

# Presentation of Participants Comments from Questionnaire

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It is fair to say that the notion of adaptive management was a common thread linking many hallway conversations with the messages of the more formal presentations of the conference. It is within this context that there is a need to engage the participants of this conference to gather their feedback so that the organizers and workshop participants can identify areas to improve, as well as reaffirm efforts that were successful. The monitoring questionnaire provided at the workshop was intended to serve this purpose. This discussion is to report the questionnaire findings in order to appreciate the comments that were offered, as well as to provide additional thought to the topic of monitoring.

The monitoring questionnaire consisted of eight questions or sub-questions, which included

Question 1. What is your interest in participating in the development and implementation of this monitoring program.

Question 2. (very poor 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 excellent)

- a) value of consultation process to the development of the framework?
- b) goal and objectives of the report
- c) proposed monitoring framework
- d) how well the framework components achieve the 3 main reasons for establishing the monitoring program
- e) completeness of the guiding principles

Question 3. Next steps for Ontario Parks in regards to Monitoring framework development and implementation

Unfortunately the number of respondents was very low, only 9 out of the approximately 80 participant audience members. Normally such a small sample size would limit discussion, however, their collective comments should still be valued for three reasons: they have taken the time to offer their comments: the participants represent a variety of organizations, including Universities, MNR, Bird Studies Canada, and Wildlands League; and their comments were reflective of other comments that were voiced during the workshop.

Some of their motivations for participating were that they were or will be involved in the monitoring initiative or in conducting research on Ontario Provincial Parks. There was also general interest in learning more about this topic. In addition, others expressed a desire to become involved in directing students towards monitoring projects, and as individuals or organizations who can offer their expertise to the design and information collection of monitoring programs.

All the questionnaire respondents were very supportive of the monitoring program, particularly in its intent to address information and management needs. In this context, a couple of individuals were pleased that most of the monitoring consultations were conducted with MNR staff; however, others were concerned with the limited range of organizational perspectives that were included. The need to involve First Nations participants was strongly voiced in both the questionnaire as well during the workshop. Alternatively, a few suggested that greater emphasis should be directed towards environmental protection, which would address another more general suggestion to prioritize the guiding principles set forth in the Consultant's report for monitoring. Some respondents found the proposed program confusing in its terminology (i.e. health versus ecological integrity) or why some concepts were principles and others were not, or some wondered if certain indicators (e.g. erosion and sediment deposition) were considered within the program. More detailed comments were constrained by the fact that the participants had access only to a summary of the 3 volume study.

No one underestimated the great challenge that lies ahead in implementing the monitoring program and responding to its results. The most mentioned concern for the proposed monitoring program was the need for financial support, and relevant staff. Certainly financial constraints should not come as any surprise, but it continues to be the sobering second thought to the implementation of any program. Similarly, some respondents asked when the monitoring program begins to produce results, how will Ontario Parks be able to respond? How will they reconcile differing objectives and guiding principles? These need to be considered as well.

Respondents also offered a number of useful comments in reference to the workshop format itself. Although an excellent forum for discussion, the opportunity to review and discuss the monitoring program was limited. The executive summary was excellent for what it provided, but it was not capable of providing the amount of information necessary to offer in depth feedback. Finally and importantly, everyone was very supportive and pleased to have the opportunity to participate in this initiative.