Northern Spotted Owl (NSO) Stakeholder Forum Survey Results

FORUM DATE – OCTOBER 23, 2019 | DOCUMENT DATE – JANUARY 10, 2020

INTRODUCTION

The second Northern Spotted Owl (NSO) Stakeholder Forum (Forum) occurred on October 23, 2019. Information about the Forum is located on the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) website at www.wildlife.ca.gov/conservation/timber/NSO-forum. CDFW asked attendees of the Forum to provide feedback by filling out a short survey. The responses to the survey will help inform CDFW's planning efforts for future Forums.

This document is a summary of the survey responses. The views and opinions expressed in this document belong solely to the individuals who responded to the survey and do not represent the views and opinions of CDFW.

The Forum organizers would like to acknowledge the participants of the Forum for providing their knowledge, insights, and requests during the meeting. Coordination and collaboration are a large part of the path to conservation success.

DEOMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY (QUESTION #1)

Respondents: 20/25

Affiliations/Occupations:

- Registered Professional Foresters (RPFs)
- Consulting biologists
- Industrial Timberland Companies
- Small Timberland Owners
- National Park Service
- CA State Parks
- CA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife (CDFW)
- Environmental NGOs
- U.S. Forest Service (USFS)
- CA Dept. of Forestry & Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- California Academy of Sciences
- Humboldt State University
- UC San Francisco
- County of Marin

Locations:

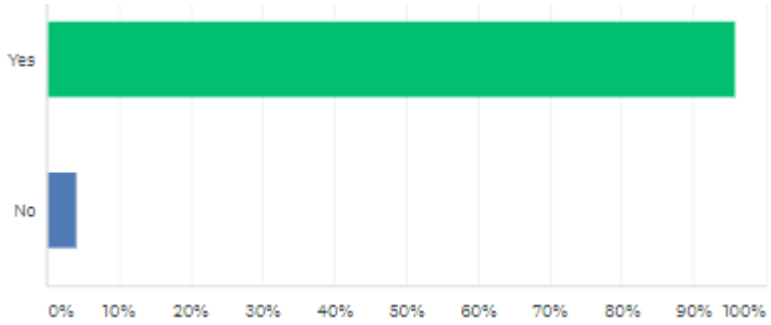
Note - Plurality of respondents were from the Mendocino area

- Mendocino/Sonoma County
  - Fort Bragg
  - Cazadero
  - Santa Rosa
  - Ukiah
  - Cloverdale
- Humboldt/Del Norte County
  - Arcata
  - Crescent City
- San Francisco
- San Rafael
- Vallejo
- Pollock Pines
- Portland, OR
- Sacramento

QUESTIONS & SURVEY RESPONSES

2. Do you consider the Northern Spotted Owl Stakeholder Forum valuable?

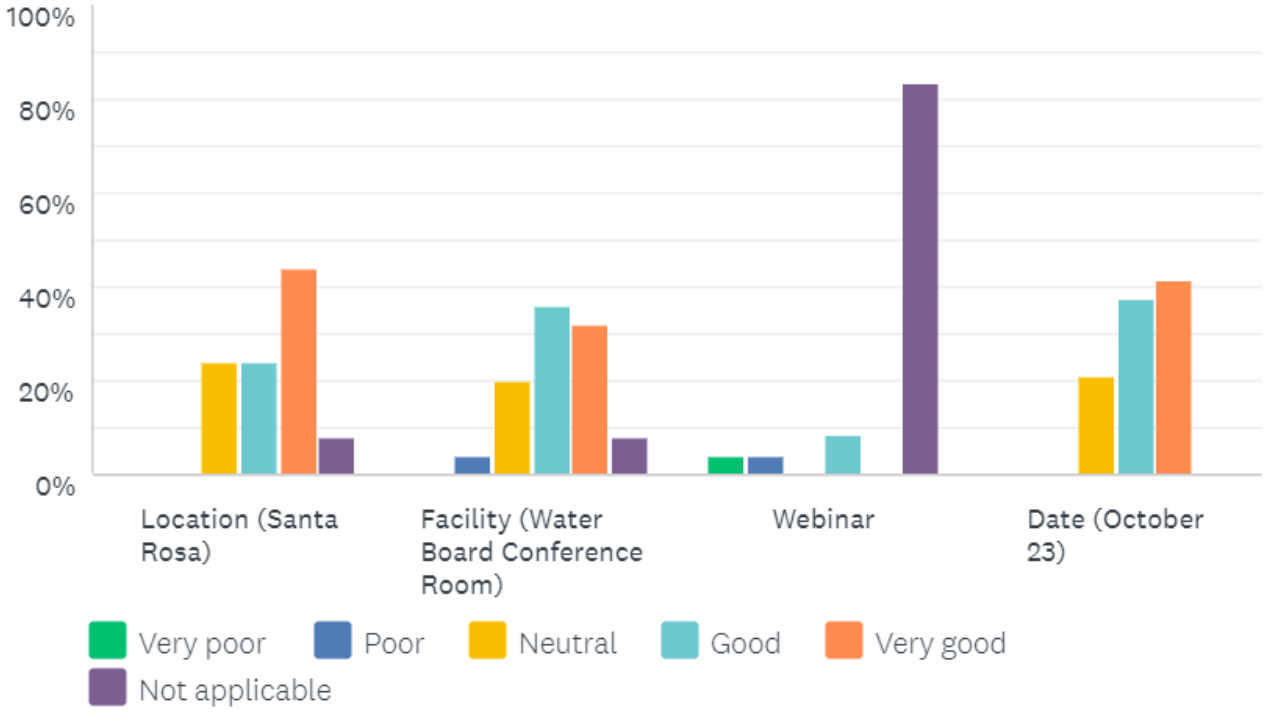
Respondents: 24/25



Yes:	23
No:	1

3. How would you rate the following aspects of the Forum?

Respondents: 25/25



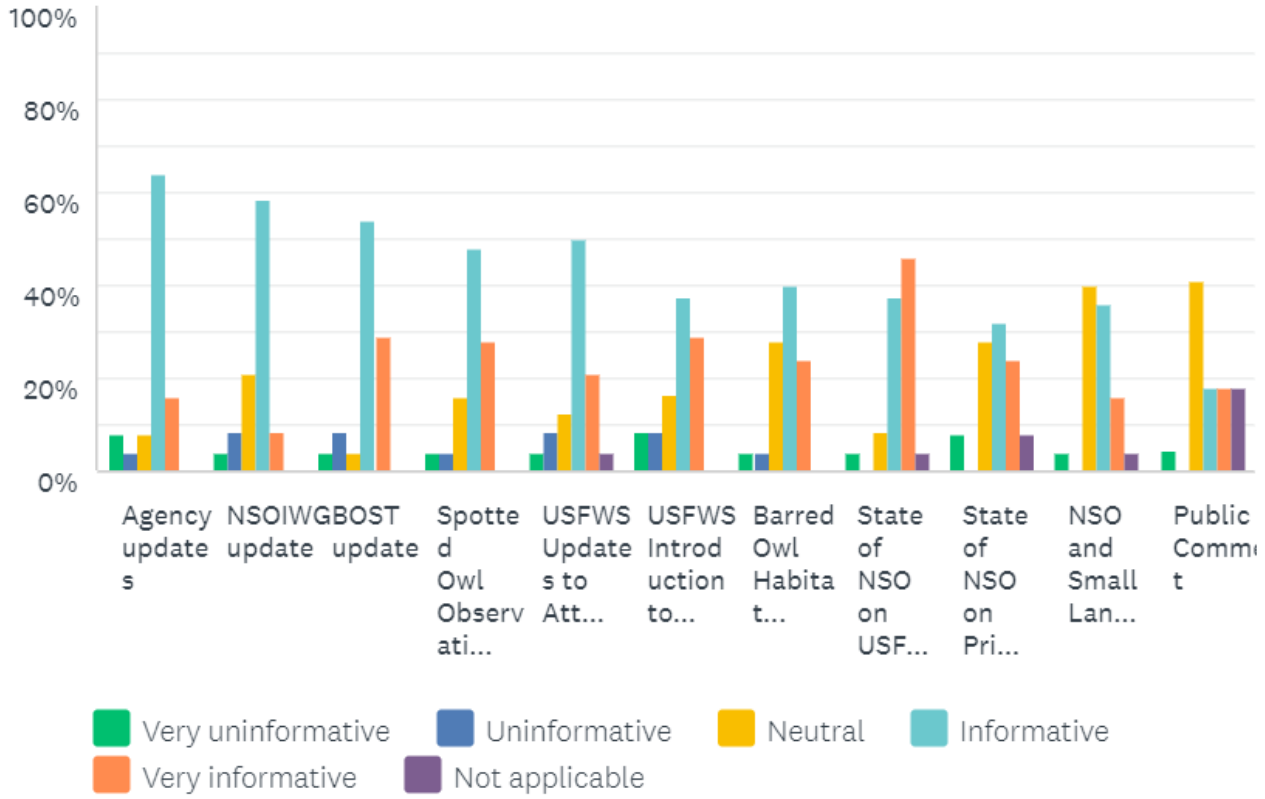
Forum Aspect	Very Poor	Poor	Neutral	Good	Very Good	N/A	Total
Location (Santa Rosa)	0	0	6	6	11	2	25
Facility (Water Board Conference Room)	0	1	5	9	8	2	25
Webinar	1	1	0	2	0	20	24
Date (October 23)	0	0	5	9	10	0	24

Comments from Respondents:

- Based on attendance at this particular meeting, it would have been better to have a venue that could accommodate more people. It appeared to be at maximum capacity.
- Thank you for holding the Forum. It was clearly intended to be a mix of biological and regulatory information. Sadly, the USFWS presentations were a disappointment. Little regulatory information and no biology at all.
- The room was small for the number of people.
- my only comment was that i has happy that i wasn't on the webinar, b/c it would be challenging to be trying to figure out who was speaking (for the many times people didn't introduce themselves, although I appreciate organizers' efforts, especially later in the day), and a good number of comments that began before microphones reached the humans.
- the band-width made it very difficult to watch and listen to the presentation. Suggest using a different connection like Adobe or WEbEx
- Did not shiver for first time
- WiFi was not working for most of the day.
- Location allowed good north coast participation while still accessible to Sacramento/interior people.
- Very helpful forum--glad there were agency and private folks allowing for back-n-forth.
- having wifi in the meeting room would be handy for participants
- Room was a little small for the group and a podium for speakers may have helped them.
- Seems like fire season is no longer a good time to hold any meetings where people must travel. I attended by skype, but that didn't work very well.
- Coffee would have been helpful.

4. How informative were the following Forum agenda items?

Respondents: 25/25



Agenda Item	Very Uninformative	Uninformative	Neutral	Informative	Very Informative	N/A	Total
Agency updates	2	1	2	16	4	0	25
NSOIWG update	1	2	5	14	2	0	24
BOST update	1	2	1	13	7	0	24
Spotted Owl Observations Database Overview & Updates	1	1	4	12	7	0	25
USFWS Updates to Attachments A & B	1	2	3	12	5	1	24
USFWS Introduction to Programmatic Safe Harbor Agreement	2	2	4	9	7	0	24
Barred Owl Habitat Selection in West Coast Forests	1	1	7	10	6	0	25

State of NSO on USFS Lands & Opportunities for NSO Management	1	0	2	9	11	1	24
State of NSO on Private Lands	2	0	7	8	6	2	25
NSO and Small Landowners	1	0	10	9	4	1	25
Public Comment	1	0	9	4	4	4	22

Comments from Respondents:

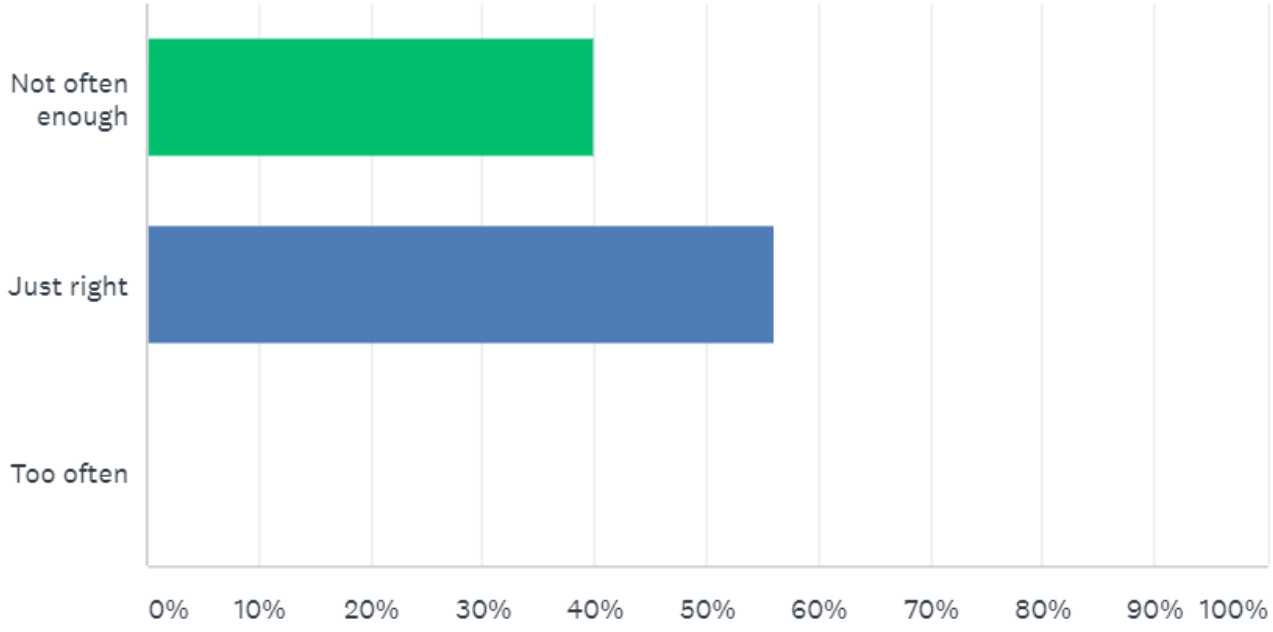
- The diversity of topics was great. However, with that said, many of us would like to see the trustee agencies address our specific comments that were provided in writing. Deficiencies in the guidelines, for example, in explicitly creating a process for identifying and protecting activity centers needs to be addressed. Similarly, questions regarding the legal rulings and concepts of "take" as discussed the April 26, 2018 memo from the Principal Deputy Director of the USFWS have yet to be answered. And, of course, the barred owl. If our questions and comments are not going to be addressed by the trustee agencies in an open and transparent manner, then many of us question the intent, purpose, and utility of having these forums in the future. Our optimism--that we can discuss and problem-solve issues associated with management and conservation of the NSO--is what keeps our interest in attending these forums. If, however, these forums are just a "check-the-box" approach to engaging with the public as part of the agency mandate arising from the CESA listing without any measurable objectives for success, then you can count many of us out in the future. The value of these meetings is dependent upon meaningful engagement and responses to our issues. I don't know how else to state the importance of this. It is a concern that we continually ask ourselves with respect to these meetings.
- Granted, this was the first NSO confab I've attended when I wasn't the primary speaker, but I was stunned at the nonsense I heard from the USFWS. What's the only thing worse than "regulation"? Regulatory uncertainty. What did the AFWO state? They don't really know what take avoidance is, they will be asking for input, and while the USFWS couldn't bring themselves to provide a copy of the new version of Attachment A, they did state that additional versions of the same would likely be produced. Basically announcing that there will be regulatory uncertainty for the foreseeable future! Great message! Worse, the USFWS is supposed to play the role of expert in the ceqa review process. There was no expertise on display at the Forum.
- I had to leave early to try and beat traffic back to Sacramento, but the morning and early afternoon were informative and I'm glad I came.
- I think the agency reps could give a little context for their role in NSO protection, and how they work with other agencies...I think a lot of presenters assumed that everyone in attendance had deep knowledge of how the regulations and process work, and just jumped into update with no framing or context. USFWS personnel were clearly not all giving the same information, and that is confusing (e.g., what is the redwood zone and when to use attachment A vs B if you are on the coast, but in non-redwood habitat).
- It was very difficult to hear, so i didn't get the full value of the time. The topics were useful, but because it was so hard to hear, i have to say i didn't absorb a good portion of the presentation
- Need programmatic SHA for small landowners in frequent fire forests.
- I gave the USFWS presentations two ratings [respondent selected both Very Uninformative and Neutral]. They were informative, but I would greatly encourage deeper listening and further development re: the needs of landowenrs.
- Thank you for the presentations!
- Again, thanks for agency updates, research, and private landowner concerns.
- This is a valuable forum. Members of the Board of Forestry should attend as the NSO rules should

be changed to keep up with the latest science, and decision makers should be present. The forum allowed the regulatory agencies to hear the discrepancies with the way the rules are now being applied from what they were intended and the unfortunate penalizing of landowners that have NSO's on their properties. The situation created is not conducive to managing for NSOs as there is no landowner relief. A better system would reward landowners that have NSOs by either paying them for the habitat or working with them instead of against them as is currently the situation the way the AC rules are being applied by CDFW.

- There really is no reason for these meetings unless the participants letters, comments, complaints, and/or suggestions actually result in altered or changed approaches by the review agencies to the NSO items considered at each meeting. If it's just a gripe session, with no results, then it should be labeled as such.
- Being new to the issue I appreciated the opportunity to learn more, although given that I haven't been involved much before, many of the morning discussions were beyond my level of understanding when it came to the specifics of surveying, implementing protective areas, etc.
- I work in Marin County. Our issues are different, dealing with recreation/trail impacts, building/remodeling of homes, etc. It would be great to address these issues too.

5. CDFW plans to host the NSO Stakeholder Forum on alternating years (every other year). Is this frequency:

Respondents: 25/25



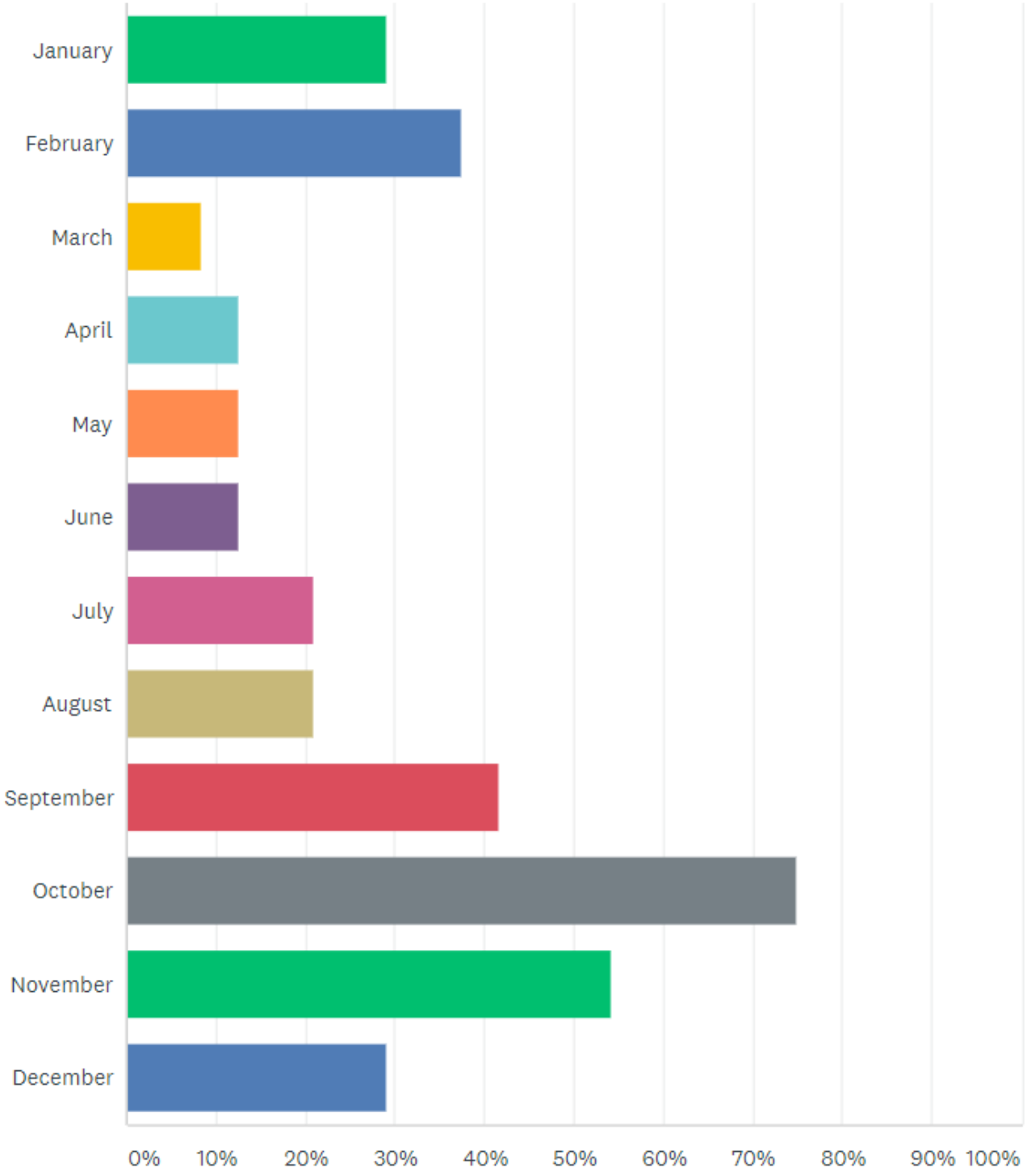
Forum Every Other Year?	# Responses
Not often enough	10
Just right	14
Too often	0
TOTAL	25

Comments from Respondents:

- Contingent upon my sentiments expressed in the previous comments above. Again, we would like to see measurable progress on our issues. Right now it is at stand still.
- Every other year would work for the biological presentations, but the regulatory situation is quite fluid and of much greater importance to your stakeholders. A regulatory Forum should be held every year until the USFWS gets its act together.
- annually would also be great, but I understand the challenges for that.
- Depends on progress with respect to SHAs
- We need to have much more frequent dialogues before we reach a turning point where there is nothing we can do.
- Every year better if feasible. I don't think the stakeholders may be aware of how quickly the situation is deteriorating vis a vis barred owl.
- We'll see--if regulations change quickly then annually may be better.
- I think that annually might be better, especially if there are changes in regulation or policy or new data that need to be discussed
- Annual meetings would be most appropriate. Even if only incremental changes are being made, sharing the details and clarify actions in a timely fashion would be of utmost importance. There appears to be quite a bit of confusion from the public that would be good to re-enforce the facts and how regulations/opportunities are implemented.
- It should be every year as the status of the NSO is plummeting due to the rapid incursion of the barred owl. The science is changing too rapidly to wait for a forum every other year.
- Unless there is followup on why agencies did or did not consider or attempt to address stakeholders concerns in their consideration to NSO matters they are responsible for, there is really no reason for these meetings.
- If there are big changes in an off year an additional meeting should be scheduled.

6. Please select the month(s) you would prefer for future NSO Stakeholder Forums. Select all that apply.

Respondents: 24/25



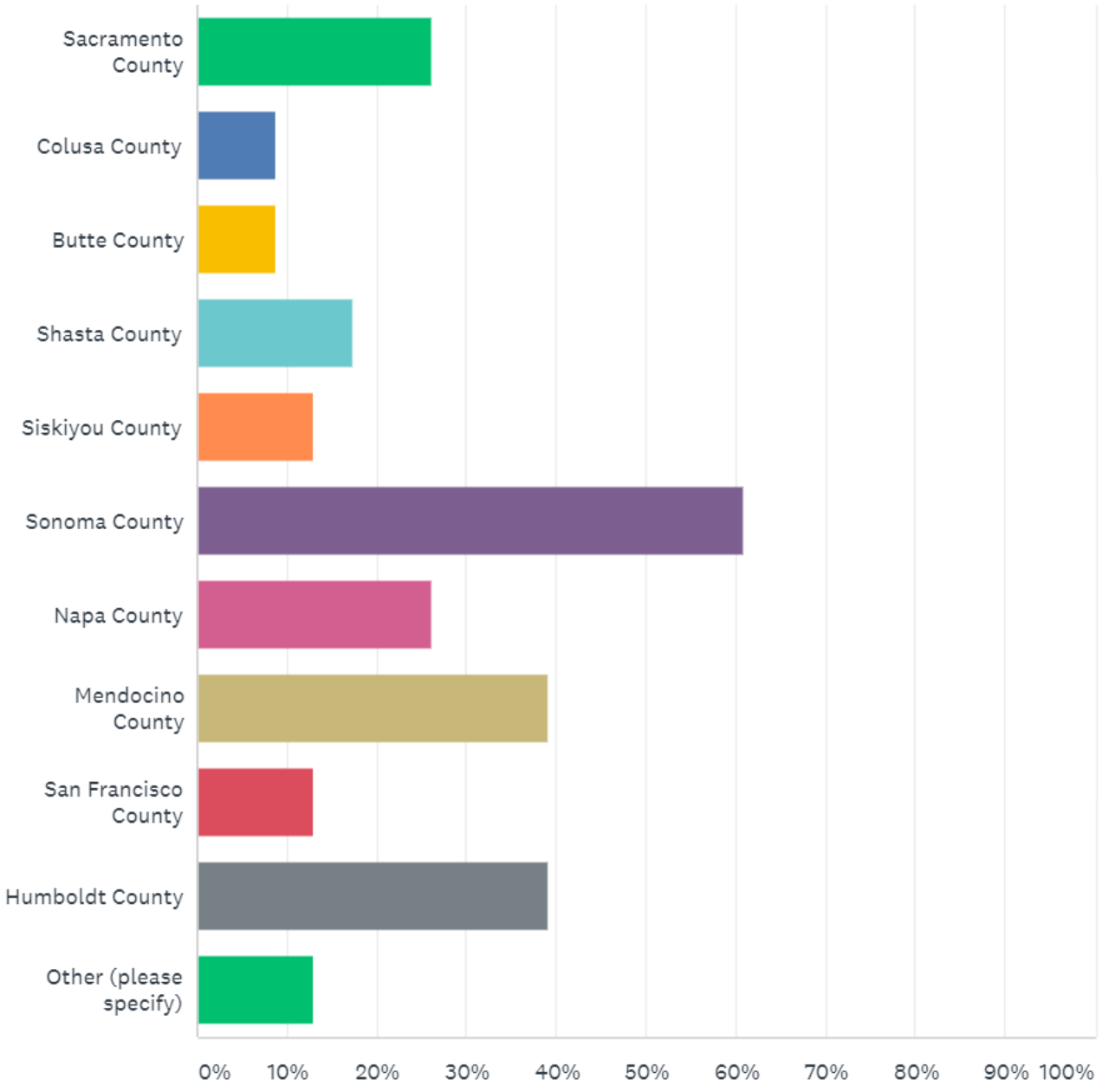
Month Preference for Forum	# Responses
January	7
February	9
March	2
April	3
May	3
June	3
July	5
August	5
September	10
October	18
November	13
December	7
Total Respondents: 24	

Comments:

- Post breeding season in any year is optimal.
- Ok
- Outside of NSO survey season
- Best to avoid the NSO survey season for maximum attendance.
- any month is fine
- After fire season.

7. Which of the following counties would you prefer for the next Forum? Select all that apply.

Respondents: 23/25



County	# Responses
Sacramento County	6
Colusa County	2
Butte County	2
Shasta County	4
Siskiyou County	3
Sonoma County	14

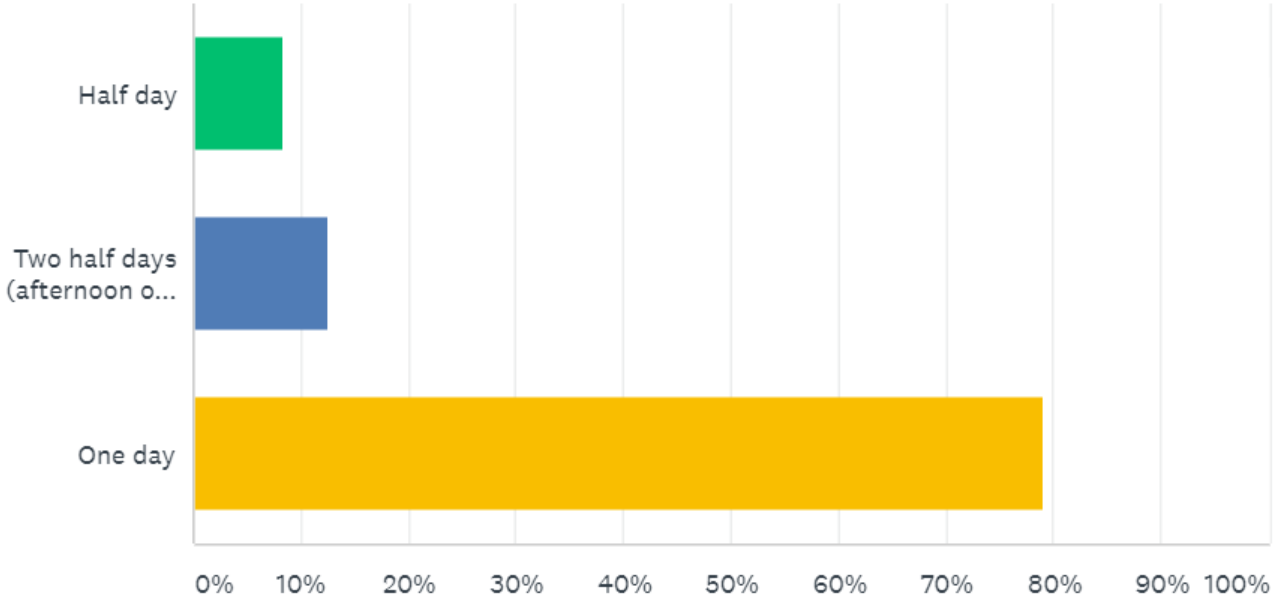
Napa County	6
Mendocino County	9
San Francisco County	3
Humboldt County	9
Other (please specify)	3

"Other":

- Any
- El Dorado, Placer
- Marin

8. What length of time do you prefer for future Forums?

Respondents: 24/25



Forum Length	# Responses
Half day	2
Two half days (afternoon of Day 1, morning of Day 2)	3
One day	19
TOTAL	24

9. Please provide any further comments or suggestions below.

Respondents: 10/25

Comments from Respondents:

- Much appreciated the CDFW head bravely responding to my question regarding why CA doesn't produce their own NSO take avoidance guidelines. I admire her greatly. Also, much appreciated the opportunity to get two researchers on record denying NSO recovery will occur on public land without dramatic intervention to remove barred owls. AFWS Biological Opinion for the GD HCP justifies the no jeopardy determination by stating NSO will recover on public land. We just got on record that is a lie. Thanks! Did you find it ironic that Yreka FWS is back to providing individuals with technical assistance? Yreka's difficulty in dealing with false information being provided by SPI lead to the demise of the program there and in Arcata which in turn led to most of the problems your stakeholders are experiencing. Now Yreka is back in business. More "help" from the USFWS. Loved the guy from Yreka explaining how Safe Harbor Agreements work. Has to be a benefit to the species but take is allowed during the Agreement period? Take is now a benefit? I would have laughed out loud but the poor guy was having enough problems. I also decided against asking him to describe exactly how the NTMPs they are targeting for SHAs can return to baseline given the restrictions on harvesting. To return an NTMP to baseline after 40 years would require either no harvest during the entire 40 year Agreement period, or giving up the NTMP and harvesting to whatever take avoidance guidance is in effect at the time. Not good options either one. Ends up the only take likely is going to be during the Agreement period. Nevertheless, they proceed undaunted. Lastly, when will the State create a publicly accessible, planning watershed based GIS site to maintain records of all CEQA approved projects? You would finally be able to say with a straight face that you are tracking cumulative effects. This would save landowners gobs of money they now spend replicating the bogus cumulative effects analysis required in a plan that somehow still exists in its own universe when reviewed. GIS recording of CEQA approved projects would also allow for plans to be reviewed in context with the other operations underway or proposed for the watershed. Think about it please. You're welcome.
- I'd like more time to connect with the meeting attendees so a provided lunch or evening reception would be good. Coffee and water would also be nice.
- Can NSO survive long term?
- Thanks for all your efforts--these forums have proven very beneficial.
- An optional field trip would be interesting if it can accommodate large groups
- More science and realistic management, less agency update s.
- Annual meetings will be best.
- The forum is an important way for regulatory agencies to disseminate new science and for the agencies to get feedback from landowners and land managers.
- Well done Mandy! Good luck on your future endeavor.
- Thank you for all of your work on this topic and organizing this forum.