

**“Harvesting Consensus or Mining  
Conflict?: Public Consultation on a  
Natural Resource Strategy for Nova  
Scotia”**

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# Background to Consultation: Stimuli

- N.S. Cab Minister stated “time to review ban on uranium exploration” (2008)
  - Ban imposed in 1982 –no mining
  - 2007-8 Spike in uranium prices –mining potential?
  - Public concerns about disguised uranium exploration
- Environmental Groups and Woodlot operators issue statement calling for public consultation on a natural resource strategy (2008)
  - Clear-cutting 94% of harvest –environmental impact?
  - Declining wood supply – forest industry future?

# N. S. Forest Industry Facts -2011

- Direct Employment - 6,700
  - Rural Jobs –Important beyond raw numbers
- Annual Exports – \$725 million
- GDP % : approx. 2.9% (2009)
  
- Source: Natural Resources Canada website Statistical Profile/Overview/Nova Scotia, 2012

# Chronology of Process : Natural Resource Strategy

- Three Phase Process
- May –June 2008 –Phase One Community Meetings on Values for NR Strategy (Joint VP & DNR project)
  - Report Our Common Ground (March 2009)
- April 2009 – May 2010 Phase TWO Expert Panels meet w/ Stakeholders & Technical Experts
  - April 2010 Steering & Expert Panel Reports released
    - 2 forest reports – minority and minority
- Phase Three Strategy Development (March 2010 to May 2011) – within DNR
- Gov't Strategy Document The Path We Share (August 2011) released
- My survey of Phases One and Two participants
  - conducted November 2011-March 2012

# Research Questions

- How do citizens assess this particular process of citizen engagement?
- Effectiveness? Levels of Satisfaction?
- Perceived Strengths and Weaknesses?
- Is there Enhanced Legitimacy for decisions?
- Is there increased interest in future engagement?

# Data Collection: Sources

- Survey of Participants In Natural Resources Task Force
  - 227 responses of the 2000 names on e-mail contact and mailing contact lists– 11.4% return
  - 57 respondents participated in both Phases One and Two
  - 46 telephone interviews and 181 web surveys
    - Conducted November 2011 to March 2012

# Methods Issues

- Small Respondent Pool –Self-selected, not random
  - Some telephone interviews; some self-administered
- Limited Variation on Variables
- No Tests for Statistical Significance
- My Focus- the Means for Questions and Patterns of Responses to the Process Evaluation

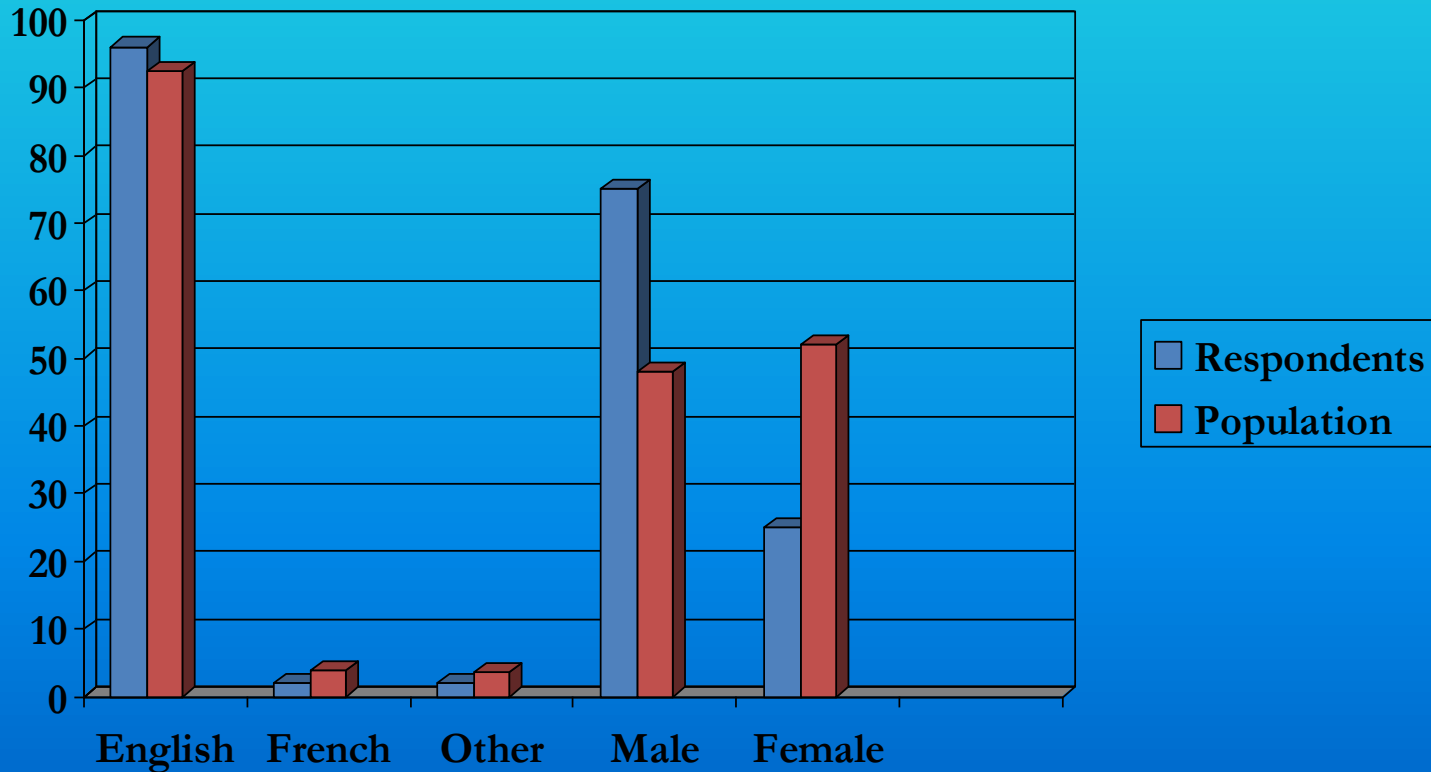
# Criteria for Evaluation

- Inclusiveness
- Perceived Influence on Process
- Deliberative Opportunities
- Openness/Transparency
- Citizenship Skill-Building



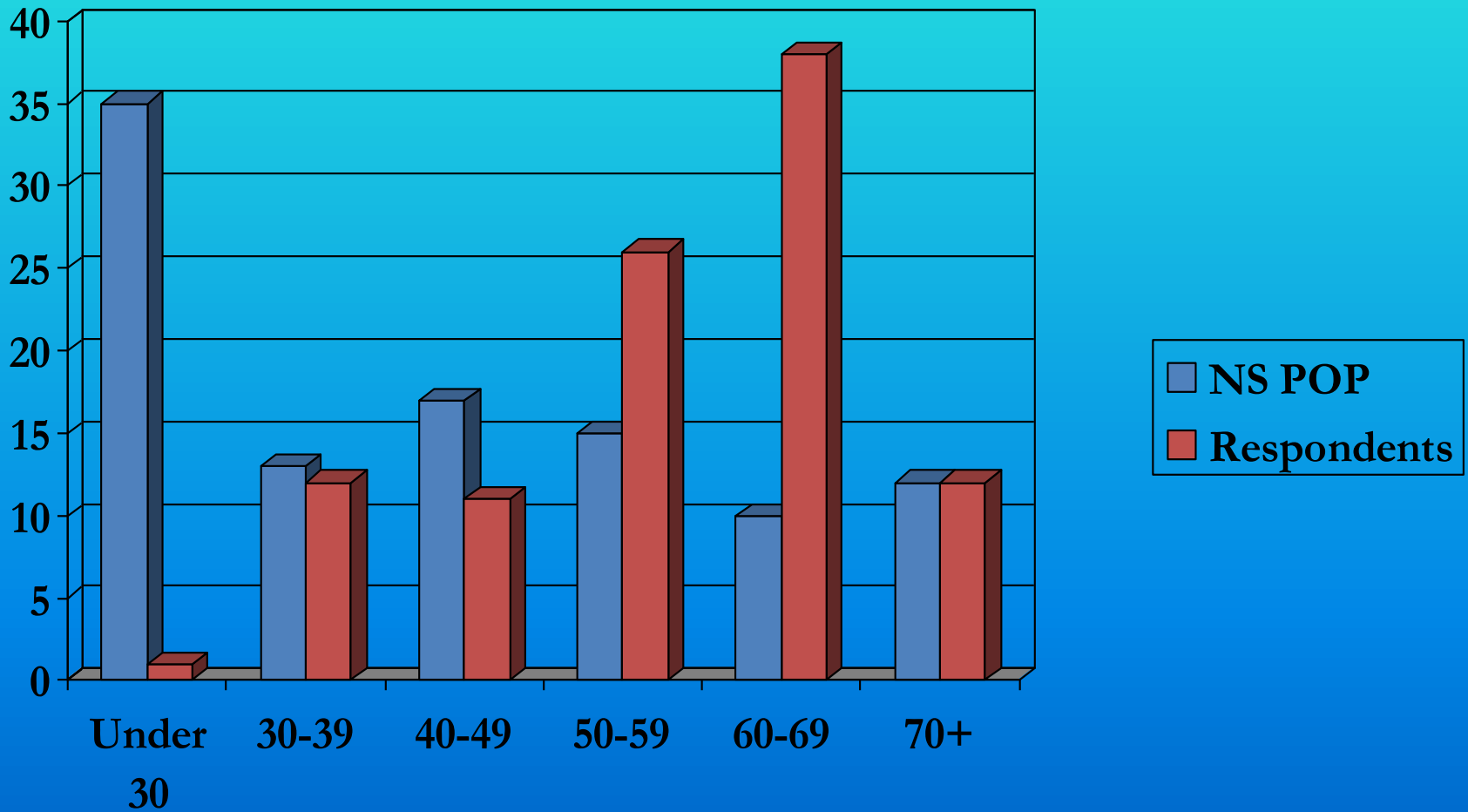
# Chart 1

Language and Gender Distribution: N. R.  
PH2 Respondents vs. N.S. Population

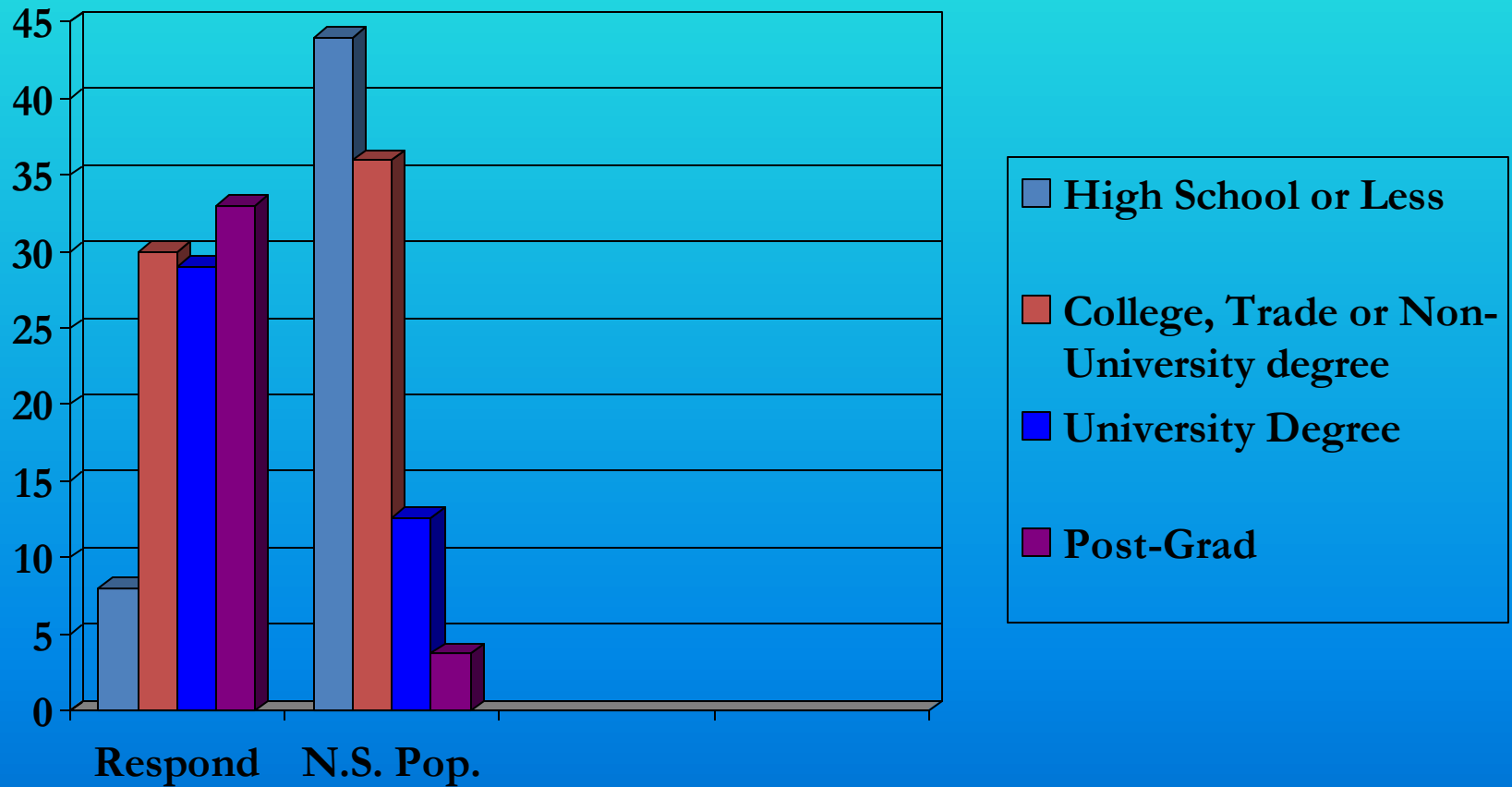


# Chart 2

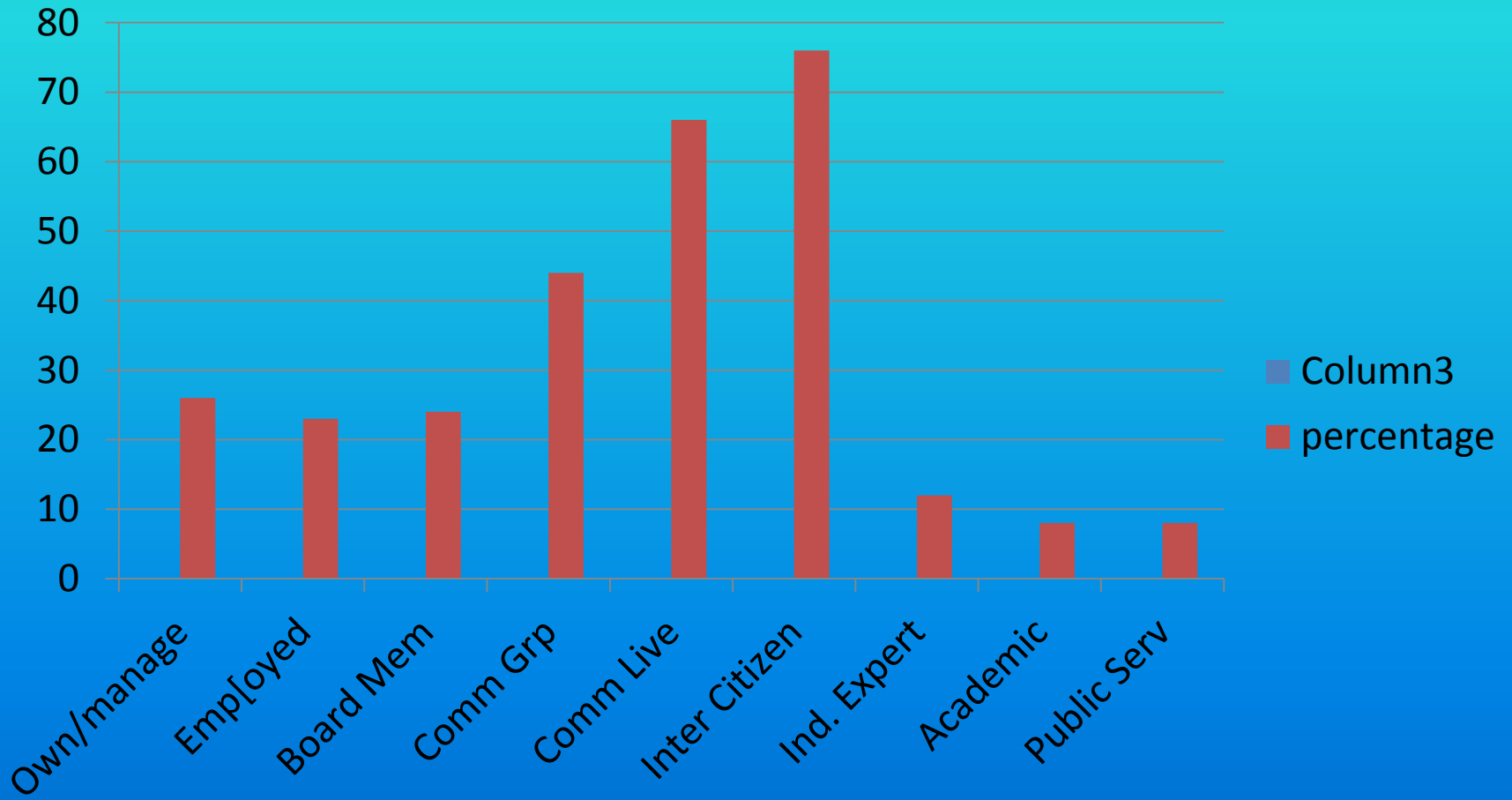
## Age Distribution- NS Pop vs. Respondents



# Chart 3 Educational Attainment N.R. Sample vs. NS Population



# Chart 4 Connection to NR Sector



# Chart 5 Knowledge of NR Issues in NS

RESPONSE	PER CENTAGE	N
Starting to Learn	4 %	6
Moderately Knowledgeable	42 %	64
Well Informed in one area	19%	29
Well Informed in Several areas	36 %	55
Total		154

# Respondent Features

- Highly Educated
- Predominantly Male
- Predominantly Middle-Aged and Older
- Strongly Linked to Natural Resources Sector
  - Many economic stakeholders
- Knowledgeable about Resource Issues
- An “Attentive Public” and NR Stakeholders

# Chart 6 Assessing Access

QUESTIONS	PHASE TWO Strongly Agree (SA)/Agree (A) % (N)	NR STRATEGY Strongly Agree (SA)/Agree (A) % (N)
Q20/30 INCLUSIVENESS/CITIZENS SAY	62 % (60)	73 % (114)
Q21/31 OPENNESS	34 % (58)	69 % (106)
Q24/34 ALTERNATIVE VIEWS	49 % (82)	79 % (121)
Q22/32 TRANSPARENCY	31 % (52)	40 % (63)

# Findings on Access

- Both Phase Two and especially the NR Strategy Process as a whole (i.e. including Phase One) were viewed as inclusive and incorporating alternative views
- Phase Two was not viewed as either open or transparent
- NR Process was seen as open, but not as transparent



# CHART 7 ASSESSING RESPONSIVENESS

QUESTIONS	PHASE TWO SA/A % (N)	NR STRATEGY SA/A % (N)
Q23/33 UNBIASED	17 % (29)	23 % (36)
Q25 REFLECT PHASE 2 INPUT	38 % (62)	
Q26 REFLECT STAKEHOLDER INPUT	31 % (50)	
Q35 REFLECT CITIZEN VALUES		35 % (53)

# Findings on Responsiveness

- Problem with Perceived Bias in Process.
  - 52% disagreed that Phase 2 was unbiased, and 57% disagreed for the NR process
- Neither the Phase Two process nor the whole NR Strategy process is perceived as reflecting the input received from stakeholders and/or citizens
- Conclusion: Significant problems on responsiveness characterized by these results

# Chart 8 Satisfaction w/ Reports

[1= Not at All Satisfied; 10= Very Satisfied]

REPORT	MEAN SATISFACTION	N
PARKS PANEL	5.6	93
BIODIVERSITY PANEL	5.2	96
FORESTS PANEL	4.7	123
MINERALS PANEL	4.6	88
STEERING COMM.	4.6	143
PATH WE SHARE Document	4.2	137
Our Common Ground	5.2	207 (Phase One Study)

# Chart 9 Satisfaction w/ NR Strategy Process

QUESTION	RESPONSE	N
Q36 Good Approach For Policy Input	46% (SA/AGREE)	71
Q29 Satisfied w/ Stakeholder Engagement	Mean 4.3 on 10 point scale	115
Q41 Participate in similar process again?	84 % Yes	128

# Interpreting Results

- Orientation of Opinion is Toward Discontent  
YET 84% would participate again
- What is the reason for such a strong willingness?
- Respondents Asked to Give Reasons for Answer

# Chart 10 Reasons to Participate Again

Reasons	N	%
Provides Opportunity for Citizen Input	20	17%
Chance to Present Your Ideas to Decision-Makers	12	10%
Contributing to Improved Policy Formulation	9	8%
Opportunity to Engage in Public Dialogue	9	8%
Preventing Special Interests from Dominating	7	6%
Public Engagement is Important	6	5%

# Sample Quotes

- “Although frustrating, I have to step in because if not a small vocal group will rule the day.”
- “It gives a chance for ordinary taxpayers to be engaged and speak”
- “I remain hopeful that through participation in engagement processes, however flawed, that better strategies, policies, regulations and practices can come forward.”

# Chart 11 Citizenship Skill-Building

Question	% SA/A	N
Learned a lot about NR Issues	56 %	85
Learned a lot about how to participate in community affairs	43 %	67



# Chart 12 STRENGTHS OF PROCESS

FEATURE	N	%
Gave Public Opportunity for Input/Say	30	28%
Open & Inclusive	16	15%
Educating Public About NR Issues	14	13%
Public Engagement/Dialogue Opportunity	14	13%
Stakeholder Input	9	8%
Voluntary Planning Role	9	8%
TOTAL RESPONSES	108	

# Chart 13 Weaknesses of Process

Feature	N	%
Special Interests Dominated Process	25	23%
Public Input Ignored/Not Listened to	18	16%
Phase Two Problematic –Disconnect, Bias	19	16%
DNR/Bureaucracy Influence on Process	12	10%
Time Line Too Long	9	8%
Uninformed Public Opinion Too Much Influence	9	8%
TOTAL RESPONSES	111	

# Chart 14 Changes to Make to Process

Suggested Change	N	%
More Effective Public Input	9	8%
More Continuous Communication	7	7%
More Impact of Rural /Resource Voice	5	5%
More Public Consultation After Panel Reports	4	4%
TOTAL N	106	

# Summary of Reactions

- A Substantial Public Appetite for Citizen Input
- Strong Orientation to inclusiveness and openness to alternative views that worked well in Phase One
- The Phase Two process was narrow, and generated suspicions about the real process at work, notably about the corporate and DNR influence on process, at the expense of public input

# Quotes on Influences

- “So I learned that science will not necessarily alter how key decisions are made. That the industrial influence cannot be underestimated. The big business influence, the influence of money, will trump the science.” – panel member
- “...as part of this openness and transparency and independence, the department was going through this great kind of pantomime of being hands off.” – another panel member

# A Path Forward

- More Policy Focus in Phase One
  - Background “Green Paper” as Starting Point
  - Public Input directed to options and policy directions rather than values
  - Challenges of Breadth vs. Depth
- Greater Linkage w/ Public Input Across Stages
  - Public Feedback Process Throughout to Phase Two end
- Linkage between Expert Panels and Steering Committee
  - No Post-report involvement

# Greater Transparency

- Considerable Feedback that Phase Two was largely invisible to public and stakeholders –both from stakeholders and panel respondents
- More posting of information during process
- More pro-active information distribution to those involved at key points.
  - A few commented they didn't know reports had been released until they learned it from my survey questions –one of whom was self- described as “attentive”

# Model for Future Consultations?

- DNR website states this process may be a model for the future
- What has this run-through suggested about future versions?
- Three Issues
  - the design of the stages
  - Public /stakeholder distinction
  - Locus of Consultation



# Consultation or Advice?

- Consultation – focuses on the operational and programmatic level and involves the agencies responsible for program design and the direct clients and stakeholders;
- Advice - addresses broad values or directions for policy. (Pal, 2010, 281)
- Phase One was Advice seeking; Phase Two was Consultation of a more limited traditional sort

# “Meaningful” Public Consultation

- Discussion is linked to policy decision-making; action oriented
- Participant roster reflects diversity of population
- Provides opportunities for balanced information about issues
- Process reflects principles of equality and fairness
- Results of the deliberative process must be communicated effectively to public at large
- (Turnbull & Aucoin, 2006, 6)

# Phase Two & Stakeholders

- Stakeholders –variable meaning in practice
- Economic Interests and Technical Experts in some cases
- Public at large in others
  - Public increasingly viewed as stakeholders in resource policy areas
- Technical Expertise was present but minor role in panels (as % of presentations)
- Attentive Publics, Industry and NGOs mostly
- Emphasis on all voices with “something to add”

# TABLE 1: Groups & Expert Panels

<b>PARTICIPANT</b>	<b>BIODIV</b>	<b>FOREST</b>	<b>MINERALS</b>	<b>PARKS</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
INDUSTRY	13	16	13	2	44
NGOs	16	11	6	36	69
GOV'T	17	11	15	17	60
INDIVID	0	5	2	6	12
ACADEMICS	4	4	1	0	10
TOTAL	50	47	37	61	195

# A Path Forward

- More Policy Action Focus in Phase One
  - Background “Green Paper” as Starting Point
  - Public Input directed to options and policy directions rather than values
  - Challenges of Breadth (Circles) vs. Depth (Presentations)
- Greater Linkage w/ Public Input Across Stages
  - Public Feedback Process Throughout to Phase Two end
- Linkage between Expert Panels and Steering Committee
  - No Post-panel report involvement a concern for several panel members

# Greater Transparency

- Considerable Feedback that Phase Two was largely invisible to public and stakeholders
  - –both from stakeholders and panel respondents
- Suggestion - More posting of information during process
- More pro-active information distribution to those involved at key points.
  - A few commented they didn't know reports had been released until they learned it from my survey questions –one of whom was self- described as “attentive”

# Locus of Consultation Process?

- Arm's Length vs. In-house?
- Respondents Comments –Dubious about ability of a department to critically review its own long-standing policies and practices
- Quote: “ Some of the people in DNR have been there since I started in the 70s.... Thinking a certain way, and we were trying to think outside the box, and some of the resistance we ran into within the government was because of that as well.” (Panel member)

# Alternatives: Arm's Length

- A real Strength of the Voluntary Planning model –trusted by participants
- Other Option –attaching policy reviews to legislative committees
- The more controversial the policy area, the more the “arm's length” element may be an issue
  - No complaints on Parks panel process
  - A number of complaints on Forest panel process



# Quote on DNR Conflict of Interest

- “I have a concern that that department is in a total position of conflict in that they wear at least three hats. [forests, parks and minerals] And all of these things are basically uses of land which are not compatible....So I fail to see how one department can wear three hats and represent the interests of three different areas.” - Phase One participant

# Conclusion 1

- IF the goal was to produce a final policy strategy that enjoyed positive public support, the results were decidedly modest, if not disappointing . However,
- The respondents welcomed the opportunity to participate and
- Saw this process as an important positive change in the way DNR makes decisions

# Conclusion 2

- Looked at as a model , the NR Strategy process needs tweaking for future use.
- A two stage process is seen as suitable for complex matters such as this, but
- the second stage needs to be more transparent and inclusive in its operation, including the operation of the Steering Committee
- The role of the Steering Committee and its linkages to the Expert Panels needs enhancement for policy integration purposes

# Resources

- Nova Scotia, Department of Natural Resources, Natural Resource Strategy, webpage at <<http://www.gov.ns.ca/natr/strategy/>>
- Nova Scotia , Department of Natural Resources (August, 2011). The Path We Share, A Natural Resources Strategy for Nova Scotia 2011-2020.
- Macias Rebecca, (2010) “Public Participation in Energy and Natural Resources Development: A Theory and Criteria for Evaluation” (CIRL Occasional paper #34).
- Pal, Leslie (2010), Beyond Policy Analysis. 4<sup>th</sup> ed.
- Turnbull, Lori & Peter Aucoin (2006), Fostering Canadians’ Role in Public Policy: A Strategy for Institutionalizing Public Involvement in Policy. Research Report P/07 Canadian Policy Research Networks

