

FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

CHESAPEAKE BAY STATED PREFERENCE SURVEY

DRAFT - NOVEMBER 21, 2011 - DO NOT CIRCULATE

The purpose of the focus groups is to develop a stated preference survey to generate data for nonmarket valuation of water quality improvements in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. The focus groups will follow an “emergent design” in which the first sets of focus groups are broad in nature and rely mostly on conversation between the participants to collect qualitative data. The primary purpose of early focus groups is to identify prevalent themes and common language when people discuss surface water quality in general and in the Chesapeake Bay in particular. Data from early focus groups will be used to narrow the range of topics covered in later focus groups. The focus group guide for the first set of groups will include relatively few questions (we have scripted eight questions below). As we conduct more focus groups and begin to converge on a design for the survey instrument, the script will include questions that will be more specific, eventually converging on a survey instrument that can be used in final focus groups and/or cognitive interviews. Some examples of more specific questions are included below but these are subject to change according to information gleaned from the first set of focus groups.

Several elements of the survey design, including but not limited to visual aids, information text, and payment vehicle for the valuation question will be tested in later focus groups. In addition, we plan to test various response formats (e.g., choice experiment and dichotomous choice), selecting that which will provide more reliable responses. Given the complexities of our scenario and the number of outcomes of interest, we anticipate that our efforts will result in a choice experiment format. However, as with the other design elements, we will rely on information collected in early focus groups to largely guide the development of the survey instrument.

Introduction

1. Thank you for participating...moderator and observer (if there is one in the room) introduce themselves
2. The session should last about 90 minutes
3. Strictly confidential, no follow-up contacts after this discussion
4. Introduce focus group participants
 - a. State your first name and town where you live and how long you've lived in the area.
 - b. Briefly tell who lives in your household.
5. Purpose of focus group is to listen to your ideas and experiences related to bodies of water like lakes, rivers, and the bays and estuaries on the coast. **[Avoid mentioning the Bay this early because we want information on other water bodies and mentioning the Chesapeake in particular could provoke emotional responses from some people.]**

Ground rules

1. We want to follow basic guidelines for polite conversation
2. We want to hear from everyone, so please participate
3. Take turns speaking
4. We love to hear different opinions but please be polite if you disagree with someone
5. We will be recording the session so we have an accurate record of what you say

Conversation Prompts

1. I'd like to hear about your last experience visiting some type of water body other than the ocean. This could be a lake, pond, river, stream, or bay. Talk about what you did during that visit and how the presence of the water body contributed to your experience.
2. Now consider all your visits to water bodies. How does the cleanliness of the water at these places affect your experiences?
3. What is your impression of the cleanliness of the lakes, rivers, and streams near your home?
4. Those of you who didn't mention the Chesapeake Bay as the last water body you visited, have you ever visited the Bay? What did you do? **[Note who has never visited the Bay and pay particular attention to their responses with regard to nonuse value]**
5. What is your impression of the cleanliness and condition of the wildlife in the Chesapeake Bay?
6. How are you affected by the cleanliness of the Chesapeake Bay?
7. Do you think it should be a priority to improve the cleanliness and wildlife conditions in the Chesapeake Bay? Why or why not?
8. What steps do you think should be taken to clean up the Chesapeake Bay?

Examples of more specific questions for subsequent focus groups

1. Restrictions have been placed on water treatment plants, sewer systems, agriculture, and other sources of pollution in the watershed. These restrictions would be phased in over time until 2025 when the practices must be fully implemented. How do you imagine quality of water and wildlife in the watershed changing over that time?
2. Do you think there are areas of the Bay that are essentially clean now and do not need further improvements?

3. Do you believe these restrictions could result in higher costs to you and your household? If so, how?
4. Requiring infrastructure improvements or changes in farming practices to clean up rivers and lakes in the Chesapeake Bay watershed and the Bay itself could result in some additional expenses for households. For example, agricultural products from the region could become more expensive, bills for water and sewer services could also increase. How do you feel about increased costs of living if it results in cleaner lakes, rivers, and a cleaner Bay?
5. Another way to pay for the required improvements is to create a new tax that all residents on this state would be required to pay. This tax would pay for new equipment at water treatment plants, improving sewer systems, and helping farmers to change the way they manage their crop land. How do you feel about a new tax if it resulted in cleaner lakes, rivers and a cleaner Bay?
6. What kinds of indicators or measurements would you like to hear about when the results of efforts to clean up lakes, rivers, and the Chesapeake Bay are reported?
7. Is it more important to clean up local lakes, rivers, ponds and streams than it is to clean up the Chesapeake Bay? Why or why not?