

Conference Feedback

SERWOC

2018

RESTORATION

for

RESILIENCE



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*Artistic Credit
Art by Nicole Barrette*



SUMMARY

Highlights

- 76.7% of attendees rated their OVERALL EXPERIENCE AS ABOVE AVERAGE TO EXCELLENT.
- 93.2% of attendees noted that the CONFERENCE MET OR EXCEEDED THEIR EXPECTATIONS.
- 93.3 % of individuals felt that the INFORMATION PRESENTED AT THE CONFERENCE WAS USEFUL.
- 91.1% of individuals found the NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES AT THE CONFERENCE VALUABLE.
- 91.1% of individuals are LIKELY TO ATTEND ANOTHER EVENT hosted by the Society for Ecological Restoration – Western Canada.

Overall, individuals felt that SERWC2018 was a very well organized conference with an appropriate duration. Conference attendees saw this conference primarily as a networking opportunity, but were also interested in the presentations and personal growth and development. Attendees found value in the plenary talks and concurrent sessions, but were unsatisfied with the Panel Discussion. Some of the most valuable things individuals took away from this conference include:

- The interconnections between ecology and human sociology;
- The restoration community looks for positive solutions;
- There is a community of likeminded people out there working hard on restoration; I feel better supported;
- Ecological restoration is still a developing science and there are no “right answers” to the many complicated challenges we face. This can be difficult to communicate to clients and I needed the reassurance that this was the truth;
- That the SER community is so welcoming, positive, and inspirational! I definitely believe that I’ve chosen the right career path;
- SER’s unique and great culture. The organization takes a very hopeful view of our environment, and this came across in all the diverse personalities present.



SUMMARY

What Did People Like About SERWC2018

Programming	Atmosphere / Take Aways
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversity of presenters and presentation topics Plenary Speakers Poster Session Clarity and Punctuality of Schedule Equality of time between listening & discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Feeling Many opportunities for networking Learning about current research areas for restoration First Nations Involvement
Volunteers & Organizing Committee	Venue & Events
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well organized Volunteers were helpful and friendly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food Venue Beer Tour & Field Trips Pre-conference workshops

What Did People Want Done Better at SERWC2018

Programming	Venue & Logistics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More student involvement (in program planning, hold a student-focused event) Panel Discussion (not enough time for questions, presentations too long) More time for networking More time to interact with vendor booths More cohesive plenary sessions (not all speakers focused on resilience) Fewer concurrent sessions (opportunities missed, sessions too long) More opportunities for discussion throughout conference Shorter conference Hold field tour during a week day More focus on aquatic/fish 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Catering Venue (lunch too far from sessions, booth tear-down every evening, getting to SFU) Wifi Smaller rooms for concurrent sessions Smaller line ups at coffee breaks Require speakers to use microphones in larger rooms Field Trip Cost Banquet Cost (include in conference fees)
Communication	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderator-Presenter Communication (lack of instruction provided on uploading presentation and speaker introductions) Provide affiliations on name tags Seek more sponsorship to minimize costs Release conference schedule and program earlier Find a more user-friendly registration software More volunteer communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less focus on revenue generation (disincentive to prospective members) Less industry promotion

SUMMARY

Overview

Field Trips

Individuals were equally satisfied and dissatisfied with the selection of field trips. The majority of individuals indicated that the cost of field trips was expensive. In terms of experience, those who attended enjoyed themselves and were happy with the quality of field trip.

Pre-Conference Workshops

Individuals were satisfied with the selection of pre-conference workshops. The cost of these workshops was considered average and acceptable. Individuals who attended enjoyed themselves and were happy with the quality of the workshops.

Banquet Dinner

Individuals who attended the banquet dinner were most impressed with the food and service at Forage. The venue was liked as well, however attendees did note how far Forage was from SFU and other accommodations. Individuals also found the cost of the dinner too expensive, and would have liked to see it included in the conference registration fee.

Abstract Submission

The majority of individuals were satisfied with the abstract submission process. Recommendations for improving this process were to ensure special characters are recognized, and having the ability to update abstracts through this forum.

Registration

The majority of individuals were satisfied with the online registration process. Recommendations for improving this process were to explore other registration software, provide more clarity around paying outstanding invoices, and use Canadian currency. Individuals checking in on-site at the registration desk were satisfied with this process. The majority of individuals found conference fees to be on par with other similar events. Individuals were neither satisfied or dissatisfied with the conference swag.

Venue & Logistics

Individuals found most elements of the conference easy to find, including the parking lot, the registration desk, plenary talks, concurrent sessions, and restrooms. However, individuals had a little more difficulty locating dining services and the field trip pick up locations. Overall, individuals were very satisfied with Simon Fraser University as the conference venue.

Accommodations

Individuals were generally satisfied with the accommodations recommended.

Sponsorship

The five most noted organizations were North Growth Foundation, Simon Fraser University, Stantec, Tetra Tech, and BCIT. North Growth was the most remembered sponsor which aligns with their sponsorship level. All of the conference sponsors (including vendor booths) were identified at least once. The majority of attendees visited the vendor booths. The top three visited booths were NATS Nursery, Hoskin Scientific, and Environment & Climate Change Canada.

SUMMARY

Event Communications

The top three ways individuals heard about SERWC2018 were via our Chapter website (www.serwc.ca), word-of-mouth, and through email distribution lists. Overall, individuals felt that they received all of the information they needed prior to the conference. Information that conference attendees were most looking for included wifi instructions, abstracts, and parking information. Presenters wanted more directions and information from moderators regarding file uploads and providing their biographies for introductions. Volunteers wanted more direction on their roles and scheduling. In general, individuals wanted more detailed information leading up to the conference.

Website

Individuals found the conference website (www.serwc2018.ca) useful for finding conference related materials. Recommendations for improving the usefulness of the conference website include posting key items such as the program and book of abstracts earlier, providing more detailed logistical information (transportation, venue maps, accommodations, etc.), and creating a discussion forum.

Tools

Individuals found the conference newsletter and social media to be the most useful communication tools. The conference blog and daily conference newsletter were useful, but attendees suggested including information that was not already part of the normal conference programming.

Volunteers

Overall, individuals found volunteers to be very helpful and friendly. Volunteers were also very easy to identify. Volunteers desired earlier, and more frequent communication with the organizing committees mostly in regards to scheduling.



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Extend Registration
2. Offer a Two-Day Conference Pass
3. Communicate more frequently with Event Volunteers, Session Presenters, and Conference Attendees
4. Provide more designated networking time
5. Build time into conference schedule to encourage attendees to visit vendor booths
6. Increase student involvement throughout the event planning process
7. Earlier release of key information
8. 1-2 concurrent sessions per day
9. Rethink registration software, and ensure Canadian conference fees are in CAD
10. Subsidize the cost of field trips
11. Hold banquet dinner closer to conference venue
12. Allow presenters to update their abstract submission(s) via the submission software rather than email
13. Dedicate more efforts to conference swag bag items
14. Consider conference venues that are more accessible
15. Create a discussion forum on event website
16. Publish more conference newsletters in advance of conference
17. Increase volunteer numbers
18. Hire a designated event photographer

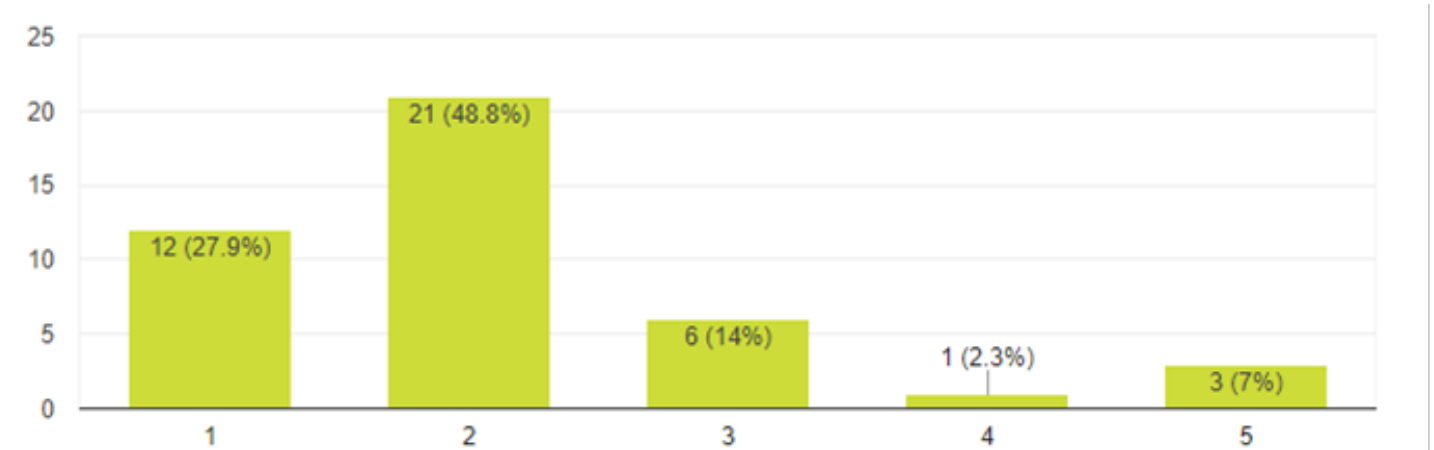


EXPERIENCE

Overall, how would you rate SERWC2018?

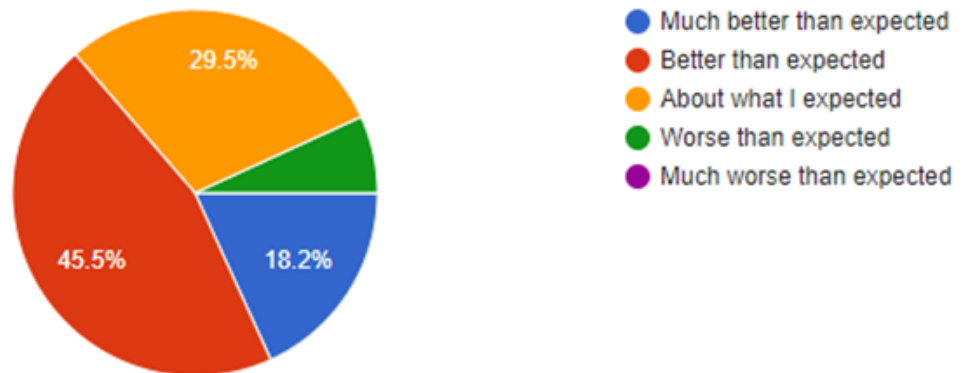
1 = Excellent, 2 = Above Average, 3 = Average, 4 = Below Average, 5 = Poor

43 Responses



How well did the conference meet your expectations?

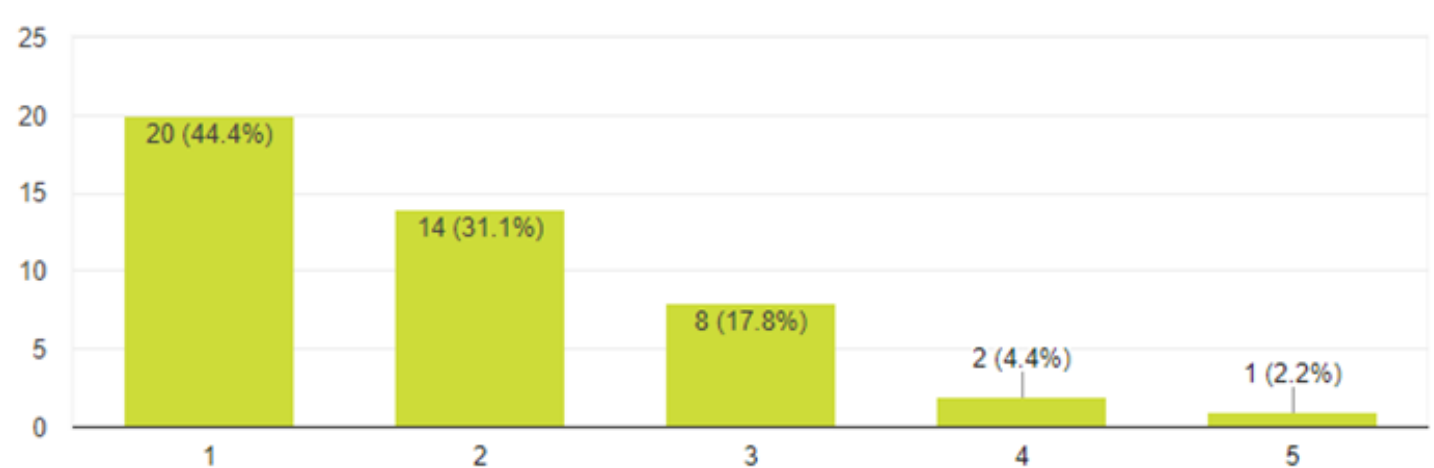
44 Responses



How useful was the information presented at the conference?

1 = Very useful, 3 = Somewhat Useful, 5 = Not at all useful

45 Responses

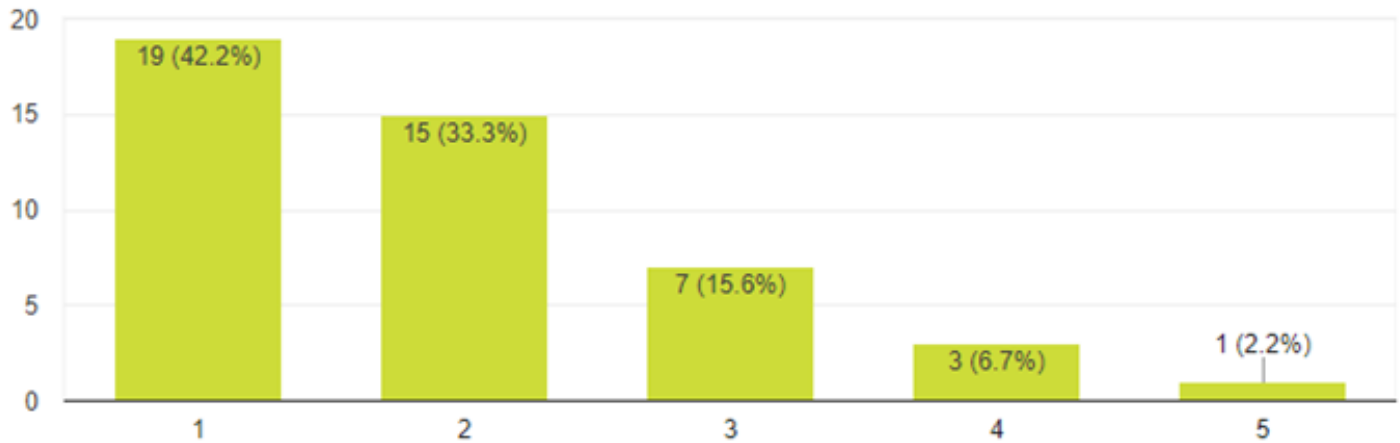


EXPERIENCE

How valuable were the networking opportunities at SERWC2018?

1 = Extremely Valuable, 3 = Somewhat Valuable, 5 = Not at all Valuable

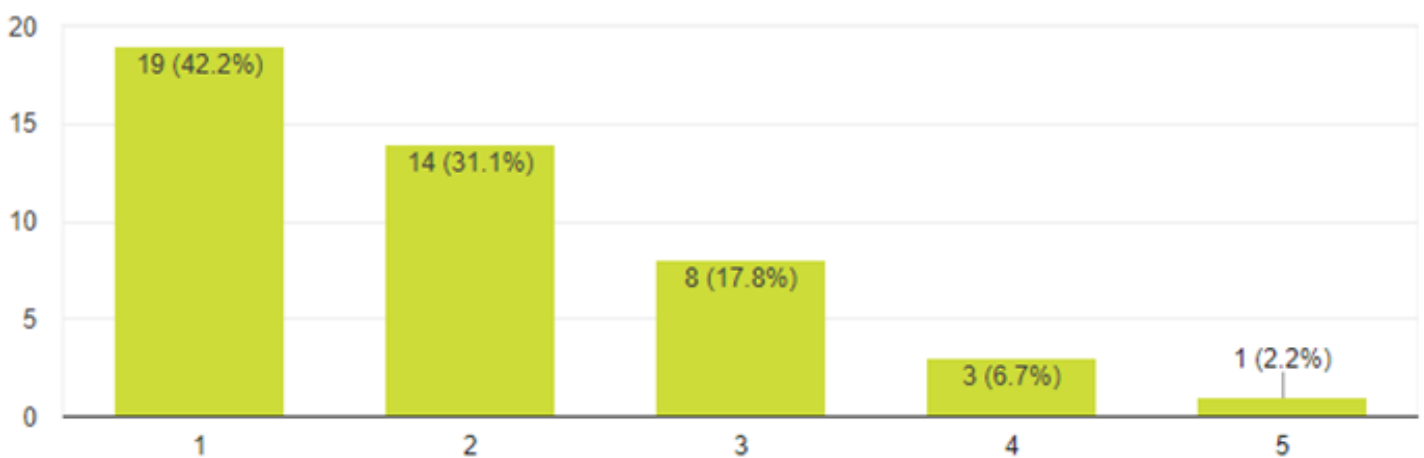
45 Responses



Overall, how likely are you to attend another conference hosted by the Society for Ecological Restoration – Western Canada?

1 = Very Likely, 3 = Somewhat Likely, 5 = Not at all Likely

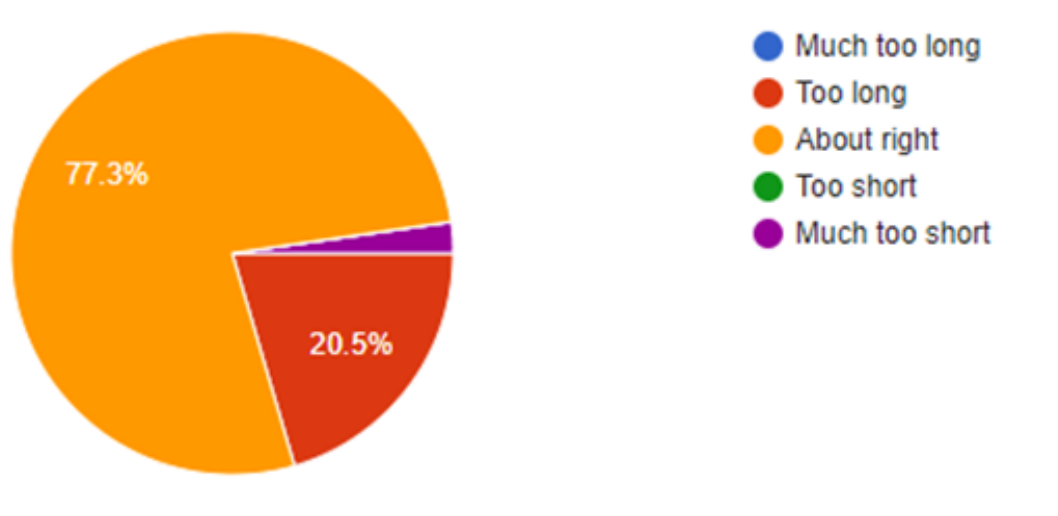
45 Responses



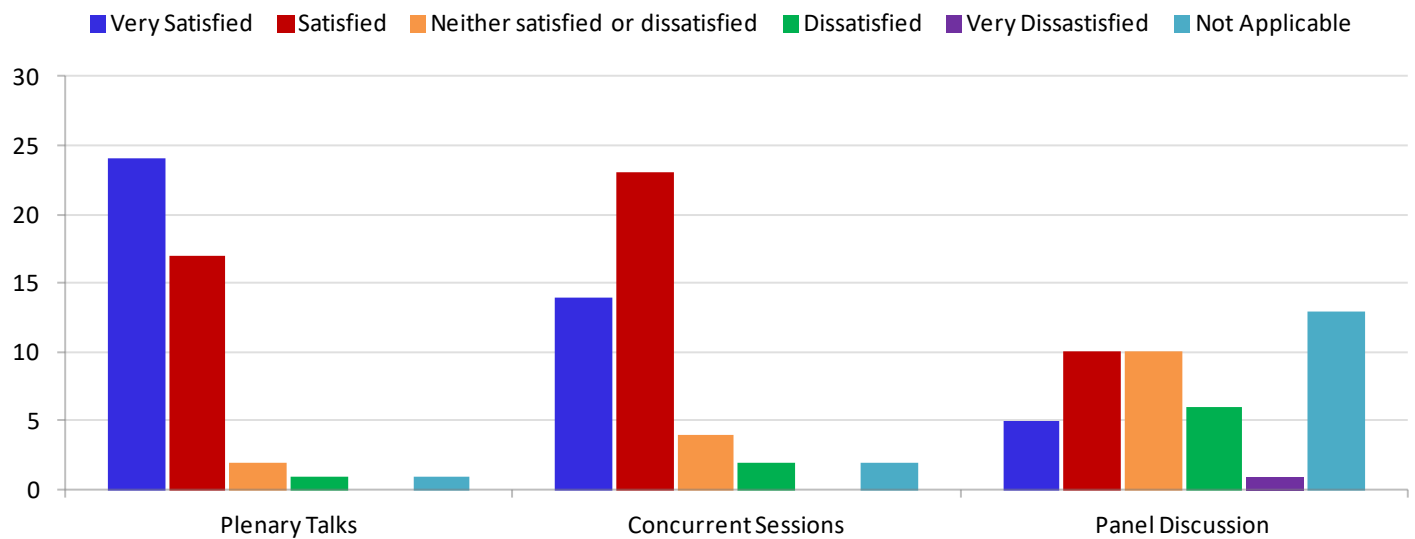
CONFERENCE EVENTS

Was the overall event length too long, too short, or just right?

44 Responses



Overall, were you satisfied or dissatisfied with the following:



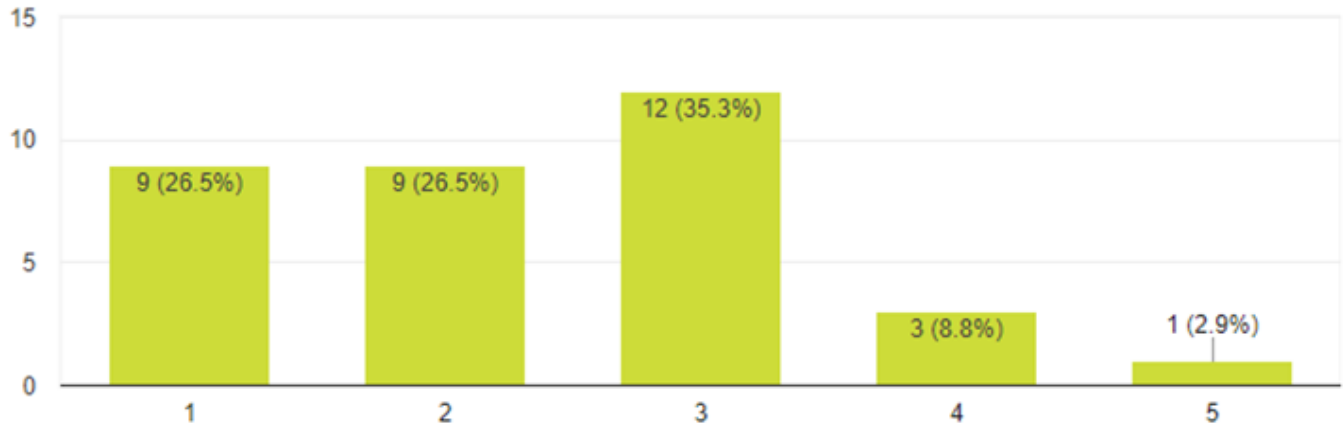
CONFERENCE EVENTS

FIELD TRIPS

Were you satisfied or dissatisfied with the selection of field trips?

1 = Very Satisfied, 3 = Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied, 5 = Very Dissatisfied

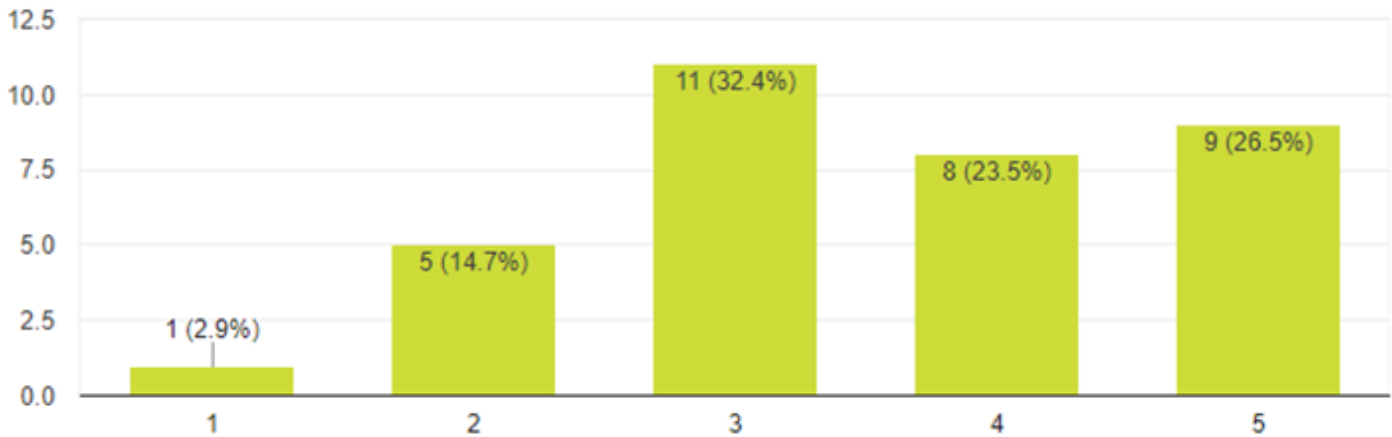
34 Responses



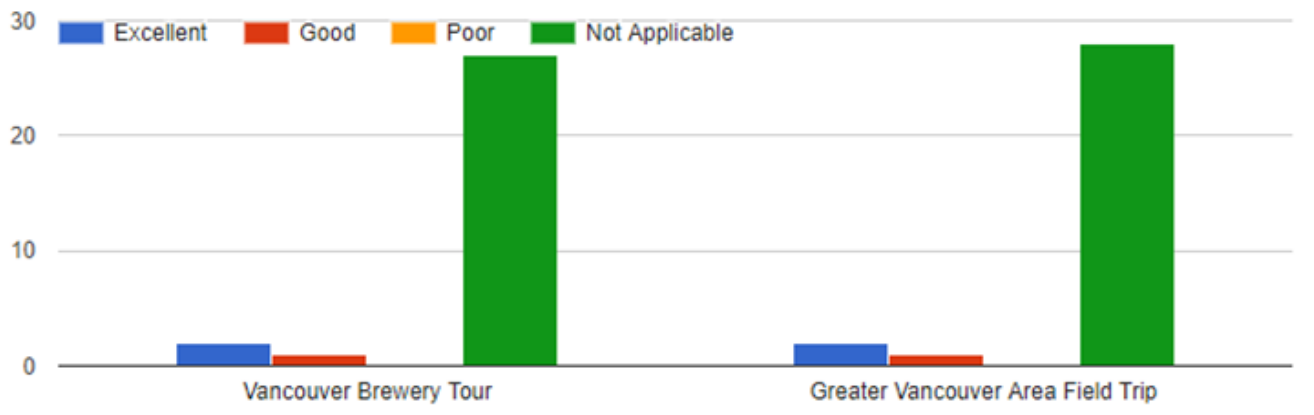
Overall, how would you rate the cost of the field trips?

1 = Inexpensive, 3 = Average, 5 = Expensive

34 Responses



If you attended a field trip, please rate your experience:



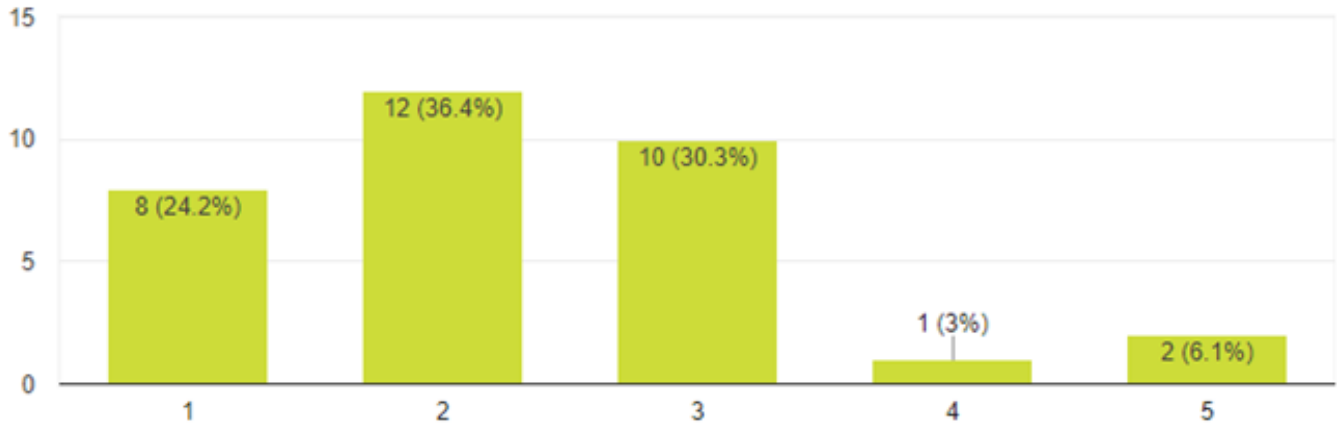
CONFERENCE EVENTS

PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS

Were you satisfied or dissatisfied with the **SELECTION** of pre-conference workshops?

1 = Very Satisfied, 3 = Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied, 5 = Very Dissatisfied

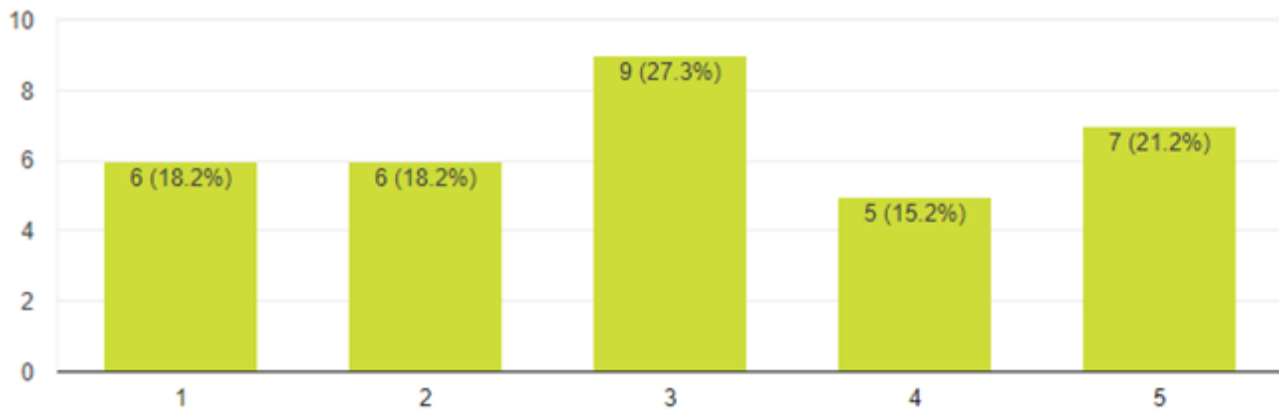
33 Responses



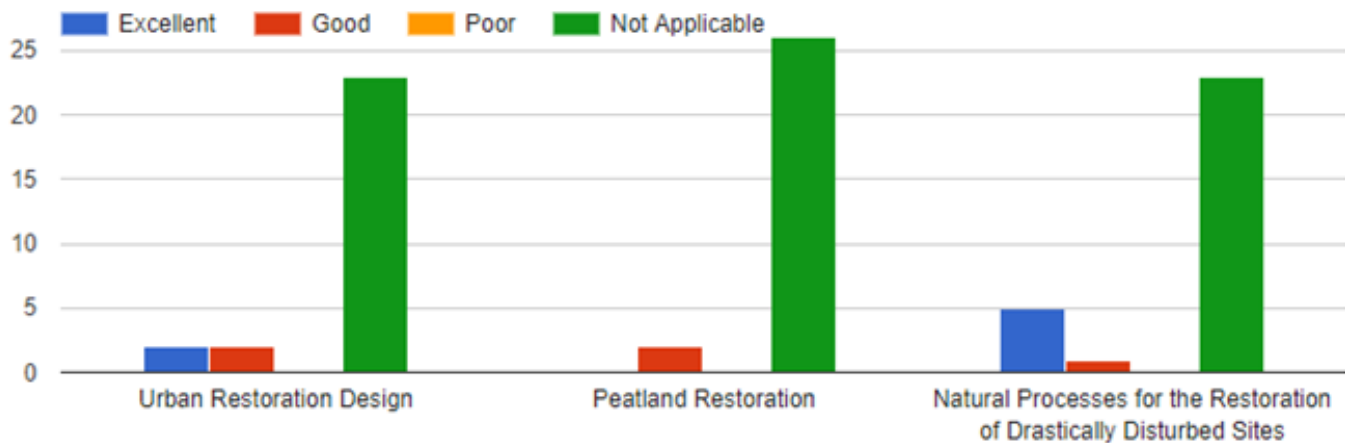
Overall, how would you rate the cost of the pre-conference workshops?

1 = Inexpensive, 3 = Average, 5 = Expensive

33 Responses



If you attended a pre-conference workshop, please rate your experience.

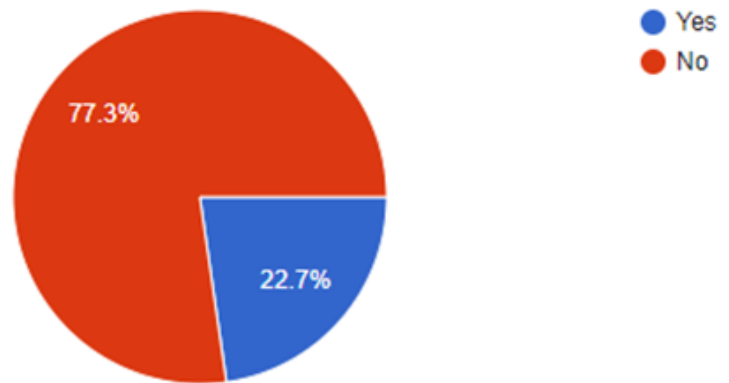


CONFERENCE EVENTS

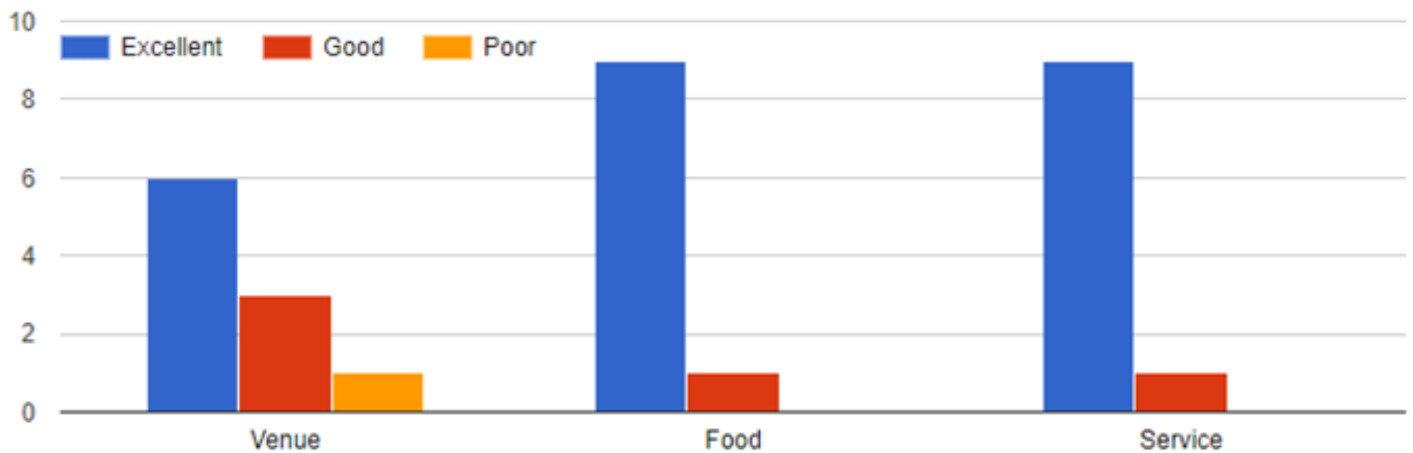
BANQUET DINNER

Did you attend the conference banquet dinner at Forage?

44 Responses



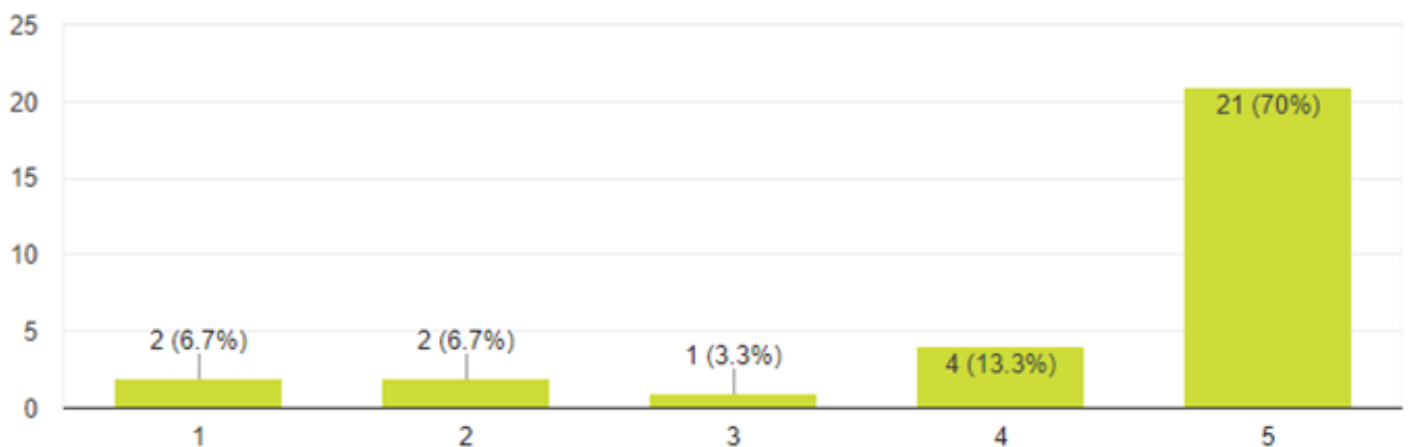
If Yes, how would you rate the conference banquet dinner on the following?



Overall, how would you rate the cost of the conference banquet dinner?

1 = Inexpensive, 3 = Average, 5 = Expensive

30 Responses

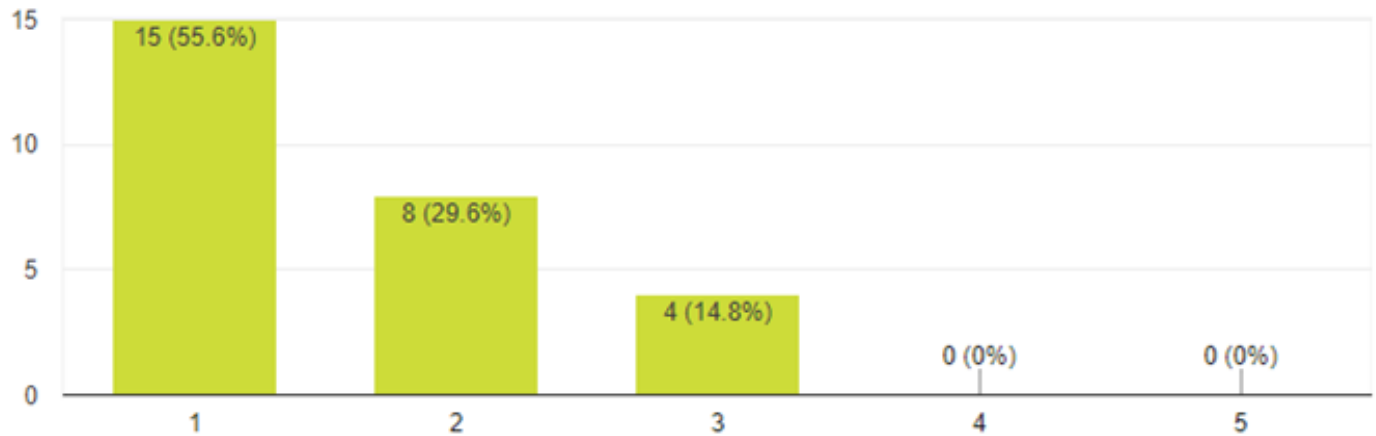


ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

How would you rate your satisfaction with the abstract submission process?

1 = Very Satisfied, 3 = Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied, 5 = Very Dissatisfied

27 Responses



Do you have any suggestions on how we could improve this process?

- It would be nice to have the abstracts in the printed program so we could make more informed choices when it came to concurrent sessions.
- Many special units/characters were not recognized in the upload process.
- Chance to update abstracts

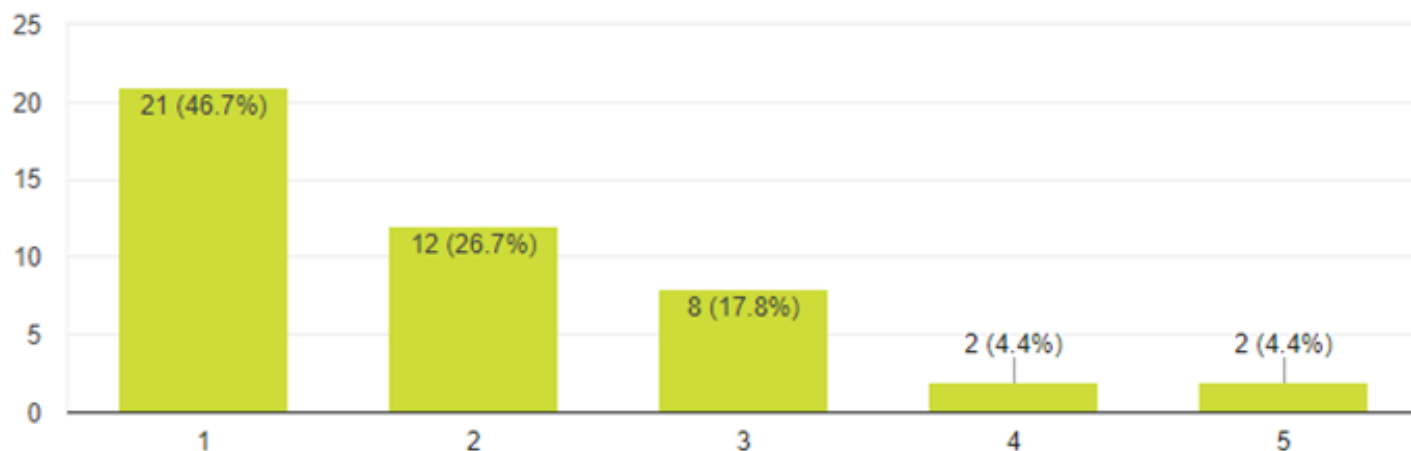


CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

How would you rate your satisfaction with the online registration process?

1 = Very Satisfied, 3 = Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied, 5 = Very Dissatisfied

45 Responses



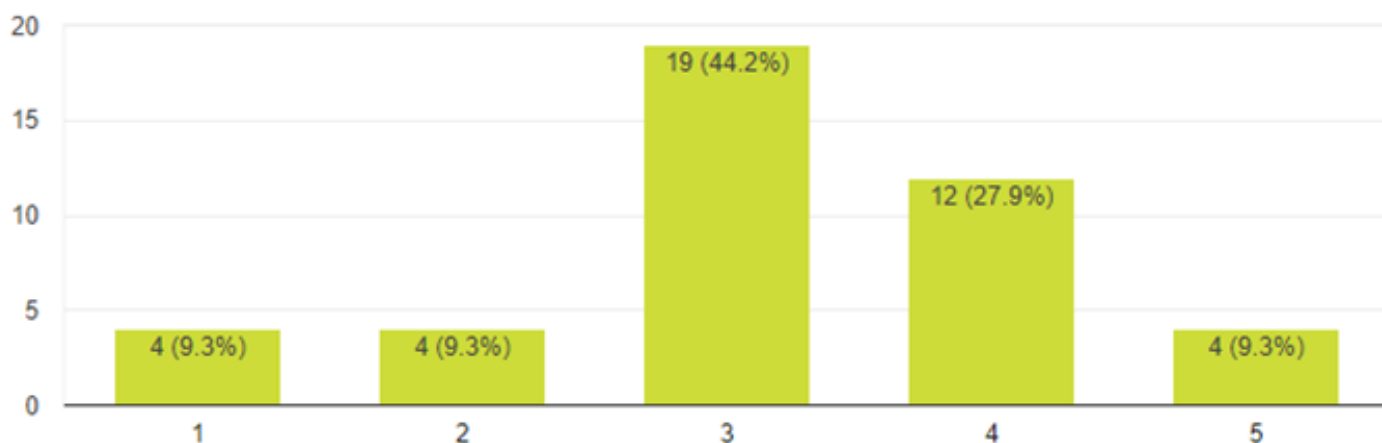
Do you have any suggestions on how we could improve this process?

- Use different Software
- Process for paying outstanding invoices unclear
- Keep to CAD currency
- Registration closed too early
- Offer a 2-day pass

Overall, how would you rate conference registration cost?

1 = Inexpensive, 3 = Average, 5 = Expensive

43 Responses

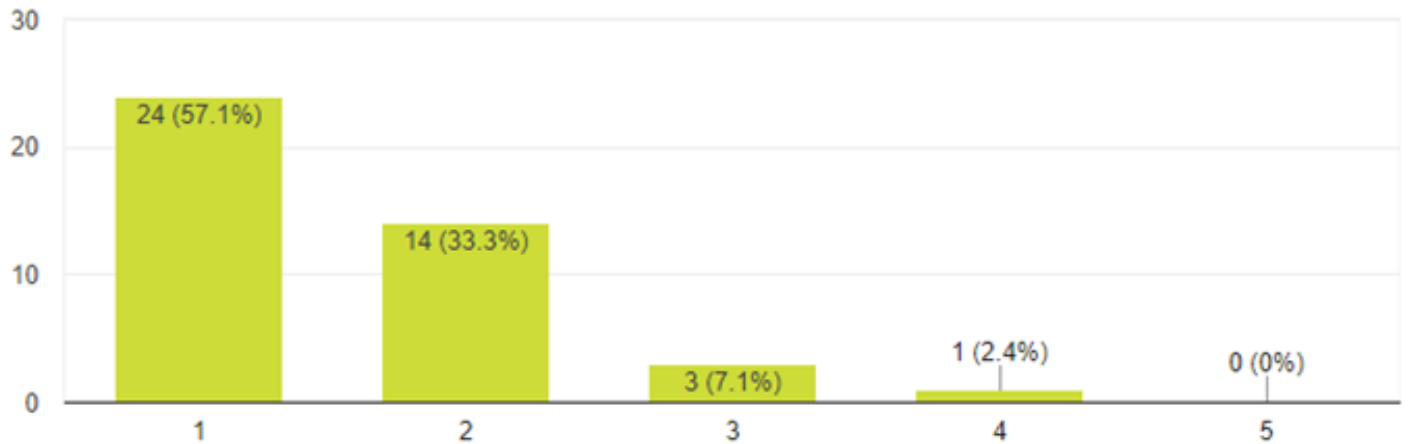


CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

How would you rate your satisfaction with the check-in process at the onsite Registration Desk?

1 = Very Satisfied, 3 = Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied, 5 = Very Dissatisfied

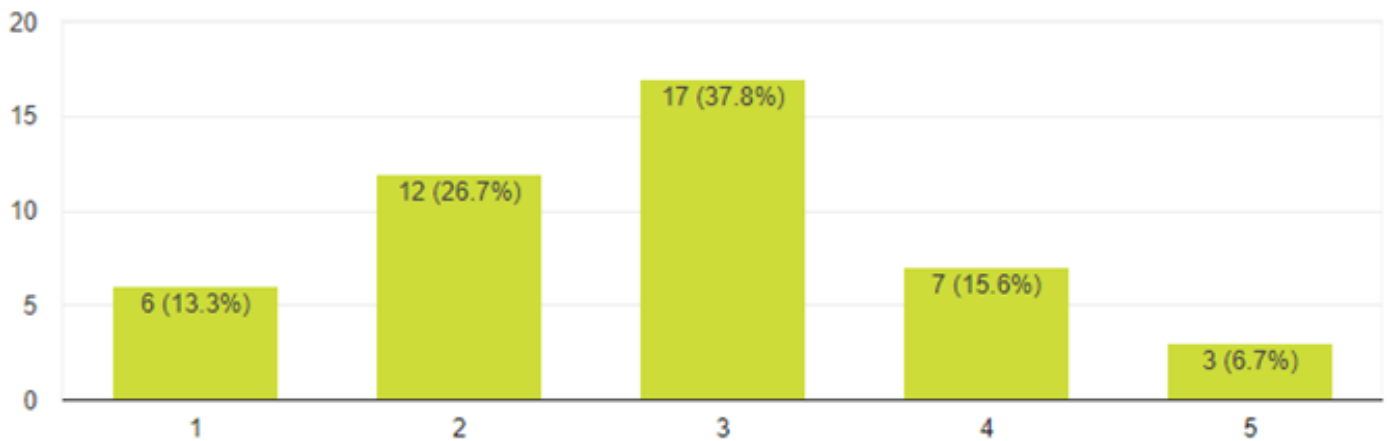
42 Responses



How would you rate your satisfaction with the conference swag?

1 = Very Satisfied, 3 = Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied, 5 = Very Dissatisfied

45 Responses

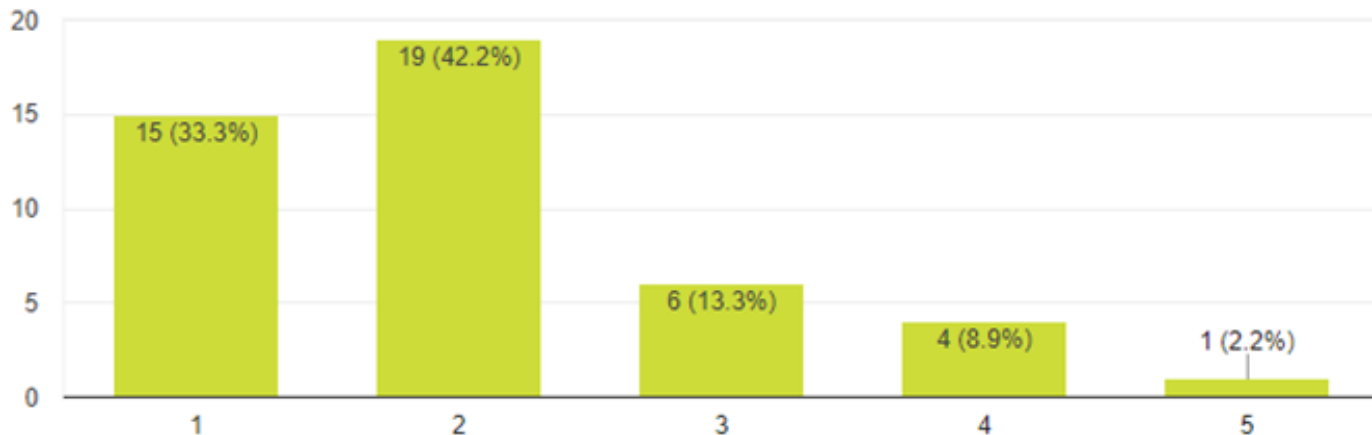


VENUE & LOGISTICS

How organized was SERWC2018?

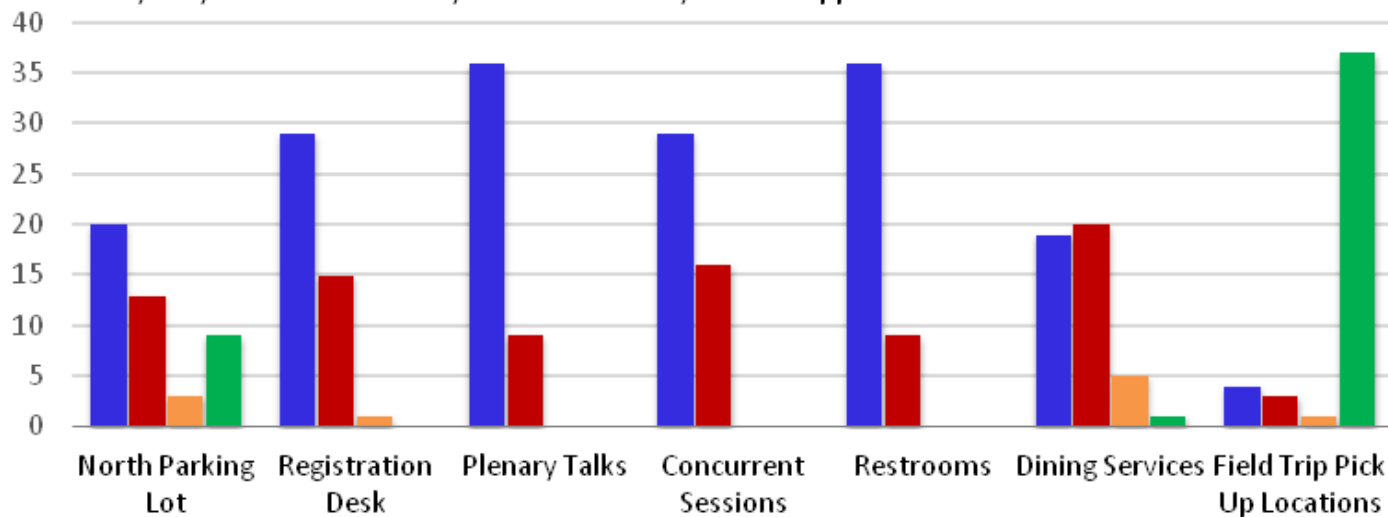
1 = Very Organized, 3 = Somewhat Organized, 5 = Not at all Organized

45 Responses



How easy was it to find the following:

Very Easy (Blue) Somewhat Easy (Red) Not at all easy (Orange) Not Applicable (Green)

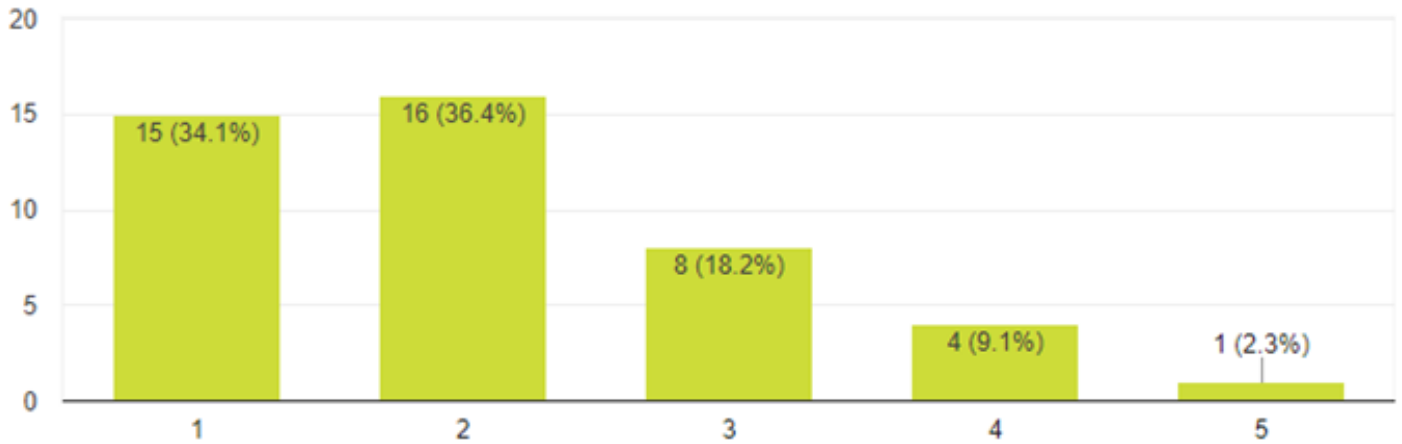


VENUE & LOGISTICS

Overall, how would you rate the conference venue?

1 = Excellent, 3 = Average, 5 = Poor

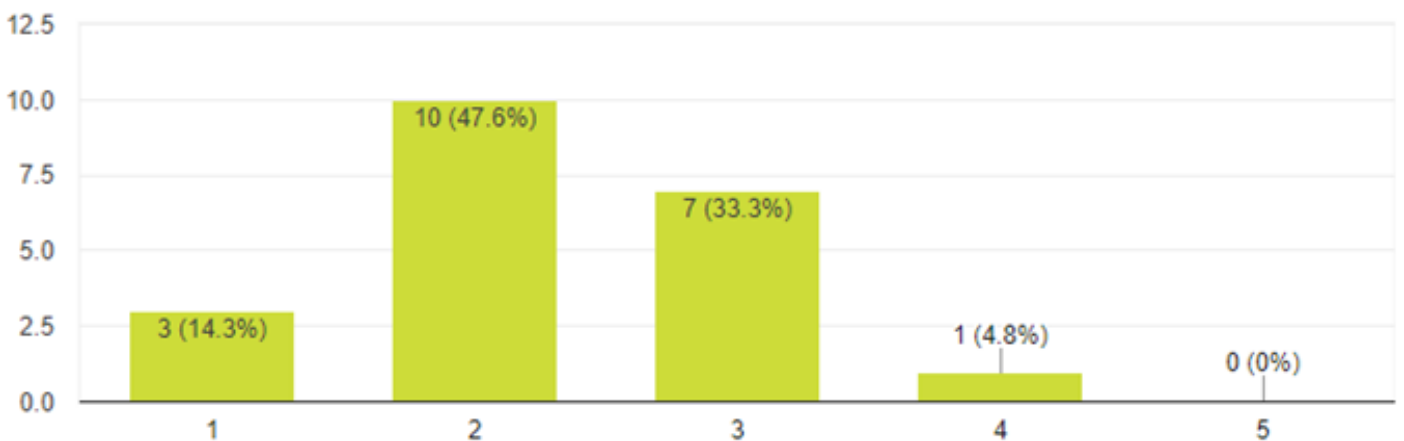
44 Responses



How would you rate the recommended accommodations?

1 = Excellent, 3 = Average, 5 = Poor

21 Responses



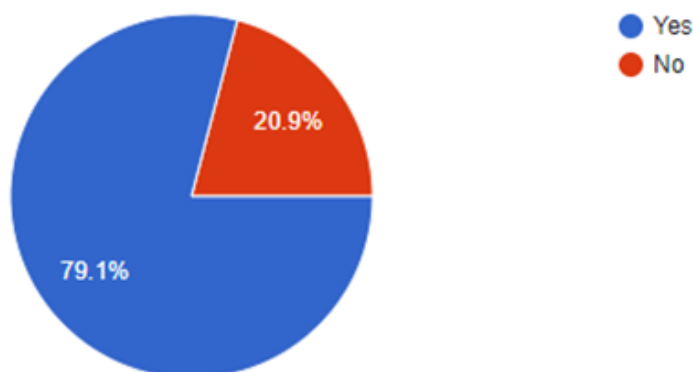
VENUE & LOGISTICS

Do you recall which organizations sponsored SERWC2018? If so, please list them below:

Sponsor	Level	Times Identified	%
North Growth Foundation	Douglas Fir	14	50.0
SFU	Western Red Cedar	13	46.4
Stantec	Fern	12	42.9
Tetra Tech	Western Hemlock	11	39.3
BCIT	Vendor Booth	10	35.7
Environment & Climate Change Canada	Western Hemlock	8	28.6
NATS Nursery	Vendor Booth	8	28.6
DIALOG	Western Hemlock	5	17.9
BCSLA	Arbutus	5	17.9
University of Victoria	Arbutus	4	14.3
ASL	Vendor Booth	4	14.3
Hoskins Scientific	Vendor Booth	2	7.1
Other		3	10.7

Did you visit any of the vendor booths?

43 Responses



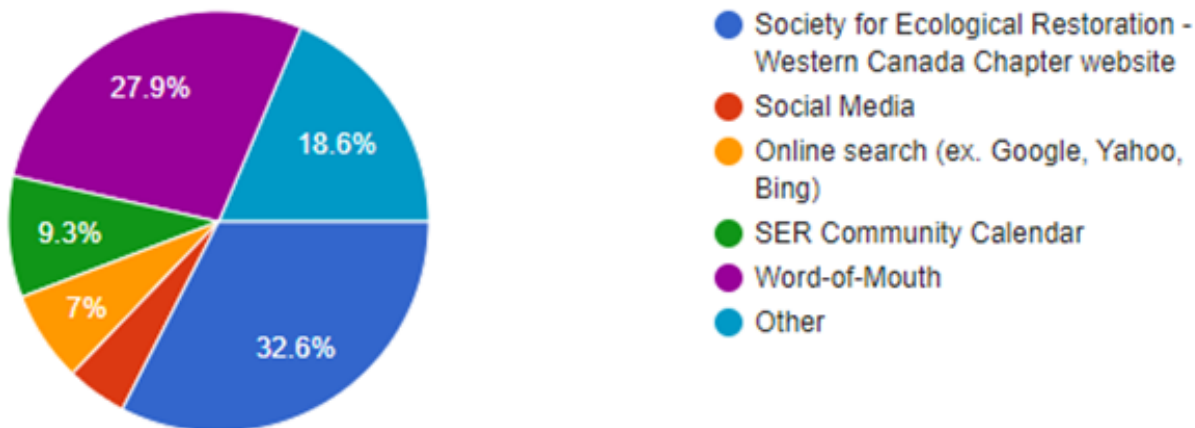
If YES, which vendor booth(s) did you visit?

Vendor	Identified Visits	% (30 Responses)
NATS Nursery	20	66.7
Hoskin Scientific	10	33.3
Environment & Climate Change Canada	8	26.7
SFU Faculty of the Environment	7	23.3
BCIT	7	23.3
Tetra Tech	7	23.3
CLRA	6	20.0
ASL Environmental Inc.	5	16.7
BCSLA	5	16.7
SER	5	16.7
SER-WC	3	10.0

EVENT COMMUNICATIONS

How did you hear about SERWC2018?

43 Responses



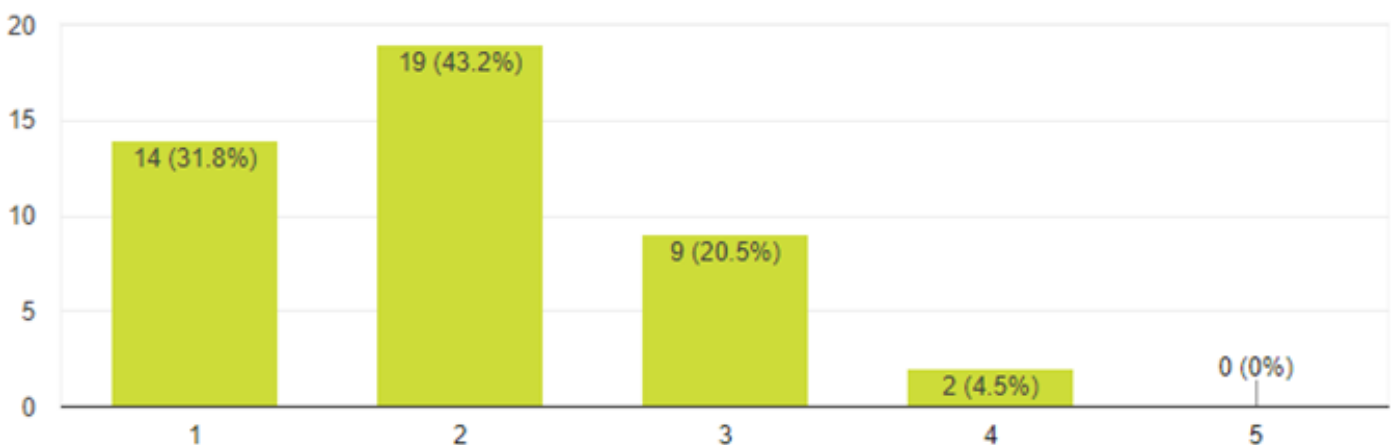
If OTHER, please specify:

- SFU/BCIT Ecological Restoration Program Email Distribution
- Email Blast
- Colleague
- Requested to speak on Panel

How useful was the SERWC2018 website (www.serwc2018.ca)?

1 = Extremely Useful, 3 = Somewhat Useful, 5 = Not at all Useful

44 Responses

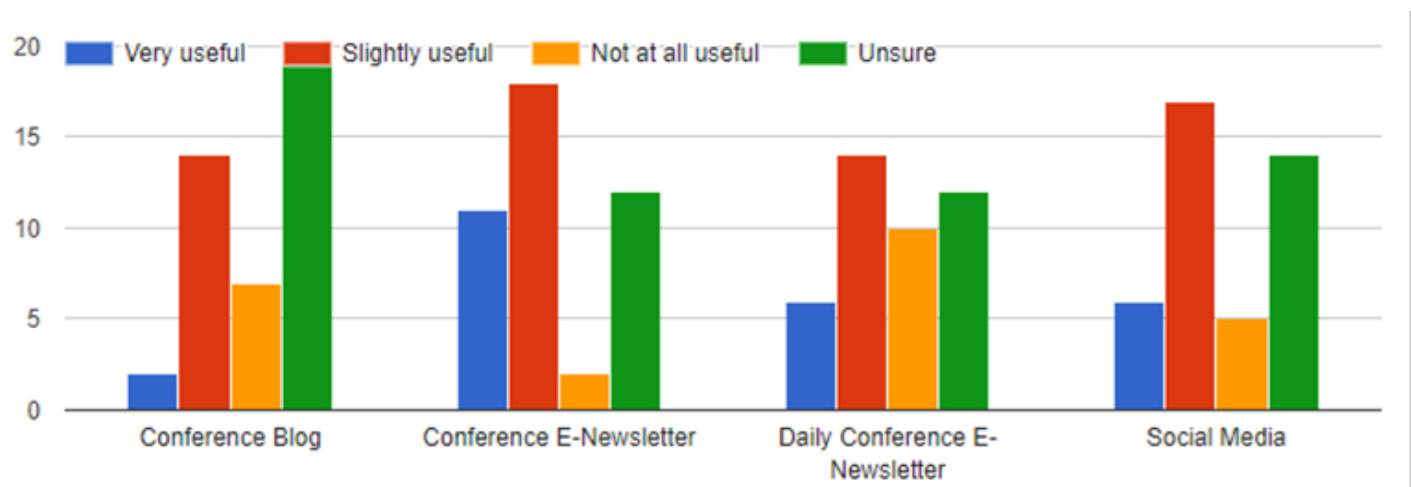


EVENT COMMUNICATIONS

On the website, what content were you looking for specifically that you could not find?

- Information released too late:
 - Conference Schedule
 - Book of Abstracts
 - Field Trip Information
 - Venue Information (maps)
- More information wanted:
 - Transportation Information (venue maps, public transit from accommodations to SFU)
 - Vendor Booth Information
 - How to register as a vendor booth
 - Hotel Accommodations & Directions
 - On-Campus Accommodation Options
 - Organizer Contact Information
- Problematic Information Formatting:
 - Conference Program (slow loading)
- Other:
 - Discussion Forum

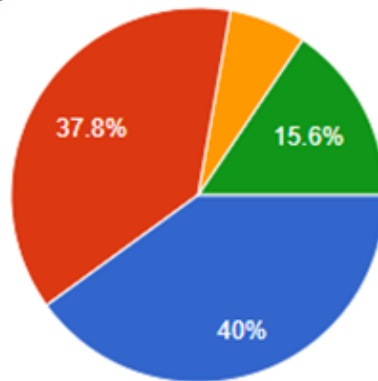
How useful were the following communication tools?



EVENT COMMUNICATIONS

Prior to the event, how much of the information that you needed did you get?

45 responses



- All of the information
- Most of the information
- Some of the information
- A little of the information
- None of the information

If any, what information were you missing?

- Conference Attendees:
 - Wifi Instructions
 - Abstract Information
 - Conference Program
 - Parking Code
 - Accommodations
- Presenters:
 - Presentation Upload & Bios
- Volunteers:
 - Roles and Schedule



Do you have any suggestions on how we could have communicated more effectively with you?

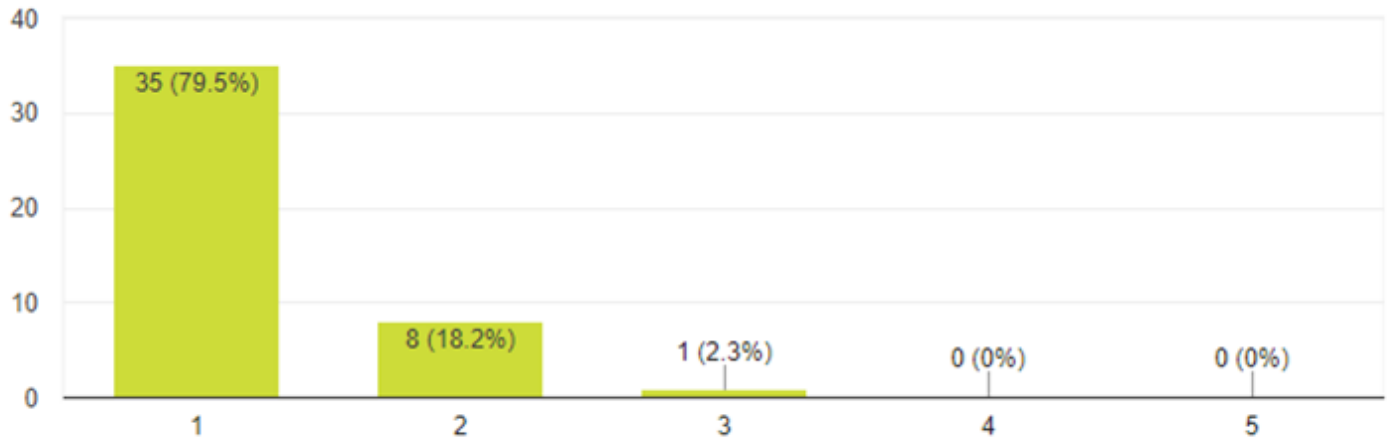
- General Communication:
 - Send more emails leading up to the event for general public and volunteers
 - Provide contact information for Field Trip organizers
 - Less text-heavy web pages
 - Increased activity on Social Media
 - More information on accommodations
 - Frequent and clear volunteer communication
- Daily Conference Communication:
 - Send a "Get Ready to Attend" e-newsletter sooner
 - Daily Newsletter – too lengthy, no new information provide outside regular **schedule**
 - Venue signage – canceled presentations and substitutions

VOLUNTEERS

How helpful were the volunteers?

1 = Extremely Helpful, 3 = Somewhat Helpful, 5 = Not at all Helpful

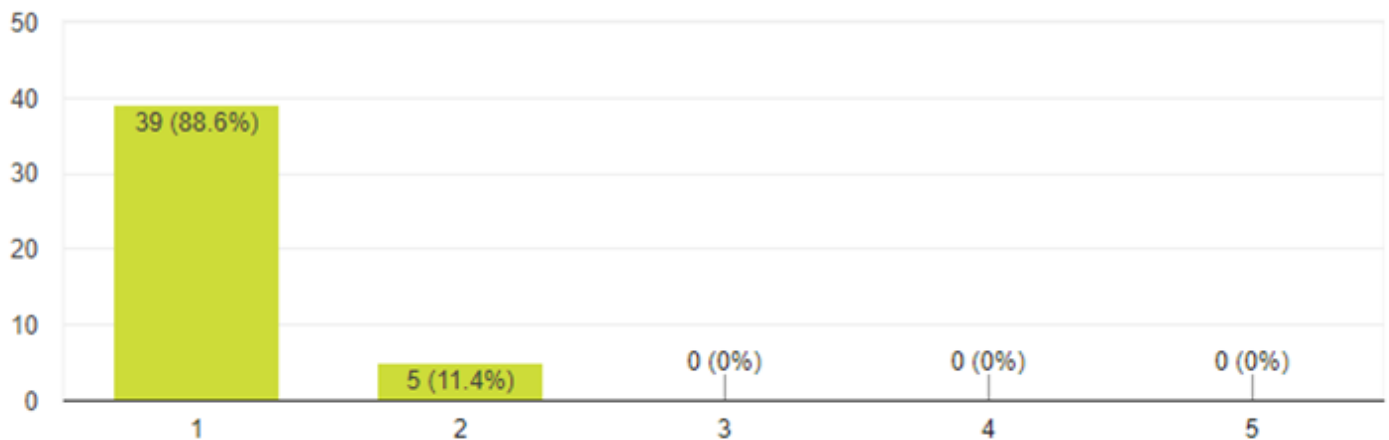
44 Responses



How friendly were the volunteers?

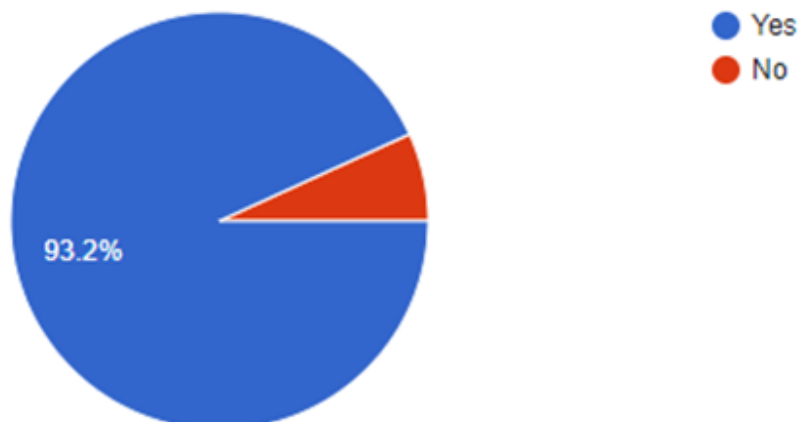
1 = Very Friendly, 3 = Somewhat Friendly, 5 = Not at all Friendly

44 Responses



Were event volunteers easy to identify?

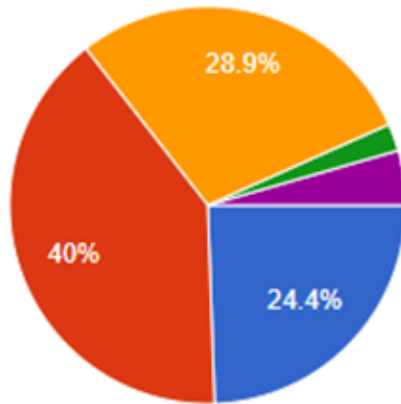
44 Responses



CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Please specify the main reason for attending this conference:

45 Responses



- Content
- Networking
- Personal growth & development
- Speakers
- Other

If other, please specify:

- Platform to share research



What is the single most valuable thing you learned at SERWC2018?

- Some sites achieve revegetation passively, while others (e.g. peatlands) may require seeding and or planting to start successional processes
- That the SER community is so welcoming, positive, and inspirational! I definitely believe that I've chosen the right career path.
- WOW! That's hard to identify just one valuable thing! Since I have to choose just one I would have to say the information obtained concerning the creation of wetlands around Highway 63 in Alberta. Some valuable insights were gained which I hope to use in wetland restoration projects in the future. Of course there are MANY other aspects which I have "taken away" and will use in my education and work in the environmental field.
- That hatchery raised salmon were out-competing wild salmon in the Serpentine River
- New restoration methods for wetlands
- The interconnections between ecology and human sociology
- Really enjoyed Karsten's talk - nice strong finish.
- The restoration community looks for positive solutions.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

- “It is a poor carpenter who blames his tools” (Michael Cody presentation)
- restoration activities in Vancouver region
- The networking was the most valuable. Most of the presentations were very site specific, with site specific recommendations (as generally is in academia, nothing to change there). I greatly appreciated the speakers who spoke broadly, i.e. the keynote speaker Katherine. I am very glad she spoke at the conference!
- The qualifications needed for restoration practitioners
- Connected with another researcher in my field - gained valuable methods insight from her presentation and our subsequent discussions.
- Assuming right environmental condition, overtime, natural process will restore site processes and functions irrespective of the intensity of degradation
- That I am progressing towards certification as a restoration practitioner
- Networking opportunities, lots of diverse useful information..
- How unique and great the culture of SER is. Takes a very hopeful view of our environment, and this came across in all the diverse personalities present.
- Content
- Restoration techniques from David Polster’s course
- Aboriginal views of restoration
- ER is a small growing field that is highly diverse
- What is going on in BC
- There is a community of likeminded people out there working hard on restoration; I feel better supported.
- Brushing up on my public speaking skills
- Ecological restoration is still a developing science and there are no “right answers” to the many complicated challenges we face. This can be difficult to communicate to clients and I needed the reassurance that this was the truth.
- That there is a definite need and convergence for belowground plant traits!
- That restoration is a very general term that means different things to different people/within different industries. Clear language needs to be used when discussing restoration to clarify differing definitions. And goals and objectives must be defined before a restoration project should be implemented.
- There is demand for ecological restoration and adaptive experimental techniques
- The interconnection of all ecosystems and ecosystem components.
- Changing baselines to restoration
- That there is an appetite for integrating the cultural and social dimensions of community restoration project
- Is that the restoration field is very industry driven

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Is there anything else you would like to share about the conference?

Positives:

- I really enjoyed it!!
- Being able to “connect” with my cohorts from SER-Western Canada has allowed me to take my involvement with SER to the next level! I fully intend to participate as a volunteer and also to work towards expanding the membership of SER within the region by developing contacts and getting the word out about the work that is being done in ecological restoration by SER members locally, regionally, nationally and internationally!
- Kudos to all the organizers
- Excellent conference, keep up the good work!
- Well done, one of the most enjoyable conferences I’ve ever attended largely due to the engaging environment.
- Thank you!
- Thank you too much! It was a fantastic conference, and felt like it was being run by a cohesive team and enthusiastic volunteers. I would recommend this conference, and hope to attend in the future.
- Thanks for organizing a first class conference.
- Thanks to all the organizers for putting on such a great conference.
- This is the first “scientific” conference I have been to that has highlighted the value of indigenous knowledge - thank you.
- It was very motivating to see so many people dedicated to restoration efforts in their work and to see how passionate restoration ecologists are. I have renewed hope in our future.
- Well done! I had a very positive experience.
- A wonderful conference.

Lessons Learned:

- 11 hours is too long for a volunteer shift.
- We need to look at issues such as urban and population growth, ecosystem services and economics and not operate in a scientific silo where only those recognized to practice restoration are certified members. Restoration is a piece of a larger puzzle and needs people familiar with ecosystem economics
- The amount of pictures being taken on day 1 was enthusiastic... but perhaps for the wrong reasons. I felt distracted and my privacy invaded. Which is really my main critique.
- I liked having it in Vancouver because I live here, but I wonder how a different location would have influenced the cross section of attendees and presentation content?
- Biggest frustration was having to miss some of the talks due to all of the choice. It would have been good to have more information on the plenary presentations to assist in choosing sessions to attend. Title alone was not a lot to go on.
- Coming from an ENGO I felt that having more than one keynote speaking about tar sands reclamation was a bit much



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