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Executive Summary

The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) sponsored a series of statewide regional meetings to enable all employees to provide feedback regarding priorities and issues for the agency based on the following 5 critical questions:

- Question 1.** What is the biggest natural resources management challenge in this area of the state?
- Question 2.** What are the areas that DNR should be addressing that it is not?
- Question 3.** What is the biggest challenge in my job?
- Question 4.** What is the most fulfilling aspect of my job?
- Question 5.** What would help me do my job better?

Nine meetings were held at seven locations (Figure 1, page iv.) and were attended by employees from all divisions of the SCDNR. All meetings, except Pendleton, were structured the same, i.e. groups of employees were instructed to develop response priorities to the five critical questions based on consensus rankings. This report, which provides analyses of the responses from the complex and extensive data set generated by the 9 meetings, was prepared as a group project by the 12 members of the 2000-2001 Workshop in Leadership Development (W.I.L.D.) class.

The W.I.L.D. group was given the large raw data set and charged with organizing and analyzing the data. One of the group’s first observations was that the data were not always collected in a consistent, unbiased way, so the validity of the analyses was hampered somewhat by the lack of scientific rigor. (For future survey efforts, study design and plans for data analyses should be developed “*a priori*” rather than “*a posteriori*”.) Therefore, prior to the analyses, there were a number of issues and assumptions that had to be addressed by the group. Some of these were: the appropriate partitioning of the data, methods for coding and scoring the data, and development of a ranking scheme. Efforts were made to partition the data in various ways, but it is very important to emphasize that this often required judgments that cannot be regarded as unbiased. This is especially true for the analyses organized by divisions. Although information organized by divisions would seem to be a valuable way of looking at the data, the structure of the meetings (employees from multiple divisions at the same meeting) required subjective decisions about division-specific relevance. The report is therefore organized so that the overall agencywide summary is provided, and there are also a series of tables and appendices in which the results based on different partitioning approaches (e.g. different divisions, different meeting sites) and more detailed data are provided. This report may be regarded as an employee mandate that can be used by the Director and Deputy Directors of SCDNR to prioritize the important activities of the agency, identify areas where change is needed, and allocate resources appropriately.

The highest ranked answers to each question were as follows:

Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Question 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing sustainable resources • Urban sprawl • Public education • Pollution • Public land issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Personnel • Managing sustainable resources • Regulations • Internal mgt. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personnel • Public education • Politics/ management • Communication • Time management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with the public • Protecting natural resources • Co-workers • Job recognition • Being outdoors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative / Personnel • Tools and equipment • Training • Communication • Less paperwork

These responses reinforce the strong commitment of DNR employees to managing resources in a responsible and sustainable manner, and further indicate an awareness that human activities associated with development, loss of natural habitat and pollution are our greatest challenges. Education emerged as an important issue that needs more attention and support. The overall impression was that ultimately, education should be one of SCDNR’s most important priorities. Education is important to acceptance of

regulations and management practices by S.C. constituencies, as well as future user groups and leaders. Personnel and administrative issues were overwhelmingly identified as one of the most important factors affecting employee effectiveness and satisfaction. Efforts to improve the productivity and effectiveness of employees would benefit from changes in administrative policies and reductions in paperwork. There was an overall impression that Human Resources should play more of an advocacy role for employee rights and career advancement. Meaningful training programs that serve to improve employee skills and opportunities for career advancement are needed. There continues to be a concern that internal politics and management practices promote inequities. Better communication between divisions and more “cross-divisional” approaches are needed. Personnel management as well as the day-to-day tasks of individual jobs need modern tools and equipment. The responses to the most fulfilling aspect of their jobs reinforced the notion that SCDNR employees place a high priority on the importance of their interactions with the public, and that they have a strong sense of social and ethical commitment to “protecting natural resources.”

In conclusion, the most important general recommendations that emerged from the results of our analyses are:

- ◆ The management of sustainable resources and mitigation of the impacts of human activities (including urban sprawl, loss of habitat, increased pollution pressures) continue to be important priorities for SCDNR. Management policies and regulations that are based on sound science and that are user-friendly and enforceable should be encouraged.
- ◆ Education programs at all levels should be encouraged to facilitate the development of an “informed public” and to insure that students, teachers and future leaders have a sound appreciation of natural resource issues. Public interactions and education are the keys to public support.
- ◆ Significant changes are needed in personnel policies and technologies so that employee effectiveness is enhanced. Technologies and management practices that increase efficiency while reducing paperwork and other impediments are needed. More opportunities for career advancement are needed. The Human Resources office should serve as an advocate for employees, and should facilitate improved communication at a variety of levels (between employees, between divisions, between administrators and employees, etc).

Site Locations Of SCDNR Regional Staff Meetings

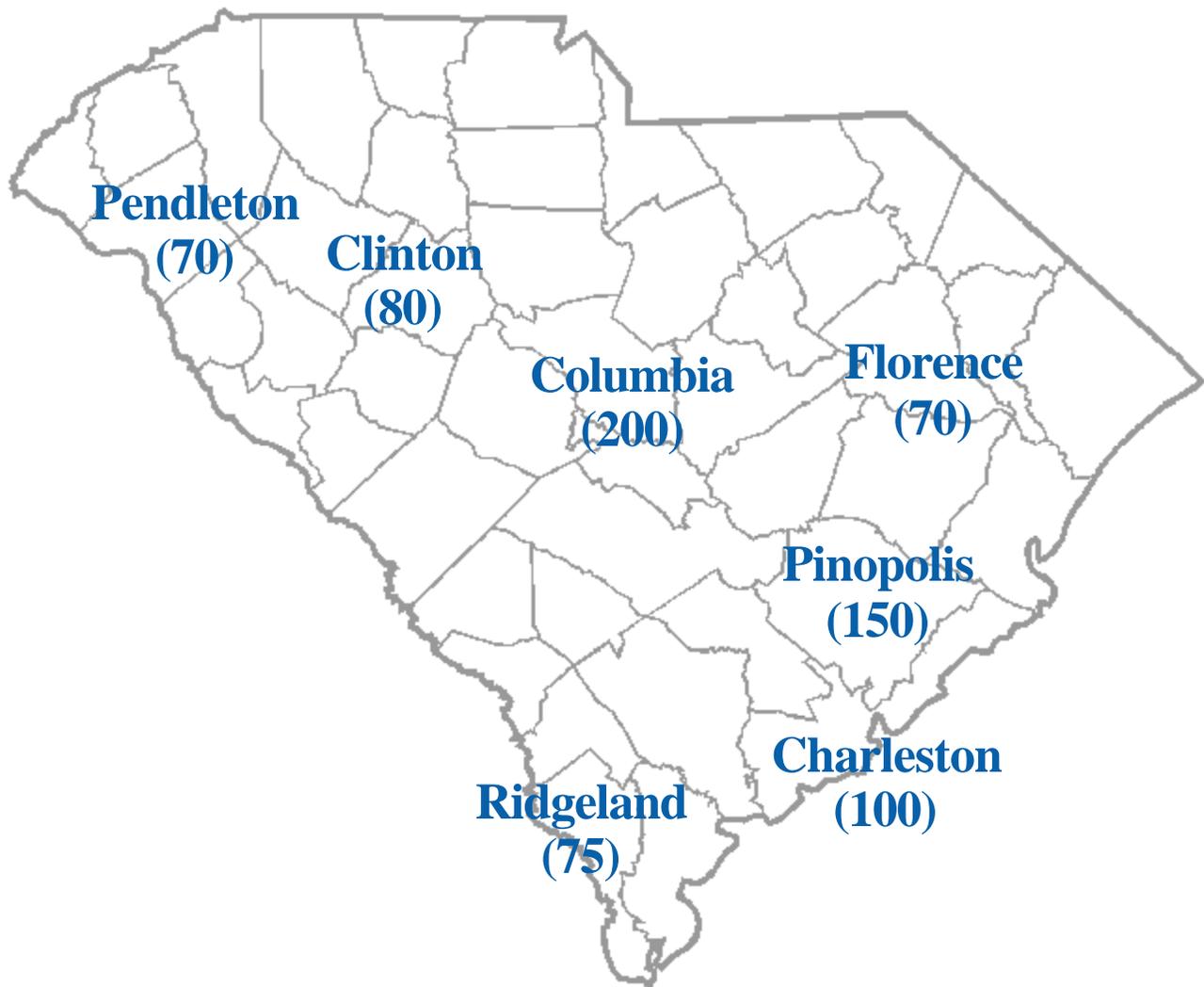


Figure 1. Site Locations (estimated total number of attendees in parentheses).