

# CIVIL ENVIRONMENTAL DISCOURSE PROJECT

*Survey and Focus Group Findings*

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July 2002

***Prepared for***

Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council  
Petoskey, Michigan

***Prepared by***

Public Sector Consultants, Inc.  
Lansing, Michigan



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# Overview

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States play a critical role in protecting the health, safety, and general welfare of their citizens and natural environment. The strong federal environmental laws enacted since the 1960s envisioned a partnership between federal and state governments to implement national clean air, land, and water laws through a regulatory process. Some of Michigan's environmental regulations mandate an opportunity for public input and participation. Other environmental regulations allow for applicants, members of the public, and agency staff to request public participation on specific matters, at the discretion of the regulators. Opportunities for ample and meaningful public participation in decision-making processes often promote and result in a healthier environment.

Michigan has a long history of providing for and integrating citizen participation and public input into environmental decision-making processes. A primary mechanism for this participation has been the use of citizen boards and commissions that serve as open forums for dialogue, dating back to 1921 with the creation of the Natural Resources Commission. These boards and commissions provided a venue for the exchange of ideas and information; important information that would not have otherwise been shared often traded hands.

In 1991, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) was reformed through a series of four Executive Orders. A primary goal was to simplify the decision-making structure and provide for increased accountability within the DNR. Nineteen formally established boards, commissions, and committees (the majority of such groups) were eliminated, including the Water Resources Commission and the Air Pollution Control Commission (November 8, 1991, Office of the Governor, press release). Public input was streamlined, and eliminated in some cases.

In 1995, further consolidation of the regulatory functions of the Department of Natural Resources occurred through an Executive Order creating the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). The Executive Order gave the DEQ cabinet status and consolidated all environmental protection and regulatory functions (e.g., permit issuance) in the new department. The governor, at the time, believed that the DNR management structure was too large and unwieldy to effectively concentrate on the importance of both conservation and environmental issues (July 26, 1995, Office of the Governor, press release). With this Executive Order, Michigan joined 35 other states—and the federal government—in having separate departments to deal with natural resources and environmental issues. Since that time, opponents have argued that the quality of public input has suffered due to fundamental changes in the way in which the DEQ solicits and considers public input during decision-making processes. Furthermore, critics argue that these changes translate into fewer safeguards to protect the environment and public health.

The Civil Environmental Discourse Project was undertaken by the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council to promote meaningful dialogue and civil discourse between staff of DEQ, members of the environmental community, and the public. By improving dialogue between these parties, the project sought to advance citizen involvement in environmental

decision-making processes. In phase one, Public Sector Consultants, Inc. (PSC), conducted surveys of the general public, DEQ staff, and members of the environmental community (EC members) to gather input and attempt to better understand the relationship between DEQ staff and EC members. The second phase of the project brought DEQ staff and EC members together in focus groups across the state to discuss the results of the surveys, paying particular attention to public involvement in DEQ decision-making. The primary goal of these meetings was to provide a forum that would foster improved public discourse between DEQ staff and members of the environmental community. This was accomplished by

- discussing various attitudes, opinions, and perceptions reflected in the survey responses;
- discussing opportunities related to citizen involvement in decision-making processes such as public meetings, contact with legislators, and the function of public boards and commissions; and
- simply bringing people together face-to-face in a meeting facilitated by a neutral third party.

To encourage broad participation, nine meetings were conducted across the state in locations corresponding to eight DEQ district boundaries and one field office (see Exhibit 1). Staff from Public Sector Consultants facilitated these meetings.

In the final phase, the DEQ and the EC members will determine independently what changes should be made to existing policies that would improve the quality of citizen participation and public input, thereby enhancing discourse and furthering environmental protection efforts.

This report contains the survey results, including data tables and analyses, in conjunction with a discussion of major themes that emerged from the focus group meetings. Overall, we find that despite the stereotypes that these two groups may hold of one another, they share a common commitment to furthering environmental protection efforts in Michigan.

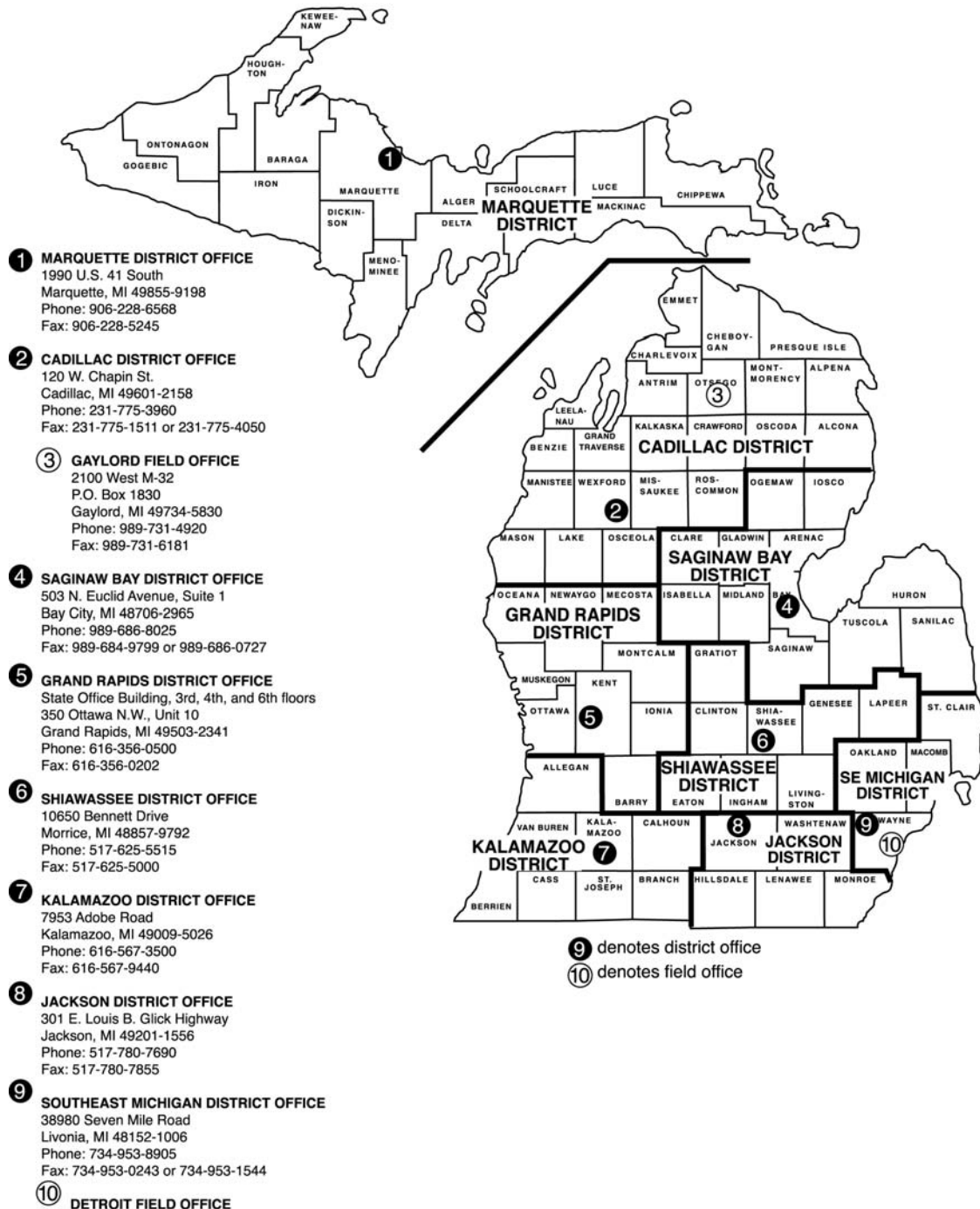
This project is supported by a grant from The Joyce Foundation and coordinated by the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council. Representatives from the Michigan Environmental Council, West Michigan Environmental Action Council, East Michigan Environmental Action Council, and Resource Stewards served as advisors to the project. The project could not have been possible without the assistance and cooperation of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality.

Opinions expressed by focus group participants and survey respondents do not necessarily reflect the views of the Joyce Foundation, Public Sector Consultants, the Department of Environmental Quality, and the environmental organizations involved.



# EXHIBIT 1

## Michigan Department of Environmental Quality District Offices





# Survey Results

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## INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

Public Sector Consultants, Inc. (PSC) conducted surveys of the general public, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) staff, and members of Michigan's environmental community (EC) to provide insight into the relationship between DEQ and the environmental community. This report summarizes the findings from all three surveys.

A telephone survey of Michigan residents aged 18 and over was conducted in June 2001. A total of 600 residents were randomly selected (using a random-digit dial technique) and interviewed. The margin of error for this survey is +/- 4 percent.

A written survey was distributed in October 2001 to all DEQ staff (approximately 1,700) via the department's inter-office mail system. Staff were given a postage-paid business reply envelope allowing them to return the survey to PSC. PSC received 629 responses—a very good response rate of 37 percent. Because this is a non-random sample, margin of error estimates cannot be calculated.

A mail survey of environmental community members was conducted in September and October 2001. The survey was distributed and returned to PSC via the United States Postal Service. Surveys were sent to 979 EC members from a mailing list compiled by the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council. The list included names of individual environmentalists, organizational staff, and engaged members of conservation and environmental organizations who had some experience working with the DEQ. PSC received 257 completed surveys—a response rate of 26 percent. As with the DEQ staff survey, this was a non-random sample, so margin of error calculations do not apply.

All surveys were designed to be as similar as possible in content so as to facilitate comparison across groups. Analysis was conducted on clusters of questions rather than on each instrument individually. The main categories of analysis are:

- Attitudes toward the environment
- Perceptions of environmental decision-making
- Sources of information for environmental decision-making
- Public and EC member involvement with the DEQ
- Improving the process of environmental decision-making

For a detailed list of frequencies along with all survey instruments, please see Appendix A.

The surveys for DEQ staff and EC members contained several open-ended questions concerning actions or activities that make citizens and EC members more effective in environmental decision-making. Respondents were very consistent in their responses, often reiterating points that had been made in other questions. In addition, respondents took the opportunity to offer feedback and express opinions that did not directly relate to

the questions being asked. Therefore, analysis of these responses is provided where appropriate, though not all responses are reviewed.

## **MAJOR FINDINGS**

In general, DEQ staff and the environmental community are more similar than different in their views of environmental discourse. Both groups see the quality of public input as poor and see limited effectiveness in the use of public hearings—as currently administered—as a means to communicate with decision-makers. Furthermore, both consistently cite one-on-one meetings as an effective method of communication. Both groups believe that a crucial step to improving the dialogue is to tone down emotions by focusing on sound, balanced information. Both groups have similar opinions about the effectiveness of the public in the decision-making process. They see specific ways for members of the public to be involved, but also believe that the process is extremely complex for many citizens to understand without specific education and knowledge.

More specific findings from this study include:

- Respondents from both the DEQ and the environmental community share nearly identical views about the three most important public policy issues—the environment, education, and health care—and the three most important environmental policy issues—sprawl, inadequate infrastructure, and loss of wildlife habitat.
- The six-way tie for the public’s “most important issue facing Michigan” is a good news/bad news situation for environmental advocates. The bad news is that environmental policy is not seen as needing more attention than any other area. The good news is that no other issue (e.g., education, health care, or the economy) dominates public attention.
- A greater proportion of the public (compared to DEQ and EC members) believes that public input unnecessarily slows down the permitting process and makes it difficult for businesses to operate.
- DEQ and EC member respondents both believe that the quality of public input on the environment is poor (approximately 3.5 on a 10-point scale). The public sees opportunities for input as moderately poor (4.6 on a 10-point scale).
- Both DEQ and EC member respondents are evenly divided as to whether the DEQ has adequate statutory authority to consider all of a project’s effects on the environment.
- When asked specifically about the environment, the public appears to have a much greater appetite for aggressive, active environmental policy than either the DEQ or the EC members. More than two-thirds (68 percent) of respondents to the public survey believe that Michigan’s environmental laws and their enforcement are not strong enough and need to be stronger. Almost half (47 percent) of these respondents believe that cities and townships are doing a fair/poor job at managing land use, growth, and development. About two-thirds (62 percent) believe that Michigan should protect the environment even if it means restricting what some property owners can do with the land they own.

- DEQ staff and EC members disagree on the helpfulness of the information they receive from each other as well as the importance of the issues each raises. The public holds roughly the same opinion of the DEQ as it does of EC members, believing that both work to protect Michigan's environment. The only organization that a majority of the public would trust all or most of the time to provide information about Michigan's environment is the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.
- DEQ respondents believe the information most helpful to them comes from other governmental entities. EC members believe the most helpful information comes from other environmental organizations or neutral third parties (e.g., universities). Interestingly, half of the EC member respondents cite the DNR as a helpful source of information, but just 35 percent believe the DEQ provides useful information.
- When asked to rate the effectiveness of several methods of direct contact with DEQ staff (e.g., meetings, telephone calls, and letters), between two and six times as many DEQ respondents compared to EC member respondents cited each method of direct contact as very effective.
- DEQ staff believe one-on-one contact is the most effective means of communication for environmental decision-making. EC members believe joining an environmental organization is the most effective, followed by a one-on-one meeting with DEQ staff. EC members also ranked "contacting a legislator" as an effective means of communication.
- Both DEQ and EC members ranked "comments at a public hearing" as one of the least effective means of public communication with the DEQ. The public's ranking of public hearings, however, was four times higher than DEQ's and EC members'.
- All three groups were in agreement on how the public gets its environmental information. A majority of both DEQ and EC member respondents believes that the public gets most of its information from the media (as opposed to the DEQ website, a local official, or an environmental organization). Most of the public does get its information from the media and believes that the media presents balanced coverage about the environment and environmental issues. Whether DEQ and EC members believe that to be true, however, is an issue that was not measured in these surveys but did come up during focus group meeting discussions.

## **ATTITUDES TOWARD THE ENVIRONMENT**

All three groups were asked their perception of the most important issues facing Michigan. The DEQ and EC members were asked to choose three. The public survey, because it was conducted by telephone, asked respondents for the single most important issue. Regardless of methodology, all groups were asked to choose from the same list of issues: crime/drugs, economic development, taxes and the state's budget, the environment, education, helping the needy, and health care.

Responses from DEQ staff and EC members show general agreement; issues are in the same order and of roughly the same magnitude (see Exhibit 2). Not surprisingly, the DEQ

employees and EC members chose the environment with the greatest frequency, followed by education and health care.

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## EXHIBIT 2

What do you think are the three most important issues facing the state of Michigan today?

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	DEQ	EC
The environment	72%	88%
Education	65	60
Health care	38	45

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The public survey only asked respondents to identify the single most important issue in the state. There was a six-way tie for first place; each of the possible choices was selected by 12–15 percent of the respondents. This lack of a clear “winner” is a double-edged sword in terms of policy debates. On one hand, the environment does not leap out in the public’s mind as a significant concern. On the other hand, no other issue takes precedence. It is important to note that this survey was conducted in the summer of 2001, well before the events of September 11 and the well-publicized Michigan budget shortfalls. Any conclusions drawn now about the public’s attitude must take these events into account.

All groups were also asked about their perceptions of the most pressing environmental problems facing Michigan. The DEQ employees and EC members were asked to select the three most important issues, while the public survey asked respondents to indicate their degree of concern about each of the issues.

DEQ employees and EC members hold fairly similar views of the environmental problems facing Michigan, identifying the same four issues as most pressing (see Exhibit 3). The public, however, sees a slightly different set of problems facing Michigan’s environment.

Respondents to the public survey were asked whether they are very, somewhat, or not at all concerned about each of the issues. Respondents were very concerned about pollution of Michigan’s air, ground, and water (80 percent); importing of out-of-state waste for disposal in Michigan (76 percent); loss of wetlands/wildlife habitat (58 percent), and selling or exporting Great Lakes water (57 percent). The public was least concerned about urban sprawl—the top concern for both DEQ employees and EC members. Just 32 percent of the public was very concerned about this environmental problem.

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### EXHIBIT 3

What do you think are Michigan's three most pressing environmental issues today?

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	DEQ	EC
Growth of suburbs and towns (urban sprawl)	67%	77%
Inadequate infrastructure to protect the environment	51	41
Loss of wetlands/wildlife habitat	50	58
General pollution of Michigan's water environment	41	44

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## PERCEPTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL DECISION-MAKING

Respondents from all three groups were asked about their perceptions of the environmental decision-making process<sup>1</sup> (see Exhibit 4). More than 40 percent of the respondents from the public survey believe that public input unnecessarily slows down the permitting process. In contrast, less than 15 percent of DEQ and EC respondents held this view, although they think the quality of public input is poor (see Exhibit 8).

Not quite half of DEQ respondents believe that citizens and environmental groups use the law to preempt local planning and zoning decisions; just over one-third of EC member respondents hold the same perspective.

In the context of specific questions regarding decision-making, the public's opinion of both DEQ and EC members is very close to how each of the latter views itself. DEQ staff seem to have a fairly positive view of EC members, while EC member respondents have a much lower opinion of DEQ. It is noteworthy that only 62 percent of DEQ respondents strongly or somewhat agree that the DEQ generally raises important issues regarding the protection of Michigan's environment and public health. In contrast, 92 percent of EC member respondents—and 76 percent of DEQ respondents—believe that environmental groups provide this function.

It is hard to determine why more DEQ staff perceive that environmental groups raise important issues than believe that the DEQ itself raises important issues, since respondents were not asked to explain their views. A number of things could explain these results, including demoralization or feeling like part of a large bureaucracy. DEQ staff may also feel that it is not within the scope of their work to raise issues, but rather to oversee and enforce current policies. They may see activism, such as bringing important issues to light, to be the purview of EC members. However, all three groups hold relatively positive views of partnerships between stakeholders in the environmental decision-making process.

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<sup>1</sup> Because of the different methodologies, the wording of questions differed slightly for the public survey. For exact wording, please refer to Appendix A.

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**EXHIBIT 4**

Perceptions of input in the environmental decision-making process, percentage that “strongly” or “somewhat” agrees with each statement

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	<b>PUBLIC</b>	<b>DEQ</b>	<b>EC</b>
Providing opportunity for public input unnecessarily slows down the permitting process and makes it difficult for businesses to operate.	42%	13%	12%
Citizens and environmental groups often use environmental statutes to preempt local planning and zoning decisions.*	NA	45	35
Environmental groups generally raise important issues regarding the protection of Michigan’s environment and public health.	84	76	92
Citizens generally raise important issues regarding the protection of Michigan’s environment and public health.	80	48	71
The DEQ generally raises important issues regarding the protection of Michigan’s environment and public health.	68	62	27
Partnerships between the DEQ, businesses, and environmental organizations help improve Michigan’s environment.	67	76	72
Environmental and conservation groups in Michigan do a good job of keeping watch on issues that are important to me.**	78	NA	NA
Environmental and conservation groups in Michigan block economic progress by making unrealistic demands of government and business.**	42	NA	NA
The DEQ listens too much to business interests.**	61	NA	NA

\* The public was not asked this question.

\*\* This question was asked ONLY of the public.

NA = Not Applicable

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Additionally, the public survey asked about general perceptions of the DEQ and the environmental community. Respondents seem to hold contradictory opinions regarding both groups. Seventy-eight percent of the public believe that environmental groups do a good job of keeping watch on issues important to them, yet 42 percent also believe that environmental and conservation groups block economic progress by placing unrealistic demands on business and government entities. (This may be the same 42 percent who say citizen input slows down the process.) The public holds a somewhat cynical view of the DEQ; 61 percent of respondents strongly to somewhat agree that the DEQ listens too much to business interests. Yet 68 percent of the same respondents believe that the DEQ raises important issues in protecting Michigan’s environment.

The DEQ and EC member respondents were asked if they believe the DEQ has adequate statutory authority to consider all of a project’s effects and minimize the impact upon the



environment. Results were very similar from both groups (see Exhibit 5). DEQ respondents were slightly more likely to have answered that the DEQ does *not* have adequate authority to consider everything. The greatest variation is that twice as many EC member respondents answered “don’t know” compared to DEQ respondents. This could indicate that some EC members don’t fully understand what DEQ does.

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**EXHIBIT 5**  
Does the DEQ have adequate statutory authority?

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	DEQ	EC
No	49%	40%
Yes	41	40
Don't know	10	20

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In a corresponding question, the public was asked about its perceptions of current environmental laws. Over two-thirds of respondents (68 percent) felt that environmental laws and enforcement of those laws are not strong enough and need to be tougher.

All three groups recognize limitations on environmental law and its enforcement. But the public appears to have a much greater appetite for aggressive, active environmental policy than either the DEQ or EC members. In addition to calling for tougher environmental legislation and enforcement, almost half (47 percent) of the respondents in the public survey believe that cities and townships are doing a fair/poor job at managing land use, growth, and development. Two-thirds (62 percent) believe that Michigan should protect the environment even if it means restricting what some property owners can do with the land they own.

Analysis by region indicates some variation in Southeastern and Southwestern Michigan and Metro Detroit (see Exhibit 6). Southeastern Michigan strongly favors protecting the environment with more stringent regulation. This region includes Ann Arbor, with its solid core of environmental activism, and Washtenaw County, which has lost more farmland than any other Michigan county due to urban sprawl. It follows that these factors might create greater willingness to support more stringent environmental regulation, even if property rights are limited in the process. The lowest rates of favoring more stringent environmental regulation occur in the Metro Detroit and Southwestern Michigan areas of the state. The Metro Detroit area includes the City of Detroit, which could skew results if those in urban cores perceive environmental protection as a rural or suburban issue. The lowest proportion of respondents who support more stringent environmental regulation is in Southwestern Michigan. Furthermore, this region has the highest proportion of respondents who volunteered, in the open-ended responses, that they believe both property rights and environmental protections are equally important.

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## EXHIBIT 6

Regional variation in favoring more stringent environmental protection, by percentage in favor

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Southeastern	79%
East-Central and Thumb	69
Central	69
Upper Peninsula/Northern Lower Peninsula	63
West-Central	61
Metro Detroit	57
Southwestern	44

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## SOURCES OF INFORMATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL DECISION-MAKING

All three groups were asked about various sources of information on the environment. The public was asked how often they would trust the information, whereas the DEQ and EC member respondents were asked how helpful they find the information to their roles in environmental policy- and decision-making.

Perceptions of the value of information varied by the source and the recipient of the information (see Exhibit 7). The public trusts the DEQ as a source of information more than EC members do. EC members find information from other environmental organizations and neutral third parties equally helpful. Fifty percent of EC members and 55 percent of the public find information from the DNR helpful all or most of the time, while lower proportions of each group rate information from the DEQ as helpful. They perceive the DNR as a more “user-friendly” agency, whereas the DEQ is perceived as more bureaucratic because of its rules and enforcement function.

The business community is cited as one of the least trustworthy or helpful by all three groups of survey respondents. Nonetheless, 18 percent of DEQ respondents indicate that the information they receive from the business community is helpful. This is more than twice as high as the percentage for either EC members or the public (5 percent and 7 percent, respectively).

The public survey included an open-ended question asking where, in the past six months, respondents had received most of their information about the environment. Eighty-three percent of the respondents indicated that they had gotten their information from the news media. This response is consistent with the perceptions of the DEQ staff and EC members. A majority of both DEQ and EC member respondents believe the public gets most of its information from the media (as opposed to the DEQ website or an environmental organization). The public also has a fair amount of trust in the news media. Fifty-six percent of respondents strongly or somewhat agree with the statement, “Michigan TV, radio, and newspapers provide balanced coverage about the environment and environmental issues.”

### Exhibit 7

How often information source is trustworthy or helpful, percentage that answered “all of the time” or “most of the time”\*

	Public (asked how often they would trust the information)	DEQ (asked how often the information is helpful and to the point in their job)	EC (asked how often they find the information helpful in understanding environmental policy)
DEQ	44%	—%	35%
Other divisions within DEQ	—	81	—
DNR	55	—	50
Other state agencies	—	68	—
University professors/researchers	46	31	53
Statewide, multi-issue environmental groups	—	23	72
Local or regional, single-issue environmental groups	—	21	63
An environmental organization	38	—	—
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	47	50	41
Local government/local official	22	35	23
Business community (business or corporation in public survey)	7	18	5
The permit applicant	—	44	10

\*A dash (—) means that the group was not asked about that particular information source.

## PUBLIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP INVOLVEMENT WITH THE DEQ

All three groups were asked questions regarding the current state of public input for environmental decision-making. The public was asked for an appraisal of current opportunities for public input. The DEQ and EC member respondents were asked to rate the current quality of public input. All respondents were asked to use a rating scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means “poor” and 10 means “excellent.”

As shown in Exhibit 8, both DEQ and EC member respondents agree that the quality of public input is poor, rating it at 3.5 and 3.4, respectively. The public sees current opportunities for public input as moderately poor, with a 4.6 rating. Together these responses paint a portrait of a relatively ineffective and weak public input process for environmental policy- and decision-making.

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**EXHIBIT 8**  
Rating of quality/opportunities for public input

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	DEQ	EC	PUBLIC
Average score	3.5	3.4	4.6

A second set of questions was asked of DEQ and EC member respondents about the effectiveness of various ways for members of the *public* to communicate their position on an environmental issue to the DEQ. From the perspective of DEQ staff, the three most effective methods for the public to communicate with them are one-on-one meetings (67 percent), telephone calls (44 percent), and writing a letter (44 percent)—all forms of direct contact with DEQ decision-makers. The EC members, on the other hand, view more indirect forms of communication, such as joining an environmental group (38 percent) or contacting a legislator (34 percent), as favorably as a one-on-one meeting with a DEQ staff person (35 percent). Both groups rated comments at a public hearing as one of the least effective methods of public communication with the DEQ (see Exhibit 9).

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**EXHIBIT 9**  
Ranking of various means for public to communicate with the DEQ, percentage responding that each item is “very effective”

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	DEQ	EC
One-on-one meeting with DEQ staff	67%	35%
Telephone calls to DEQ staff	44	9
Writing a letter to DEQ staff	44	17
Sending an e-mail to DEQ staff	37	5
Contacting a legislator	31	34
Comments at a public hearing	20	16
Joining an environmental group	12	38
Writing a letter to the editor of a newspaper	11	20

Next, DEQ and EC members were asked about the most effective means for *environmental groups* to communicate with the DEQ (see Exhibit 10). Again, DEQ staff saw direct contact as the most effective way to communicate, citing one-on-one meetings (55 percent) and letter writing (40 percent) as most effective. The most interesting difference here is that DEQ staff considered bringing litigation (36 percent) as the next most effective means for environmental groups to make their concerns heard and impact decision-making. EC members, on the other hand, made bringing litigation their first choice (56 percent), followed by submitting a petition (44 percent), and a one-on-one

meeting (37 percent) as the most effective ways for EC members to communicate with the DEQ.

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#### **EXHIBIT 10**

Ranking of various means for environmental groups to communicate with the DEQ, percentage responding that each item is “very effective”

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	<b>DEQ</b>	<b>EC</b>
One-on-one meeting with DEQ staff	55%	37%
Writing a letter to DEQ staff	40	16
Joining a lawsuit in support of DEQ	38	34
Bringing a lawsuit in opposition to DEQ	36	56
Submitting a “petition” type letter to DEQ with multiple signatories	35	44
Telephone calls to DEQ staff	33	9
Sending an e-mail to DEQ staff	27	4
Comments at a public hearing	26	29
Encouraging a newspaper to take an editorial position	21	35
Submitting a letter to the editor of a newspaper	12	13

---

When asked in a separate question to name the most effective method of communicating with the DEQ, both groups named “one-on-one meetings with DEQ staff” as the top choice (37 percent DEQ, 21 percent EC members). Thus, even though EC members in general do not view direct contact with DEQ staff as very effective, such contact is cited more often than any other method as most effective.

That one-on-one meetings emerged as the most consistently mentioned method of effective communication with decision-makers is an important finding. Although other methods were cited, it is the one that most consistently emerges. While different proportions of DEQ and EC member respondents see direct contact as effective, it points to a source of common ground in the pursuit of improved environmental discourse. In contrast, EC members view telephone calls and e-mails as particularly poor methods of communicating with the DEQ, for both the public and themselves.

### **IMPROVING THE PROCESS OF ENVIRONMENTAL DECISION-MAKING**

All three survey groups were asked what they believe would make citizens more effective participants in enhancing communication and improving environmental decision-making processes. DEQ and EC members were asked a series of three open-ended questions asking about actions citizens can take to be more effective in

- general policy making;
- rule-making processes and decisions; and
- participating in permitting processes and decisions.

As Exhibit 11 illustrates, the patterns of responses from DEQ staff and EC members regarding these questions were similar. The most common response from DEQ staff regarding citizen effectiveness in both general environmental decision-making and in rule-making is for citizens to have knowledge of the issue. For the permitting process, DEQ staff more commonly responded that citizens are most effective when they push their position by using good communication, knowledge, and a control of their emotions. Sound knowledge is a common thread for citizen effectiveness in all three processes, according to DEQ responses. Similarly, knowledge of the issue was the most frequent response of EC members regarding citizen effectiveness in rule-making and permitting decisions. EC members most commonly responded that citizens are more effective in environmental decisions when they communicate with the DEQ, government/elected officials, and the media to “make their voice heard.” When all three decision-making processes are considered, DEQ staff and EC members agree that knowledge of the issue and good communication are paramount for citizen effectiveness. (See Appendices B and C for detailed responses.)

### **EXHIBIT 11**

Most common responses to the question: What do you think makes citizens more effective when participating in...

	<b>...environmental decisions or decision-making?</b>	<b>...rule-making processes/decisions?</b>	<b>...permitting processes/decision-making?</b>
DEQ (Questions 13-A –13-C)	Knowledge of the issue	Knowledge of the issue	Effectively push their position through good communication, knowledge, and a control of their emotions
EC (Questions 12-A–12-C)	Communication with DEQ, government/elected officials, media, “make voice heard”	Education, awareness, and knowledge of the issue	Education, awareness, and knowledge of the issue

The public, in contrast, was asked only one question: “What single action or activity do you believe would make citizens more effective when participating in environmental decisions?” Their responses reflect to some extent the themes of DEQ staff and EC members. The most frequent response was to participate in hearings and meetings. The second most frequent response was to increase knowledge on the issue through researching the facts. However, the public was less concerned with effective communication or involvement than the DEQ staff and EC members (see Appendix A, Public Survey, Question 13). During the focus group meetings, many DEQ staff suggested that the general public and environmental groups are an important voice, and play a vital role in forming policy and enhancing environmental decision-making

processes. At the same time, DEQ staff indicated that people must become better educated on the requirements for public input, and their limitations as defined by statutes and related rules.

In the minds of both EC members and DEQ staff, there is a connection between being knowledgeable about the environment, the process of decision-making, and being an effective communicator. Emotional responses, supported with limited scientific data, are viewed by all respondents as ineffective when it comes to influencing a decision-making process. Accordingly, the way to balance emotion is by relying on sound information and possessing a good working knowledge of the issues at hand. Again, this fact is underscored in the public survey responses; the need for citizens to educate themselves about facts surrounding an environmental issue, and their ability to convey that information in an objective fashion, is emphasized. Several DEQ respondents indicated that EC members tend to be ill informed and often exaggerate environmental problems for publicity, causing some DEQ staff to be wary of their claims.

Moreover, these survey results suggest that there is a need for better communication among all parties. It appears that all groups believe in the power of accurate and detailed information, presented in an objective, straightforward manner. Simply put, if *all* parties had their facts straight going into meetings, hearings, or other forums of communication, rather than relying on emotional pleas for a desired outcome, the process would be greatly improved. Given that DEQ staff and EC members rate the current quality of public input as relatively poor, and that the public believes the opportunity for public input is limited, we conclude this points to a significant need for ways to improve the quality and make more efficient use of the limited opportunities for public input. It seems an obvious point, but it is one that consistently and clearly emerges from the data.

Another broad theme emerges in Question 7 of the DEQ survey (Appendix B). This question asks, “What is the single most important thing citizens can do to make your job more rewarding?” Over 30 percent of the respondents suggest that citizens must “get involved by participating in regulatory processes, elect new officials, demand accountability, reinstate public oversight boards, and put the environment first in one’s actions.” This is a clear request by DEQ employees for the public to engage in environmental decision-making processes.

In other open-ended questions, DEQ staff and EC members were asked for examples of positive and negative outcomes of citizen and environmental group input in the environmental decision-making process. The results reveal that in many respects, the DEQ and EC members see things similarly. For example, in response to the question, “Can you think of an example on a local or statewide level where *citizen* involvement led to a more positive outcome for the environment?” both DEQ staff and EC members identify citizen support for the “bottle bill” and opposition to the Cadillac Renewable Energy tire-burning permit with greater frequency than any other single event. In assessing negative outcomes of citizen input, single events are not mentioned, but rather general categories of NIMBY (“not in my back yard”) attitudes, nuisance complaints by citizens that take time and resources away from other concerns, and complaints to a legislator, resulting in the diversion of attention from other, seemingly more important concerns.

In assessing the positive impact of environmental groups (“Can you think of an example on a local or statewide level where *environmental group* involvement led to a more positive outcome for the environment?”), both DEQ staff and EC members mention with greatest frequency the “bottle bill” and the defeat of the Cadillac tire-burning permit. The DEQ tends to specifically mention MUCC as an effective organization. Water-quality issues emerge as the most frequently cited category where environmental groups had positive impacts on decision-making. No real pattern emerges from the data on negative impacts of environmental group involvement.

Again these results indicate that DEQ staff and EC members have more similarities than may previously have appeared. It is important, as Michigan looks to the future of environmental policy-making, that these points are considered rather than ratcheting up the rhetoric and relying on stereotyping as a means to communicate.



# Focus Group Summary

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Phase two of the Civil Environmental Discourse Project involved conducting nine focus group meetings throughout the state of Michigan. Meetings were held at or very near to the DEQ District Offices, and at the Gaylord Field Office. Although everyone who was sent the written survey was invited to participate, in order to keep the group discussions productive, space was limited at the meetings to ten DEQ staff members and ten members of the environmental community. The focus group meetings were facilitated by PSC and staffed by Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council. The primary goal of the focus group meetings was to provide a forum that would foster improved communication between DEQ staff and members of the environmental community. This was accomplished by (1) discussing the perceptions, attitudes, and opinions expressed in the survey data; (2) discussing issues related to citizen involvement in environmental decision-making; and (3) simply bringing the two parties together in a facilitated dialogue setting.

The facilitator described “ground rules” at the beginning of each meeting in an attempt to optimize feedback from participants in a limited amount of time, and to ensure an orderly meeting. The ground rules included:

- Keep the comments focused on the topics being discussed.
- Feel free to express opinions, but be succinct and to the point.
- Names of attendees will not be attached to recorded comments.
- Keep the setting informal, encouraging participation and feedback.

Meetings were scheduled to last for two hours, although most ended after two-and-a-half, and covered a wide range of topics. Most of the attendees appreciated the opportunity to take part in the project and saw this as an important step toward improving communication between DEQ staff and EC members. Many were meeting for the first time. During the meetings, participants appeared comfortable and eager to share their insights and offer feedback based on individual experience. This made for lively discussion, and generally a high level of respect for participants was witnessed at the meetings.

The meetings also served a dual purpose of disseminating preliminary survey results to attendees. Results from the survey instruments provided the focal point for group discussion and revolved around the following themes:

- Attitudes toward the environment
- Helpfulness and sources of information
- Public involvement with the DEQ and decision-making
- Environmental group involvement with the DEQ and decision-making

Discussions on these topics ranged widely. The following section summarizes the major themes that were discussed during the focus group meetings.

## **ATTITUDES TOWARD THE ENVIRONMENT**

### ***Ranking the Issues***

Survey results show that DEQ employees and EC members generally agree on the three most important issues facing the state of Michigan (the environment, education, and health care) and the three most pressing environmental issues (urban sprawl, inadequate infrastructure—e.g., sewage treatment and conveyance, and loss of wetlands/wildlife habitat). Yet the general public ranked environmental issues in importance on a par with crime/drugs, economic development, taxes, and education in our society. In addition, the public ranked the four most pressing environmental issues as water and air pollution, import of out-of-state-trash, loss of habitat, and export of Great Lakes water.

Many meeting participants were not surprised that DEQ and EC members agreed on the most pressing issues, suggesting that the difference between the groups may be attributed to the fact that DEQ employees and EC members look at environmental issues on a daily basis and have more intimate knowledge. It was also suggested that many DEQ employees and EC members have committed their professional and/or personal lives to the protection of the environment, and a logical conclusion is for these groups to favor environmental protection in comparison with other issues. It was generally believed that EC members and DEQ were “on the same side,” although inevitably differences of opinion arose on how problems should be addressed.

### ***The Media***

The media were singled out as a primary influence on the general public and its perception about what is important. It was suggested that, too often, the media lack specific scientific knowledge about an environmental topic and have difficulty conveying its importance to the public. This may lead to a confused audience or one that is misinformed. Several attendees suggested that both the media and public do not have the time to thoroughly analyze environmental issues, and that often short turn-around times imposed on journalists to write stories can lead to incomplete or even inaccurate reporting. Some also believe that the media have an agenda separate from providing complete, balanced reporting.

Many participants pointed out that “the nature of the business” impacts the quality and accuracy of media reporting. In many areas of the state there is a high turnover of reporters. This creates a situation requiring repeated efforts to raise reporters’ awareness and understanding of environmental issues. Additionally, many participants felt that the business side of media, whether it’s selling papers or attracting viewers or listeners, influences how issues will be covered and fosters sensationalism instead of balanced reporting.

It was also suggested that the general public doesn’t take the necessary time to become fully informed on environmental issues, although many agreed that the DEQ and EC members are not doing a satisfactory job communicating important issues to the public and the media. Attendees generally agreed that a lack of environmental education is a significant problem for the media and the general public—educating the public is part of DEQ’s and environmental organizations’ missions and should receive greater emphasis in

the activities of these organizations. In some cases it was believed that television could play a larger role in educating the public on the environment, specifically a television show that is sponsored by the DEQ and the DNR. In addition, printed materials, focused public education campaigns, and forums would be valuable education tools.

### ***Providing Opportunity for Public Input***

Roughly three times as many public respondents felt that public input unnecessarily slows down the permitting process, compared to a low percentage of both the DEQ and EC members. Meeting participants suggested that potential reasons for this response include:

- The public does not understand the difference between a public meeting (at which public officials may respond to citizen concerns) and a public hearing (which collects public comments but does not include official responses).
- The public's response to this question might be influenced by the lack of comprehensive media reporting. Issues are only reported when the permitting process or citizen involvement has in fact slowed down or held up development projects.
- Lack of education on some issues.
- Scientific data is often lacking.
- The public relies more on emotion than scientific evidence to convey positions.
- Lack of preparation based on short lead-times, since public notices are usually 30 days or less.
- When there is no opportunity for input prior to a hearing the only thing the public can do is provide comments at a hearing, with no response from or interaction with the DEQ.

### ***Who Raises Important Issues?***

While there is some difference in the number of survey respondents from each group who feel that the various groups raise important issues, all three groups respond positively to partnerships between the DEQ, EC members, and the business community, agreeing that they are helpful. While EC members gave a low rating to the statement that the DEQ generally raises important issues regarding protection of Michigan's environment and public health, some meeting attendees believe that this occurs because the DEQ staff deals with existing regulations and does not necessarily go out looking for emerging issues. If citizens do not bring issues to the attention of the DEQ, many believe that no action will be taken. Many EC members expressed frustration that their staff members take a lot of time to review permit applications and send comments to the DEQ, with little or no effect on the final outcome.

### ***Statutory Authority***

The survey results indicate that both DEQ staff and EC members are evenly divided as to whether the DEQ has adequate statutory authority to consider all of a project's effects on the environment. At the focus group meetings, however, DEQ and EC members' views differed. While EC members felt the need for better application of existing laws, DEQ

staff indicated that the extent of their work is guided and limited by existing statutes in most cases. To make meaningful changes, DEQ staff felt that EC members first have to gain a better understanding of existing laws, determine where there are gaps, and then seek to change the environmental laws that dictate the DEQ's work.

Some suggested that the rules and regulations are available but field staff are not available to enforce or oversee everything. There also appears to be a misunderstanding about the type of enforcement that the DEQ and DNR are able to do as it relates to existing statutory authority. Every enforcement case involves lots of time and money, an attorney, local prosecutor support, or a state attorney general. It is very difficult to do effective enforcement on small violations. In addition, many attendees agreed that environmental compliance and the enforcement of regulations are two sides of the same coin—a stronger enforcement regime would command higher compliance with environmental laws. Many participants believe that an increased focus on “voluntary compliance” with regulations over the last decade has sent a conflicting message to regulated entities, causing a decline in overall compliance.

Some attendees suggested that people's attitudes toward environmental regulations depend on their own situation. Do they own property with wetlands or streams? What sort of stake do they have? People often want to regulate what's next to them but don't want regulation for themselves.

Some discussion did focus on the topic of term limits and its influence on environmental protection. Many believed that legislators have “less at stake” due to relatively short, finite terms, resulting in negative impacts on the environment.

## **HELPFULNESS AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

### ***Trust and Information***

DEQ respondents believe the most helpful information comes from within their agency and other governmental entities. EC member respondents believe the most helpful information comes from other environmental organizations or neutral third parties, such as universities. Based on the survey data, the public trusts information provided by the DNR most of all. Some attendees suggested that the loss of public confidence in the DEQ's ability to “do the right thing” over the last decade has led to an erosion in the level of the public's trust in the agency.

Many were surprised to see that the public trusts the DNR more than the DEQ, and could not fully explain the phenomena. One possible explanation is that most of the permitting and regulatory functions have been removed from the DNR and placed in the DEQ, allowing the DNR to appear more objective and trustworthy in the information it provides. Some questioned whether the public even understands the difference between the two agencies, and particularly the DEQ's responsibilities.

## **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT WITH THE DEQ**

### ***Quality of Public Input***

Based on the survey results it is clear that DEQ and EC members do not view the quality of public input positively and the public ranks the opportunity to provide input as poor. Many focus group participants felt that the opportunity for public input is provided too late and therefore has little if any effect but to slow down the process. In addition, some felt comments provided are often emotional appeals that do not address the policy or statutory requirements and as a result, raise issues that are not relevant and cannot be considered in the decision-making process.

It was noted that the level of public involvement diminishes as citizens become disillusioned with the process because expectations, realistic or not, haven't been met. Often the public's goal is to stop a project altogether through a permit denial, rather than modify it to reduce negative impacts, and as a result anything less is viewed as a defeat. Many suggested that public input would be much more valuable if it were provided much earlier in the decision-making process, addressed statutory requirements, and were grounded in scientific facts. DEQ staff emphasized that if an application is submitted within the purview of the law and it meets statutory requirements, a permit must be issued.

When surveyed, DEQ staff chose one-on-one meetings as the most effective way for citizens to communicate with them (23 percentage points higher than any other means of communication). EC members, however, ranked joining an environmental group highest (38 percent), closely followed by one-on-one meetings with the DEQ and contacting a legislator (35 percent and 34 percent, respectively).

DEQ survey responses indicate that the best way for the public to communicate with the agency is through direct contact, yet EC members favor indirect methods such as contacting a legislator, writing a letter to a newspaper, or joining an environmental organization. However, a sizeable proportion of EC members (35 percent) also found one-on-one meetings with DEQ staff to be effective.

Many EC members attending the meetings believed that DEQ employees have limited ability to influence the outcome of decisions, and that legislators have better access to the DEQ management, and thus are more influential in affecting the outcome of a decision. DEQ staff indicated that the public often is not aware that DEQ staff are primary authors for response letters from legislators. DEQ staff do not discourage EC members and the public from writing to their legislators; they should be aware, however, that DEQ staff will likely be writing the response. DEQ staff do believe that responding to legislative inquiries and letters from the public takes time away from doing program work.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP INVOLVEMENT WITH THE DEQ**

### ***Effective Communication***

Survey results show that DEQ staff favor direct methods of communication with EC members, such as one-on-one meetings (55 percent) or letters (40 percent). Somewhat

surprisingly, more than a third of DEQ respondents felt that bringing a lawsuit in opposition to the DEQ (36 percent) or joining a lawsuit (38 percent) was the most effective means of communicating. EC members also favored bringing (56 percent) or joining (34 percent) a lawsuit, as well as submitting a “petition” type letter (44 percent). Still, 37 percent of EC members rated one-on-one meetings with DEQ staff as “most effective.”

DEQ staff have been encouraged by management to work with EC members and develop professional relationships when possible. A primary way that involvement occurs with EC members is through grant projects administered by the DEQ. Participants also agreed that EC members and DEQ staff should form better partnerships and communicate on a regular basis. In addition, many pointed to a need for better communication and coordination between the DEQ and DNR.

Generally, EC members believe that the environmental community is helpful when it comes to explaining the permitting process to the public. However, they would like to be better trained and more knowledgeable on some issues. In some cases it has been difficult for EC members to help the public understand the DEQ and decision-making processes because EC members often do not understand them. Some thought it would be helpful for the DEQ to conduct training seminars on environmental statutes and their implementation.

In many cases, EC members get invited to stakeholder meetings and attend. However, attendance at ongoing meetings on a single issue often diminishes because of lack of resources, the necessary commitment of time, the scope of the meeting is too broad, or groups lack a certain level of sophistication to understand and engage in the process. Also, based on personal experience, some have seen these processes undermined by subsequent decisions made by the DEQ director. These actions reduce the incentive for EC members to participate. It was generally agreed that this lack of involvement has negative consequences for the environment. At the same time, EC members may be criticized by the DEQ for not attending these forums. Still, some participants felt that there is value in showing up because they learn more about how and why decisions were made. The perception of declining influence has caused fewer EC members to participate, and their absence does minimize their chances to influence decisions. Over time, EC members have felt divorced from decision-making processes and are often unclear about what their role should be on specific issues.

There was agreement among meeting participants that EC members receive good information from DEQ staff when requested, and that EC members were more comfortable talking to regional offices than to existing district offices. It appears that decision-making authority has been consolidated in Lansing and taken away from the field and what were former regional offices. It was suggested that the regional office structure had the authority to resolve issues, which is no longer the case. Some attendees believed that a shift in environmental policy has occurred that is biased toward economic development at the expense of environmental protection. They believed that in the 1970s, the ability to make a decision was based on the right thing to do for the environment and that Michigan was viewed as preeminent by other states when it came to protecting the environment.

## COMMON THEMES

The focus group meetings provided an excellent forum to bring together DEQ staff and EC members to openly discuss various perceptions, attitudes, and opinions expressed in the survey data. The forums allowed the project team leader and PSC to further analyze survey data and discuss questions raised by the survey data. The focus group meetings provided a relaxed setting in which DEQ staff and EC members could get acquainted and form the basis of future relationships that will enhance civil discourse—a primary goal of the project.

The focus group meetings contained a wide variety of comments and suggestions for ways to improve civil discourse and citizen involvement. There were many recurring themes and specific recommendations from one meeting to the next. Some garnered unanimous agreement and others generated heated debate. For example, on one hand, it was universally expressed that better communications between DEQ and EC members and a more transparent decision-making process would be good for the public and the environment. On the other hand, discussions around the question of whether to reunite the DEQ and DNR generated compelling arguments on both sides of the issue.

*The focus group meetings did not attempt to prioritize or develop a comprehensive strategy to improve civil discourse or citizen involvement in environmental decision-making. The following themes were taken from recurring suggestions made at the nine focus group meetings. They are offered here as possible avenues that EC members and the DEQ could take to enhance environmental discourse and improve public input into environmental decision-making in Michigan.*

Implementation of these suggestions will take a commitment from the DEQ and EC members. Although some, such as changing existing legislation, would involve a substantial investment of resources, others could be implemented quickly and with little expense. For example, DEQ and EC members could improve the quality of citizen input by providing more and better information to citizens regarding statutory standards and opportunities for citizen involvement. A recent DEQ change to public hearing format, called an “open house,” allows one-on-one conversations but has received mixed reactions. An inexpensive way to continue the improved communications initiated with the focus group meetings is simply to have EC members and DEQ district level staff hold periodic meetings to foster dialogue and civil discourse.

### **Communication**

- Overall, improve communication between the public, the media, the DEQ, and EC members.
- Provide a mechanism for formal communication for management of all state agencies responsible in some way for environmental quality (DEQ, DNR, Michigan Department of Agriculture, etc.)—both in Lansing and at the district level.
- Encourage citizens’ comments to be their own (versus a canned response or form letter), to the point, and focused on the applicable law when speaking or writing to the DEQ about a specific issue.

- Re-initiate the Natural Resources and Environmental Leadership Institute to bring together DEQ staff and EC members on a regular basis.
- Create an Environmental Ombudsman to facilitate EC member involvement in DEQ decision-making processes.
- All communications, from both the DEQ and from EC members, should focus on the issues and not personalities.
- DEQ should initiate contact with EC members more often and actually solicit public input on issues.
- Celebrate successes—the DEQ and EC members should compliment each other on jobs well done.

### ***Education***

- Enhance environmental education efforts for the general public on decision-making processes, such as the role of public meetings and hearings (e.g., citizen's guide to participating in environmental laws).
- Increase public understanding of the DEQ's existing statutory authorities.
- Increase public understanding of the DEQ's role in enforcing environmental laws.
- Focus environmental education efforts on key decision-makers and stakeholders at the local level (e.g., prosecutor's office).
- Enhance cross-training opportunities within the DEQ and potentially between the DEQ and the larger environmental organizations.
- Expand the DEQ's efforts to educate citizens on the science and policy of environmental protection, which might involve a redirection of the Environmental Assistance Division's priorities.

### ***Citizen Participation***

- Establish a public oversight board for the DEQ to allow additional opportunities for public input.
- Encourage EC members to meet with developers and permit applicants prior to DEQ application submission.
- Create opportunities for meaningful public input as early as possible in the decision-making process (soliciting public input after the permit has been drafted is too late).
- Promote broad citizen involvement overall—simply getting people to vote is important.

### ***Decision-making***

- Allow more decision-making in the field.
- Involve field staff in policy-setting agenda in Lansing.
- The DEQ should conduct more public meetings earlier in the decision-making process versus public hearings later in the process.
- Increase opportunities for public input in the DEQ decision-making process.
- Embrace ecosystem management to enhance environmental protection.



- Set DEQ program priorities on a district-by-district basis with broad community input.
- Make post-denial negotiations transparent and include citizen input.
- Continue/expand stakeholder groups in rule-making processes.

### ***Information Sharing***

- Enhance access to information about specific issues, permit applications, and decision-making processes via the Internet.
- Enhance information sharing between members of the environmental community and the DEQ through periodic meetings and ongoing communications at the district level.
- The DEQ should release more information (e.g., fact sheets) during permit review process.
- Simplify information and share DEQ revenue and funding allocations with public.
- Develop an information clearinghouse within the DEQ's Environmental Assistance Division.
- Provide earlier notice of pending permit issues.
- Announce "Notice of Permit Issuance" so that people are aware of 60-day administrative appeal.

### ***Enforcement***

- The DEQ should provide a higher level of enforcement for existing regulations.
- Expand enforcement opportunities for the DEQ Law Division (e.g., appearance tickets).
- Environmental statutes should be revised to allow citizens to more easily file for enforcement actions.
- The DEQ should call on EC members to help convince local prosecutors to take enforcement action.

### ***Legislative***

- EC members should endeavor to make whatever legislative changes are necessary to accomplish enhanced citizen involvement in environmental decision-making.
- A new broad-based quality-of-life environmental statute is needed (existing statutes are too restrictive and often don't consider what people feel is important).
- Enhance regional planning initiatives and expand local land use regulation authority.
- Seek to provide additional DEQ staff through the budget process.
- Change the administrative rules development process to encourage more citizen involvement.
- Close loopholes in existing laws (e.g., the isolated wetland exemption).

In closing, it is important to acknowledge that the value of citizen involvement in environmental decision-making was recognized and emphasized at the focus group meetings. Environmental laws are meant to protect the public's interest in the benefits of a clean healthy environment. As one participant put it, to a great extent, the quality of our shared environment is an indicator of the vigor of our democracy. If we are to protect the public's interest in the environment, then both state agencies and members of the environmental community must endeavor to ensure that meaningful opportunities for citizen involvement are written into the decision-making process of environmental laws, and that, most importantly, citizens are given the knowledge and the tools to be able to participate fully.

# Appendix A

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*Survey Instruments and Findings*



*Public Survey*  
Final Results

[INSTRUCTIONS FOR PHONE BANK IN BRACKETS, CAPS]

**[INTRODUCTION]**

Hello. I'm calling from Public Sector Consultants in Lansing, Michigan. We are conducting a survey of public attitudes toward Michigan's environment and natural resources. You can help us understand how the public values different aspects of Michigan's land and water resources by taking a few minutes of your time to answer a few questions.

Are you 18 years of age or older and a resident of Michigan for more than 6 months?

YES .....CONTINUE  
NO ..... TERMINATE

Before we begin, let me tell you that this interview is completely voluntary. Should we come to any question that you do not want to answer, just let me know and we'll go on to the next question.

**PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS**

1) What do you think is the most important issue facing the state of Michigan today?

[ROTATE]

a) Crime/drugs .....	15%
b) Encouraging economic development/jobs .....	13
c) Taxes/the state's budget .....	12
d) The environment .....	14
e) Education.....	14
f) Helping the needy.....	13
g) Health care.....	8
h) Other [VOLUNTEERED].....	10
i) Don't know/Refused .....	1

- 2) Next, I'm going to read you a list of environmental issues. For each, please tell me whether you are very concerned, somewhat concerned, or not concerned at all. Are you very, somewhat, or not concerned about ...

[ROTATE. CODE VERY CONCERNED = 1, SOMEWHAT CONCERNED = 2, NOT CONCERNED AT ALL = 3, DON'T KNOW (vol.) = 4, REFUSED/OTHER (vol.) = 5]

	<b>Very Concerned</b>	<b>Somewhat concerned</b>	<b>Not concerned at all</b>	<b>Don't know/ refused/Other</b>
a) The import of exotic species, such as the zebra mussel, into the Great Lakes via ship ballast water	53%	26%	16%	5%
b) The growth of suburbs and towns into undeveloped areas of the state (also known as "urban sprawl")	32	43	23	2
c) Pollution of Michigan's air, ground, and water	80	18	2	0
d) Inadequate or inappropriate public infrastructure (for example, crumbling sewer and septic systems)	49	40	9	2
e) Importing out-of-state waste for disposal in Michigan	76	19	4	1
f) Selling or exporting water from the Great Lakes to other states	57	25	16	2
g) Loss of wetlands/wildlife habitat	58	32	9	1

- 3) I will now read a list of possible sources of water pollution in the Great Lakes. For each one I read, please tell me whether you personally believe it is a major source, a minor source, or not at all a source of pollution in the Great Lakes. [ROTATE]

	<b>Major source</b>	<b>Minor source</b>	<b>Not at all a source</b>	<b>Don't know/ Refused</b>
a) Discharges from industry	80%	17%	1%	2%
b) Discharges from sewage treatment plants	71	24	2	3
c) Runoff that flows into storm drain systems	47	43	5	5
d) Discharges from coal-burning power plants	54	32	6	8
e) Discharges from boats and ships	46	46	5	3
f) Runoff from farms	33	51	12	4
g) Emissions from automobiles	46	45	7	2

### ***Perceptions of Public Input on the Environmental Policy Process***

The next set of questions asks for your perceptions of how the public is involved in setting environmental policies in Michigan.

- 4) First, please listen to the following three statements about the environment and tell me which comes closest to your own view. [ROTATE]
- a) Michigan's current environmental laws and enforcement of those laws are not strong enough and need to be stronger..... 68%
  - b) The current environmental laws and enforcement of those laws are fine and should be left alone. .... 22
  - c) The current environmental laws and enforcement of those laws are too strict and need to be relaxed..... 6
  - d) Don't know/Refused/Other [VOLUNTEERED] ..... 4
- 5) Currently, cities and townships in Michigan are responsible for managing land use, growth and development through zoning laws. How would you rate the job that your local city or township has been doing of managing growth: excellent, good, fair or poor?
- a) Excellent..... 10%
  - b) Good..... 40
  - c) Fair ..... 26
  - d) Poor ..... 21
  - e) Don't know/Refused/Other [VOLUNTEERED] ..... 3

6) Which of the following is more important to you [ROTATE]:

- a) Protecting property rights of individuals even it means that growth and development go unchecked. .... 25%
- b) Protecting the environment even if it means restricting what some property owners can do with the land they own. .... 62
- c) Both have the same importance [VOLUNTEERED] ..... 6
- d) Don't know \Refused\other [VOLUNTEERED] ..... 7

7) On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is very poor and 10 is excellent, how do you rate the current **opportunities** for Michigan residents to influence environmental policy?

Average score = 4.57

8) Using the same 1 to 10 scale, where 1 is not effective and 10 is very effective, [ROTATE]

Don't know	Not effective										Very effective
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

- a) how effective do you think **environmental groups** are in protecting Michigan's environment? Average score = 5.31
- b) how effective do you think the **Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ)** is in protecting Michigan's environment? Average score = 4.85
- c) how effective do you think the **business community** is in protecting Michigan's environment? Average score = 4.08

9) Next, I'm going to read you a series of statements. For each, please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree. [ROTATE. CODE STRONGLY AGREE = 1, SOMEWHAT AGREE = 2, SOMEWHAT DISAGREE = 3, STRONGLY DISAGREE = 4, DON'T KNOW (vol.) = 5, REFUSED/OTHER (vol.) = 6]

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/ Refused/ Other
a) Providing opportunity for public input unnecessarily slows down the environmental permitting process and makes it difficult for businesses to operate.	13%	29%	27%	21%	10%



	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/ Refused/ Other
b) <b>Environmental groups</b> generally raise important issues regarding the protection of Michigan's environment and public health.	39%	45%	7%	6%	3%
c) <b>Citizens</b> generally raise important issues regarding the protection of Michigan's environment and public health.	34	46	12	4	4
d) <b>The DEQ</b> generally raises important issues regarding the protection of Michigan's environment and public health.	20	48	9	7	16
e) Partnerships between the DEQ, businesses, and environmental organizations help improve Michigan's environment.	20	47	11	6	16
f) Environmental and conservation groups in Michigan do a good job of keeping watch on issues that are important to me.	30	48	11	8	3
g) The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality listens too much to business interests.	29	32	18	8	13
h) Environmental and conservation groups in Michigan block economic progress by making unrealistic demands of government and business.	12	30	26	24	8
i) Michigan's television, radio, and newspapers provide balanced coverage about the environment and environmental issues.	21	35	24	17	3

### ***Decision Making—Trust in Information***

The next few questions ask how you receive and use information about Michigan's environment.

- 10) Thinking back over the last **six months**, from what source do you get most of your information about Michigan's environment? [RECORD OPEN-ENDED RESPONSE]

**83% get the information from the media.**

- 11) I'm now going to read you a list of organizations, people, and groups. If you received information about the Michigan environment from these individuals or organizations, would you trust the information all of the time, most of the time, some of the time, or none of the time? [ROTATE]

	<b>All of the time</b>	<b>Most of the time</b>	<b>Some of the time</b>	<b>None of the time</b>	<b>Don't know/ Refused/Other (vol.)</b>
a) A local official from your town or county	4%	18%	56%	18%	4%
b) An environmental organization	6	32	53	6	3
c) The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality	8	36	39	8	8*
d) U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	11	36	41	8	4
e) Your neighborhood association	7	22	43	12	16
f) Michigan Department of Natural Resources	15	40	36	6	3
g) MSU Extension	12	35	35	6	12
h) A church or religious leader	8	26	41	17	8
i) A business or corporation	1	6	54	35	4
j) University professors/scientists	7	39	42	9	3
k) Your local schools	8	30	47	10	5
l) A doctor or nurse	8	37	42	10	3

\*Responses do not total 100% due to rounding.

## ***Public Involvement and Input into the Environmental Policy Process***

- 12) There are a number of ways that citizens can communicate their concerns about the environment. I'm now going to read you a list of activities, and ask you to answer "yes" or "no" to each one. Have you **ever** ... [ROTATE. CODE YES = 1, NO = 2, DON'T KNOW (VOLUNTEERED) = 3, REFUSED/OTHER (VOLUNTEERED) = 4]

**Yes**

- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| a) attended or participated in a public hearing about the environment? .....                | 30% |
| b) met one-on-one or in a small group with an elected official about the environment? ..... | 19  |
| c) sent an e-mail about the environment to a legislator or local official? .....            | 13  |
| d) called a legislator or local official about an environmental concern? .....              | 21  |
| e) written a letter to a newspaper about the environment? .....                             | 11  |
| f) joined an environmental group? .....   | 17  |

- 13) What single action or activity do you believe would make citizens more effective when participating in environmental decisions? [RECORD OPEN-ENDED RESPONSE. PROBE, "Are there any other activities you can think of?"]

Open-ended responses:

No answer .....	204
Participate/hearings, meetings .....	59
Not able to categorize .....	47
Awareness and knowledge of the issues .....	45
Individual actions .....	38
Communication with DEQ, officials, media, and others; "make voice heard" .....	35
Better information available/education .....	30
Greater public involvement .....	28
Vote/vote for enviro-friendly candidates .....	23
Advertising/media .....	23
Involvement/EC members, organizing around an issue .....	15
DEQ criticism/agency administration .....	13
General involvement .....	10
Activism .....	9
Watchdog or whistleblower .....	3
Lobby (focused on legislative) .....	3
Financial support .....	3
Be thoughtful, open-minded, and listen .....	3
Collaborate between all stakeholders, local government, EC .....	3
General participation .....	2
Greater awareness .....	2

## Demographics

The last section of this survey contains demographic questions. Again, your answers are confidential, and if we come to any question that you do not want to answer, just let me know and we'll go on to the next question.

14) In general, how knowledgeable would you say you are about environmental issues facing Michigan today? Would you say you are very knowledgeable, somewhat knowledgeable, or not at all knowledgeable about Michigan environmental issues?

- |  |     |
|--|-----|
| a) Very knowledgeable.....                     | 15% |
| b) Somewhat knowledgeable.....                 | 71  |
| c) Not at all knowledgeable.....               | 13  |
| d) Don't know/Refused/Other [VOLUNTEERED]..... | 1   |

15) How many years have you lived in the state of Michigan? [RECORD NUMBER OF YEARS. CODE DON'T KNOW = 888, REFUSED/OTHER = 999]

- |                    |     |
|--------------------|-----|
| a) <25 years ..... | 24% |
| b) 26–35 .....     | 23  |
| c) 36–45 .....     | 20  |
| d) 46–55 .....     | 14  |
| e) >55 .....       | 19  |

16) In the last year, have you ... [ROTATE. CODE YES = 1, NO = 2, DON'T KNOW (VOLUNTEERED) = 3, REFUSED/OTHER (VOLUNTEERED) = 4]

	<b>Yes</b>
a) Gone hunting? .....	24%
b) Gone fishing? .....	49
c) Been camping? .....	49
d) Gone hiking? .....	52
e) Ridden a snowmobile? .....	17
f) Been boating or canoeing? [INCLUDES KAYAKING] .....	56
g) Been swimming? .....	62
h) Been skiing (cross-country or downhill)? .....	15
i) Watched birds or other wildlife? .....	88

17) Do you own a ...[ROTATE. CODE YES = 1, NO = 2, DON'T KNOW (VOLUNTEERED) = 3, REFUSED/OTHER (VOLUNTEERED) = 4]

	<b>Yes</b>
a) Snowmobile? .....	13%
b) Personal watercraft, such as a jet-ski? .....	3
c) Recreational vehicle, such as a camper? .....	19
d) Off-road vehicle? .....	23
e) Sailboat? .....	2
f) Powerboat? .....	21
g) Canoe or kayak? .....	13

18) What is the highest level of education you have completed?

a) Some high school .....	24%
b) High school graduate .....	32
c) Vocational or technical school .....	9
d) Some college .....	19
e) College graduate .....	10
f) Post graduate study or degree .....	6
g) Refused/Other [VOLUNTEERED] .....	0

19) What is your racial or ethnic background? Are you white, African American, Hispanic, Native American, Asian American, Arab American, or another ethnic group?

a) White .....	81%
b) African American .....	10
c) Hispanic .....	1
d) Native American .....	3
e) Asian American .....	0
f) Arab American .....	0
g) Another group .....	2
h) Refused (VOLUNTEERED) .....	3

20) What county do you live in? [CODE BY FIPS CODE. CODE DON'T KNOW = 88888, REFUSED/OTHER = 99999]

21) What is your ZIP code? [RECORD 5-DIGIT ZIP CODE. CODE DON'T KNOW = 88888, REFUSED/OTHER = 99999]

22) Politically, do you consider yourself conservative, moderate, or liberal?

a) Conservative .....	25%
b) Somewhat Conservative .....	15
c) Moderate .....	25
d) Somewhat Liberal .....	13
e) Liberal .....	11
Don't know/Refused .....	11

23) Gender [BY OBSERVATION ONLY]

a) Male .....	45%
b) Female .....	55

That completes the survey. **Thank you for your time.**

# DEQ Employee Survey

## *Final Results*

### INTRODUCTION

The Civil Environmental Discourse Project, coordinated by the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council, seeks to explore issues related to citizen involvement and understanding in environmental decision making and help improve communications between the environmental community and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).

In the first phase of the project, Public Sector Consultants, Inc. (PSC), a public policy research firm, has been hired to conduct surveys of DEQ staff, Michigan environmental organizations, and the general Michigan public. These surveys will allow each group to assess the current level of citizen participation and interest in environmental decision making. PSC will analyze the responses to compare the perceptions of these groups and identify areas of consensus and disagreement.

The second phase of this project will involve bringing together DEQ staff and members of Michigan environmental groups to discuss results of the analysis, with a particular focus on citizen involvement in environmental decision making.

### INSTRUCTIONS

Please take a few minutes to complete this survey. **Your individual answers are confidential and anonymous**, and PSC will only report aggregate data.

When you are finished, place the survey in the postage-paid, PSC business reply envelope included in this packet. Please return your completed survey no later than October 19, 2001.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Jeff Williams ([jwilliams@pscinc.com](mailto:jwilliams@pscinc.com)) or Melissa Riba ([mriba@pscinc.com](mailto:mriba@pscinc.com)) at PSC, telephone 517/484-4954.





## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. What do you think are the **three** most important issues facing the state of Michigan today? (Choose no more than three.)
- |  |     |
|--|-----|
| a. Crime/drugs .....                           | 26% |
| b. Encouraging economic development/jobs ..... | 28  |
| c. Taxes/the state's budget .....              | 31  |
| d. The environment .....                       | 72  |
| e. Education .....                             | 65  |
| f. Helping the needy .....                     | 14  |
| g. Health care .....                           | 38  |
| h. Other .....                                 | 16  |

**See Appendix B for “Other” responses.**

2. What do you think are Michigan's **three** most pressing environmental issues today? (Choose no more than three.)
- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| a. The import of exotic species into the Great Lakes via ship ballast water .....   | 22% |
| b. The growth of suburbs and towns into undeveloped areas of the state<br>(also known as “urban sprawl”) .....  | 67  |
| c. General pollution of Michigan's air and ground environment .....   | 30  |
| d. General pollution of Michigan's water environment (including the Great Lakes, rivers,<br>and streams) .....  | 41  |
| e. Inadequate or inappropriate public infrastructure to protect the environment (crumbling sewer<br>and septic systems, heavy reliance on automobiles for transportation) ..... | 51  |
| f. Regulation of water diversion and consumption of Great Lakes waters .....  | 18  |
| g. Loss of wetlands/wildlife habitat .....  | 50  |
| h. Other .....  | 8   |

**See Appendix B for “Other” responses.**

## PERCEPTIONS OF PUBLIC INPUT ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY PROCESS

3. What do you think is the current **quality** of public input in the environmental policy process in Michigan?

<i>Don't know</i>	<i>Very poor</i>									<i>Excellent</i>
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

**Average = 3.5**

4. How well do you think each of the following groups understands Michigan's environmental statutes, regulations, and hearings processes?

- a. The public

<i>Not well at all</i>										<i>Extremely well</i>
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

**Average = 2.8**

- b. Environmental groups

<i>Not well at all</i>										<i>Extremely well</i>
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

**Average = 6.2**

- c. Elected officials

Not well  
at all  
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9  
Extremely  
well  
10

**Average = 4.5**

5. Please review the following statements and indicate whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with each.\*

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
a. Michigan citizens are actively engaged in the environmental policy process.	2%	17%	6%	30%	43%	3%
b. Providing opportunity for public input on pollution permits unnecessarily slows down the permitting process and makes it difficult for businesses to operate.	3	10	11	25	49	2
c. Citizens and environmental groups often attempt to use environmental statutes to pre-empt local planning and zoning decisions.	14	31	19	12	11	14
d. Environmental groups generally raise important issues regarding the protection of Michigan's environment and public health.	26	50	10	9	4	1
e. Citizens generally raise important issues regarding the protection of Michigan's environment and public health.	9	39	22	23	6	1
f. The DEQ generally raises important issues regarding the protection of Michigan's environment and public health.	23	39	11	15	11	1
g. Partnerships between the DEQ, businesses, and environmental organizations are helpful to furthering Michigan's environmental policy.	43	33	9	7	6	2

**\*Responses do not total 100% because some respondents selected multiple responses.**

6. In general, do you believe that the DEQ has adequate statutory authority to consider all of a project's effects and minimize the impact on the environment?\*

a. Yes .....	41%
b. No .....	49
c. Don't know .....	10

**\* Responses do not total 100% because some respondents selected multiple responses.**

7. What is the single most important thing **citizens** can do to make your job more rewarding?

**See Appendix B.**

8. What is the single most important thing **environmental groups** can do to make your job more rewarding?

**See Appendix B.**

## DECISION MAKING—TRUST IN INFORMATION

9. *If you do not work with environmental permits, please skip to question 10.* Think of a typical permitting process in the last 3 months. What percentage of phone calls and emails do you estimate that **you** received about each permit from

	Average
a. Citizens .....	21%
b. Local units of government .....	11
c. Permit applicants .....	61
d. Environmental group representatives .....	7
e. The media .....	5

10. Thinking about information you have received from members of the following groups in the past, please mark whether you—in general—have **found the information helpful and on point** in your job all of the time, most of the time, some of the time, or none of the time.\*

	Helpful information all of the time	Helpful information most of the time	Helpful information some of the time	Helpful information none of the time	Don't know
a. Other state departments/agencies	6	62	28	1	3
b. Other divisions within DEQ	13	68	16	1	2
c. University professors/researchers	4	27	41	4	24
d. Statewide, multi-issue environmental groups	1	22	49	8	20
e. Local or regional, single-issue environmental groups	1	20	50	10	19
f. EPA	7	43	36	4	11
g. Friends	3	26	42	13	17
h. Co-workers	18	68	12	0	2
i. Local government/local officials	3	32	51	6	8
j. Citizens	1	17	66	7	10
k. The business community	0	18	55	13	14
l. The permit applicant	4	40	31	2	24

**\*Responses do not total 100% because some respondents selected multiple responses.**

Next, we will ask a series of questions about **public/citizen** involvement in the environmental policy process, followed by a series of questions about **environmental group** involvement in the policy process.

We will begin with **public/citizen** involvement.

## PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

11. There are a number of ways in which members of the **public** can communicate their position to you. For each of the following items, please mark whether **you** generally find the activity not effective, somewhat effective, or very effective **in your role**.

	Not effective	Somewhat effective	Very effective	Don't know
a. Comments at a public hearing	15%	52%	20%	12%
b. One-on-one meeting with DEQ staff	4	24	67	5
c. Sending an e-mail to DEQ staff	5	54	37	5
d. Telephone calls to DEQ staff	4	50	44	3
e. Writing a letter to DEQ staff	4	47	44	4
f. Joining an environmental group	24	45	12	19
g. Writing a letter to the editor of a newspaper	42	35	11	12
h. Contacting a legislator	23	37	31	8

12. Which of the above do you believe is the **most** effective method for citizens to communicate with the DEQ?\* (Please write in the letter.)

a. Comments at a public hearing .....	6%
b. One-on-one meeting with DEQ staff .....	38
c. Sending an e-mail to DEQ staff .....	5
d. Telephone calls to DEQ staff .....	15
e. Writing a letter to DEQ staff .....	20
f. Joining an environmental group .....	2
g. Writing a letter to the editor of a newspaper .....	2
h. Contacting a legislator .....	13
Refused/Don't know .....	5

\* **Responses do not total 100% because some respondents selected multiple responses.**

13. What single action or activity do you believe makes citizens more effective when . . .

- a. participating in environmental policy making?

**See Appendix B.**

- b. participating in rule making processes/decisions?

**See Appendix B.**

- c. participating in permitting processes/decisions?

**See Appendix B.**

14. Can you think of an example where **citizen involvement** on a local or statewide issue led to . . .

- a. a positive outcome for the environment?

**See Appendix B.**

- b. a negative outcome for the environment?

**See Appendix B.**

15. Where do you think that the public gets **most** of its information about DEQ decisions, policies, or announcements?\*

a. The DEQ web site .....	5%
b. The Internet in general .....	2
c. DEQ public notices of meetings .....	4
d. DEQ meetings .....	2
e. The media .....	65
f. The DEQ calendar .....	2
g. Direct contact with DEQ staff .....	10
h. Environmental organizations .....	4
i. Other .....	9
j. Don't know .....	7

\* Responses do not total 100% because some respondents selected multiple responses.

## ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP INVOLVEMENT

16. There are a number of ways in which an **environmental group** can influence environmental decision making. For each of the following items, please mark whether **you** find the activity not effective, somewhat effective, or very effective **in your role**.

	Not effective	Somewhat effective	Very effective	Don't know
a. Comments at a public hearing	11%	55%	26%	8%
b. In-person meeting with DEQ staff	4	35	55	6
c. Sending an e-mail to DEQ staff	10	57	27	6
d. Telephone calls to DEQ staff	7	55	33	5
e. Writing a letter to DEQ staff	6	49	40	6
f. Organizing and submitting a letter to DEQ signed by a large group of environmentalists	15	42	35	8
g. Bringing a lawsuit in opposition to DEQ	21	31	36	13
h. Joining a lawsuit in support of DEQ	13	32	38	17
i. Encouraging a newspaper to take an editorial position	28	38	21	14
j. Submitting a letter to the editor of a newspaper	35	41	12	11

17. Which of the above do you believe is the **most** effective method for environmental organizations to communicate with the DEQ?\* (Please write in the letter.)

a. Comments at a public hearing .....	8%
b. In-person meeting with DEQ staff .....	37
c. Sending an e-mail to DEQ staff .....	4
d. Telephone calls to DEQ staff .....	4
e. Writing a letter to DEQ staff .....	12

f. Organizing and submitting a letter to DEQ signed by a large group of environmentalists .....	9
g. Bringing a lawsuit in opposition to DEQ .....	13
h. Joining a lawsuit in support of DEQ .....	19
i. Encouraging a newspaper to take an editorial position .....	17
j. Submitting a letter to the editor of a newspaper .....	0
Refused/Don't know .....	6

**\* Responses do not total 100% because some respondents selected multiple responses.**

18. At what point is an environmental group's involvement **most** effective?

a. Working directly with a permit applicant before the application is submitted .....	27%
b. When a regulation is being developed or discussed .....	59
c. At meetings that are held on a regular basis .....	10
d. After a permit application is submitted .....	4
e. Complaints after a permit has been issued .....	1

19. Can you think of an example where **environmental group** involvement on a local or statewide issue led to . . .

a. a positive outcome for the environment?

**See Appendix B.**

b. a negative outcome for the environment?

**See Appendix B.**

## DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

20. My current position at DEQ is (mark all that apply):\*

a. Management/Supervisory .....	18%
b. Non-Supervisory .....	63
c. Secretarial/Clerical .....	10
d. Classified civil services or contract position .....	21

**\* Responses do not total 100% because some respondents selected multiple responses.**

21. I work primarily in the following area(s):\*

a. Regulatory/Permitting .....	39%
b. Compliance/Enforcement .....	36
c. Administration/Technical Services .....	17
d. Outreach/Assistance .....	10
e. Executive Office .....	2
f. Other .....	6
No answer .....	2

**\* Responses do not total 100% because some respondents selected multiple responses.**

22. I have been employed with the DEQ/DNR or the DEQ/DCH for:

- |                           |     |
|---------------------------|-----|
| a. 5 years or less .....  | 22% |
| b. 6–10 years .....       | 22  |
| c. 11–15 years .....      | 24  |
| d. 16 or more years ..... | 32  |

23. Do you have any comments you would like to share?

***See Appendix B.***





# Environmental Group Survey

## *Final Results*

### INTRODUCTION

The Civil Environmental Discourse Project seeks to explore issues related to citizen involvement in environmental decision making and help improve communications between the environmental community and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). This project is coordinated by the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council and involves representatives from the Michigan Environmental Council, West Michigan Environmental Action Council, East Michigan Environmental Action Council, Resource Stewards, and the Michigan Environmental Law Center.

In the first phase of the project, Public Sector Consultants, Inc. (PSC), a public policy research firm, has been hired to conduct surveys of DEQ staff, Michigan environmental organizations, and the general Michigan public. These surveys will allow each group to assess the current level of citizen participation and interest in environmental decision making. PSC will analyze the responses to compare the perceptions of these groups and identify areas of consensus and disagreement.

The second phase of this project will involve bringing together DEQ staff and members of Michigan environmental groups to discuss results of the analysis, with a particular focus on citizen involvement in environmental decision making.

### INSTRUCTIONS

Please complete this survey based on **your** experiences, not those of your organization. **Your individual answers are confidential and anonymous**, and PSC will only share aggregate data with the project partners.

When you are finished, place the survey in the postage-paid, PSC business reply envelope included in this packet. **Please return your completed survey no later than October 31, 2001.**

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Jeff Williams (jwilliams@pscinc.com) or Melissa Riba (mriba@pscinc.com) at PSC, telephone 517/484-4954.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. What do you think are the **three** most important issues facing the state of Michigan today? (Choose no more than three.)
- |  |     |
|--|-----|
| a. Crime/drugs .....                           | 23% |
| b. Encouraging economic development/jobs ..... | 19  |
| c. Taxes/the state's budget .....              | 21  |
| d. The environment .....                       | 88  |
| e. Education .....                             | 60  |
| f. Helping the needy .....                     | 15  |
| g. Health care .....                           | 45  |
| h. Other (.....) .....                         | 56  |

*See Appendix C for "Other" responses.*

2. What do you think are Michigan's **three** most pressing environmental issues today? (Choose no more than three.)
- |  |     |
|--|-----|
| a. The import of exotic species into the Great Lakes via ship ballast water .....  | 27% |
| b. The growth of suburbs and towns into undeveloped areas of the state (also known as "urban sprawl") .....  | 77  |
| c. General pollution of Michigan's air and ground environment .....  | 17  |
| d. General pollution of Michigan's water environment (including the Great Lakes, rivers, and streams) .....  | 44  |
| e. Inadequate or inappropriate public infrastructure to protect the environment (crumbling sewer and septic systems, heavy reliance on automobiles for transportation) ..... | 41  |
| f. Regulation of water diversion and consumptive use of Great Lakes waters .....   | 23  |
| g. Loss of wetlands/wildlife habitat .....   | 58  |
| h. Other (.....) .....   | 33  |

*See Appendix C for "Other" responses.*

## PERCEPTIONS OF PUBLIC INPUT ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY PROCESS

3. What do you think is the current **quality** of public input in the environmental policy process in Michigan?
- | <i>Don't know</i> | <i>Very poor</i> |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | <i>Excellent</i> |
|-------------------|------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|------------------|
| 0                 | 1                | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10               |

**Average = 3.4**

4. In terms of effectiveness in protecting Michigan's environment . . .
- a. how effective do you think **citizens** consider environmental groups?

<i>Don't know</i>	<i>Very poor</i>									<i>Excellent</i>
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

**Average = 5.3**

- b. how effective do you think the **DEQ** considers environmental groups?

<i>Don't know</i>	<i>Very poor</i>									<i>Excellent</i>
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

**Average = 3.6**

c. how effective do you think the **business community** considers environmental groups?

<i>Don't know</i>	<i>Very poor</i>									<i>Excellent</i>
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

**Average = 3.7**

d. how effective do **you** consider environmental groups?

<i>Don't know</i>	<i>Very poor</i>									<i>Excellent</i>
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

**Average = 5.8**

5. Please review the following statements and indicate whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with each.\*

	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Somewhat agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
a. Overall, there is adequate public input into Michigan's environmental policy decisions.	1%	9%	3%	25%	61%	1%
b. Providing opportunity for public input on pollution permits unnecessarily slows down the permitting process and makes it difficult for businesses to operate.	3	9	6	18	63	1
c. Citizens and environmental groups often attempt to use environmental statutes to pre-empt local planning and zoning decisions.	8	27	17	22	22	4
d. <b>Environmental groups</b> generally raise important issues regarding the protection of Michigan's environment and public health.	68	24	2	2	4	0
e. <b>Citizens</b> generally raise important issues regarding the protection of Michigan's environment and public health.	28	43	13	11	6	0
f. The <b>DEQ</b> generally raises important issues regarding the protection of Michigan's environment and public health.	2	25	13	27	31	2
g. Partnerships between the DEQ, businesses, and environmental organizations are helpful to furthering Michigan's environmental policy.	41	31	8	7	11	2

**\*Responses do not total 100% because some respondents selected multiple responses.**

## THE MICHIGAN ENVIRONMENT AND THE DEQ

6. Do you believe that the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has adequate **statutory** authority to consider all of a project's effects and minimize the impact on the environment?

Yes .....	<b>40%</b>
No .....	<b>40</b>
Don't know .....	<b>20</b>

7. If you answered “No” to the above question, can you think of a specific example where the DEQ did not have adequate **statutory** authority to consider all of a project’s effects and minimize the impact on the environment?

**See Appendix C.**

8. What is the single most important thing citizens can do to help you protect the environment?

**See Appendix C.**

## DECISION MAKING—TRUST IN INFORMATION

9. Thinking about information you have received or seen from members of the following groups in the past, please mark whether you—in general—have **found the information helpful** in understanding environmental policy all of the time, most of the time, some of the time, or none of the time.

	Helpful information all of the time	Helpful information most of the time	Helpful information some of the time	Helpful information none of the time	Don’t know
a. DNR	4%	46%	41%	4%	5%
b. DEQ	2	33	48	14	3
c. University professors/researchers	7	46	30	2	14*
d. Statewide, multi-issue environmental groups	19	53	22	3	2*
e. Local or regional, single-issue environmental groups	15	48	32	4	2*
f. EPA	6	35	41	7	11
g. Friends	3	24	64	7	2
h. Co-workers	9	29	46	10	8*
i. Local government/local officials	3	20	52	21	4
j. Citizens	2	16	70	7	5
k. The business community	1	4	51	37	7
l. The permit applicant	0	10	45	23	22

*\*Responses do not total 100% due to rounding.*

Next, we will ask a series of questions about **public/citizen** involvement in the environmental policy process, followed by a series of questions about **environmental group** involvement in the policy process.

We begin with **public/citizen** involvement.

## PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

10. There are a number of ways in which **the public** can communicate their position to the DEQ. For each of the following items, please mark whether **you** believe the activity is not effective, somewhat effective, or very effective.

	Not effective	Somewhat effective	Very Effective	Don’t know
a. Comments at a public hearing	26%	56%	16%	2%
b. One-on-one meeting with DEQ staff	13	42	35	9*

c. Sending an e-mail to DEQ staff	29	45	5	20*
d. Telephone calls to DEQ staff	26	54	9	11
e. Writing a letter to DEQ staff	26	47	17	10
f. Joining an environmental group	6	53	38	3
g. Writing a letter to the editor of a newspaper	17	60	20	5*
h. Contacting their legislators	10	55	34	2*

***\*Responses do not total 100% due to rounding.***

11. Which of the above do you believe is the **most** effective method for citizens to communicate?

a. Comments at a public hearing .....	7%
b. One-on-one meeting with DEQ staff .....	18
c. Sending an e-mail to DEQ staff .....	2
d. Telephone calls to DEQ staff .....	1
e. Writing a letter to DEQ staff .....	3
f. Joining an environmental group .....	27
g. Writing a letter to the editor of a newspaper .....	5
h. Contacting their legislators .....	25
i. Missing .....	12

12. What single action or activity do you believe makes citizens more effective when . . .

a. participating in general environmental decisions?

***See Appendix C.***

b. participating in rule-making processes/decisions?

***See Appendix C.***

c. participating in permitting processes/decisions?

***See Appendix C.***

13. Can you think of an example where **citizen involvement** on a local or statewide issue led to

a. a more positive outcome for the environment?

***See Appendix C.***

b. a more negative outcome for the environment?

***See Appendix C.***

14. Where do you think that the public gets **most** of its information about DEQ decisions, policies, or announcements?

a. The DEQ website .....	1 %
b. The Internet in general .....	4
c. DEQ public notices of meetings .....	4
d. DEQ meetings .....	3

e. The media .....	56
f. The DEQ calendar .....	2
g. Direct contact with DEQ staff .....	2
h. Environmental organizations .....	21
i. Other .....	3
j. Don't know .....	4

## ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP INVOLVEMENT

15. There are a number of ways in which an **environmental group** can influence environmental decision making. For each of the following items, please mark whether **you** believe the activity is not effective, somewhat effective, or very effective.

	Not effective	Somewhat effective	Very Effective	Don't know
a. Comments at a public hearing	10%	60%	29%	1%
b. In-person meeting with DEQ staff	11	45	37	7
c. Sending an e-mail to DEQ staff	26	53	4	17
d. Telephone calls to DEQ staff	22	58	9	10*
e. Writing a letter to DEQ staff	18	59	16	7
f. Organizing and submitting a letter to DEQ signed by a large group of environmentalists	9	39	44	7*
g. Bringing a lawsuit in opposition to DEQ	7	27	56	10
h. Joining a lawsuit in support of DEQ	9	34	34	24*
i. Encouraging a newspaper to take an editorial position	9	48	35	8
j. Submitting a letter to the editor of a newspaper	16	66	13	5
k. Participating on advisory groups that draft administrative rules	3	35	51	10*
l. Contacting a legislator	6	58	32	3*

*\*Responses do not total 100% due to rounding.*

16. Which of the above do you believe is the **most** effective method of communicating with the DEQ?\*

a. Comments at a public hearing .....	7%
b. In-person meeting with DEQ staff .....	21
c. Sending an e-mail to DEQ staff .....	2
d. Telephone calls to DEQ staff .....	1
e. Writing a letter to DEQ staff .....	3
f. Organizing and submitting a letter to DEQ signed by a large group of environmentalists .....	9
g. Bringing a lawsuit in opposition to DEQ .....	18
h. Joining a lawsuit in support of DEQ .....	1
i. Encouraging a newspaper to take an editorial position .....	4
j. Submitting a letter to the editor of a newspaper .....	1
k. Participating on advisory groups that draft administrative rules .....	11
l. Contacting a legislator .....	6
None/no answer .....	18

*\*Responses do not total 100% due to rounding.*

17. At what point is an environmental group's involvement **most** effective?
- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| a. Working directly with a permit applicant before the application is submitted ..... | 33% |
| b. When a regulation is being developed or discussed .....                            | 49  |
| c. At meetings that are held on a regular basis .....                                 | 13  |
| d. After a permit application is submitted .....                                      | 3   |
| e. Complaints after a permit has been issued .....                                    | 2   |
18. Can you think of an example where **environmental group** involvement on a local or statewide issue led to . . .
- a. a more positive outcome for the environment?  
**See Appendix C.**
- b. a more negative outcome for the environment?  
**See Appendix C.**
19. What percent of the time do you (or your organization) spend communicating with each of the following groups?
- |                                     |     |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| a. Citizens .....                   | 32% |
| b. Local units of government .....  | 18  |
| c. Permit applicants .....          | 10  |
| d. Other environmental groups ..... | 20  |
| e. Media .....                      | 13  |
| f. DEQ .....                        | 14  |
| g. Other .....                      | 28  |

## ORGANIZATION INFORMATION

*(Questions 20–22 are intended for organization staff and board members who perform staff functions.)*

20. Is the environmental organization you work for statewide or local?
- |                 |     |
|-----------------|-----|
| Statewide ..... | 48% |
| Local .....     | 52  |
21. Is the environmental group you work for a single-issue advocacy group or a multi-issue advocacy group?
- |                    |     |
|--------------------|-----|
| Single-issue ..... | 21% |
| Multi-issue .....  | 79  |

22. How long has your organization been in operation? **Average = 29 years**

## DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

23. How long have you been involved with environmental issues? **Average = 21 years**

24. What is your Zip Code? \_\_\_\_\_

25. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
- |                                     |    |
|-------------------------------------|----|
| Less than high school .....         | 0% |
| High school graduate .....          | 7  |
| Some college .....                  | 16 |
| Bachelor's Degree .....             | 24 |
| Post-graduate degree or study ..... | 53 |

26. Do you have any comments you would like to share?

***See Appendix C.***



# Appendix B

## *Open-Ended Questions, DEQ Employees*

The following pages present data from the open-ended questions contained in the surveys for the Civil Environmental Discourse Project. Questions 1 and 2 list the question and the text of open-ended responses. The remaining questions, due to the volume of responses, are categorized in table format with the number of responses for each.

### **Question 1 — Other**

*What do you think are the **three** most important issues facing the state of Michigan today? (Choose no more than three.)*

“Other” responses given by respondents:

- Aging population services
- Citizen safety/terrorism
- Condition of roads
- Decline of family unit
- Decriminalization of drug use/rehab
- Deterioration of the fabric of society
- Dirty politics, overpaid legislators subject to bribes
- Dissolving family structure
- Emergency response readiness (interagency communication)
- Employee morale/wages
- Encouraging proper/controlled development
- Energy conservation
- Environmental pollution
- Equity in public servants’ pay scales
- Fairness across all socio-economic classes
- Fairness in law enforcement
- Family related issues
- Family; diversity issues
- Government corruption
- Government unresponsive to public, unaccountable
- Hiring more African-American—especially in management positions
- I think taking actions to prevent terrorist activity is most important
- Invasion of privacy—laws that step on individual’s rights
- Lack of public transportation, in and to Detroit/Ann Arbor/Lansing/ Jack-son/Grand Rapids
- Land usage planning and long-range environmental legislation.
- Land use
- Land use controls number one
- Land use issues
- Land use planning
- Land use policies
- Loss of federal representation
- Mental health

- Moral decay
- Moral decline
- No spiritual compass
- Overpopulation
- Planning—Land development and the lack thereof
- Protection from terrorist activities
- Public safety/domestic safeguards
- Responsible state officials
- Roads and bridges
- Safety and security of our country
- Safety
- Security
- Security/disaster preparedness
- Security/home defense
- Social environment
- Sprawl
- Terrorism
- Terrorist attacks
- The economy in general
- Tolerance and diversity
- Travel security (airlines)
- Uncontrolled development
- Undue influence of big business on Michigan government and elected officials
- Unregulated development
- Urban sprawl
- Weapons of mass destruction

### **Question 2 — Other**

*What do you think are Michigan's **three** most pressing environmental issues today? (Choose no more than three.)*

“Other” responses given by respondents:

- Administrators with technical background
- Coal burning
- CSOs
- Defaulting to national standards. Michigan should be more protective than Wyoming.
- Discarded DEQ “pollution” standards that allow cancer and impacts to return to prevention & protection of resources (Engler/Harding).
- Drilling for oil in the great lakes
- Drilling in the big lakes
- Exotic species, land and water

- Implementing government policies to encourage sustainability in business practices
- Inadequate/inappropriate programs at the state level
- Institutional control to limit use of resources in the future, possibly in perpetuity
- Interstate transport of air emissions
- Involving politics in environmental issues
- Lack of enforcement of environmental laws
- Lack of regulatory enforcement equally against all violators
- Lack of staff funding, MIOSHA
- NAFTA and GATT—free trade brings exotic species to this country and Michigan
- Noise by airport or railroads
- Nonpoint source discharges, farmland runoffs (soil with contaminants), erosion of roads
- Overpopulation
- Overpopulation/over consumption of resources
- Politicizing environmental issues
- Politicizing of environmental issues and management
- Population growth. Other agricultural sprawls, crops grown for livestock rather than direct human consumption.
- Proliferation of wildlife enclosures
- Pub health records as they relate to asthma, cancer, reproductive problems (endometriosis)
- Public drinking water safety
- Relaxation of environmental laws
- Relocation of environmental regulations
- Storm water management
- The promotion of tourism over natural resource protection
- Unrecognized ground pollution
- Unrecognized groundwater pollution
- Using Michigan to receive hazardous/radioactive waste from other states
- Waste disposal solid and hazardous
- Watershed based planning/growth

- Weakness in cleanup enforcement laws

### Question 7

*What is the single most important thing **citizens** can do to make your job more rewarding?*

Categories of Responses	Number of Responses
Get involved—participate in regulatory process/elect new officials, demand accountability/reinstate public oversight board/put the environment first in your own actions	236
Know/learn/address real issue and the process; know who can impact what (DNR vs. DEQ, staff vs. management); keep emotions out	212
Acknowledge a job well done; acknowledge positive accomplishments; be nice, patient; give us a pay raise	85
Nothing/no answer	85
Cooperate with DEQ staff/report violations; obey the laws	46
Don't "shoot" the messenger: blame DEQ management/Administration/legislature	39
Don't try to get special treatment/exceptions to laws; don't use DEQ to resolve personal issues	14
Change attitude; avoid NIMBY syndrome	12
Demand adequate staffing/personal interaction	3

### Question 8

*What is the single most important thing **environmental groups** can do to make your job more rewarding?*

Category of Responses	Number of Responses
Constructively and positively work with DEQ to improve the environment within the mandate of DEQ	114
Gather (and only report) honest and complete information before acting in a responsible and constructive manner	107
Non-responsive	100
Become involved in the political/rule-making processes	77
Be realistic and pragmatic	60
Unclassified	58
Assist with citizen education	54
Act as watchdogs for the environment	39
Work on all issues of importance, not just high-profile ones	20

**Question 13A**

*What single action or activity do you believe makes citizens more effective when . . .*

A. participating in environmental policy making?

Category of Responses	Number of Responses
No answer	164
Knowledge of the issue	155
Lobby the media, legislators, DEQ, etc.	97
Effectively push their position through good communication, knowledge, and a control of their emotions	93
Involvement w/ DEQ, policy makers, organizations etc.	49
Participate in public hearings, focus groups, and one on ones etc.	47
Nothing can be done	19

**Question 13B**

*What single action or activity do you believe makes citizens more effective when . . .*

B. participating in rule-making processes/decisions?

Category of Responses	Number of Responses
No answer	207
Knowledge of the issue	130
Effectively push their position through good communication, knowledge, and a control of their emotions	89
Lobby the media, legislators, DEQ, etc.	83
Participate in public hearings, focus groups, and one on ones etc.	72
Involvement w/DEQ, policymakers, organizations, etc.	43
Nothing can be done	8

**Question 13C**

*What single action or activity do you believe makes citizens more effective when . . .*

C. participating in permitting processes/decisions?

Category of Responses	Number of Responses
No answer	226
Effectively push their position through good communication, knowledge, and a control of their emotions	123
Lobby the media, legislators, DEQ, etc.	100
Participate in public hearings, focus groups, and one-on-ones, etc.	84
Involvement w/ DEQ, policy makers, organizations, etc.	58
Knowledge of the issue	31
Nothing can be done	7

**Question 14A**

*Can you think of an example where **citizen involvement** on a local or statewide issue led to. . .*

A. a positive outcome for the environment?

Categories of Responses	Number of Responses
No response	256
No	77
Yes	76
Miscellaneous issues	76
Wetlands and water quality	43
Air quality issues	42
Specific legislation	21
Knowledge of real violations	21
Unclassifiable	14
Nearly always	1
Information	1
Hard to tell	1

**Question 14B**

*Can you think of an example where **citizen involvement** on a local or statewide issue led to. . .*

B. a **negative** outcome for the environment?

Categories of Responses	Number of Responses
No response	300
No	142
Miscellaneous issues of citizen neglect	62
Yes	45
Unrealistic attitude towards industry/NIMBY	21
Negative political pressure/legal interference	18
Unclassifiable	16
False claims of violations/consuming staff time	15
Elected current administration	7
Utilizing bureaucracy to halt action	1
Feeding wildlife	1

**Question 19A**

*Can you think of an example where **environmental group** involvement on a local or statewide issue led to. . .*

A. a **positive** outcome for the environment?

Categories of Responses	Number of Responses
No response	312
No	84
Yes	54
Miscellaneous issues	50
Water quality issues	39
Specific legislative or rulemaking impact	29
Unclassifiable	22
Air quality issues	18
Citizen assistance and education	11
Get public's attention	4
Land purchase	3
Report violations/provide information	2
Watchdog status	1

**Question 19B**

*Can you think of an example where **environmental group** involvement on a local or statewide issue led to . . .*

B. a **negative** outcome for the environment?

Categories of Responses	Number of Responses
No answer	372
No	138
Miscellaneous issues	31
Yes	22
Unclassifiable	16
Wasting DEQ time/do not understand DEQ's job	15
Focus on unimportant/unrealistic goals and issues	12
Water quality issues	8
Air quality issues	7
Failure to accurately communicate with public/providing misinformation	7
Failure to work with business	1

**Question 21**

*I work primarily in the following area(s):*

Division/Line of Work	Number of Respondents
Regulatory/Permitting	247
Compliance/Enforcement	227
Administration/Technical Services	106
Outreach/Assistance	64
Executive Office	13
Other	39
No answer	10

“Other” responses included:

- District Supervisor
- Environmental assessment
- Environmental cleanups/response.
- Environmental monitoring
- Funding
- Freedom of Information
- Grant programs.
- Information processing
- Monitoring/assessment.
- OPS-Personnel



- Project management/funding (water/wastewater)
- Remediation
- Voluntary Environmental Partnership Program

### **Question 23**

*Do you have any comments you would like to share?*

<b>Categories of Responses</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>
No response	348
Better communication/knowledge will improve relationships between DEQ, citizens, environmental groups, etc.	97
Politicians/politics/business is hurting the DEQ/environment	60
Miscellaneous	31
There is a management problem in the DEQ	28
DEQ needs more enforcement power	24
Happy with survey	14
Not happy with survey	13
New policy is needed to help the DEQ	12
Nothing can be done	2



# Appendix C

## Open-Ended Questions, EC Members

The following pages present data from the open-ended questions contained in the surveys for the Civil Environmental Discourse Project. Due to the volume of responses, each section lists the survey question followed by a table with responses by category.

### Question 1 — Other

*What do you think are the **three** most important issues facing the state of Michigan today? (Choose no more than three.)*

“Other” responses given by respondents:

- (Circled but left blank)
- A spiritual compass
- Aging population services
- Animal issues
- Animal welfare
- Anti-environment governor and DEQ
- Better community planning—encourage redevelopment of urban areas
- Campaign finance
- Citizen safety/terrorism
- Condition of roads
- Controlling corporate influence
- Controlling development
- Corrupt politicians
- Decline of family unit
- Decriminalization of drug use/rehab
- Deteriorating core cities
- Deterioration of fabric of society, especially families
- Dirty politics—overpaid legislators subject to bribes
- Disrespect/lack of understanding between ethnic/racial groups
- Dissolving family structure
- Divorce and loss of traditional family
- Emergency response readiness and interagency communications
- Employee morale/wages
- Encouraging proper/controlled development
- Energy conservation
- Environmental pollution
- Equity in public servants’ pay scales, both within government and in comparison to similarly situated private sector jobs
- Ethics in government
- Fairness across all socioeconomic classes
- Fairness in law enforcement
- Family-related issues
- Foundation for a family—government condonance [*sic*] and economic breaks for couples trying to raise (proper) Christian families (nondysfunctional)
- Government corruption
- Government unresponsive to public, unaccountable

- Gross inequities in compensation to government employees
- Growth issues
- Helping those downsized with better programs for job [illegible]
- Hiring more African Americans, especially in management positions
- Homeland security
- I think taking action to prevent or foil terrorist activity is most important
- Income disparity
- Increasing population
- Infrastructure—roads, etc
- Infrastructure of local units of government (i.e., schools/fire)
- Inner-city segregation; we need to bring people with mid- and high-level incomes back to the cities
- Intolerance
- Invasion of privacy—laws that step on individual rights
- Lack of campaign finance reform
- Lack of coordinated and prudent land use planning
- Lack of DEQ oversight on oil/gas drilling, CAFO's, etc.
- Lack of environmentally responsible government
- Lack of public transportation in and to Detroit/Ann Arbor/Lansing/Jackson/Grand Rapids
- Land usage planning and long-range environmental legislation
- Land use
- Land use—poor land division act
- Land use controls
- Land use issues
- Land use planning
- Land use planning—sprawl
- Land use policies
- Land use, sprawl
- Literacy and job training
- Living wages
- Loss of farm and open space land to development
- Loss of federal representation
- Mental health
- Moral decay
- Moral decline
- No fresh water to leave Michigan
- Not sure—probably keeping people fed, healthy, and educated and employed
- Overpaid politicians
- Overpopulation
- Overpopulation for the sustainable resource base
- Over-regulating people
- Permissive society
- Planning—land development and the lack thereof
- Planning issues (of all natures, not just land use)
- Population control
- Preservation of open space
- Prison industry
- Protection from terrorist activities
- Public health and nutrition—reforming food systems, eating patterns, poor lifestyle choices
- Public safety
- Public safety, i.e., Sept. 11
- Public safety/domestic safeguards
- Public safety/security
- Race relations

- Rampant sexual promiscuity
- Repeal of concealed weapons law
- Responsible state officials
- Roads and bridges
- Roads beat up by heavy trucks
- Runaway health care costs
- Rural jobs
- Safety
- Safety and security of our country
- Security
- Security issues
- Security/disaster preparedness
- Security/home defense
- Silt/rivers/streams—filling in due to changes
- Social environment
- Socially responsible economic development
- Sprawl
- Stabilizing state's population
- State policies—poor decisions made without regard from *[sic]* those affected
- Sustainable development
- Terrorism
- Terrorism (i.e., anthrax)
- Terrorist attacks
- Terrorists
- The two major political parties being controlled by special interest instead of citizens
- The economy in general
- Tolerance and diversity
- Transportation
- Travel security, i.e., airlines
- Uncontrolled development
- Undue influence of big business on Michigan government and elected officials
- Unregulated development
- Urban revitalization
- Urban sprawl
- Urban sprawl and development of our farmlands
- Urban sprawl/loss of farmland and woodlots
- Urban sprawl/zoning
- Urban transportation
- Water rights/use
- Weapons of mass destruction

## **Question 2 — Other**

*What do you think are Michigan's **three** most pressing environmental issues today? (Choose no more than three.)*

“Other” responses given by respondents:

- (Circled, but left blank)
- A “pro-business” attitude by governor that puts roadblocks to protecting environment
- Administrators without technical background
- Agricultural sprawl—crops grown for livestock rather than direct human consumption

- Air pollution from Indiana/Illinois/Wisconsin
- Air toxics monitoring
- Chemical contamination of fish due to air pollution
- Cleanup of areas of concern
- Cleanup program lacks adequate emphasis or enforcement and provides insufficient oversight for work done by [illegible] parties
- Coal burning
- Combined sewer overflows
- Defaulting to national standard. Michigan should be more protective than Wyoming.
- Deforestation
- Department and divisions—managers over-ruling technical staff for industry and development
- DEQ management
- Destruction of river systems—due to drain code
- Discard DEQ “pollution” standards that allow cancer and impacts to return to prevention and protection of resources—Engler/Harding standards encourage degradation of all resources
- Drilling for oil in the Great Lakes
- Drilling in the big lakes
- Drilling under Great Lakes and waters
- Exotic species, both plant and animal, not just ballast water
- Exotic species, land and waste
- Failure to clean up known contamination—Brownfield cover-ups
- Failure to enforce and implement laws
- Government staffing
- Governor Engler
- Groundwater
- Implementing government policies to encourage sustainability in business practices
- Import of exotic species in aquatic and terrestrial environments, not just Great Lakes
- Import of waste—Canada
- Import of waste to Michigan landfills
- Imported trash
- Inadequate/inappropriate programs at the state level
- Indiscriminate use of road salt by untrained county road commission personnel
- Industries slow to adopt clean manufacturing practices
- Institutional controls to limit use of resources in the future, possibly in perpetuity
- Interstate transport of air emissions

- Involving politics in environmental issues
- John Engler's flouting of environmental laws
- Jurisdictional issues—local government—too many
- Lack of enforcement by the state to protect the environment by not enforcing existing laws/general policy stuff at state level
- Lack of enforcement of environmental laws
- Lack of environmental commissions
- Lack of public education on environmental issues
- Lack of regulatory coordination and poorly informed local planners/officials
- Lack of regulatory enforcement equally against all violators
- Lack of staff and funding—MIOASHA
- Lack of statewide coordinated planning
- Managing groundwater use
- Mercury in mine waste in the area
- Michigan's contribution to earth population growth
- NAFTA and GATT— free trade bring exotic species to this country and Michigan
- Need of mass transit
- Noise by airport and railroads
- Nonpoint source discharge—farmland runoff (soil with contaminants), erosion from roads
- Oil drilling in Great Lakes
- Overpopulation
- Overpopulation of turkeys and deer
- Overpopulation/overconsumption of resources
- Overuse of resources
- Politicizing environmental issues
- Politicizing of environmental issues and management
- Population growth
- Promotion of tourism over natural resource protection
- Public drinking water safety
- Public health records as they relate to asthma, cancer, reproductive problems (endometriosis)
- Redevelopment of blighted urban areas (residential, commercial, and industrial)
- Relaxation of environmental laws
- Relaxation of environmental regulations
- Reliance on unsustainable resource use and practices in public and private sectors
- Scrap tire processing
- "Spoils of war" attitude at government levels
- Stormwater management

- Unchecked economic growth—statewide, nationwide, global
- Unrecognized groundwater pollution
- Using MI to receive hazardous/radioactive waste from other states
- Waste disposal— solid and hazardous
- Watershed-based planning/growth
- We are currently not taking advantage of federal money for Great Lakes issues to the same extent as other parts of the country (Florida)
- Weakness in cleanup enforcement laws

### Question 7

*(Lead-in question: Do you believe that the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has adequate **statutory** authority to consider all of a project's effects and minimize the impact on the environment?)*

*If you answered “No” to the above question, can you think of a specific example where the DEQ did not have adequate **statutory** authority to consider all of a project's effects and minimize the impact on the environment?*

Categories of Responses	Number of Responses
Water and wetlands quality/ watersheds	47
No	19
No backbone and lax enforcement	9
Development and zoning	8
Not able to categorize	6
Weak authority	5
General comments about	3
Air quality issues	2
Yes, but no specific example	2
Department structure	1
Education is the answer	1
General pollution, miscellaneous issues	1
Habitat	1
Industry specific	1
Laws need updating	1
Public involvement	1
Support litigation	1
Wildlife management	1



**Question 8**

*What is the single most important thing citizens can do to help you protect the environment?*

Categories of Responses	Number of Responses
Individual actions	36
Vote/vote for enviro-friendly candidates	30
General involvement	18
Awareness and knowledge of the issues	16
Involvement/EC members, organizing around an issue	14
Communication with DEQ, officials, media and others; "make voice heard"	14
Watchdog or whistleblower	14
Activism	13
Lobby (focused on legislative)	12
No answer	9
Participate/hearings, meetings	3
Financial support	3
Not able to categorize	3
Greater public involvement	2
General participate	1
DEQ criticism/agency administration	1
Be thoughtful, open-minded and listen	1
Collaborate between all stakeholders, local government, EC	1
Don't be selfish	1
Greater awareness	1

**Question 12A**

*What single action or activity do you believe makes **citizens** more effective when . . .*

A. participating in general environmental decisions?

Categories of Responses	Number of Responses
Communication with DEQ, government/elected officials, media, "make voice heard"	37
Involvement/EC members, organize around issues	22
Participate, public hearings, meetings	20
Lobby for changes (focused on government)	18
No answer/No	18
Be thoughtful, open minded and listen (control emotions)	14
Vote (includes electing enviro-friendly candidates and vote out current administration)	9
Education, awareness and knowledge of the issue	6
Individual personality	6
Nothing	4
Protest	2
Support litigation	2
Early involvement	1

**Question 12B**

*What single action or activity do you believe makes **citizens** more effective when . . .*

B. participating in rule-making processes/decisions?

Categories of Responses	Number of Responses
Education, awareness, and knowledge of the issue	52
Communication with DEQ and others	35
No answer/No	35
Participate/public hearings and meetings	19
Be thoughtful, open-minded, and listen, control emotions	16
Involvement/EC members and organizing around an issue	12
Nothing	9
Lobby	6
Various constructive alternatives	5
Vote	5
Early involvement in process	3
Individual personality traits	3
General involvement	2
Media contact	2
Protest	1
Right side of the issue	1
Support litigation	1

**Question 12C**

*What single action or activity do you believe makes citizens more effective when . . .*

C. participating in permitting processes/decisions?

Categories of Responses	Number of Responses
Education, awareness, and knowledge of the issue	54
Communication with DEQ and others	40
No answer/No	23
Participate/public hearings, meetings	20
Be thoughtful, open minded and listen (control emotions)	14
Involvement/organizations	11
Be thoughtful, open-minded, and listen, control emotions	11
Nothing	6
Early involvement in process	4
Individual personality traits	4
Support litigation	4
General involvement	3
Lobby	3
Media contact	3
Vote	2
Early involvement	1
Protest	1

**Question 13A**

*Can you think of an example where **citizen involvement** on a local or statewide issue led to...*

A. a more positive outcome for the environment?

Categories of Responses	Number of Responses
Water and wetlands quality/watershed preservation	54
No answer/No	36
Air quality	25
Not able to categorize	17
All the time/Yes	8
Miscellaneous and general pollution issues	6
Land use issues (including development and zoning)	3
Wildlife management	2
Activism	1
Citizen advisory boards	1
Communication with others	1
Support litigation	1

**Question 13B**

*Can you think of an example where **citizen involvement** on a local or statewide issue led to...*

B. a more negative outcome for the environment?

Categories of Responses	Number of Responses
No answer/No	88
Water and wetlands quality/watersheds	21
Land use issues, development and joining	19
Not able to categorize	14
Wildlife management	8
When they don't have appropriate understanding/knowledge	7
Apathy	3
Miscellaneous and general pollution	2
Never	2
Voted for current administration	2
Air quality	1
All the time/Yes	1

**Question 18A**

*Can you think of an example where **environmental group** involvement on a local or statewide issue led to . . .*

A. a more positive outcome for the environment?

Categories of Responses	Number of Responses
Water and wetlands quality	50
No answer/No	40
Land use issues	31
Support for legislation or regulations (especially mentioned the "bottle bill")	25
Air quality	11
All the time/Yes	11
Miscellaneous/general pollution	11
Not able to categorize	10
Wildlife management	3
MEC	2
Support litigation	1
Vote	1
MUCC	1
Educational programs	1
NMEAC	1

**Question 18B**

*Can you think of an example where **environmental group** involvement on a local or statewide issue led to . . .*

B. a more negative outcome for the environment?

Categories of Responses	Number of Responses
No answer/No	75
Not able to categorize	9
Water and wetlands quality/watershed	9
Wildlife management	9
Land use issues	6
Lobbying for the wrong outcome	4
Never	3
Defeat of specific initiatives, programs	2
Air quality	1
All the time/Yes	1
Attack modes	1
MUCC	1
Sierra club	1
Support for legislation or regulations	1
When they don't have appropriate understanding/knowledge	1

**Question 26**

*Do you have any comments you would like to share?*

Categories of Responses	Number of Responses
General DEQ criticism	50
No answer/No	31
Survey comments	24
DEQ criticism/support of field staff	15
DEQ criticism/ties to current administration	11
Personal comments	10
Strengthen public involvement	9
Systemic criticism (i.e., "capitalism is bad; broad sociological stuff)	7
Strengthen environmental agenda	6
Lawsuits	3
Not able to categorize	3
Get politics out of decision-making	2
DEQ criticism/agency administration	1
DEQ criticism/constructive suggestion	1
Change will take time	1
Criticism of term limits	1
EC criticism	1
Failure of grant activities	1
Improve knowledge	1
Fewer regulations	1
Messaging	1
Need citizen oversight	1