



Sustainability Input Forums

Input received in Dickinson, ND

PREPARED FOR



DATE
December 2023



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

North Dakotans of all backgrounds were invited to come together to share innovative ideas, knowledge, and perceptions related to reducing greenhouse gas emissions during the state's Sustainability Input Forums held from October 31 through November 8, 2023, in eight locations around the state. In addition, more than 100 people shared their thoughts via an online survey through December 5, 2023.

Input received through this process will assist North Dakota in forming the basis for sustainability planning and actions in 2024 and for years to come. Information gathered will be used to inform the state's participation in U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) program. North Dakota's Sustainability Input Forums are supported with a CPRG planning grant.

This report summarizes input received through conversations held in-person and online during three sessions in Dickinson. Subsequent input received through the online comment form are italicized and attributed to this report based on ZIP codes indicated.

CONTEXT

The North Dakota Sustainability Input Forums were open public meetings that were organized to be conversational and informal. The role of the North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality (NDDEQ) was to host and to listen, with the assistance of an independent facilitator.

NDDEQ's goals for the forums were two-fold: 1) hear what North Dakotans are thinking and doing related to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and 2) fuel conversation and connection between diverse stakeholders. To this end, conversations were held in a circle and lightly facilitated around a handful of core questions, as outlined in the following sections. Each session generated at least two hours of interaction, with comments provided by participants in the form of verbal feedback, comment cards, and online polls and chats.

Dickinson Input Forums were held at Stark County Veterans Pavilion. The Department of Environmental Quality had access to the entire building and utilized the large meeting space for each of the sessions. Upon entering, a small circle was created. A combination Bluetooth microphone/speaker was placed at the center of the circle and a camera outside of the circle to connect with online attendees.

Hosts for the forums were: Jennifer Skjod, NDDEQ; Allison Ahcan, ERM, Facilitator; Isabella Binger, ERM, Online Facilitator.

The attendees of these sessions, including online participants, offered an array of backgrounds. Individuals attending had experience within the oil and gas industry, agriculture industry, cattle industry, government, and agricultural organizations. A total of 18 people provided input from the Dickinson area.



1. CONVERSATION SUMMARIES

The forum was productive and enlightening, with the conversation focused on existing industries within the state and potential growth opportunities through greenhouse gas reduction grants. Discussion revolved around topics of community, energy, and agriculture. There was a common interest between groups as to how innovation can drive this funding in a way that does not further limit and restrict agriculture and oil/gas industries but instead fosters new technologies and techniques to meet the needs of the state. Individuals were worried about how regulations from this program will impact current businesses and emphasized that tactics already being utilized to reduce greenhouse gas emissions should be recognized and shown as examples of effective innovation.

Further details of discussion topics follow. Online comments from the region, but submitted subsequent to the meeting dates, have been noted in *italicized type*. Please note that bullets contain verbatim comments from Comment Cards, although similar points may be combined if mentioned more than once.

1.1 BENEFITS

Question: What BENEFITS do you see for North Dakotans as greenhouse gas emissions are reduced?

Participants pointed out that a major benefit of reducing greenhouse gas emissions is the economic opportunity it brings to the state. Innovation that can be brought to existing industries could include more CO₂ sequestration measures as part of agriculture and oil/gas production. Potential partnerships could be built between new and existing industries to further strengthen North Dakota's economic structure.

Comments:

- Less federal/state overreach
- Expanded production opportunities
- Potential of new partnerships
- Job creation
- Less regulations
- Economic opportunities
- Innovation potential
- A cleaner environment
- *Reduction in health issues*
- *Climate stability*
- *Very few benefits*

1.2 DOWNSIDES

Question: What DOWNSIDES do you see for North Dakotans as greenhouse gas emissions are reduced?

This portion of the conversation raised concerns around how regulation attached to the implementation of Climate Pollution Reduction Grants could change the economic possibilities within the state. Specifically, changes to regulations may impact small businesses or primacy of

permitting Class VI UIC in the state. Additional worries noted surround the costs of implementing suggested practices, and how that could impact production throughout the state.

Comments:

- Increase in regulation
- Job elimination
- Individuals will not be able to afford the change
- More regulation; job elimination
- More federal government involvement
- Transition costs to the state
- *Rise in energy costs, leading to a cascade of increased costs downstream*

1.3 EXISTING EFFORTS

Question: What ALREADY is being done in North Dakota to reduce greenhouse gas emissions? Who is doing it?

Participants emphasized that North Dakotans are already doing much to assist in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, but that is not being amplified inside and outside of North Dakota. Specifically, within agriculture, it was noted that no-till farming has drastically reduced greenhouse gas emissions while simultaneously increasing production. There was also emphasis on how agriculture and oil/gas industries share techniques, such as greenhouse gas reductions and land reclamation practices.

Comments:

- Flare reduction in oil and gas
- CO2 sequestration
- Tracking what emissions are being captured by the landscape
- Pipelines (trucks off the roads)
- Zero emission premature controls (oil and gas)
- Oil and gas efficiencies
- Soil quality improvements
- Education events and demonstrations
- Energy & Environmental Research Center (EERC) collaboration in enhanced oil recovery from CO2
- *Carbon Capture in Beulah (Red Trail Ethanol Plant)*
- *Pipeline companies maintaining lines for leaks*
- *Emission regulations in energy production*

1.4 POTENTIAL STATE INCENTIVES/SUPPORT

Question: In what ways would you want to see the state INCENTIVIZE, SUPPORT or just generally HELP with greenhouse gas reductions?

Both in-person and online comments strongly suggested that the state should not abandon its existing industries. The phrase 'innovation over regulation' was suggested as a practice for the state while implementing the CPRG funds, as it would create the space for existing industries to expand production instead of limiting it. This would include partnership between private industry and the state to fund innovation.

Comments:

- Advocate for industry
- Continue to advocate for innovation over reclamation
- Work with private industry and incentivize it
- Public education
- Partner with smaller companies within the state instead of big business
- *Utilize and incentivize solar energy and solar farms*
- *Install meters on every oil and gas well to monitor emissions*
- *Enforce violations with meaningful fines*
- *Install air quality monitors (for volatiles as well as particulates) in the Western part of the state to enhance knowledge of oil field emissions*
- *Expanded CRP program to use prairie land and grasses for carbon capture*

1.5 OTHER

Question: Is there anything else you want us to know on this topic?

- The in-person participants did not have any additional topics of discussion regarding greenhouse gas reduction, but online comment cards pointed out that the New Zealand Space Agency partnered with MethaneSAT to create a methane tracking satellite in space. This technology will launch in early 2024 and be able to quantify regional-scale methane emissions from oil and gas operations worldwide down to areas of 1 km².
- Additional online comments expressed interest in what job opportunities are expected to arise as a result of CPRG funding.
- *Times are tough financially for North Dakotans. Increasing energy costs now would be further those hardships*

2. DISCUSSION OF EXAMPLE GHG REDUCTION STRATEGIES

To bring the conversation to a more tactical level, a series of greenhouse gas emissions reductions examples were displayed on posters during each session for participants' reactions. It was noted that these examples were not proposals, just examples of strategies that have been implemented in other communities.

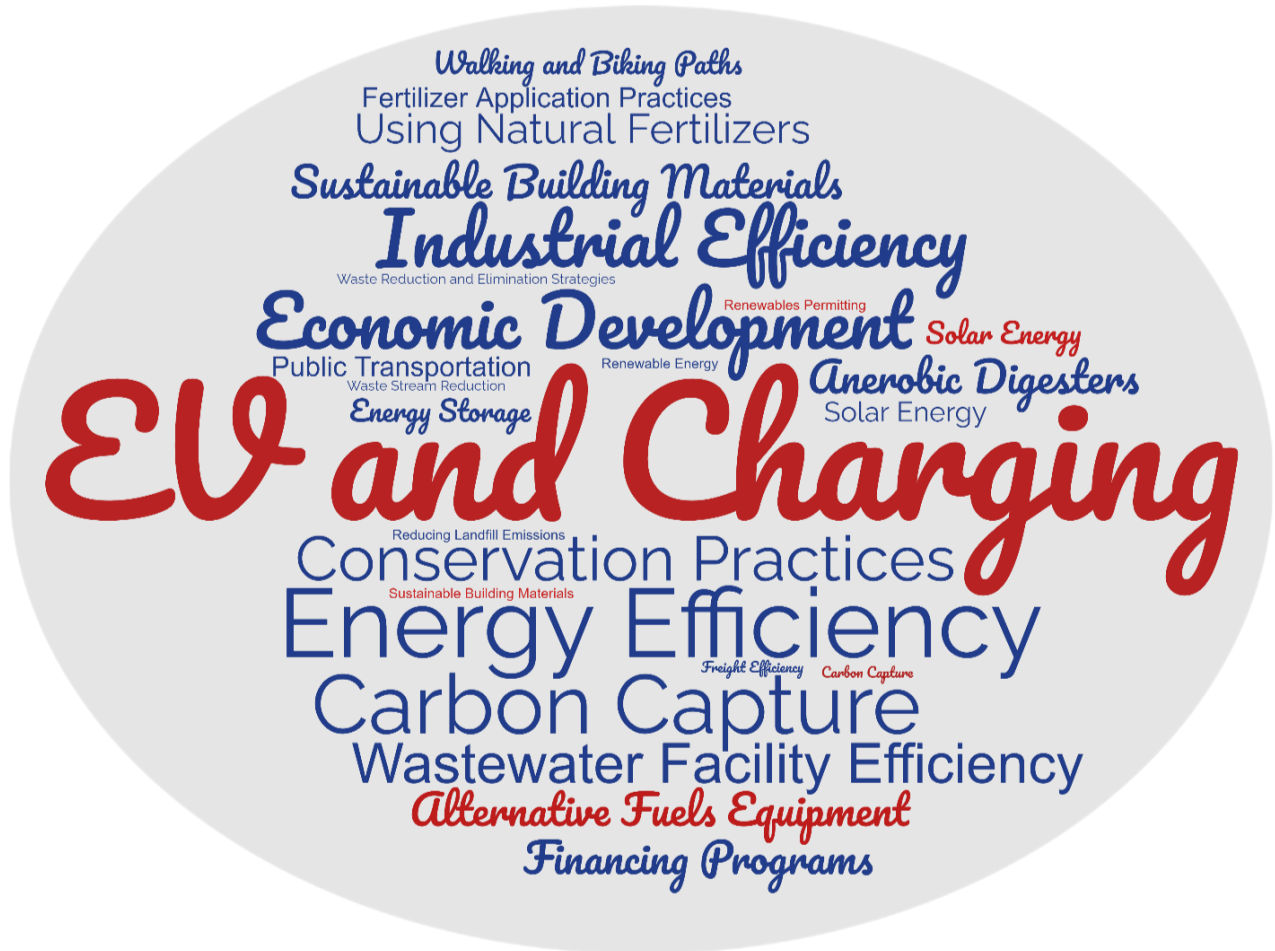
In-person participants were given red and blue sticker-dots to place next to any example on which they had an opinion. Blue was used to indicate support of an example for use in North Dakota; red indicated that they did not support the example for North Dakota. Participants were also given post-it notes to add additional examples, suggestions or comments/questions.

Online participants received a link via the chat in Zoom to a Microsoft form with the same list of examples. They were given the option to click "support", "not support" or "skip" the question. They also were able to elaborate on their responses.

All participants were cautioned that this process was meant to gauge general support or opposition to the various examples, that they were not voting.

The following "word cloud" graphic depicts how often (larger letters = more dots) that examples were selected, and to what degree they were supported (blue) or not supported (red).

SUMMARY OF REACTIONS



Note: The larger the type, the more often a strategy received a dot during this activity in Dickinson.

Blue type = support. Red type = do not support.

In addition to placing red or blue dots on sample greenhouse gas emission reduction strategies posters, participants were invited to discuss the options and compare reactions to the sample strategies.

Strategy	Verbatim Comments
Electric Vehicles and Charging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certain areas they are fine, but they are not a blanket solution • I’m not against them, they just don’t work in North Dakota with our severe hot and cold. • I think they are a geographical issue for us more than anything. The infrastructure also isn’t there. I don’t foresee putting funds behind that.
Alternative Fuels Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We make them all here out of North Dakota, but we can’t buy them because California buys it all. It is all coming from here, but we don’t have access to it.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is stuff being looked at like electric tractors and battery run stuff, but it's so far from reality yet. • You have to have a regular tractor while the other is charging
Fertilizer Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm all about that
Alternative Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have 1400 acres permitted for a solar farm, they haven't come out to do it yet. It is contracted but we will see if it happens.
Energy Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need to help the regular consumer and the regular citizen figure out how to consume products or utilized services that are going to be focused on greenhouse gas emissions.
Walking and Biking Trails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We fund them through Outdoor Heritage Walking, biking/biking paths all the time. We just did one the other day in Napoleon. • They are for recreation not to ride to work
Wastewater Facility Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In North Dakota we do not have enough water to entice industries to come here. • We are struggling to get enough rural water to rural people • We paid for a pipeline from Dickinson wastewater, recycled water to go to the golf course.
Conservation Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When we first started Cover Crops, we did it and it was pretty short lived, at least in my experience. We didn't know how to manage through. We went away from it because we didn't have technology to support what we did. • What is the intent? To build soil health or to extend grazing for lifestyle? • We are the ultimate recyclers where I come from because we are renderers. All that waste that would go into landfills, we render and put it back into feed and it goes back into cattle and the turkeys and the chickens and the pigs.
Anaerobic Digesters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We don't use them in this state; we should. We own two of them and are looking at building more.
Other- Permitting Reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lot of ideas that you are going to get with any sort of innovation are going to get bogged down with regulatory review after regulatory review from federal to state to municipality • You can always hope for it, But I feel like if it could happen it would have been done by now • It is a red tape item that needs to be addressed
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An extremely relevant category to everything we're talking about is water in of itself. • If you want to bring a hydrogen plant in and we don't have water here, how can you expand on the greenhouse thing? Water is part of the process that you need there. Any of these things that we're looking at doing, whatever industry, there's some form of water going to be needed • You have this green narrative which you know how well perceived that is in the state in North Dakota. So ESG plays a big part in that, especially from the finance side. And we talked about the insurance and all the all the other entities that you know you reminded us are involved with ESG and how it affects what we do in the state of North Dakota. That's why we have an ESG study because it does have an effect on what we do.

3. WAYS TO ENGAGE

Sustainability Input Forums and the corresponding online survey were the first in a series of engagement opportunities led by North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality in support of long-term sustainability planning and North Dakota's collective greenhouse gas emissions reductions work.

Video recordings, reports, notices of future engagement opportunities, and additional methods to provide feedback may be found at the NDDEQ website: <https://deq.nd.gov/sustainability/>
For additional information, contact Jennifer Skjod, NDDEQ Public Information Officer, via email at jskjod@nd.gov

Thank you to those who shared their passions and wisdom as part of this conversation.

APPENDIX - EXAMPLE STRATEGIES

The following examples were provided as examples of greenhouse gas emission reduction strategies being implemented in U.S. communities. These examples were provided by ERM to generate discussion and reaction during North Dakota Sustainability Input Forums. Please note that these were not provided as proposals, nor were participants asked to rank or vote on them.

Energy Implementation and Development

- **Renewable Energy** - Incentives for installing renewable energy and energy storage systems on commercial properties
- **Energy Efficiency** - Incentives for installing end-use energy efficiency measures in commercial and residential buildings
- **Financing Programs** - Establish a financing program (e.g., grants or low-interest loans) for energy efficiency and renewable energy installations in new and existing buildings
- **Electric Vehicles and Charging** - Incentives to increase the share of electric vehicles (e.g., leasing and purchasing), and to expand electric vehicle charging infrastructure
- **Carbon Capture** - Programs to support or incentivize carbon capture, utilization, and storage (CCUS) at industrial and energy facilities
- **Industrial Efficiency** - Programs to support or incentivize implementation of energy efficiency measures in industry, including energy audits, strategic energy management, equipment upgrades, and waste heat utilization
- **Low/No Carbon Fuels** - Programs to support or incentivize greenhouse gas emission reductions in industrial energy use and industrial processes, including use of low/no carbon fuels, electrification, renewable energy, and process improvements
- **Low-Carbon Materials** - Programs to develop, expand, and support markets for low-embodied carbon materials and products, such as cement and steel
- **Renewables Permitting** - Streamline permitting for renewable energy projects
- **Waste Stream Reduction** - Increase the efficiency or effectiveness of waste reduction, reuse, recycling, or composting programs. Reducing the amount of materials entering landfills.
- **Wastewater Facility Efficiency** - Incentives for installing renewable energy and energy efficiency measures at wastewater treatment facilities
- **Reducing Landfill Emissions** - Incentives to reduce methane emissions from landfills and wastewater treatment facilities, including through collection for use

Agriculture

- **Anerobic Digesters** - Incentives to promote anaerobic digesters to capture methane and generate renewable energy or produce renewable fuel
- **Alternative Fuels Equipment** - Incentive programs to fund agricultural equipment technologies that use alternative fuels
- **Fertilizer Application Practices** - Incentives for technologies and techniques that reduce nitrous oxide emissions from fertilizer application such as precision agriculture practices
- **Using Natural Fertilizers** – Reinforcing soil health with the life cycle of the animal

- **Conservation Practices** - Implement programs that support best practices in agricultural conservation to help protect soil health, including cover crops, no-till, other runoff reduction techniques
- **Economic Development** - Programs for local and regional economic development partners to establish food- and agriculture-based economic development strategies, such as community-based food co-ops

Community, Public Service and Government

- **Solar Energy** - Increase access and funding for solar panels on your home or businesses in your community
- **Energy Efficiency** - Funding for increasing energy efficiency in your home or businesses in your community, including proper insulation
- **Electric Vehicles and Charging** - Increasing electric vehicle charging stations in your community
- **Sustainable Building Materials** - Utilizing sustainable building materials for your local buildings
- **Public Transportation** - Increasing the availability and access to public transportation in your community
- **Walking and Biking Paths** - Additional walking and biking paths in your community
- **Energy Storage** - Funding for battery technology to store solar energy at commercial businesses
- **Waste Reduction and Elimination Strategies** - Providing residential recycling and composting service
- **Freight Efficiency** - Increasing efficiency in freight movement.