

Subject Matter Expert Survey Plan

Target Audience

Members of the public with specific expertise or experience working on environmental and natural resources issues.

Purpose

To gather input on what experts believe are the most important goals and strategies for the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund and how the funding process could be improved.

Preamble

The Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) is seeking input from people with expertise and experience in environmental and natural resource issues. Your input on this survey will help inform the development of the next strategic plan that guides spending from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF).

The ENRTF was established by Minnesota voters in 1988 through an amendment to the state constitution. It is funded in part by proceeds from the Minnesota State Lottery. The ENRTF provides funding for activities that protect, conserve, preserve, and enhance Minnesota's environment and natural resources for the benefit of current Minnesotans and future generations. Since 1991, the trust fund has provided approximately \$875 million in funding for approximately 1,800 projects in every county of the state.

The LCCMR is a 17-member body made up of both state legislators and citizens that makes recommendations each year to the legislature on how ENRTF funds should be spent on projects around the state. Every six years, the LCCMR is required by law to develop a strategic plan with goals and strategies to guide those recommendations. The LCCMR is currently working on creating a strategic plan for 2025-2031.

Thank you for taking the time to share your subject matter expertise. This survey is voluntary and should take 10-20 minutes to complete, depending on the extent of your answers.

Need an accessible version of this survey? Use the link at the top to access a plain text version.

Any potentially identifying information that you provide is considered private data under the Minnesota Data Practices Act (Minnesota Statutes §13.64).

If you have questions about the ENRTF or the LCCMR, please contact lccmr@lccmr.mn.gov or (651) 296-2406. You can find more information online at <https://www.lccmr.mn.gov>.

If you encounter problems with this survey, please contact lccmr@lccmr.mn.gov

Questions

* Indicates questions that require a response.

Section 1. Goals

The first series of questions will assist the LCCMR in identifying and prioritizing goals for future ENRTF funding.

1. * In which of the following areas do you have expertise or experience related to environmental, natural resources, or outdoor recreation issues? (Select Up To Three)

- Agricultural Practices
- Air Quality
- Aquatic Habitat and Management
- Climate Change
- Energy
- Environmental Education
- Environmental or Civil Engineering
- Forestry
- Geology, Soils, and/or Mineral Resources
- Invasive Species
- Outdoor Recreation
- Recycling, Reuse, and Other Waste Management
- Land and Wildlife Habitat and Management
- Water Quality
- Water Quantity
- Other (Please specify: _____)

[The answer to question #1 will be used to determine which questions from section 2 will be answered. Subject matter experts will only be asked to prioritize and identify strategies related to their area of expertise or experience.]

2. How can the ENRTF help Minnesota be a leader nationally and internationally on environmental and natural resources issues?

[Open Text Response]

3. * The following goal statements were developed by a past group of Minnesota's environment and natural resources experts. Please rank these goals from more important for Minnesota to achieve to less important:

- Minnesota's water resources are better managed for both water quantity and quality, as a result of better understanding of the connections between surface water and groundwater.
- Minnesota's environment, natural resources, and communities are resilient in the face of climate change, land use changes, and extreme weather events.

- Minnesota has healthy and diverse wildlife and plant populations that sustain and enhance the state's environment, economy, and quality of life.
- Minnesota's public and private lands, including forests, grasslands, and agricultural lands, provide long-term benefits to fish, wildlife, and people.
- All Minnesotans, especially young people, have access to and take advantage of opportunities for culturally relevant and innovative connections to the lands and waters of Minnesota.
- Minnesota achieves reliance on nonpolluting, renewable energy in all sectors (including transportation, building, industry, agriculture, and others).
- Minnesota responds quickly and proactively to emerging environmental and natural resources issues.

4. Is there another goal that you think the ENRTF could help Minnesota achieve?

[Open Text Response]

Section 2. Strategies

The next series of questions will ask you to identify the most important or effective strategies to help achieve the goals in your area of expertise from the previous section. You can define "important" as you see fit; it may mean it would have the largest impact, it addresses a critical area, it isn't being addressed by other funding sources, or some other measure of importance. Your answers will assist the LCCMR in identifying and prioritizing strategies for future ENRTF funding.

5. Which of the following strategies do you think is most important or would be the most effective to achieve the following goal:

Minnesota's water resources are better managed for both water quantity and quality, as a result of better understanding of the connections between surface water and groundwater.

- Research and demonstrate innovative, market-based policies and partnerships that solve local water issues in both forest-based regions and agriculture-based regions.
- Educate local officials on how to improve and protect water resources, including model projects and policies that can be emulated at all scales.
- Research, demonstrations, incentives, and policies to hold back water and increase evapotranspiration opportunities to prevent water pollution.
- Increase understanding of weather and future weather and climate patterns, and how these align with anticipated water needs across Minnesota.
- Research on the impacts of nutrients and effective agriculture and urban practices to improve surface water and groundwater quality, as well as manage water quantity and mitigate the impacts of agriculture drainage and urban stormwater runoff.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of current management practices and past investments to improve water resources.

6. Is there another strategy you think would be key to achieving this goal? Strategies could include things like research, education, measurement, demonstration, or developing something in particular related to the goal.

[Open Text Response]

7. Which of the following strategies do you think is most important or would be the most effective to achieve the following goal:

Minnesota’s environment, natural resources, and communities are resilient in the face of climate change, land use changes, and extreme weather events.

- Research and demonstrate market-based policies that are economically viable and help pay for the land use, conservation, and other practices needed to achieve climate resiliency and water resources protection, especially in agricultural areas.
- Research effective water use scenarios to identify improvements needed to ensure the state’s water resiliency and sustainability (including modeling water scenarios, managing water on land, optimizing use to prevent overuse of groundwater, and improving water reuse and wastewater management).
- Identify and promote workable, holistic, multibenefit, diverse, and viable (e.g., economically and socially) solutions for storing more water on the land, through both engineered and natural solutions targeted at critical areas.
- Support cities, counties, and watershed districts with developing climate resiliency and adaptation plans, and processes for funding and implementing those plans.
- Compile existing research, identify gaps, and develop research to quantify land use and land cover changes, in order to identify restoration and protection needs to achieve sustainable natural systems.
- Use public open space to demonstrate climate change adaptation, mitigation, and prevention.

8. Is there another strategy you think would be key to achieving this goal? Strategies could include things like research, education, measurement, demonstration, or developing something in particular related to the goal.

[Open Text Response]

9. Which of the following strategies do you think is most important or would be the most effective to achieve the following goal:

Minnesota has healthy and diverse wildlife and plant populations that sustain and enhance the state’s environment, economy, and quality of life.

- Monitor the biologic and environmental health of systems through high-quality research, to support management of lands and waters.
- Research key issues and develop strategies to combat them (e.g., bird/insect crash).

- Species-specific and habitat-level research and management to effectively maintain, protect, and restore habitats and populations.
- Research to inform managing plant, fish, and wildlife communities to adapt to climate change.
- Conservation of additional lands and support for management of currently protected lands.
- Support and provide technical assistance to private landowners on cost-effective ways to develop and restore diverse, native habitat.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of current management practices and past investments to sustain and enhance wildlife and native plant populations.

10. Is there another strategy you think would be key to achieving this goal? Strategies could include things like research, education, measurement, demonstration, or developing something in particular related to the goal.

[Open Text Response]

11. Which of the following *three* strategies do you think are most important or would be the most effective to achieve the following goal:

Minnesota’s public and private lands, including forests, grasslands, and agricultural lands, provide long-term benefits to fish, wildlife, and people.

1. Promote, research, and evaluate best management practices (BMPs) on public and private lands, in order to provide long-term benefits to fish and wildlife.
2. Develop innovative, market-based policies to make substantive conservation efforts financially feasible.
3. Enhance education and public outreach to change landscape and ecosystem norms.
4. Educate people through demonstration on the opportunity for public and private lands to slow and store water for multiple benefits (e.g., water quality, habitat, flood mitigation) as well as for carbon sequestration.
5. Improve and demonstrate how working lands can be economically productive and good habitat.
6. Increase understanding and assessment of tradeoffs among different environmental and societal goals to improve decisions on public and private lands.
7. Evaluate, prioritize, and demonstrate how working lands and renewable energy can be mutually beneficial.
8. Research and demonstrate the practical value of regenerative agriculture.
9. Develop and implement agricultural cropping systems with diverse crops that provide multiple benefits, including exploring markets and supply chain.
10. Research, develop, and demonstrate agricultural production processes and systems that are significantly less carbon-intensive and decrease the loss of nutrients into ground water and surface water.
11. Preserve and protect the watersheds that are already in good shape.
12. Implement conservation actions that prioritize the needs of vulnerable, declining, poorly understood, and sensitive species.
13. Encourage landscape-level and eco-type planning, instead of parcel-level.
14. Identify high-quality habitat, recreation open spaces, and other high-priority areas for action.
15. Prioritize projects that enlist the support of multiple agencies and organizations.

12. Is there another strategy you think would be key to achieving this goal? Strategies could include things like research, education, measurement, demonstration, or developing something in particular related to the goal.

[Open Text Response]

13. Which of the following strategies do you think is most important or would be the most effective to achieve the following goal:

All Minnesotans, especially young people, have access to and take advantage of opportunities for culturally relevant and innovative connections to the lands and waters of Minnesota.

- Address the social, economic, and physical barriers to outdoor recreation through programs that encourage inclusivity and address inequities.
- Research people’s interests in outdoor recreation and understand barriers to participation.
- Assess programs, activities, and physical spaces for their accessibility and effectiveness; support changes to adapt and retrofit to welcome more people.
- Through collaborative efforts, provide curriculum, programs, and outdoor environmental events that teach K–12 students what public lands are, introduces them to public lands near them, and encourages them to explore local public lands.
- Through partnerships between schools, environmental learning centers, and other community resources, provide evidence-based, engaging programs to bring students to outdoor experiences.
- Capital projects that develop culturally relevant, accessible, and resilient outdoor recreation facilities, infrastructure, and equipment rental programs that create innovative experiences (e.g., parks, trails, fishing piers, shoreline fishing areas, birding trails, shelters).

14. Is there another strategy you think would be key to achieving this goal? Strategies could include things like research, education, measurement, demonstration, or developing something in particular related to the goal.

[Open Text Response]

15. Which of the following strategies do you think is most important or would be the most effective to achieve the following goal:

Minnesota achieves reliance on nonpolluting, renewable energy in all sectors (including transportation, building, industry, agriculture, and others).

- Encourage bundling renewable energy production and battery storage.
- Demonstrate the ability and statewide potential to generate solar energy on perennially vegetated lands, reducing CO₂ and water runoff, while making the enterprise economically viable.

- Incentivize the use of nonpolluting renewable energy in agriculture, industries, and commercial transportation.
- Demonstrate community-scale, net-zero renewable energy systems.
- Fund energy efficiency improvements and renewable energy for rental properties, small businesses, and schools.

16. Is there another strategy you think would be key to achieving this goal? Strategies could include things like research, education, measurement, demonstration, or developing something in particular related to the goal.

[Open Text Response]

Section 3.

The LCCMR solicits proposals every year for ENRTF funding available the following year. The Commission reviews and evaluates all proposals against their 10 adopted evaluation criteria. A subset of high-ranking proposals is selected to move forward and invited to present before the LCCMR. The Commission then makes final recommendations for spending from the ENRTF to the Minnesota Legislature. If approved by the Legislature and the Governor, funds are generally available by July 1 of the year following proposal submission.

17. * Have you or the agency, organization, or program you work for previously applied for funding from the ENRTF?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know.

18. * If you replied "yes" to question 17, have you or the agency, organization, or program you work for received funding from the ENRTF?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know.

19. * How would you categorize the agency, organization, or program you work for or are affiliated with?

- Academic
- Non-Profit
- Private
- Tribal
- Local Government Agency
- State Government Agency

- Federal Government Agency
- Other (Please specify: _____)

20. * How much do you agree with the following statements:

- The LCCMR does a good job in notifying potential applicants that funding is available.
- It is clear what projects are eligible for funding from the ENRTF.
- Completing and submitting a proposal to the LCCMR is reasonably simple and straightforward.
- It is clear how the LCCMR evaluates and selects projects to recommend for funding.
- The LCCMR process for recommending funding from the ENRTF is fair and transparent.
- LCCMR staff are helpful and easy to work with.
- The LCCMR’s process from proposal submission to fund availability is timely and efficient.
- Once funded, project reporting requirements are clear and straightforward.

[Range from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree and Don’t Know]

21. Are there any other thoughts you would like to share regarding the LCCMR funding process?

[Open Text Response]

22. * Have you participated in any of the following ENRTF strategic planning engagements? (Select all that apply)

- Public Survey
- Public Listening Session
- I’m not sure if I participated in any of these engagements.
- I did not participate in any of these engagements.

Platform

LCCMR staff will evaluate and determine an appropriate platform to distribute the survey to the public.

Distribution Strategy

The survey will be made available online and accessible using a link and QR code. The link and QR code will be shared directly with individuals with subject matter expertise or organizations whose members have subject matter expertise, including the following:

1. Direct email invitation to past project managers and applicants and/or direct email invitation to organizations that have received or applied for ENRTF funding.
2. Direct email invitation to statewide professional associations related to the environment, natural resources, and outdoor recreation.

3. Direct email invitation to faculty of Minnesota college and university departments related to the environment, natural resources, and outdoor recreation.
4. Direct email invitation to state agency professionals in each field.
5. Direct email invitation to environmental and natural resources professionals, not included in any of the previous groups.

In distributing the subject matter expert survey, staff will work to differentiate the subject matter expert survey from the public survey where an individual, organization, agency, or institution may receive notifications for both surveys. There will be some overlap between responses to the two surveys as subject matter experts are also members of the public. The survey questions will provide some data to analyze the extent of that overlap. The two surveys are also designed to collect different information. Options will be pursued that allow only one response per person.

Schedule

Open for at least 4 weeks

Close by end of April

Compile results by last week of May.

Provide to subcommittee members 1 week prior to June 10 meeting and present at meeting.