

Conservation Communications Survey

Report of Key Findings

August 2001

I. About the Study

Boddy Media Group of Des Moines, Iowa conducted this study on behalf of the Iowa Conservation Education Council with funding provided by Iowa's Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) Fund.

2500 households, randomly selected from a statewide database, were sent the survey questionnaire that appears in the appendix of this report. A new one-dollar bill incentive and a paid return envelope accompanied the survey and cover letter. 550 surveys were returned and tabulated for this study. The surveys were distributed in June of 2001 and survey receipts were terminated on July 31, 2001.

At the 95% confidence level, a sample size of 550 generates a margin of error of approximately +/- 4.2%. This means that if this study methodology were repeated 20 times, 19 of those repetitions are expected to generate data falling within the +/-4.2% range of the current data.

This survey does skew toward more senior members of the population for three reasons:

1. It is a survey intended to target adults, not youth
2. The study is sent to "Head of Household" further discouraging young adults living with parents to fill out the study
3. Mail surveys of this nature generally generate a higher completion rate among older adults

The 2000 U.S. Census data shows a median age of Iowa's *adult* population (ages 18+) of 44-45. This study has a median respondent age of 52.5.

II. Introduction/Summary

A majority of adult Iowans says more emphasis should be placed on natural resources. Those who are most likely to give even stronger support to natural resource issues – calling the environment a top priority – include 55+-year-old women while those less likely to support the environment include mid-life males.

Nearly nine out of ten Iowa adults say they're likely or very likely to notice a message related to natural resources/the environment with local issues most likely to get their attention. Those whose support for the environment is strongest respond most positively to messages linking conservation issues to the legacy we leave our children. Those least likely to support the environment respond most strongly when the message implies job or business effects.

Of five general categories tested, *water quality is the conservation issue that generates the most interest among Iowans*, and they're most likely to back that commitment through recycling or purchase of environmentally friendly products. They're least likely to participate in Earth Day celebrations.

When asked to select one of four descriptors that identifies their relationship to the environment, *more Iowans would call themselves an “outdoorsperson”* than any other descriptor, but none of the names tested earns majority support. One in five Iowans say they do not identify with any of the descriptors (outdoorsperson, conservationist, environmentalist, sportsperson). Those who call natural resource issues a “top priority” are much more likely than any other group to refer to themselves as an environmentalist.

A strong plurality of Iowans (43%) say we should “preserve” our natural resources, but Iowans do not seem well connected to organizations from whom they might get conservation information. Of 15 organizations tested, fewer than one in ten Iowans support (through membership or other affiliation) 14 of them. Only the Iowa Farm Bureau breaks into any double-digit support, with 15% of these respondents claiming some affiliation to that organization. These data show these organizations are generally not all that familiar to many Iowans.

Conservation professionals – along with friends and family – are among the sources Iowans most trust for information about the environment. Those who are least likely to support the environment, however, tend to trust members of the agri-business community ahead of professionals like county naturalists or DNR employees.

Conservation jargon is not “very well” understood among Iowans, but a majority do say they understand most of the 21 terms tested either “very well” or “somewhat.” The terms least understood tend to be the most scientific in origin and/or they are relatively new terms to be presented to the general public. The broad concepts of “conservation” and “erosion” are the best understood of the terms presented.

III. The Audiences

Three conservation camps: pragmatists, emphasizees, and the choir. Seventeen percent (17%) say we should be pragmatic – the environment is important, but basic human needs come first. The environmental “choir” makes up 29% of this sample – these respondents see natural resource-related issues as a “top priority.” The majority of Iowans fall somewhere in between these two camps. Fifty-four percent (54%) say we should place more emphasis on these issues – but they fall short of calling natural resources a top priority. One particularly upbeat note for conservationists here: this study also asks respondents if they hold the view that “we should stop worrying about natural-resource related issues.” Only three survey participants (0% with rounding) check this response.

Throughout this report, we’ll look at these audiences divided into these three attitudinal camps (pragmatists, emphasizees, and choir) for the purpose of understanding when conservation messages are simply preaching to the choir vs. reaching out to a new constituency.

First, this report looks at the demographic make-up of these three camps with differences significant from the overall sample appearing in boldface:

%	Overall	Pragmatists	Emphasizers	Choir
Gender				
Male/Female	53/47	71/29	53/47	43/56
Age				
Under 35	15	12	20	9
35-54	41	54	40	37
55-74	30	22	30	36
75 and older	13	11	11	18
Education				
Less than HS	6	2	3	13
HS Grad	26	26	28	23
Tech/Some College	31	28	30	36
College Grad	21	27	22	14
Post-Grad	16	16	17	14
Marital Status				
Single	10	14	8	9
Married/Partnered	67	71	71	58
Divorced/Separated	12	10	9	18
Widowed	11	5	11	15
Have Children				
12 or younger	28	31	31	19
13-17	16	19	18	11
18 or older	71	67	68	79
Employment				
Full-time	55	70	55	47
Part-time	8	3	8	12
Retired	28	19	26	36
Other	9	9	11	5
Income				
Less than \$25K	20	12	17	30
\$25-49K	23	22	23	25
\$50-74K	20	23	22	15
\$75K or more	16	26	17	10
No Answer	21	17	23	20

The data above reveal:

The pragmatist is . . .

- More likely to be male than the overall sample
- More likely to be middle-aged and less likely to be 55-74
- More likely to be a college graduate
- Less likely to be widowed
- More likely to be employed full time and less likely to be employed part-time or retired
- Less likely to earn less than \$25K and more likely to earn \$75K or more.

The choir member is . . .

- More likely to be female than the overall sample
- Less likely to be young or middle-aged and more likely to be 55+
- More likely to have less than a high school education and less likely to be a college graduate
- Less likely to be married and more likely to be separated or divorced
- Less likely to have children 12 or younger and more likely to have adult children
- Less likely to be employed full-time and more likely to be retired
- More likely to have a household income of less than \$25K, and less likely to have a household income of \$50K or more

As you can see from the above, since the emphasizees outlined represent a majority of Iowans (54%), they rarely show significant statistical differences from the overall respondent pool. Therefore, this report will focus on the pragmatists, the choir, and the overall sample for purposes of making comparisons and developing strategies.

IV. Conservation Interest and Action

Respondents notice environmental issues. Only 11% of this sample say they are not that likely (9%) or not at all likely (2%) to hear or see a message related to natural resources/the environment. Compare that to 89% who say they are “very likely” (37%) or “somewhat likely” (52%) to see such a message.

Differences between pragmatists and the choir members are dramatic here. Nearly two-thirds (62%) of the choir members say they’re “very likely” to hear or see natural resources messages compared to just 10% of the pragmatists.

Local issues get the most attention. Almost two-thirds of these respondents (63%) say they’re “very likely” to pay attention to a message related to natural resources/the environment when it’s a local issue that affects nearby people and places. A majority are also “very likely” to pay attention when . . .

- The issue has an impact on the legacy we leave our children (60%)
- It’s a major issue that affects many people (58%)

- When it affects my job or business (55%)

Not quite half of these respondents are “very likely” to take notice when medical professionals believe a health concern is involved (49%) and just a little over one-third note hearing it from a friend or relative (34% - “very likely”). A plurality of 27% each is “very likely” to pay attention to a natural resource message when a faith-based organization expresses concern or when children say they learned about it in school.

Strategic Note: This state has often cited educating young people as a conduit for getting messages to adult audiences, but this research shows that might be the least effective method for reaching adult groups. Couching the issue in terms of its local impact, legacy, or breadth of reach might be a much stronger approach.

As you’ll see later in this report, respondents give friends and family high marks for trusting the natural resource information friends and family deliver. Yet here, only about one-third say they’re “very likely” to pay attention to the information of friends/family. This could mean that while they do trust their friends and family, it does not mean they discuss weighty issues with them. The information friends and family provide may be truthful but not of any real consequence. Or this could mean they’d trust friends and family when they deliver natural resources information, but they do not consider them “very likely” to do so.

Choir members care about legacy and pragmatists value jobs. A majority of pragmatists say they’re “very likely” to heed an environmental message only in one instance – when it affects their jobs. Choir members put a lot of stock in the legacy they leave their children – 79% say that’s when they’re “very likely” to notice the message.

**Message Impact
(Rank Order of When E-Issue is “Very Likely” to Reach Pragmatists)**

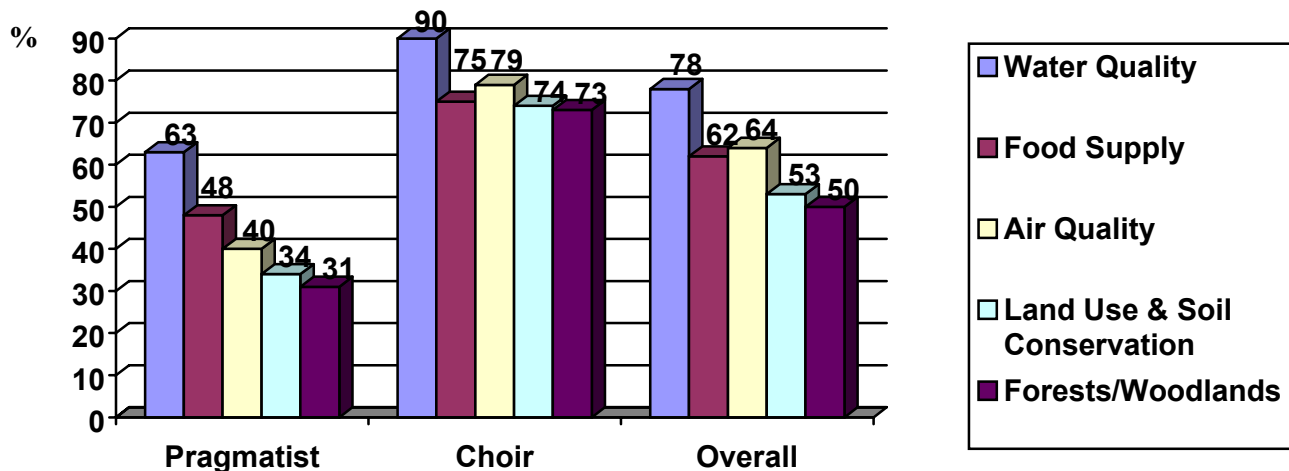
Circumstances when “very likely” to pay attention	Pragmatists (%)	Choir (%)
When it effects my job or business	51	62
When it’s a local issue	39	75
When it has an impact on the legacy we leave our children	30	79
When it’s a major issue affecting many people	30	77
When medical professionals believe it’s a health concern	27	64
When hear about it from friend/relative	16	47
When children tell me they learned about it in school	14	40

Iowans care about water quality and other natural resource topics. More than three-fourths (78%) of Iowans say they’re very interested in water quality as a topic, followed by air quality (65%), food supply (62%), land use and soil conservation (54%), and forests/woodlands (50%). Of these five topics tested, the lack of interest was only in the single digits.

Strategic Note: Water quality continues to serve as a “hook” to involve Iowans in environmental concerns, but their overall topic interests related to the environment are relatively broad-based.

Not surprisingly, the overall interest of the pragmatists is significantly suppressed compared to the overall sample, although 63% of this group join the overall sample in rating their interest in water quality first of five options offered. While this is a significant figure, compare it to the whopping 90% of choir members who say they’re “very interested” in water quality.

“Very Interested” in the Following Natural Resource Topics
In Rank Order by Pragmatist Preferences



Strategic note: The interest in water quality beyond any of the other broad issues listed may well be due to the high level of media coverage (much of it potentially startling) that this issue has been getting. A rapidly growing volunteer water quality monitoring effort – and the simple fact that probably all Iowans see value in enjoying good water quality – may come into play here as well.

Recycling is the number one way Iowans say they’ll back up their conservation commitment. More than nine-in-ten Iowans (94%) say they’re “very likely” (70%) or “somewhat likely” (24%) to participate in recycling activities. Eighty-four percent (84%) say they’re “very” (39%) or “somewhat” (45%) likely to purchase environmentally friendly products. Of eight conservation activities offered, only participating in Earth Day celebrations does not earn a majority of support from Iowans.

	<u>Very Likely or Somewhat Likely to Take Part (%)</u>	<u>Not That Likely or Not At All Likely to Take Part (%)</u>
Recycling	94	6
Purchasing “environmentally-friendly” products	85	12
Community clean-up day	67	30
Roadside clean-up	65	32
Water quality monitoring	62	36
Wildlife monitoring	56	42
Donating time or money to environmental causes	53	44
Earth Day celebrations	39	58

The rankings of the top five activities hold across all audiences – but the pragmatist’s interest takes a dramatic turn downward. A majority (53%) say they’re very likely to take part in recycling, but the next ranking activity (purchasing environmentally friendly products) only earns that kind of a support from a small plurality of pragmatists (18%). A majority of choir members, however, say they’re very likely to both recycle (80%) and purchase friendly products (57%).

Strategic Note: One of the most interesting findings here is perhaps the relative lack of interest in Earth Day Celebrations – even on the part of choir members. Of that strongly supportive camp, only 15% say they’re “very likely” to take part in Earth Day festivities. It may simply be that all Iowans are a bit pragmatic when it comes to supporting environmental causes – they may simply want some assurances their dollars and effort are going directly to help the environment. Donating time and money to some other entity and/or celebrating Earth Day – with no real clarity of purpose – may not reflect the direct impact they want to *know* they’re having on their natural resources.

“Very Likely” to take part in . . .

In Rank Order by Pragmatist Rating

(Significant differences from overall appear in bold face)

	<u>Pragmatist (%)</u>	<u>Choir (%)</u>	<u>Overall (%)</u>
Recycling	53	80	70
Purchasing environmentally friendly products	18	57	39
Community clean-up day	17	34	26
Roadside clean-up	16	32	25
Water quality monitoring	13	32	23
Donating time and money	4	21	11
Wildlife monitoring	3	30	18
Earth day celebrations	1	15	9

V. Conservation Attitudes and Descriptors

Iowa is a state of outdoors people. More than one-third (35%) of Iowans say they consider themselves primarily an “outdoorsperson” when presented with a list of four options including:

- Outdoorsperson (35%)
- Conservationist (22%)
- Environmentalist (18%)
- Sportsman (10%)

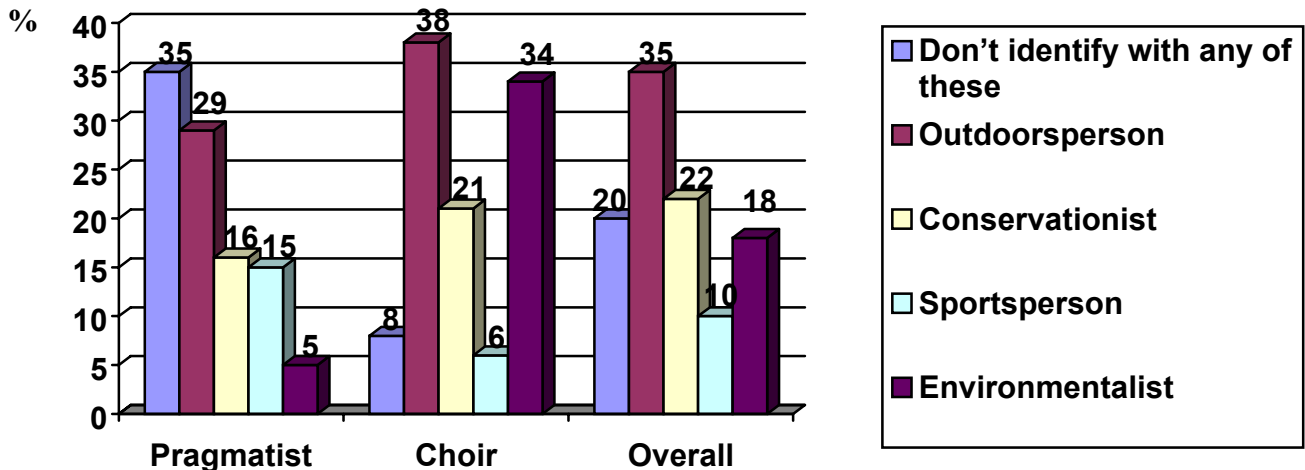
One-in-five Iowans (20%) say they identify with none of the above descriptors.

The pragmatists are the most likely to see no fit with one of these categories (35% vs. 20% overall) and also the most likely to favor the title “sportsman” (15% vs. 10% overall). Of the four names, pragmatists – like the overall sample – are most likely to relate to the term “outdoorsperson” but their support of that language is still significantly lower than the overall sample (29% vs. 35% overall).

Choir members also prefer the term “outdoorsperson” (38%) but only slightly when compared to the term “environmentalist.” (34%).

%

Consider Myself Primarily a . . .
In Rank Order by Pragmatist Preferences



Strategic Note: Speaking to people interested in the outdoors will likely get the ear of more persons than speaking to conservationists or environmentalists. A term that’s truly broad and inclusive, however, has not been uncovered in this research.

Iowans are preservationists. Forty-three percent (43%) believe that when it comes to natural resources, we should “preserve” what we have. Just over one-in-four (26%) want to “maintain” our resources. Not quite one-in-five (19%) want to “restore” what we have and 8% want to “sustain” our resources. Choir members drive the preservation interest with a majority of them (53%) checking this option from a list of seven possible approaches to natural resources.

Pragmatists want our resources maintained – not reconstructed or restored. No majority consensus for any of the seven approaches emerges from the pragmatists, but well over one-third (37%) say they believe we should maintain our natural resources – compared to just 21% of the choir members who say the same.

When it comes to natural resources, I believe we should . . .

In Rank Order by Pragmatist Rating

(Significant differences from overall appear in bold face)

	<u>Pragmatist (%)</u>	<u>Choir (%)</u>	<u>Overall (%)</u>
Maintain	37	21	26
Preserve	21	53	43
Use to our advantage	17	1	5
Sustain	13	5	8
Let nature take its course	10	4	5
Restore	6	25	18
Reconstruct	3	6	5

Strategic Note: This across-the-board lack of appreciation for reconstruction may stem from a general ignorance about what the term means, but this term was not tested here (See “Conservation Jargon” section of this report), making this pure speculation.

VI. Conservation Connections

Iowans have few conservation affiliations. Fifteen affiliations were tested, including organizations whose sole mission is conservation and others such as farm groups which sometimes promote conservation practices. Only the Iowa Farm Bureau breaks out of the single digits (15%) for having a membership connection within the past five years.

Strategic Note: Stating the obvious – lots of room for growth here. It appears Iowa has a large untapped pool of conservation choir members – Iowans who believe the environment should be a top priority – but they do not yet value joining the state’s more active conservation organizations. And remember, the majority of Iowans (54%) also say Iowa should place more emphasis on natural resource related issues. This means about ¾ of all Iowans should be pre-disposed to some kind of conservation affiliation and these organizations have memberships of generally 1-6%.

Further building the case for the potential of this untapped resource is the dramatic difference between choir members and pragmatists throughout this study – except here. Here the most significant finding is

the lack of significant difference between these two camps. Only in one instance – in the case of the Nature Conservancy – do we see the slightest of “bumps” from the overall sample. Seven percent (7%) of the choir members claim an affiliation with the Nature Conservancy compared to 3% of the sample overall and 1% of the pragmatists. Otherwise, the membership of these organizations shows no significant difference between the pragmatists and the choir members compared to the overall sample.

Presence of Organization Affiliation *

	<u>Overall Sample (%)</u>
Iowa Farm Bureau	15
Pheasants Forever	7
Commodity Groups	6
Service Organizations	6
Ducks Unlimited	6
Century Farm	4
Nature Conservancy	3
Sierra Club	2
Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation	2
Citizens for Community Improvement	1
Master Gardeners of Iowa	1
Iowa Prairie Network	1
Practical Farmers of Iowa	1
Iowa Conservation Education Council	---
Iowa Environmental Council	---

* Are you now a member or within the past five years have you been a member, or otherwise affiliated with any of the following organizations?

These organizations are not considered particularly trustworthy sources of information. Only two organizations are trusted completely or somewhat by a majority of Iowans for the information the organization provides. Fifty-three percent (53%) trust Ducks Unlimited “completely” (14%) or “somewhat” (39%). Similarly, 52% trust Pheasants Forever “completely” (15%) or “somewhat”(37%).

	<u>Trust Somewhat or Completely (%)</u>	<u>Distrust Somewhat or Completely (%)</u>
Ducks Unlimited	53	8
Pheasants Forever	52	7
Service Organizations (e.g., Rotary, Kiwanis, etc.)	48	9
Iowa Farm Bureau	48	17
Master Gardeners of Iowa	45	3

	<u>Trust Somewhat or Completely (%)</u>	<u>Distrust Somewhat or Completely (%)</u>
Commodity Groups (e.g., Pork Producers, Cattlemen, Corn Growers, etc.)	44	19
Iowa Conservation Education Council	42	5
Nature Conservancy	41	4
Iowa Environmental Council	40	7
Century Farm	38	3
Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation	37	6
Iowa Prairie Network	33	7
Citizens for Community Improvement (CCI)	33	7
Practical Farmers of Iowa	32	7
Sierra Club	31	17

With some variations in order, the top six most trustworthy organizations for the overall sample are the same as those for the pragmatists. And in terms of overall trustworthiness rating, few statistically significant differences appear between the ratings pragmatists give to these six groups compared to the choir's ratings. But among the *bottom* tier of trustworthy organizations – groups more specifically identified with environmental issues – the data show fairly dramatic differences in the trust ratings of the pragmatists vs. the choir.

Trust Completely or Somewhat
In Rank Order by Pragmatist Rating
(Significant differences from overall appear in bold face)

	<u>Pragmatist (%)</u>	<u>Choir (%)</u>	<u>Overall (%)</u>
Iowa Farm Bureau	54	46	48
Ducks Unlimited	53	53	53
Pheasants Forever	52	50	52
Service Organizations	51	43	48
Commodity Groups	50	41	44
Master Gardeners of Iowa	49	48	45
Century Farm	39	42	38
Nature Conservancy	34	52	41
Iowa Conservation Education Council	33	47	42
Practical Farmers of Iowa	29	32	31
Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation	29	45	37
Iowa Environmental Council	27	50	40
Iowa Prairie Network	24	42	33
Citizens for Community Improvement	24	38	33
Sierra Club	16	40	32

Strategic Note: These top six organizations (Iowa Farm Bureau, Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, Service Organizations, Commodity Groups, and Master Gardeners of Iowa) hold fairly consistent credibility for the pragmatists, choir, and general audiences. Until other organizations raise their profile and/or credibility, connecting environmental messages to these six organizations will likely give them greater weight with the pragmatists without sacrificing getting the message to the choir.

Many of these organizations are simply not familiar to Iowans. Nine of these 15 organizations are not rated by at least one-third of Iowans because they do not consider themselves familiar enough with the organization to give it a rating. Least familiar to Iowans are Practical Farmers of Iowa (44%) and the Iowa Prairie Network (43%).

	Not Familiar Enough to Rate (%)
Practical Farmers of Iowa	44
Iowa Prairie Network	43
Practical Farmers of Iowa	44
Citizens for Community Improvement (CCI)	41
Century Farm	40
Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation	38
Nature Conservancy	36
Master Gardeners of Iowa	34
Iowa Conservation Education Council	34
Iowa Environmental Council	34
Sierra Club	32
Pheasants Forever	24
Service Organizations (e.g., Rotary, Kiwanis, etc.)	24
Ducks Unlimited	22
Commodity Groups (e.g., Pork Producers, Cattlemen, Corn Growers, etc.)	20
Iowa Farm Bureau	18

VII. Recognized, Trusted Information Sources

Conservation professionals are the most trusted sources of environmental information. Only a plurality trusts any of the cited references “completely.” Not quite one-third (30%) say they trust the Department of Natural Resources completely as a source of information about conservation and the environment, followed by County Conservation naturalists (29%), friends and family (24%), farmers (24%) and both the Natural Resources Conservation Service and Environmental Protection Agency with 20% each.

Least trusted are legislators – in a close grouping with business and news media.

	<u>Trust Somewhat or Completely (%)</u>	<u>Distrust Somewhat or Completely (%)</u>
County Conservation naturalists	87	11
Friends and family	86	12
Department of Natural Resources (DNR)	83	14
Scientists	81	17
Extension Service personnel	80	16
Farmers	79	19
Natural Resource Conservation Service	79	18
Educators	75	18
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	70	26
Agri-business representatives	70	28
Business people	52	45
Legislators – state	42	56
News media	41	56
Legislators – national	36	62

Pragmatists tend to have greater trust of business community while choir looks to the scientific/naturalist community. In a top tier of those they trust, pragmatists say they trust somewhat or completely:

- Farmers (81%)
- Friends/family (80%)
- Agribusiness (73%)
- Extension Service (71%)
- County Conservation Naturalists (68%)

The choir’s top tier reveals a different ranking:

- County Conservation Naturalists (91%)
- Scientists (86%)
- Friends/family (86%)
- Department of Natural Resources (DNR) (86%)
- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) (85%)

In their top five rankings based on trust, the pragmatists and the choir only overlap when it comes to friends/family and the County Conservation Naturalists. The pragmatists bring farmers, agri-business

and Extension into their top tier, while the choir appears more likely to heed the word of scientists and government professionals in the DNR and NRCS.

Strategic Note: This study may be demonstrating the ability of the County Conservation Naturalist to play a more significant leadership role on conservation issues, considering the relatively high level of trust this position enjoys among both pragmatists and the choir. As the number one conservation professional for the pragmatists, farmers, too, hold potential to sway the pragmatists toward support of conservation causes.

Comparative Trust Rankings

In Rank Order by Pragmatist Rating

(Significant differences from overall appear in bold face)

	<u>Pragmatist (%)</u>	<u>Choir (%)</u>	<u>Overall (%)</u>
Farmers	81	77	79
Friends, Family	80	86	86
Agribusiness	73	62	70
Extension Service	71	80	80
County Conservation Naturalists	68	91	87
DNR	65	86	83
Scientists	60	86	81
Business	57	45	52
NRCS	51	85	79
Educators	49	80	75
EPA	47	75	70
State Legislature	27	46	42
National Legislature	23	43	36
News Media	21	49	41

“Famous” conservationists are not well known in Iowa, including Iowans. More than two-thirds (67%) of Iowans say they’re not familiar enough with immediate past DNR Executive Director Paul Johnson to rate how likely he is to increase interest in natural resources and the environment. Similarly, the time-honored work of Aldo Leopold goes relatively unappreciated by many Iowans with 64% considering Leopold “not familiar enough to rate.” The national conservationist Henry David Thoreau fares a little better (43% say he’s not familiar enough to rate), but it takes movie star status to be recognized in Iowa – and even then . . . More than one-third of Iowans (35%) say they’re not familiar enough with Robert Redford to rate his influence.

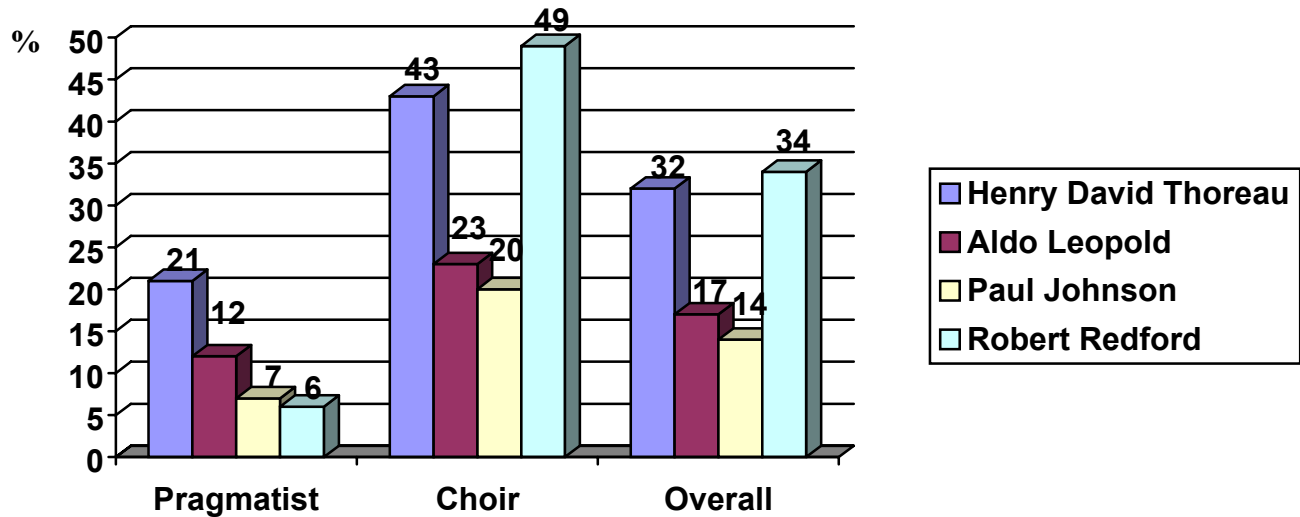
With the exception of Henry David Thoreau, the pragmatists are less likely than the overall sample to find the spokesperson “not familiar enough to rate.” That said, in no instance does it appear these examples would have any greater influence on the pragmatists than they would on the overall sample –

just the opposite. And as for the choir members, their preference for the Sundance Kid is clear: 49% say Robert Redford might be very or somewhat likely to increase their interest in the environment compared to just 6% for the pragmatists and 34% for the sample overall.

%

Very or Somewhat Likely to Increase Interest

In Rank Order by Pragmatist Rating



Strategic Note: If you want to preach to the choir, hire Robert Redford. As for the pragmatists, these data do not show us what will work, only what won't.

VIII. Conservation Jargon

Conservation terms and concepts are not well understood. From a list of 21 terms often used by conservationists in Iowa, only two are considered “very well” understood by a majority of Iowans. Fifty-six percent (56%) each say they very well understand “conservation” and “erosion.” The more scientific the term, it generally appears the least likely it is to be understood – with the exception of the broad-based concept of the “wise use movement” which was only “very well” understood by 6% of Iowans. Other terms clustering at the bottom of the very well understood scale are more technical in nature, including “ridge-till” (19%), “environmental indicators” (17%), “genetically modified organisms” (14%), “hypoxia” (9%), and “riparian buffers” (8%).

	<u>Understand Very Well or Somewhat (%)</u>	<u>Understand Not That Well or Not At All (%)</u>
Conservation	95	4
Erosion	91	7
Habitat	84	15
Wetlands	77	21
Prairies	75	23

	<u>Understand Very Well or Somewhat (%)</u>	<u>Understand Not That Well or Not At All (%)</u>
Global warming	72	26
Crop residue	71	28
Restoration	68	30
Diversity	67	31
Forest management	66	31
Environmental indicators	59	38
Stewardship	58	40
Ecosystems	57	40
Sedimentation	57	40
Stream bank stabilization	54	45
Ridge-till	50	48
Sustainable agriculture	49	49
Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs)	39	58
Riparian buffers	28	69
Wise Use Movement	26	71
Hypoxia	25	72

Choir members claim a greater understanding of terms. When looking at statistical differences between the choir and pragmatists compared to the overall sample, choir members rate their understanding higher for 12 of these 21 terms. Pragmatists rate themselves higher in understanding than the overall sample seven times. They also show a lesser understanding than the overall sample of just one term: “conservation.”

Understanding of Terms “Very Well”

In Rank Order by Pragmatist Rating

(Significant differences from overall appear in bold face)

<u>Majority of Responses</u>	<u>Pragmatist (%)</u>	<u>Choir (%)</u>	<u>Overall (%)</u>
Erosion	52	62	56
Conservation	50	67	56
<u>Second Tier Responses</u>			
Crop Residue	41	39	37
Wetlands	41	40	35
Diversity	40	31	30
Habitat	38	49	41
Stewardship	36	23	24
Prairies	33	38	32

<u>Third Tier Responses</u>	<u>Pragmatist (%)</u>	<u>Choir (%)</u>	<u>Overall (%)</u>
Sedimentation	28	29	22
Restoration	26	36	25
Ecosystems	26	31	25
Forest Management	25	34	25
Genetically Mod. Organisms	25	12	14
Global Warming	25	30	23
<u>Less than 25%</u>			
Streambank Stabilization	24	26	21
Sustainable Agriculture	24	23	20
Ridge-till	21	23	19
Environmental Indicators	20	25	17
Riparian Buffers	13	10	8
Hypoxia	9	11	9
Wise Use Movement	5	9	6

IX. Recommendations

These data show a state that does care about its natural resources but is not overly confident in its understanding of the jargon – and perhaps the issues themselves. These data imply that where past education efforts have been the most pervasive and intense and seem to have real practical value (recycling, and water quality, for example), the messages are largely getting through to Iowa’s adults.

These data also show that the strong sense many active conservationists in this state have of always “preaching to the choir” may be true, but has not translated into affiliations with conservation organizations – or even a strong willingness to donate time and money to environmental causes.

In short, these data reveal great opportunity to educate Iowans about terminology, issues, philosophy, and opportunities for action on behalf of our natural resources – even among the 29% of adult Iowans with a pre-disposition to care.

- Couch natural resource issues in terms of local impact, legacy, breadth of the issue’s reach, and job/business enrichment or expansion.
- Hook Iowans into natural resource related issues through their natural connection to water quality.
- Build on what appears to be a developing interest in buying eco-friendly products. Consider downplaying our past emphasis on Earth Day celebrations. When Earth Day celebrations are planned, include a practical work activity/opportunity to make them more attractive.

- Until better terminology is uncovered, speak to broad audiences as “outdoors people” and speak of *preserving* or *preserving and maintaining* our natural resources. Even when speaking to the choir, emphasize restoration over reconstruction.
- Promote conservation organizations/affiliations to the choir members. In looking at the demographics, reach out to women, mid-life and older, in less affluent households.
- Build awareness and image of conservation organizations across-the-board.
- Look for ways to include those agri-business people (including farmers) and conservation professionals who are trusted for their expertise on natural resource issues in outreach efforts. Explore ways to build strong relationships with these folks to ensure a good exchange of accurate information.
- Capitalize on the potential revealed here for “word-of-mouth” campaigns and promotion due to the trust placed in friends and family.
- Consider returning to the days of Teddy Roosevelt quotes or work much harder in teaching the Sand County Almanac.
- Recognize the great gap in understanding of conservation terms. Avoid their stand-alone use even with adult audiences. Explain terms with a sentence or two when used and develop much richer education to help more adults understand the most important terms.
- Recognize the relatively small impact of student learning on parent/adult learning and focus adult-intended education more directly on adult audiences.
- Make better use of naturalists and Extension personnel to reach the pragmatists and average Iowans. Of the five most trusted sources of environmental information, these are the only two categories whose missions include environmental education.