

2018 State of Water Conference Audience Assessment Summary

For three weeks in June, Minnesotans from across the state participated in an online survey to assess the greater community need for an event like the State of Water Conference. Nearly 150 people representing 31 counties filled out the survey, providing a wealth of helpful information to help organizers prepare for the 2018 conference.

This document describes the survey outcomes – themes related to the structure and content of presentations.

Respondent Details

147 people took the survey. They represent a broad cross-section of Minnesotans working to care for the state's waters, and this breakdown largely reflects attendance at previous State of Water Conferences. In fact, 75% of the respondents stated that they have participated in the event in the past.

<u>Sector</u>	<u>Response count</u>	<u>Response percent</u>
Educator	6	4%
Private business	4	3%
Lake/River group member	49	33%
Non-profit	11	7%
SWCD, WD, WMO staff	15	10%
Other	3	2%
Community Member	12	8%
State agency staff	36	24%
Local government staff or elected official	11	7%
TOTAL RESPONSE:	147	100%

These respondents represent 31 Minnesota counties, with the greatest single-county representation in Hennepin. However, looking at the overall response rate it is important to note that the majority of responses came from counties in greater Minnesota and, largely, those considered "lake country." This will be a factor in determining a location for the conference, since most indicated they would not travel more than three hours to attend.

Content of the Conference

Two predominant narratives emerged from the responses specific to conference topics, one detailing the overarching topics and the other clarifying what type of information within those topics would be most useful. Regardless of topic, respondents want to see the following at conference sessions:

- Updates on current issues
- Case studies showing successes
- Information about funding
- Information about collaborations or partnerships
- Strategies that can be used by individuals, communities, and government bodies

For general topics, there was not a significant deviation from past State of Water Conferences, though there were nuances as well as new topics. More than 50 subthemes were identified, which were eventually narrowed down to six. Some of those subthemes led to the five items listed above, and the others led to these general topics:

- Water Quality and Quantity
 - Surface water and groundwater
 - Altered hydrology
 - Chlorides

- Habitat
 - Value of ecosystems for water quality and quantity
 - Storage on the landscape
 - Buffers
 - Vegetation and forestry
- AIS
 - New threats
 - Prevention and enforcement
 - Management of established AIS populations
- Agriculture
 - Farmers sharing best practices
 - Buffers
 - Specific impacts to surface and groundwater
- Local Capacity
 - Lake association best practices
 - Master Water Stewards
 - Behavior and policy change
 - Prioritization
- Climate Change
 - Anticipated impacts to vegetation, water quality, water quantity
 - Changes already seen
 - Climate adaptation

Conference attendees hope to come away with the tools, resources, and relationships necessary to successfully:

- Carry out individual actions
- Engage their communities
- Affect policy and regulations
- Develop targeted strategies
- Secure funding
- Implement projects to improve the health of their lake

Format of the Sessions

Questions about the type of information presented (informational, skill, update, etc.) solicited responses that largely mirrored topic suggestions. These are the first five themes described above, reproduced below for easier reading:

- Updates on current issues
- Case studies showing successes
- Information about funding
- Information about collaborations or partnerships
- Strategies which can be used by individuals, communities, and government bodies

This duplicity shows consistency across responses. However, in the “any last thoughts” question at the end of the survey, interaction and opportunity for discussion (facilitated or otherwise) in sessions was mentioned several times.