



“Now Is the Time” Dialogue Report

Executive Summary

The Waukesha County Green Team (WCGT), in collaboration with the Wisconsin Office of Sustainability & Clean Energy and Carroll University, held a Community Conversation on October 23, 2025, at Carroll University in Waukesha, Wisconsin. This event gathered a diverse group of residents, business owners, legislators, and municipal staff for facilitated small group dialogues centered on environmental sustainability.

The purpose of this event was to provide participants with an opportunity to come together to share their unique experience, perspectives and ideas, and to hear the perspectives and experience of others. The event was also designed to increase awareness and deepen understanding of local environmental concerns across the group.

Conversations revealed significant participant insights on observed environmental changes and revealed the breadth of participant concerns and perspectives on human actions that impact the environment. The dialogue also spotlighted the variety of ways participants are engaging in and addressing environmental issues. Central to the conversations was a longing to make a bigger impact through changes in personal and community values and behaviors, as well as civic action.

Feedback from this Community Conversation will inform WCGT’s future programming and outreach, helping to respond to community priorities about our changing environment and our human impacts on the environment.

Note: In October of 2018, WCGT hosted a similar program in collaboration with Carroll University and with the assistance of the Zeidler Center for Public Discussion. Similar questions were presented to attendees at that program as in 2025. In this report we will at times make comparative references to the participant comments from the 2018 discussion.

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Purpose of Community Conversation

The purpose of the Community Conversation was to bring residents, business owners, legislators, and municipal staff together to engage in a small group facilitated dialogue that would organically raise community concerns and awareness of local climate and environmental issues that impact our community and future generations who live here.

The insights obtained from this event will support the WCGT in shaping programs and communications that respond to community concerns about the impact of human activities on the changing climate and ecological decline within our County and region. This work is essential to safeguarding the current physical environment and economic stability of our community.

Program Overview

The community conversation program was promoted as “*Now Is the Time for a Community Conversation on Sustainability in Waukesha County*”. Promotion led with the question “Are you concerned about the increasing frequency of floods, changes in air quality, and the economic consequences of extreme weather.” Messaging was used to tangibly connect the environmental climate issues to recent flooding and subsequent large scale property damage in the region brought on by a recent extreme rain event as well as multiple days of poor air quality throughout recent months brought on by remote wildfires.

“For many in our County recent floods have threatened our homes and livelihoods, while remote fires have impacted our local air quality and the health of our families. The economic challenges caused by these environmental events remind us that we are not immune to the emerging trend toward extreme weather events. Join us for a Community Conversation about how we can protect our natural resources for the people who live here now and for generations to come.”

Participant expectations were also set in advance with an explanation of what participants were attending.

“A community conversation is a structured dialogue of active listening and sharing that brings together members of a community to discuss shared concerns, ideas, and aspirations. The main purpose of a community conversation is to create an open and inclusive space where diverse voices can be heard and ideas can be shared.”

And participants were given information about why their voice matters.

“Participation gives you the opportunity to share your unique perspectives, experiences, and ideas and hear those of others. By participating, you can ensure that your perspective is heard, while contributing to the creation of a more inclusive environment, fostering mutual understanding, contributing to the collective community, and inspiring positive change.”

Eight other local environmentally focused organizations were invited to participate in the event by hosting tables with information about their organization and what they do. Participants had the opportunity to talk with representatives from these organizations prior to the start of the formal part of the program. The organizations present were Wisconsin Office of Sustainability and Clean energy, Focus on Energy from Southeast Wisconsin, Wild Ones Menomonee River Chapter, Plowshare Fair Trade Marketplace, Citizens Climate Lobby Waukesha Chapter, Carroll University Environmental Club, and Waukesha County Land Conservancy.

The program began with a presentation on Extreme Weather and Mitigation by local WISN - 12 meteorologist Lindsey Slater. Lindsey's Presentation with Q&A was followed by the facilitated small group dialogues.

Method for Small Group Dialogue

The method for the facilitated small group dialogues was explained in the large group and then reviewed by each of the small group facilitators within their groups prior to commencing the dialogue in each group. A total of 73 individuals participated in the program. Upon arrival, participants were randomly placed in one of 13 groups. Each group contained 4 to 6 participants with 6 participants plus a small group facilitator as the ideal number.

A few individuals opted out of participating in the small group dialogue prior to the start of the dialogue. Reasons given to members of our team included not feeling well, distance to travel home, and attending to hear the speaker only.

The role of the small group facilitator was to welcome people to their group, review the dialogue process that was explained in large group; get agreement with participants on the Dialogue Guidelines; remind people about their agreements if they forgot them during the facilitated dialogue; and present the series of questions for response from participants. Facilitators were also tasked with keeping equal time for participant responses and logging anonymous notes from participants. Participants were informed in advance about the reporting purpose of the anonymous note taking by facilitators.

For the **structured portion of the dialogue**, facilitators presented a series of three questions in “Rounds”. During each of the 3 Rounds a single question was presented to the group. Participants were given 1 minute to think about their answer to the question. After that initial minute, each person in the group was given 3 min to respond to the question while other participants listened. If a participant chose not to respond to a question they could “pass” or “pass for now”. After everyone in the group responded to the question or passed, the group proceeded to the next Round with another question.

Following the structured portion of the dialogue, participants were invited to engage in a “Connected Conversation” where they had the opportunity to speak with others openly in cross dialogue and ask clarifying questions of others in their group.

Before beginning the Rounds, the following dialogue guidelines were reviewed and participants were asked to confirm agreement with the Dialogue Guidelines, the Form of the Dialogue, and the confidentiality statement.

Dialogue Guidelines

- We will speak for ourselves and from our own experience using “I” statements when speaking
- We will refrain from criticizing the views of others, attempting to persuade others to adopt our own views, or make broad sweeping statements about groups
- We will listen with resilience, “hanging in” when what is said is hard to hear

Form of Our Dialogue

- We will participate within the timeframes suggested and stay on topic
- We will not interrupt except to indicate that we cannot hear a speaker
- We will respect confidentiality of what is shared and not connect what is said to a specific individual.
- We will “pass” or “pass for now” if we are not ready or willing to respond to a question

Regarding Confidentiality

- We will respect confidentiality of what is shared and not connect what is said to a specific individual.

Structured Dialogue Questions

ROUND 1 QUESTION – “Talk about an experience you’ve had (professionally or personally) that you think influences how you approach environmental issues.”.

ROUND 2 QUESTION – When thinking about sustainability in Waukesha County what’s your main environmental or natural resource concern?

ROUND 3 QUESTION – Finish this sentence. Now is the time for What?

Unstructured Dialogue Connected Conversation

Following the structured dialogue questions participants were invited to take part in a unstructured Connected Conversation where they could speak with others openly in cross dialogue and ask clarifying questions of others in their group.

Parting Pledge

In ending, participants were given the opportunity to make a “Parting Pledge” in response to the question “What’s one action you’d be willing to personally commit to in the following month?”

Feedback Surveys

Participants were asked to fill out a short Pre-Feedback Survey at the registration desk prior to entering the room and a Post-Feedback Survey at the end of the program. Results of those surveys are included in the “Feedback” section of this report.

It should be noted that in a couple of groups, answers to the structured dialogue questions tended to align on one or two topics whereas in most groups there was a broad array of experiences and concerns mentioned. Since participants were randomly assigned to groups the issue alignment may be due to the influence of information presented by other participants in the group

Structured Dialogue

Round 1 Question: Talk about an experience you’ve had (professionally or personally) that you think influences how you approach environmental issues.”

Seeing visible changes to the environment over time; a lifelong connection to the outdoors; influence by family, teachers and community; personal education; and professional experience all were mentioned equally as influencing participants' approach to environmental issues. Other Influences mentioned included concern for the next generation, profound impact on personal health, and core spiritual values.

Many named people who influenced them as cross generational - young people learning from older generations as well as older generations learning from younger generations. Compared to the 2018 discussion, more people talked about experiencing disconcerting visible changes to the environment over time.

Visible Changes to the Environment

Visible changes to locations where participants live, have lived or worked, and the dynamic changes they have seen in the environment (nature, animals, land use, water, pollution, etc.) over time were most mentioned as what influences how they approach environmental issues.

Many witnessed the loss of natural habitats, such as marshes, wetlands, and beaches, due to development and pollution. Some recounted changes in wildlife populations, impacts from droughts and floods, and firsthand observations of climate change. Many expressed a sense of loss, frustration, and emotional connection to these places, motivating some to get involved in efforts to understand and address environmental issues locally.

Comments from participants included:

"I spent my adolescence in Sarasota, Florida and witnessed the filling in of mangroves for houses and shores being sold to private contractors. The average person lost access to the beaches. It's all for greed."

"I was a commercial fisherman in Alaska for three years and came back to Wisconsin about 30 years ago. About two years ago I checked on how things were in Alaska and found that the salmon runs were depleted, there were problems with the animals, it was sad to see. It made me aware of what people around the world were going through and want to help."

"I grew up near a cornfield and marsh and lake which provided education and entertainment for our family for years. I learned the marsh was to be filled in. I wanted to do something to stop this and so I had the DNR come to see the impact it would have on the many birds, fish and animals that lived there. I was not successful in getting it stopped and one day the marsh was no more. I saw a muskrat sitting in a lone puddle of water on the new concrete that filled the marsh. I am still very emotional thinking about this."

"On a trip to Alaska in 2012, I saw water everywhere around Denali. The permafrost is melting. I saw a big chunk of ice fall into the water. In answer to questions the tour guide told me they weren't allowed to talk about it."

"Where I come from (TX) we are used to droughts. Not here. Floods are worse than ever. They are building structures with foundations higher off the ground and with materials that are more replaceable. It feels like a fight to survive, not just correct things."

"When I was young, I would go for walks and collect tadpoles. Kids can't even do that now. Now the smaller lakes around where I live look bad and have chemicals."

"There used to be thousands of acres of wild rice that provided food for wildlife and now there is nothing"

"Got involved after a red algae bloom on a local lake and got involved in a local community group to help understand and manage environmental impacts on lake and rivers. Zebra mussels changed the lake dramatically. kids couldn't swim or use the lake, or fish"

"Construction/development seems to be filling in natural wetlands, when traveling it seems other cultures and countries are doing more to protect the natural environment."

Some participants talked about their experience of visual changes in terms of climate affecting the winter sports and farming/gardening culture in Wisconsin.

“Through work (municipality) there is lots of discussion about floodplain zoning and solar. Personally, kids can scarcely use the ice rink we got them.”

“As a life-long skier, the season is getting ever shorter”

“2010 heavy rains and floods, community garden plot has been flooded out, as an older person, am getting up earlier to avoid the heat of day”

Lifelong Connection to the Outdoors

Many participants expressed a lifelong connection to the outdoors and environmental stewardship, sharing childhood experiences of playing in parks, collecting pond samples, and valuing nature through family activities like recycling and Boy Scouts. Some described growing up in environments where industry impacted nature, leading to an awareness of the tension between economic benefits and environmental health. Early influences, such as reading about population issues, sparked deeper interest in environmental problems and shaped personal values. Overall, the comments highlight curiosity, appreciation, and a commitment to preserving the natural world.

“I was interested in the outdoors and the environment since childhood. I would give my allowance to environmental groups.

I grew up playing outside, winter or summer didn’t matter. Collected samples in local ponds and looked at what was in the water; always curious about exploring and discovering. I had an innate interest; wanted to be in nature and preserve it.”

“Grew up as an outdoors family with a great appreciation of nature. Saved all glass and did recycling.”

“Boy Scouts and biking awakened me to love of nature.”

“Growing up my family was always outside.”

“I grew up in Wisconsin Rapids with a paper mill in town with about 500 jobs. Parents sent me outside to play. The outside air smelled bad. We could fish in the river but couldn’t eat fish (with PCBs). I remember feeling a tension between economics and jobs with a good environment.”

“I loved being in nature as a kid maybe 8-10 yrs old, playing in parks especially. When I was 13, I read a book on population that intrigued me; I understood it as a big problem, it kind of suggested a direction for my life.”

“I have always loved the outdoors and had a great deal of respect for nature. I particularly like to swim in rivers and lakes.”

“Grew in UP Michigan near mines. Three mines closed affecting other kids’ families (not my own)”

Influence of Family, Teachers and Community

An equal number of participants were influenced by family members, teachers and other members of the community. In general participants talked about cross generational influence that affects how they approach environmental issues. Some talked about parental influence and family practices around recycling. A few mentioned the impact their children or youth in general have had on their thinking about the environment. Several participants referenced the impact classroom teachers had on their thinking about the environment.

“My daughter went to Northland College. Through her, I had many different experiences and exposures, for example: foraging, and making a straw bale house.”

“As a high school and college teacher, exposure to young people was key for me. I tried to make my students aware of issues that would broaden their thinking. My students ran the spectrum of social class. They asked good questions. It’s not only talking about issues, but also actions.”

“My Father was an environmental scientist in the 1970s and brought that sentiment to the family; Earth Day era. We grew up crushing cans and conserving. I remember seeing litterers and dad would say ‘that guy thinks the world is his garbage can.’”

“My kids are Gen Z, and they are much more aware of the impact of our lives on the environment and what our generation has left them with. The use of plastics. I have read a lot of books on the environment, like “Walk Through the Woods,” and I’ve hiked in the Grand Canyon. I want to help preserve the natural environment.”

“My college professor said his generation messed it up, and it’s my generations job to fix it. But it is the responsibility of all of us. We need to hold the government and companies accountable.”

“I’m an environmental sociology student now, and I’m still learning. I’m getting perspectives on how bad current norms can be, with manufacturing, for example, and other industries. I’m seeing how other countries handle environmental issues.”

“Hearing about the climate 30 years ago, a disconnect with what I hear now. Feelings of “they” should do something about the climate. I don’t know what to do about the larger climate problem.”

“A couple of my family members have electric cars and tell of their environmental advantages. Moved from rural area to metro area and became involved in recycling.”

“My mom works in the environmental field and our family spends a lot of time outdoors. I realize the future is not guaranteed; I recognize the environmental consequences of my actions, for example what I eat, what career I choose, what influence I have.”

A few respondents attributed what influences them to their experience with communities that live more connected to nature, are more proactive to environmental issues, or have lower levels of consumerism.

“Living in the mountains of West Virginia for 30 years has had a huge impact on my life. An old guy from WV said he doesn’t need plumbing; he should be able to get his own water. I see people who want to make dinner, so they make a list and go to the store to get what they need. I think you should use what you have to make dinner. Gather food, harvest. I hate it here. This life is unsustainable. I have solar panels, bees, a garden, an electric car.”

“Am learning from Native tribes that humans can live in harmony with planet”

Personal Education and Community Group Involvement

Personal education on issues and education through participation in environmental community groups was the second largest influence shaping participants' views on environmental issues. Many cited personal experiences, such as creating unique college majors, working with conservation organizations, and engaging in groups like Citizen Climate Lobby and the Waukesha County Green Team. Family background, early exposure to Earth Day, and watching nature shows also played significant roles. Practical efforts, including driving electric vehicles, reducing waste, installing solar panels, and participating in sustainability fairs, reinforced their commitment. Education and community discussions, like film screenings and book clubs, fostered greater awareness and inspired ongoing action.

“In college, I created my own major. I wanted to understand myself, society, and beyond, which are intertwined. I read lots of books, most of which focused on problems, not solutions. I have developed and written about ecosociology, which promotes action to solve problems. That’s what gives me hope.”

“I worked for the Nature Conservancy and then the Ice Age Trail. Educating is important to me. I joined the Waukesha County Green Team. It’s important to me to live respectfully with the environment.”

“I also have made many individual efforts at supporting the environment, such as driving an electric vehicle before Tesla. I participated in a book club about low carbon diets, which connected me with like-minded people. I belong to the Citizen Climate Lobby.”

“Had an opportunity to travel the world with work, and saw many types of environments, but never really thought about them in any meaningful way, I didn’t pay attention. After retiring I got involved in a political lobbying group that worked on climate issues. I learned a lot, more maybe than I wanted to, and now actively trying to make an impact. Things are hard, and falling apart right now in this political climate, but have to keep pushing and working towards ease of permitting for renewables; it is a political nightmare”

“No specific thing, some family pursued environmental degrees in college, and I was born in 1970, the year of Earth Day and environmental action. I watched nature shows growing up. Environmental issues have always been on the radar but didn’t have a lot of capacity to do more because of work, financial and family obligations. Have been

branching out recently, adding solar panels, cutting down on waste, purchased a used electric vehicle. Looking for ways to connect”

“Since I have been more aware of environmental issues, I have been changing my own behavior. My first understanding was to reuse, reduce, recycle. I began to realize the need to organize.”

“I was invited to go to the Notre Dame convent and view the film planetaria. It showed changes in our planet. We had a very interesting discussion afterwards. Several of the Notre Dame Sisters suggested that I join the Wisconsin Citizen Climate lobby. I think it is very important to advocate with our public officials about environmental issues.”

“I started in college at the University of Madison and took several courses, including an environmental forum and a biology class related to the ecosphere. There, I gained the knowledge that we needed to reduce our CO2 emissions, and CO2 emission levels would lead to an increase in climate temperature. This was the 1970s. Since that time, I have been very active in environmental issues, including at one point being a member of the Green Party. I believe my environmental consciousness has made me a much better person. I’ve worked with the Waukesha Green Team for several years.”

“Getting involved in sustainability fairs and seeing the displays. I was hiking in La Crosse with friends and was invited to an Eco Fair which was uplifting to see people working in this space. I have been involved with Plow Share and their creativity is inspiring.”

“Worked with the municipality and got into recycling and promoted recycling and reuse in a big way.”

“I took environmental sustainability in college, and my teacher had a big influence on how I think about the environment. I had some health problems and started looking into the connections between health and diet and product packaging, which led me to be concerned about plastics and choose more seasonal and locally grown food. I’ve made small changes over time.”

“Since retirement and grandchildren, I did a deep dive into climate issues resulting in environmentally sensitive furnace and native species planting in yard.”

Professional Experience

Many participants shared a wide variety of professional experiences ranging from careers in alternative fuels, environmental engineering, teaching, consulting, battery manufacturing and solar sales, that shaped their outlooks and actions. Many emphasized the impact of data, community, and witnessing environmental damage that has motivated their commitment to sustainable practices and raising awareness about environmental issues.

“I was hired by an alternative fuels group, and I became passionate about how we use resources. It deepened my outlook. I have a son, and I want him to grow up with options. In addition, my different life stages, such as becoming a mom, have influenced my

interests. Right now, with an early school age son, the issue I work on is teaching him about healthy eating.”

“I worked for a medical equipment manufacturing firm. I’m very interested in what it takes to make these machines. I have always had an interest in design for the environment, and I developed a curriculum at my workplace for our new engineers. Given where I lived and worked, I was able to bike to work. I’ve been very active in what was known as the Environmental Action League. I am very interested in the circular economy, which is similar to design for the environment. Now that I’m retired, I look forward to doing many different things.”

“Professionally, I worked for many years selling equipment to dentist and orthodontic offices. During my personal time, I was always outside. I have now switched jobs and work in sales for a solar contractor. My personal life and my professional life are much more congruent. I love that they fit together so well, and they reinforce each other.”

“I was an environmental engineer for 40 years, and I did stuff that made a difference. All the things we did were good, but what’s ahead of us is bigger. But it’s not hopeless. We’ve seen changes in the past and we can do it again.”

“There are multiple factors including my profession as an Environmental consultant in remediation of pipeline disasters, seeing the devastating effects of our vast dependency on crude oil.”

“I worked for the largest lead-acid battery maker in the world. They greenwash their program of lead recycling as if out of concern for the environment when it’s really them wanting the lead back. They moved manufacturing from Mexico to South Carolina, and everyone was getting sick and the sidewalks were turning yellow.”

“I teach environmental science, so I am data driven. The data is clear. I do a lot of reading of many different environmental perspectives such as law and history. Every day, working with students and different generations makes the environmental issues more concerning. I grew up in a rural setting spending lots of time outdoors.”

“In the 1980s I studied business risk management and took an environmental course. After graduation, I accepted a job as an environmental consultant and worked with a broad team including an EPA scientist for 10 years. I brought the financial perspective to help businesses understand their environmental liability. Since then, I’ve done a lot of reading of environmental topics and the earth, and connection with nature.”

“Work in the sewer industry. Alarmed at flooding damage and also the bee issue. Moved to the country to experience community living.”

“CPA requires me to have a broad-based understanding. This is now my outlet and passion. I am a master gardener trying to help people understand environmental issues. Deforestation is my main concern.”

A few named family farming as being influential

"Grew up with uncles with farms who had different practices on farms. As an only child I was sent to visit and stay with each one. I remember visiting state fair and participating in 4H"

"Grew up living on farm enjoying nature. I went to vet school and purchased a farm with husband. Looking at alternative ways to farm."

"Lived on a farm, raised kids there and home schooled them. Intimately involved in the environment on the farm. Experienced rhythms of nature."

Other Influences mentioned included concern for the next generation, profound impact on personal health, and core spiritual values.

"Realize how blessed we were in the past to have had the environment we had; what are we handing over to the next generation?"

"Increased concern from having children. Now I have a 'brand new' granddaughter. I'm uncertain about hope for the future. I feel the pessimism from kids about their future."

"My wife and I are very cognizant of chemicals in the environment, and we try to stay away from them. I suffer from late onset Parkinson's disease, which is usually caused by chemicals in the environment. Particularly Roundup/Paraquat. I grew up next to a cornfield and assumed they used Roundup. My disease has solidified my resolve against chemicals and that is built on my baseline opposition to them."

"There was a death in my family which was attributed to environmental factors."

"I love being in nature. God created everything, and being in creation and recognizing the beauty, simplicity, complexity, vastness, and minuteness is a prayer for me. My faith and common sense tells me that it's my responsibility and all of humanity's responsibility, to take care of what God has created out of love and respect. Also, I know that when the environment is degraded due to climate change or pollution of any kind, the poor suffer the most, and my faith tells me that I need to care for the poor, which means I must care for the earth."

Round 2 Question: When thinking about sustainability in Waukesha County what's your main environmental or natural resource concern and why?

Among all concerns, water quality and water availability were mentioned most often by participants. Waste and consumerism, development and community sprawl as well as loss of native habitat also weighed heavily as participant concerns. Misinformation and better education were mentioned by several people as concerns - concerns not mentioned in the 2018 dialogue.

Concern about chemicals in the environment can be linked to concerns about water but were segmented out as distinct when concerns were related to pesticides and herbicides. Several of the concerns could also be linked to one's carbon footprint, energy, and/or climate change.

Water

Participants overwhelmingly identified water quality and availability as their main local environmental concern. They discussed issues such as contamination from chemicals and wells, impacts of deforestation, lake pollution, and the depletion of groundwater resources. Concerns included the effect of fertilizers and pesticides on lakes, destructive boating practices, and invasive species like zebra mussels. Some noted how urban development has altered local waterways, while others mentioned problems caused by phosphates, road salt, and sewage overflow into the Great Lakes. Many advocated for water conservation and responsible personal practices, emphasizing the need for collective action to protect vital water resources.

"The availability and use of water, including the water table, contamination, and how deforestation affects our water supply and cleanliness. Water is essential to life."

"Water is the main thing that needs protection. The Lake Country Clean Waters has good meetings. You can't eat fish from the Lake in Oconomowoc because of chemicals. The wells are contaminated. Cows in Waukesha are on land over the water table. Wake boats destroy vegetation on the bottom of the lake."

"I am concerned about conserving water, not doing laundry more often than needed, rather than just for convenience. I want my actions to influence others. I also hang out my laundry, partly as an example of saving energy."

"Water. 100 years ago, water fed from Waukesha to Lake Michigan. We've depleted all that water. It caused a cone depression that is now filled by water from Lake Michigan. We require acceptable quality. We have plenty of precipitation, but we waste it."

"Water. I live on a small lake in New Berlin. The local creek has become marshy because of all the buildings going up. People who live on lakes should not be able to use fertilizers on their lawns. There are too many pesticides."

"The lakes and waterways are a mess. Zebra mussels are everywhere. Local lake (Lower Genesee) has been getting worse and worse since the 1990s"

"The City of Waukesha uses water from Lake Michigan; other communities may need to. Quarries digging north of Waukesha disrupt ground water and local homeowners are impacted"

"It seems things are broken regarding healthy water. Phosphates are a big problem;"

"I live in Milwaukee County, and I think about the Great Lakes. So many things are concerned with fresh water. How raw sewage may go into the Great Lakes in times of flooding. And in the winter, I notice the excess salt on the roads and I'm concerned about how our natural resources are being impacted."

“When I came here from Pakistan, I was amazed—we can drink water from the tap? You can’t think of that in Pakistan. Here the raw sewage is cleaned before it goes into the Great Lakes; we don’t have that in Pakistan”

“I’m concerned about our water resources. Thirty years ago when I fished, I’d see a lot of different species, but not now.”

“Water quality. I’m concerned about our beaches and the waste in the water and plastics in the water. We need to recycle plastics, so they don’t hurt water quality. Less fortunate countries have water quality problems.”

“Drinking water and the aquifer. I took part in a film on water in Waukesha that drove home how interrelated we are with our water. Radon is a concern.”

“Safe drinking water.”

“Water, I use well water, so not personally impacted, but wonder about ground table.”

“Loss of wetlands means loss of natural filter leading back to & refilling aquifer.”

“I see parts of lands zoned “agricultural” that are actually partly wetland; farmers plow through, fertilize, etc., so we are losing more wetland than we know.”

“Water, PFAS.”

“Water and land use.”

“Water quality is a major concern Lawns and concrete do not allow water to soak into the earth. Fox River is getting lower. Putting in natural plants wherever possible.”

“Drinking water.”

Waste and Consumerism

Participants expressed deep concerns about excessive waste, landfill overflow, and food disposal, stressing the need for more responsible consumption and recycling. They highlighted issues such as reliance on single-use plastics, fast fashion, and microplastics, as well as declining natural fiber use. Many advocated for composting. The group called for greater education, especially for children, about the environmental impact of personal choices, emphasizing that community action and awareness are critical for change.

“How many landfills are we going to build? It’s crazy what we are throwing away, including usable food. “Feeding America” will throw away a good bag of potatoes if only a couple of potatoes are bad in the bag. A simple potato is covered in chemicals: fertilizer, pesticides, deveining wash. I try to encourage organic farming, but no one is interested.”

“The over garbage situation in neighborhoods seems monumental with the amount of junk being thrown away. The landfill being over filled.”

"Things people waste make me crazy. People throw out food at restaurants. Decline in natural fibers for clothing and replaced by synthetics."

"Food waste. Non-profits could use food. We need to watch energy use and water waste. Advocate for solar panels. We can start at a personal level by cutting waste."

"Recycling. Use paper instead of plastic."

"People don't recycle enough. Some things aren't recycled because there is no market for them. Microplastics are a concern."

"Consumerism. We don't need all that we have. Houses are too big. Too many pets."

"Secondly, I'm concerned about waste, such as single use plastics and fast fashion. There is no 'away.' Plastic bags should not be permitted. If plastics are recycled they are only downcycled into a lesser quality, whereas aluminum can be recycled forever without degrading. Our community needs more composting and better recycling. This is doable at the community level. I have garbage can guilt."

"I'm concerned about waste and convenience purchases. Online purchases result in shipping, plastic, and a lot of wish-cycling because boxes covered in plastic film can't be recycled. I am concerned because I think our culture consumes so much and we should be more aware and educated. I think people, especially kids at younger ages, need more education about product ingredients and what we need versus want. I learned too late."

"Consumerism. The lack of connection between personal actions and their environmental impact, plastic use, driving, bag use in stores. We are miles away from critical recognition and awareness."

"No ban on plastic bags."

Community Sprawl - Development and Planning

Participants expressed major concerns about rapid development, loss of green space, and habitat destruction, highlighting the negative impacts of urban sprawl, overbuilding, and increased asphalt surfaces. They noted issues like decreased tree canopy, excessive lawn care chemicals, and rising heat. Concerns also included loss of farmland and perceived lack of sustainable land use planning vs balanced planning. Also mentioned was road and highway expansion.

"I'm concerned about losing green space to development, habitat loss, land and water use. Decreased tree canopy and more asphalt surfaces increase heat in our environment. Population growth is a definite factor. We need to increase solar as our energy source."

"Overbuilding. Companies build new buildings and desert the old ones. There are so many subdivisions going up. It impacts water, losing trees and wildlife. People could be fixing up older houses instead of putting up new ones."

“Urban sprawl and over consumption. What society values. Does it matter? I value friends and being close to them. Mixed-use neighborhoods make so much more sense.”

*“Subdivisions are going in everywhere and using every square inch of land
Lawn care rules in subdivisions require everything to be perfect and manicured, and this ends up with chemicals everywhere.”*

“I want Waukesha County to be livable. Apartments are exploding, Goerkes Corners is very densely developed. Density is overkill and continuing everywhere.”

“So many concerns! I feel like land is a concern, there is too much development. My family built a home in Brookfield many years ago in the area of Calhoun Road and Bluemound. Now there are so many businesses and buildings there, and so much roadkill. Where do the animals go? And where is people’s attention? With social media, we’re siloed in our communication. People are worried about other things, day-to-day things like feeding their families. But the U.S. recently gave money to Argentina. Why couldn’t that money be used for our climate?”

“Development is too rapid. The rate of it, the type of it. The lack of planning. There are issues around affordable housing. There is a lack of sustainable land use. Duplication of stores. Ie a Walgreen’s on every corner.”

“Sustainability. I agree with the others re: politics, lack of planning, over development. Also, the internal combustion engine, in that people are leaving their cars running all the time.”

“Loss of farmland due to increase in development of housing. Lots are too large.”

“Road and highway expansion which is taking up too much land. Too much asphalt and concrete adding heat to the environment. No green space for water run-off and absorption of heat.”

“Economic development in Waukesha County.”

“As a Carroll University student, I learned about water in Waukesha Co. Also flew in a plane over the Waukesha County watershed and saw the land and development effect. Development is happening in low land. What does ‘balanced’ in development mean?”

Conserving Nature and Biodiversity

Participants expressed concern over declining wildlife habitats, insect populations harmed by chemicals, and lake damage from recreational boating. They noted the loss of land stewardship among new residents, the negative environmental impact of lawns, and emphasized the need for education and sustainable practices to protect natural ecosystems.

“Had plantings and natural landscapes until they became too burdensome to manage. Moved to a small condo without plantings, but ended up putting some in because missed the growing and natural items. Trying to share the natural plant message with neighbors.”

Brookfield is working to get certified as a wildlife habitat City through National Wildlife Federation; Animal habitat is gone, there is wildlife all over the place because it is disrupted from its normal range, no place to go."

"Decline of insects because of pesticides and other chemicals."

"Native plants"

"Lake management. DNR needs to help manage and police lakes better. Large boats are on small lakes creating 3-to-4-foot wakes for water skiing which causes damage to plant life and damage to lake bottoms. No rules are pitting neighbors against neighbors with those who enjoy water sports and those who want to fish."

"Land conservation. Long term residents being bought out by the younger generation who has neither capital or dedication to environmental stability."

"Lawns killing insects. We need to think differently about yards in terms of fertilization and pesticides. We need to educate politicians about what is happening."

Misinformation and Better Education

Participants expressed concerns about widespread misinformation, lack of community awareness, and political barriers to environmental progress in Waukesha County. They emphasized the need for education around reducing CO2 emissions, supporting clean energy, and addressing unsustainable development, energy use, water quality, and insufficient adoption of renewable resources.

"I talk to a lot of people in my profession, and people's attitudes are generally bad. There is a lot of misinformation and cavalier attitudes everywhere. Need to create more awareness and genuine concern."

"There is a problem with the way we vote in Waukesha County. We need to vote in support of the environment. People need to be educated and there's a need to repeat presentations like tonight so that people learn about the need to change and how they can change."

"Education and awareness need to be brought up. People need to see the data and then people will see the need. CO2 needs to be reduced. Take the politics out of it. Clean energy brings sustainability, and it will save you a lot of money over the long-term. Any reduction in CO2 will benefit everyone. People need to be willing to take a stand as to organization."

"I am concerned that I am not very aware, and I think the community level awareness and consciousness is not high. I think people are unaware of where stuff comes from and where it goes."

"My main concern is the political reality in Waukesha County which impacts energy use, development, and water quality. We have a lot to push against in Waukesha County"

because politics totally influences individual understanding. For example, Delafield is developing houses in farm fields and none of them have solar installed. In comparison to places with laws and policies protecting water and encouraging renewable energy, we in Waukesha County are stuck."

Chemicals in the Environment

Participants expressed concerns about chemical use on lawns and trails, including herbicides and pesticides, runoff impacting water quality, health risks from "forever chemicals," lack of communication from utilities, and the effects on local wildlife. Many want chemical-free natural areas and worry about children's exposure and threats to the food chain.

"There are some native plants on the Lake Country recreational trail, but the utility company uses harsh herbicides to control vines and vegetation rather than simple cutting. There are monarch butterflies on the trail that are impacted. The utilities don't communicate well. Want natural areas that are chemical free, but don't trust anything; it's all building up in us."

"Chemicals are a big concern; neighborhoods that don't use chemicals to control lawns are impacted by newer neighborhoods that do use them because of runoff. The City of Waukesha uses water from Lake Michigan, other communities may need to. PFAS is everywhere and its very expensive to test private water wells for these types of chemicals. Healthy drinking water is a big concern."

"We live in an area with rivers and lakes. I am very concerned about herbicides and pesticides that are used on lawns and in parks. When we have rain events, the water simply dumps these chemicals into our lakes. I can't understand why we don't tolerate weeds. I am especially concerned about kids playing in the parks with all these chemicals. I'm also concerned about how these chemicals affect the food chain."

"Pesticides/insecticides to maintain the perfect lawn. The obsession with perfect lawns. There could be opportunities for insects, birds and animals. I think it is too much."

"Worry about PFAS - forever chemicals – seems to be interest/concern about this, but not a lot of knowledge."

Energy

"I'm concerned about how much energy we use and how it's generated. We need more renewable and more efficient energy sources. Heat pumps now can be used for both air conditioning and heating. A big chunk of our problem comes down to energy use."

"My main concern is energy use and that our electricity is produced largely from fossil fuels. I'm concerned about improving energy efficiency and having low carbon sources for electricity production. I'm concerned about distribution - electricity production needs to be decentralized so that everything everywhere is producing electricity."

"My main concern is the need to move away from fossil fuels to clean sources of energy since there is way too much carbon in the atmosphere. I think our society is moving at a

snails pace when we need to be moving at the speed of light on decarbonization, since we already experiencing the affects of climate change. Related to this, the high energy demand of data centers and AI is causing our energy demand to increase drastically when instead we need to be reducing our energy use. If these companies locate their facilities in Wisconsin our energy prices will increase. We need policy to reduce the energy needed for this technology and support it with renewable sources.”

“Energy use, in particular with increased use of AI”

Climate Change and Carbon Footprint

“Climate change. We need to reduce our large carbon footprint and carbon pollution. I’m concerned about Waukesha’s water usage, what with radon and decreasing groundwater. And plastics everywhere. And supporting biodiversity and fighting invasive species.”

“I am most concerned about global warming and climate change. We live in a populated area with too many cars and a lack of public transportation. We use a lot of energy. There is not nearly enough education about reducing our CO2 production. The presentation tonight definitely demonstrated it. We need to have more education like this. People are busy with their everyday lives and don’t think about it.”

“Political situation doesn’t allow for the truth about global warming.”

“The climate change impacts on WI.”

“What makes me hopeful is events with organizations coming together. Like the NO KINGS rally to voice concerns together, outside of our little silos. We need to reduce our carbon footprint. It would take 8 earths for everyone to live like we do. Dissension is a problem, wherein we are not co-evolving. Everyone has to be involved, sharing, speaking, so the whole thing moves forward.”

Air Quality

“Air quality due to the fires in Canada impacts people who are required to work outside. This could be a disaster. I work at home, so it doesn’t impact me as much.”

“And air quality from the fires and exhaust from vehicles. I have family members with asthma who are affected. I’m in the solar industry so I see that we can make a change, we can try to undo what’s been done.”

“Wildfire Smoke.”

“I’m concerned about emissions. Waukesha County isn’t the worst for suburban sprawl, but I’m still aware of how much time we spend in cars. And there’s just not much within walking distance. I live near where they’re tearing down the UW-Waukesha campus buildings for a mixed-use residential development. We’ve asked for a small grocery store to be included, but nothing’s been offered.”

Other Concerns

Bike Paths, Hiking, and Trees, Agriculture, Transit, Impacts of Manufacturing

"I have a manufacturing background, and I really love manufacturing. Here in Waukesha, we have quite a few large industries. These industries need to be clean, but that is a tough row to hoe because there is a short-term benefit in being dirty. We need the employment, but we need the employers to be responsible."

"I am most concerned about transportation. We need more public transportation, and it needs to be multi-modal. This all has a social aspect. All of us need to connect with other people. We need to give folks the opportunity together and lots of folks need other options in transportation, such as older folks on electric bikes. We need to make sure that all parts of the system connect, and this will also reduce CO2."

"Too much driving polluting the air. Need more public transportation."

"I care about lots of things: water, flowers and trees, biking paths and hiking, parks and nature preserves, educational events. Everyone can relate to some part of the environment and find a reason to care about it. The avenue is different for different people, but we can help each other with our interests and connect. We come together with respect for each other and for each one's part."

"Consolidation of farms into huge herds."

Round 3 Question: Finish this sentence: Now is the time for what?

The most frequent responses to this question involved changing personal behaviors and engaging with others in respectful conversations that may move them to personal awareness and personal and collective action. Thus, many participants linked changing personal behavior to engaging others to do the same through conversation and example. Many participants emphasized the need for civil engagement and advocacy while others said that now is the time to make an impact on shifting what our community values.

Community Conversations and Engaging Others in Our Community

Participants emphasized the urgent need for respectful conversations, collective action, and joyful connection to address societal and environmental challenges. They advocated for perseverance, community involvement, and opening opportunities for young people. The group highlighted the importance of reimagining solutions, setting positive examples, and increasing efforts for environmental protection. Personal reflections revealed feelings of isolation and nostalgia, alongside hope for a future built on understanding, cooperation, and purposeful engagement with diverse perspectives.

"Now is the time to open gates, opportunities, options for young people. They tend to be concerned mostly about their own needs. We need to give them something bigger to think about. We need them to feel safe and to open up to others' needs."

"Now is the time for respectful conversations. People are disconnected, angry, and fearful. The Guidelines for this event are very useful in helping people connect, to understand and accept each other, and find common ground. Then we can decide to act together."

"Now is the time for collective action. Given the dire situation of our earth, we need civil discourse to lead to working together for our earth."

"Now is the time for Joy, for dancing with each other, for overcoming fear, sadness and anger. We need to listen and interact with people with different views and ideologies from an authentic position. We need constructive conversations. We can't bring people into connection without joy, making it fun and purposeful."

"Now is the time to persist and persevere. I feel isolated but need to be heard. I need to be part of a community and not give up when it feels hard."

"Need to become involved, at whatever level you can."

"We need to reimagine. Generally a conflict avoider so avoid getting involved in difficult situations; Interested in the No Kings protest, but concerned about what would happen, ended up going and it was hopeful and powerful. I want to work from a place of hope."

"Now is the time for community. Less I, it needs to be more we we. Everything I do affects everyone else. You start in your local community. It is not my garbage service. It is how this garbage service, for example, affects us all."

"Now is the time to be a good example to others. Do whatever you can in your lifestyle that will help the rest of the world. Whatever it is, heat pump, electric car, etc. You also need to express yourself to others in order to help the future."

"Now is the time to increase our effort for the environment. We are all doing something and now is the time to increase it. Pick one area, focus on it and work together but hit it hard. As a sidenote, I really miss June bugs. I have very fond memories of how much my mother did not like June bugs, but I always found them interesting. It makes me sad that we don't have as many as we used to."

"Time for dialogue. We're here, in a room full of people, at night after a long day, and it's giving me hope. Social media puts us in our silos. People get offended. Communication is becoming a lost art form. We can take micro actions. We can't control others but we can do something and inspire others."

"Now is the time for someone taking the lead, giving encouragement. Taking the social pressure off people to make changes to do things to help the environment."

“Take time to act alone or with groups.”

“Dialogue expressing one’s own truth. Many are uneducated. Be open to learn new things.”

“Events like tonight. It’s time for collective action. My family gardens, has solar panels, but we’re the only ones in our neighborhood. How do we come together? Is there something we can do as a group to move the needle and get others to pay attention?”

“I’m in agreement with all in the group. We need collective action, to get going on that. We can’t depend on the government.”

“Gentle reminders, ongoing education aka small bits of info over time.”

“To get people to do “One Simple Thing” to help their communities.”

“Speak truth to power. Focus on community and take care of each other. Stop short-term thinking and think long term. We need to stop thinking about the election cycle of the next 2 yrs, 4yrs, or even 10 yrs, but instead plan for the next 50 or 100 years. Before we didn’t know the damage we were causing, but now we know so our actions are intentional. Accepting short-term benefits at the expense of long-term stability is the source of our problems. Our political environment now is not as it’s always been and is not the way it will be in 10 years.”

“For collective action. Thinking that we can each make a small individual change and stop there feeling good about ourselves, or conversely, taking on guilt that we as individuals aren’t making enough individual changes is wasted energy. We need to be talking to others about climate change, keeping the conversation going even when people disagree to understand their perspectives, building a movement which includes many perspectives, and taking collective action to get government policies and major industrial sectors involved in solutions.”

“Step up with courage – need more. Can feel ‘bit beat up these days’. Encourage each other at churches, schools. Speaking out. Let companies know.”

“Become educated and to educate. Be committed and become more active. Address with actions committed to sustainability needs. There is plenty of opportunity to get involved in Waukesha Co. I learned a lot about solar recently, and septic systems.”

“Looking for a place / how to ‘plug in’ where I can use my career skills for sustainability. Feel a fierce urgency of now.”

Changing Personal Behaviors – Individual Action

Participants emphasized that now is the time for personal and community action, environmental consciousness, and behavioral change. They advocated for reducing the use of harmful

products, plastics, and individual carbon footprints. The comments highlighted the need for education, advocacy, and humility, urging people to connect with the land and prioritize the common good. Concerns about water supply issues and the impact on future generations were voiced, with calls for innovation and incremental steps to address environmental challenges.

“Now is the time for community action. We need to keep ourselves open to hear different perspectives. We need to commit to the common good, common ground, rather than act solely as individuals, not wanting to do what the community needs.”

“Now is the time to change behaviors and share the message to start small. Reduce a little bit every day. Stop using RoundUp and other harmful products. Help people realize what kind of impact they can have.”

“Now is the time to act as individuals in more sustainable ways. Stop the use of plastics. Putting plants in the yard to attract bees and other helpful planting. Letting our representatives know what we need to focus on. We need someone who can get the nation focused. The UK gives grants to people for innovation. We need high-profile influencers. It’s all of our problem. We can start with the little things.”

“It’s time to Wake Up! Realize what is happening and do something about it. I feels genuine compassion for the next generation and what they are being left. We can control this and make it better, but nobody seems to care. Water supplies are getting screwed up. Williams Bay on Lake Geneva has major water supply problems. Portage had to shut down its water supply because of nitrates.”

“Need to take action.”

“Now is the time for each one of us to look at our carbon footprint. How can we decrease it? We need to teach ourselves, our kids, and their kids about reducing our carbon footprint. Each of us can do something and each step counts.”

“Now is the time to be environmentally conscious and apply that consciousness to everything. I want my kids, their kids, and their kids to enjoy what I have enjoyed, and we must apply environmental consciousness to our lives today.”

“For whatever you can do. It’s better than nothing. I’m skeptical that “Now” is the time. There’s an old, I think Jewish, saying: “When is the best time to plant a tree? One hundred years ago.” People need to snap out of it!”

“Many people understand that there’s a problem, but the problem is with putting guilt on the individual –and that’s what big companies do. It’s time for advocacy and awareness. But even if everything were to change materially, we still must change our world view and our connections with the land. We need humility and mental change to accept that we are a small piece of the cosmos.”

“Personal responsibility. I need to do something and not worry about someone else.”

“Change – Don’t like to be a cop. We have way more stuff than we need. On birthdays, don’t buy things, rather spend time together.”

“Now is the time for everything. Some buy electric cars, some put in solar panels, it needs to be from the heart to do the things that matter.”

“Personal responsibility. I need to do something and not worry about someone else.”

“Change or Action – Don’t purchase water bottles or packs of water. Use more organic things to limit chemical use.”

“Change – Taking more actions that protect and improve the environment.”

“Teaching and learning. Check sources. Be able to have mutual understanding conversations.”

Civic Engagement

Participants emphasized the need for civil engagement and advocacy, urging action such as contacting Congress and supporting policies like carbon taxes. They called for holding companies accountable for emissions and rewarding sustainability at the community level. The group stressed the importance of political will, honest conversations, and stronger regulations, such as the Clean Water Act. They advocated for collaboration beyond party lines, involving both individuals and industry to address environmental challenges and create lasting change.

“Now is the time for civil action and civil communication, not uncivil silence.”

“Now is the time for being more involved. The Citizens Climate Lobby works on carbon tax. We allow people not to pay for their use of energy and for their behaviors. Members of congress should be able to do something. People need to integrate their lives to accommodate the community.”

“Now is the time for taxing behaviors, like companies creating emissions and greenhouse gases. We should award sustainability at the community level – both businesses and individuals.”

“We need to advocate for these issues and contact Congress about them.”

“To change your views into political will. Technology can be there and do things, but unless there’s a change on a political level, nothing will change. Policies can change if people say they won’t take it anymore.”

“Time for honest conversations. In an ideal world we put aside politics, because we have more in common than not. We need stronger policies and regulations at state and local levels. Ex. The Clean Water Act was regulation.”

“Individual action: speak to officials at ALL levels.”

“Get the politics (party loyalty) out of it! Use common sense; we all need clean environments, so must collaborate. Stop flipping policies back and forth every time a new person gets into office.”

"Industry and government to come together to help solve large problems that individuals cannot solve by themselves."

"Now is the time for more and larger local action and advocacy to municipalities to help local communities get things done in the local communities and areas."

"To vote all politicians out of office and start anew."

"Engage decision-makers. Creative solutions. Address economic issues. We are at a crossroads. Used to not be political, now can't avoid it. Trying to get in some activism. We can do a win-win."

"Taking local action, work locally. Take responsibility while collectively telling political leaders to step up or step down. No more corporate donations."

Changing Community Values

Some participants emphasized the need to reject material excess, prioritize sustainable and dense community planning, and shift toward sustainable models of living. They called for unity, honesty about environmental realities, and connecting global warming with poverty and justice issues. Thoughtful, long-term solutions, quality education, and environmental campaigns that promote simple individual and community actions toward sustainability. The urgency for action was clear, stressing that continued delay threatens irreversible changes to the world as we know it.

"Now is the time to give up greed. Someone just built a 18,000 sq ft house on a lake in Oconomowoc. Why do people need so much? My daughter gets manicures every week. My neighbor spends so much money ordering things and having them delivered overnight. Do we really need new sheets delivered the next day?"

"We need to get rid of mini mansions – not just \$10MM houses, but also 1MM-\$2MM houses! Think beyond the 1% of entitled people. Focus more on a Scandinavian mode of living. Build dense communities and provide more open space and common areas for communities. Mixed use is a starting point. Need sustainable planning and communities. Mass transit would be great."

"Open one's eyes for action. There are too many deniers, people who want to push our environmental problems down the road or say it's not happening. They're too concerned about their day to day lives, and in 20 years it will be too late."

"Now is the time for unity. Unite for the common good."

"Human beings are part of nature. Support every creature."

"Time to be honest about where we come from and where we currently are."

"Time to tie Global Warming into the other issues that are going on in the world. People in poverty are the most affected. We need also to look at Racial and environmental justice. These things need to be tied together."

“Time for thoughtful long-term solutions and quality education. The more you think, the more you do. There’s no easy one and done. Quick and easy doesn’t work in the long run. We need things that will hold into the future. Scandinavia has worked out lots of possibilities. City, forest and Green Energy policies. We’ve been far too slow and coming up with wrong solutions.”

“Action. The philosophical questions, the politics, the laws, the personal opinions, will never end. But the physical world as we know it can end, and is already changing. We can’t go back to how things were. There is no more time to delay.”

“Change. In some ways, we need to change back to efforts that originated in the 1970s such as “give a hoot don’t pollute” or “reduce, reuse, recycle” campaigns. Rinse plastic bags. The country was on a good trajectory, but we backslid and changed for the worse. We need to be aware, increase education, and educate children.”

Recycling and Changes in Consumption

“More recycling. I saw that someone was making gasoline from plastic, and lawn chairs from (recycled) plastic. There’s a lot of research being done on plastic.”

“Teach more people about recycling and its benefits.”

“Using what we have, borrowing, renting, asking ourselves “do I need this,” “how will I feel about this purchase in 30 days,” or “can I find it somewhere else?” Refilling and reusing items to avoid single use plastics.”

Better Community Planning

“Everybody needs to be involved, all generations of people. Need green spaces and we are running out of natural spaces.”

Connected Conversation

This unstructured time gave participants the opportunity to speak with others openly in cross dialogue and allowed participants to follow up on each other’s responses from the previous rounds of discussion.

Some of the conversations focused on broader individual actions participants can take, such as getting involved in organizations and politics. For example, “We need to go to town hall meetings. Tell them what you want. Canvass for the people you want to win in local elections. Engage.”

Some groups endeavored to understand others’ suggestions and resources, such as asking about solar arrays and ground installation. Other groups focused on education, such as the importance of learning from indigenous people, reading, and of teaching children.

While participants’ interests and opinions varied, most appreciated and acknowledged that the format of the program resulted in positive feelings of connection. For example, “We need way

more facilitated conversations to bring opposing groups to bridge the gaps, with conversations that are productive and feel good, everyone feels heard.”

Parting Pledge

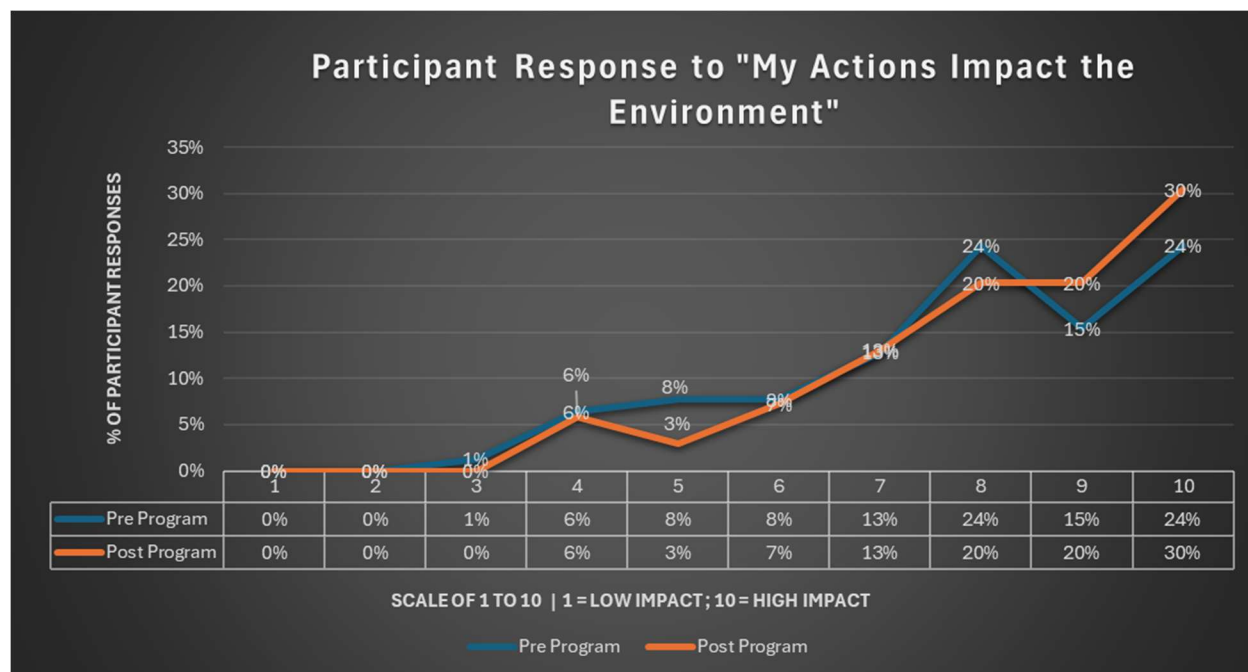
Responses to the question “What’s one action you’d be willing to personally commit to in the following month?” are recorded below. Not all groups had enough time to ask participants to make a “Parting Pledge”. Some individuals chose not to make a pledge while others felt that they were doing enough already.

- Expand my reach to local politicians.
- Find out what the local issues are and who is in charge.
- Education myself on sustainability, find out what is happening in our State government, and take some action.
- Use food items in the pantry before buying anything new.
- Make one trip to SVDP each week.
- Trying to figure out what to do, will continue messaging with Veterans
- Going to a meeting to learn about the impact of the Big Beautiful Bill on our communities
- Looking into Fossil Fuel Addiction
- Continue to educate the younger generation.
- Meeting with WI Congressional Representative to discuss climate matters through climate lobbying group.
- Planning to join “something” in the sustainability arena.
- I will express the need to be more sustainable to the people I meet.
- I will reach out to the solar contractor about getting a solar panel on a tool shed that I maintain on behalf of a mountain bike club.
- contact my representatives.
- contact my representatives.
- not rake my leaves
- be more systematic with my composting
- start a community group in Waukesha for the Waukesha County Green Team
- Find ways to reduce plastic water bottle usage by 87 year old aunt who does not have the strength for opening many types of water bottles. Possibly a water pitcher with easy to use spigot or a refrigerator with an in-door water dispenser.
- Try laundry detergent sheets that come in cardboard box instead of using detergent that comes in plastic bottles.
- Will not buy any plastic water bottles and will try out composting.
- Will work to educate sister about recycling.
- I will skip car washes.
- I will plant native plants for a nature center at a day care center near my house.
- I will write to my politicians regarding sustainability issues.
- I recommit to significantly reduce consumption.
- Reduce consumerism.
- Bike more.

- Keep walking.
- Bring environmental issues into my racial justice groups.
- Not buying new/buying more 2nd hand
- Lobby Representative Fitzgerald with Citizen's Climate Lobby
- Vote
- Engage with someone from the WCGT on NWF backyard certification in my community
- Spend more time in nature, even as it gets colder
- Re-using plastic
- Research road salt ecological impacts
- Stay connected to 'the civic game / life'
- Persist in reaching out to be engaged
- Appreciate hope

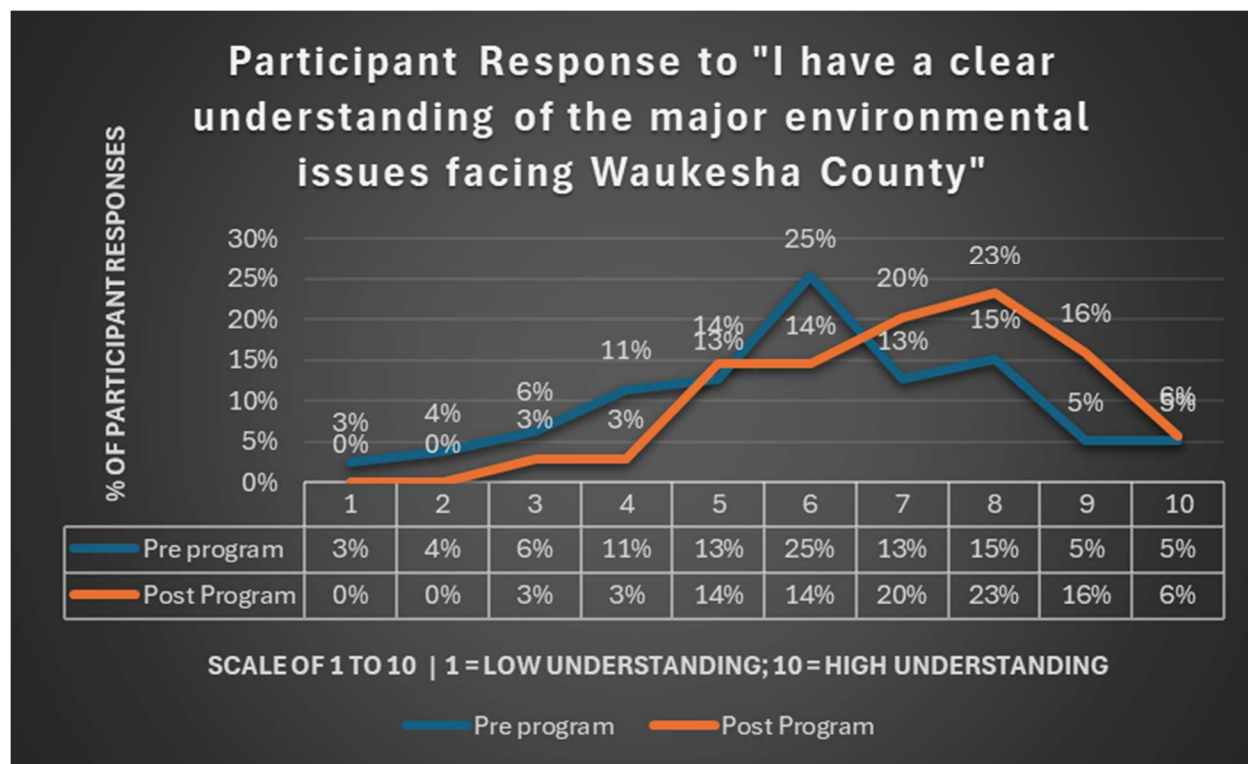
Feedback

Pre and Post Feedback Surveys Question 1: Responses rose from an average response of 7.8 pre-program survey to 8.2 post program survey.



Comment: *funny, on the way in I read this as my efforts to help the environment; now I read it as my actions as a living human being have an impact - negative? How did you mean it? I'd say I'm a 6 for believing my efforts have a pos impact, and a 9 for my actions may have a neg impact.

Pre and Post Feedback Surveys Question 2: Responses rose from an average response of 6.0 pre-program survey to 7.1 post program survey.



Post Feedback Survey Question 3: How willing are you to recommend this experience to another? Average response 9.0

Comments: Why or why not?

- It felt good to talk to others in the community; loved making connections
- enjoy community conversation in safe environment
- great experience-lots of good ideas
- I like the participation and learning the ideas of others
- It was great meeting new people and sharing concerns about the env.
- fun, good helpful info - learned new things
- is good for everyone
- we need in person dialogue!
- great ideas and exchange
- awareness, education, contacts, community
- great chance to discuss issues about sustainability
- in-person dialogue is so much more thoughtful and forward-moving than arguing online or ruminating in my head
- great conversations and ideas!

- it's good to learn about how others are thinking of issues
- great speaker and I enjoyed the small group activity because I could learn how others promote sustainability
- it was a great way to connect and learn more about what is happening in our communities
- respectful conversation and new ideas
- building community, getting new perspectives
- learning about the issues of others and their connections to the environment is eye opening and inspiring
- great info, loved hearing more about the flood data
- I think education and awareness of not only the current state of things but also what the past and future 100's looks like. Information without context is useless
- good speaker
- all the people who care in one room, taking time out of their lives to be here is encouraging
- great to discuss... how can people remain in touch?
- we need to find each other we can work together!
- positive, re-inforcing educational
- It was a great experience to meet people with the same concerns that I have about Waukesha County and the environment.
- I believe it is important for us a people to openly discuss the challenges ahead of us all as we all have differing opinions and ideas. Great setting to allow individuals to speak freely and respectfully regarding both their concerns but also their intent and action plans.

Post Feedback Survey Question 4: What was most satisfying or valuable about this experience?

- Lindsey's Talk + Conversation = same value
- Connecting with others
- dynamic discussion - sustainability and environment
- community conversation, with clear guideline and facilitation; excellent keynote presentation
- sharing and accepting ideas
- common desires and concerns, excellent insights
- hearing others perspectives Q3+Q4
- hearing the ideas of others
- learning
- conversations with presenters and group numbers
- confidentiality and freedom to speak about opinions openly
- the cross conversation - so civil, so intelligent, so thought provoking
- the talking circle - great to hear the ideas and perspectives of others
- fun, liked interacting with groups

- talking with others and learning how much everyone cares about the environment
- learning about sustainability
- human connection; I feel re-energized renewed hope
- small group discussion was great
- talking with others and sharing ideas
- good conversation good thoughts and ideas
- the discussions were excellent, great networking
- thought provoking discussions
- sharing
- discussing environmental and sustainability issues with common understanding
- guided conversation/climate presentation
- the engagement and diversity even amongst folks who all want sustainability
- hearing from the participants re: climate change
- cross-talk
- hearing other people's concerns
- hearing experiences and meeting people of like minds
- input from other members of the group
- information sharing from both linsey slater and from the members of our group
- slide show
- got to learn from others' shared experiences; got to organize my own thoughts by articulating them
- hearing the people in my group talk about their experiences
- meeting more people and connecting
- seeing how others are taking action
- expressing myself
- meeting people
- presentation by Linsey Slater was very interesting but listening to comments by the breakout group were equally interesting
- I learned from peers about what I DO to promote sustainability
- connecting with others and hearing their views
- challenging my existing beliefs
- the group discussion
- meeting kindred spirits
- the open dialogue
- new perspectives about the area I call home
- I enjoyed the discussion in our group and Lindsey's presentation
- meeting others with different backgrounds and their worldview
- seeing what people feel and know about environmental issues and how they impact them
- the presentation was somewhat informative but the discussion was the best part
- being with like minded people who care
- Being able to discuss and more importantly listen to others
- hearing different perspectives
- hearing the issues from an expert and discussing them with fellow citizens

- the last question: what are you going to do in the next month
- sharing ideas
- learning
- melding of minds, connecting with others
- hearing my groups comments and experiences and opinions
- great presentation by Linsey and the conversations
- the exchange of ideas and information
- hearing what others thought and want to see
- reinforcing any commitment by being with kindred spirits; gaining wisdom from my new friends
- sharing time and reflections with people I don't know
- Lindsey was exceptional - her COURAGE was inspiring. Great guest. lovely discussion in our group and great group leader
- seeing the data presented by Linsey Slater
- I would say the most satisfying thing about this experience was getting into groups and talking to each other about our own opinions.
- Being able to openly discuss issues with both like and differing minded people.

Post Feedback Survey Question 5: In your personal opinion, what are you most concerned about environmentally in your community?

- Lack of civility to talk about common good
- green space, water issues, bike paths
- green space loss, habitat loss
- cutting greenhouse gas emissions - reaching net zero
- sharing, teaching care of the future
- water
- water use and purity
- pesticides dumped on lawns
- herbicides and pesticides
- excess consumption and creation of garbage
- air quality
- waste - of food; not just the act of wasting but the mindset that wasting is OK or waste, not considered at all
- lawns-chemical use (toxins)
- use of plastics and chemicals like herbicides and insecticides
- climate change
- lack of
- energy use and development
- overdevelopment
- drinking water
- loss of native habitat due to development and the lack of replacement
- chemical contamination

- water pollution from herbicide/insecticides
- the lack of understanding that we must all work together to solve problems
- transportation, lack of multi-model (systems perspective)
- reducing the carbon footprint here on earth
- the need for people to learn about the climate problem and what they can do about it
- industry vs the environment
- our consumption
- habitat restoration; water quality
- people's awareness and attitudes
- clean water
- how global climate change will impact us here; waste and emissions from transportation
- how the political environment is downplaying environmental issues
- development
- the rising humidity
- consumerism
- ignorance
- climate change impacts to precipitation events and trends: droughts punctuated by intense storms
- loss of animal species from climate change
- over building
- urban sprawl and concrete
- water and land quality
- water, overbuilding
- green space, land conservation
- consolidation of rural economy (farms, processing plants, feed mills, etc)
- saving wildlife (birds, bees, etc)
- bad planning resulting in the damage to our forests in Menomonee Falls, as well as pesticides and mosquito sprays
- drinking water, transportation, and green/native spaces
- CO2 output from transportation and industry
- waste and over consumption
- awareness (see other comment)
- waste, single use plastic, energy mix, move to renewables
- clean water
- lack of the political will to do the right thing
- over development
- effect of wake surfing boats on lakes
- growth -> HOA's, destruction of native land, housing
- WASTE (use of non-recyclable materials)
- climate change and the inability of people to come together to implement solutions we already have. Some continue to deny reality and others stick their heads in the sand.
- protecting the water
- water quality
- lack of awareness and commitment by people in this area

- energy and water use, land use/soil conservation
- water quality - PFAS, microplastics, air quality
- clean water and air
- Water quality
- Green space conservation.

Post Feedback Survey Question 6: What is your age?

Age Range	Percent of participants
18-24	9%
25-34	6%
35-44	10%
45-54	7%
55-64	23%
65-74	29%
75+	17%

Post Feedback Survey Question 7: What County do you live in?

County	Percent of Participants
Waukesha	79%
Milwaukee	9%
Washington	1%
Jefferson	7%
Other [Walworth, Dane]	4%

Appendix A - Feedback Survey Forms

Now Is the Time Pre-Feedback Survey

Please answer the first two questions on a scale of 1 - 10									
1. My actions impact the environment									
Low Impact									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	High Impact 10
2. I have a clear understanding of the major environmental issues facing Waukesha County									
Low Understanding									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	High Understanding 10

How did you learn about this event? Check all ways you heard about or saw the event.

- ☐ WCGT email
- ☐ WCGT Social Media [FB, Instagram, Linked In, Next Door]
- ☐ Other Social Media
- ☐ Other organization's promotion
- ☐ Media [Waukesha Freeman, etc.]
- ☐ Flyer at library or retail shop
- ☐ Friend
- ☐ Other _____

Now Is the Time Post-Feedback Survey

Please answer the first three questions on a scale of 1 - 10									
1. My actions impact the environment									
Low Impact									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	High Impact 10
2. I have a clear understanding of the major environmental issues facing Waukesha County									
Low Understanding									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	High Understanding 10
3. How willing are you to recommend this experience to another?									
Low									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	High 10
Why or why not?									
4. What was most satisfying or valuable about this experience?									
5. In your personal opinion, what are you most concerned about environmentally in your community?									

What is your age?

- ☐ Under 18
- ☐ 18-24
- ☐ 25-34
- ☐ 35-44
- ☐ 45-54
- ☐ 55-64
- ☐ 65-74
- ☐ 75+

What County do you live in?

- ☐ Waukesha County
- ☐ Milwaukee County
- ☐ Washington County
- ☐ Jefferson County
- ☐ Other _____