



Sustainability Input Forums

Input received in Jamestown, 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 Jamestown. 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.

The Jamestown Sustainability Input Forums were held in the banquet facility of the Knights of Columbus building. Hosts for the forums were Dave Glatt, NDDEQ, Presenter; Renee Hoyos, ERM, Facilitator; Monica Zattera, ERM, Online Facilitator.

Attendees included various individual from across industries/interests including, but not limited to, family farmers, agricultural industry professionals, ranchers, educators, and local residents with a passion for the environment, wetlands, forestry, and climate change. A total of 17 Jamestown area residents provided input.

1. CONVERSATION SUMMARIES

Jamestown conversations were productive and informative with a heavy agriculture orientation throughout the day. Various individuals participated in multiple sessions to listen in and contribute to multiple sessions. Each person was given the opportunity to participate and share their perspectives and knowledge. The Jamestown sessions drew a number of questions related to the sustainability planning process, especially how people/industries, specifically the agricultural industry, might benefit from the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant process. There also were questions related to a slide depicting 2021 sources of greenhouse gases in North Dakota, a representation of data provided by EPA. NDDEQ Director Dave Glatt was on hand to field questions prior to diving into the listening portion of the forum. Participants came prepared to participate, having seen materials from previous presentations.

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 focused primarily on the economic potential new industry could provide the area including additional income from taxes and the possibility to draw younger residents. There was brief mention acknowledging the opportunity to be part of a global collective effort and changing the traditional mentality to one focused more on collective efforts.

Comments:

- Property tax incomes and increased property owner income from CO₂ pipelines
- Tax incentives for businesses
- Improved health
- Continual operation of ethanol plants
- Cleaner air
- Increased allure to new, younger residents
- Increased diversity of industry
- Monetary incentives
- Change in growing season
- Being part of a global effort
- New industries and markets
- Potential weather stabilization
- Redirection of funds away from more harmful practices
- Become a change leader
- *Decrease cost of insurance related to weather disasters*
- *Increased job opportunities*
- *Energy security- reduce reliance on foreign oil production providing protection against geopolitical instability*
- *Rural development with additional income opportunities*
- *Additional jobs*

1.2 DOWNSIDES

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

Participants were heavily concerned with potential drawbacks of transitioning due to the upfront cost and potential shift in economic model. They were hesitant to embrace the potential loss of local control and saw potential infringement on personal rights and property.

Comments:

- Higher utility costs
- Increased taxation
- Increased regulation
- Political issues
- Cost of food grade CO2
- Additional competition for resources
- Cost vs benefit concerns
- We are alone in our efforts
- Loss of local control
- Infringement on personal property rights
- None
- Change of current economic model
- Risks associated with storage of carbon
- Potential green-washing
- *Reduction of energy efficiency*
- *"There are no downsides unless Republicans want to create them"*
- *Dry gas will be harder to control*

1.3 EXISTING EFFORTS

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

Attendees focused primarily on current agricultural practices in place for minimizing environmental impacts and existing resources/funding for farmers/ranchers to optimize their production.

Comments:

- Drying coal before using
- Windfarms
- Plans for a water to fertilizer plant powered by wind
- Corn and soybean biofuel production
- Modern ag practices including no-till, cover crops and rotational grazing
- Electric car charging stations
- Hydroelectric power
- Red Trail and Project Tundra sequestration
- Capture of flare gas
- Improved rail access
- Soil and Water Outcomes Fund
- Electric vehicles and charging stations
- Land preservation/conservation efforts such as ND Game and Fish, USFWS
- *Businesses are reducing fuel use*
- *Minimize food waste*

- *Increased use of personal practices such as turning off lights, recycling and using less water*
- *Environmental monitoring/compliance checks*
- *Basin Electric is working on carbon capture*

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?

Education and advocacy is needed across industries and communities, said participants. Carbon capture and sequestration are done naturally through plants and is a low-cost, low-regulation solution if further incentivized.

Comments:

- Finance the conversion of wastewater gas to usable gas
- Provide data on infrastructure costs vs operational costs
- Advocate for grazing and cover crops as a form of carbon storage
- Incentivize urban planting and maintenance of trees and the use of trees for carbon sequestration
- Provide more educational opportunities
- Research CO2 contributions from traffic
- Begin a slow transition to renewable fuels
- Ensure markets are viable and ready for transitioning
- Invest in more biofuel production plants
- Improve existing infrastructure such as rails, highways and pipelines
- Provide grants for retrofitting/integrating energy efficient tools into new and old construction
- Expand NDDEQ air quality monitoring
- Work with municipalities to create local climate action plans
- Funding for a highspeed passenger rail
- Grants for undergraduate/graduate research
- Support for regional food production and processing
- Electric buses/public transportation
- Support cities who promote walkability/bike-ability
- *Focus more on plant sequestration of carbon*
- *Raise taxes on oil extraction*
- *Mandate advanced biofuel utilization*

1.5 OTHER

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

- After seeing a slide with a depiction of sources of greenhouse gas emissions in North Dakota, the request was made by a participant to remove the image of a cow as it overemphasized the role of cattle in the state's emissions.
- *How do we recycle Styrofoam coolers?*

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 Jamestown.

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
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's just that everybody has a different set of definitions and metrics. • For customers to be able to trust sustainability information, it needs to stand up to questions, have a way to be verified. • It makes sense to incentivize early adopters with funding, but it has to be sustainable and have longevity built in. So it needs to have science behind it to make sure it accomplishes something. • As a young person, I have to live with the future we're starting to create now. I don't want to say no to all these strategies, but I don't want to rush into something either. So I'd pick the things that are supporting human infrastructure – governance institutions and new ways of organizing people for the world we live in. Because somebody 100 years ago decided to build a railroad here. • How about more direct roads? So you don't have to drive 80 miles to go 40. • I would like to see continued and expanded air quality monitoring by the NDDEQ. • There are interesting scientific questions that North Dakota could fund research about. Asking questions that matter and building consensus around the answers. • We need to know where we stand. • We don't have a passenger rail system that's efficient between Fargo, Jamestown, Bismarck and maybe even Montana. What we do have goes up to Grand Forks and Minot. Maybe high-speed rail?
Carbon Capture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of the toolbox, carbon capture is the one that gives me pause just because I feel like it has the potential spiral unregulated and cause some severe harm if not checked. • Carbon capture through farming and forestry are very different. • I would create a carbon bank (aggregator/connector) for the state, trading within the state first. • Take advantage of emerging carbon markets and carbon capture technology to close the loop on-site and between sites. There's a lot of discussion to be had here. We're producing CO2 here and it can be used in another process right next door. • Carbon capture is a very broad term. It could be closed-loop or regional. Anything that travels long distance makes me very nervous and it's not like an unfounded fear either. • Do it right. Don't just put it in the ground. For example, we need food-grade CO2 for tomato production.
Walking and Biking Paths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There's momentum in Jamestown to find alternative ways to transport yourself across town. It's more about community well-being and when it brings them closer to nature maybe they think twice about supporting something that supports nature. • Support cities for more walkability and viability. We have bits and pieces in some cities, some are doing great. And there are good programs out there if you're under populations of less than 10,000 or over 50,000. But many of our communities cannot qualify.
Renewables Permitting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes when you streamline something, it gets done before everyone looks at it.

EVs and Charging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are you filling that battery with? Is it wind power, solar power, coal power? Is it really going to be reducing your greenhouse gas emissions that way?
Alternative Fuels Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You don't need to fund different equipment because you can use them both already.
Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We can lean into our agricultural heritage to bring in outside dollars from tourism. When people visit here, they can see how we leapfrog other states. • I'm for something that's going to benefit agriculture, especially if they're doing something right. But it doesn't really scream "greenhouse gas reduction" to me. • Food-grade CO2 often is in shortage for some facilities; can't we figure out how to meet those needs with what we have in other places? • There are so many unpredictable things in agriculture – weather, fertilizer, etc. If we create markets here, we can be more sustainable and more stable. It might take investment in the short-term, but buffer against costs in spikes in the future. • Increasing CSA, farm-to-table, and other regional food opportunities does have a connection to potentially reducing emissions, but it takes a lot of people doing that. • Let's get charging stations into our downtowns, not just along the freeways.
Freight Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you want to solve or make a big impact on reductions in carbon and gases, focus on commodity transportation. Figure out how to better get our products to the market. • I think we've got economic development operations in most communities in North Dakota and they're doing a pretty good job. I gave it a red dot here. • One thing that could reduce carbon is getting more of our products to market by rail. That would benefit industry and everybody.
Natural Fertilizers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you can't define natural and get everybody to believe that, you've got a challenge. • Wastewater Facility Efficiency • Wastewater treatment plans are falling or will fall soon. And when we rebuild them, can we do it in a new way? • The wastewater treatment facility in Jamestown is right next to a gas pipeline. So if emissions could be cleaned up, they could be put right in the pipeline. • We need food-grade CO2 for water treatment plants, but we have to get it elsewhere. • It seems like we're close to capturing CO2 from the potato plant, but they're still having to flare. Work has been done to figure out how to clean it and put it directly into the nearby pipeline. We need to get past the final questions and barriers, risks.
Financing Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Millions of dollars don't go a long way in building a processing plant or a crushing facility or whatever, but maybe it buys the interest on a low-interest loan.
Renewable Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are only a few places in the country that produce renewable diesel, and North Dakota should be one of them. • Big apartment buildings are heated with fuel oil. Bio heat would lead to a huge, immediate reduction in emissions. • Our peak demand is in the winter at night. Well, solar doesn't do much then.
Conservation Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crop insurance deadlines don't work with planting of cover crops. We don't have time to get a winter crop established in the ground before winter happens. • Our county has not been able to hire a GIS person and we need one. Anything we can do to connect people to the environment and to readily available information would help us to make better decisions and make them faster.

Anaerobic Digesters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> California has made them work well, but the scale here is very different. We don't have any of those really huge dairy herds. But it could be applied to the food waste business.
Low/No Carbon Fuels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I'm hoping that hydrogen fuels technology improves so we might get it here. Perhaps North Dakota should put some research into being one of the first states to have hydrogen-fueled cars. We need to advance the capture of methane and flaring in the western part of the state. When I ride my bike out there, I can feel the heat from every one of those flares and they're not even close to the road. You know there's tremendous amount of energy being lost.
Waste Reduction and Elimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start a site where windmill blades could be recycled.

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.