

Participant Survey

Basin-wide Planning: Upper Platte River

University of Nebraska Public Policy Center

June 2019

Introduction

The Nebraska Department of Natural Resources engaged the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center to survey participants in the Upper Platte Basin Basin-wide planning process.

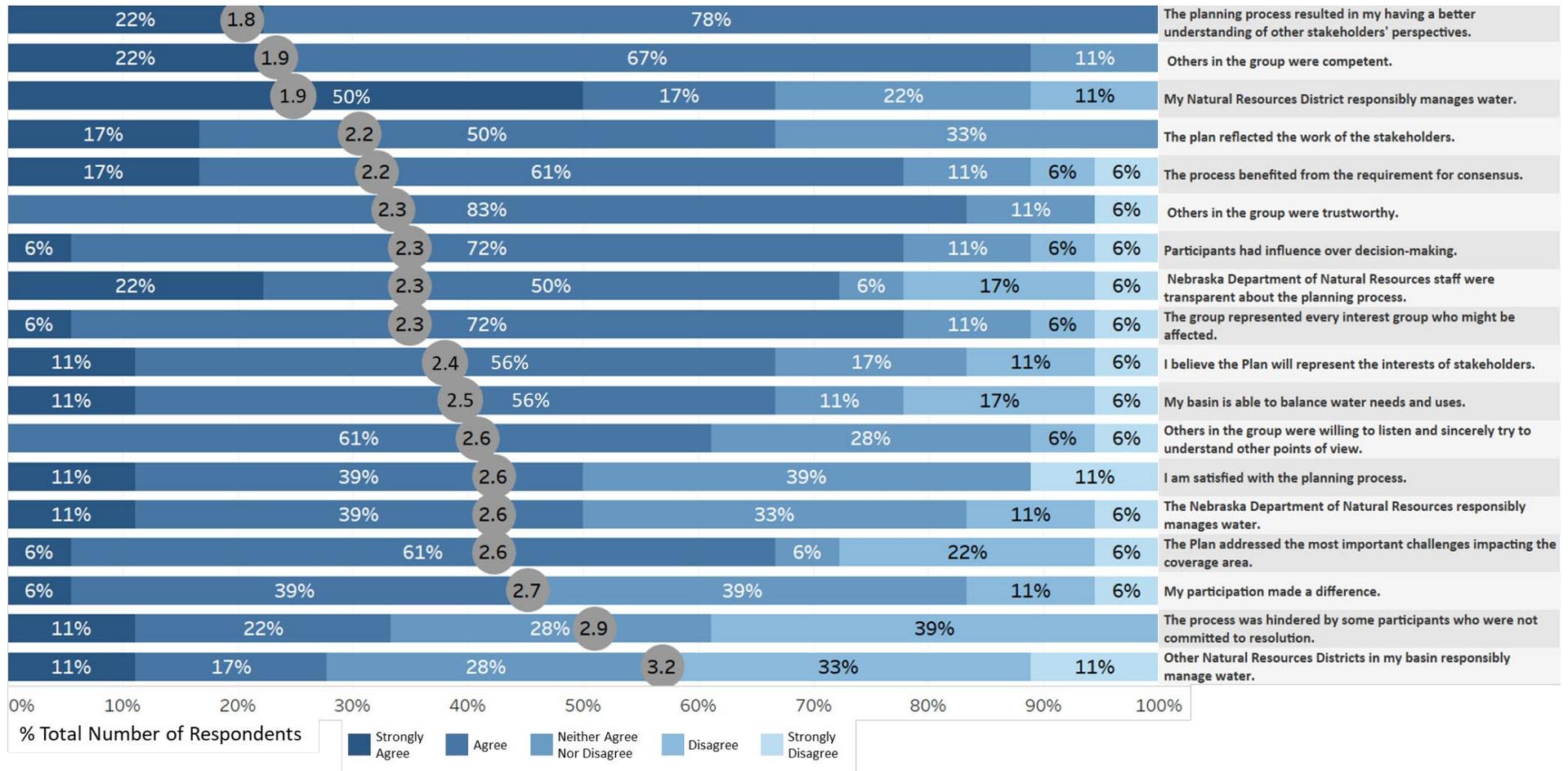
The survey was administered online. Participants received an email invitation and several reminders, all of which included a link to the online survey. All participants in the basin-wide planning process, except those who had moved or were deceased, were invited to complete the survey.

The survey was conducted in January 30 – March 4, 2019. Of 45 persons invited to complete the survey, 18 responded (40% response rate).

Overall Process

Respondents were satisfied with the overall process, with all items scoring at or above the center of the scale (Figure 1). The items are ordered by *Mean* response value (denoted in the gray circle). Only one item was stated negatively: *The process was hindered by some participants who were not committed to resolution* (second item from the bottom of Figure 1). The responses were not recoded, so the interpretation of that item is the plurality of respondents (39%) did not believe the process was hindered for that reason (i.e., respondents Disagreed with the statement) while 33% *Agreed* or *Strongly Agreed* that the process was hindered.

Figure 1. Overall process



Strongly Agree=1, Agree=2, Neither Agree Nor Disagree=3, Disagree=4, Strongly Disagree=5

Text Responses from those who *Disagreed* or *Strongly Disagreed*

Two items in the Overall Process set asked respondents who *Disagreed* or *Strongly Disagreed* to provide an additional text response. The two items with the additional text response were:

- *The group represented every interest group who might be affected.*
- *The Plan addressed the most important challenges impacting the coverage area.*

Missing from the group

Respondents who *Disagreed* or *Strongly Disagreed* with the item *The group represented every interest group who might be affected*, were asked to identify who was missing from the group. Two responses were received:

- The landowners
- Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality

Most important challenges not addressed

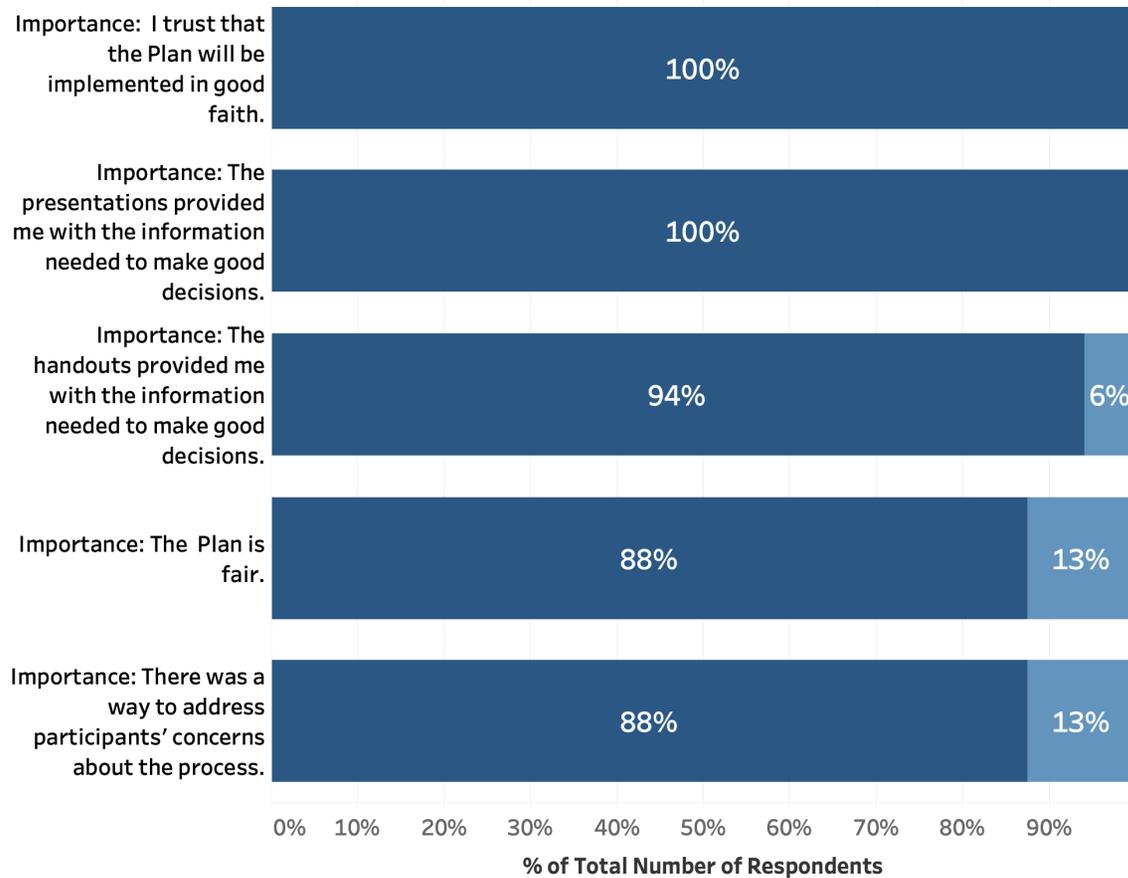
Respondents who *Disagreed* or *Strongly Disagreed* with the item *The Plan addressed the most important challenges impacting the coverage area*, were asked to identify the challenges were not addressed. Five responses were received:

- Restoring depleted streamflows
- Long term impacts of GW pumping
- The COHYST models were not represented by actual numbers and facts, and as long as the western end of the basin did everything they could to conserve and put water back in the river it didn't seem to me that anyone in the central or east were concerned about conservation or their water usage
- I think we have excellent people at all levels of water management and the planning process made a genuine effort to consider all points of view. The fatal flaw in the IMP is that it makes no sense with "water 101". If water is reusable, reduced usage upstream doesn't help downstream users, and will eventually lead to reduced recharge of upstream groundwater and lined canals and pipelines which will further reduce recharge. We must use river related water upstream first and then recapture it, retimed, in McConaughy for a second use by downstream users.
- The COHYST model is outdated and seems to allow some districts to continue to use more water than necessary. All wells should be monitored and there should not be allowed to pump water out of the ground and then return it to the river and believe you are returning flow back to the river.

Factors

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of five factors. For two of the factors, every respondent indicated the factor was *Important*. There were no respondents that indicated any of the five factors were *Unimportant*.

Figure 2. Rating of importance of factors

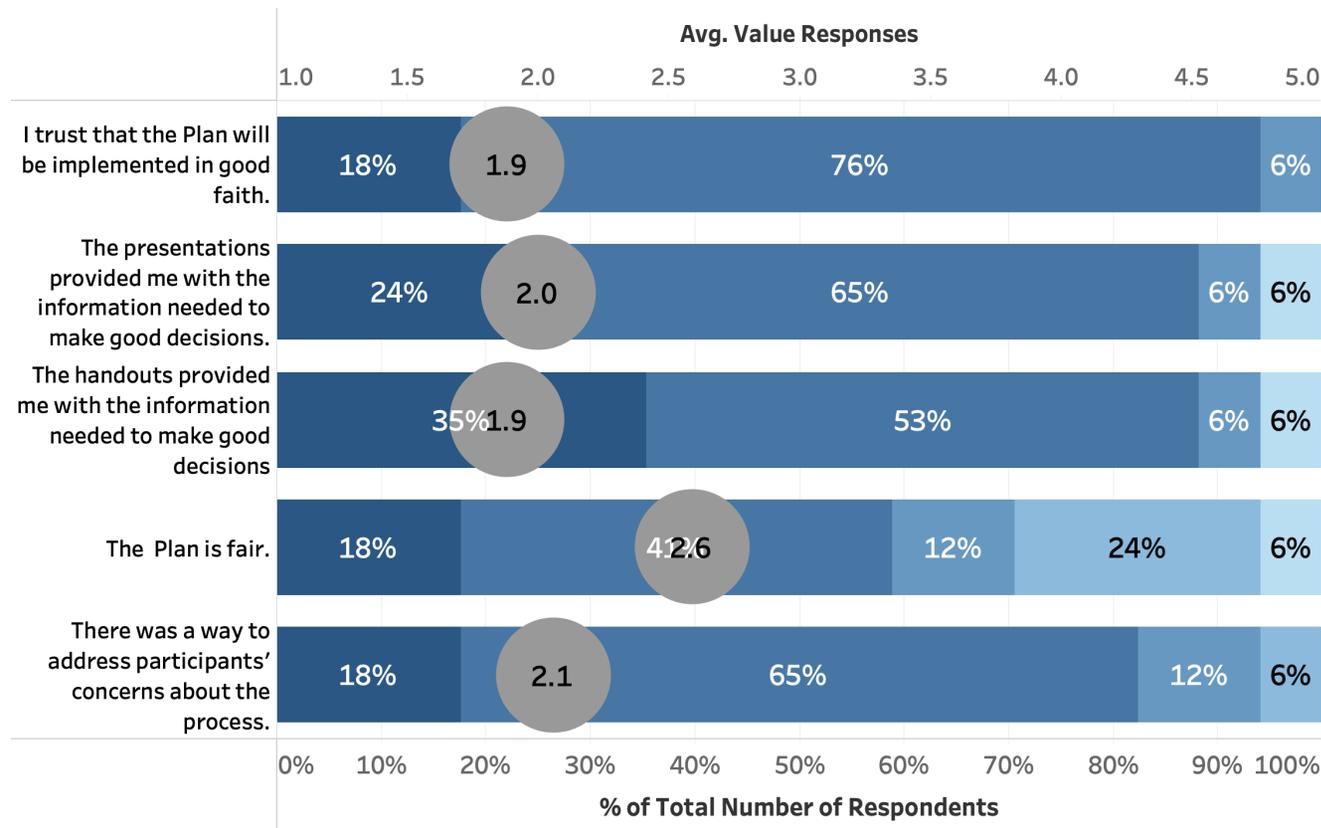


Important=1, Neither Important Nor Unimportant=2, Unimportant=3



Respondents were asked to rate the presence of five factors in the planning process. The items are listed in the order as the Importance to aid easy comparison. The three highest importance factors also had the numerically highest means (denoted with gray circles) for presence in the planning process.

Figure 3. Rating of process



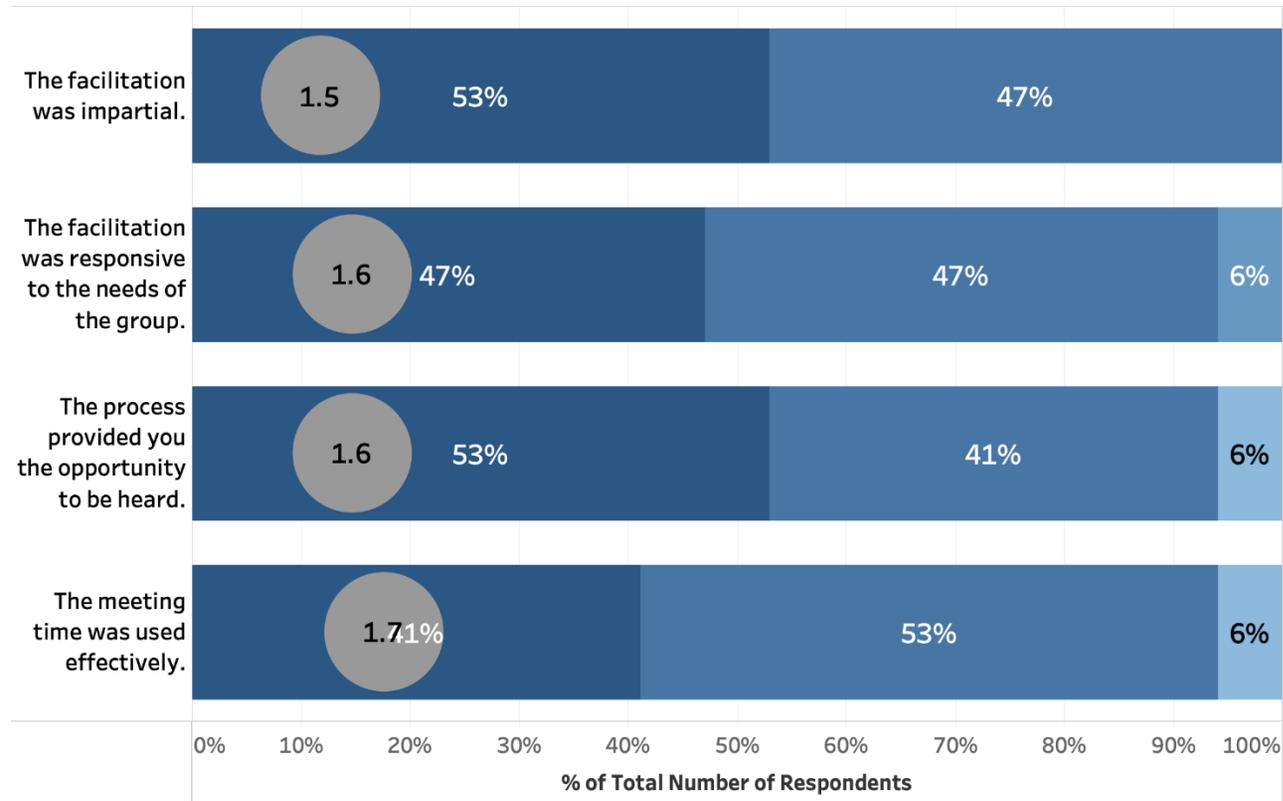
Strongly Agree=1, Agree=2, Neither Agree Nor Disagree=3, Disagree=4, Strongly Disagree=5

Text Responses
 ■ Strongly Agree
 ■ Agree
 ■ Neither Agree Nor Disagree
 ■ Disagree
 ■ Strongly Disagree

Facilitator

Respondents were pleased with the facilitator: the majority of respondents *Agreed* or *Strongly Agreed* with the four positive descriptive statements posed by the survey. No respondents *Strongly Disagreed* with any of the four statements. The number in the gray circle denotes the *Mean* value for each item.

Figure 4. Assessment of facilitator



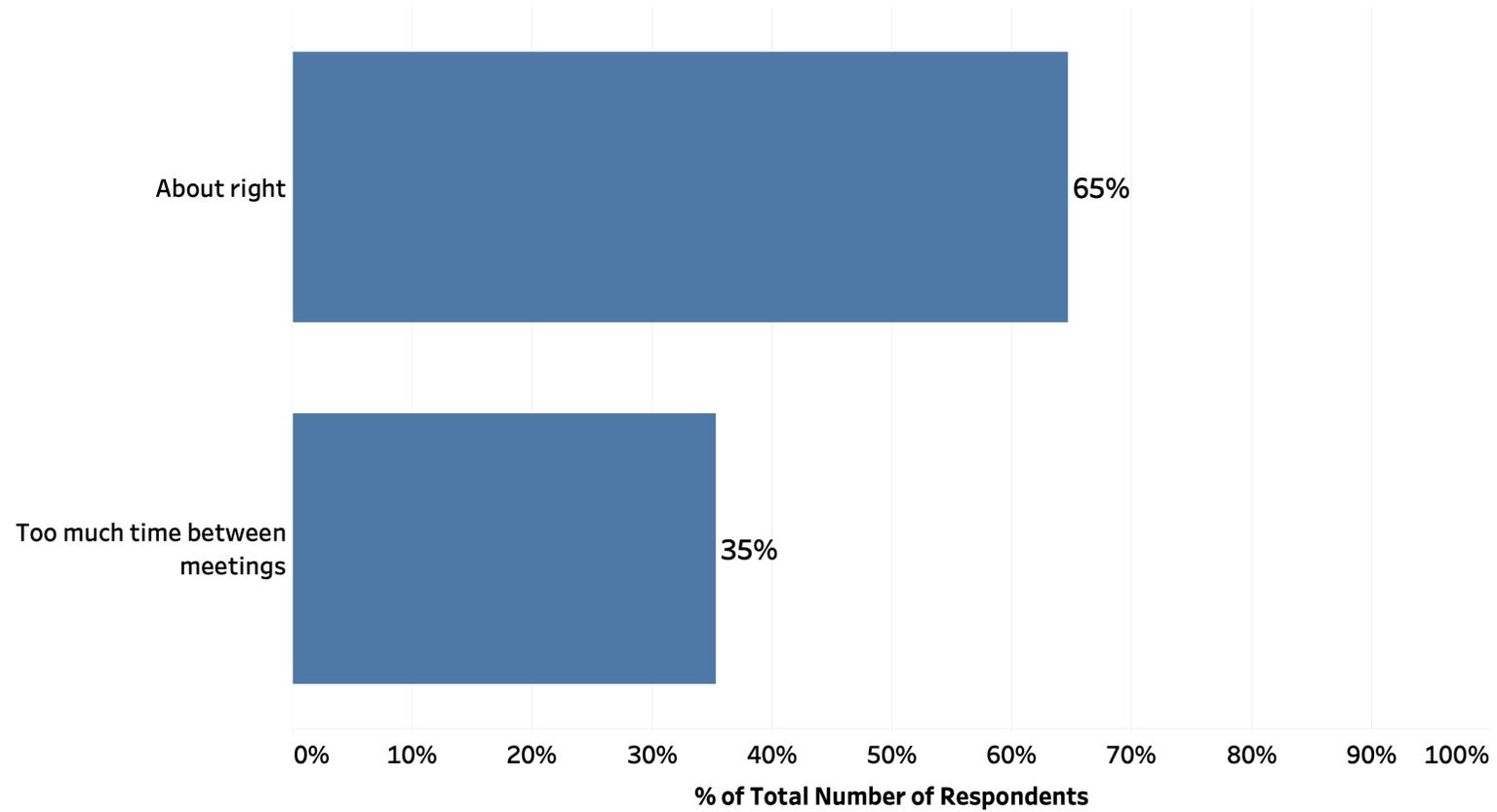
Strongly Agree=1, Agree=2, Neither Agree Nor Disagree=3, Disagree=4, Strongly Disagree=5

Text Responses
 ■ Strongly Agree
 ■ Agree
 ■ Neither Agree Nor Disagree
 ■ Disagree
 ■ Strongly Disagree

Spacing of Meetings

Most respondents believed the spacing of the meeting was *About right* and a minority felt there was *Too much time between meetings*. No respondents chose *Too little time between meetings*.

Figure 5. Spacing of meetings



Additional perspectives

An open text item on the survey invited participants to *Use the space below for any additional perspectives you want to share about the planning process and your answers in this survey.* The responses were:

- Best facilitator I have ever been around.
- Having the Robust Review Results was necessary and should have been provided early on in the planning process. I still have not seen the results!
- Outstanding facilitator
- I would empathize that the people were great but targeting the dry end of the state to supply a growing list of downstream uses can only work if we manage water as a reusable resource.
- The planning process was late on presenting data and at the final meeting a lot of data was missing from the draft. Making decisions without the data being provided was frustrating.
- Very interesting to watch government at work. Wasteful time management and believe some direction was determined prior to meetings.
- I have been involved since 1998. It has been a good experience for me, I am proud of the way the process has been handled so far. Everyone that wanted to talk about the issues got their chance.
- Disappointed that specific information on progress and needs were withheld until the end (realize they were not substantiated until then) and then we get to final meeting and it seems like DNR and NRD directors had made decisions on what the plan was going to look like. I felt the NRD directors sitting at the table and leading much of the conversation made it seem like participants voices were less valued. In the next increment it would be nice to have the NRD directors more observational like the DNR staff was throughout the process.

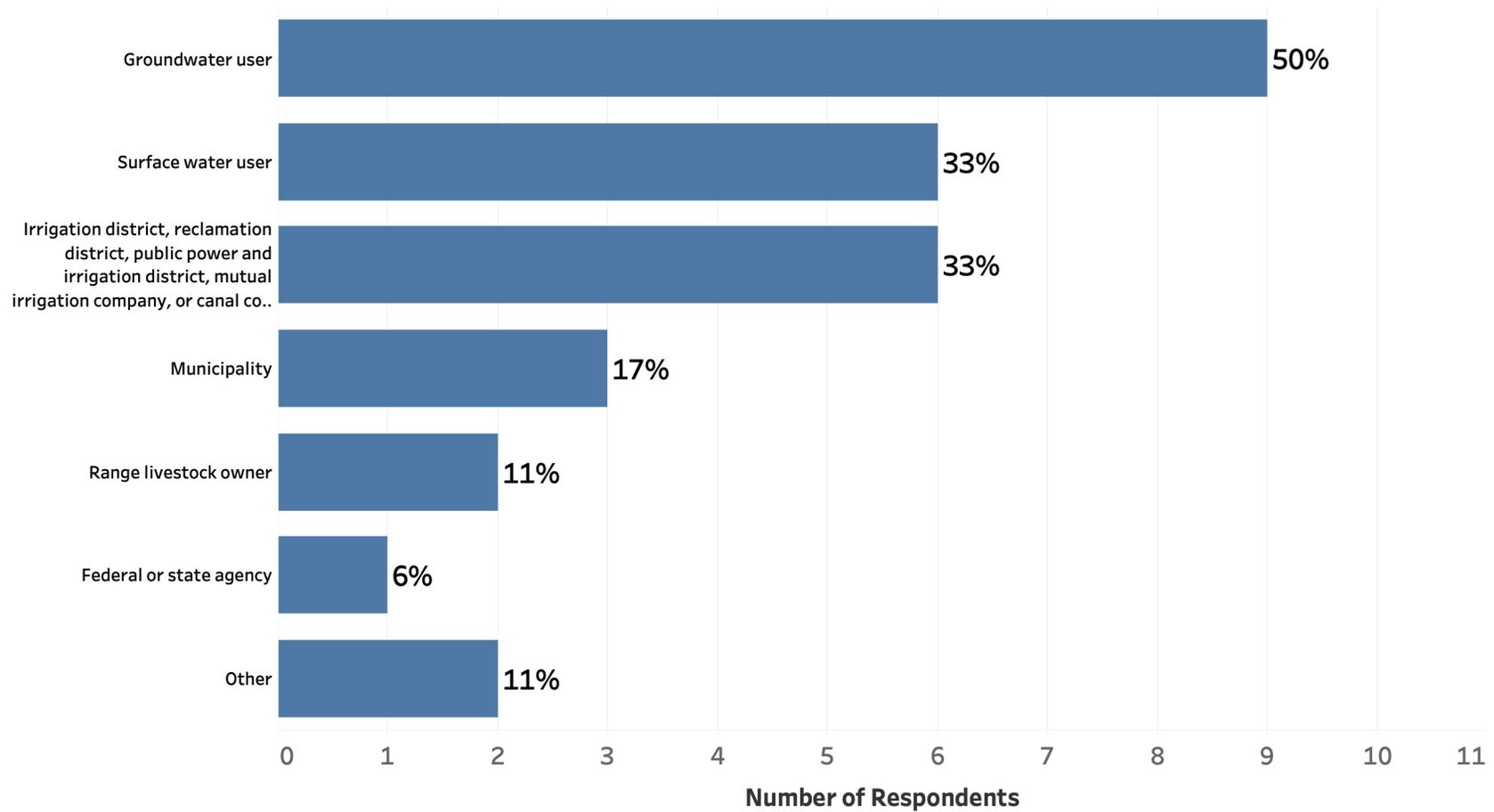
Respondents

Of the 45 participants, including alternates, 19 persons (42%) completed the survey.

Representation

Half of respondents indicated that they represented groundwater interests (respondents could select more than one category)

Figure 6. Representation



Text Responses from those who identified as representing *Other*

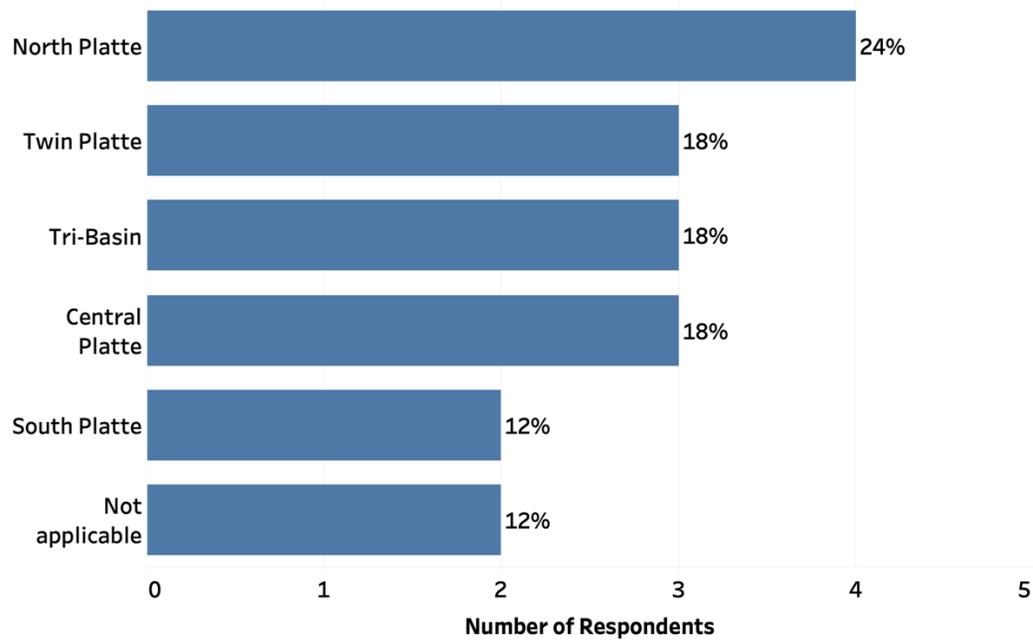
Respondents who selected *Other* as the group they represented were asked to identify their representation. The two responses were:

- I attempted to consider the IMP from the point of view of future generations.
- financial

No analyses were conducted to assess whether there were differences in perspectives about the planning process based on Representation type, due to extensive overlap and small numbers. For example, it may be thought that ground water users and surface water users may have different perspectives. However, among the 10 persons who noted they represented ground and/or surface water interests, 5 indicated that they represented both, 4 represented ground water only, and 1 represented surface water only.

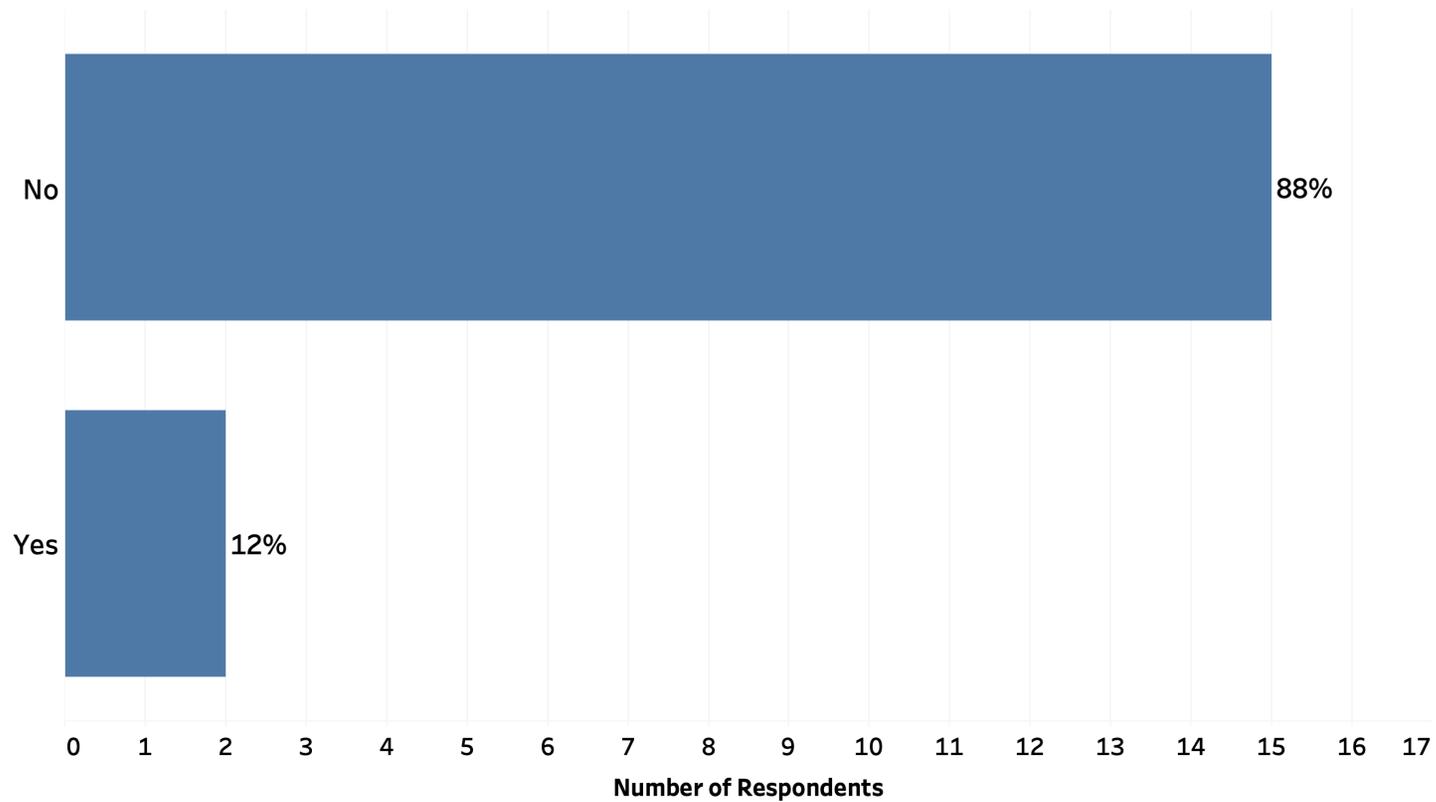
Participants came from every Natural Resources District area.

Figure 7. "Home" NRD



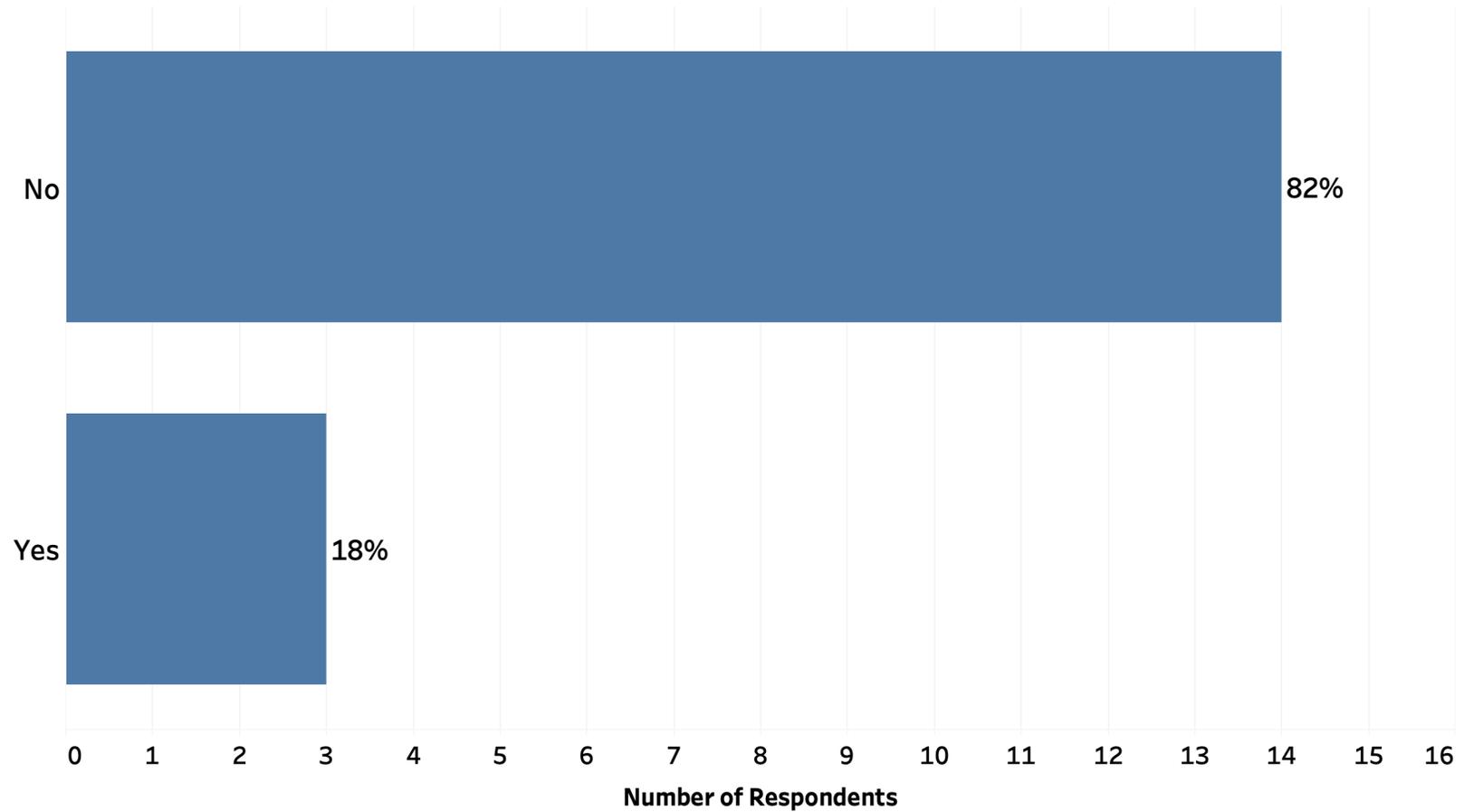
The majority did not participate as a representatives of their NRD. No analyses were conducted to assess whether there were differences in perspectives about the planning process based on NRD representation due to the very small number of persons who indicated they were participating as a representative of their NRD (n=2).

Figure 8. Representative of NRD



Most respondents have never been an NRD board member. No analyses were conducted to assess whether there were differences in perspectives about the planning process based on whether the participant had ever been an NRD board member due to the very small number of persons who indicated they had been an NRD board member (n=3).

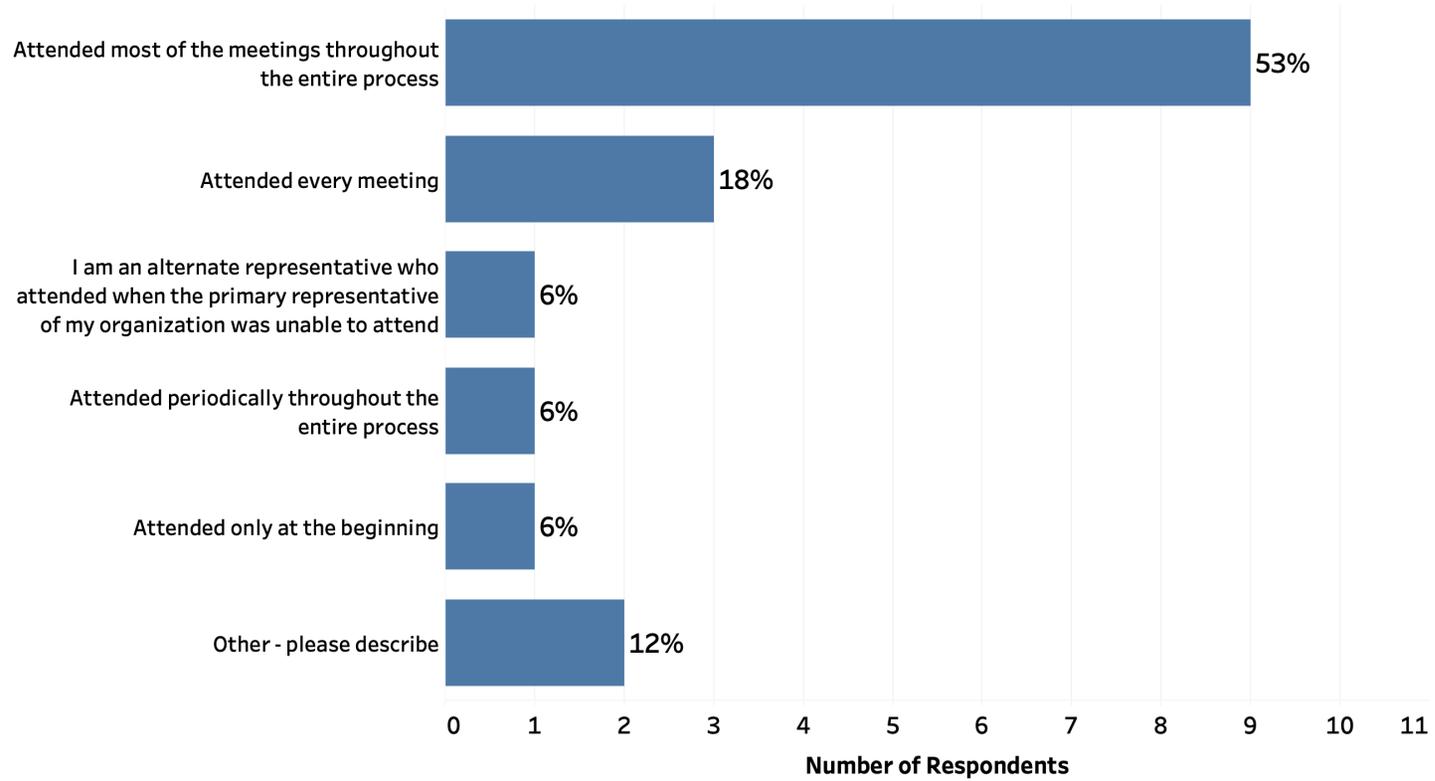
Figure 9. Ever served on an NRD board



Attendance

The majority of respondents *Attended most meetings throughout the entire process.*

Figure 10. Attendance pattern



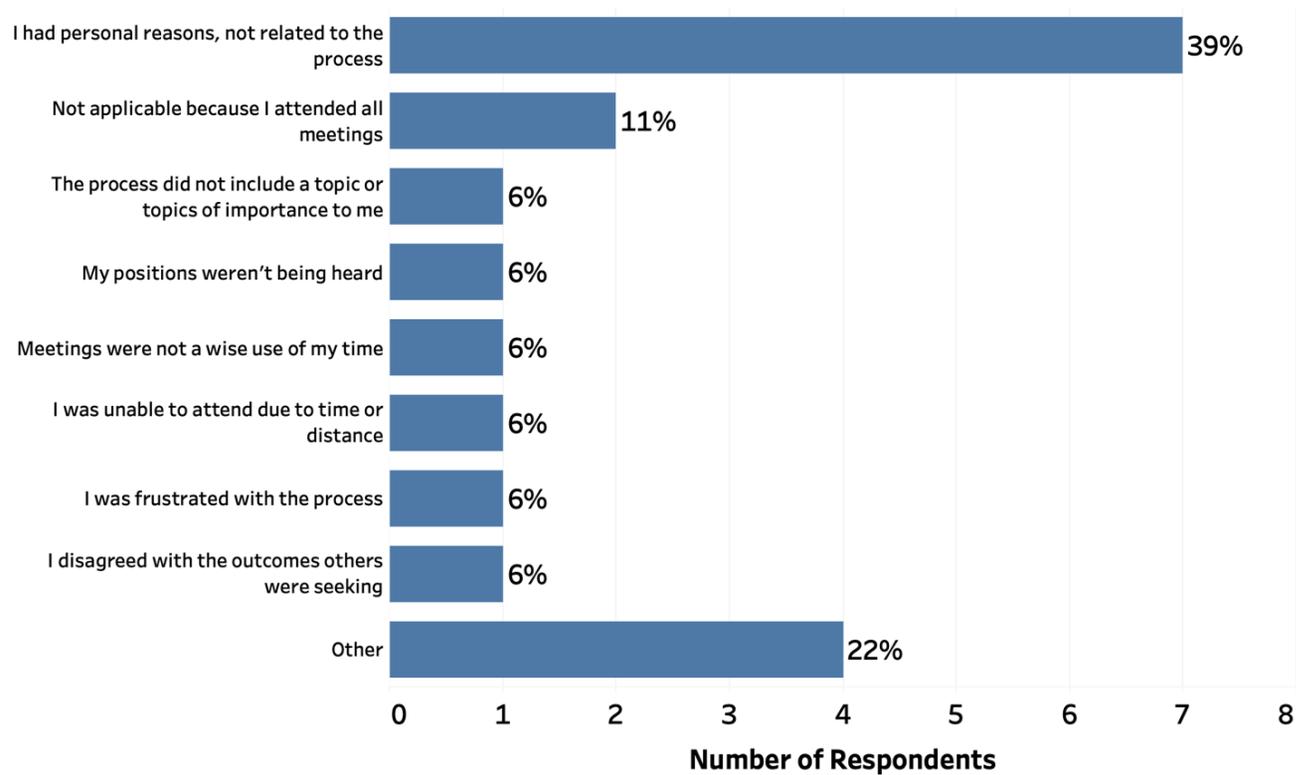
Text Responses from those who indicated that pattern of attendance was *Other*

Two respondents indicated there were other patterns:

- I only missed one meeting in the entire process
- I was an alternate who attended all except for the first 3 or 4 meetings

When respondents did not attend, it was often due to personal reasons. No analyses were conducted to assess whether there were differences in perspectives about the planning process based on attendance patterns because, even when responses were grouped, the numbers within the groups were small.

Figure 11. Reason for missing meetings



Text Responses from those who missed meetings because *The process did not include a topic or topics of importance to me*

Respondents who selected *The process did not include a topic or topics of importance to me* were asked to provide a description. There was one response:

- Without a clear, achievable, science-based definition of "over appropriated" vs "fully appropriated" we risk river and groundwater viability in an attempt to achieve "fully appropriated" status. The North Platte NRD overachieved IMP goals to increase river flows. With projected world population growth, A "forever" commitment to strive to maintain those goals won't work for the grand kids and may dry up western Nebraska.

Text Responses from those who missed meetings for *Other* reason

Respondents who selected *Other* were asked to provide a description. Responses were:

- Out of state on business trip
- I attended all after being appointed to do so
- My attention was needed at my employment rather than community involvement
- Missed one meeting because I had other out of state meeting planned

APPENDIX: SURVEY

Thank you for your willingness to share your experiences in the Upper Platte River basin-wide planning process. This survey was developed by the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center and should take only 10 – 15 minutes to complete. Click the red "Submit" button on the bottom of each page to proceed through the survey. Your individual answers will only be seen by researchers at the University and will be kept confidential. Results of the survey will be aggregated and reported to the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources so that no individual's participation or answers will be revealed. [Click here](#) for a summary of the planning process.

Thank you for your time!

1. Rate your level of agreement with the following statements: (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree Nor Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)
 - a. Participants had influence over decision-making.
 - b. The process was hindered by some participants who were not committed to resolution.
 - c. The plan reflected the work of the stakeholders.
 - d. Nebraska Department of Natural Resources staff were transparent about the planning process.
 - e. The planning process resulted in my having a better understanding of other stakeholders' perspectives.
 - f. Others in the group were trustworthy.
 - g. Others in the group were willing to listen and sincerely try to understand other points of view.
 - h. Others in the group were competent.
 - i. My Natural Resources District responsibly manages water.
 - j. Other Natural Resources Districts in my basin responsibly manage water.
 - k. The Nebraska Department of Natural Resources responsibly manages water.
 - l. My basin is able to balance water needs and uses.
 - m. I believe the Plan will represent the interests of stakeholders.
 - n. I am satisfied with the planning process.
 - o. My participation made a difference.
 - p. The process benefited from the requirement for consensus.
 - q. The group represented every interest group who might be affected. (If you Disagree or Strongly Disagree, who was missing from the group?)
 - r. The Plan addressed the most important challenges impacting the coverage area (if you Disagree or Strongly Disagree, what challenges were not addressed?)

2. What did you think about the spacing of meetings? (click one)
 - a. Too much time between meetings
 - b. About right
 - c. Too little time between meetings

3. For each statement, check your assessment of its importance. (Important, Neither Important Nor Unimportant, Unimportant)
 - a. The handouts provided me with the information needed to make good decisions
 - b. The presentations provided me with the information needed to make good decisions.
 - c. There was a way to address participants' concerns about the process.
 - d. The Plan is fair.
 - e. I trust that the Plan will be implemented in good faith.

4. For each statement, check your level of agreement (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree Nor Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)
 - a. The handouts provided me with the information needed to make good decisions
 - b. The presentations provided me with the information needed to make good decisions.
 - c. There was a way to address participants' concerns about the process.
 - d. The Plan is fair.
 - e. I trust that the Plan will be implemented in good faith.

5. Check your level of agreement with the following statements about the facilitator leading the planning meetings. (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree Nor Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)
 - a. The facilitation was impartial.
 - b. The process provided you the opportunity to be heard.
 - c. The facilitation was responsive to the needs of the group.
 - d. The meeting time was used effectively.

6. Which description best characterizes your pattern of attendance at planning meetings? (click one)
 - a. Attended every meeting
 - b. Attended most of the meetings throughout the entire process
 - c. Attended periodically throughout the entire process

- d. Attended at the beginning and the end of the process, but not in the middle
- e. Attended only at the beginning
- f. Attended only at the middle
- g. Attended only at the end
- h. I am an alternate representative who attended when the primary representative of my organization was unable to attend
- i. Other - please describe _____

7. Why did you not attend planning meetings? (click all that apply)

- a. Not applicable because I attended all meetings.
- b. My positions weren't being heard
- c. My positions were already represented by others
- d. I was unable to attend due to time or distance
- e. Meetings were not a wise use of my time
- f. I was frustrated with the process
- g. I disagreed with the outcomes others were seeking
- h. I was not kept informed of meeting times
- i. I had personal reasons, not related to the process
- j. The process did not include a topic or topics of importance to me. Please describe:

- k. Other. Please describe: _____

8. Identify the type of stakeholder group you represent (click all that apply):

- a. Irrigation district, reclamation district, public power and irrigation district, mutual irrigation company, or canal company
- b. Groundwater user
- c. Range livestock owner
- d. Municipality
- e. Surface water user
- f. Federal or state agency
- g. Conservation-focused organization
- h. Other. Please describe: _____

9. Which Natural Resources District do you consider your primary district? (click only one)

- a. North Platte
- b. South Platte
- c. Twin Platte
- d. Central Platte
- e. Tri-Basin
- f. Not applicable

10. Did you participate in the planning process as a representative of your NRD Board?

- a. Yes
- b. No

11. Have you ever been an NRD board member?

- a. Yes
- b. No

12. Use the space below for any additional perspectives you want to share about the planning process and your answers in this survey.