

Survey Results

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Last year North Branchers received a survey designed to answer the following questions: Who are North Branch volunteers? How do North Branch volunteers feel about ecological restoration tasks? How important is the work of the North Branch to volunteers? The survey was sent to everyone on the North Branch mailing list and published on the website and in BrushPiles. Thirty-nine people responded. Their answers provide us with a bit of information about North Branch restoration tasks and management, and something about the volunteers themselves. The hope was that the survey would form the basis for a book I would write about the North Branch. The book is still being written; it is for me a slow but deliberate process hampered by federal work restraints regarding publishing (I work for U.S. EPA).

The survey, however, should give us insight into the North Branch community even though responses are from a narrow, if important, group of respondents. My perception is that most of the respondents are core North Branchers, no matter the length of time as a volunteer. So the results only tell us about the respondents; they do not tell us about all of the others who volunteer throughout the year. For example, while it is true that the respondents are predominantly “middle aged, white/Caucasian, highly educated, and prosperous individuals,” it is also true that many North Branch volunteers do not fit that description. There are the twenty or thirty-somethings and the school groups and the large groups who also participate regularly. But 39 individuals filled out the survey and it is a summary of their responses you will find on the North Branch website.

What happens next? My analysis of the responses will continue. I will summarize and follow up on the stories people provided as to favorite North Branch memories. And my review of North Branch material will continue throughout this year. That book will be finished.

I have several suggestions for North Branch follow up. First, since this survey only captured the views of 39 people, a follow up survey or questionnaire to the hundreds of people who did not respond should be considered. It might shift the direction of North Branch management, or it might confirm it. A follow up survey would certainly broaden our understanding of who are North Branchers and how they feel about ecological restoration tasks. Second, the results of this survey, though from a small number of volunteers, still have value. Understanding task preferences, why people choose to volunteer, and how people found out about the North Branch, could be important in setting workday priorities and in recruiting new volunteers.

Please email me at krod17@msn.com with any thoughts. Karen Rodriguez