

# Environmental Sustainability Action Plan

## Community Voices for a Sustainable Bruce County

### Executive Summary

Bruce County's Environmental Sustainability Action Plan (ESAP) is being developed to guide meaningful, practical steps toward a more resilient and environmentally responsible future. To ensure the plan reflects community values and priorities, Bruce County undertook broad engagement with residents, stakeholders, and partners. This report, *Community Voices for a Sustainable Bruce County*, summarizes the feedback collected between May and July 2025.

A total of 799 responses were received through a 19-question survey, including 574 from the public and 225 from stakeholders such as municipal representatives, conservation authorities, and First Nations. Participants represented all nine municipalities, as well as neighbouring regions, seasonal residents, and community organizations.

A multi-channel promotion campaign supported diverse participation and ensured broad awareness of the process. Outreach included a dedicated webpage with background information and the survey link, targeted emails to more than 500 organizations across agriculture, tourism, environment, business, education, and health sectors, and formal promotion through a Council report and County media release. Paid campaigns on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Spotify, combined with local radio ads, extended reach across the County and neighbouring regions. Collectively, these efforts generated thousands of impressions and clicks, helping to secure participation from a wide cross-section of residents and stakeholders.

Feedback was organized around seven key environmental themes:

1. Corporate Sustainability Leadership
2. Climate Resilience & Adaptation
3. Climate Mitigation
4. Forest Conservation, Stewardship & Agriculture
5. Sustainable Transportation & Mobility
6. Waste Management
7. Environmental Education, Engagement & Partnerships

## Key Findings

### Strong mandate for leadership

- A large majority (77% - Figure 1) of respondents supported a County leadership role in environmental responsibility, even when this required financial trade-offs (62% - Figure 2), service adjustments (60% - Figure 3), or changes in public expectations (77% - Figure 4).

### High concern about local risks

- Water quality, waste management, and biodiversity loss were identified as top priorities, alongside shoreline erosion, flooding, and climate change impacts.

### Readiness to act

- 78% of participants indicated they are willing to change personal habits to support a more sustainable community, with waste reduction, energy efficiency, and sustainable mobility most frequently noted.

### Collaboration and education as enablers

- Respondents emphasized the importance of partnerships with municipalities, Indigenous peoples, conservation authorities, schools, and local organizations, along with continued investment in public education.

### Equity and accessibility must be central

- Participants highlighted the need for programs and services that are inclusive of rural and remote residents, low-income households, and vulnerable groups.

### Capacity and accountability are critical

- Limited staff resources, infrastructure gaps, and funding challenges were flagged as barriers. Respondents underscored the importance of clear roles, dedicated staff, transparent reporting, and measurable outcomes.

### Quick wins and long-term systems change

- Many called for a dual approach: visible short-term actions (e.g., organics collection, tree planting, transit improvements) paired with systemic changes in land use planning, infrastructure design, and procurement.

### **Leverage local knowledge and innovation**

- Respondents pointed to promising local initiatives, community organizations, and grassroots efforts as valuable sources of solutions that the County can recognize, support, and scale.

### **Place-based and culturally respectful approaches**

- Participants emphasized that solutions should reflect Bruce County's diverse landscapes and communities, while honouring Indigenous knowledge, traditions, and culturally significant lands.

## **Path Forward**

The engagement findings provide clear direction for Bruce County's Environmental Sustainability Action Plan (ESAP). Building on this strong foundation of public and stakeholder input, the ESAP will establish clear short-, medium-, and long-term priorities, align County operations with community values, and define measurable outcomes to track progress.

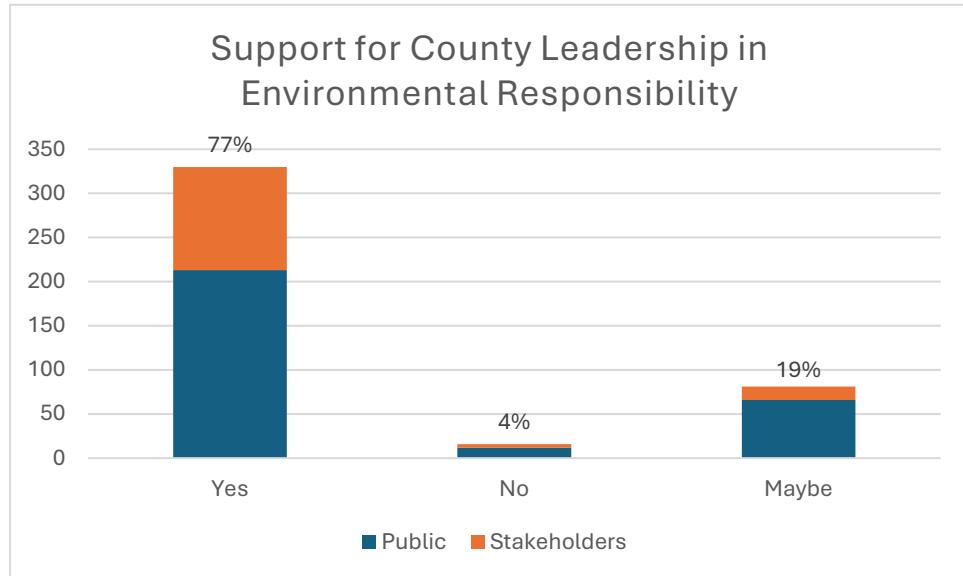
By combining these community voices with the operational insights from the Environmental Scan, Bruce County is well-positioned to take a leadership role in advancing rural sustainability and climate action. The ESAP will strengthen collaboration with Indigenous partners, local municipalities, conservation authorities, community organizations, and residents, while ensuring that environmental responsibility is embedded across County decision-making.

A draft ESAP will be presented to Council in January 2026, with final approval anticipated following Council's review and feedback.

Together, the Environmental Scan and engagement results provide a comprehensive foundation for Bruce County's Environmental Sustainability Action Plan (ESAP).

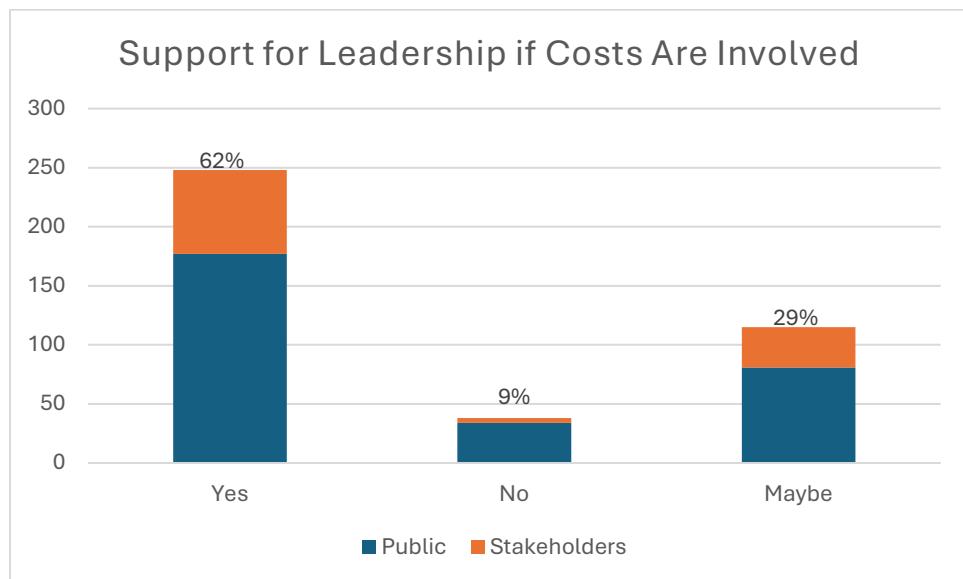
## APPENDIX A

Figure #1 – Support for County Leadership in Environmental Responsibility



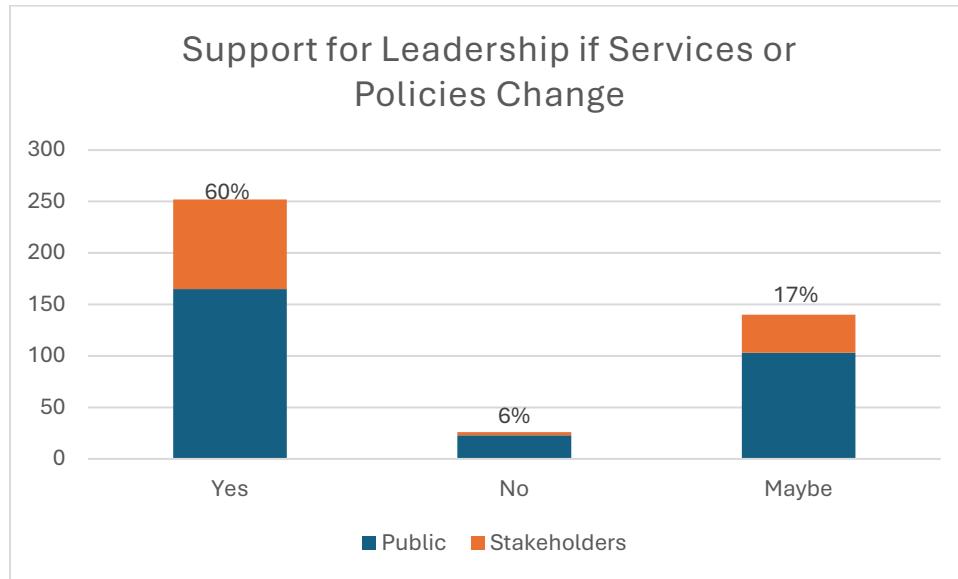
*Based on survey Question 10 - "Do you support the County taking a leadership role in environmental responsibility?"*

Figure #2 – Support for Leadership if Costs Are Involved



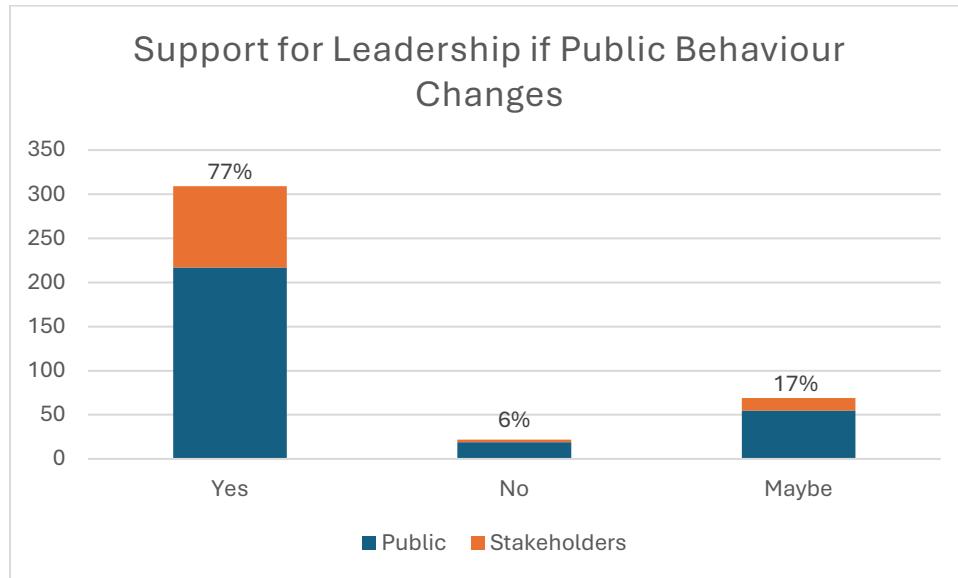
*Based on survey Question 11 - "Would you support the County exploring a leadership role in environmental responsibility, even if it may involve financial considerations?"*

Figure #3 – Support for Leadership if Services or Policies Change



*Based on survey Question 12 - "Would you support this leadership role if it required changes to how services are delivered or how staff policies and practices are implemented?"*

Figure #4 – Support for Leadership if Public Behaviour Changes



*Based on survey Question 13 - "Would you support this role if it encouraged changes in public behaviour or expectations?"*