

# **LAGUNA MADRE BINATIONAL INITIATIVE**

## **CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT ATTITUDES SURVEY**

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### ***The Laguna Madre Binational Initiative***

The Laguna Madre project is a cooperative effort by two leading non-profit conservation organizations to promote economic development based on the preservation of natural resources in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas and the northeastern Tamaulipas region in Mexico.

### ***Organizers***

Texas Center for Policy Studies, founded in 1983, conducts research and provides project support to citizen-based organizations throughout Texas and the border region. TCPS Executive Director Mary Kelly and Assistant Director Karen Chapman, formerly manager of the Sabal Palm Audubon Center and Sanctuary in Brownsville, will direct this project for the Center.

Pronatura Noreste is Mexico's leading conservation organization. Their new northeastern Mexico office, based at Monterrey Tech, is under the direction of the respected conservation biologist Dr. Ernesto Enkerlin. The Laguna Madre is a regional priority for PNE. Project coordinator for the Laguna Madre region is Miguel Angel Cruz, previously a biologist with Ducks Unlimited, Mexico.

### ***Local Leadership***

TCPS and PNE are working together and with an advisory committee of community leaders in the valley to shape and define the concept of conservation-based development. This concept builds on the idea of sustainable development; development that meets the needs of the existing population while preserving resources - like water, trees and open space - for future generations. This may seem an insurmountable task, but communities as disparate as the Sierra Nevada region in the western US and Amazonian villages in Brazil are working actively to realize this vision.

### ***Public Survey***

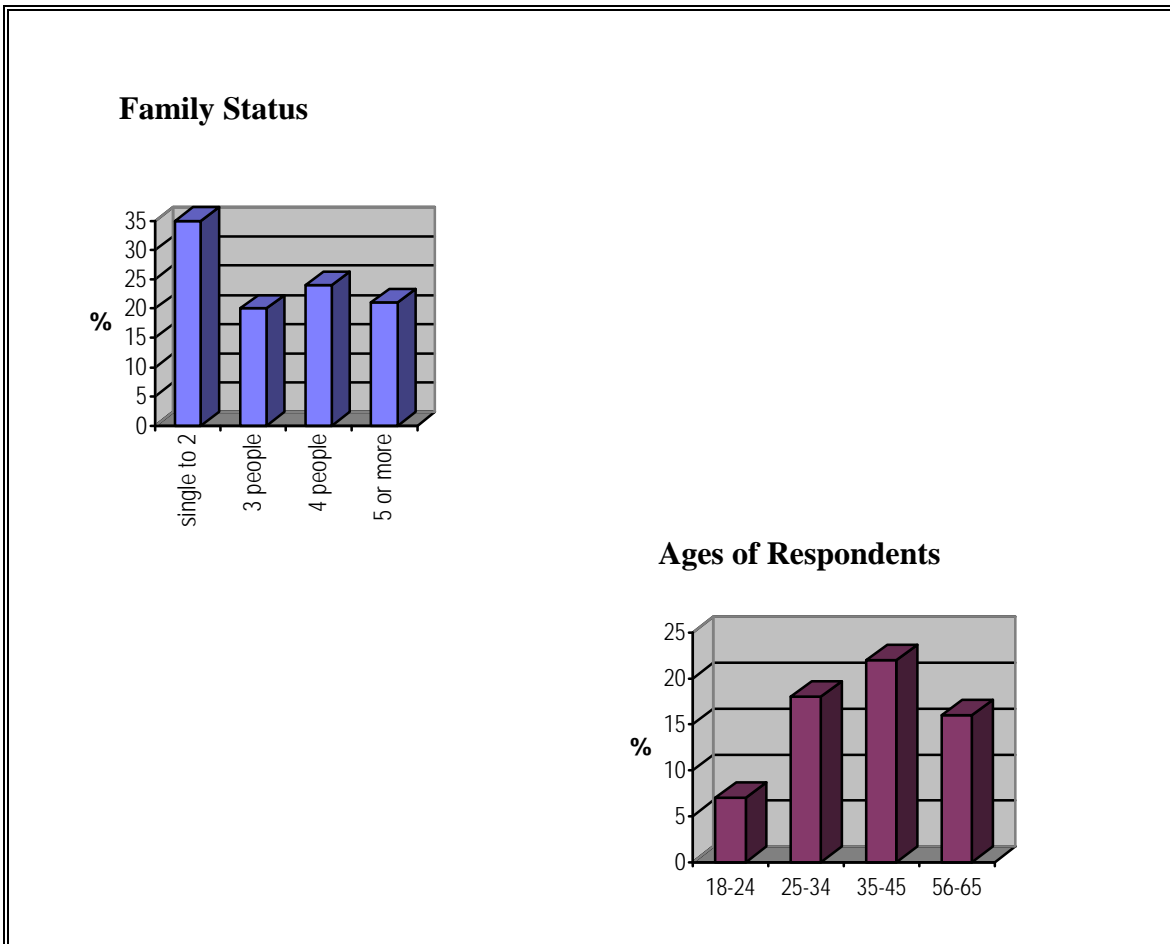
To initiate the Laguna Madre project, TCPS commissioned a public survey of 400 Cameron and Willacy county residents, conducted by Victory Data of Brownsville. The survey asked residents' opinions on a range of issues relative to natural resources, educational opportunities and the local economy.

Responses to the survey will be used to support efforts like the World Birding Center and other nature-based tourism ventures, and to promote economic development locally that enhances the conservation of scarce natural resources. It will also assist TCPS and PNE

to begin the Laguna Madre initiative with a better idea of residents' values and attitudes toward natural resources and how they link these to the local economy.

### **Survey Results**

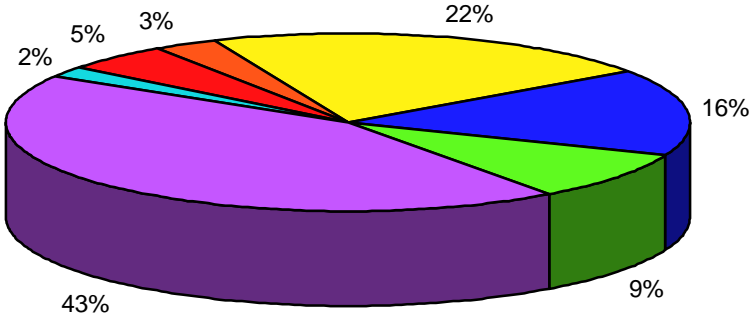
Of the 400 residents surveyed, three-quarters were from Cameron County. Of the total respondents, 37% were from Brownsville, 25% from Raymondville, 13% from Harlingen, and the remainder from smaller communities like Los Fresnos and Olmito.



About half the respondents were female and half were male. 78% of the respondents were born or raised in the Valley and 83% had graduated from high school. These graphs show that the ages and family status of the respondents were generally quite varied, with some categories showing slightly higher representation than others; single and two-person households for example. However, larger families are also well represented, with 20% of the respondents having a family size of five or more.

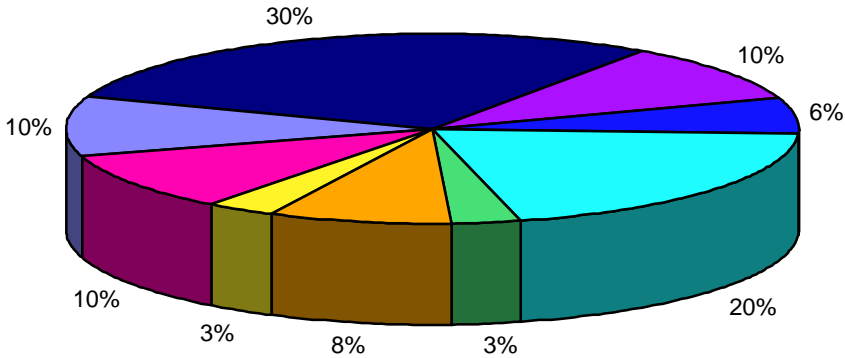
The following pie charts reflect answers to multiple-choice questions.

**Where do you and your family go to enjoy nature or the outdoors?**



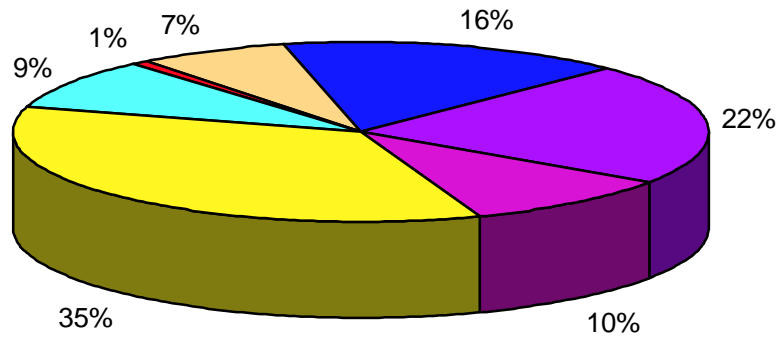
- Local park
- Refuge
- South Padre
- Boca Chica
- L. Madre
- Camping
- Other

**What do you usually do for outdoor recreation?**



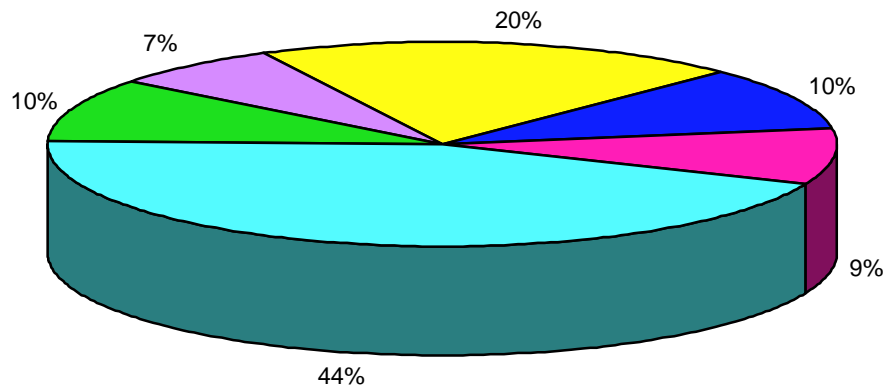
- Hunt
- Fresh-water fish
- Salt-water fish
- Birding
- Hiking
- Boat
- Swim
- Picnic
- Other

**What do you believe to be the biggest environmental problem in your area?**



- Water pollution
- Air pollution
- Trash dumping
- Water shortages
- Deforestation
- Pesticides
- Other

**Which do you believe to be the primary cause of environmental problems in your area?**



- Industry
- Growth
- Apathy
- Poverty
- Politics
- Other

◆ **90 to 100% of those surveyed gave a positive response to the following:**

1. I am willing to use less water in times of drought.
2. Schools should teach our children about nature and the local environment.
3. Local government should invest more in attracting different businesses to the area.
4. Local government should invest more in protecting natural resources like water and trees.

◆ **80 to 90% positive response:**

1. Natural resources like the Laguna Madre are important too our economy.
2. I would like to participate more in planning our community's future.
3. Local government should invest more in educational opportunities for my children and myself.
4. Local government should spend more money on bike paths and sidewalks.
5. Local government should put more money into preserving historic buildings.
6. Local government should invest more in providing local health care services.

◆ **70 to 80% positive response:**

1. We need to provide more protected areas for animals and plants.
2. Local government needs to try to bring in industries that do not pollute the environment.
3. There should be more job choices and training for our youth.
4. Most local jobs available don't pay enough to keep people above the poverty level.
5. We should do more to develop tourism locally.
6. Local government should plant more trees.
7. Local government should invest more in expanding public transportation.
8. Local government should invest more in cultural events.

◆ **60 to 70% positive response:**

1. There are too many people for the number of jobs available.
2. Local government should invest more in constructing roads and highways.