Benzie Natural Resource Assessment

Benzie Conservation District

2016

The Benzie County Natural Resource Assessment is a survey of local stakeholders aimed to gauge the priorities of natural resource protection and enhancement in Benzie County

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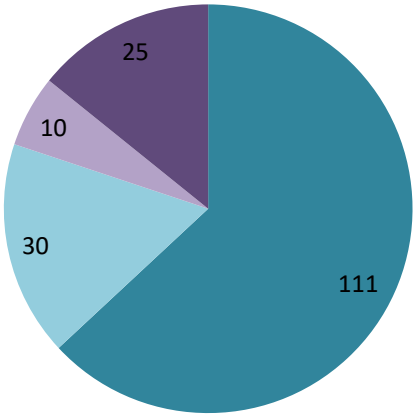
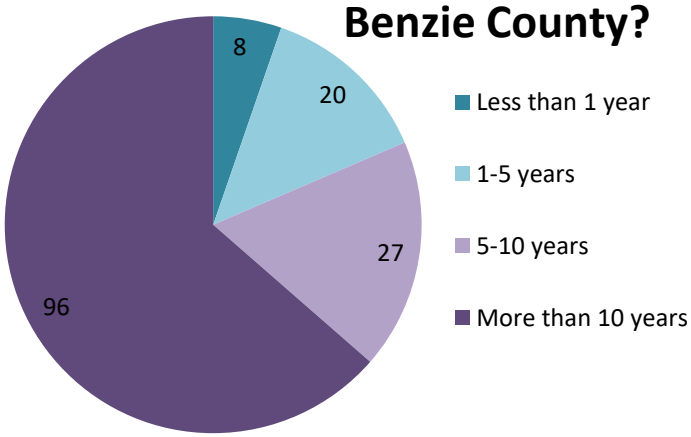
BENZIE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Survey Demographics

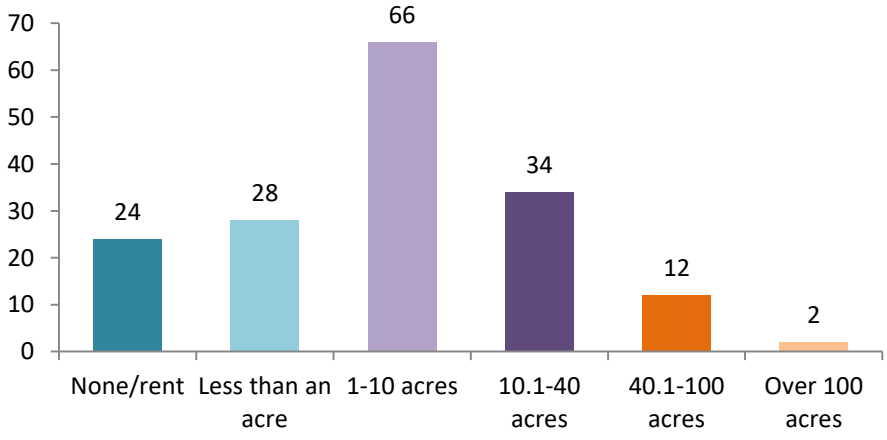
Do you live in Benzie County?



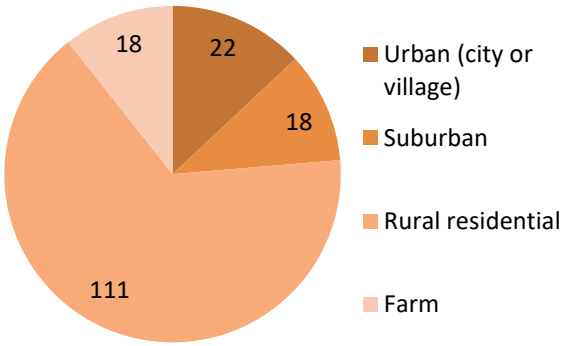
How long have you lived in Benzie County?



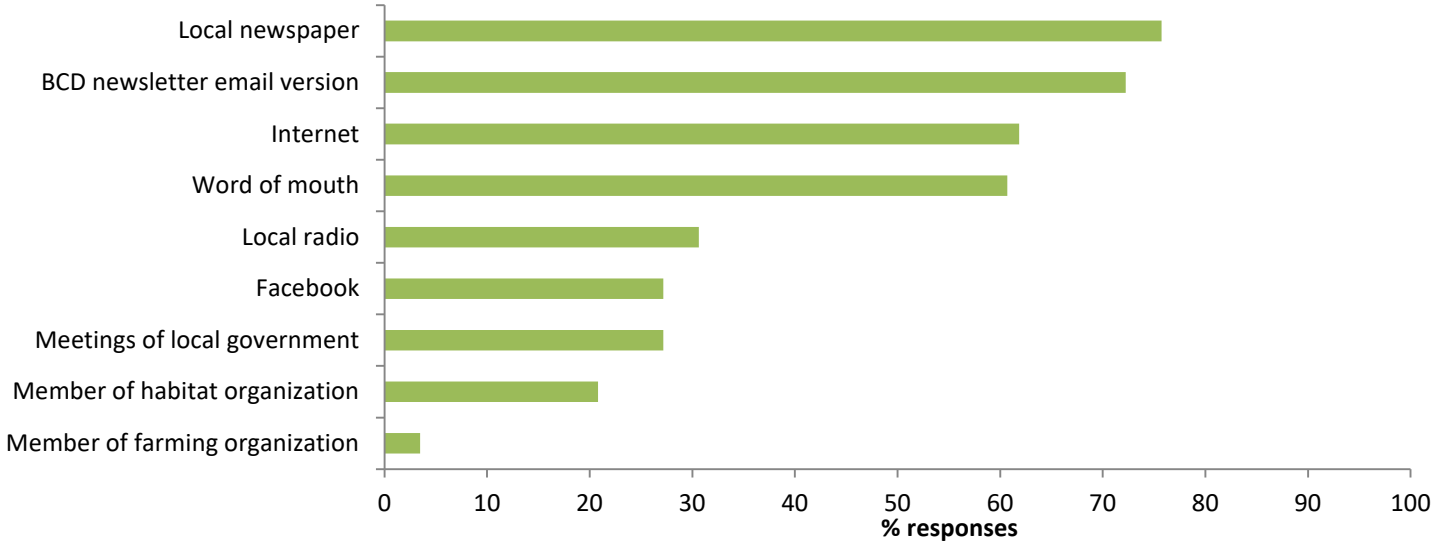
How much property do you own in Benzie County?



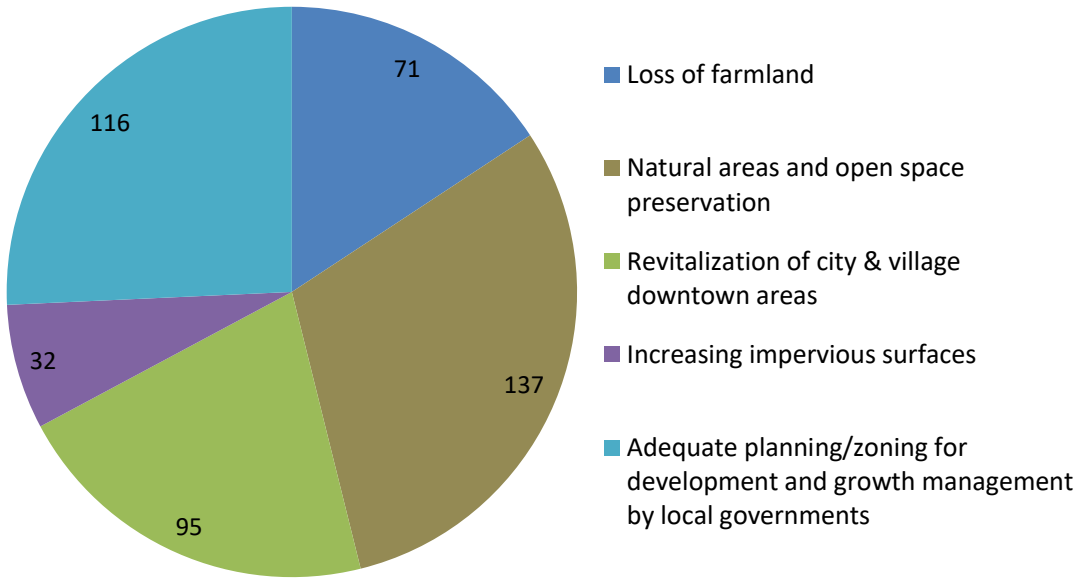
Describe the setting in which you live?



What sources do you use to keep informed about news and information concerning natural resource issues in Benzie County?



What are the top three LAND USE issues that you think will be of concern over the next five years in Benzie County?

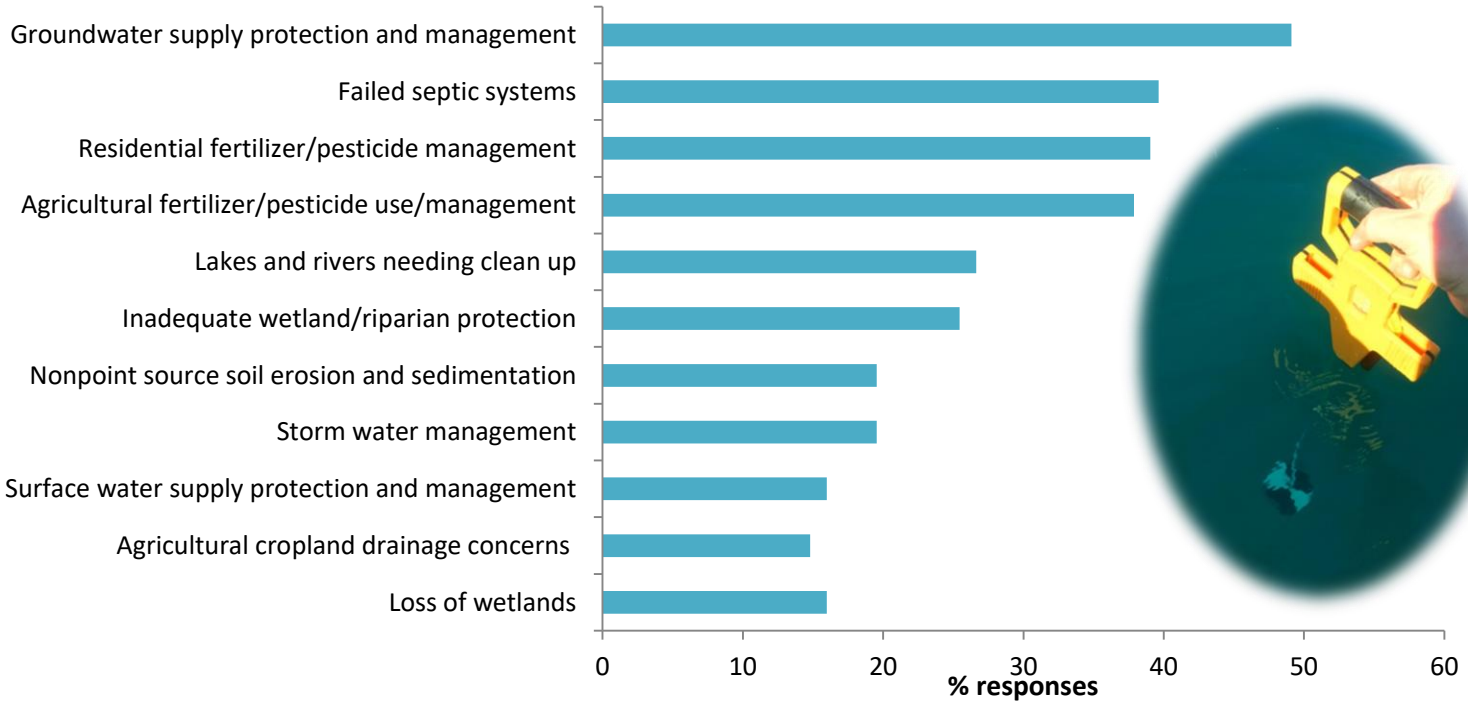


Other Responses

- Climate change
- Renewing and maintaining roads
- Good luck on the last choice..!! No standard regulations for townships.

- Uncontrolled invasive species - especially Scotch pine and Mustard-Olive
- Loss of viewshed
- Including bike lanes on new highway paving jobs... Make our county a "bicycling destination"
- Wind farms
- Deteriorating condition of our roadways in Benzie County
- Stopping wind turbines in Benzie county
- historic restoration
- Affordable housing for low-income families
- southern view that land/water are $ resources only Answer Choices Responses
- Loss of farmland
- Natural areas and open space preservation
- Revitalization of city & village downtown areas
- Increasing impervious surfaces
- Adequate planning/zoning for development and growth management by local governments
- None of the above. Taxes and government bodies having to pay for services on a smaller taxable base. When people or groups decide to preserve land and it comes off the tax rolls without any compensation to the tax entities. I think if they are raising funds to preserve a property the should also raise enough to create a trust fund to pay the taxes that are lost when it is owned by the Land Conservancy. The way it is now the taxes are born by many who can't afford more taxes. Let’s have those who can afford it raise the money to pay their share of taxes.
- Over development of Northern Mi.
- Zoning
- organic farming preservation
- Shoreland/Riparian area protection
- 4 lane road
- invasive species control and eradication
- I am concerned about tree health in the area, and I think monitoring air quality to determine if there is some impact from air pollution weakening or making trees more susceptible would be good to know
- empty buildings not being used
- Environmental protection
- Keeping out Industrial Wind Turbines, expanding solar

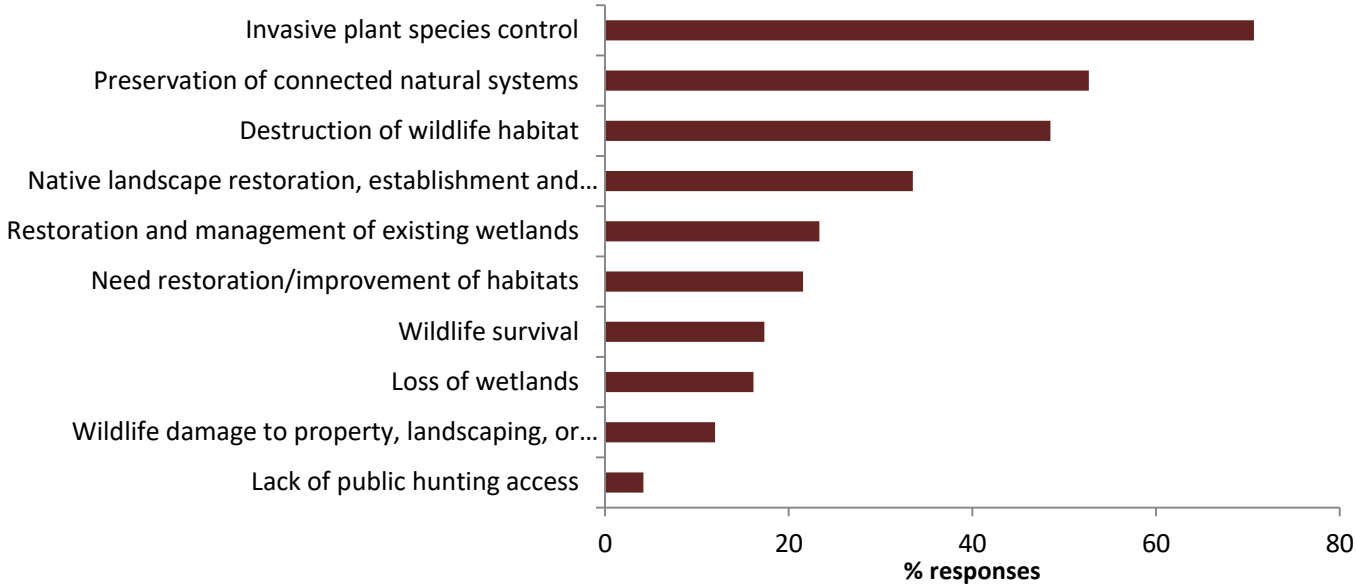
Please select the top three WATER QUALITY issues that you think will be of concern over the next five years in Benzie County.



Other Responses:

- Drinking water quality
- Threat of invasive species
- Fracking contamination
- Actually, all the above should be EQUALLY important..!!
- Nutrient runoff; preservation of pristine water quality
- These are all concerns
- Building on the waterfront
- Disposal of consumer pharmaceuticals into water supply; also invasive water plants and animal species
- Swimmers itch
- It was really hard to select the top 3, for they are all very important
- Pipeline 5
- Road Commission practices near wetlands (ex. Valley Rd, Pioneer Rd..)
- Just what we need more government regulation.
- Allowing home owners to grow grass to the water's edge and fertilizing all that grass allowing for runoff into our rivers
- water frontage septic systems & holding tanks
- Invasive species in lakes and streams

Please select the top three WILDLIFE & HABITAT issues that you think will be of concern over the next five years in Benzie County.



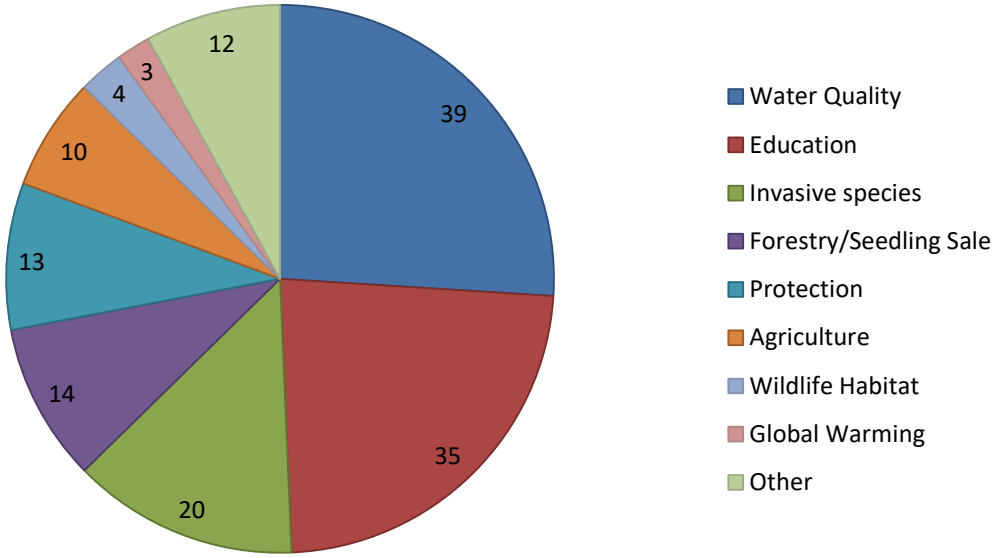
Other Responses:

- Overuse of places like the Platte River in the summer
- Excessive logging, atv/orv off trail riding, gunfire for hours day/night stresses wildlife as well as humans
- Are Bees Wildlife....need habitat and protection
- Bee populations - loss of bees
- Exploding deer population
- The deer population making diversity restoration very difficult
- Too many deer! They're eating too much forest vegetation!
- Overabundance of deer is greatly impacting our native vegetation in the area
- Too many coyotes
- Increase bear sighting in residential settings
- Invasive animal control
- Expanding Conserved Land
- No concerns

What do you feel are the most important conservation practices offered or services you feel Benzie Conservation District should focus on in the next five years?

**107 responses. Some responses addressed multiple topics*

Most Important Services



Water Quality – *39 mentions*

Protection/Management – 20

Water Monitoring – 6

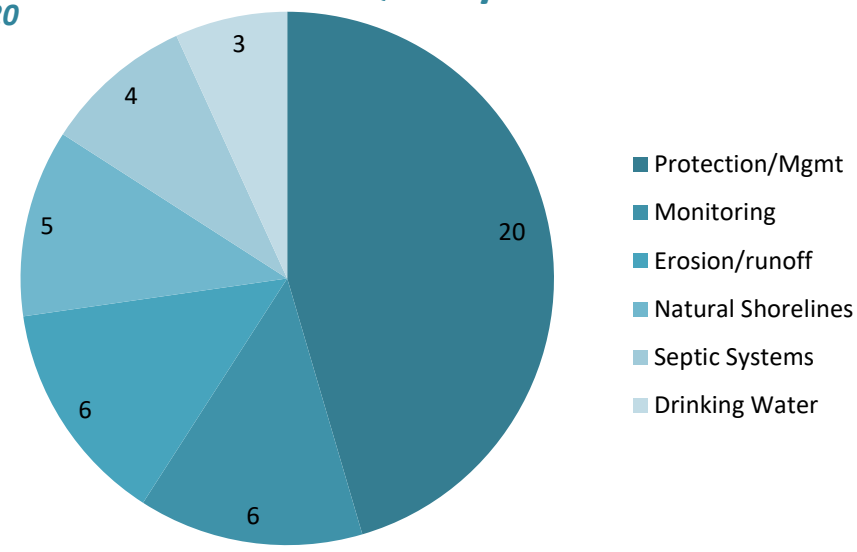
Erosion/runoff – 6

Natural Shorelines – 5

Septic systems – 4

Drinking water – 3

Water Quality issues



Education – *35 mentions*

General Public Education – 14

Plantings/Habitat – 7

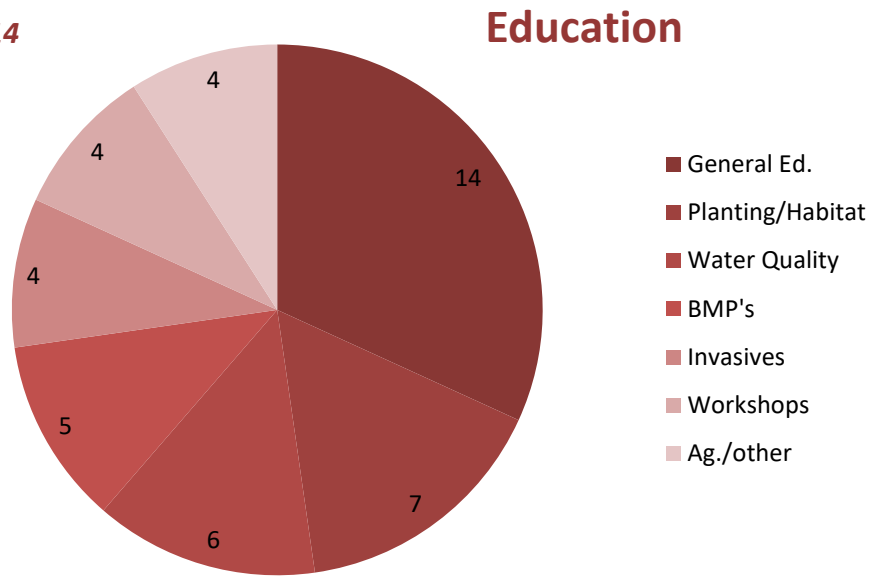
Water Quality – 6

BMP's – 5

Invasive species – 4

Workshops – 4

Ag./other – 4



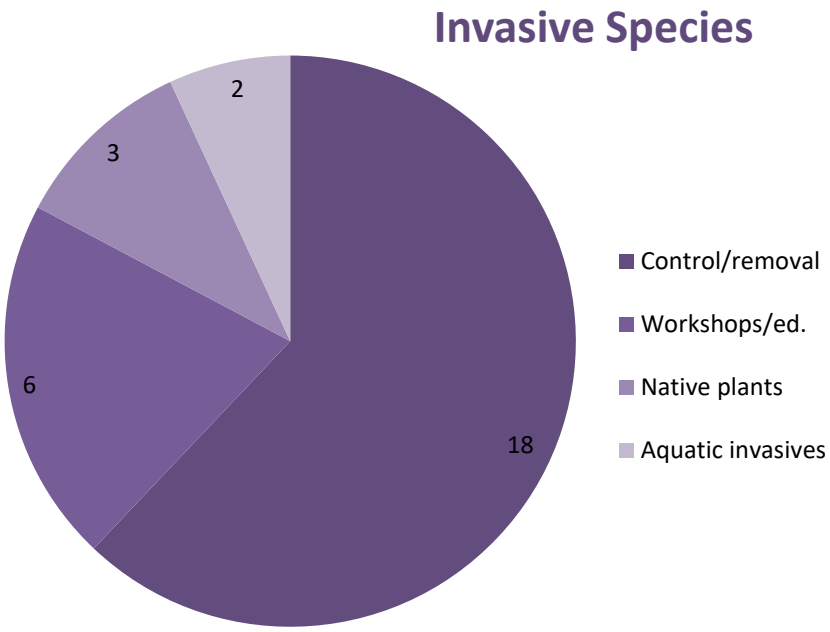
Invasive Species – *20 mentions*

Control/removal – 18

Workshops/education – 6

Native Plants – 3

Aquatic – 2



Water Quality – *39 mentions*

- Assistance with testing and maintenance of surface waters
- Education about the importance of protecting water quality
- Surface water contamination from agricultural sources and septic systems, wetland protection, and natural corridors for the movement of wildlife.
- Education about habitat preservation, erosion, and water usage/protection
- continue to emphasize stormwater management best practices; fight invasive species and promote native plants; help farmers with runoff issues and other BMPs
- Water quality in homes and lake water
- collaboration with other agencies/municipalities on water quality (e coli issues from Cold Creek run-off) and invasive species in water and on land
- Education on good environmental practices Restoration of diverse native forests Protection of water quality
- Helping to manage our precious water resources and what feeds into them.
- Long term water quality data collection across the county. Continue Workshops for homeowners, business owners,
- Water quality monitoring, natural shoreline education
- keep our water healthy
- Learning how to cut back on herbicide treatments Water management Restoration of native fish species Forest and tree protection against pests
- The completion of the all-encompassing Watershed Plan has been a huge accomplishment. The plan provides guidance for the practices and services that the BCD is currently doing and can aim for in the future.
- Native plant sales and assistance with establishment; watershed protection
- Keep all outreach strong. Workshops in the field demonstrating how to do a project. Water issues.
- non point surface water runoff continue
- Septic tank and ag runoff issues
- Protection and management of our surface waters
- Preventing the contamination of ground/surface water resources by residential and commercial sources – cooperate with FLOW and similar regional organizations
- wetland and riparian management
- Continue providing support for local lake Assoc groups.
- Surface & groundwater contamination from downstate boats and RV's; Invasive species; deforestation due to ash, beech, and maple diseases; climax forest loss;
- Working with local communities to reduce nutrient load to rivers and lakes - community waste water treatment improvement (especially Beulah) and septic system inspection/monitoring.
- Maintaining wildlife habitats and clean water
- Land management practices (cover crops, native plantings, rain gardens, etc.) on residential and recreational property to protect soils and preserve water quality.
- Protection of Watersheds

- Water
- Educating riparian owners on best practices to minimize eutrophication and sedimentation.
- Lake, river, waterways protection
- Info for water frontage residents on how to plant natural materials to restore beach frontage rather than strip everything and then put in rock walls to prevent erosion.
- Invasive plant management via private/public cooperation. Improving recreational opportunities away from the lakefronts. Mitigating the damage that lakefront property owners create with suburb-like manicured landscaping.
- water quality protection forest management and preservation continued education and outreach
- removal of invasive plants and aquatic animals, monitor water quality
- Protection of our water and forests.
- put in a sewer system around the lakes or at least have septic systems improved; save, improve, protect, restore wildlife habitat
- assisting landowners with planning on their properties, for invasive species control, native plants, water quality, animal habitat, etc.
- Management of deer population in urban areas Erosion management near lakes and streams

Education – *35 mentions*

- native plant supply; INVASIVE SPECIES ID and MANAGEMENT; REFORESTATION; EDUCATING PEOPLE ON HOW TO PREPARE FOR GLOBAL WARMING; WHAT WE CAN DO INDIVIDUALLY, AND TOGETHER TO CHANGE WHAT WE ARE DOING TO THE PLANET
- Education about the importance of protecting water quality
- Education
- Education of Citizens
- Increased Communication with public sector
- Answering questions
- Education of youth & public, training & assistance to private landowners, monitoring of habitats & biodiversity
- Education about habitat preservation, erosion, and water usage/protection
- Keeping the public informed
- Education
- Education about the negative effects that humans have on our ecosystem. Encourage a cultural shift in our habits and the way we view our surroundings. (nature)
- Public education about good practice and how it affects you as a resident
- Inspiring and educating and acting upon invasive species removal, and native plants and trees. Seems to be huge emphasis on deer but small game population seems low.
- Invasive species, watershed education and preservation.
- Education on good environmental practices Restoration of diverse native forests Protection of water quality

- Long term water quality data collection across the county. Continue Workshops for homeowners, business owners,
- Education, classes, presentations
- Keep all outreach strong. Workshops in the field demonstrating how to do a project. Water issues.
- Invasive species & increasing public awareness of all matters of real and potential threat to Benzie wildlife and natural features.
- Forest Management education. Invasive eradication workshops.
- Outreach with the younger generations, partnering with Grow Benzie, Native plantings workshops, guest columns in the Record Patriot and the freebie papers about to dos (skip the don'ts).
- Public awareness and education on water and land conservation.
- Education of citizens
- Continue offering classes, plant sales and clean-up opportunities.
- Keeping the doors open and the information flowing to the public.
- Educating riparian owners on best practices to minimize eutrophication and sedimentation.
- Community EDUCATION Networking members of the public
- Awareness and education to the public on Environmental issues with the best supportive science based reasons . People want to know the "why" of all issues.
- Educating visitors to the area on conservation/respect of land and animals.
- water quality protection forest management and preservation continued education and outreach
- sustainable agriculture practices; preservation of habitat, trails, and accessibility; public education on conservation practice
- Education about farming best practices and how to build a rural market architecture to keep sustainable farming in Benzie County. Education about invasive species and the effect of global climate change. Connecting with the Land Conservancy to get people to be out on hikes and enjoying the lakes in Benzie County.
- I think the district should continue its community outreach efforts to increase awareness of the importance of managing the environment the best way possible for all living things.

Invasive Species – *20 mentions*

- native plant supply; INVASIVE SPECIES ID and MANAGEMENT; REFORESTATION; EDUCATING PEOPLE ON HOW TO PREPARE FOR GLOBAL WARMING; WHAT WE CAN DO INDIVIDUALLY, AND TOGETHER TO CHANGE WHAT WE ARE DOING TO THE PLANET
- continue to emphasize stormwater management best practices; fight invasive species and promote native plants; help farmers with runoff issues and other BMPs
- Inspiring and educating and acting upon invasive species removal, and native plants and trees. Seems to be huge emphasis on deer but small game population seems low.
- Invasive species prevention and control Land use and zoning Preservation of our natural river
- Invasive species, watershed education and preservation.

- Invasive species
- Much more intensive and publicized efforts to get rid of invasive species
- collaboration with other agencies/municipalities on water quality (e coli issues from Cold Creek run-off) and invasive species in water and on land
- Invasive species control
- Invasive species & increasing public awareness of all matters of real and potential threat to Benzie wildlife and natural features.
- Forest Management education. Invasive eradication workshops.
- Planting native...grasses, etc. Invasive species control wetland protection and restoration Dune ecology restoration
- Surface & groundwater contamination from downstate boats and RV's; Invasive species; deforestation due to ash, beech, and maple diseases; climax forest loss;
- Swimmer's Itch eradication Invasive species monitoring and reduction Reforestation - given dead ash, beech, oak, issues
- Natural resources health and sustainable practices. Controlling non-native invasive species, diseases.
- invasive species control wetlands preservation
- Invasive plant management via private/public cooperation. Improving recreational opportunities away from the lakefronts. Mitigating the damage that lakefront property owners create with suburb-like manicured landscaping.
- Invasive species control, alternatives for failed septic systems.
- removal of invasive plants and aquatic animals, monitor water quality
- assisting landowners with planning on their properties, for invasive species control, native plants, water quality, animal habitat, etc.

Forestry/Seedling sales – *14 mentions*

- Education on good environmental practices Restoration of diverse native forests Protection of water quality
- Learning how to cut back on herbicide treatments Water management Restoration of native fish species Forest and tree protection against pests
- Native plant sales and assistance with establishment; watershed protection
- Intelligent (thoughtful) tree planting
- Seedling sales
- plant more trees
- Forest Management education. Invasive eradication workshops.
- Programs on managing forest land in this era of so many pest killing trees.
- Continue offering classes, plant sales and clean-up opportunities.
- Surface & groundwater contamination from downstate boats and RV's; Invasive species; deforestation due to ash, beech, and maple diseases; climax forest loss;
- Swimmer's Itch eradication Invasive species monitoring and reduction Reforestation - given dead ash, beech, oak, issues

- water quality protection forest management and preservation continued education and outreach
- Reforestation with native trees and identification of sites with a suspect history of pollution.
- Protection of our water and forests.

Protection/Land acquisition – *13 mentions*

- Protection great lakes, rivers, streams.
- Protection, Protection, Protection
- Land and wildlife preservation
- Protection, preservation, and even improvements in public land & water resources
- land acquisitions
- Land and wildlife preservation
- Invasive species prevention and control Land use and zoning Preservation of our natural river
- Invasive species, watershed education and preservation.
- maintaining natural habitat
- Protecting waterfront and restoring nature
- Conservation of natural spaces in light of pressure from increasing tourism.
- Planting native...grasses, etc. Invasive species control wetland protection and restoration Dune ecology restoration
- public/private preservation of natural surroundings

Agriculture – *10 mentions*

- continue to emphasize stormwater management best practices; fight invasive species and promote native plants; help farmers with runoff issues and other BMPs
- Permaculture/natural design
- farmers to better understand their impacts and resource values. Assessment of erosion-related issues in the county.
- Septic tank and ag runoff issues
- Agricultural runoff
- orchard management
- Land management practices (cover crops, native plantings, rain gardens, etc.) on residential and recreational property to protect soils and preserve water quality.
- Connecting private landowners to information and programs for habitat and natural resource management (e.g. NRCS programs)
- sustainable agriculture practices; preservation of habitat, trails, and accessibility; public education on conservation practice
- Education about farming best practices and how to build a rural market architecture to keep sustainable farming in Benzie County. Education about invasive species and the effect of global climate change. Connecting with the Land Conservancy to get people to be out on hikes and enjoying the lakes in Benzie County.

Wildlife Habitat – *4 mentions*

- Habitat restoration and management
- Maintaining wildlife habitats and clean water
- put in a sewer system around the lakes or at least have septic systems improved; save, improve, protect, restore wildlife habitat
- assisting landowners with planning on their properties, for invasive species control, native plants, water quality, animal habitat, etc.

Global Warming – *3 mentions*

- CO2 mitigation
- native plant supply; INVASIVE SPECIES ID and MANAGEMENT; REFORESTATION; EDUCATING PEOPLE ON HOW TO PREPARE FOR GLOBAL WARMING; WHAT WE CAN DO INDIVIDUALLY, AND TOGETHER TO CHANGE WHAT WE ARE DOING TO THE PLANET
- Education about farming best practices and how to build a rural market architecture to keep sustainable farming in Benzie County. Education about invasive species and the effect of global climate change. Connecting with the Land Conservancy to get people to be out on hikes and enjoying the lakes in Benzie County.

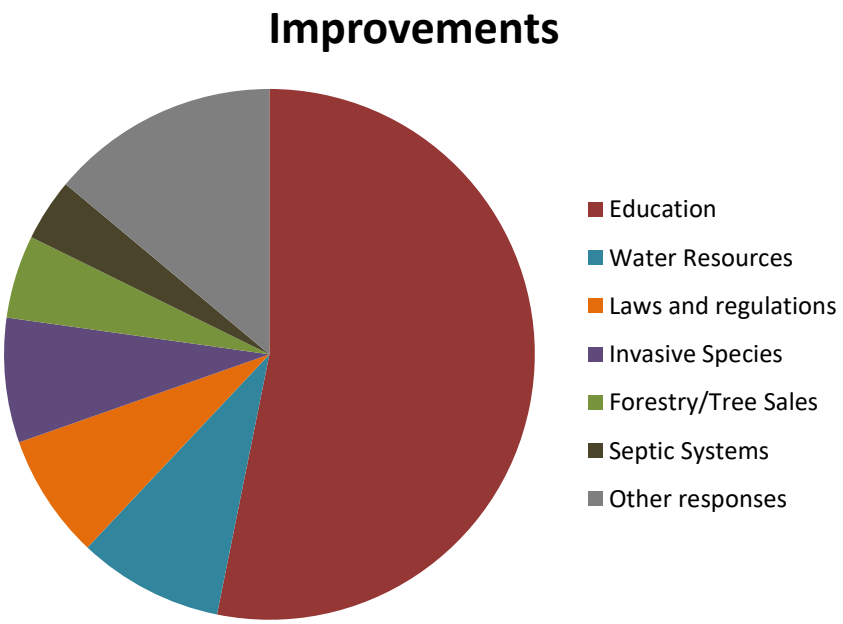
Other

- Management of deer population in urban areas Erosion management near lakes and streams
- Waste disposal....hazardous waste control
- Integration of practices on a watershed-wide basis.
- Threat to species and species loss is a major world problem which threatens to become much worse. Habitat stabilization/diversification for all native species, flora and fauna, is essential. Real conservation.
- I trust you to sift & sort & figure out what you discern is the most important.
- Solar energy
- Research and planning
- Think through proposed solutions before proposing solutions that may be more intrusive than necessary.
- Invasive plant management via private/public cooperation. Improving recreational opportunities away from the lakefronts. Mitigating the damage that lakefront property owners create with suburb-like manicured landscaping.
- To continue the excellent conservation practices of the past .My wife & I are now in our 80's so we can no longer ski, canoe or do strenuous hiking but we always rated Benzie county a 10 for land use care & management..
- Management of deer population in urban areas Erosion management near lakes and streams

What is the most important change or improvement in service you think Benzie Conservation District should do to help you on your land or in your community?

**78 responses. Some responses addressed multiple topics*

Education – 42
Water Resources - 7
Laws and Regulations - 6
Invasive Species - 6
Forestry/Tree Sales - 4
Septic systems - 3
Other - 11



Education - 42

On site education/Workshops

- Hands-on workshops on peoples land
- Engagement with seasonal residents who own land along lakes which has an impact on water quality. More direct engagement with the ag community about practices to use which will minimize their impact on water quality. A focus on climate change would be relevant--it is real and getting worse.
- Education events Seed and tree/shrub sales Landowner advice/counseling
- More educational programs & service projects
- Discuss how nature can and should be enjoyed in one's own backyard: Creating wildlife habitats and safe spaces within the human environment. We can help preserve and protect our total environment by the choices we make at home, not just by visiting nature preserves.
- Site visit
- Increase on-site technical assistance opportunities, educating landowners to the network of professionals available through the conservation district.

- Organize gatherings where we remove invasives; loved the pollinator field trip
- Free consultation of natural features, habitat improvement/protection. Also, more volunteer opportunities.
- Education. Demonstration Sites.
- Continue and expand your excellent educational programs. Perhaps offer consultations to individuals and companies to advise them on good land practices for their property
- Continue and expand your excellent educational programs. Perhaps offer consultations to individuals and companies to advise them on good land practices for their property
- public/private education

Increase Public Education

- There are stakeholders in the community that may or may not be aware of, or involved in, the work of the BCD, but who are influential in managing and changing our landscape. I'm thinking of the road commission, realtors, land developers, etc. who need to be partners with the BCD and various environmental associations in protecting the land and lakes and streams.
- frequent sharing of ways to increase public awareness/ easy actions to address conservation needs at home, businesses and with youth
- Better publicize educational events to reach more individuals from appropriate pools.
- Continue and expand your excellent educational programs. Perhaps offer consultations to individuals and companies to advise them on good land practices for their property
- public/private education
- More education of the need to protect & restore natural areas via Planning Boards for both land and water
- MORE OUTREACH TO INFORM THE PUBLIC ABOUT WHAT YOU ARE CURRENTLY WORKING ON AND HOW RESIDENTS CAN BE INVOLVED
- make people more aware of your services so they can use them by educating them through available media and other sources
- Get facts/info out by email(s) or (sorry) meeting(s) around the county or at the gov't center. Well publicized!
- There must be a way to let all the public in on your news. Weekly column in the newspaper of meetings and issues clear presentation of services to the community and ways they could use the BCD also sustainable agriculture? Native landscaping? compost?

Continue education programs

- Education programs for young children and help citizens remediate problem areas.
- Additional Education of our youth to protect our environment for future generations, well water testing
- Offering lots of info
- Education of local environmental issues that negatively impact health, quality of life and natural resources.
- Educate the youth and general public
- Provide answers to concerns about preserving our environment.

- Continue communicating important land use issues
- continue the existing outreach programs recycle
- Keeping residents informed and suggestions of possible improvements.
- Continue environmental & conservation education of young people and adults.
- Information and literature about how every individual can help the local environment
- Educate the public on how their actions effect their neighbors land and water quality.
- Continuing to provide information and resources for dealing with invasive species and guidance for the implementation/maintenance of native species.
- Continue to help to educate the community and protect the water and forests.
- ??? Maybe make available more nature books and reference materials during the spring and fall tree sales.
- Sharing information which you already to a great job of! Specially regarding erosion control, riparian buffers, and habitat planning and protection.
- Keep us abreast of changes in policy or law; new invasive species; tick, swimmers' itch, and mosquito-born disease issues; water and wind rights news
- Just keep doing what you are doing and perhaps do more school programs. Start with the children
- Continuing education re: invasive species Sales of seedlings/native species

Water Resources - 8

- Waste water removal
- improve the Platte lake boat ramp
- Protect and improve the water quality of Lower Herring Lake
- protect all water sources
- I'm interested in aquifer capacity, shape and location.
- Coordination of the Benzie Lakes Coalition has been a real plus, maybe augmented more with short presentations on specific subjects of choice. More frequent meetings maybe every month in summer and bimonthly in winter?
- Helping area watersheds garner and disseminate more data and secure grants

Invasive Species - 6

- Continue to work on invasive plants and species.
- Help reintroduce native species, fight invasive species.
- Controlling invasive species/planting native species small crop production/soil management growing small crops for business planting for water conservation
- Continuing to provide information and resources for dealing with invasive species and guidance for the implementation/maintenance of native species.
- Continue invasive species reduction programs.
- Organize gatherings where we remove invasives; loved the pollinator field trip

Laws and Regulations - 6

- Create new laws and protect the organic farmer against conventional outdated farming laws.
- work on getting laws changed. homeowners/businesses should not be able to grow grass to the water's edge, let alone fertilize. these same people should not be allowed to pump water out of our rivers/streams. yes, get the laws changed.
- Guidance with adequate zoning/planning regulations
- In services with the Road Commission on how it would benefit them to stop ignoring deq water quality guidelines.
- While the deq continues to not enforce water quality, our county reps should want to retain clean water for Benzie residents.
- enable construction and development efforts, rather than proposing solutions for problems which might in fact be minimal.

Forestry/Tree Sales - 4

- Tree planting
- Save our trees
- Better access to forestry services.
- Make sure the trees offered for sale are of highest quality and will survive through the sale process.
- ??? Maybe make available more nature books and reference materials during the spring and fall tree sales.

Septic systems - 3

- Share best practices and worst practices on septic systems, and how to know if yours is working right.
- Work with Health Dept. for more frequent inspections of holding tanks. Offer residents more seminars on how to properly use their septic systems. Programs on how to control wetland drainage on residential properties bordering lakes and streams.
- Testing for sewer tank efficiency.

Other - 10

- Deer management
- Help to preserve the rural flavor & natural beauty of Benzie County in general.
- Have services for the proper disposal of unwanted items such as the service Frankfort City provides for spring cleanup.
- Keep doing what you're doing!
- Incentivize recycling.
- Increase support to local groups
- Please give us wifi. It is so close but still not available.
- Funding sources for good land management practice and remediation of previous use.
- Keep doing what you're doing
- Small family farming More opportunity for native landscaping options Less irrigation help
- Build a pond on our property! haha