



## Long Range Business Plan Conservation Scope Information Gathering Report May 12, 2020

**Background:** To better inform our Long Range Business Plan (LRBP) Update we reached out to community members, program participants, organizational partners, staff and board to gather a diversity of perspectives to consider in planning for our organization’s future scope, financial sustainability and overall health with an aim of embedding equity and inclusion as a founding value in all that we do. We gathered input through:

- 32 partner & community organization interviews
- 160 historically underserved community members were surveyed by 8 hired Community Engagement Liaisons (CELs) comprised of community leaders, translating as needed, within the following communities: Arabic, African American, Chinese, Latinx, Native American, Slavic, Africans and Vietnamese.
- 183 online and in person surveys
- Staff and Board online surveys and follow-up discussions
- Partner and community meeting discussions

**Report Intent:** This report provides high-level summary findings key to the conservation scope discussion from these efforts, but more detailed reports on findings are available upon request (inquire with [Mary@wmswcd.org](mailto:Mary@wmswcd.org) ).

### Report Content:

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### Overarching Themes/Findings:

- Lack of awareness of our District and conservation issues at large is seen as the greatest threat as well as the top barrier to effectively getting our work done.
- The need for more conservation education and clarity/simplification of messaging was highlighted throughout.
- Clean water or water quality remains a top concern with across all datasets.
- Climate change, air quality, soil health and access to land have surfaced as priority issues to many surveyed in concert with identified opportunities to work on these issues and better meet prioritized historically underserved community members’ needs.
- Wildlife habitat and connectivity certainly ranked towards the top for partner interviews and online surveys, but the CELs surveys didn’t showcase wildlife as a key concern for community members responding.
- Cultural conflicts with our invasive species management philosophies and/or tools has surfaced in surveys and interviews alongside partner interviews finding invasive programing as critical to that stakeholder group.
- Increasing pressures of development and urbanization along with related concerns for wildlife habitat/connectivity and watershed health have been emphasized in the results.



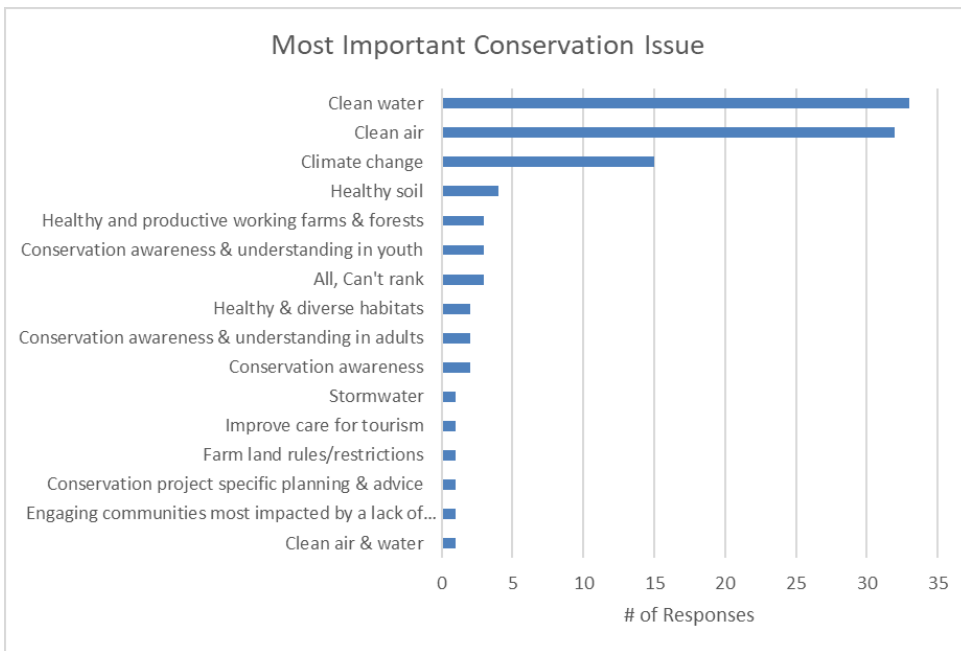
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**Interview Findings:** The following showcases the most frequently mentioned candid feedback we received in conducting 32 interviews with partners, program participants and other stakeholders to better understand what we do well, where we can improve, and what programs or areas of work we should prioritize over the next five years.

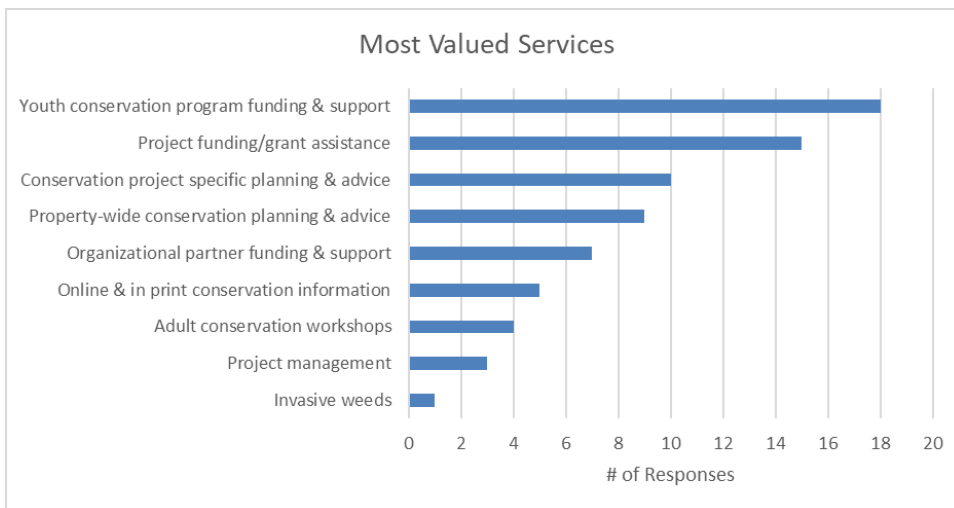
- What we do well (& multiple partners would like to see continued):
  - Convening & collaborating
  - Diversity, equity & inclusion
  - Customer support/responsive/technical advice
  - Conservation planning
  - Working with landowners
- Improvements:
  - Better outreach & communications around services/offerings
  - Increase/expand collaboration
  - Address climate change
  - More or sustained capacity, to do what we already do
- Conservation issues:
  - Most Mentioned: Education & outreach, watershed health & water quality, wildlife needs/habitat/connectivity
  - Frequently Mentioned: Climate change, invasive species
  - Next Most Mentioned: Diversity equity & inclusion, wildfire risk reduction & forest health
- Greatest threats:
  - Lack of education/awareness/information
  - Climate change
  - Development & urbanization
  - Capacity & lack of funding
- Most valued programs/services:
  - All of them, Youth Education & Support
  - EDRR Invasives
  - Canopy Weeds, Forest Health, Healthy Streams
- Top Barriers:
  - Awareness
  - Time
  - Funding
- Opportunities:
  - Outreach & communications
  - Collaboration & sharing
  - Upcoming events & school events
  - Forest resiliency & wildfire risk reduction
  - Diversity, equity & inclusion



**CELs Findings:** Historically underserved community members were surveyed by hired Community Engagement Liaisons (CELs) comprised of community leaders, translating as needed. The majority of those surveyed (93%) have had no interaction with the District prior to this survey despite 23% of those surveyed living within the District’s boundaries.



While clean water, clean air, climate change and soil were spotlighted when asked to rank conservation issues, the general ask for conservation issues of importance *access to natural areas and garden space* surfaced as a third ranking criteria amongst the aforementioned categories. The access issue also came out in CELs reports regarding a desire to culturally connect, enjoy and work with land in a variety of ways including a desire from some to return to farming, foraging, parks access and community garden space.



Our funding and grant assistance rose to the top of general valued services question, but when asked to rank youth programming topped that.

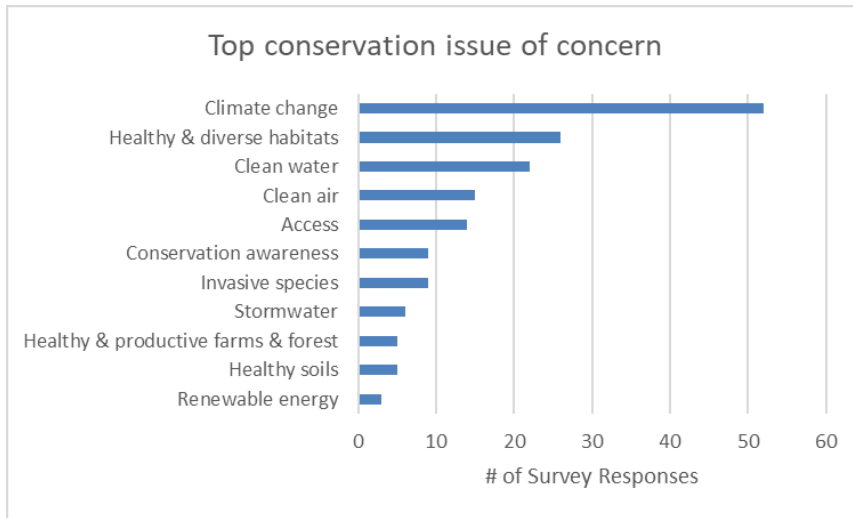
Insufficient information/understanding of what we do and if our services are available was the top found barrier to them accessing our services with time, landownership, funding and language barriers also noted at relatively high levels.

Opportunities to support cultural connection to land and its management were discussed. Cultural conflicts with our invasive species management philosophy & tools was highlighted. Providing programming at predetermined community spaces (even if out of jurisdiction) was strongly encouraged.

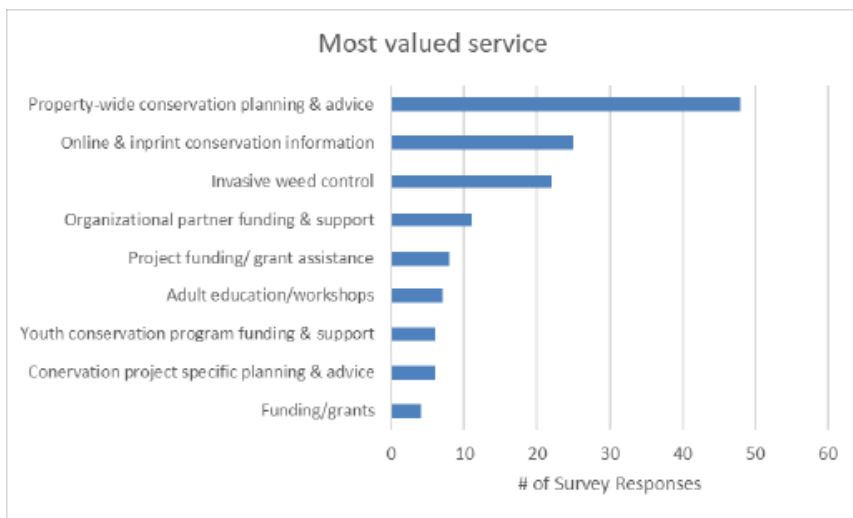


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**Online & In-Person Surveys:** The majority of those surveyed (89%) live within our District boundaries and 92% have heard of us before while 42% have received direct assistance from the District and 25% declared themselves to be a project/program partner.



Although clean water and invasive species topped the general conservation issues of concern question, when respondents had to rank issues climate change and healthy habitats rose to the top. Soils also took a marked drop in overall % when respondents were asked to rank. In addition to those listed, diversity, equity & inclusion (DEI), anthropogenic historical ecology, politics, preservation and urbanization, naturescaping in suburbs, moving tank farms, preservation of trees & urban forests, salmon populations, wildfire, and oak preservation were found written in answers.



For general valued service responses, the top picks were the same, but invasive weed control topped the list with online and inprint in 2<sup>nd</sup> place and property-wide conservation planning in 3<sup>rd</sup>. Write in responses for most valued services included community gardens, hedgerows, conservation, and raising awareness about conservation threats.

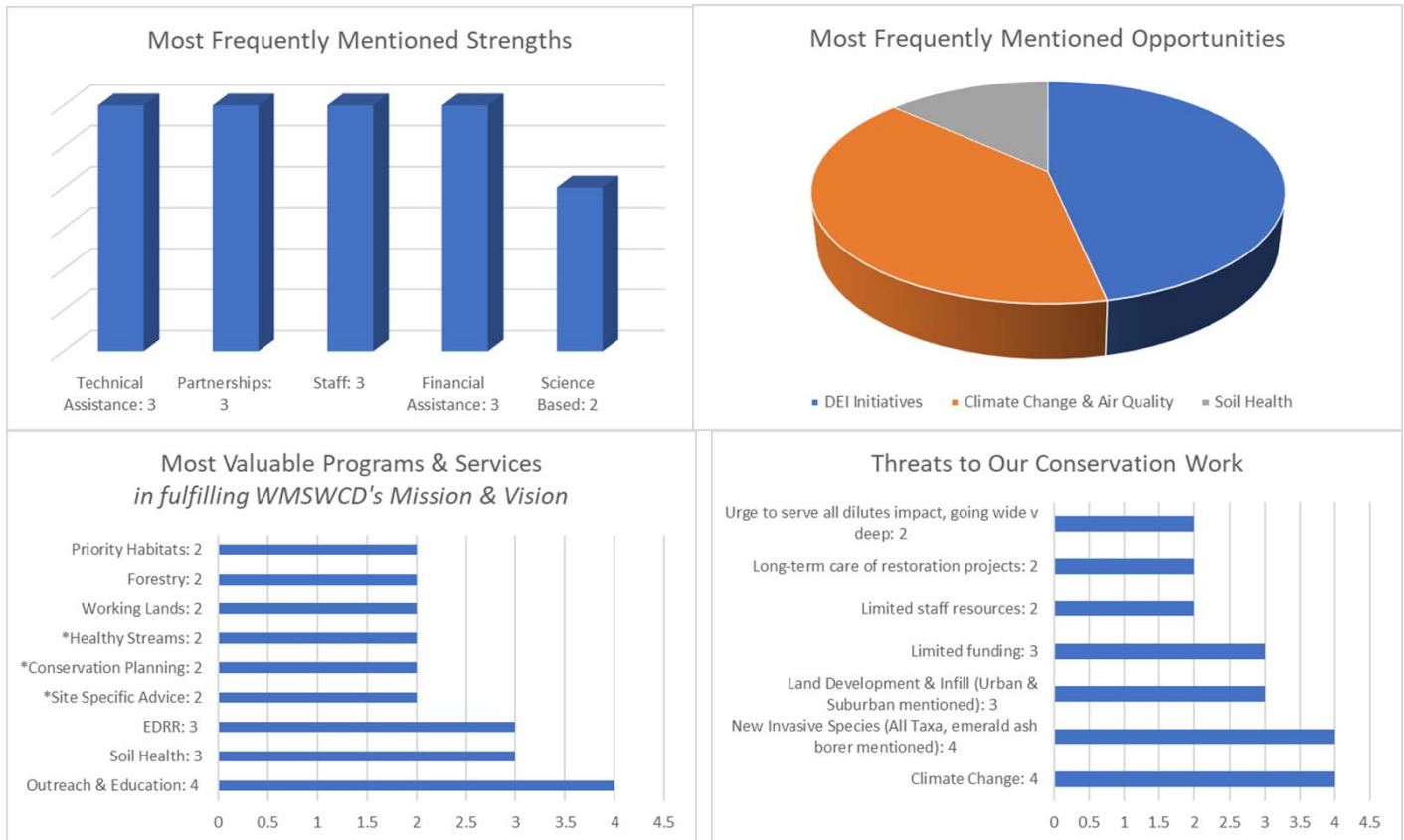
The responses to the barriers question (below) matches the top identified barriers from the CELs, but shows time and funding to be more significant barriers than were listed for the CELs. “Other” barriers written in include uncertainty, funding needs, confidence and need.

|  |        |    |
|--|--------|----|
| I don't know what you do   | 25.40% | 32 |
| I don't have enough time in my schedule                                      | 25.40% | 32 |
| I don't have extra funds to contribute to a project                          | 22.22% | 28 |
| I'm not physically able to implement suggestions                             | 8.73%  | 11 |
| I don't own property, or it's too small to qualify for your assistance       | 13.49% | 17 |
| I don't have sufficient information on what services I might be eligible for | 35.71% | 45 |
| I'm not comfortable working with government organizations                    | 3.17%  | 4  |
| Your information isn't available in my preferred language                    | 1.59%  | 2  |
| Other (please specify)   | 27.78% | 35 |



**Staff & Board Surveys:**

The following showcases graphic depiction of key staff survey results:



In addition to the staff survey results, depicted above, we collected answers on these same questions from our Board. We received 4 Board responses to this survey and are in close alignment with the staff findings. For our strengths, the Board responses highlighted our staff and partners as our top strengths. The Board highlighted our invasive species work, restoration and education work as most valuable. Increased and leveraged funding were most frequently listed as Board identified opportunities, however other particulars were mentioned including easements, diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) and becoming less siloed across urban/rural issues.

Lastly, for threats, two board members identified limited resources (funding and staff) as the biggest threat while the remaining respondents cited climate change and lack of landowner follow-through. Staff's flagging of climate change and development/urbanization as key threats to our conservation work is in close alignment with what we've heard from others.