A side benefit to this is reduced road congestion.
- Good transportation is also essential to economic development. Clearly, road transportation is considered the priority for moving both people and products.
- Health care is a concern in many rural areas.
- Affordable housing is an economic issue.
- Quality education systems will stimulate economic growth.
- Communities must respect the environment. In all regions, citizens were conscious of the richness of their natural resources and the importance of protecting them and maintaining clean air and water. They agreed economic development should not come at the expense of land use and infrastructure planning.
- Water and sewer (infrastructure) issues must be dealt with.
- Education about the environment is essential, both in the schools and in communities.
- Effective land use requires planning. Sprawl is a concern and zoning was favored in most places. Planning should be regional and the state should act as a catalyst, providing guidelines, projections and funding, with greater cooperation between state agencies and citizens.
- In Fergus Falls, many citizens believe that over-regulation is a problem, exacerbated by a belief that the Pollution Control Agency does not understand how farmers operate. Some regulations do not make sense, and as a result, some dairy farmers are pulling out of the region, they said.
- Grant allocation should be fairer. There should be more flexibility and grants with performance goals, not restrictive guidelines. It was suggested that Regional Development Commissions be given a larger role. There is also a concern regarding fund matching—many rural communities lack the resources to match funds. This sets up a situation in which rich areas get more and poor areas get less.
- Partnership between all levels of government is essential. Statewide planning is necessary but the state needs to maximize local participation. State government could decentralize more.

#### 1992 Executives' Opinions of Environmental Issues (Fredrickson and Byron Law Firm)

The population for this survey is executives from the largest manufacturing companies in Minnesota. A total of 78 telephone interviews were conducted with the 100 largest companies and 22 with the next 50 largest. The purpose of this survey was to better understand how Minnesota executives deal with the challenges of balancing environmental concerns and business interests as well as managing compliance. A variety of questions were asked about environmental compliance including the most valuable source of compliance information, what motivated companies to comply and the effect of environmental compliance on competitiveness. Among the findings:

- Executives said that their company's most valuable sources of information for understanding environmental regulations are internal environmental staff, such as quality assurance managers. Second most valuable source was trade associations and their publications.
- When asked about satisfaction with their company's involvement in regulatory compliance, executives are
  most satisfied with their company's compliance with regulations and their efforts to minimize corporate
  liability on environmental issues. They are least satisfied with their company's preparedness for future
  environmental regulations.
- Nearly 50 percent of executives surveyed believed that Minnesota's environmental regulations have had a
  negative effect on their company's ability to compete nationally. Fifty percent of the executives believe
  Minnesota's environmental regulations put them at a competitive disadvantage internationally. One-third
  felt that Minnesota's environmental regulations had no effect on their ability to compete nationally or
  internationally.
- Competitors' actions regarding compliance are not a major motivator affecting companies' approach to compliance.
- 65 percent of executives surveyed said the possibility of fines has a minor or no effect on their approach to compliance.
- Factors that motivated compliance included damage to their company's public image and revocation of permits and licenses.
- When asked who they call first when their company needs outside assistance related to environmental compliance, executives most often mentioned environmental engineers (41 %) and attorneys (21 %). Government and regulatory agencies were at the bottom of the list of resources to call (2 %).

### 1994 Customer Views on 1994 Strategic Planning (PCA with help from U of M, focus groups of end user and partner customers)

MPCA staff conducted eight focus group interview with 74 participants around the state between June 21 and June 28, 1994. The purpose of the focus groups was to gain information about how Minnesotans view the environment and the MPCA's protection efforts to support the Strategic Planning process underway at the time. Participants included both Minnesota residents and MPCA customers. Key findings included:

- Nearly all focus groups gave water the highest importance of environmental factors that people value.
- Education was mentioned in all groups as very important.
- Environmental protection must be balanced with economic growth.
- Participants wanted the MPCA to provide additional leadership in prioritizing environmental problems.
- Participants wanted MPCA to have more of a customer service orientation, to be more responsive and more accessible on a local level.
- Participants expressed frustration about the apparent lack of communication and coordination between the
  agencies responsible for environmental programs and also between MPCA divisions. Participants wanted
  consistent standards and regulations.

#### 1995 Customer-Centered Strategy Plan (Himle Horner interviews of agency customers)

To assist the MPCA in developing a long-term customer-focused strategic plan, Himle Horner interviewed MPCA customers and staff to identify MPCA core products and the potential gaps between delivery and customer expectations. Himle Horner conducted telephone interviews with 16 MPCA customers from a variety of organizations and locations throughout the state between November 10 and November 15, 1995. The objective was to find out their perceptions on the level of customer service while using MPCA products. The interviews were selected from a list of names proposed by the MPCA. Himle Horner selected the interview candidates, which included both large and small companies who had had recent dealings with the MPCA.

#### **Findings:**

- MPCA is responsive to customers, but on its terms. The MPCA staff only works within its regulatory boundary, rarely allowing for creative solutions.
- Customers are often frustrated with the lack of integration among departments.
- The entry point to the MPCA often is confusing and/or inaccessible. Customers feel they get bounced around several times before being put in touch with the right person.
- Representatives of small businesses express much greater frustration with the MCPA than larger company contacts. There is a perceived lack of empathy among MPCA staff toward the issues facing the small business owner. Regulations seem designed as a "one-size-fits-all" solution, making it difficult to comply.
- MPCA staff transition is a problem for some customers. When MPCA staff turnover occurs, while the customer is in the middle of a process, customers are often asked to start the process over.
- Customers in outstate Minnesota prefer to work with their regional office. Regional MPCA representatives are members of their own communities and are perceived to understand their needs better.
- MPCA's training programs and seminars are perceived as positive. Nearly all the
  customers view the MPCA's statewide training and seminar programs to be of
  significant benefit to them.
- Professional relationships are good. Staff members are seen to be very knowledgeable and committed to the protection of the environment.

• MPCA's relations with customers have improved dramatically in recent years. Although there is still quite a bit more work to be done, customers feel that real progress toward better customer service has been achieved in recent years.

#### 1995 MPCA Customer Expectations (Prism, Inc., phone interviews of MPCA customers)

Building on preliminary research conducted by Himle Horner, Inc., PRISM, Inc. conducted a series of 30-minute interviews with 41 MPCA customers between December 8-15, 1995. The purpose of the interviews was to probe customer expectations and satisfaction regarding a pre-defined set of products currently provided through the MPCA.

#### Findings: What Customers Like About the MPCA

- They place a great deal of value on the MPCA's willingness to solicit customer input.
- They agree that environmental rules and controls are needed.
- They feel that they have positive relationships with MPCA staff.

#### Findings: What Customers Would Like to Change about the MPCA

- Improvements in the way the MPCA implements "Environmental Rules," "Guidance Documents and Technical Assistance," "Environmental Permits," and "Enforcement."
  - Specifically, customers had a desire for processes that are easier to understand, less expensive to implement, and more effective. MPCA customers are more concerned about taking actions that result in real environmental improvements than in compliance with policies that do not appear to have a direct effect on the environment. Customers also cited several instances where they suffered real dollar losses as a result of delays associated with the permitting process.
- Longer-term, more collaborative relationships with MPCA representatives.
- Greater flexibility to create broad environmental plans.
- Better access to the MPCA in greater Minnesota.

#### 1996 Customer Interviews on MPCA Products and Services

The MPCA contracted with the Management Analysis Division of the Department of Administration to conduct interviews of 35 of the MPCA's external customers about specific MPCA products and services. The customers include representatives from local units of government, consultants, environmental groups and state legislators. Of the 35 interviewed, 11 were staff from local units of government, 18 staff from for-profit or nonprofit organizations and six were state legislators from both the House of Representatives and Senate, all but one sitting on the environmental and natural resources committee. Except for legislators, interviewees were asked to comment specifically on particular MPCA products and services. The legislators were asked more general questions about the MPCA's mission and delivery of products and services. This research is similar to that conducted by PRISM, Inc., and Himle Horner, Inc, with different customers. Note that this is a very small sample size and probably should be used to generalize with great caution.

#### **Findings:**

- Customers interviewed felt the MPCA's products and services should accomplish the following:
  - Environmental protection
  - Compliance by regulated entities through meeting rules and regulation; or
  - Provision of guidelines and guidance on implementing environmental laws.
- Questions were asked about five of the MPCA's products and services (guidance documents and technical
  assistance, rules, compliance activities, environmental review and permits). Three of the above five
  (guidance documents and technical assistance, compliance activities, and environmental review) are
  believed by these customers to be achieving the correct objectives.
- A number of interviewees said they did not believe that rules and permits are meeting their objectives.
- Most customers stated that their relationship with MPCA staff is good and multiple examples existed to show how MPCA products and services are useful. Examples included:
  - Opportunities are provided for public comment.

- The products and services perform an educational function.
- MPCA has the ability to institute penalties and get entities to respond.
- MPCA is a resource to turn to when problems or questions arise.
- Rules provide a level playing field within industries and draw attention to particular hazards.

#### Multiple examples exist to explain how products and services are not meeting objectives.

- Standards are out-of-date or don't address major problems.
- A lack of consistency is seen among inspectors.
- Not enough time is allowed to make thorough inspections.
- Staff are rigid, and interpret rules literally, not considering the specifics of a given situation.
- Rule language is hard to understand.
- Standards for protecting the environment and sanctions for violations are not high enough.
- Pro-industry bias is shown.

#### • Multiple suggestions for improvement exist

- Speed up processes and actions.
- Be consistent across processes, among staff and among regulated entities.
- Balance the MPCA's stance to prevent some customers from seeing the MCPA as pro-business at the cost of the environment and others from believing that the MPCA protects the environment at too great a cost to business.
- Work more effectively with regulated parties by:
  - providing one permit to cover all media,
  - achieving balance between enforcement and helping businesses comply,
  - give more attention and individualized work to a specific project or industry,
  - provide shorter permit renewal periods and
  - allow more flexibility of means to companies that agree to perform at higher standards.
  - Be creative in protecting the environment by taxing pollution and focusing on prevention, being
    more risk-based and targeting the more significant pollution sources, focusing on specific goals for
    preventing pollution or cleaning the environment and making permits more outcome-based or
    results-oriented.
  - Improve MPCA's interaction with the general public by making the rules language and rulemaking process easier to understand.

#### Mercury Contamination Reduction Advisory Council Summary of Post-Process Participant Interviews and Recommendations

July 1999

This piece is included in the synopsis not because of the mercury issue but rather because the process evaluation itself turned out to be very instructive the art and practice of using stakeholder advisory or decision making groups, which may be of interest to the redesign teams.

To learn from the experiences of the Mercury Contamination Reduction Advisory Council, the MPCA interviewed about 30 Council participants at the conclusion of the Council's work. The interviews focused on opinions about the overall process, the role of the MPCA in the process, and the role of the Council itself. Lessons learned from the interviews will be incorporated into future efforts of this type.

Part I of the report summarizes the major themes heard from participant interviews, and some notable quotes related to each theme to further illustrate the concepts and range of opinion. Part II describes recommendations for future processes, based on the interviews. In addition, a copy of the interview questionnaire with a compilation of the raw data (responses of interviewees) is included as an attachment to this report.

For the redesign teams, here are a couple excerpts from the report that may be interesting. The entire report is 13 pages, and is well worth reading if you haven't done so.

Based upon Outcomes' staff interviews of participants in the Mercury Reduction Advisory Council and other research, we have developed recommendations on the use of group decision-making processes by the MPCA and recommendations for planning and implementation of these processes. The recommendations should be considered a beginning step in our understanding of the variety of external input tools. As our knowledge and understanding increases, the recommendations may change or expand in detail.

It should also be noted that the recommendations discussed below apply to a type of process in which a group works together to make consensus decisions about an issue, sometimes called "collaborative decision making" or "group decision making." Although the MPCA called the mercury effort an "advisory council" and may have formed the group to provide advice, it evolved over time into a decision-making body. Thus, the recommendations developed here are appropriate to group decision-making processes, rather than to an advice-giving processes.

The recommendations are categorized into three phases: deciding whether to use group decision-making; designing the process; and implementing the process. We've included the recommendations for deciding whether to use group decision-making in this stakeholder research synopsis.

#### DECIDING WHETHER TO USE (OR NOT USE) A GROUP DECISION-MAKING PROCESS.

Group decision-making is one tool for developing solutions to environmental problems. It is not the only tool and should not be used in every circumstance. In fact, group decision-making can be considered a reactive tool and should be used sparingly. Use of this type of process is warranted in situations where:

- there is a compelling problem. Compelling problems are those that have an environmental impact, socio-economic consequences, and a range of understanding and viewpoints on the issue;
- parties are committed to finding a solutions;
- the problem affects a broad array of people;

- the problem has no obvious scientific or regulatory solution;
- participants are willing to devote the time needed; and
- the MPCA is willing to invest significant resources.

If all of the above conditions are not met, group decision making should not be the tool of choice. Two examples of problems which seemed to be well suited to this process were the landfill problems addressed by the Select Committee on Recycling and the Environment (SCORE) and the flooding problems in northwestern Minnesota, addressed by the Red River Mediation Project.

For a copy of the full report, contact Paul Hoff or Liz Gelbmann, who was the primary author.

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Note: This stakeholder research piece is included as an example related to the broader activity of basin planning.

### Red River Basin Planning Process Follow-up Evaluation, 1999

To learn from the experiences of the Red River Basin Planning process, the MPCA interviewed 20 participants at the completion of the basin plan. The interviews focused on opinions about the overall process, the people involved in the process, and the basin plan itself. Lessons learned from the interviews will be considered and incorporated into future basin planning efforts in Minnesota.

This report summarizes the major themes heard from participant interviews, and some notable quotes related to each theme to further illustrate the concepts and range of opinion. In addition, a copy of the interview questionnaire is included as an attachment to this report.

Three themes came through again and again during the interviews. These overall themes were:

- There are <u>many</u> planning processes going on at the state, basin and local level, and these processes need to be coordinated (examples: Red River Basin Plan, MN Water Plan 2000, local water planning).
- The agency better follow through on the Red River planning effort and come up with some money to fund projects...either agency funds or funds they (the agency) secure from somewhere else.
- The participants in the process need feedback and further updates; they want to know what is happening now with respect to the basin plan.

The rest of the themes identified during the interviews fall into the following three categories: The Process, The People and The Plan.

For more information, contact Paul Hoff or Liz Gelbmann.

#### Program-specific customer research

#### 1993 Clean Water Partnership Survey (PCA interviews of project managers)

This is an August 1993 survey of customers involved with the Clean Water Partnership Program. The survey included detailed questions about the application process, project ranking and selection, project work plan, water quality and watershed assessments. It also asked several questions about the two main phases of the report, the diagnostic study and the implementation plan. Additional questions dealt with MPCA assistance to projects and areas where more assistance was needed.

#### 1994 Tanks Program Focus Groups

The purpose of this research was to learn more about the needs of the Petroleum Storage Tank Program customers and identify opportunities for program improvement. Focus Groups were held in Bloomington, Owatonna, Marshall, White Bear Lake, Virginia and Little Falls. Each group was a mixture of tank owners, UST contractors, LUST consultants and neighbors to tank sites and environmentalists.

#### Major findings included:

- Small businesses, small local units of government and residents have significantly different service delivery needs than small businesses.
- Small businesses have trouble understanding the program, affording costs and managing consultants.
- Vast majority of customers favors regionalizing MPCA staff.
- Nearly all customers favor face-to-face visits with MPCA when small business is the
  customer and for cases with complex technical and enforcement issues. In most other cases,
  customers want to use the telephone of written communications (believe they are more
  efficient.)

#### 1995 Small Business Assistance Program Survey

The MPCA sent a written survey in October 1995 to 267 randomly selected Small Business Assistance Program customers. Response rate was 39 percent. Among respondents, the program's customer service ranked very high, but business owners expressed frustration with the complexity of the air-permitting program. One survey question asked about whether or not small businesses were able to reduce emissions and/or wastes as a result of the compliance assistance they had received. Of those who responded, 38 percent said yes and 60 percent said they were not reducing emissions or wastes. Some expressed frustration at the fact that the regulations are complex and burdensome, but do not necessarily result in environmental improvements.

#### 1996 Superfund Re-engineering Phase 1 (Prism, Inc. focus groups with MPCA staff)

Eight focus groups were conducted with Superfund staff, including a separate focus group for supervisors to gather input for use in determining the process to use for re-engineering Superfund. These focus groups were mostly about deciding a process for re-engineering (how to involve staff, etc.) rather than about how program re-engineering.

**1996 Site Response Section Input and Response** (Biko, Associate, Inc. telephone survey used for program re-engineering)

The MPCA contracted with Biko Associates, Inc. to conduct a telephone survey of its customers. The goal of the survey was to obtain the perceptions of customers about the Site Response Section program, how Site Response Section staff do their jobs and how the programs and staff performance can improve. These programs include the traditional Superfund program, the Voluntary Investigation and Cleanup Program and Site Assessment activities. For purposes of the survey, the MPCA divided their customers in to seven customer groups: environmental organizations and neighbors, industry, attorneys, consultants, development agencies, local government, and financial community/real estate development. A total of 49 people were interviewed from April 29-May 21, 1996, with an average of seven customers interviewed per customer group.

Survey topics included: site identification and assessment questions, site clean-up level questions, program funding questions, site clean-up cost questions, staff communication questions, specific customer group questions and summary questions (participants were given the opportunity to state what has been satisfying and frustrating about their involvement with the program).

#### **Consensus of all respondents:**

- Superfund program was generally considered a failure by all customer groups for widely varying reasons. VIC program was considered a success.
- Nearly all customer groups believed that MPCA staff were communicating well
- Funding sources for Superfund were prioritized similarly across all customer groups.

The top priority was responsible parties and the bottom priority non-responsible landowners, with the exception of the neighborhood/environmental organizations group, which put state taxes at the bottom of the priority list.

#### Areas of disagreement among respondents

- Respondents were split over whether the identification and prioritization processes were fair.
- Different customer groups had different perceptions about how staff could improve service. Responsible parties and associated professionals focused primarily on speeding up the process and consistent application of standards. Development professionals focused on shortfalls of the program related to property transfer and re-development. Environmental organizations and neighbors wanted more attention given to "the needs of the site and less to the interests of land owners."

#### Survey highlights

- Most respondents believe the existing clean-up efforts take between 3-10 years and that this is too long. Ideal time frames for most would be one to three years.
- Risk-based cleanup was endorsed by all groups, but with varying levels of comfort. The proposition to compromise clean-up levels to facilitate clean-up of more sites was generally rejected.
- One recommendation common to several customers groups was increasing proactive participation by a broader range of stakeholders. The existing public participation rules were labeled as perfunctory or a farce.
- Another common recommendation from virtually all customer groups was to return phone calls more promptly.

#### 1996 Site Response Program Activities (Biko Associates, Inc., Core, Inc. Focus groups)

The MPCA contracted with Biko Associates, Inc. to conduct seven focus groups with a total of 66 of its customers between May 17 and June 7 1996. The purpose of the focus groups was to obtain the perception of customers about the Site Response Section programs, how Site Response Section Staff do their job and how the programs and staff performance could improve.

#### Areas of consensus across all focus groups

- All customers support the intent of Superfund
- In spite of its intent, the process primarily benefits lawyers and consultants by keeping them employed.
- The Superfund process needs to be simplified.
- Superfund is costly with more resources going into litigation than cleanup.
- The financial harm of retroactive joint and several liability on small business owners should be mimimized
- VIC is preferred to Superfund since it leads to faster cleanup and less litigation.

#### General recommendations for improving MPCA efforts

- Customers want to develop better working partnerships with the MPCA.
- MPCA staff could benefit from communications, customer-service and business skills training to improve consistency and efficiency.
- Involving the community early and continuously in the planning process for remediating contamination and assessing costs eliminated future conflict.
- Customer groups want to be more involved in setting priorities.
- The concept of "risk-based" needs to be clarified and customer groups would like to be involved in defining the term.

### 2000 MPCA Spill Survey: Status of Spill Preparedness by Large Companies in Minnesota (MPCA mail survey of large companies)

This was an MPCA mail survey conducted for the spills program that surveyed 23 representatives from large companies in Minnesota. Companies were selected because of their potential for serious spills. Response rate for the survey was 83 percent. The survey was designed to find out about each company's perception of their spill preparedness, their participation in Community Awareness and Emergency Response Groups, obstacles that prevent improvement of spill preparedness and how the MPCA might help large companies become better prepared for spill responses.

#### **Findings:**

- Overall, companies felt they were somewhat more prepared for spills at their headquarters than at operations away from their headquarters (such as railroads or pipelines).
- Companies felt they were well prepared to make quick and accurate notification and had up-to-date Spill Prevention and Response Plans. They were less confident of their ability to have the appropriate number of trained staff available, and the ability of contractors to arrive quickly at a spill. They also said they were not as likely to have strategies in place for spills in sensitive areas.
- The most often mentioned significant obstacles to maintaining or improving spill prevention and response were insufficient time for preparation and insufficient contractor capability.
- When company representatives chose options for how the MPCA might help companies become better prepared to respond to spills, they most often mentioned plan review with suggestions, training for spill prevention and response and training on regulations and procedures. The least popular options were unannounced spill response exercises, enforcement action accompanied by publicity and plan review with required changes.
- Eight of the 19 people who responded to the survey said that representatives from their company belonged to Community Awareness and Response groups.

### 2000 Small Business Assistance Program/MnTAP Survey of Automotive and Implement Businesses and Repair Shops in the Marshall District

The MPCA's Small Business Assistance Program and the Minnesota Technical Assistance Program sent this mail survey to 719 businesses in the Marshall District. The businesses surveyed were automotive collision and mechanical repair shops and agricultural implement repair shops. A total of 75 businesses returned the survey.

The survey was designed to see whether these businesses wanted assistance in finding companies to dispose of hazardous material and if they were aware of the materials exchange program. MnTAP and SBAP were also curious to see how and from where business owners receive regulatory information. Also, respondents were asked what methods of pollution prevention they use and what would be the most convenient time for them to attend workshops and have one-on-one assistance from MnTAP and SBAP.

#### Findings:

- Most respondents did not care to receive assistance in finding used oil sorbent diposal or antifreeze recycling companies.
- Very few wanted help finding outlets for recycling or disposing of 13 other materials including batteries, electronic components and fluorescent lights.
- When asked how they receive information on the changing environmental regulations affecting their business, over half said through environmental bulletins and newsletters.
- Trade association publications or letters, waste haulers, and vendors and suppliers were another frequent source of information.
- Less than half of the respondents said their business currently receives what they consider accurate and clear information on waste reduction, recycling and environmental compliance.
- Close to two thirds of the respondents wanted to receive additional information in waste reduction, recycling and environmental compliance through newsletters and brochures. Very few of them wanted this information through demonstrations or information shared at a volunteer's business. Few wanted information through phone calls.
- Most respondents were most interested in waste reduction ideas specific to the auto/implement service industry and hazardous waste and air quality regulations and compliance.
- The pollution prevention methods included most in these business' shop activities were housekeeping and maintenance, and employee training.
- Most respondents cited a lack of capital and space limitations as the biggest reasons for not implementing pollution prevention activities.
- More than half of the 75 respondents were interested in reducing their energy costs.
- Approximately one third of the respondents were familiar with the material exchange program and another approximately two thirds said they were interested in learning more about the program.
- Respondents were asked how a workshop would best fit their schedule. Of those that answered this question, approximately 60, most of them preferred an evening meeting starting around 6 and lasting around 2 hours on any day of the week of any month of the year.
- When asked about having MnTAP or SBAP staff visit them at their shop for one-on-one help, most of the 50 some that answered, and had a preference, said they would prefer an early morning or evening meeting on Monday or Tuesday in January or November.

#### 1999 Ground Water Monitoring and Assessment Program (GWMAP)

In September of 1999, exactly 130 surveys were mailed to county water planners or watershed district managers or other decision makers regarding ground water quality issues. The response rate was overwhelmingly positive with 55% of the surveys being returned completed. One of the purposes of the survey was to determine what planners believed to be the three most important ground water issues in their region.

Findings: The Three Most Important Ground Water Issues in Each Region of the State

Respondents were able to pick their top three ground water issues from a list of eleven choices.

• Land use impacts to ground water was the most common answer with 63.8% of respondents indicating it was one of their top three choices;

- Septic systems that do not meet environmental standards followed with 47.2%;
- Wells that need to be abandoned was one of the top three choices of 41.6% of the respondents; and
- Land application of manure or other waste followed with 38.8% indicating it was one of their top three choices.

# Findings: Would you be willing to participate in a statewide monitoring effort at any of the following levels?

Respondents were given six options and were allowed to pick multiple answers.

- *Utilize information collected from the monitoring effort* was the most common answer with 66.7% of respondents indicating interest.
- Help identify areas where monitoring wells can be installed was the second most common answer with 56.9% of respondents indicating interest.
- *Help maintain and sample wells* was the third most common answer with 44.4% of respondents indicating interest.

#### Findings: How do you prefer getting ground water quality information?

Respondents were given six options for getting ground water quality information.

- *Direct mailings* was the most common answer with 68.0% of respondents choosing this option;
- From the Internet was the second most common answer with 37.5% of the responses; and.
- *Newsletters* was the third most common answer with 26% of respondents choosing this option.

#### **Additional Findings:**

- 84.7% of respondents said they have access to the Internet at their office;
- 40.3% of respondents said they had accessed the PCA's ground water web site; and
- 75.4% of respondents said they had received fact sheets or reports discussing ground water quality from the PCA.

The survey also included the following questions (the answers to which can be found in an available summary document):

- What ground water studies are currently being conducted in your area and who is conducting them?
- Is there local ground water quality information available for your region of the state that you would be willing to share? (Respondents were asked to briefly describe the type of information they have.)
- Please list any local experts or contacts for ground water quality issues.

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