



COMMUNITY SURVEY

Community Engagement Survey Final Report | November 2025



For more info

<https://www.tn.gov/environment/duckriverpartnership.html>

Community Survey Overview

SURVEY DEVELOPMENT

The survey was developed by the Community Engagement & Public Education Working Group with input from TDEC and members of the grassroots coalition. Harpeth Conservancy helped guide the process to ensure the questions reflected the Partnership's goals, addressed community priorities, and gathered meaningful insights to support the draft recommendations.

DUCK RIVER GRASSROOTS COALITION

The Duck River Grassroots Coalition is a network of local organizations and community advocates dedicated to protecting the river, including the Duck River Watershed Society, the Duck River Conservancy, and Friends of the Duck River. The Coalition played a key role in this project by serving as the primary distributors of the survey.



Community Survey Overview

DATA SET OVERVIEW

The Duck River Grassroots Coalition shared the survey through their individual groups' social media channels, email listservs, and in-person outreach tables to maximize community reach.

The survey was also conducted on-site at the **Duck River Outdoor Expo** and **the National Banana Pudding Festival**, capturing input from residents and river users attending those events. In addition, the survey link was distributed to local elected officials and key stakeholders to broaden participation, and it was published in *The Hickman County Times* to reach a wider regional audience.

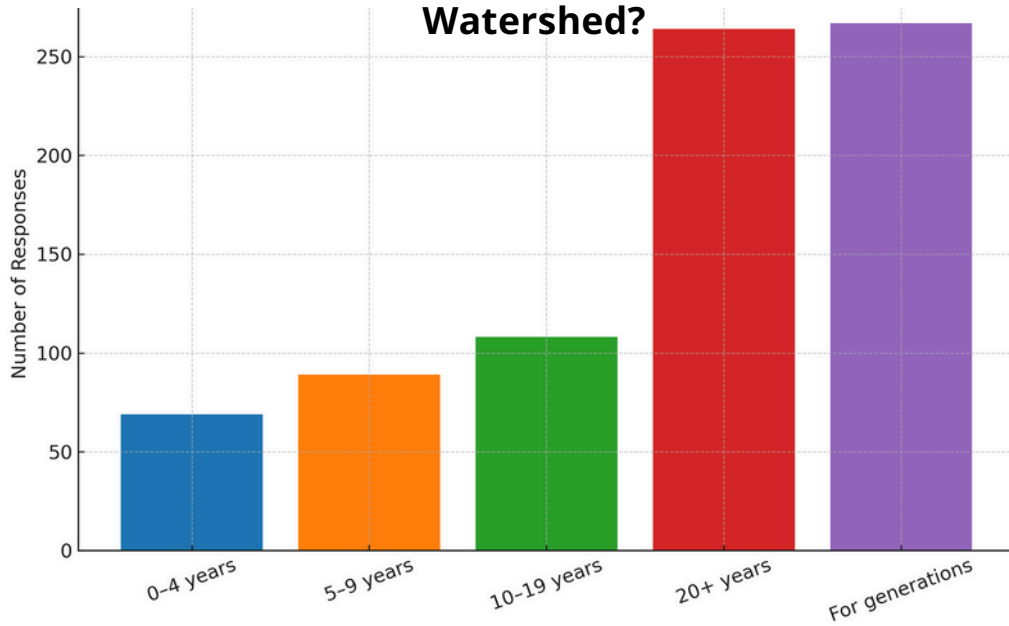
This report reflects **850** responses collected between July 13 and October 15, 2025.

Overview of the Dataset

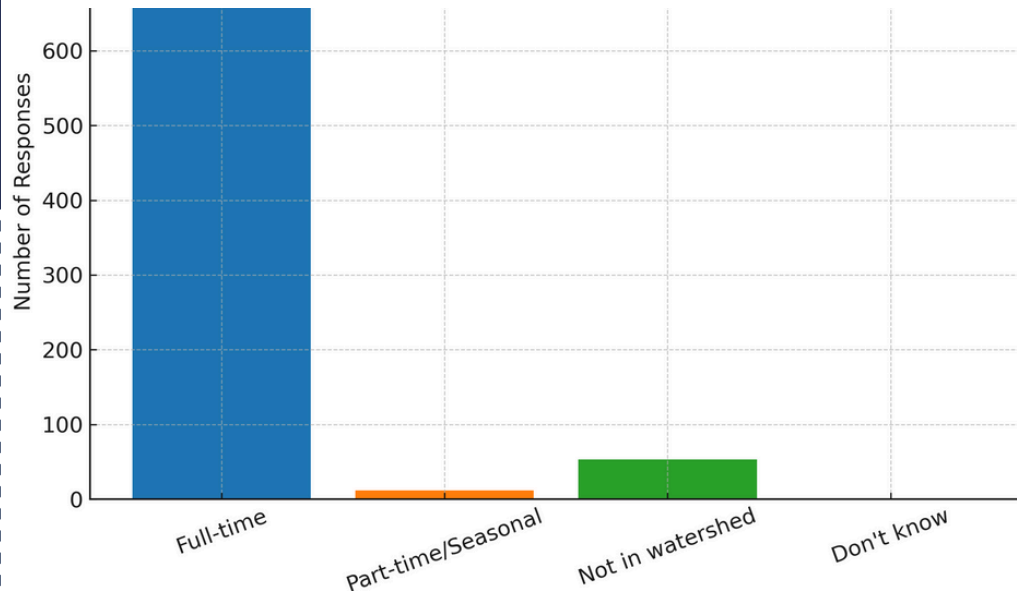
Over **90% of respondents** live in the watershed **full-time**, and a notable portion have lived there 20+ years or “for generations” (nearly one-third, 31%).

This deep-rooted residency suggests ***strong local identity*** and potential willingness to protect the river, but also indicates that outreach must balance long-time residents’ perspectives with those of newer arrivals.

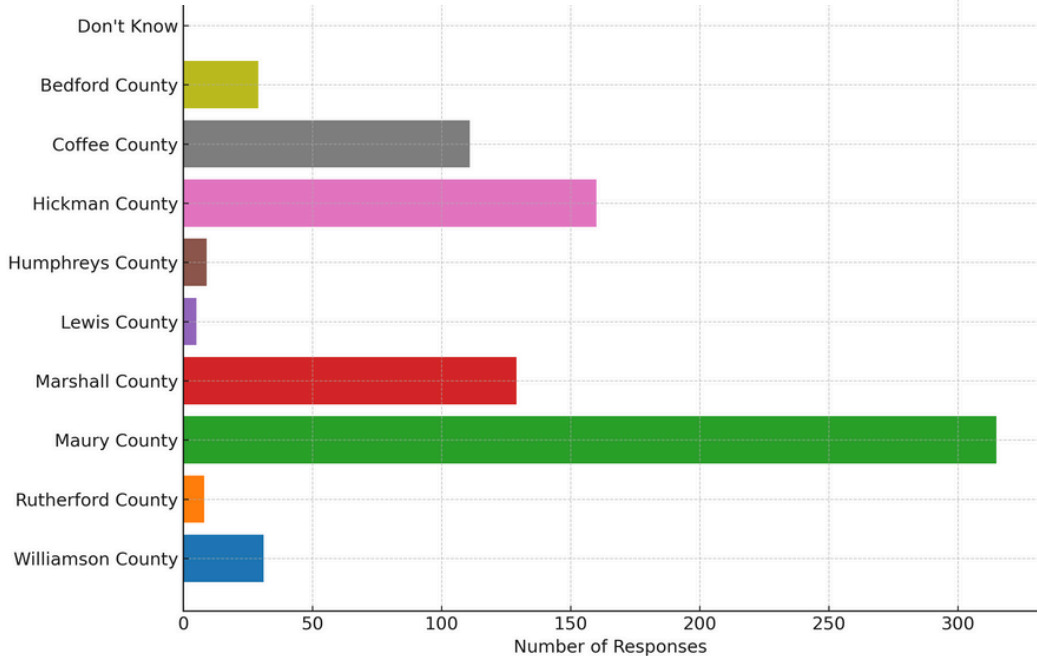
How long have you lived in the Duck River Watershed?



Do you reside in the Duck River Watershed full-time or part-time?



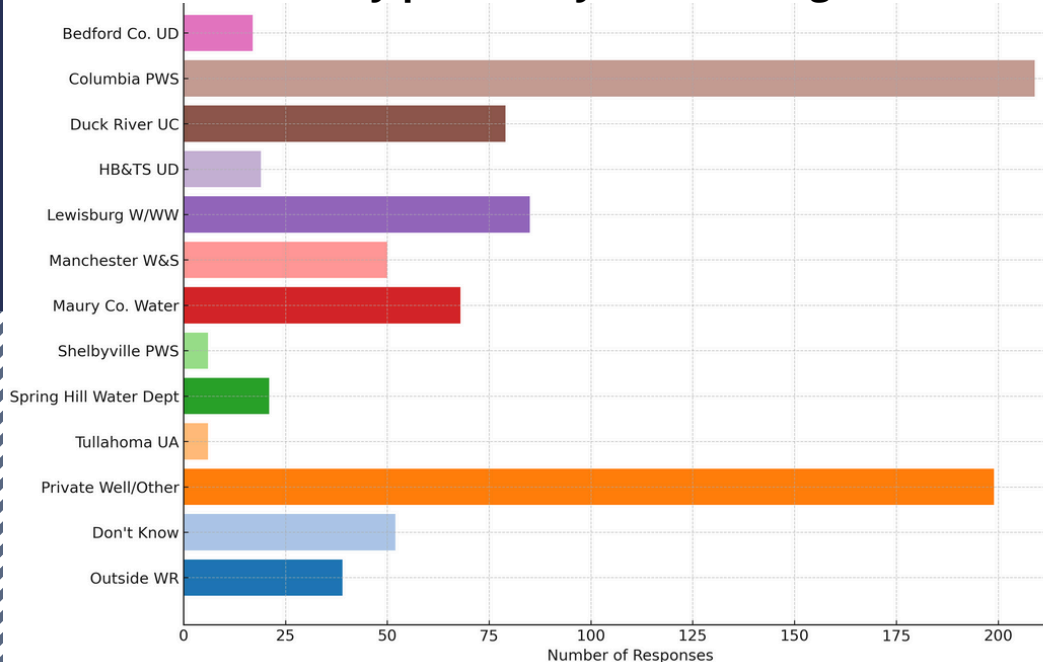
What county do you live in?



Residency & Drinking Water Sources

Survey participation concentrated in key watershed counties. **Maury County** accounted for the largest share of responses (**37%**), followed by **Hickman** (**19%**), **Marshall** (**15%**), and **Coffee** (**13%**). This strong representation from core watershed areas offers a reliable snapshot of local perspectives.

Which utility provides your drinking water?



The most common drinking water sources among respondents were **Columbia Power & Water Systems**, **private wells**, **Lewisburg Water & Wastewater**, and the **Duck River Utility Commission**. Notably, 6% of participants were unsure of their water provider, suggesting room for increased education around local water systems.

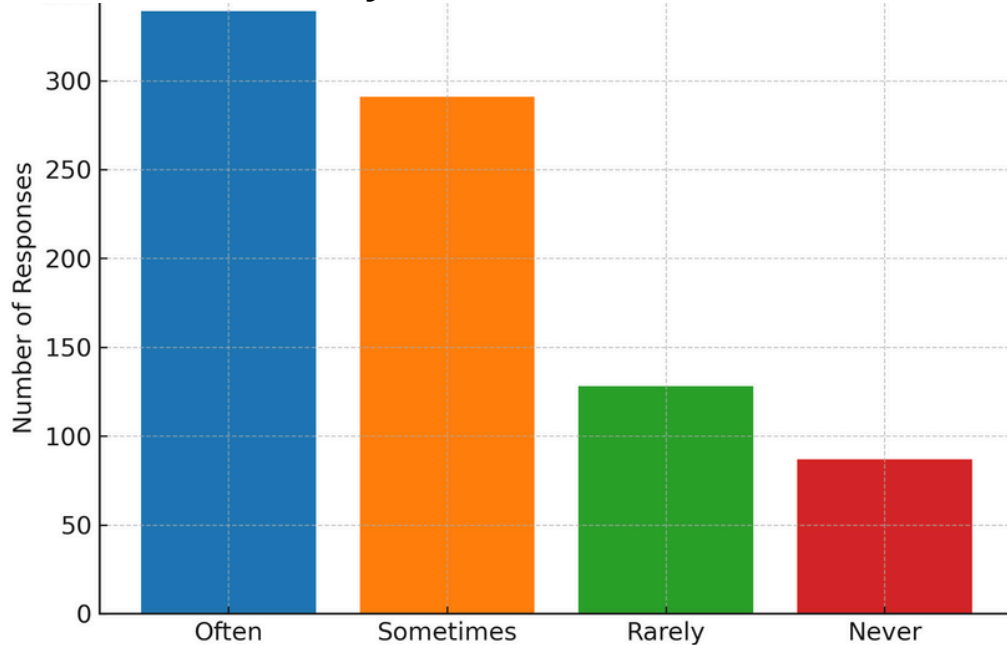
Recreation

Survey results show that most respondents have a meaningful connection to the Duck River through regular recreation.

Nearly **40%** reported visiting often (**339 respondents**), while another **34%** visit sometimes (**291 respondents**). Fewer respondents indicated limited use, with **128** saying they rarely visit and **87** noting they never recreate on the river.

Overall, the majority of participants engage with the Duck River at least occasionally, underscoring its importance as a regional outdoor resource.

How often do you recreate on the Duck River?

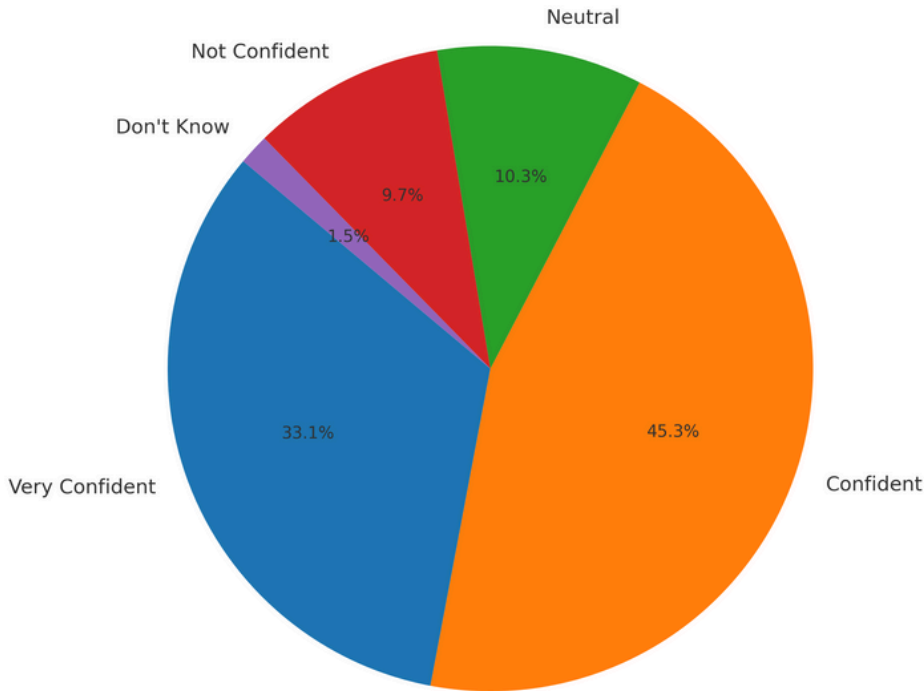


Survey responses highlight several key recreation hubs along the Duck River. The most frequently visited areas included:

- Columbia/Maury County
- Centerville/Hickman County
- Normandy Lake and Old Stone Fort in Coffee and Bedford Counties
- Henry Horton State Park
- Williamsport–Cheeks Bend–Chickasaw Trace

Frequent references to Higher Pursuits and River Rats also suggest strong potential partners for future outreach.

How confident are you in your understanding of the issues facing the Duck River?



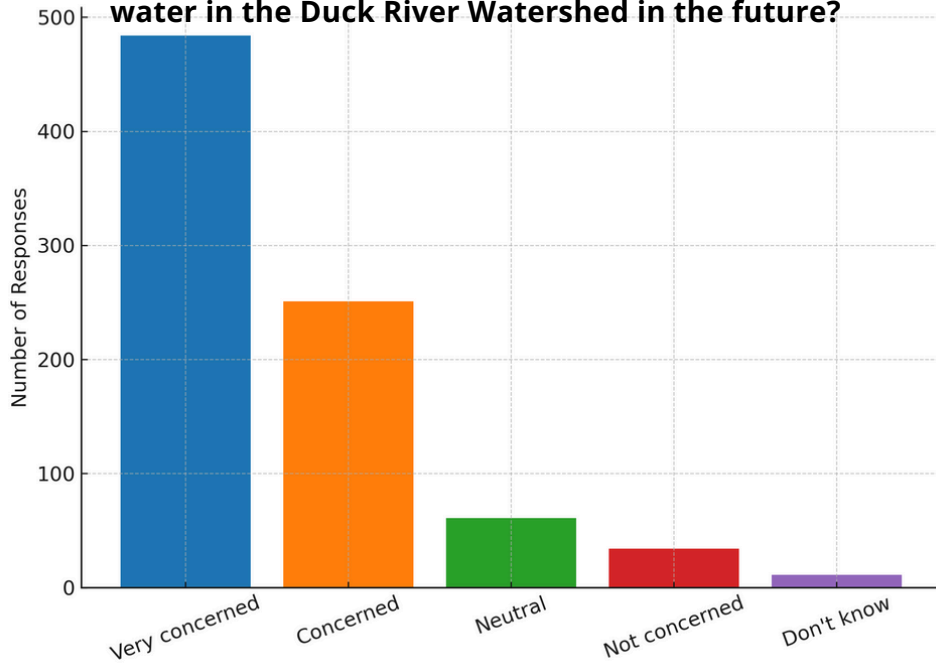
Awareness & Confidence

More than 3/4 of respondents report being “**very confident**” or “**confident**” about understanding Duck River issues.

This suggests a baseline of awareness that outreach can build on for many respondents. However, it also suggests that messaging should include or provide **new, actionable information** rather than rehash basics.

Concern Levels

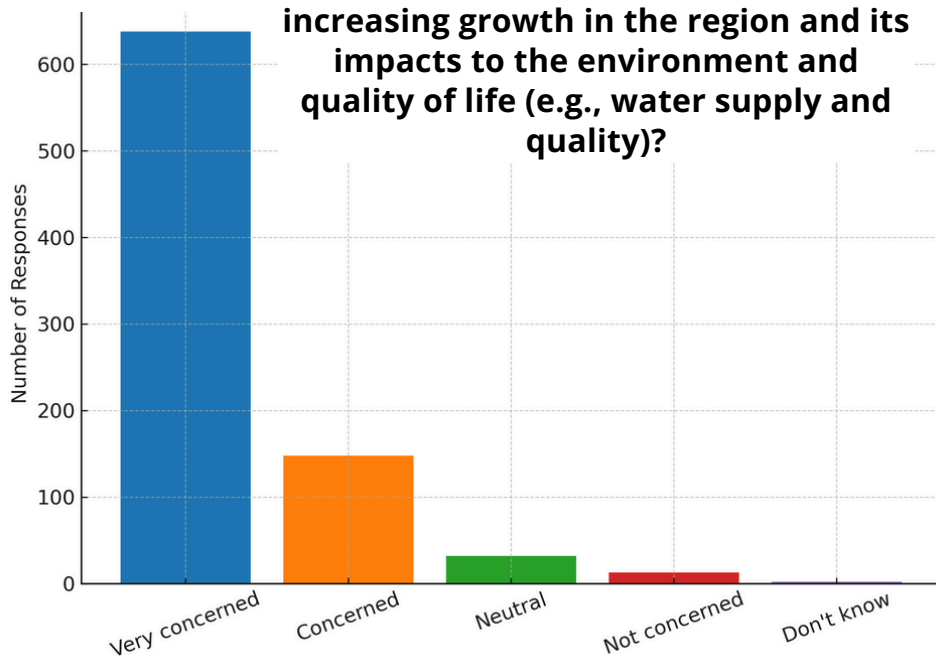
Are you concerned about there being adequate drinking water in the Duck River Watershed in the future?



Future Water Supply: “Very concerned” or “concerned” are the most common responses (~86%).

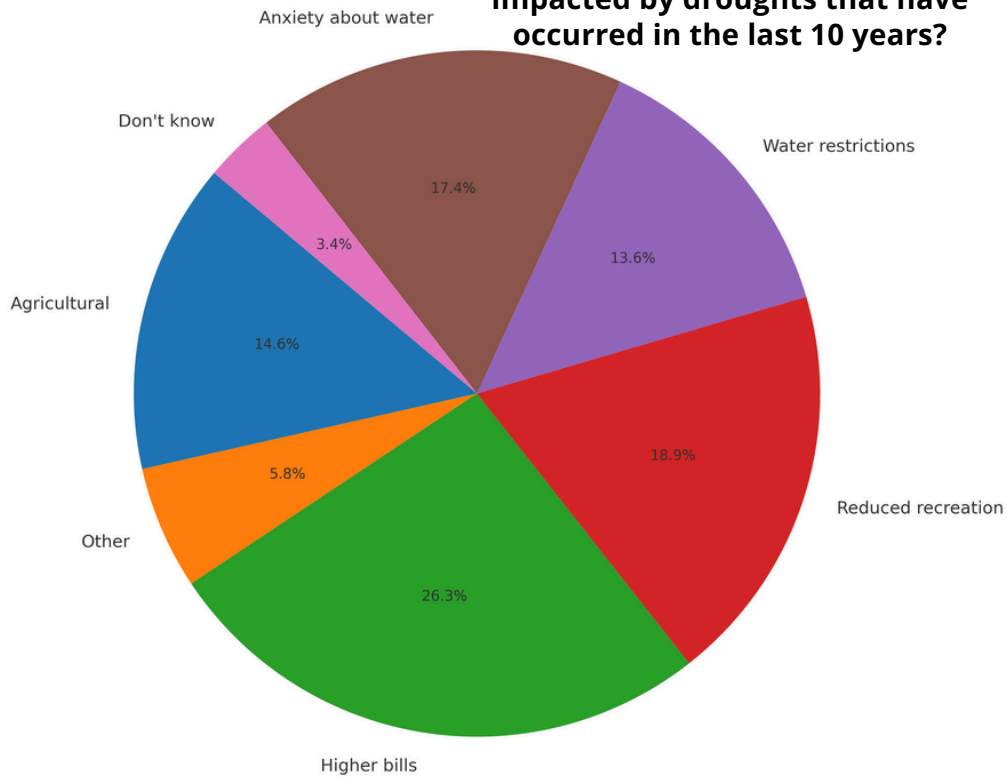
Growth Impacts: Strong majority “very concerned” about how regional growth affects water supply, quality, and environment.

How concerned are you about the increasing growth in the region and its impacts to the environment and quality of life (e.g., water supply and quality)?

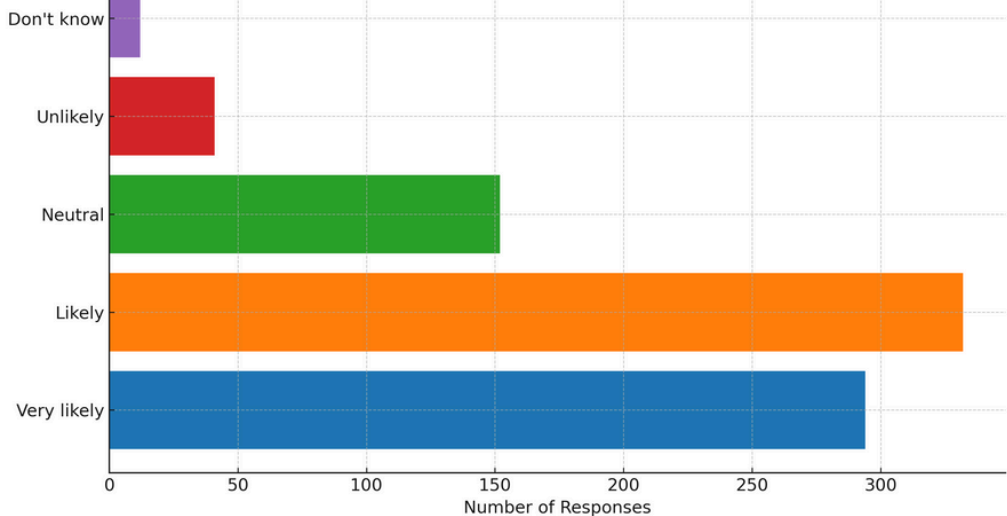


These two concerns are natural bridges into community engagement for planning, conservation policy, and sustainable growth strategies.

How have you personally been impacted by droughts that have occurred in the last 10 years?



How likely are you to take voluntary actions to reduce your personal water usage during drought conditions?



Drought

- Impacts:** Respondents reported several key impacts related to water issues, including higher utility bills, reduced recreational access, agricultural strain, and growing anxiety about water uncertainty, underscoring both practical and emotional pressures on communities.
- Willingness to Act:** Encouragingly, **75%** of respondents said they would be likely or very likely to voluntarily reduce water use during drought, signaling a strong willingness to participate in collective, community-benefiting conservation efforts.
- Current Actions:** Many already practice basic conservation behaviors such as using low-flow fixtures, watering less, taking shorter showers, turning off taps, and in some cases using rainwater; **less than 3%** reported taking no action.

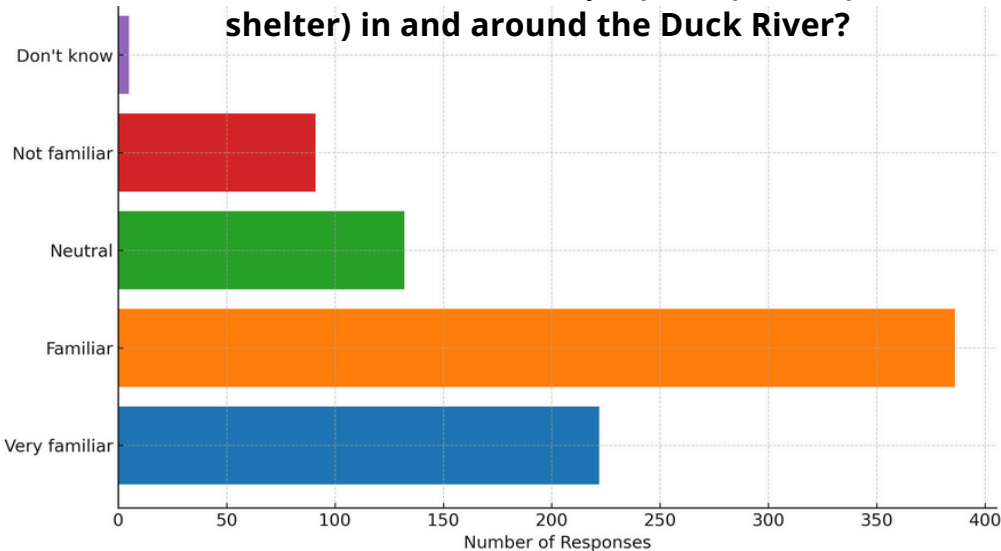
Conservation Support

Overwhelming familiarity and support for wildlife and habitat conservation (“familiar” and “very supportive” were dominant).

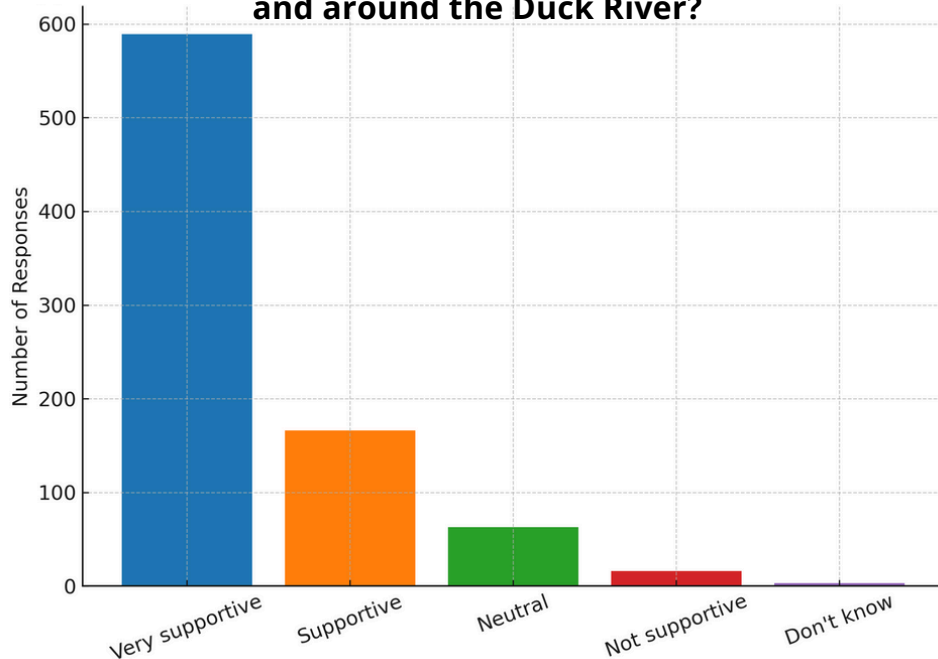
Conservation is a unifying issue across demographics, even for those with different views on growth, policy, or regulation.

This can serve as a “bridge” topic to bring people into more complex conversations about water management, drought, and development impacts.

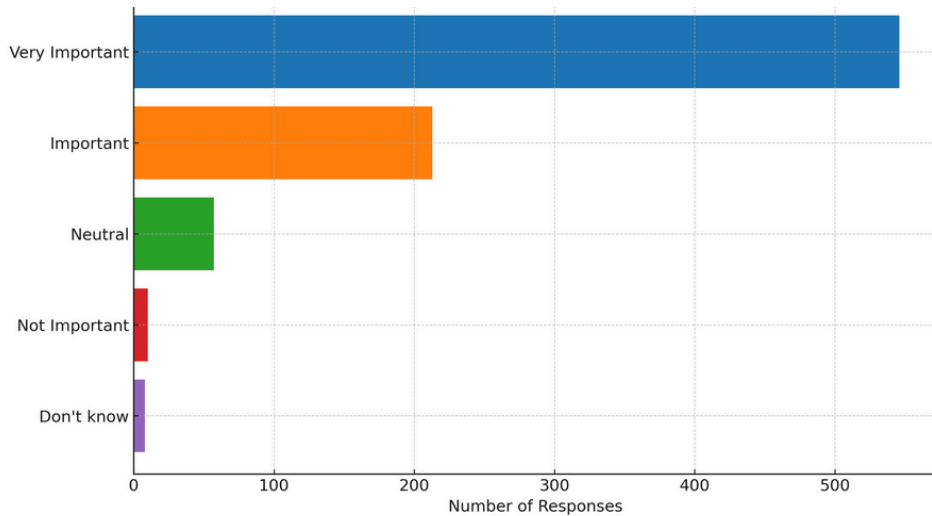
How familiar are you with the efforts to conserve wildlife and their habitats (i.e., food, water, and shelter) in and around the Duck River?



How supportive are you of efforts to conserve wildlife and their habitats (i.e., food, water, and shelter) in and around the Duck River?



How important do you believe that public outreach and education is in helping to protect water quality and conserve the Duck River?

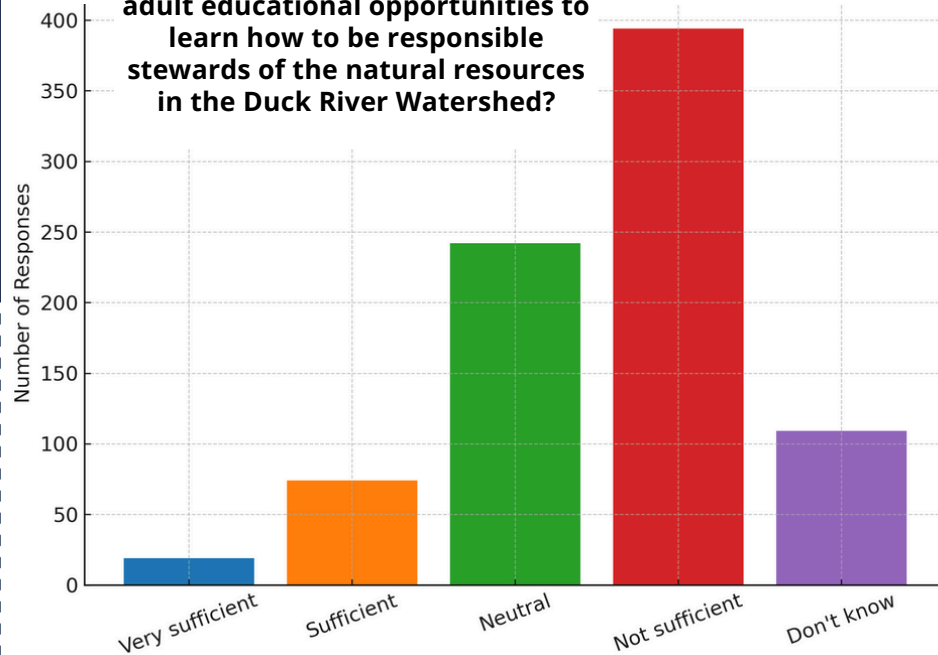


Public Outreach & Education

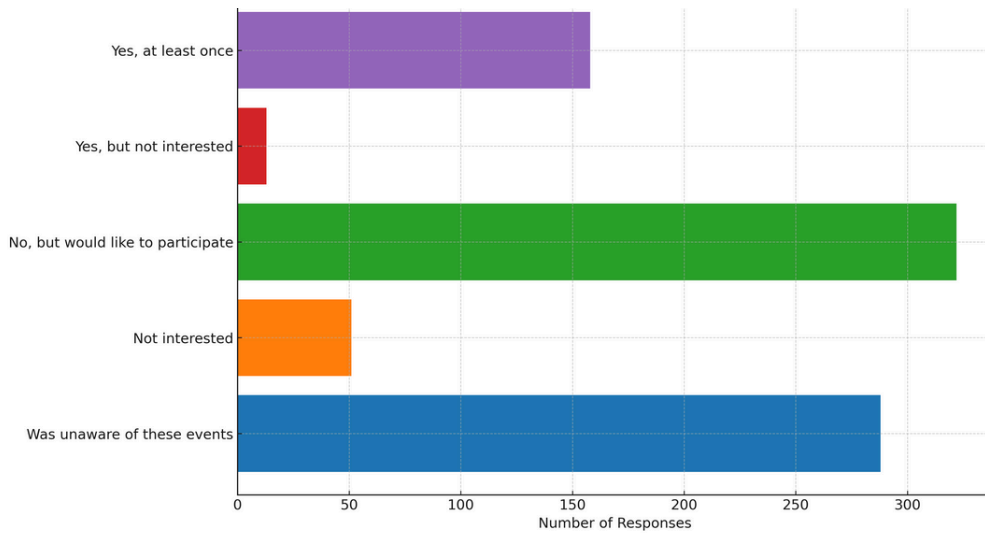
Nearly all respondents rated public outreach as “important” or “very important.”

However, most feel educational opportunities are “**not sufficient.**” This is a clear call for expanded programming.

Are there sufficient youth and adult educational opportunities to learn how to be responsible stewards of the natural resources in the Duck River Watershed?



Have you participated in educational opportunities like the Duck River Expo and the Duck River Watershed Education Days?



Public Outreach & Education

Participation in past events is split between many who have never attended but say they would like to or they were unaware. Less than **25%** have previously participated.

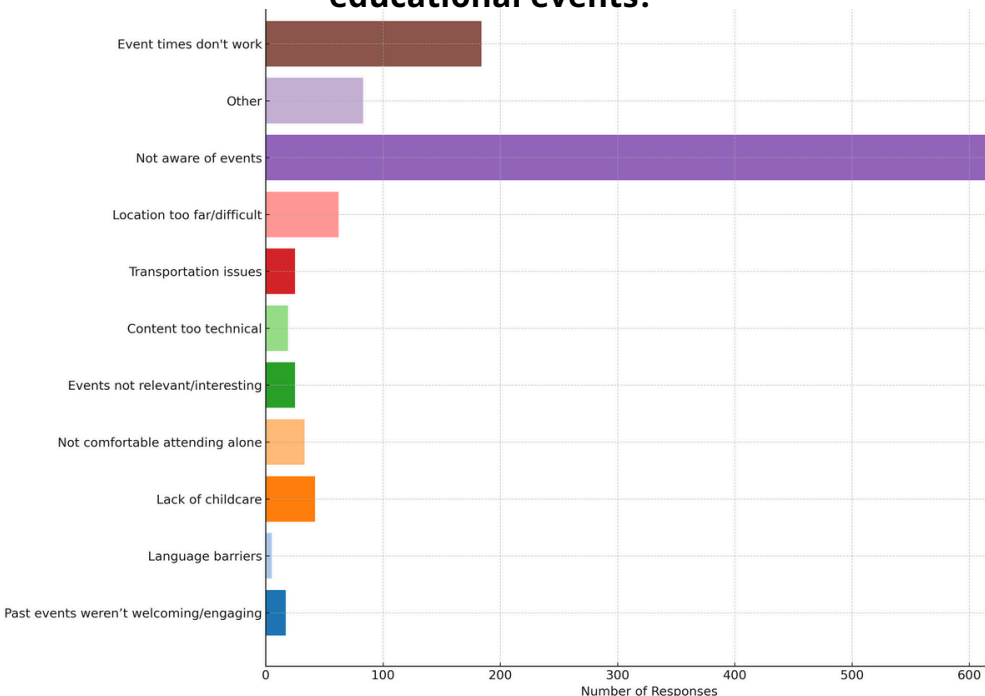
Biggest barriers:

- Lack of awareness that events are happening
- Timing conflicts for families and working people

Overall, better event visibility and flexible scheduling are a must.

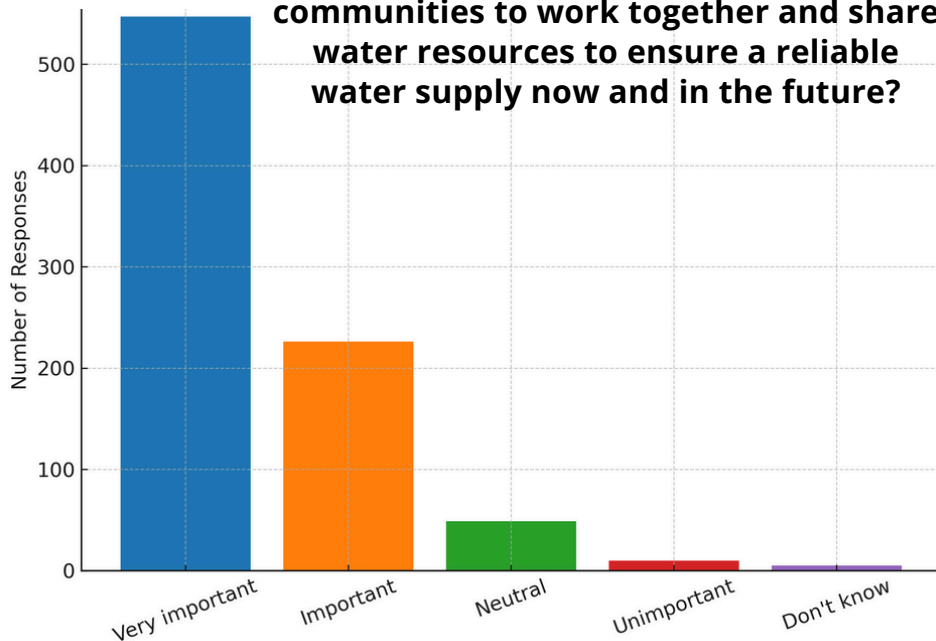
People are interested, but structural and communication gaps are keeping them out. Even small improvements in outreach and scheduling could translate into a noticeable jump in participation. This would also highlight the need for a strategic communications plan throughout the watershed to promote programming and events; as well as utilization of communications platforms to be a source of educational resources and campaigns.

What barriers exist to your participation in these educational events?



Attitude

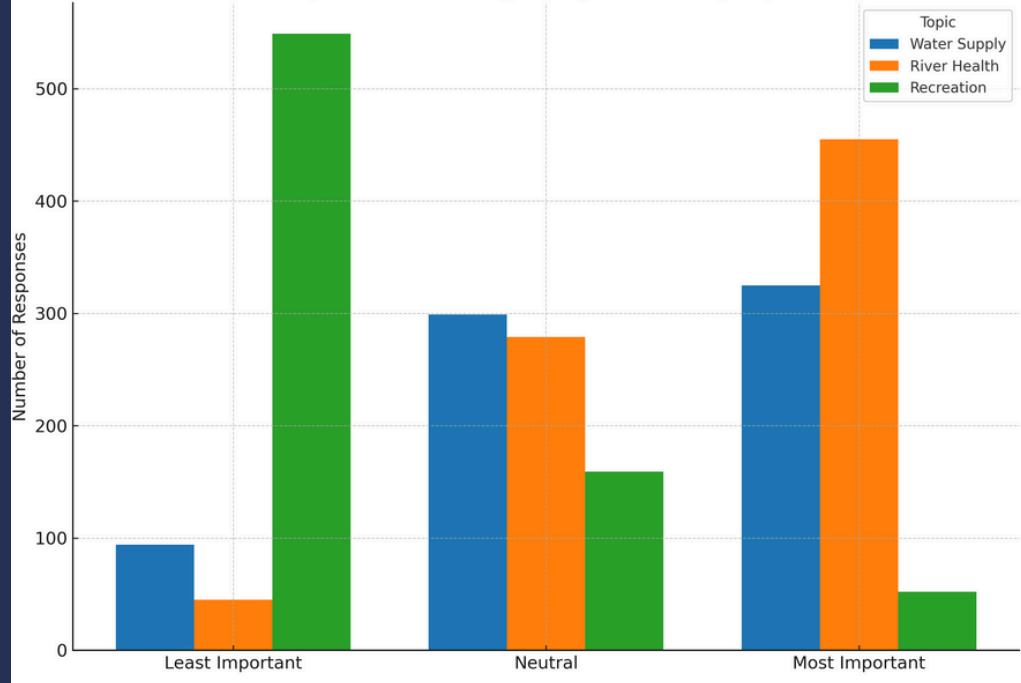
How important do you think it is for communities to work together and share water resources to ensure a reliable water supply now and in the future?



There is a **broad consensus** on ***collaboration*** as a necessary strategy, which provides a strong foundation for coalition-building, inter-county initiatives, and policy advocacy.

Since most people agree, discussing water management as shared responsibility would be readily accepted.

Which of the following topics do you believe are the most important to you and your community? Please rank each topic from 1 to 3, with 1 = Least Important and 3 = Most Important to you.



This shows a clear environmental protection and sustainability focus in community values. Recreation may be valued, but is seen as secondary to ensuring ecosystem health and water availability. This suggests messaging around recreation may work best when framed as a **benefit** of protecting water supply and river health, not as a standalone priority.

Interests

The three ranked topics were Water Supply, River Health, and Recreation.

From the counts:

- **River Health (water quality, plants/wildlife, etc.)** overwhelmingly stood out — the majority ranked it “Most Important” (**455 responses**), with fewer than **50** ranking it least important.
- **Water Supply** came in second, with a strong showing for “Most Important” (**325**) and many choosing “Important” (**299**).
- **Recreation** had the opposite pattern — most ranked it “Least Important” (**549**), with relatively few considering it a top priority.

CORRELATIONS & RELATIONSHIPS

Relationship	Observation
Concern about growth ↔ Concern about water supply	Strong alignment; respondents “very concerned” about growth were almost always “very concerned” about future water adequacy.
Confidence ↔ Familiarity with conservation	Those “very confident” about river issues tended to report being “very familiar” with conservation efforts, showing education boosts confidence.
Participation ↔ Awareness	Low participation directly tied to “not aware of events” barrier. Better outreach/promotion of events likely increases turnout.
Willingness to conserve ↔ Concern about drought impacts	Respondents who felt personal impacts (bills, recreation, crops) reported they were more likely to take voluntary water-saving actions.
Long-term residents ↔ Concerned about growth	“For Generations” and “20+ years” respondents show the highest environmental concern likely due to witnessing long-term change.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The community is deeply invested in the Duck River's health, but communication and accessibility gaps remain.
- Educational and event awareness campaigns could meaningfully increase engagement.
- Cross-county collaborative messaging resonates as most respondents already support shared resource management.
- Behavior-change readiness is high; residents already practice many conservation habits and are open to more.

WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

The survey has proven to be an effective tool for gathering valuable insights from the Duck River Watershed community, giving us a clear picture of residents' priorities, concerns, and willingness to act. It confirms what we need to guide outreach, policy discussions, and program development.

We've confirmed strong support for conservation, high concern for water supply, and readiness to participate in drought-related actions. At the same time, results highlight barriers such as limited awareness of events and uneven geographic participation in the survey itself.

