

National Park Service Natural Resource Program Center

Evaluation of Selected NRPC Programs by the Natural Resource Advisory Group

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Natural Resource Stewardship and Science Directorate
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Executive Summary

In March 2004 a questionnaire was completed by all members of the NPS Natural Resource Advisory Group (NRAG) attending its meeting in Homestead, Florida. The questionnaire was developed in cooperation with Texas A&M University and was designed to evaluate 2 functions and 6 technical- assistance activities of the Natural Resource Program Center (NRPC).

For the first of the 2 functions—NRPC funding programs—the percentage of positive evaluations (i.e., “agree” or “strongly agree”) was 69% out of a possible 100%. For the second function related to natural resource policy development, guidance, and regulatory review, the percentage of positive evaluations was 86%.

The percentage of positive evaluations for the 6 technical- assistance activities was 74%. Broken down by individual program, the results were: 1) Air Quality Program—71%; 2) Environmental Compliance Program—59%; 3) Exotic Plant Management Teams—76%; 4) Geoscience Program—66%; 5) Monitoring Program—88%; and 6) Water Quality Program—83%.

In most cases, the non- positive evaluations fell in the “neither agree nor disagree” or “don’t know” categories. Relatively few of the non- positive evaluations were negative.

Other results included:

- At least 90% of NRAG members indicated they were aware of each of the 6 technical- assistance programs.
- At least 90% of NRAG members agreed or strongly agreed that: 1) they understood the objectives of exotic plant management teams, the Monitoring Program, and the Water Quality Program; 2) the Monitoring Program is meeting its objectives; 3) the goals of the Monitoring Program strategically align with the NPS mission; 4) the Water Quality Program is responsive to parks; and 5) the exotic plant management teams and the Water Quality Program contribute to parks’ ability to manage natural resources.
- Although the majority of respondents agreed that they understood the objectives of the 6 programs, with the exception of the Monitoring Program they were less likely to feel the programs were achieving these objectives.
- For each technical- assistance program, less than 90% of respondents felt that information about the program was readily available.
- NRAG members used a variety of means to access information about NRPC functions and programs, including the natural resource Intranet Web site and phone calls and emails to NRPC staff and regional coordinators. The NPS policy Web site was a commonly used source of information for natural resource policy development, guidance, and regulatory review.

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INTRODUCTION

In March 2004 an evaluation questionnaire was given to members of the National Park Service Natural Resource Advisory Group (NRAG) attending its annual meeting in Homestead, Florida. This group is made up of representatives appointed by regional directors. It includes superintendents, associate regional directors with line authority over natural resource programs, regional natural resource program managers, and park natural resource managers. In addition, at any time there may be 2 or 3 other positions appointed by the Associate Director to represent other national programs that work closely with natural resources. Attending the NRAG meeting were 4 park superintendents, 2 park resource managers, 4 associate regional directors, 6 regional program managers, and one additional member. Fourteen of these 17 individuals completed the evaluation questionnaire.

The purpose of the questionnaire, developed in cooperation with Texas A&M University, was to solicit close-ended and open-ended evaluations of selected programs of the Natural Resource Program Center (NRPC). The NRPC is an administrative unit of the Natural Resource Stewardship and Science Directorate (NRSS) and provides services to NPS field units related to natural resource management, planning, and policy. Evaluations were solicited for the following functions and programs:

- Projects funded through NRSS
- Natural resource policy development, guidance, and regulatory review
- Air Quality Program
- Environmental Compliance Program
- Exotic Plant Management Teams
- Geoscience Program
- Monitoring Program
- Water Quality Program

Close-ended items were answered using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” A “don’t know” response was also included for most questions. Items were worded so that a response on the “agree” side of the scale indicated a positive evaluation. Following completion, the forms were sent to Texas A&M University for analysis. The results are described in this report.

Natural Resource Program Center Funding Areas

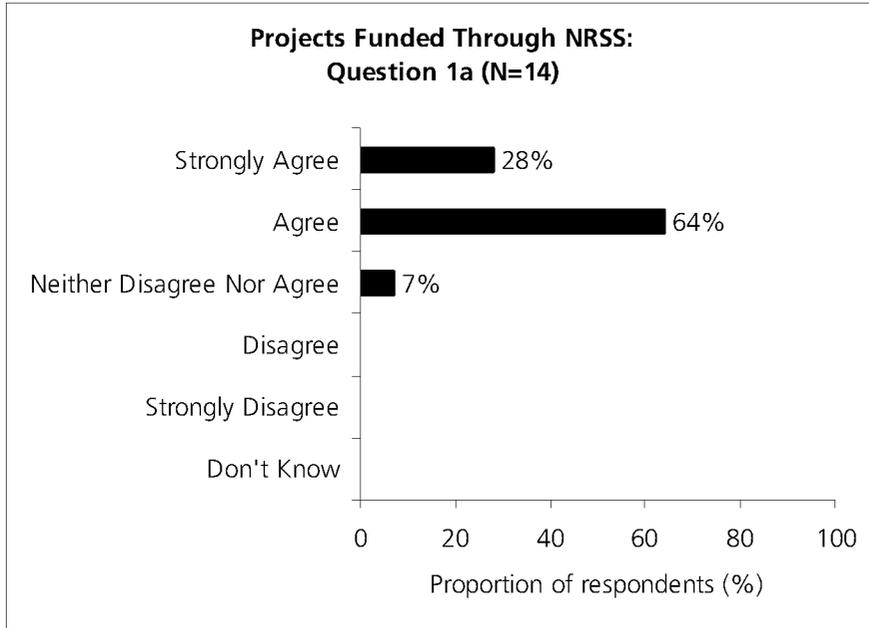
Evaluations in this section address the funding sources managed by the Natural Resource Program Center divisions. These include Servicewide Natural Resources Preservation Program funds, such as sub-accounts for disturbed lands restoration, threatened and endangered species, specific division competitive accounts (Air Resources, Biological Resources Management, Environmental Quality, Water Resources), and division non-competitive funds.

For this NRPC function area, 69% of the ratings were positive (i.e., “agree” or “strongly agree”) out of a possible 100%. In most cases, the largest number of non-positive evaluations fell in the “neither disagree nor agree” and “don’t know” categories. Relatively few of the non-positive evaluations were negative.

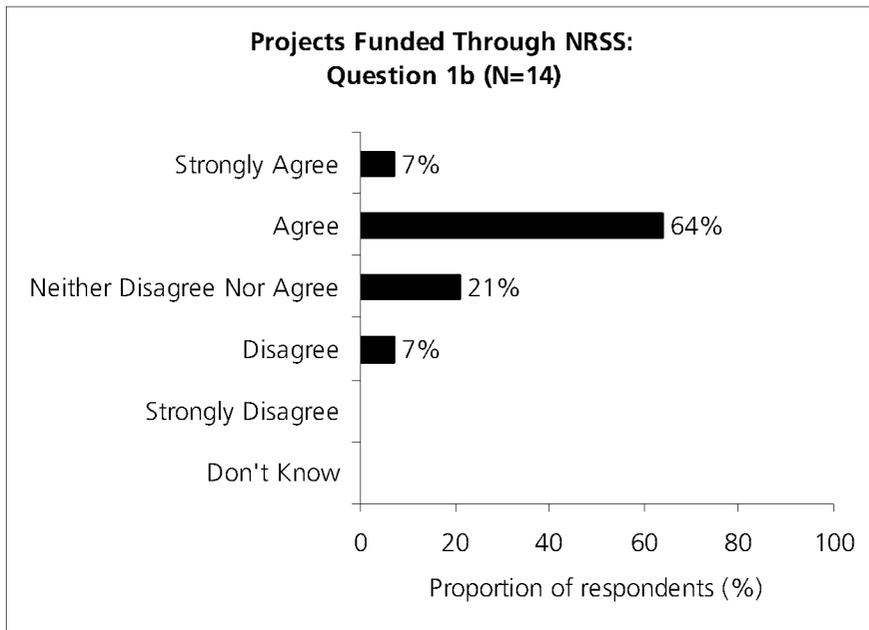
The fewest positive evaluations (50%) occurred for 2 items: 1) “The NRPC plays a helpful role in preparing project submittals and managing projects,” and 2) “The NRPC provides adequate peer review for all stages (preparation through implementation, reporting).”

The greatest agreement (92%) was with the statement, “I understand the natural resource funding sources available and the project submittal and selection process.”

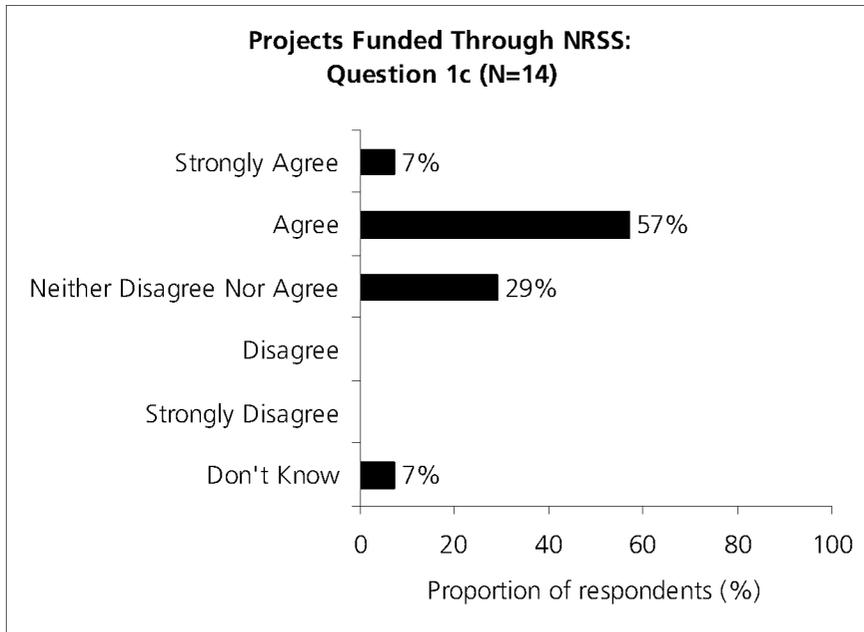
I understand the Natural Resource funding sources available, and the project submittal and selection process.



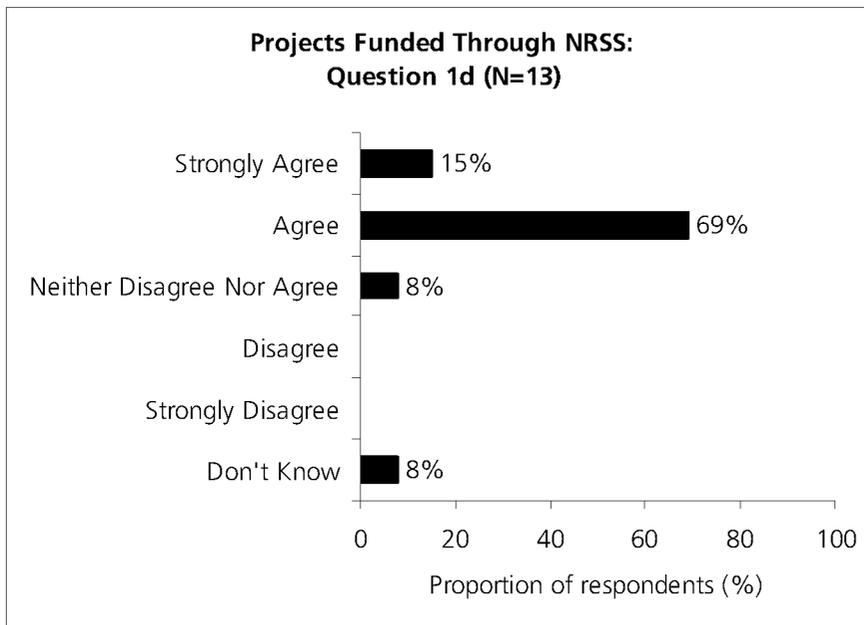
The sources and processes are appropriate for meeting priority needs within current funding constraints.



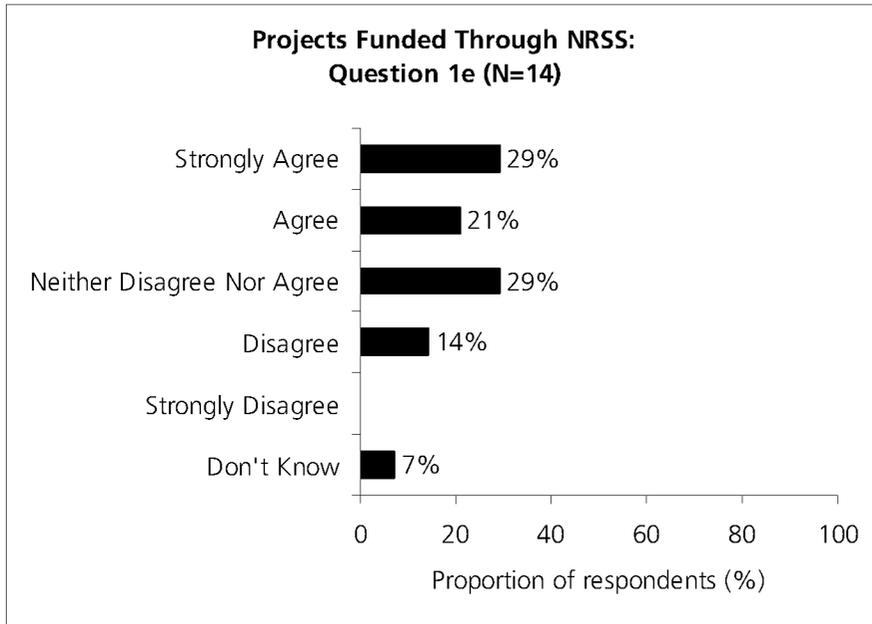
Final products meet management needs.



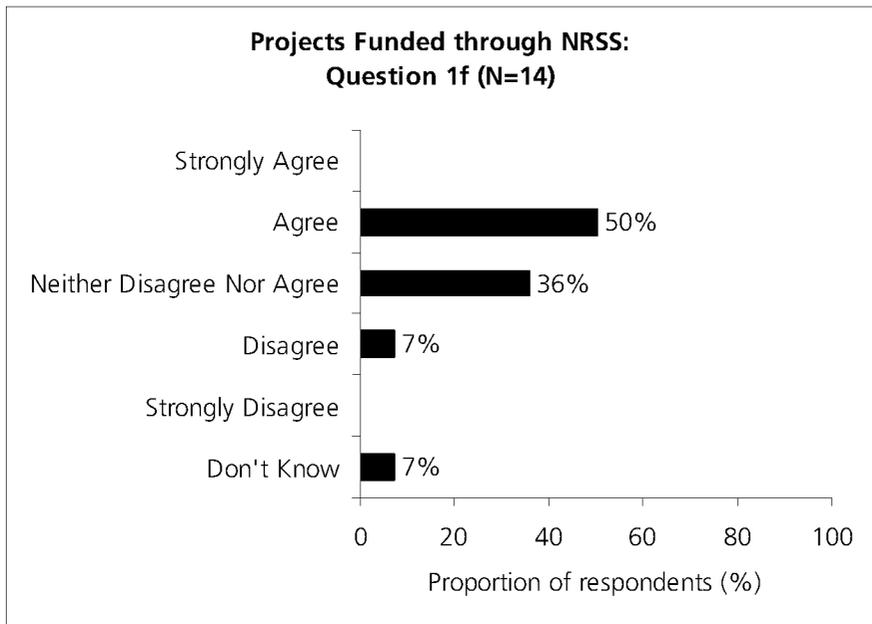
Final products are of high quality.



The NRPC plays a helpful role in preparing project submittals and managing projects.



The NRPC provides adequate peer review for all stages (preparation through implementation, reporting).



Natural Resource Policy Development, Guidance, and Regulatory Review

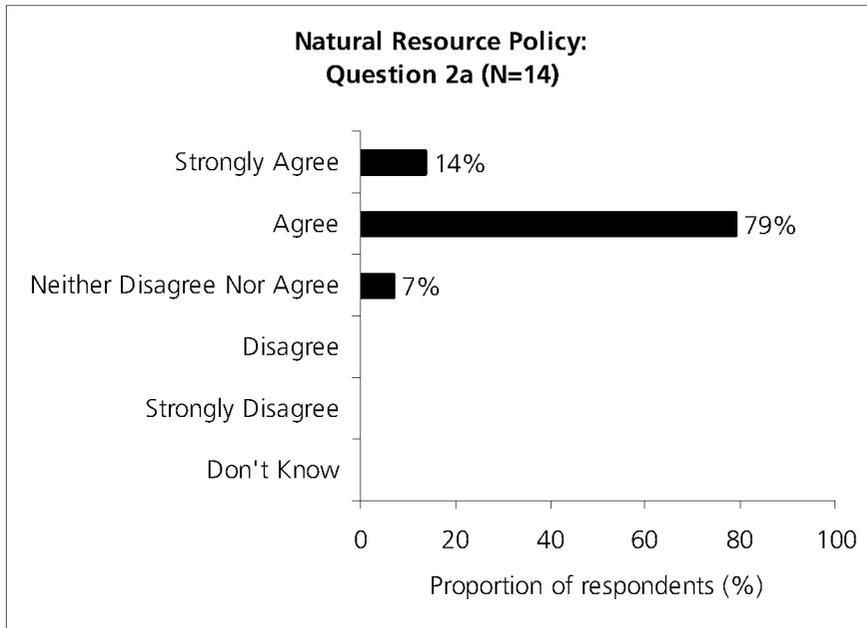
These evaluations encompass NRPC functions that develop NPS policy and implementation guidance and NRPC assistance in addressing external agency regulatory and permitting processes.

In this function area, 86% of the ratings were positive (i.e., “agree” or “strongly agree”) out of a possible 100%. As with funding programs, the largest number of non- positive evaluations fell in the “neither disagree no agree” and “don’t know” categories.

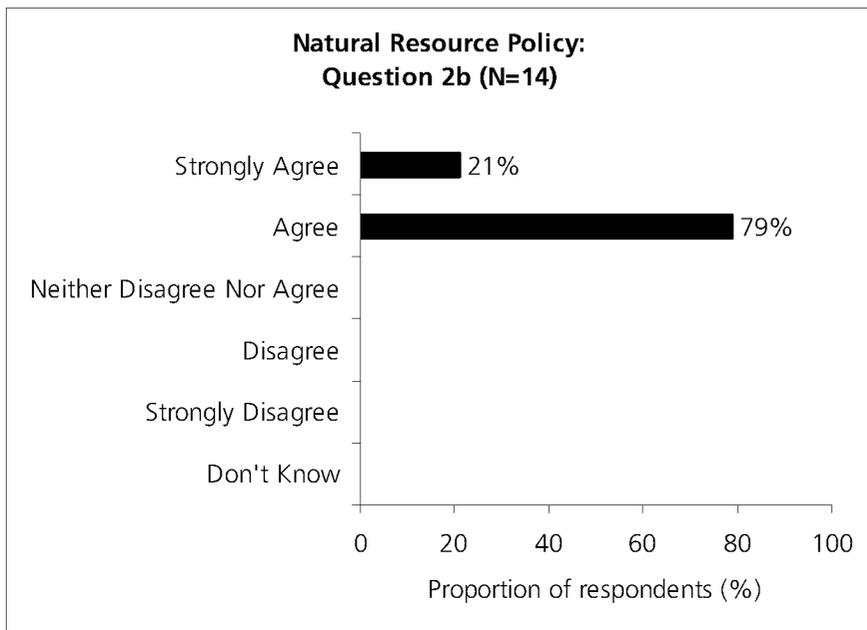
The lowest level of agreement (65%) was with the statement, “NRPC staff promotes NPS policies when working with external agencies and partners or commenting on other agencies’ activities.”

The greatest agreement (100%) occurred for 2 items: 1) “Management policies and guidelines adequately address issues and are useful to parks in effectively managing natural resources,” and 2) “I know where to find natural resource policies and guidelines.”

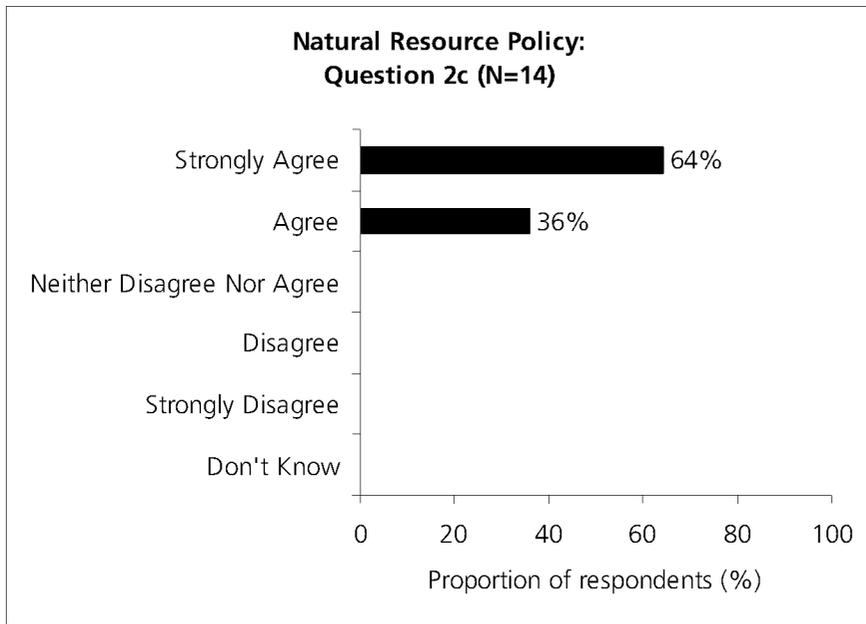
NPS management policies and guidelines for natural resource management are clear.



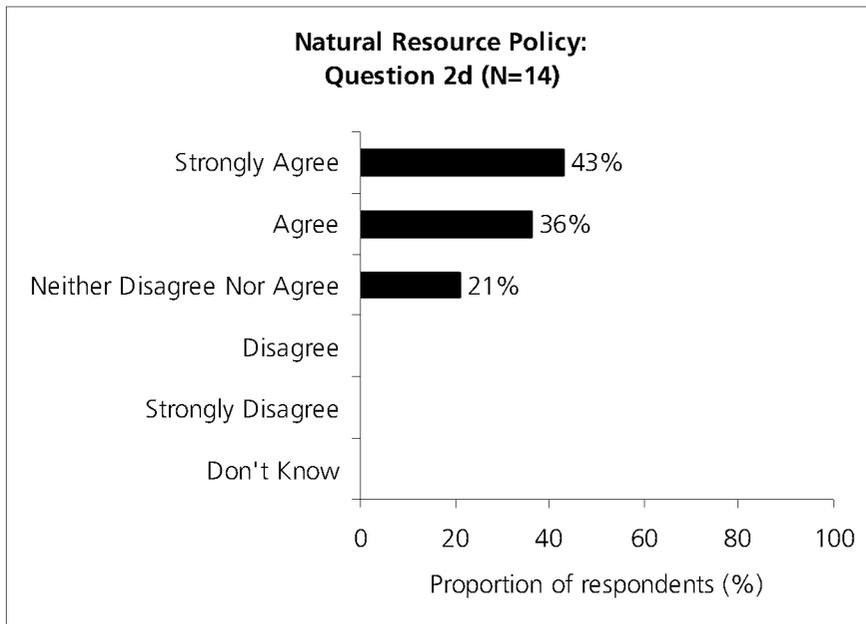
Management policies and guidelines adequately address issues and are useful to parks in effectively managing natural resources.



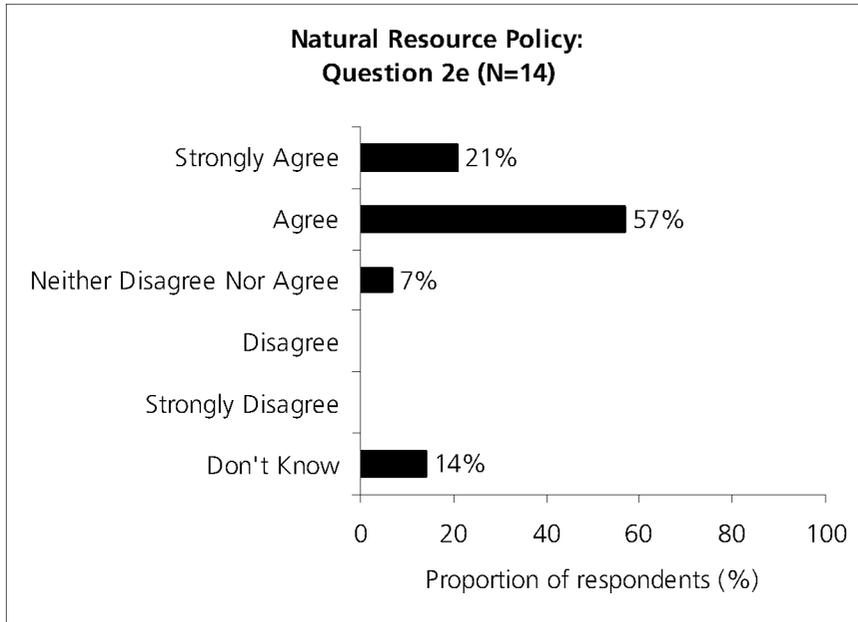
I know where to find natural resource policies and guidelines.



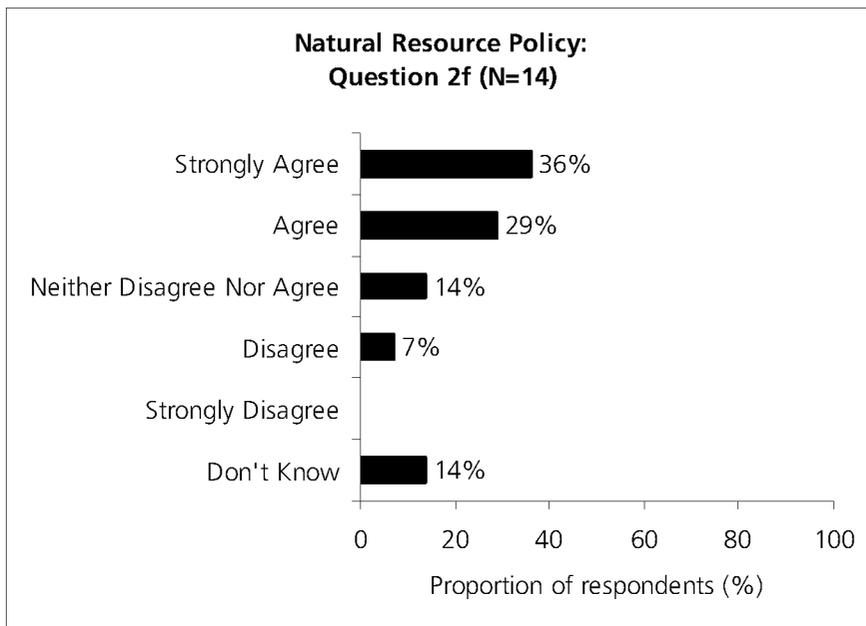
NRPC staff provides timely policy guidance to parks.



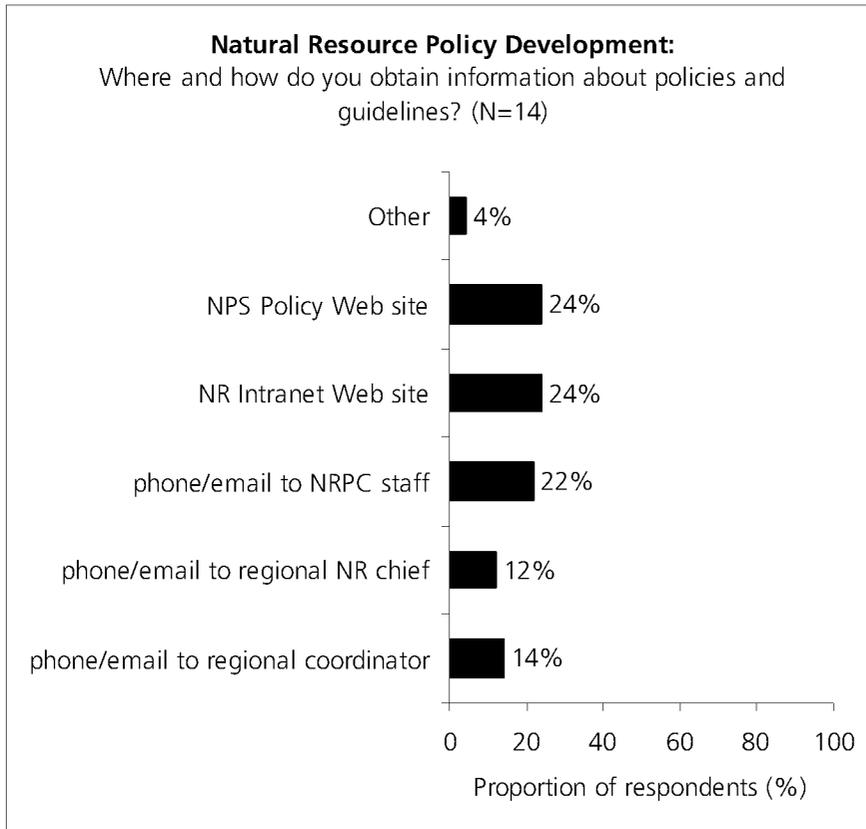
NRPC staff accurately interprets policies, regulations and guidelines and provides consistent policy advice to parks.



NRPC staff promotes NPS policies when working with external agencies and partners or commenting on other agencies' activities.



Sources of information on polices and guidelines.



Note: Respondents could select more than one information source.

Technical-Assistance Programs: Overview

This section highlights results of the evaluation for 6 NRPC technical- assistance programs. It presents a combined evaluation for all 6 programs, compares the programs on individual evaluation items, and analyzes responses to 2 questions concerning the programs' goals and objectives: "I understand the purposes and objectives of the program," and "The program is meeting its objectives." The 6 programs evaluated include:

- Air Quality Program
- Environmental Compliance Program
- Exotic Plant Management Teams
- Geoscience Program
- Monitoring Program
- Water Quality Program

Combined Evaluation of 6 Technical-Assistance Programs

An overall evaluation of 6 of the NRPC's technical- assistance activities was obtained by averaging the percentage of "agree" and "strongly agree" ratings across 9 items for all 6 programs. (Agreeing with a statement represented a positive evaluation.)

The 9 items were:

1. I am aware the program exists within the NRPC.
2. I understand the purposes and objectives of the program.
3. The program is meeting its objectives.
4. The program goals/objectives are appropriate and strategically aligned with the NPS mission.
5. Information about the program is readily available.
6. Based on the information available to me, the program is cost- effective.
7. The program is responsive to park/field needs and concerns.
8. The program contributes to park managers' ability to manage natural resources.
9. Proper mechanisms are in place to ensure that resources are allocated equitably and strategically to parks.¹

NRAG respondents agreed or strongly agreed with these statements 74% of the time. By individual program, the percentage of positive evaluations were: 1) Air Quality Program—71%; 2) Environmental Compliance Program—59%; 3) Exotic Plant Management Teams—76%; 4) Geoscience Program—66%; 5) Monitoring Program—88%; and 6) Water Quality Program—83%.

In most cases, the non- positive evaluations fell in the "neither disagree nor agree" and "don't know" categories. Relatively few of the non- positive evaluations were negative.

By-Question Program Comparison

The percentage of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with each item is presented below. In addition, the percentage of "Don't Know" (DK) responses to each statement is displayed. Because of item non- response, the base for percentaging ranges from 12 to 14. (Due to rounding, percentages in these tables may differ slightly from corresponding graphed percentages in the following sections of this report.)

I am aware the program exists with the NRPC ("yes" responses)

Air Quality	93% (13/14)
Environmental Compliance	100% (14/14)
Exotic Plant Management Teams	100% (14/14)
Geoscience	93% (13/14)
Monitoring	100% (14/14)
Water Quality	93% (14/14)

¹ Because of the high proportion of "don't know" responses (24%) to this item, the results should be interpreted with caution. In many cases, NRAG members apparently felt they did not have enough information to evaluate the allocation of program resources to parks.

I understand the purposes and objectives of the program (strongly agree/agree).

Air Quality	86% (12/14)	(DK, 0%, 0/14)
Environmental Compliance	65% (9/14)	(DK, 0%, 0/14)
Exotic Plant Management Teams	100% (14/14)	(DK, 0%, 0/14)
Geoscience	71% (10/14)	(DK, 0%, 0/14)
Monitoring	100% (14/14)	(DK, 0%, 0/14)
Water Quality	93% (13/14)	(DK, 0%, 0/14)

The program is meeting its objectives (strongly agree/agree).

Air Quality	71% (10/14)	(DK, 14%, 2/14)
Environmental Compliance	43% (6/14)	(DK, 29%, 4/14)
Exotic Plant Management Teams	65% (9/14)	(DK, 14%, 2/14)
Geoscience	50% (7/14)	(DK, 21%, 3/14)
Monitoring	100% (14/14)	(DK, 0%, 0/14)
Water Quality	79% (11/14)	(DK, 14%, 2/14)

The program goals/objectives are appropriate and strategically aligned with the NPS mission (strongly agree/agree).

Air Quality	69% (9/13)	(DK, 23%, 3/13)
Environmental Compliance	71% (10/14)	(DK, 14%, 2/14)
Exotic Plant Management Teams	86% (12/14)	(DK, 0%, 0/14)
Geoscience	62% (8/13)	(DK, 15%, 2/13)
Monitoring	100% (14/14)	(DK, 0%, 0/14)
Water Quality	86% (12/14)	(DK, 14%, 2/14)

Information about the program is readily available (strongly agree/agree).

Air Quality	69% (9/13)	(DK, 8%, 1/13)
Environmental Compliance	71% (10/14)	(DK, 14%, 2/14)
Exotic Plant Management Teams	86% (12/14)	(DK, 0%, 0/14)
Geoscience	71% (10/14)	(DK, 7%, 1/14)
Monitoring	86% (12/14)	(DK, 0%, 0/14)
Water Quality	65% (9/14)	(DK, 7%, 0/14)

Based on the information available to me, the program is cost-effective (strongly agree/agree).

Air Quality	50% (6/12)	(DK, 17%, 2/12)
Environmental Compliance	21% (3/14)	(DK, 36%, 5/14)
Exotic Plant Management Teams	57% (8/13)	(DK, 7%, 1/14)
Geoscience	43% (6/14)	(DK, 29%, 4/14)
Monitoring	71% (10/14)	(DK, 0%, 0/14)
Water Quality	71% (10/14)	(DK, 7%, 1/14)

The program is responsive to park/field needs and concerns (strongly agree/agree).

Air Quality	77% (10/13)	(DK, 15%, 2/13)
Environmental Compliance	71% (10/14)	(DK, 14%, 2/14)
Exotic Plant Management Teams	71% (10/14)	(DK, 7%, 1/14)
Geoscience	79% (11/14)	(DK, 0%, 0/14)
Monitoring	77% (10/13)	(DK, 0%, 0/14)
Water Quality	100% (14/14)	(DK, 0%, 0/14)

The program contributes to park managers' ability to manage natural resources (strongly agree/agree).

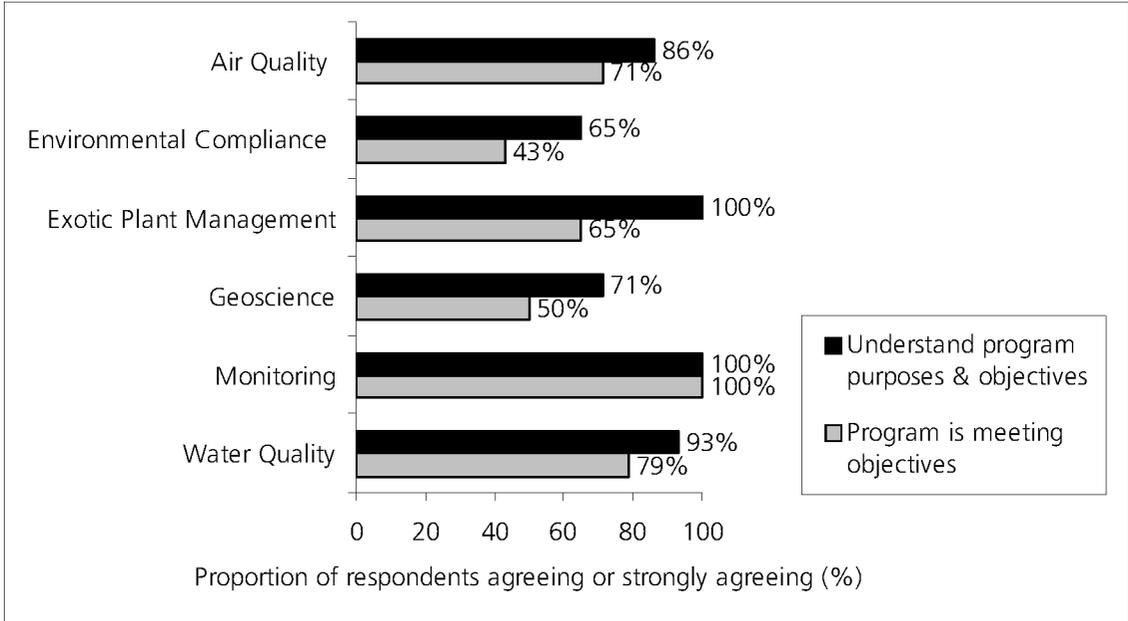
Air Quality	77% (10/13)	(DK, 15%, 2/13)
Environmental Compliance	71% (10/14)	(DK, 7%, 1/14)
Exotic Plant Management Teams	93% (12/13)	(DK, 0%, 0/14)
Geoscience	79% (11/14)	(DK, 0%, 0/14)
Monitoring	65% (9/14)	(DK, 0%, 0/14)
Water Quality	100% (14/14)	(DK, 0%, 0/14)

Proper mechanisms are in place to ensure that resources are allocated equitably and strategically to parks (strongly agree/agree).

Air Quality	38% (5/13)	(DK, 38%, 5/13)
Environmental Compliance	14% (2/14)	(DK, 43%, 6/14)
Exotic Plant Management Teams	29% (4/14)	(DK, 21%, 3/14)
Geoscience	43% (6/14)	(DK, 21%, 3/14)
Monitoring	86% (12/14)	(DK, 0%, 0/14)
Water Quality	58% (8/14)	(DK, 21%, 3/14)

Program Objectives

The following graph compares responses to 2 items for all 6 technical- assistance programs: “I understand the purposes and objectives of the program,” and “The program is meeting its objectives.” For most programs, a high percentage of NRAG members agreed they understood the objectives. However, fewer respondents felt the programs were achieving these objectives as they understood them. The exception was the Monitoring Program. In this case, all respondents agreed that they understood the program purposes and that these objectives were being achieved.



Air Quality Program

Evaluations in this section deal with the Air Resources Division program that promotes protection of park air resources by:

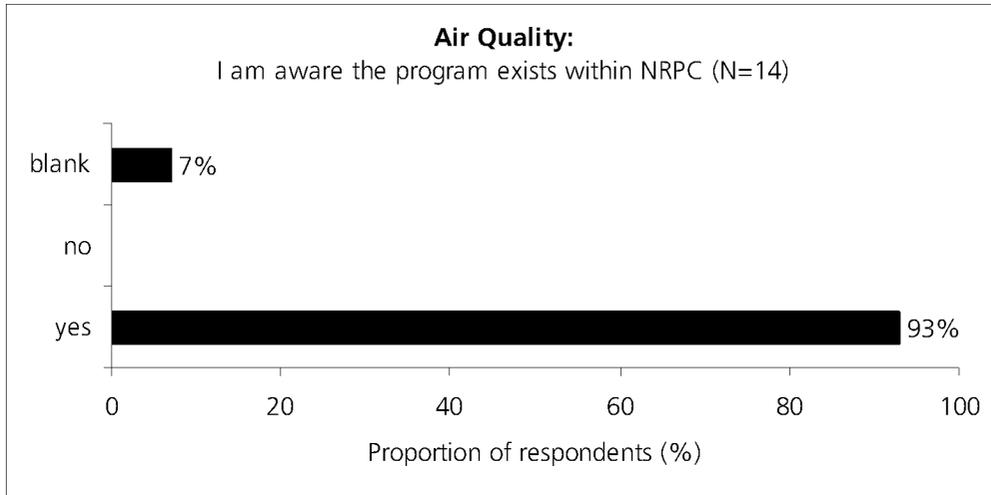
- Overseeing collection and analysis of park air quality data.
- Providing scientific, technical, and regulatory expertise to parks (e.g., ecological and visual/scenic effects of air pollution, modeling and analytical tools, pollution control technology, interpretation and application of federal and state laws and regulations).
- Reviewing impacts of new air pollution sources on parks.
- Collaborating with partners and stakeholders to develop pollution control programs.
- Providing technical assistance with planning, education, and interpretation.

The overall rating for the Air Quality Program was 71% out of a possible 100%.

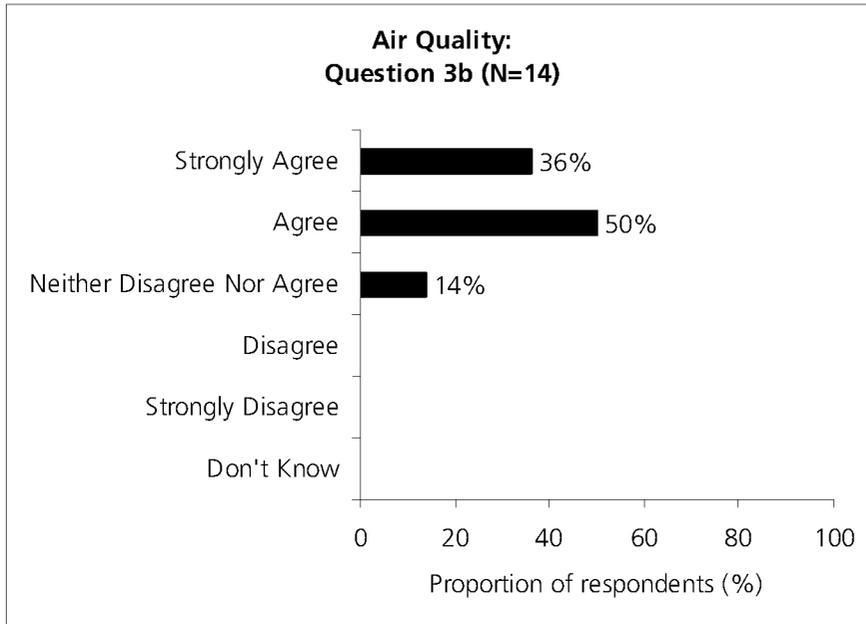
The lowest level of agreement (38%) was with the statement, “Proper mechanisms are in place to ensure that resources are allocated equitably and strategically to parks.”

Excluding the awareness item, the greatest agreement (86%) occurred with the statement, “I understand the purposes and objectives of the program.”

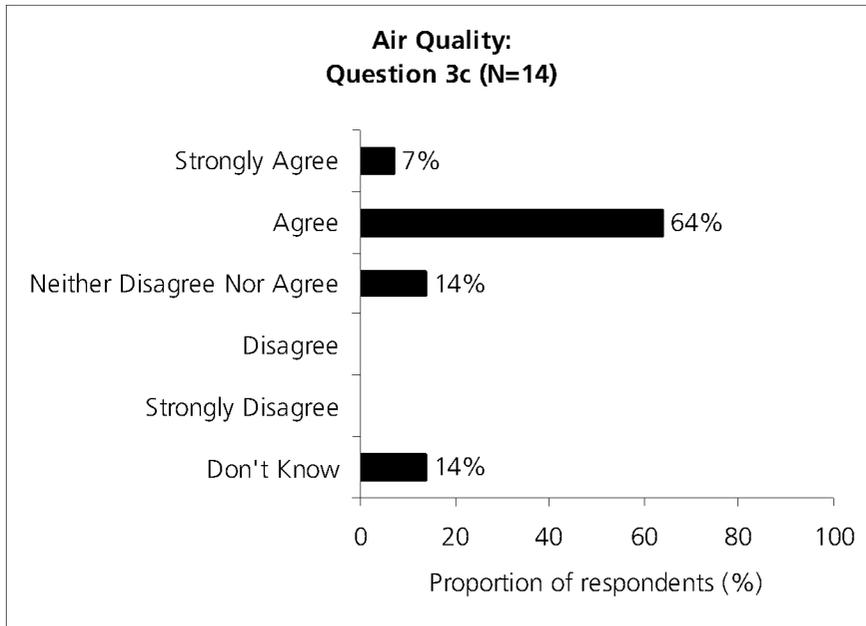
Awareness of program.



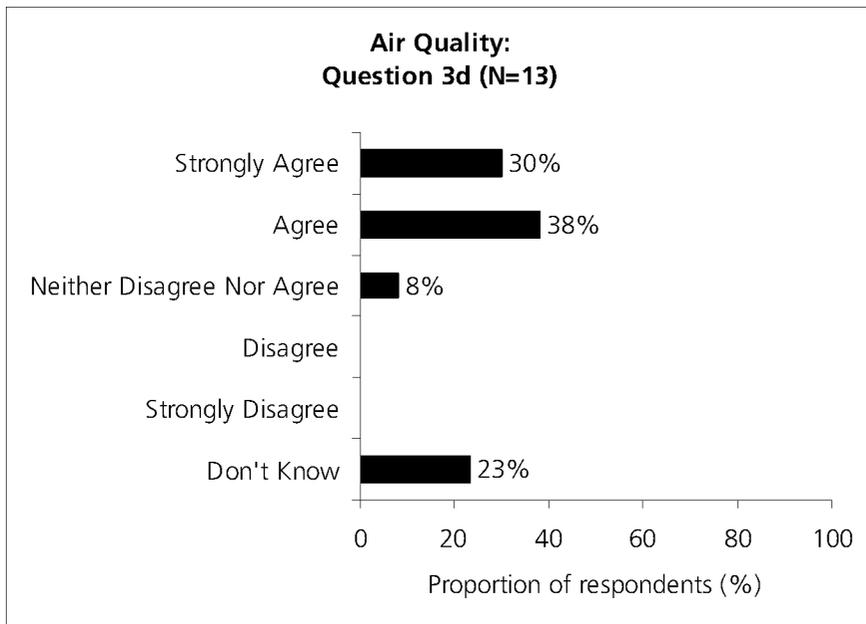
I understand the purposes and objectives of the program.



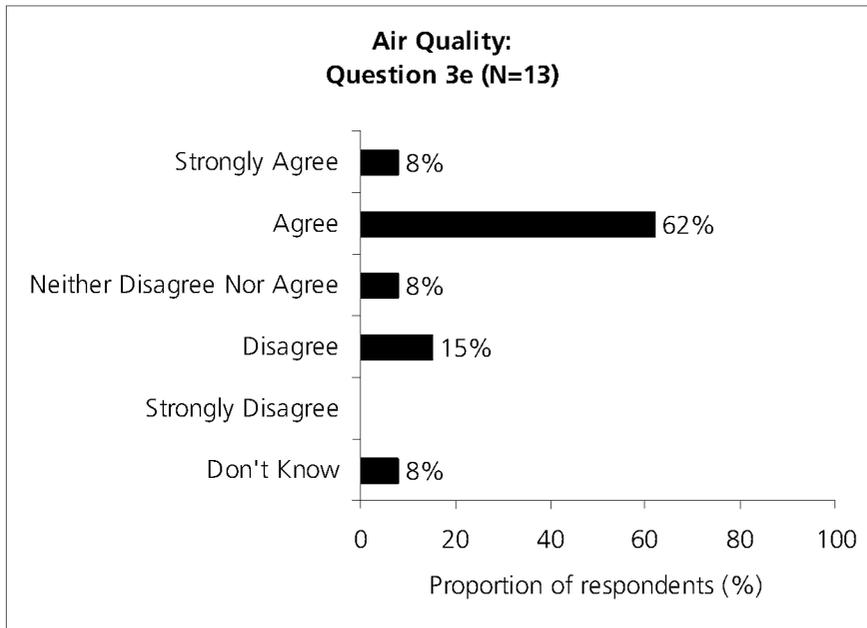
The program is meeting its objectives.



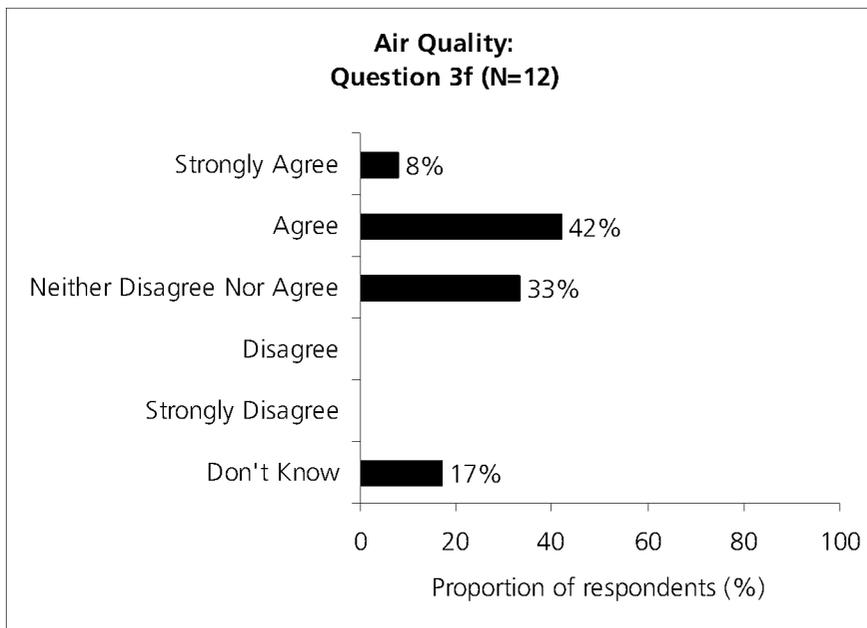
The program goals/objectives are appropriate and strategically aligned with the NPS mission.



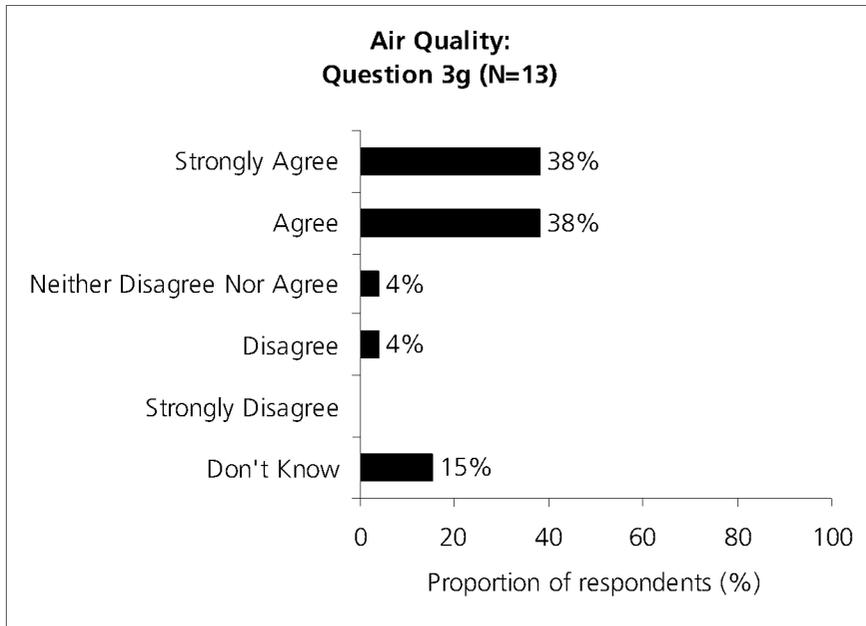
Information about the program is readily available.



Based on information available to me, the program is cost-effective.

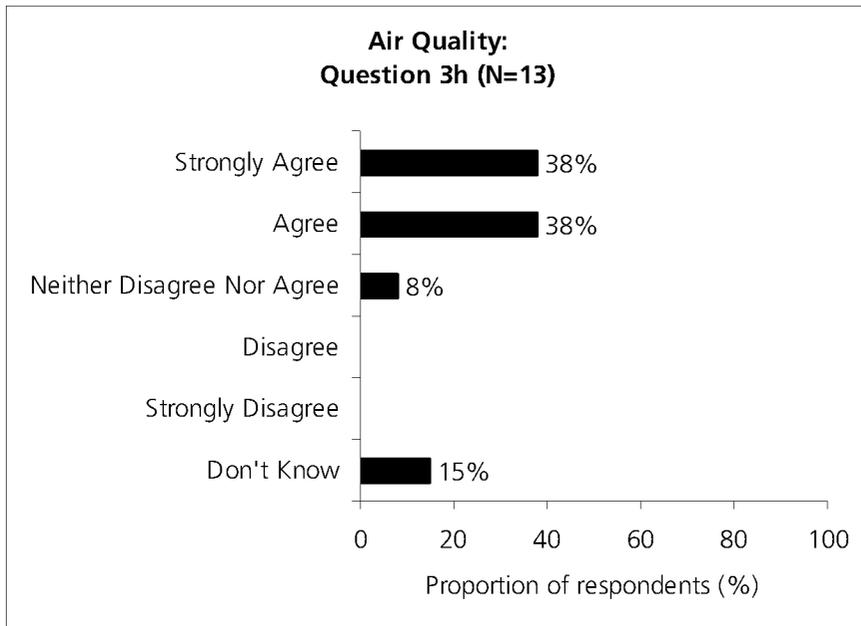


The program is responsive to park/field needs and concerns.

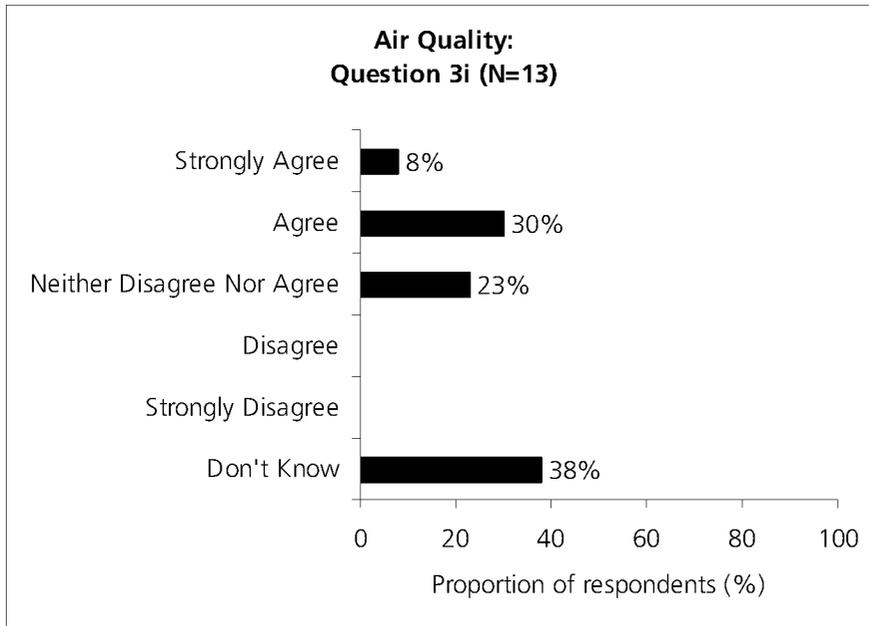


Note: One respondent split his/her rating between “disagree” and “neither disagree nor agree.”

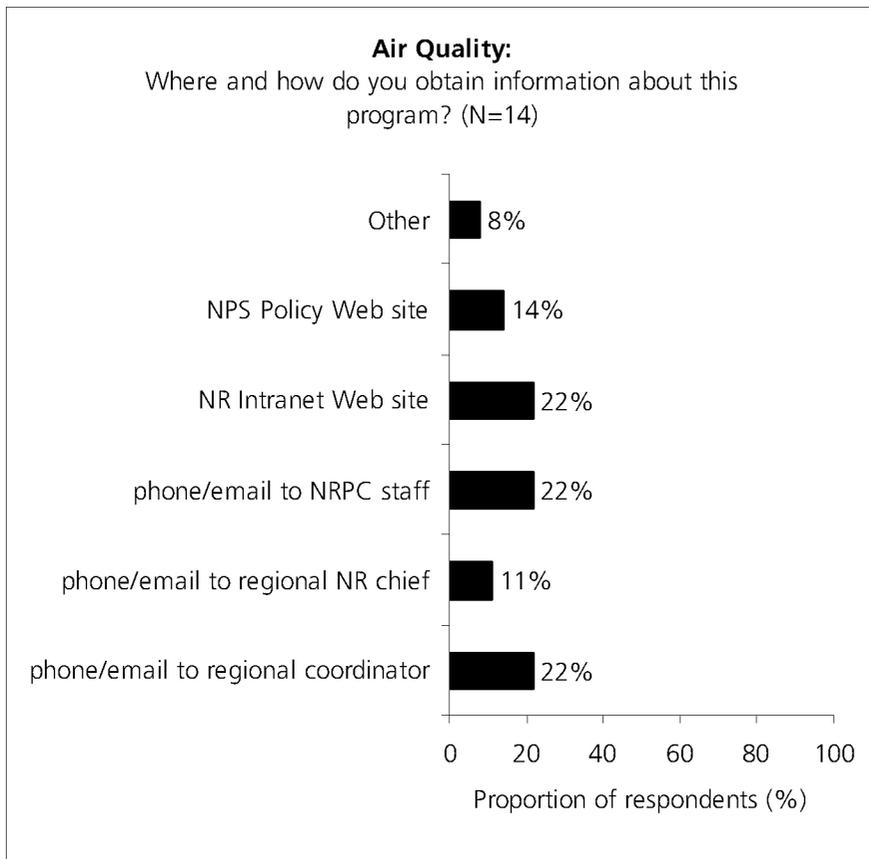
The program contributes to park managers' ability to manage natural resources.



Proper mechanisms are in place to ensure that resources are allocated equitably and strategically to parks.



Sources of information on program.



Note: Respondents could select more than one information source.

Environmental Compliance Program

Evaluations in this section encompass the Environmental Quality Division's program to manage NPS environmental review and compliance by:

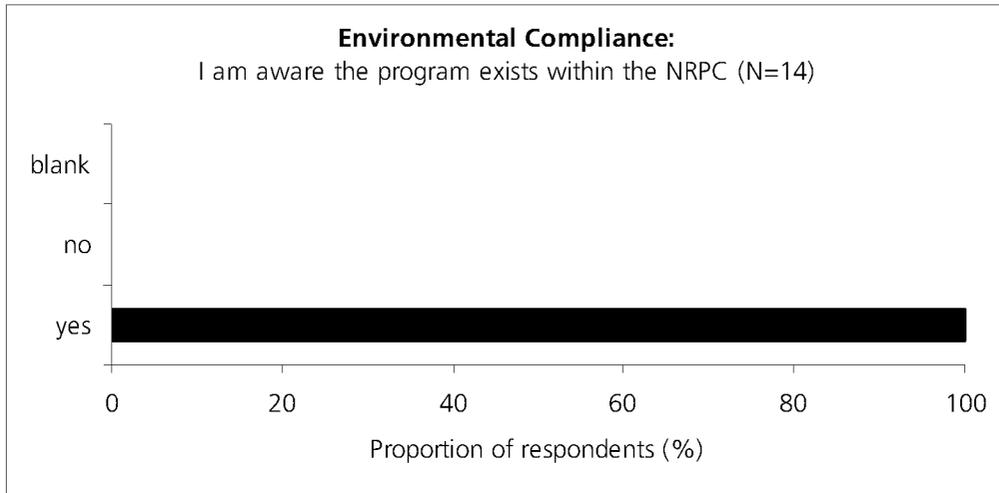
- Developing and interpreting Servicewide policy and guidance.
- Developing and implementing NPS and interagency training and workshops on environmental compliance issues.
- Providing oversight of contracted projects, including complex environmental impact statements and environmental assessments.
- Providing technical assistance to parks and regions, including support related to court-ordered or legislatively mandated projects.

The overall rating for the Environmental Compliance Program was 59% out of a possible 100%.

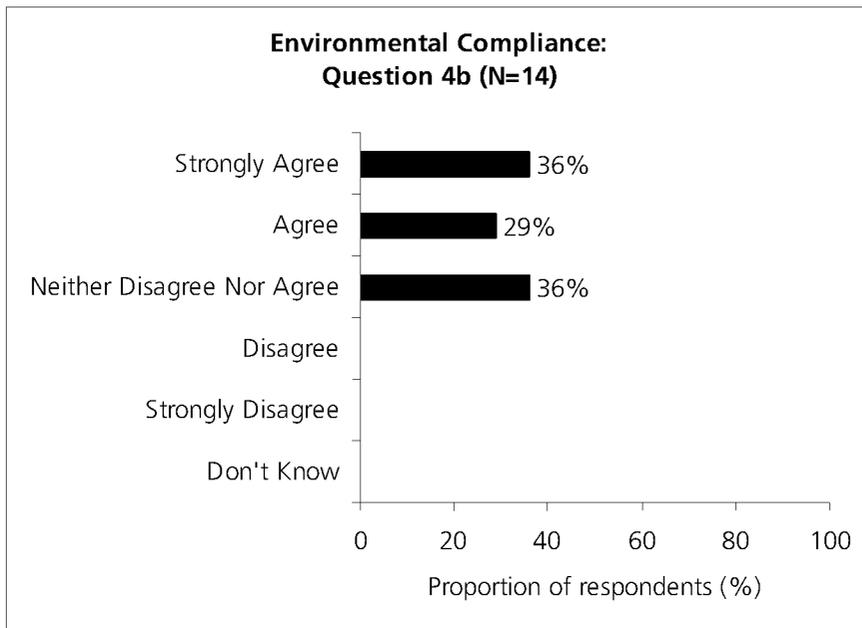
The lowest level of agreement (14%) was with the statement, "Proper mechanisms are in place to ensure that resources are allocated equitably and strategically to parks."

Excluding the awareness item, the greatest agreement (72%) occurred with the statement, "The program is responsive to park/field needs and concerns."

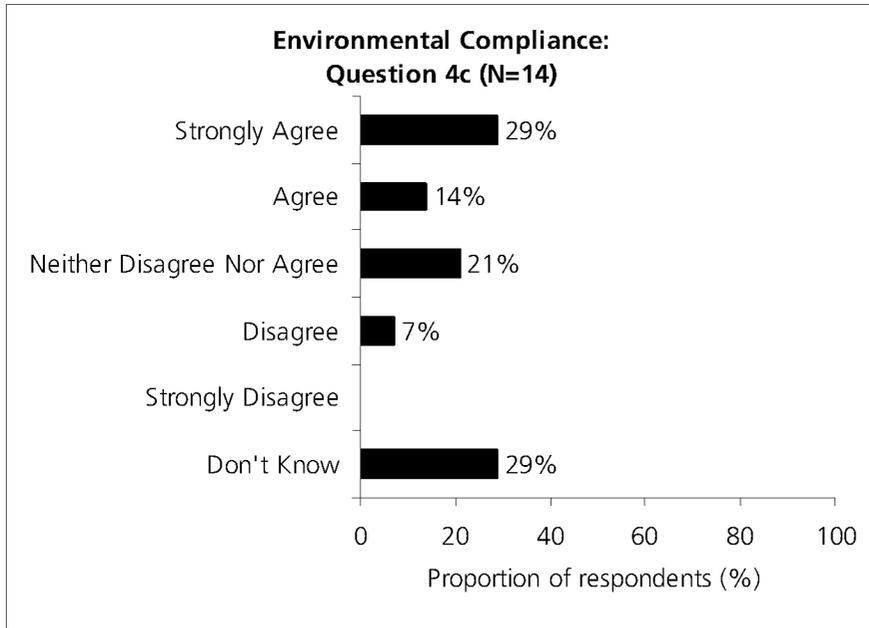
Awareness of program.



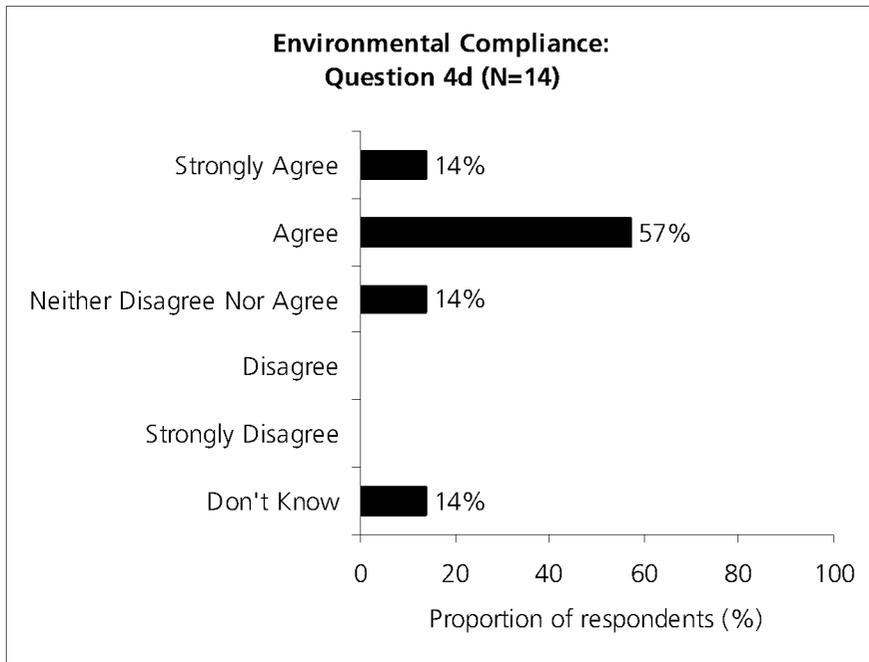
I understand the purposes and objectives of the program.



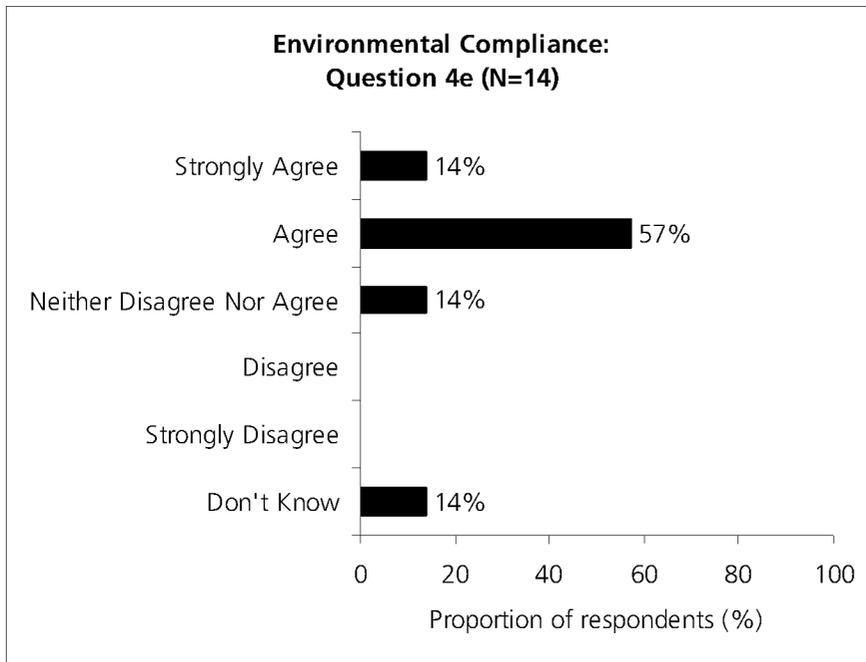
The program is meeting its objectives.



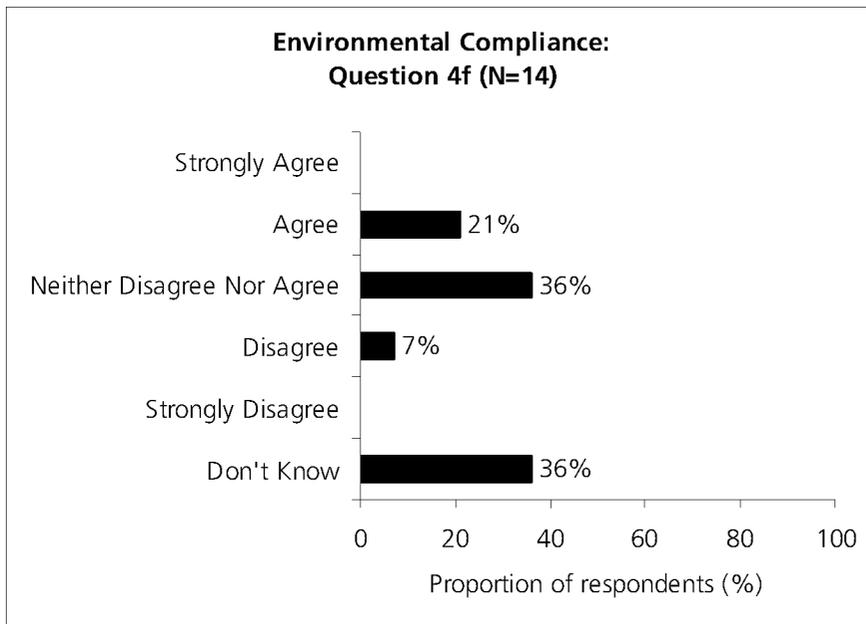
The program goals/objectives are appropriate and strategically aligned with the NPS mission.



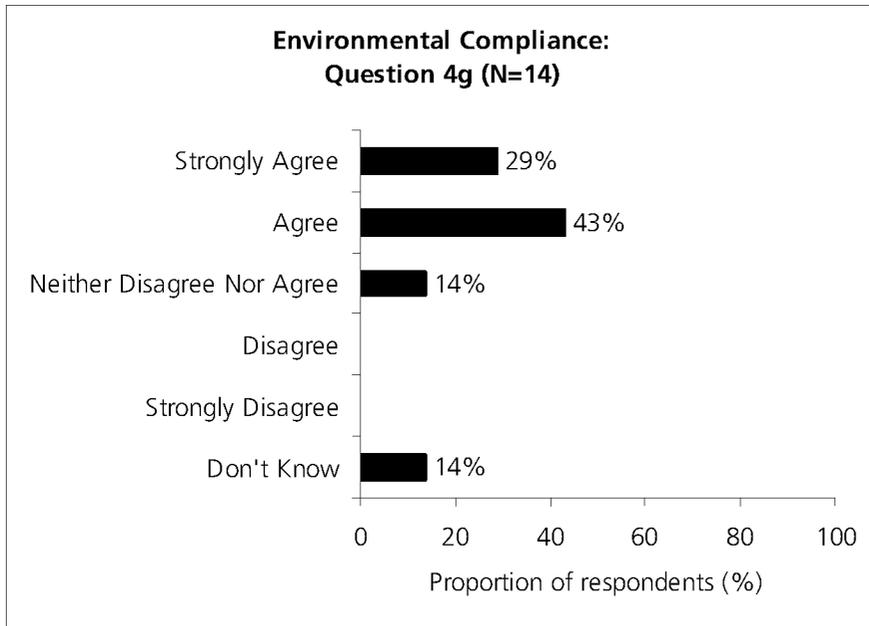
Information about the program is readily available.



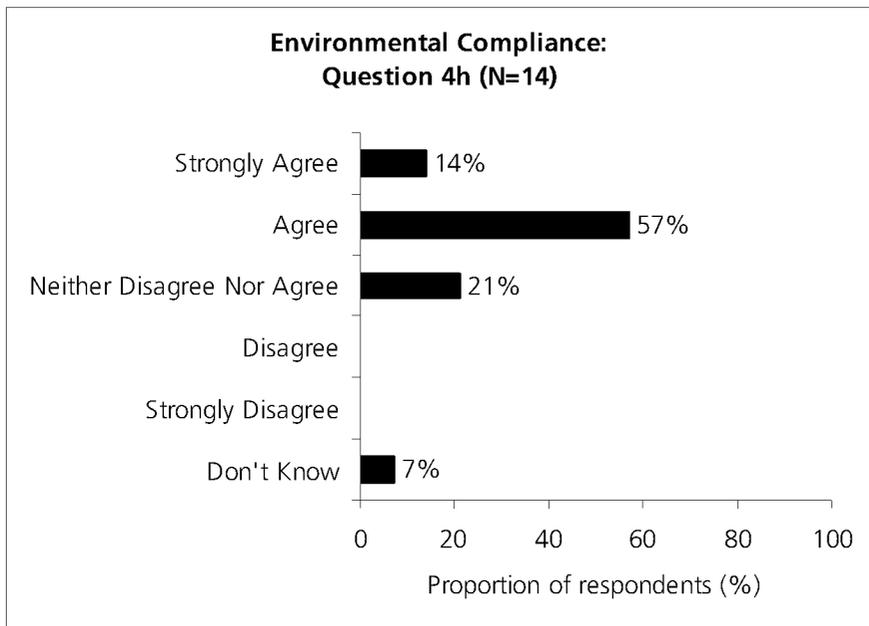
Based on information available to me, the program is cost-effective.



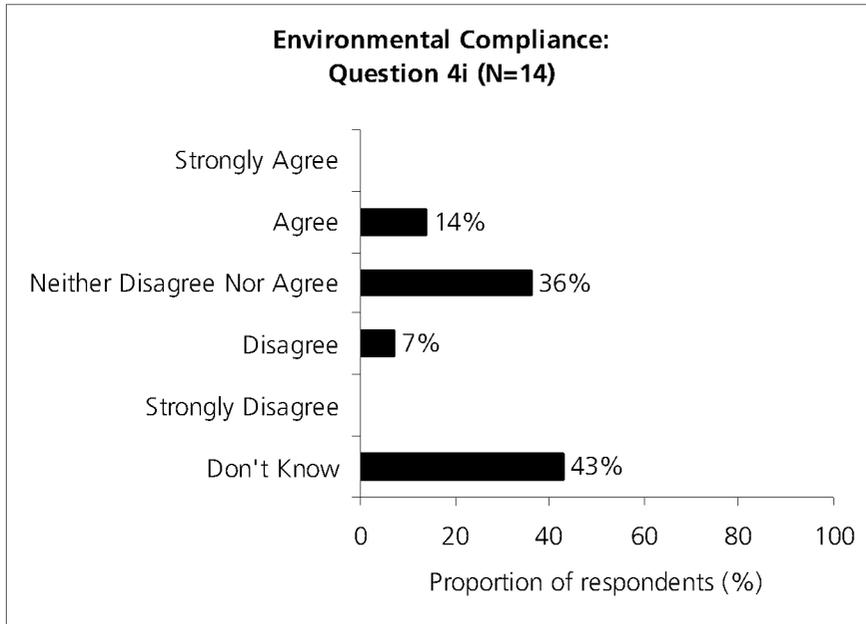
The program is responsive to park/field needs and concerns.



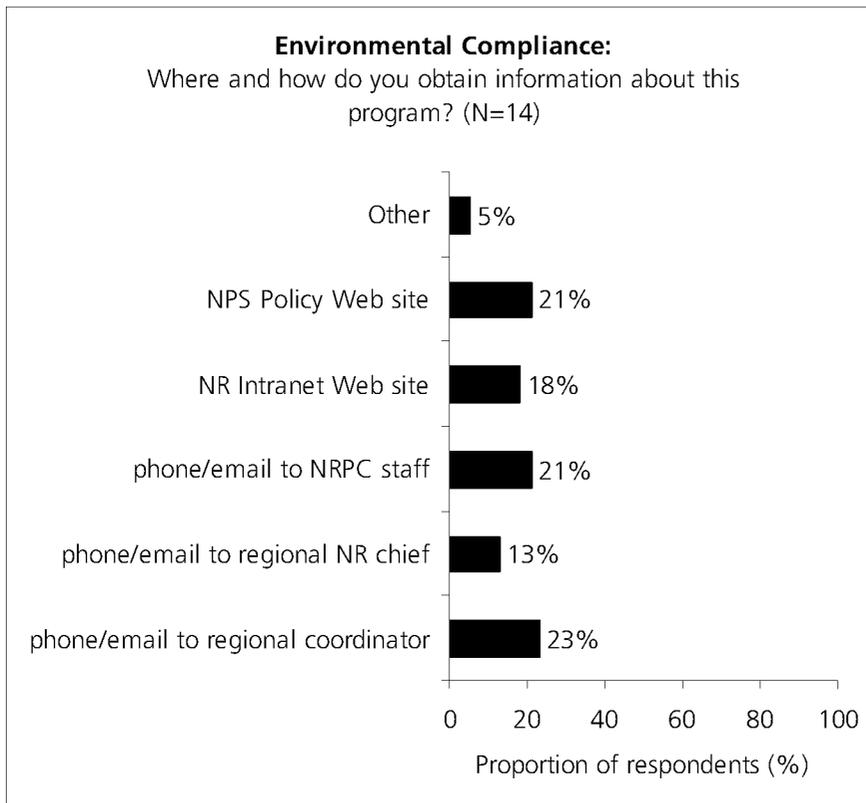
The program contributes to park managers' ability to manage natural resources.



Proper mechanisms are in place to ensure that resources are allocated equitably and strategically to parks.



Sources of information on program.



Note: Respondents could select more than one information source.

Exotic Plant Management Teams

Evaluations in this section address the Biological Resource Management Division's program "To protect natural resources from the impacts caused by non- native invasive plant species through prevention, control, restoration, and education." Sixteen exotic plant management field teams provide direct service to parks through:

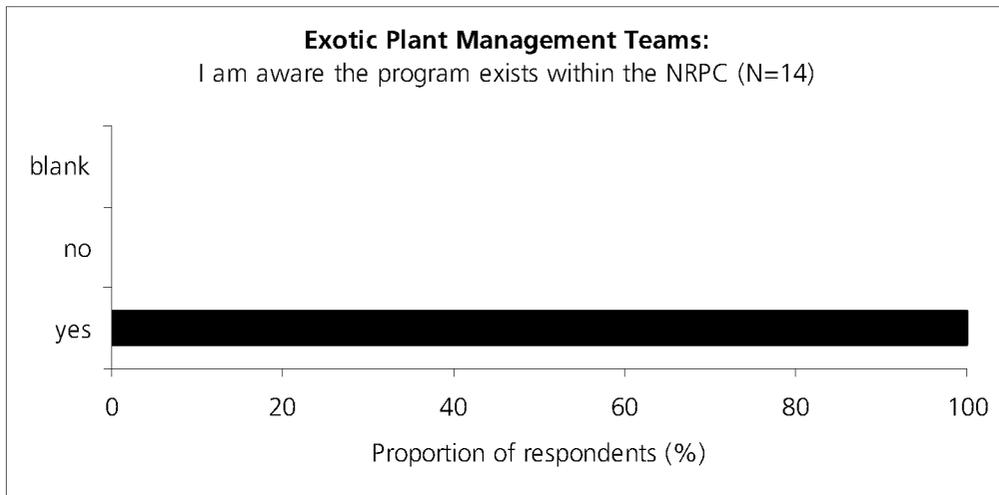
- Non- native invasive plant identification.
- Non- native invasive plant inventory, mapping, and planning.
- Technical assistance to develop comprehensive integrated pest management strategies ranging from specific techniques to development of planning documents that provide long- range direction for park control and maintenance programs.
- Direct treatment activities to control prioritized non- native invasive plants.
- Outreach and education on impacts, prevention, and solutions and development of partnerships to benefit native plant communities through non- native invasive plant species control.

The overall rating for the Exotic Plant Management Teams was 76% out of a possible 100%.

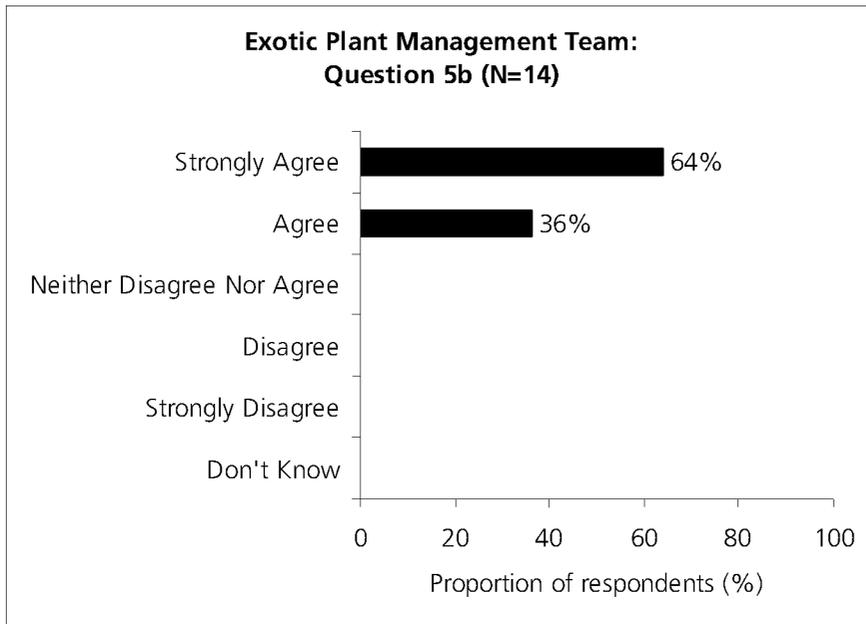
The lowest level of agreement (29%) was with the statement, "Proper mechanisms are in place to ensure that resources are allocated equitably and strategically to parks."

In addition to the awareness item, the greatest agreement (100%) occurred for the statement, "I understand the purposes and objectives of the program."

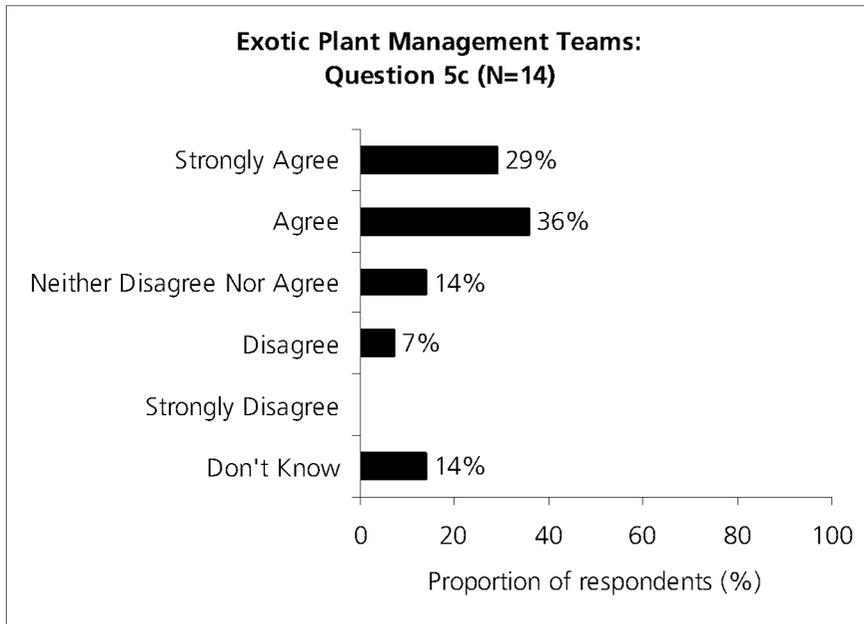
Awareness of program.



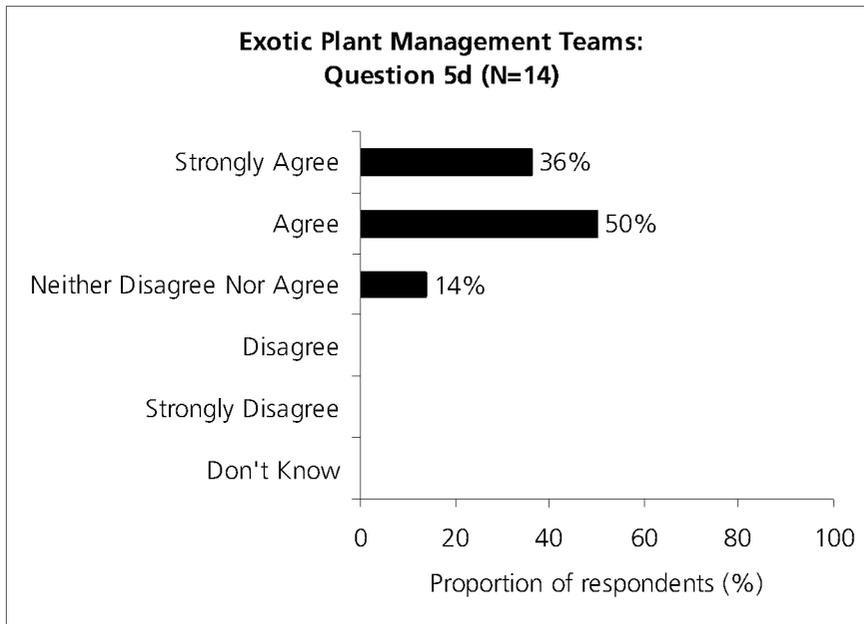
I understand the purposes and objectives of the program.



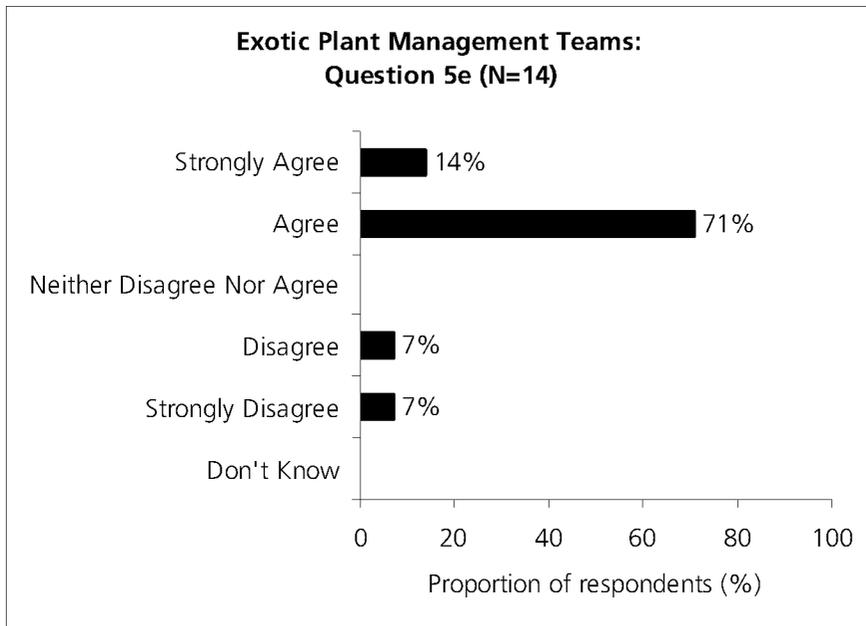
The program is meeting its objectives.



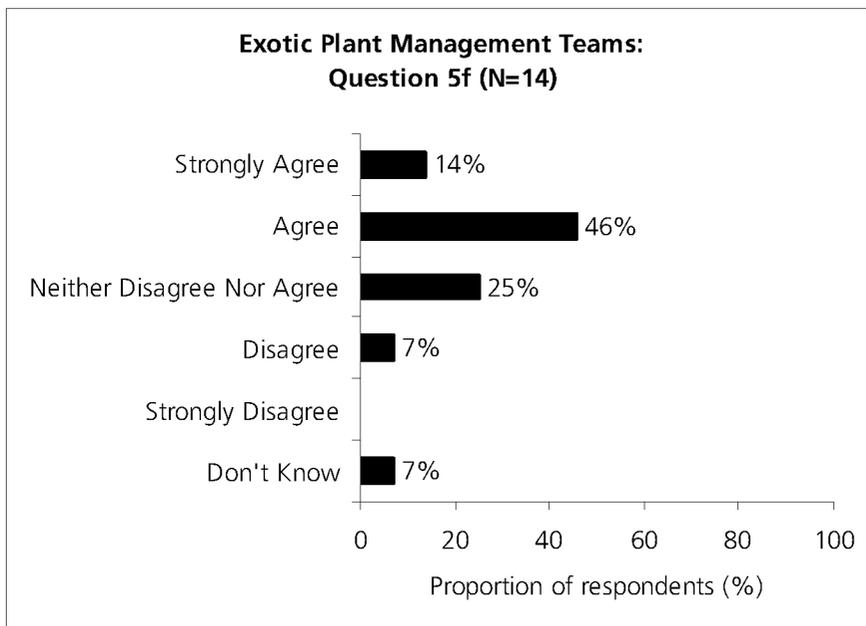
The program goals/objectives are appropriate and strategically aligned with the NPS mission.



Information about the program is readily available.

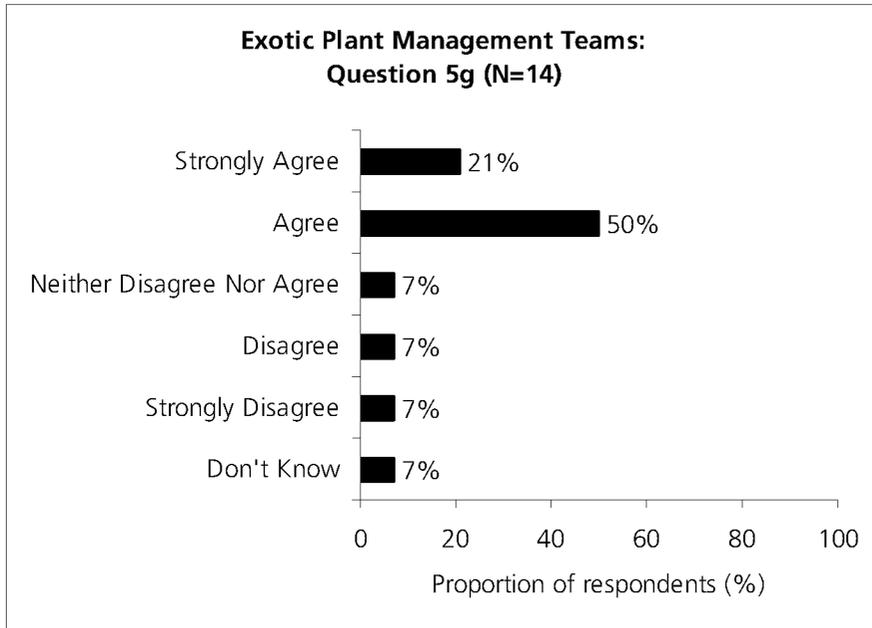


Based on information available to me, the program is cost-effective.

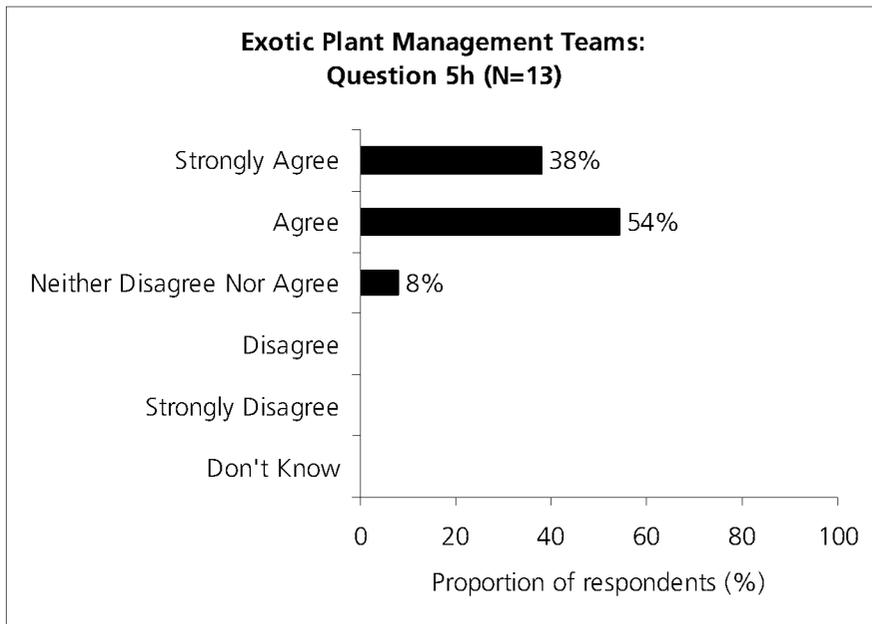


Note: One respondent split his/her rating between “neither disagree nor agree” and “agree.”

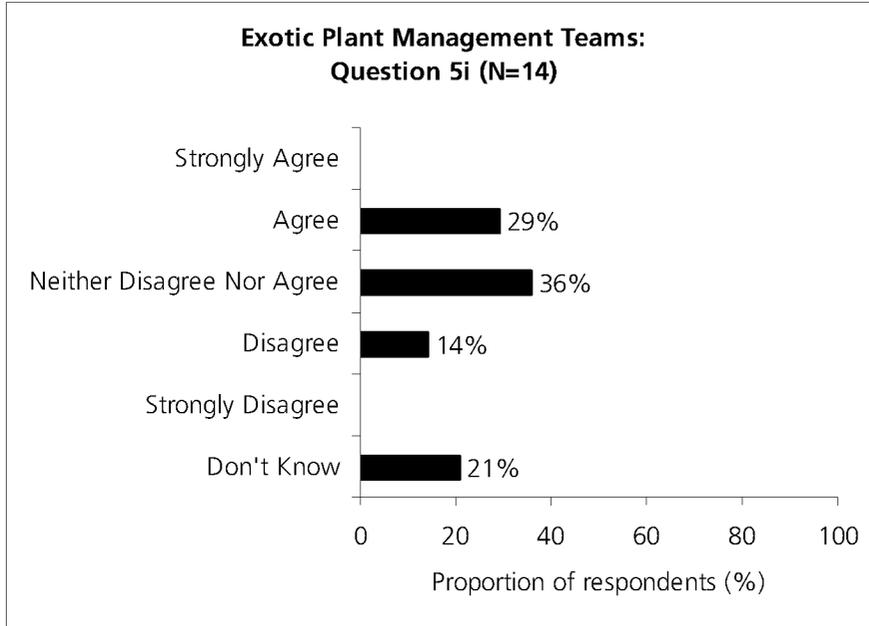
The program is responsive to park/field needs and concerns.



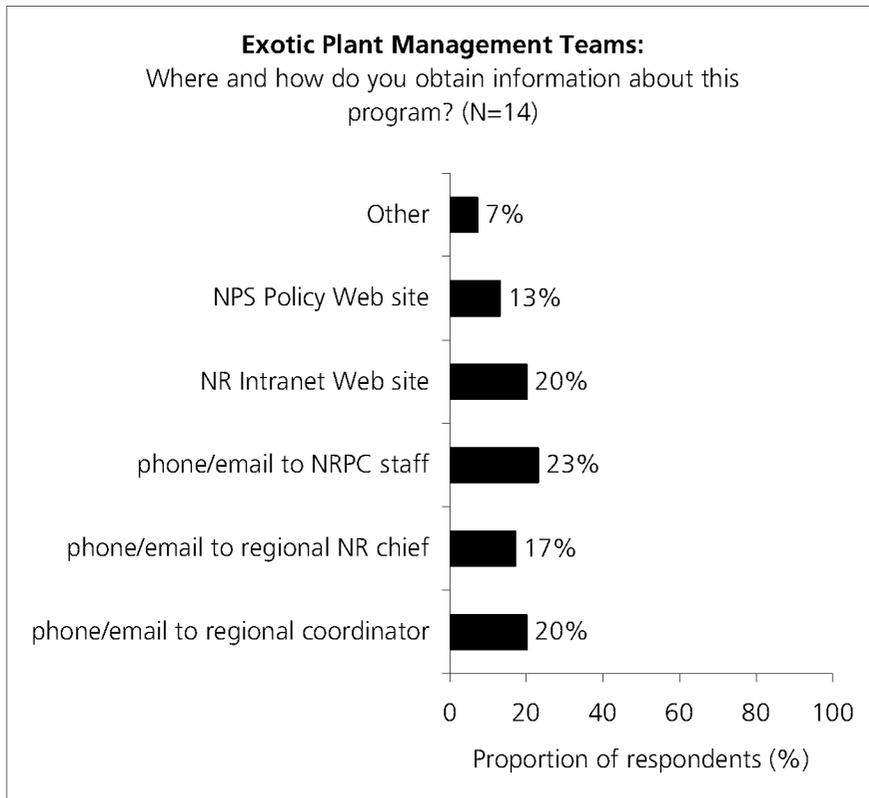
The program contributes to park managers' ability to manage natural resources.



Proper mechanisms are in place to ensure that resources are allocated equitably and strategically to parks.



Sources of information on program.



Note: Respondents could select more than one information source.

Geoscience Program

Evaluations in this section encompassed the Geologic Resources Division's programs on:

- Geologic features (e.g., arches, caves, dunes, fossils, shorelines, volcanoes).
- Active geologic processes (e.g., coastal and fluvial erosion/accretion, dune formation, glacial retreat, karst systems, mass movement, sediment dynamics, geothermal systems).
- Geologic hazards (e.g., landslides, rock falls, debris flows, glacial outbursts).

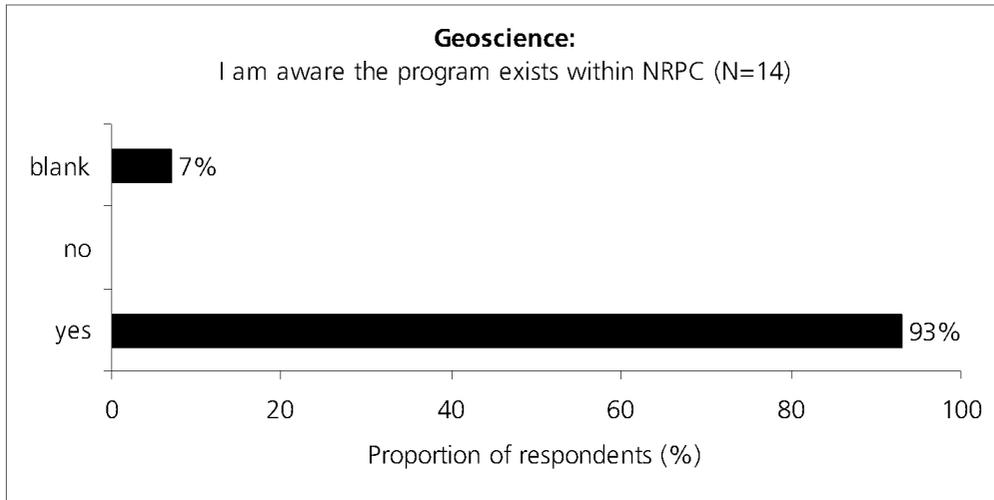
Activities include disturbed land restoration, inventorying and mapping, resource assessment, monitoring, planning and permitting, policy and regulatory guidance, education and outreach, implementing the Geoscientist-in-the-Parks program, and providing technical expertise.

The overall rating for the Geoscience Program was 66% out of a possible 100%.

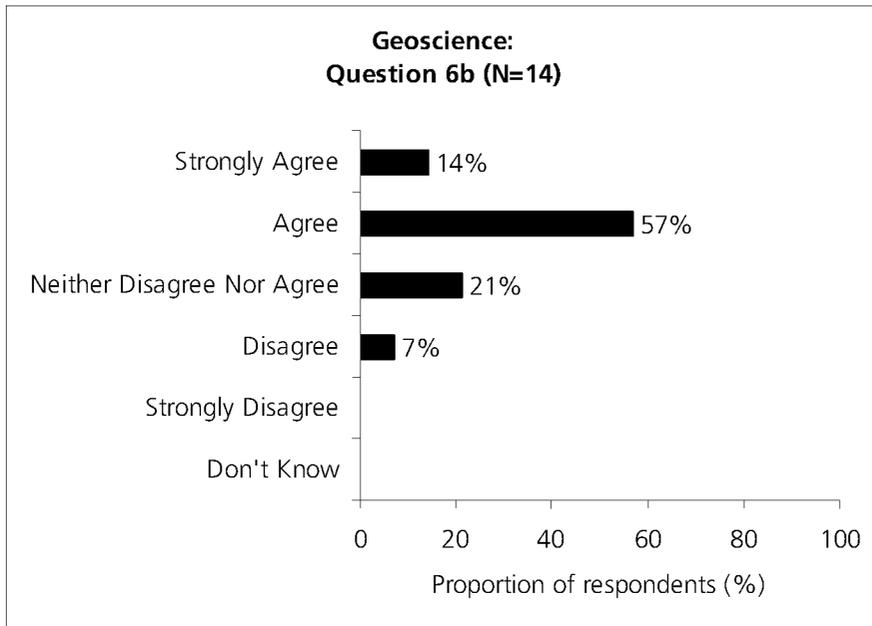
The lowest level of agreement (43%) was with 2 statements: 1) "Based on the information available to me, the program is cost-effective," and 2) "Proper mechanisms are in place to ensure that resources are allocated equitably and strategically to parks."

Excluding the awareness item, the greatest agreement (78%) occurred for 2 statements: 1) "The program is responsive to park/field needs and concerns, and 2) "The program contributes to park managers' ability to manage natural resources."

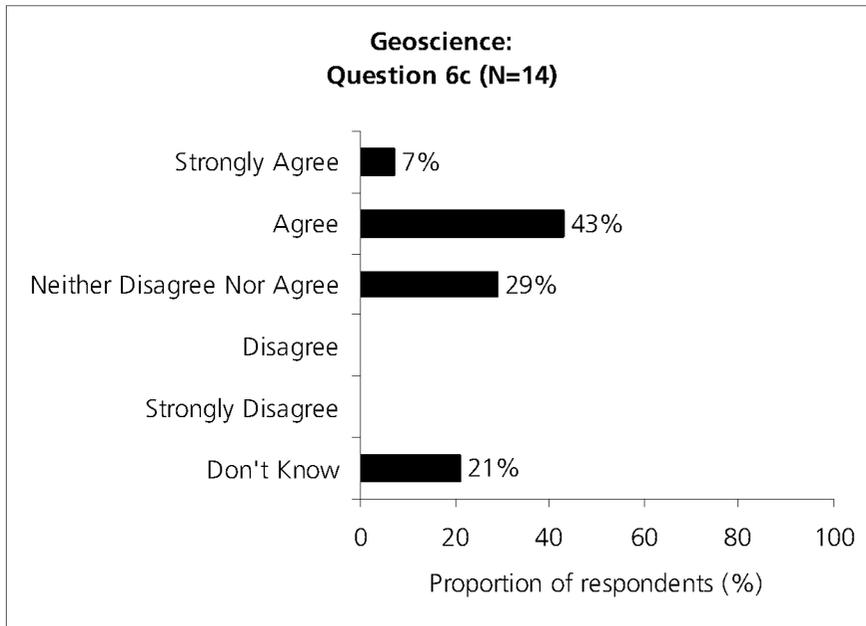
Awareness of program.



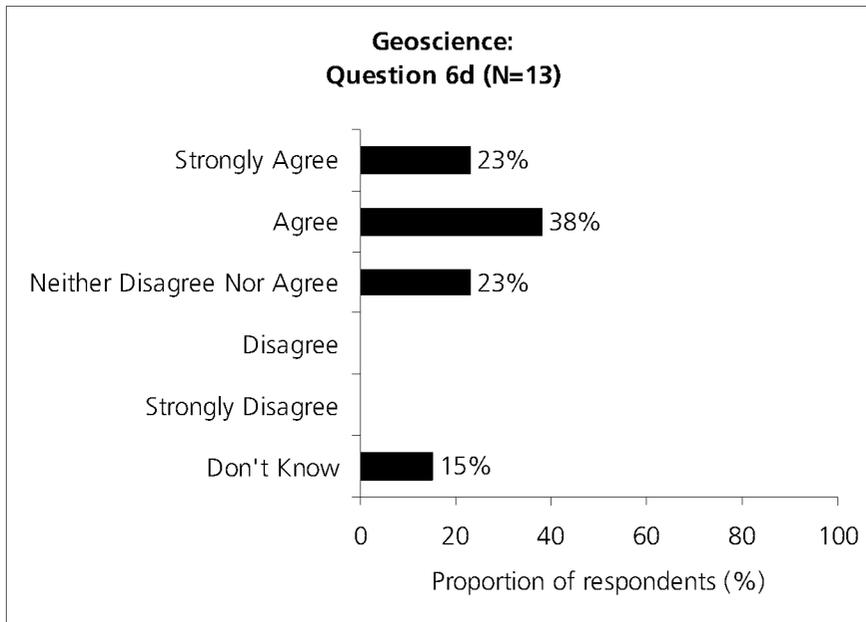
I understand the purposes and objectives of the program.



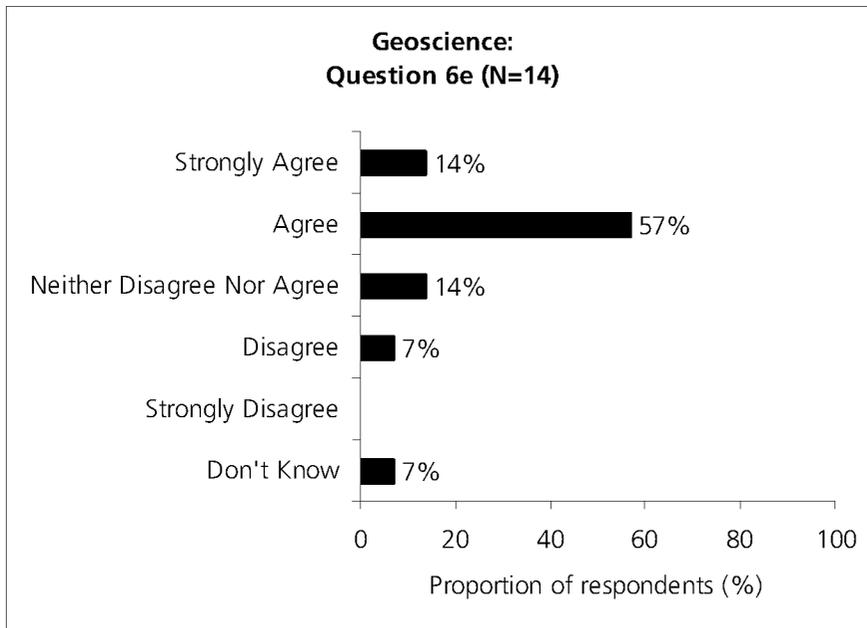
The program is meeting its objectives.



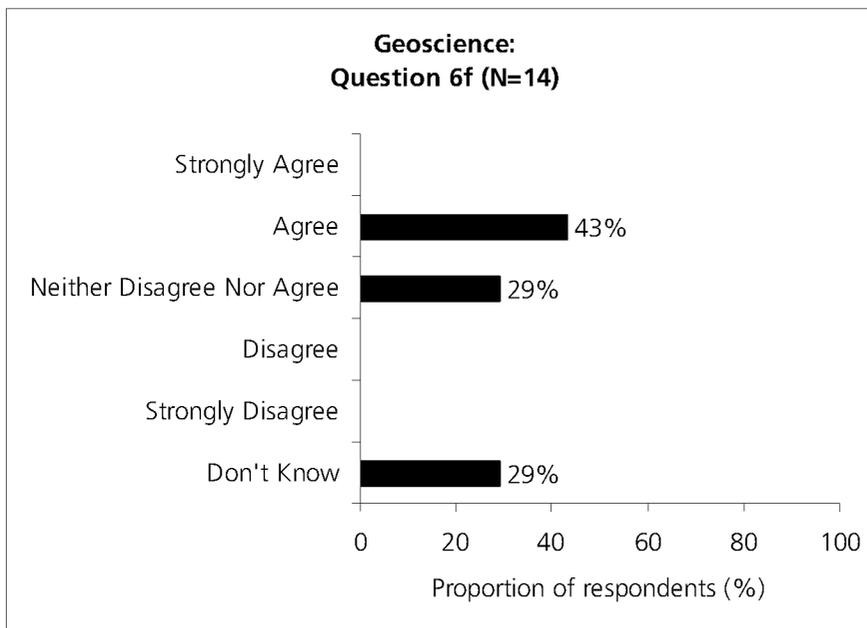
The program goals/objectives are appropriate and strategically aligned with the NPS mission.



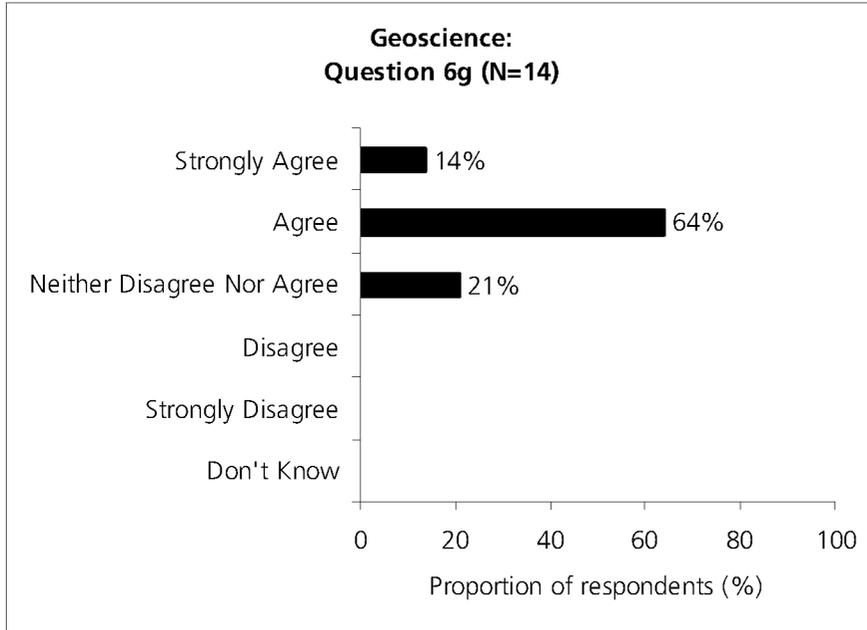
Information about the program is readily available.



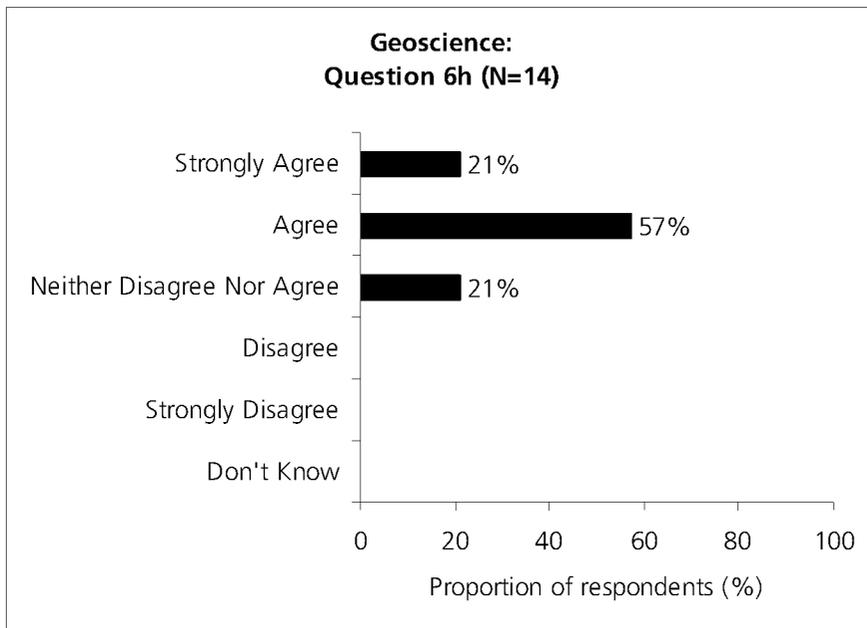
Based on information available to me, the program is cost-effective.



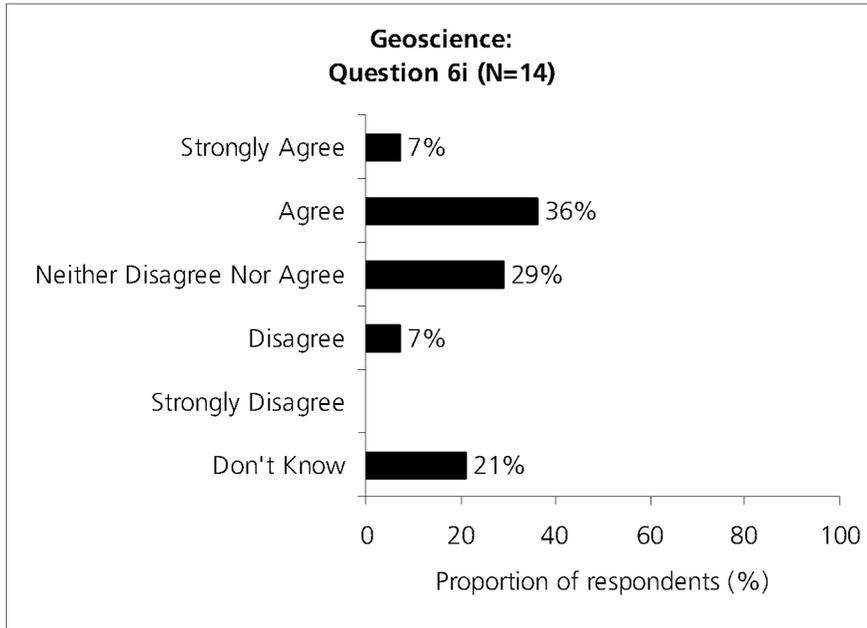
The program is responsive to park/field needs and concerns.



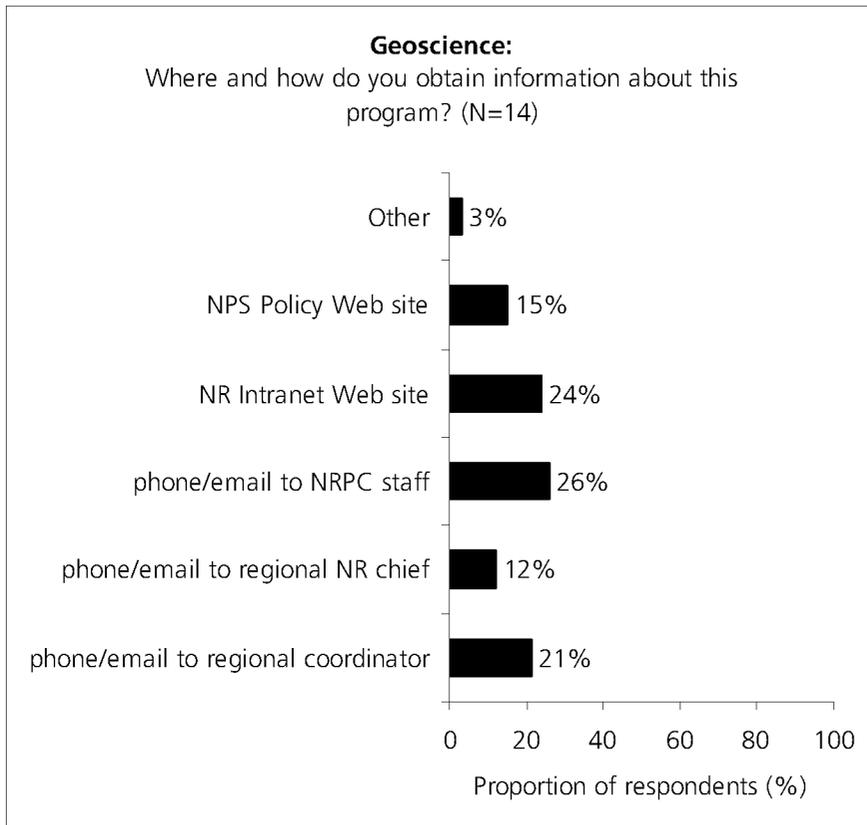
The program contributes to park managers' ability to manage natural resources.



Proper mechanisms are in place to ensure that resources are allocated equitably and strategically to parks.



Sources of information on program.



Note: Respondents could select more than one information source.

Monitoring Program

Evaluations in this section encompass the Natural Resource Information Division's program that promotes protection of park resources by:

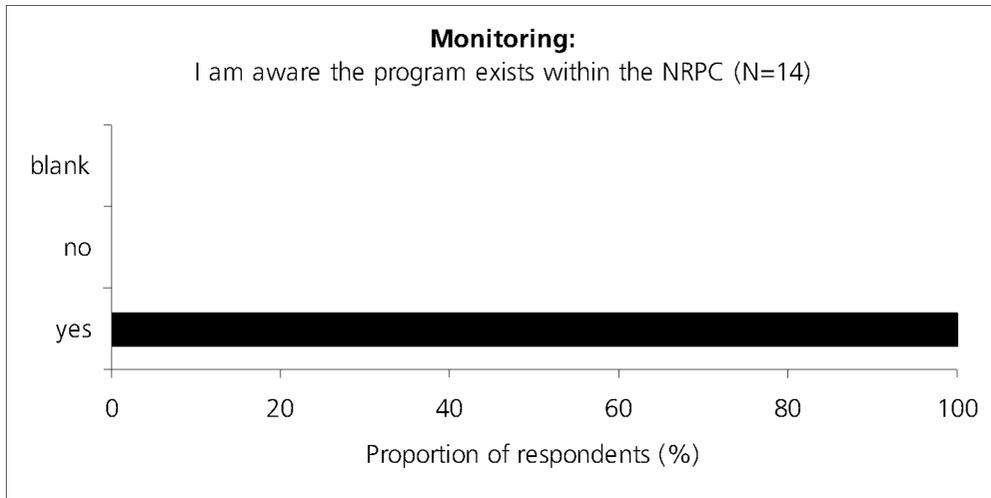
- Providing administration, oversight, and fiscal accountability for the Vital Signs Monitoring Program.
- Formulating policies and guidance documents associated with ecological monitoring by prototype parks and networks.
- Providing technical assistance, expertise, and training to parks and regions relative to the design, development, and implementation of prototype and Vital Signs network monitoring programs.
- Reviewing operational monitoring programs and providing recommendations for improvement.
- Developing and maintaining databases, Web sites, protocols, and analytical tools to support prototype parks and network-based monitoring programs.
- Collaborating with partners and stakeholders to increase the utility and cost-effectiveness of NPS monitoring programs.

The overall rating for the Monitoring Program was 88% out of a possible 100%.

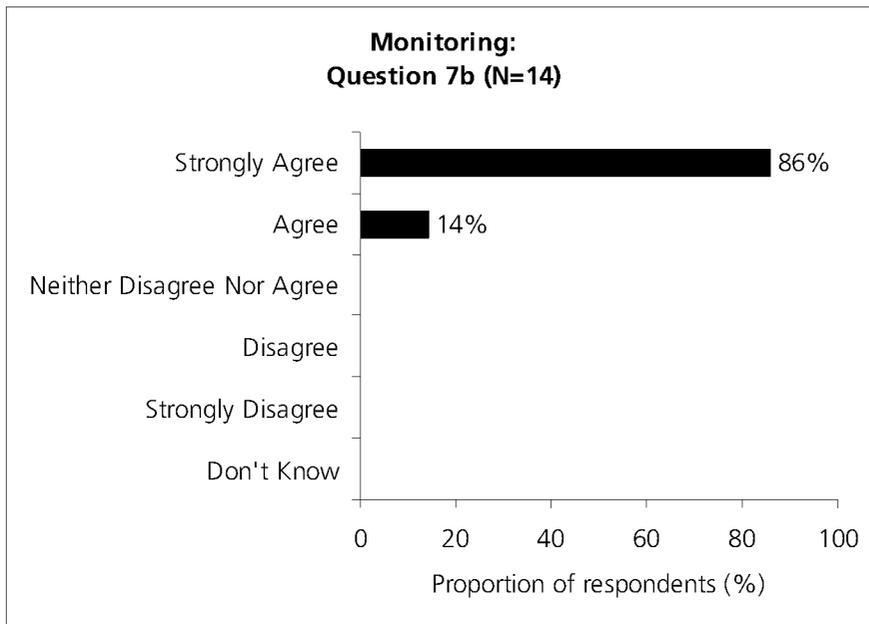
The lowest level of agreement (65%) was with the statement, "The program contributes to park managers' ability to manage natural resources."

In addition to the awareness item, the greatest agreement (100%) occurred for 3 statements: 1) "I understand the purposes and objectives of the program," 2) "The program is meeting its objectives," and 3) "The program goals/objectives are appropriate and strategically aligned with the NPS mission."

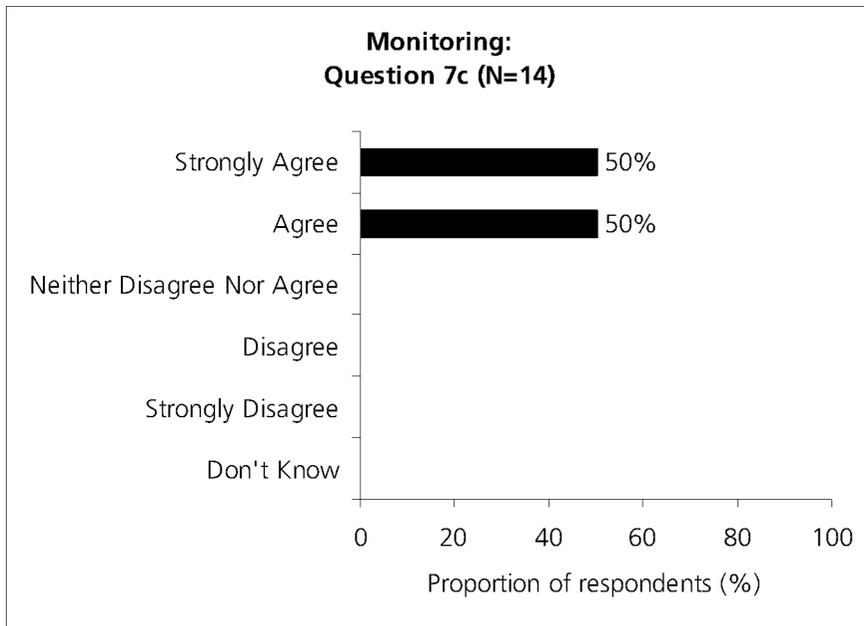
Awareness of program.



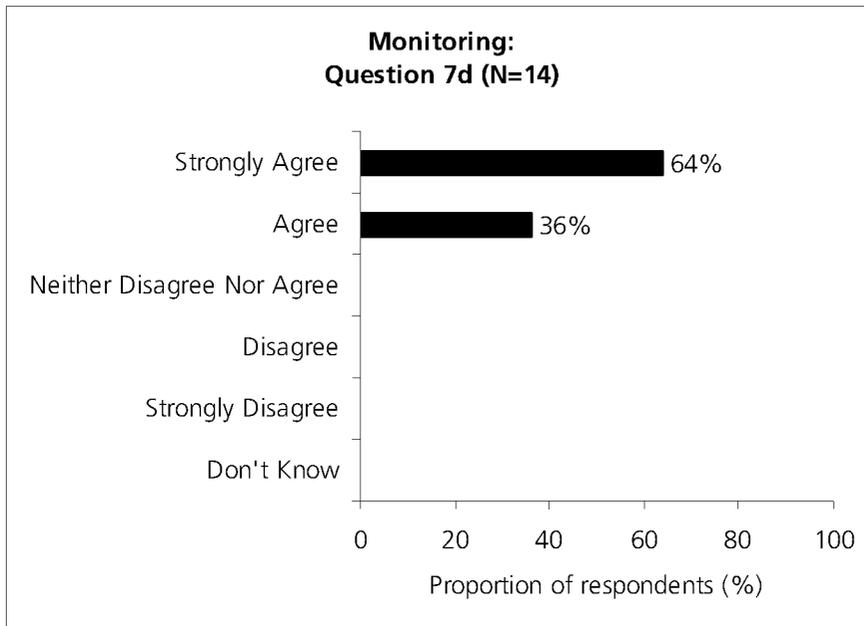
I understand the purposes and objectives of the program.



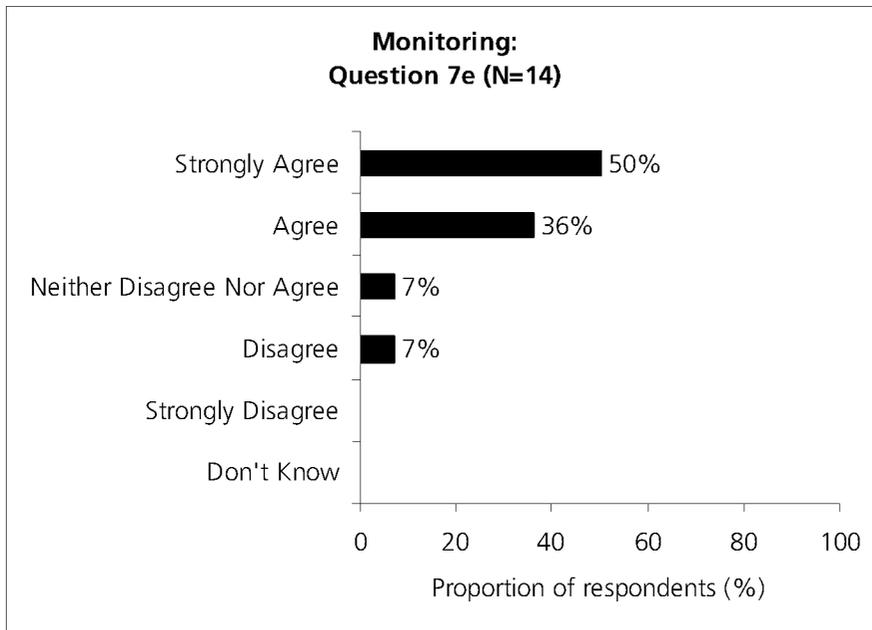
The program is meeting its objectives.



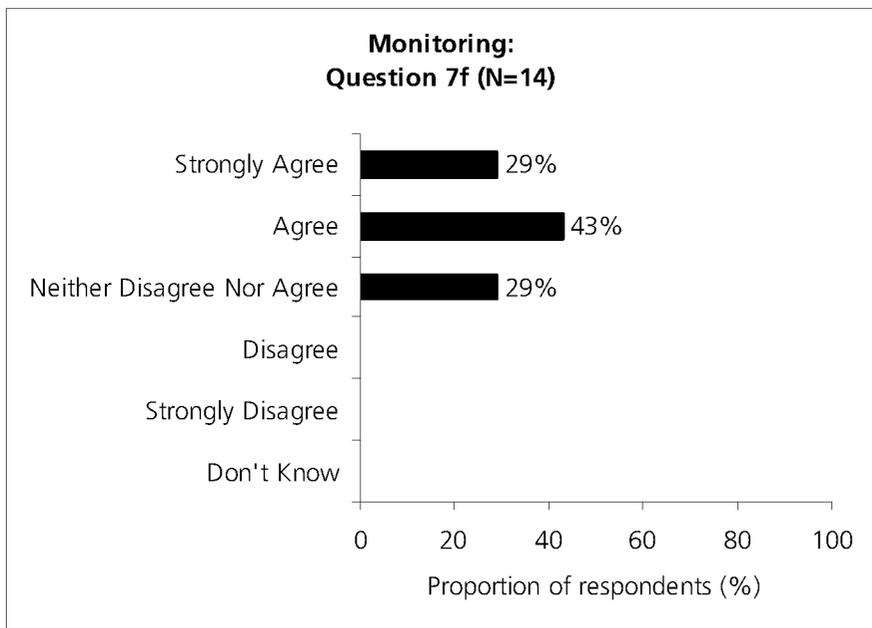
The program goals/objectives are appropriate and strategically aligned with the NPS mission.



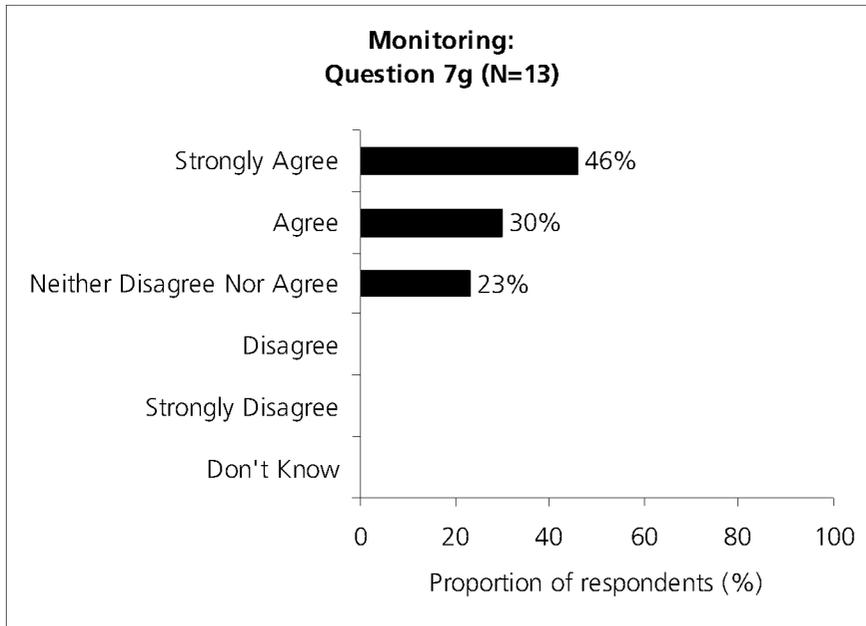
Information about the program is readily available.



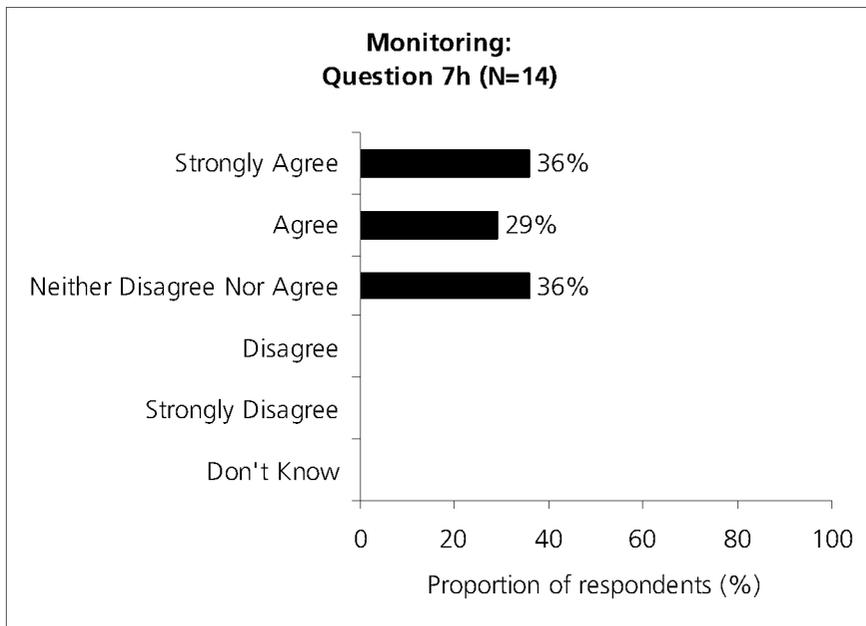
Based on information available to me, the program is cost-effective.



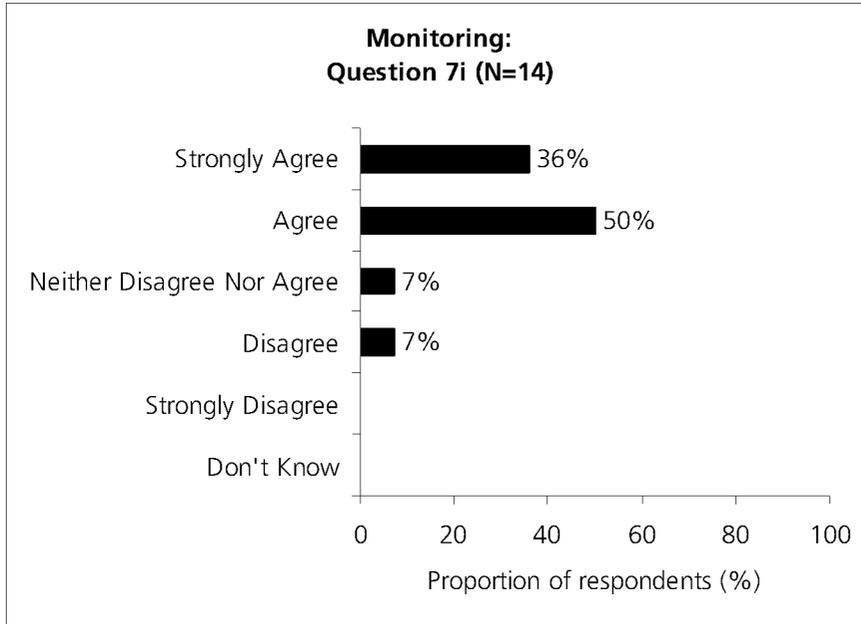
The program is responsive to park/field needs and concerns.



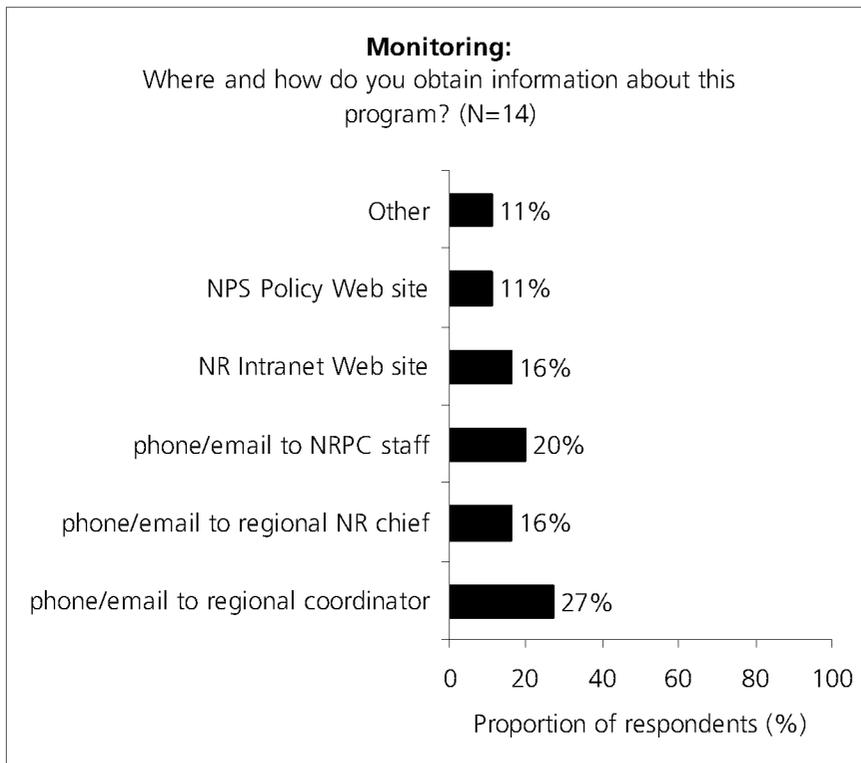
The program contributes to park managers' ability to manage natural resources.



Proper mechanisms are in place to ensure that resources are allocated equitably and strategically to parks.



Sources of information on program.



Note: Respondents could select more than one information source.

Water Quality Program

Evaluations in this section address the Water Resources Division's program of:

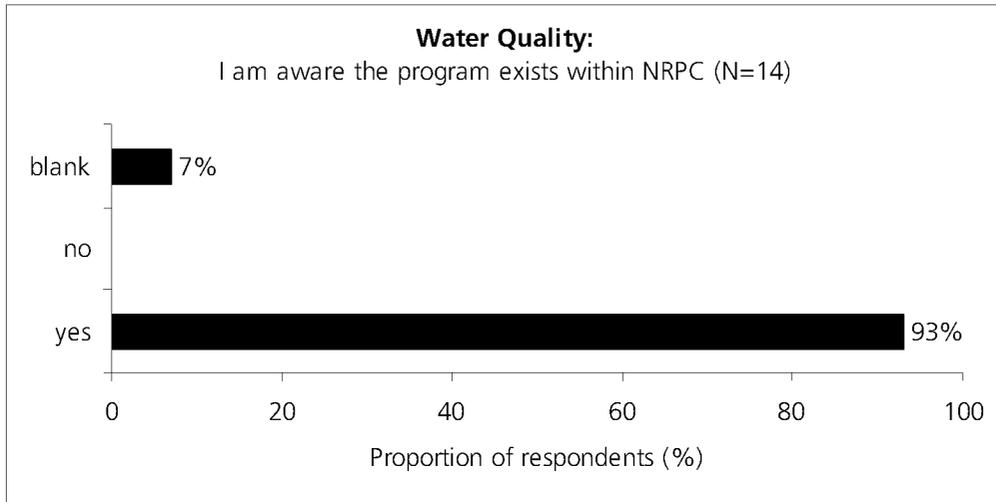
- Leadership, fiscal oversight, and technical guidance to networks for the Water Quality Monitoring Program.
- Administration of the NPS- USGS Water Quality Monitoring and Assessment project funding program.
- Policy and guidance on compliance with the Clean Water Act and the application of the Act to park water- quality management issues.
- Technical assistance in environmental contaminants and in chemical, physical, and biological water quality management, monitoring, and interpretation.
- Water- quality data management in EPA- Storet and data synthesis and analysis.

The overall rating for the Water Quality Program was 83% out of a possible 100%.

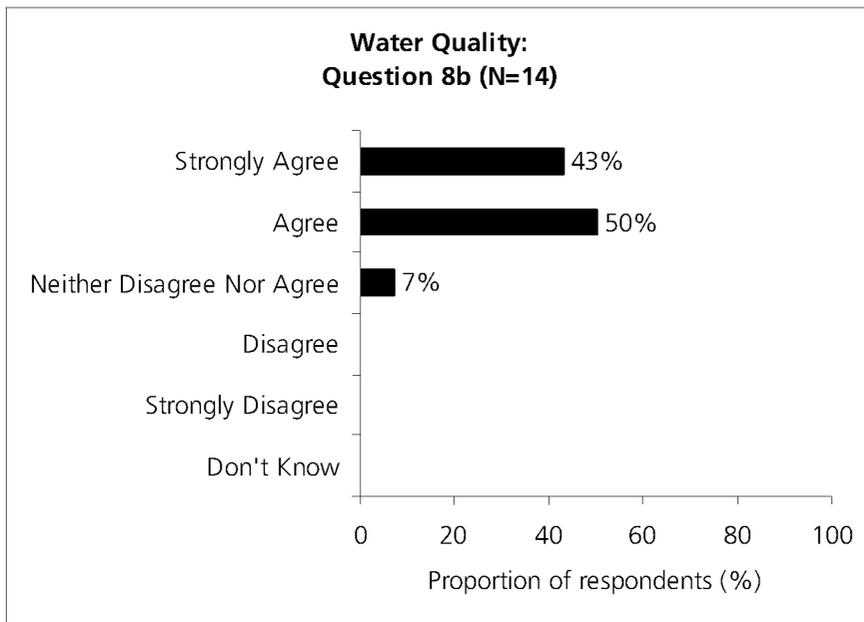
The lowest level of agreement (58%) was with the statement, "Proper mechanisms are in place to ensure that resources are allocated equitably and strategically to parks."

The greatest agreement (100%) occurred for 2 statements: 1) "The program is responsive to park/field needs and concerns," and 2) "The program contributes to park managers' ability to manage natural resources."

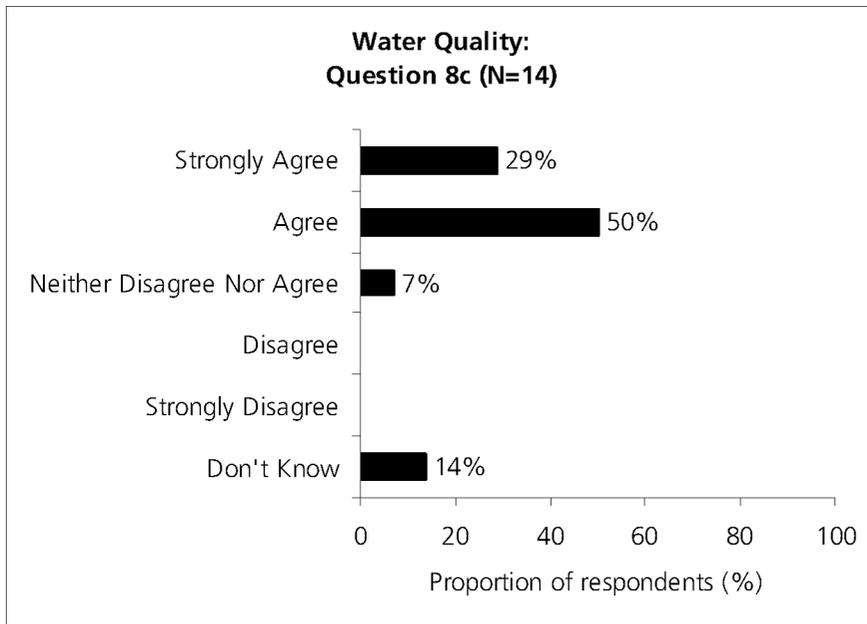
Awareness of program.



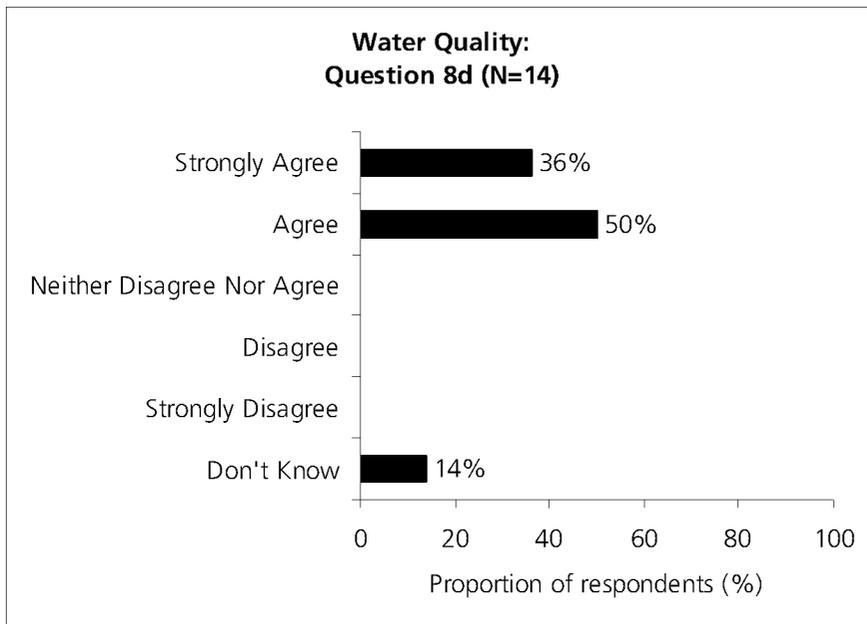
I understand the purposes and objectives of the program.



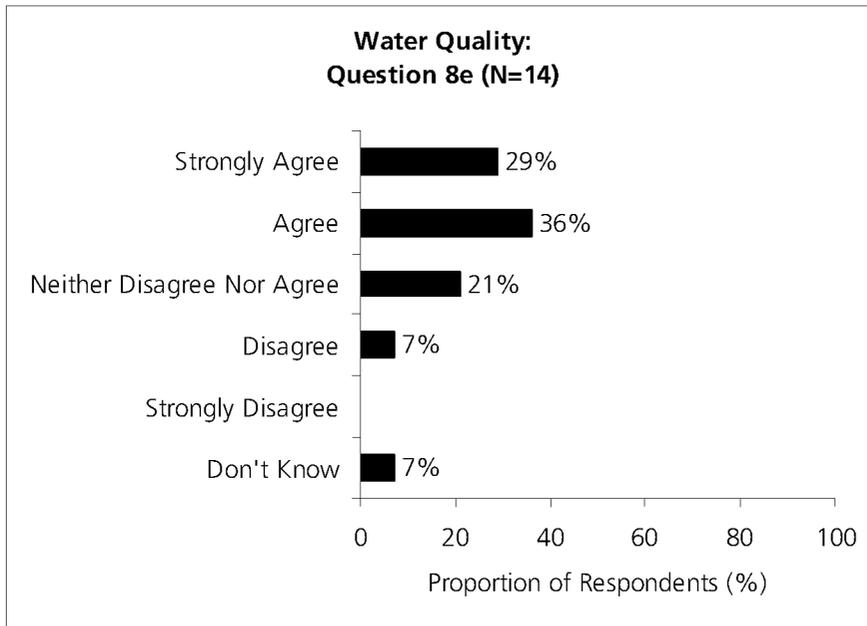
The program is meeting its objectives.



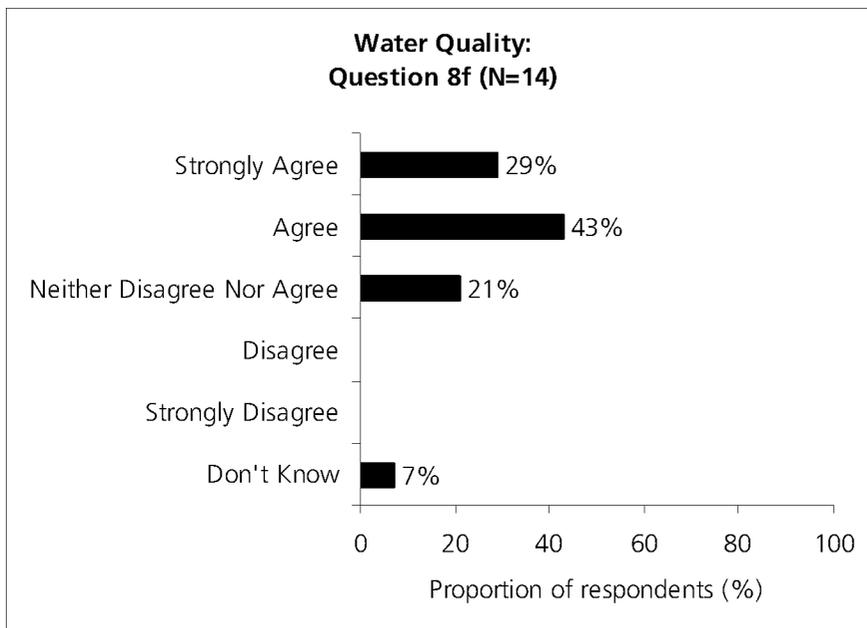
The program goals/objectives are appropriate and strategically aligned with the NPS mission.



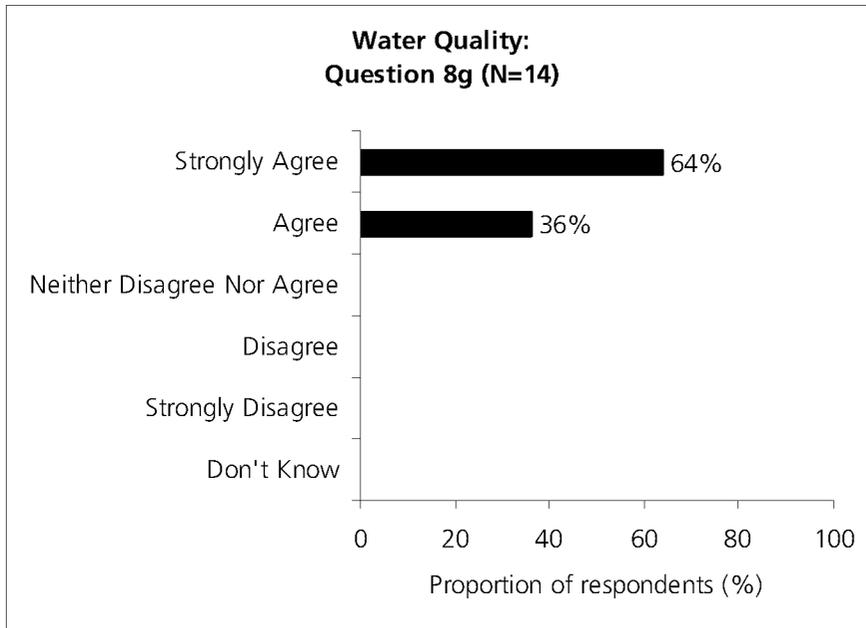
Information about the program is readily available.



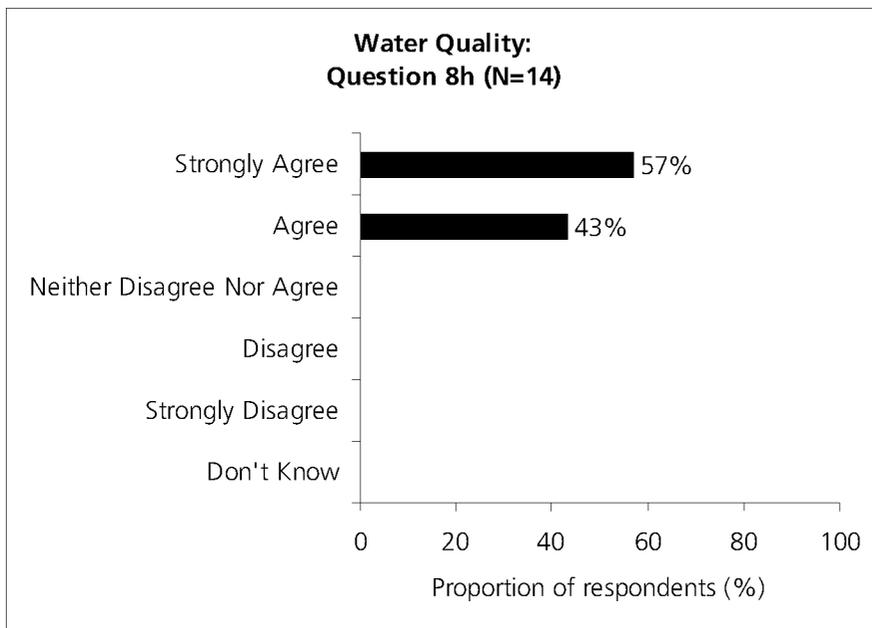
Based on information available to me, the program is cost-effective.



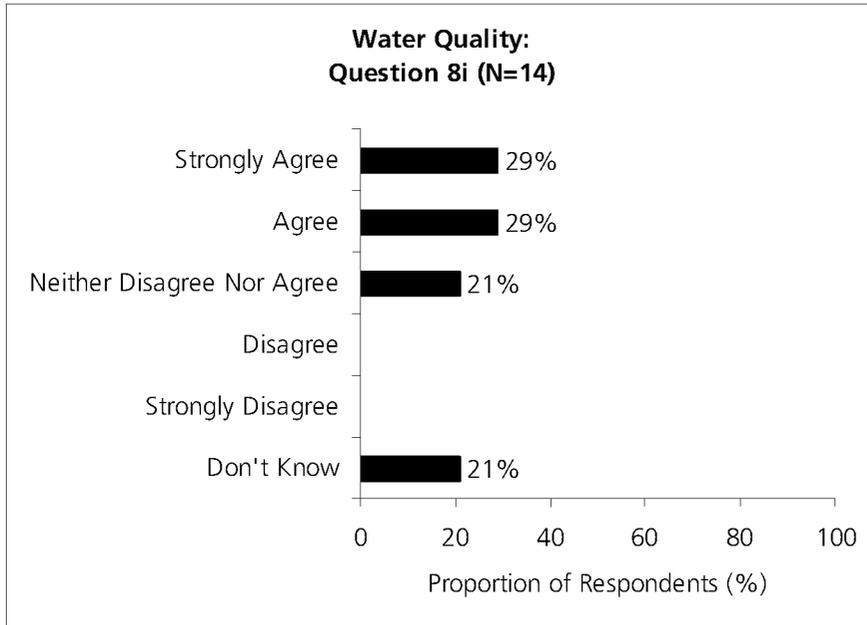
The program is responsive to park/field needs and concerns.



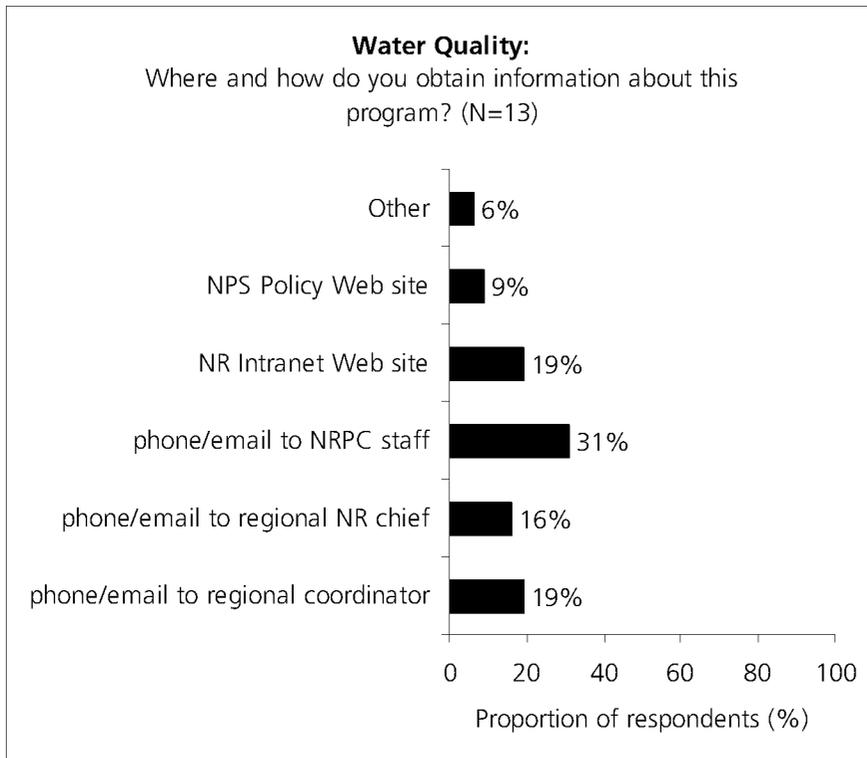
The program contributes to park managers' ability to manage natural resources.



Proper mechanisms are in place to ensure that resources are allocated equitably and strategically to parks.



Sources of information on program.



Note: Respondents could select more than one information source.

Open-ended Responses and Additional Comments

1. Projects Funded through NRSS: Do you have additional comments?

- There are too many funding categories and too varied funding and time limits in places. Reduce categories and block grant more funds to region to more effectively determine priority science needs with less confusion.
- Sources are appropriate, but we should revisit the criteria. Too much weight put on T&E species (should be any sensitive species) and matching funds. I don't believe the NRPC helps to prepare project submittals or manage projects. They do ensure that reports are delivered.
- I think the rating process needs refinement. There is an over-emphasis on funding project just because they are well described. More emphasis needs to be placed on critical natural resource issues. Work plans should focus on method. I think we can really solve problems if that were the focus. An example of this occurred with CWD.
- Consider NR- MAP (revision) for determining regional competitive target/goals.
- In some cases we need closer review of implementation plans. Tech support (guidance) during implementation plan is very valuable.
- Inadequate review comments on unsuccessful proposals. There have been situations in which we have had problems getting the reviews from WASO that are required before funding will be authorized. There have also been some misperceptions by WASO, with inadequate opportunity for response by parks and regions.
- No additional comments - 8

2. Natural Resource Policy Development, Guidance, and Regulatory Review: Do you have additional comments?

- Glad to hear more training is coming.
- Needs updating on new issues such as wind farms and other newer technologies impacting parks (Mgt. Policies 2001).
- Good progress made in this area in the past few years - much better organized than years ago.
- Policies are good, but interpretation can vary because of park enabling legislation and political pressure. We need good resource information to reinforce our policy based decisions. Regions help administer and direct the servicewide policy implementation in parks.
- No.
- Reference desk is a great internet resource for policy/guidelines.
- Some of the updated DOs seem to be taking a long time to develop (such as wildlife immobilization and IPM), and it's unclear why.

- No additional comments - 5

3. **Air Quality:** *The aspects or functions of this program that are most important or helpful to me are:*

- Provides good opportunities for local ties to air resources boards, good exchanges of information at local levels.
- Having parks and regions look outside typical boundaries at processes that have "clear" effect on parks.
- Assistance working with the Class I areas on EPA and State issues such as NO_x and ozone management/regulation issues.
- Very important issues that potentially affect many aspects of our NR programs - We need to do more work in this area.
- Technical assistance to provide input on EIS's for new pollution sources. Technical assistance for air quality monitor, working with State. It is looking like the NRC funded regional AQ staff w[ill] be important assets.
- Monitoring sites, regional air coordinator, ARD expertise.
- Policy guidance, regulatory action, monitoring support.
- While info on this program is readily available, I need a "dummies" version - maybe a brochure. It should have the goals and objectives of the sub units of the program and how each integrates to give us a picture of long-term trends (e.g. NADP, visibility, Hg).
- Technical data, monitoring databases, and legal interpretation are need[ed]. WASO staff are essential to assemble all the pieces for effecting involvement in regulatory issues.
- No additional comments - 5

4. **Air Quality:** *How can we make this program better?*

- More parks need to be added to this monitoring program.
- Maintain the strong link that exists with the field.
- For those of us in areas of poor air quality, if there is a way to educate [the] public better about air/health issues, it would help. More dynamic air cam web pages like Acadia are nice.
- Strengthen InsideNPS to include recent documents, examples from other Class I parks on air issues, assistance for Class II parks.
- I don't know who the staff are that I should contact on specific issues. I primarily work with specialists at the regional level who consult with WASO specialists as needed.

- More money and staff.
- Biological effect technical support needs more involvement from the academic community and other researchers.
- See brochure suggestion above. [in question 3 responses]
- Educate superintendents and muster their support and action to lead the charge on reducing the [comment not completed]
- No additional comments - 5

5. **Environmental Compliance:** *The aspects or functions of this program that are most important or helpful to me are:*

- There is still substantial misunderstanding and inconsistency in application of NEPA in parks. Improved communication between parks and regional compliance staff would help. Environment[al] assessments need to be clear and succinct documents. Project mgmt should follow an integrated env. review without unnecessarily creating burdens to accomplish simple tasks.
- Aware of this program primar[il]ly due to the PEPC and the Environmental Quality funding source. I work primarily with the IMR staff like Chris Turk and Eva Long.
- Funding to support compliance actions is quickly and timely.
- Money for special project needs.
- I have not had need to utilize this Division nearly as much as other NRPC Divisions.
- Good coordination between the National office, Regional office, and Parks. Good support from very knowledgeable people.
- Assistance over the phone on difficult or unusual NEPA projects.
- Now PEPC looks good.
- This is a difficult program to assess. It appears that this program is not visible nor does it actively promote its availability.
- No additional comments - 5

6. **Environmental Compliance:** *How can we make this program better?*

- NEPA training, planning and review with web-based system could be beneficial. Clear and succinct guidance as needed at the parks. Lack of consistency in determination of what qualifies as categorical exclusion continues to plague the parks. Clear guidance may not solve the problem of those employees who interpret the NEPA requirements in a strict manner beyond the intent of

the law. Inform superintendents to direct staff to maintain facilities while conserving natural and cultural resources. [illegible] funding for compliance costs.

- I like the fact that EQD can and does make quick decisions to support parks and meet compliance actions. Responsiveness trumps my lack of understanding of program objectives.
- Timely inquiry responses. Site visits - regions and parks.
- I think PEPC will be a great aid. NEPA Compliance training is a high priority need across the Service. It's critical to get more maint., admin., and rangers better training.
- We are lacking the appropriate support and funding at the park level. We have not been able to get base funding to make this important responsibility a part of the operation - except for special project funding.
- Other than the WASO Division Chief, it's hard to know who to contact.
- PEPC is a good start. Next is to provide more training, both online and face to face, for park and regional staff.
- More training for field staff. Once the PEPC is online we need to conduct assessments of how it is being used and see if lite actions are being handled in lite manner to the extent they should and opportunity to address this.
- Improve communication with the field including method of delivery of updates/info.
- No additional comments - 5

7. **Exotic Plant Management Teams:** *The aspects or functions of this program that are most important or helpful to me are:*

- One of the most effective NRC programs. Results seem to be immediate and long term.
- EPMT is very successful in many levels and has our complete support from parks and region.
- Will improve over time. The focus on removing the highest priority exotic plant populations in parks.
- Very important program - fortunately I don't need to work on this issue (at present).
- Our Network Liaison has done a great job in moving the program forward for us. Having expertise available, with coordinated strategy, data gathering, data mgmt. Our liaison has effectively partnered to gain significant matching grants to increase chemical purchase and field staff.
- Meeting targets. Relationship enhancement with state and other organizations.
- There is potential but program seems disorganized. We get mixed messages from NRPC.

- The idea of a team with multi-park responsibilities works better with a woody species like tamarisk than with many herbaceous species we deal with in the northern Rockies. We have developed a system of nodes that is, I think, working pretty well.
- A coordinated schedule approach to "attack" exotic plant pests. Determine appropriate treatment.
- No additional comments - 5

8. **Exotic Plant Management Teams:** *How can we make this program better?*

- Closer review of parks meeting their commitments in support and follow up work of these teams. Big question - How committed are park units to continue monitoring and treatments for continuation of eradication.
- Recommend we do not lose sight of the programmatic place of EPMT within (under) the broader context of IPM. Lots of exotic plant management is done outside EPMTs and that is under IPM coordination - along with a large daily operational workload associated with IPM (termites, turf, etc).
- Continue to provide training for EPMT and park resource management specialists on aspects of invasive population identification and control. Provide assistance with large-scale plant control planning. Provide online training and information through the web and InsideNPS.
- EPMTs need to be considered part of IPM rather than disjunct from it. Exotic plants are just one of the many pests that IPM deal with, and EPMTs need to coordinate with other aspects on an integrated pest mgmt program. For some reason, regions seem to have been left largely out of the loop with this program. It would help the program to involve regions more so there will be advocates for it at the regional level and it can be coordinated with other regionwide programs. NRPC staff seem unwilling to coordinate with regions on this. I haven't found substantive information on the NR Intranet Web site.
- This program needs increased funding. Exotic species is a long-term problem with no "final solution." We need to show the progress we're making and tell how we can do more with more funding. What we have now is a good start with measurable results. We need long-term monitoring of control efforts and subsequent system impacts and responses.
- Clear instructions on administrative intent (who will staff report to?). More teams. More money.
- Teams should not be park-based.
- Expand education and selling success stories. Set up more and better monitoring.
- No additional comments - 6

9. **Geoscience:** *The aspects or functions of this program that are most important or helpful to me are:*

- We have the most contact with Lindsay McClelland; used to have more contact with Bob Higgins when Dr. Paul Pois was in YELL; we have used Dave Steinsen with disturbed lands in the past with excellent results. Mary Helfner still works closely with disturbed lands staff. All my interaction with Geoscience staff have been excellent.
- Needs [to] communicate stuff beyond mining and oil/gas.
- I would like to do more work in the future with Division to take better advantage of their expertise.
- Paleontology support.
- Strong western focus. We don't hear from the staff much.
- Funding for disturbed lands projects. Technical assistance for oil and gas/mining.
- I have attended field programs and presentations which are very enlightening but the on-ground results are sometimes difficult to show. In parks when I've worked where geo resources were a prime, recognized resource, we looked to univ. and other agencies more frequently than NPS.
- This program has good appeal and far reaching implications for improved resource conditions.
- Extremely successful in maintaining contact with the field with the services that are available.
- No additional comments - 5

10. **Geoscience:** *How can we make this program better?*

- Used the geoindicators as a foundation for vital signs selection. Our primary partner in geology are the USGS and University of Utah through the YELL Volcano Observatory. Lindsay [McClelland] is involved with this, but might want to become more deeply involved.
- Promote paleo, cave, geohazard, education aspects.
- More geoscientists for region or networks to assist parks.
- Additional technical support needed, more contacts with academic/agency scientists recommended.
- More information on InsideNPS.
- Seek funding support (since, unfortunately, this program was not included in the Challenge).
- This program seems very underfunded and not appreciated. Perhaps more wide-spread specific (smaller?) projects in non-traditional geo parks with a clear product that meets a management

need (map?, report?, etc.) would help. I worked in a park where [illegible] maint. called Federal Highways about rock stability because they didn't know we had a prog.

- No additional comments - 7

11. **Monitoring:** *The aspects or functions of this program that are most important to me are:*

- Great program - with the inevitable erosion of money sooner or later what is the likelihood that park will continue monitoring when/if networks lose some or all ability to maintain it?
- This program is critical to parks' ability to understand and manage resources - it should continue to be the highest priority.
- Providing a picture of the ecological trends in parks.
- Good science focus. Needs to communicate objectives better to park/reg. level. Many parks think the program will replace not augment monitoring.
- Cooperation and coordination among parks. Peer review.
- Just the general oversight and coordination of vital signs monitoring.
- Very important program - I spend a lot of my time working closely with 2 networks.
- Develop robust monitoring techniques for indicators. Scientific review, data management, and analysis are critical.
- Not many visits yet - but will be beginning next year.
- No additional comments - 5

12. **Monitoring:** *How can we make this program better?*

- After a bit of a bump with Phase II, report we are on track, but may point to need for closer oversight/peer review along the way - I say this knowing a lot of effort has already been directed this way, but honest, constructive review/criticism is critical to success. Should have no ego.
- There needs to be greater oversight of program requirements and deadlines by the Associate Dir. These requirements and deadlines place an unreasonable workload on our regional coordinator - it's more than one person could possibly handle, and her effort to do so is jeopardizing her health. Due dates should be conveyed through "channels." I'm not convinced that the databases are being designed in a manner that will generate the needed information, rather than just storing data.
- Continue to share information between Regions through meetings, Web sites, etc. so that the best ideas are shared.
- Needs more review and acceptance by science community for vital signs monitoring.

- Expand objectives. Fund all networks.
- Increased funding - complete networks - increase monitoring efforts.
- Clear up lines of professional [illegible] from region. Illustrate natural resource successes.
- No additional comments - 7

13. **Water Quality:** *The aspects or functions of this program that are most important or helpful to me are:*

- Assistance with NEPA (wetlands/flood plains) Water Resource Mgt. Plans, Water Resource Project Funding and technical assistance.
- Great technical support. Timely, professional response.
- Work plans development.
- Technical assistance (oversight of study plan development) by WRD staff saved a project for me at one point. Invaluable guidance and strict adherence to QAQC requirements helped us get rid of a bad researcher (USCOS) and replace with a competent one to provide for a quality project.
- We are just beginning to take advantage of this program and are receiving very good support - results.
- Good technical assistance and outreach to parks. Need to travel to visit parks to help with issues. Network based resource specialist[s] are a plus.
- We have had good service from H2o quality from Chuck Peter on the Montana H2o compact, Dan Kimball on the McClaron Mine Tailings, Jeff Hughes on Reese Creek, etc.
- No additional comments - 7

14. **Water Quality:** *How can we make this program better?*

- The step- down from national program to park specific monitoring programs is a struggle. I don't think park managers have a strong link.
- Improve InsideNPS Web site by posting PDF files of examples of useful documents such as water resource mgt. plans, etc.
- More money.
- Locating staff within central office. Fund increase cost.
- Keep up good work.
- No additional comments - 9

15. Additional Comments:

- Question 1(c) Until the instructions were re-written this year, they were far too complex (200+ pages between Intermountain Region and G[illegible] call). One suggestion - please allow us to address the criteria in the PMIS "justification" module rather than the "optional criteria" module. You can't access the "optional criteria" module until after bonding has occurred - which is problematic. Question 3(b) I don't know much about the program because I rely on Mary Helftner to take care of it. Question 3(c) We have had excellent service from our resources, especially in 2 cases - winter air quality monitoring and modeling for the Roundup Plant. As I go through this questionnaire, I realize that, in most cases, I don't know much about the programs' objectives or whether they are being met. What I do know about is the service provided to my park by the NHC (NRPC?) branches. In every case, the service has been excellent.
- Streamline annual reports to reduce work load to allow people to do their jobs. Help work load - ICM reports, Park NRC Fund reports, EPMT reports, CESU reports, Learning Center reports, IAR reports, Sci/Tech report, T&E report, etc. PMIS is a cumbersome and time-consuming system - too many funding categories in combined servicewide call. Multiple program funding accounts in region (15+) makes balancing "check book" a real chore. National based understanding of park needs is not always accurate. Regions have the best handle on park needs and evaluating issues. Block grant funding increases effective[ness] and efficiencies. Integrate FMSS/RAMS/PMIS/NES.
- NRPC provides invaluable assistance to parks.
- (1) Is there an "Ocean Program"? (2) Need to move the NNL program on. There [has] not been a new listing in almost 15 years! (3) I think you should develop some criteria before selecting pilots for RSP. I think it should be a park with: (a) Park with staff that believe in resource planning and are thoughtful, seasoned. (b) Park that has prepared an RMP in the past. (c) Not just volunteers. (d) Park should be one where their ability to make RM decisions is largely in their own hands. Appalachian Trail is co-managed by the Trail Conference which needs substantial education on NR policy first. They would be a very challenging pilot. (e) Parks working, thinking about PFCs. (4) NRPC for some divisions (GRD, ARD, EQD) don't have enough staff to support technical assistance needs at the park level or where do all the tech asst. requests go? Everyone tries to be responsive but staff time/travel is limited. Expectations are high/too high?
- In general terms, the NRPC program is one of the best managed in the NPS. It is important that the NRPC Division Chiefs/staff work closely with other programs such as Planning and Cultural Resources to share relevant information.
- The programs are good, strong, and [are] doing an incredible job with so many resources and such a small staff. The Advisor Board of Directors for I&M and Science Advisory Group model for I&M is helpful - could be do something similar to other program areas?
- Staffing- out the new BRMD over the last few years has been a valuable contribution to national leadership on high profile issues.
- No additional comments - 7

