

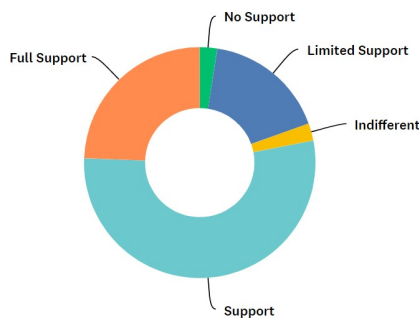


# BUILDING INSTITUTIONAL BUY-IN FOR HABITAT CONSERVATION PRACTICES

## PRELIMINARY RESULTS FROM THE 2020 SURVEY

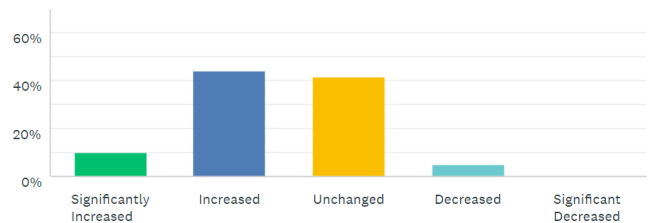
To build on the positive input and participation that the Rights-of-Way Habitat Working Group (ROWHWG) received from its 2019 online survey and the Fall 2019 workshop, an updated version of the survey was launched in November 2020. Though polling is ongoing and more data is required, the preliminary results allow us to examine year-to-year trends as well as identify emerging needs and opportunities.

### GENERAL SUPPORT FOR HABITAT PROGRAMS



Across all respondents, initial indications from the 2020 survey show high levels of institutional buy-in and managerial support for habitat conservation in rights-of-way (ROW) and other lands. However, when survey results are filtered to show only the feedback from respondents who represent utility companies or departments of transportation, support for habitat conservation drops slightly.

When asked how their organization’s support for habitat conservation changed over the past year, respondents returned near equal numbers for “increased” and “unchanged.”



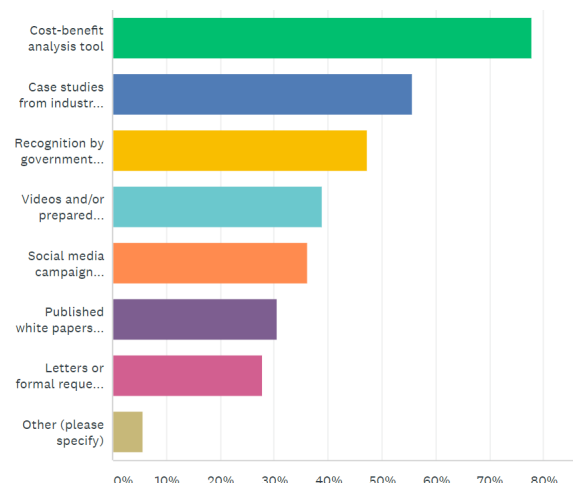
Once additional input is received, the ROWHWG will work to better understand how support for habitat conservation has shifted. Specifically:

- What factors caused habitat conservation support to increase over the past year?
- What factors resulted in support remaining stagnant?

### COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS

By and large, survey respondents indicated that a cost-benefit analysis tool would be the most helpful asset for articulating the value of habitat on ROW, educating leaders at their organization, and influencing decision making in support of habitat conservation and integrated vegetation management (IVM) practices. While the survey results show that a few organizations have already developed cost-benefit analyses, the majority have not. As such, the ROWHWG is seeking to better understand the following:

- If your organization has attempted to conduct a cost-benefit analysis but stalled, what was the cause?
- From an organizational communications perspective, what barriers are hindering the development of a cost-benefit analysis tool?



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## BUILDING INSTITUTIONAL BUY-IN FOR HABITAT CONSERVATION PRACTICES PRELIMINARY RESULTS

### FROM THE 2020 SURVEY (CON'T)

#### BARRIERS TO HABITAT

Participants of the ROWHWG realize the benefits of IVM and habitat conservation and work to make it a reality across the U.S. However, when it comes to making the case to organizational leaders, those benefits may be outweighed by perceived barriers to adoption. To help develop internal communications on IVM and habitat management, the 2020 survey asked respondents to identify key issues that stymied potential support of habitat conservation initiatives. While responses varied and additional input is required, the results were as follows (in descending order of priority):

- Low priority compared to other operational needs
- Perceived higher cost or belief that habitat management will not provide an immediate return on investment
- Business as usual or a desire to manage vegetation as you always have
- Lack of awareness
- Concern about additional regulation (e.g. Endangered Species Act)
- Concern that the initiative will not be successful or well-received by the public, employees or other stakeholders
- Reduced budget or other operational impacts due to COVID-19

#### ARTICULATING THE VALUE OF HABITAT

From a pool of options, survey respondents were asked to select the three options they believed would be most effective in increasing institutional buy-in for habitat conservation and management support. While additional data will help differentiate the results, the current top-three findings are:

- 42%** Partnering with external leaders and influencers (e.g., conservation NGOs, government agencies or other partners on habitat initiatives)
- 39%** Integrating habitat practices into formal organizational policies, contracts, sustainability and biodiversity strategies, and/or public reporting.
- 39%** Articulating how habitat management makes good business sense

*Do you agree that these options represent the best articulation of the value of habitat?*

#### NEXT STEPS

Your input will help the ROWHWG better understand the barriers to the adoption of habitat and IVM practices and facilitate the next steps for the Communications and Outreach Task Force, including to help us determine the feasibility of developing an industry-wide cost-benefit analysis tool. If you haven't already done so, [click here to take the 2020 survey.](#)

We'd also like to hear your thoughts and reactions to the preliminary survey results. Join us on the Building Buy-In discussion board to provide your feedback. [Click here to post on the discussion board.](#)

As always, thank you for your valuable input and participation in the Rights-of-Way as Habitat Working Group!

2020 ROWHWG SURVEY SPONSORED BY:

