

Boulder County Parks & Open Space
Integrated Weed Management Plan
Open House and Community Discussion
October 11, 2023

Prepared by Carrie W Bennett



Open House and Community Discussion: Event Summary

Having concluded the open house and community discussion with Boulder County community members and Parks & Open Space staff on October 11, I respectfully submit the following report to Boulder County leadership and residents. The information that follows is intended to document the process and basic outcomes. Nothing in this report is intended as an endorsement or condemnation of any position or priority.

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Basic Information

- This event was held at the Boulder County Parks and Open Houses headquarters in Longmont from 5:30-7:30pm.
- Approximately 20 community members attended this event with an additional 20 staff and guests with expertise on identified topics.
- The meeting included three main parts: an open house portion where people visited educational stations and had informal conversations with staff, a brief presentation of plan highlights and goals, and a live polling activity in which people shared their priorities and provided feedback.
- At the conclusion of the event, participants were invited to share additional written feedback on all portions of the event’s contents (yellow sheets). The data that follows here reflect the results of the participants’ closing thoughts.
- Unless otherwise indicated with quotation marks, participant comments have been streamlined/summarized for brevity and clarity. A number in parenthesis (#) after a statement indicates that multiple people shared the same/very similar idea.

Open House Stations

1. Why and How

Kudos

- Education to ALL, younger users of open space, urban and rural
- “It’s VERY important to address weed management on public lands”
- “Good that management goal is to reduce use”
- See concern for health and safety
- Glad to see native plants and healthy ecosystems.
- “Enjoyed talking with Jim”
- 115,000 acres of land to be managed in all
- Must comply with state law

Concerns/questions/suggestions

- Need CSU extension or Senior Ag Ed. Project on learning packets for life biology classes
Tie to 7th grade plant study in the state curriculum
- Before and after pictures are from different seasons (2)- disingenuous
- Plan doesn’t include open space ag lands. Agricultural users must use this plan too, even if they want to eliminate use of toxic chemicals
- Not enough attention to soil health (biodiversity, water retention)

2. Constraints

Concerns/questions/suggestions

- Look at the long term costs of doing/not doing anything
- TOTAL costs (full life cycle assessment) are important to examine (2)
 - Chemical companies are subsidizing the chemicals, what’s the REAL cost of the chemicals?
 - Need to account for the costs to impacts on environment, human, animal, and pollinator health
 - Include upstream/upwind and long term costs
 - Consider costs to non-target species, climate change, soil health
 - Local economy, not just “impact of weeds on ag” but also the benefits of using local farmers/grazers, new local tech/weed solutions etc.
- Please provide a breakdown of costs in the IWM by the categories/methods. Include volunteer labor value.
- Does BCPOS collaborate with OSCAR? Sustainability tax would be powerful here.

3. How: decision-process and adaptive feedback

Kudos

- Good herbicides are the most effective
- Good to see what not to use

Concerns/questions/suggestions

- Most of IWM deals with chemical methods, seems imbalanced (2)
- More analysis needed to prioritize non-toxic and non-chemical methods

4. How: best management practices

Kudos

- Great info from Jim on teasel

Concerns/questions/suggestions

- Need for transparency here. How much of the entire activities are arial spraying? Gets a lot of attention but seems like it's a small portion of the overall effort.
- Explain more the costs and tradeoffs of pesticides, alternative methods, and not doing anything.
- Leaching is important to consider, not just drift.
- Aerial spraying buffers should be bigger (~200 yards to allow for/protect from drift).
- "Alternate science/research should have input. Currently focusing on chemical industry and traditional weed management professional input more."
- Need much more scientific based investigation of pesticides. Use of these is at odds with greenhouse gas reductions and public/environmental health.
- "Doesn't follow WPM policies of using least toxic approach first before considering herbicides= best management practices are not practiced."
- "Don't use Cornell University ratings of toxicity. They're scientifically flawed."
- Not clear how Boulder County determines pest practices. Could improve transparency by addressing this.

Feedback specifically on arial spraying

- Presentation was too fast
- Concern about no regulation on arial spraying
- "Would love to see compost tea sprayed from an airplane"
- What are other methods of aerial spraying?
- "Eliminate arial spraying"

5. Private property resources and enforcement

Kudos

- Recognize the challenge of enforcement, especially with rental/lease responsibilities
- 36,500 acres in conservation easement
- Noxious weeds booklets are extremely helpful (2)

Concerns/questions/suggestions

- Need more timely enforcement (and assistance)
- Tension between higher enforcement with these landowners vs. actions on county property (ROWS, transportation etc.)
- "Weeds from open space infested my private farm!"
- Want more info on non-chemical treatments on our property.

Community Discussion- Values in tension

Kudos

- Really happy to see alternatives added to the plan.
- I support ALL the tools. The reality of fighting such large acreage without all tools is too much. You need an army for hand-pulling either way.
- Staff seems very devoted. Thank you for all your work!

Concerns/questions/suggestions

- Fear of chemicals and aerial use should be considered but people who are experienced in land and weed management should have a voice!
- What does going herbicide free look like? Is this being considered?
- What's the goal with the biodiversity map? How are we changing the landscape to improve/change that?
- Doesn't seem like ecosystem health is REALLY the top value listed in the plan. Seems like effectiveness is really the value that's prioritized, especially for cheatgrass.
- "Effectiveness is held up as gold standard for Rejuvera treated areas, more than human health."
- Need to show the science to support herbicide use.
- Went too fast, couldn't keep track.
- "Tweak" makes it seem like the input that is coming out now is already too late to have an impact.
- Do the maps about habitat, biodiversity, endangered critters, inform the treatments used around the identified parts? How?

Other Feedback (not necessarily tied to one topic above)

Concerns/questions/suggestions

- Reach out to other groups who use the open space (scouts, schools, Sierra Club) to educate them.
- "Squeaky wheel" (passionate anti-pesticide) people get too much consideration. May not be representative of broad public opinion.
- Fire mitigation should be a priority.
- Please share the slide for the costs of alternative weed management options.
- "Pay attention to polling of priorities, (largely shows dislike of chemical use) Public input (in the survey) doesn't support herbicides."
- "I provided technical and legal support to an organic farmer whose lands were over-sprayed by POS lands."
- "I would be happy to meet with BCPOS to discuss details of pesticide toxicity, effects on soil health, food safety, etc." (contact provided)
- Small group in attendance, no mountain residents.

Attachments

Event Agenda

Feedback Form

Menti-Meter Results



**Parks &
Open Space**

**Integrated Weed Management Plan Update:
Open House and Community Discussion**
Wednesday, October 11, 2023 5:30-7:30 PM
5201 St. Vrain Road, Longmont, CO 80503

Purpose:

- Thoughtfully review and evaluate the draft weed management plan
- Collect stakeholder feedback to promote alignment between the plan and community values
- Strengthen respectful and collaborative relationships between Boulder County community members (residents + County staff)

Agenda:

- Weed Management Plan Elements (5:30-6:15)** “Stations” around the room include:
 1. **Why & How:** Desired Future Outcomes, IWM Objective and tactics, State requirements, benefits of adaptive management
 2. **Constraints:** Tactics costs, limitations, and drawbacks
 3. **How: Decision Process/Adaptive Feedback:** Monitor, research, revise
 4. **How: Best Management Practices:** Safety and well-being. Harm mitigation, steps we take to minimize harm to human and ecological health.
 5. **Private Property: Resources and Enforcement:** CPP, CSU Extension, weed identification, etc.
- Community Conversation (6:15-7:15)**
 - **Welcome** and Grounding
 - **Plan Highlights**—Staff presentation
 - Decision making process and new policies (aerial spray, buffers, notification, monitoring)
 - Case Studies (illustrate tradeoffs/promote safety and well-being, include examination of going herbicide free)
 - **Tensions/Tradeoffs** with weed management
 - **Community Feedback:** Using Mentimeter
<https://www.menti.com/al1jh811f46e>
- Next Steps, Closing (7:15-7:30)**



QR Code For
- Mentimeter



Read the Draft Plan and provide feedback at boco.org/iwmp

QR Code For
- Draft Plan and Feedback

Norms/Ground Rules for Successful Engagement

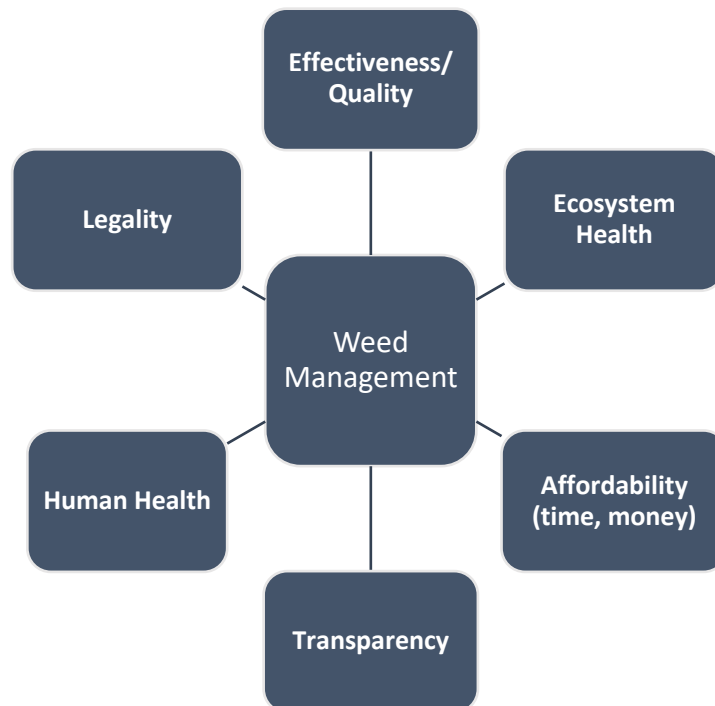
1. Listen to learn- the better we understand things, the stronger our solutions can be.
2. Balance participation- everyone has something to offer, create space for lots of voices.
3. Use a helicopter view- balance a focus on one priority with a landscape perspective.
4. Assume positive intent- we have shared hopes, use curiosity to better understand.
5. Take care of yourself- drink water, eat a snack, use the restroom, ask for help...

Wicked Problem Mindset

Martín Carcasson, Colorado State University

“Wicked problems inherently involve competing underlying values, paradoxes, and tradeoffs that cannot be resolved by science.” Competing priorities exist in tension with one another in ways that are difficult/impossible to reconcile. Put simply, with wicked problems, “we can’t have it all.”

For Example:



Our brains hate these paradoxes, we love a good story of good vs. evil. We crave certainty. We prefer simplicity and clarity to ambiguity. Wicked problems are best understood by identifying and clarifying the priorities in tension AND recognizing the different ways that different people may prioritize or balance those values.

People who prioritize values aren't wicked, the problems themselves are. Be hard on the problems and easy on the people.

Please use this form to record your insights from tonight’s presentations and discussions. We will collect this form from you when you leave and use the results to create a summary document.

Topic/Stop	What stands out to you from this section/topic? What do you like?	Concerns or questions from this section/topic?
1: Why and How		
2. Constraints		
3. How: decision process and adaptive feedback		
4. How: Best Management Practices		
5. Private Property: Resources and Enforcement		
At 6:15 PM- Plan Highlights (whole group presentation)		

Boulder County Parks & Open Space

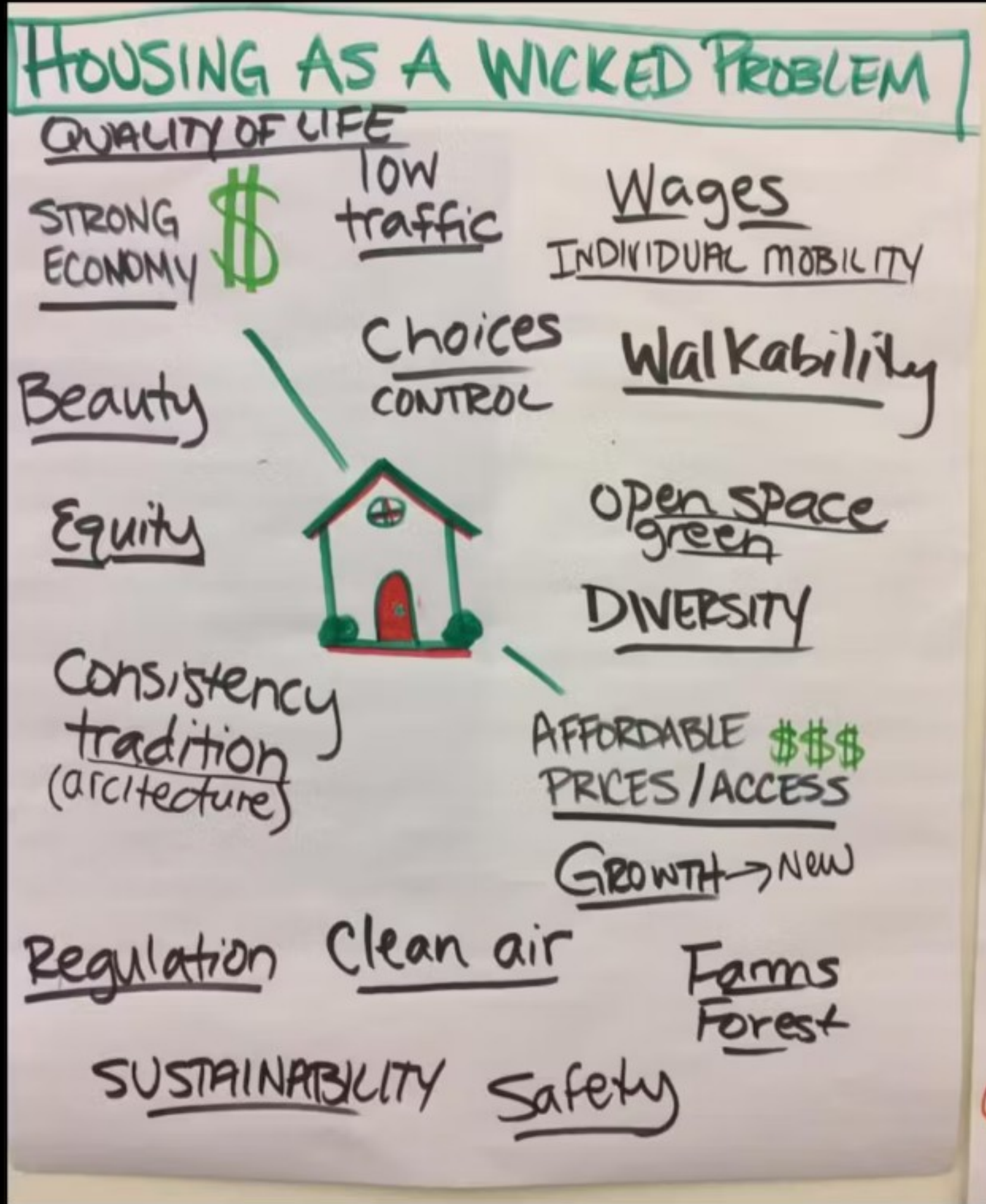
We're glad you're here!

The Community Conversation will begin at 6:15





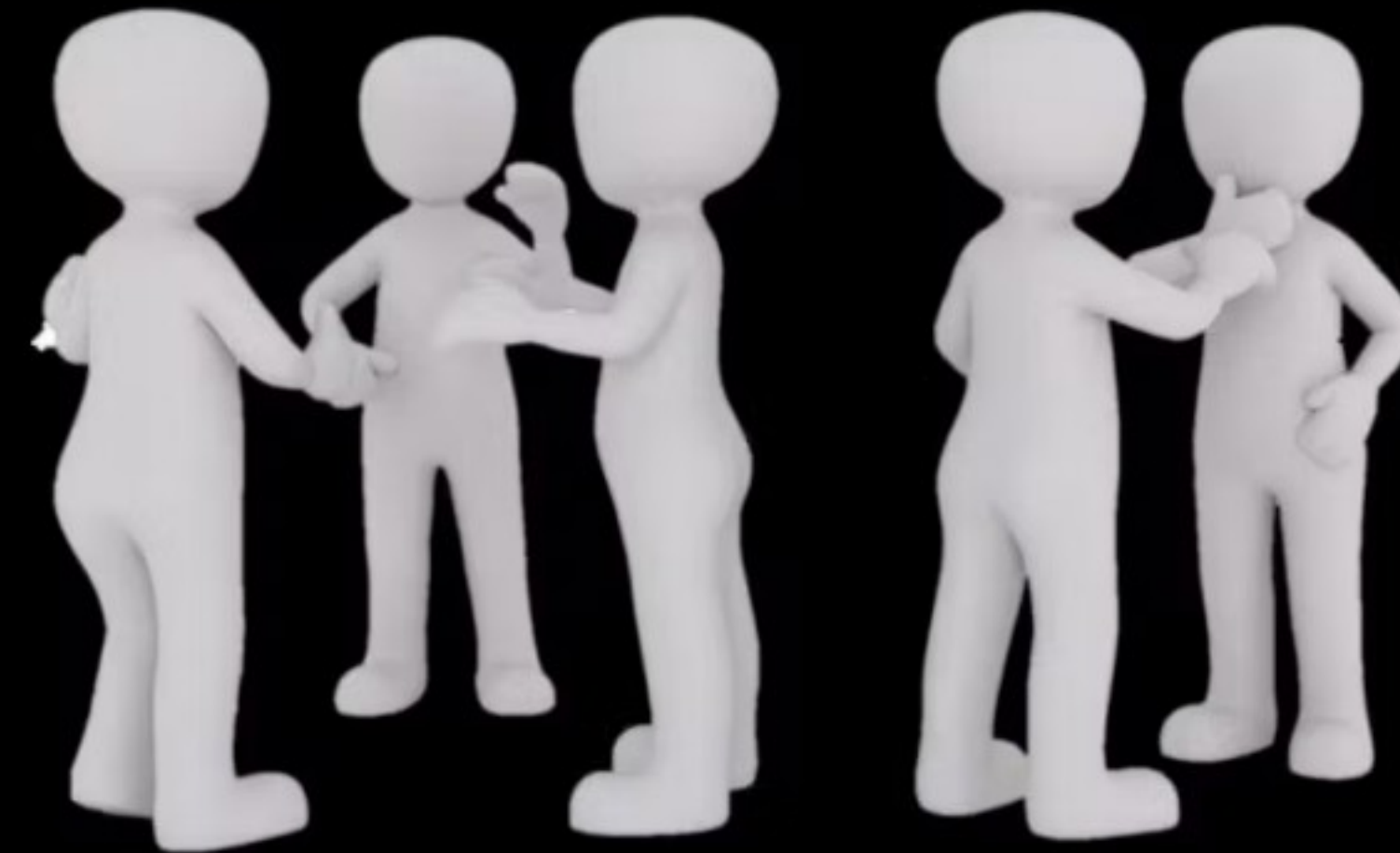




Why Deliberation



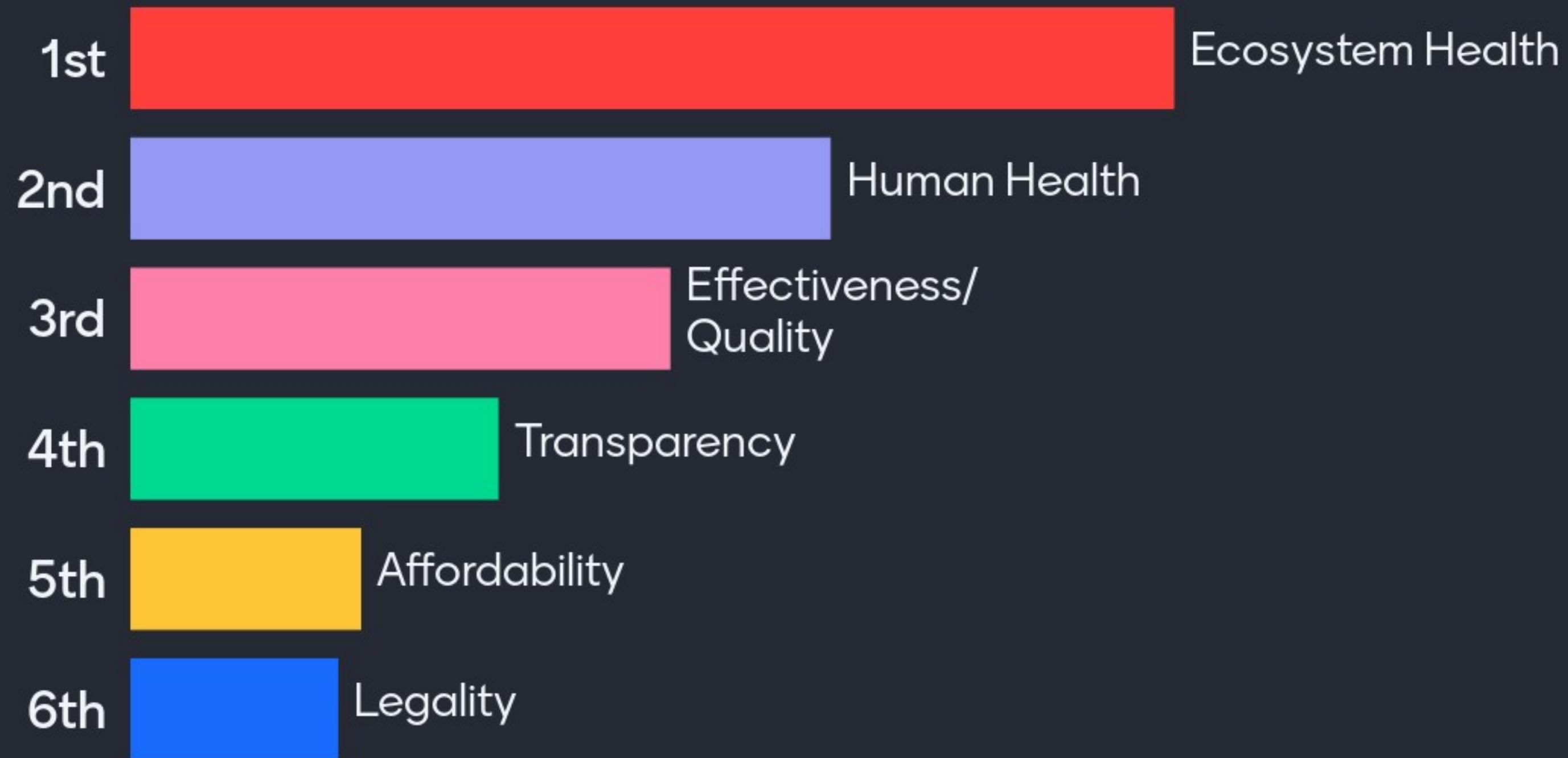
- Zero-sum/right wrong
- Increased polarization
- Fight over facts

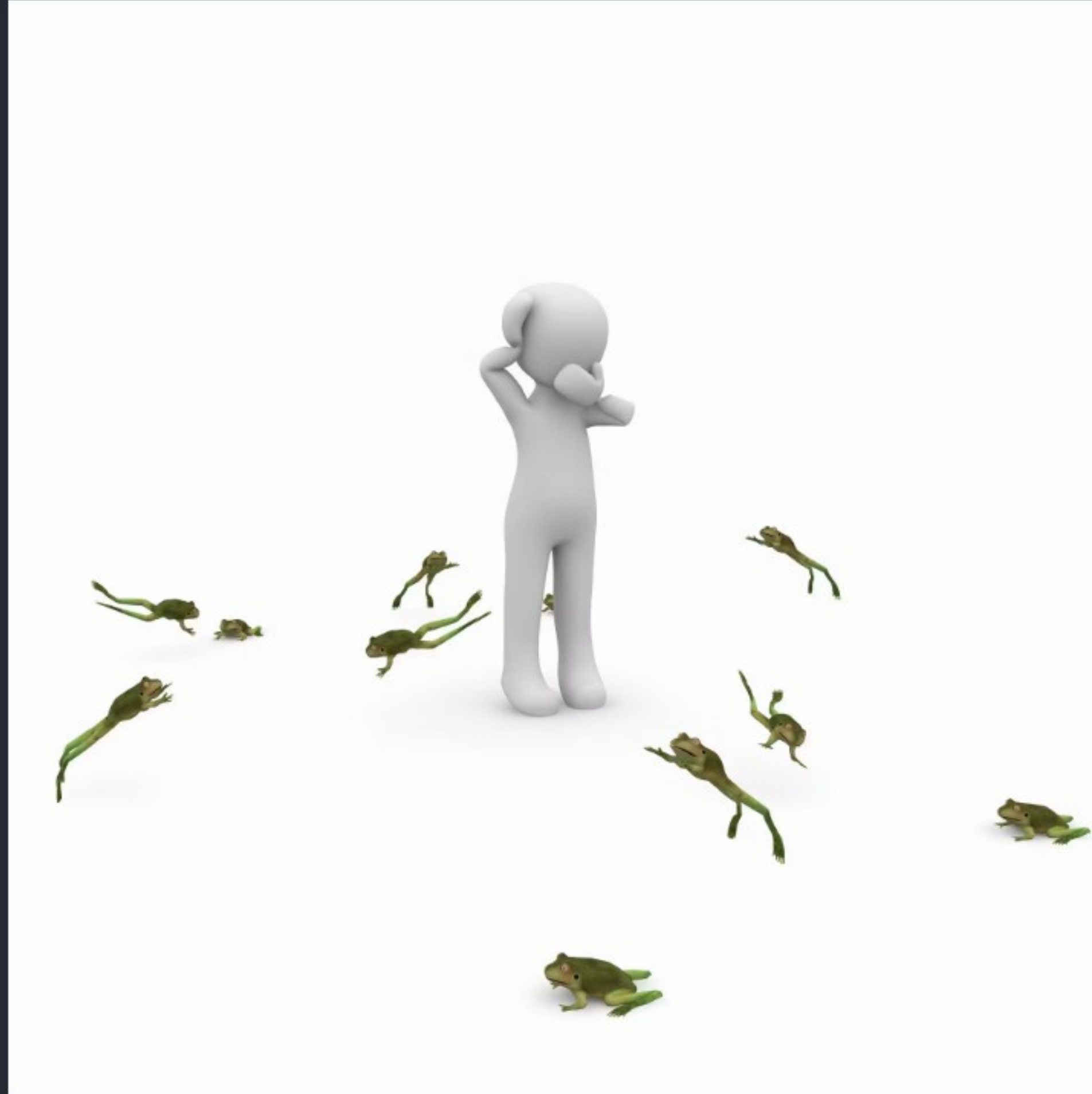


- Acknowledgement of paradox
- Identifies and clarifies values
- Recognizes hard trade-offs

Join us on MentiMeter to share *your* views

Which of these values are MOST important to you? Please rank them.



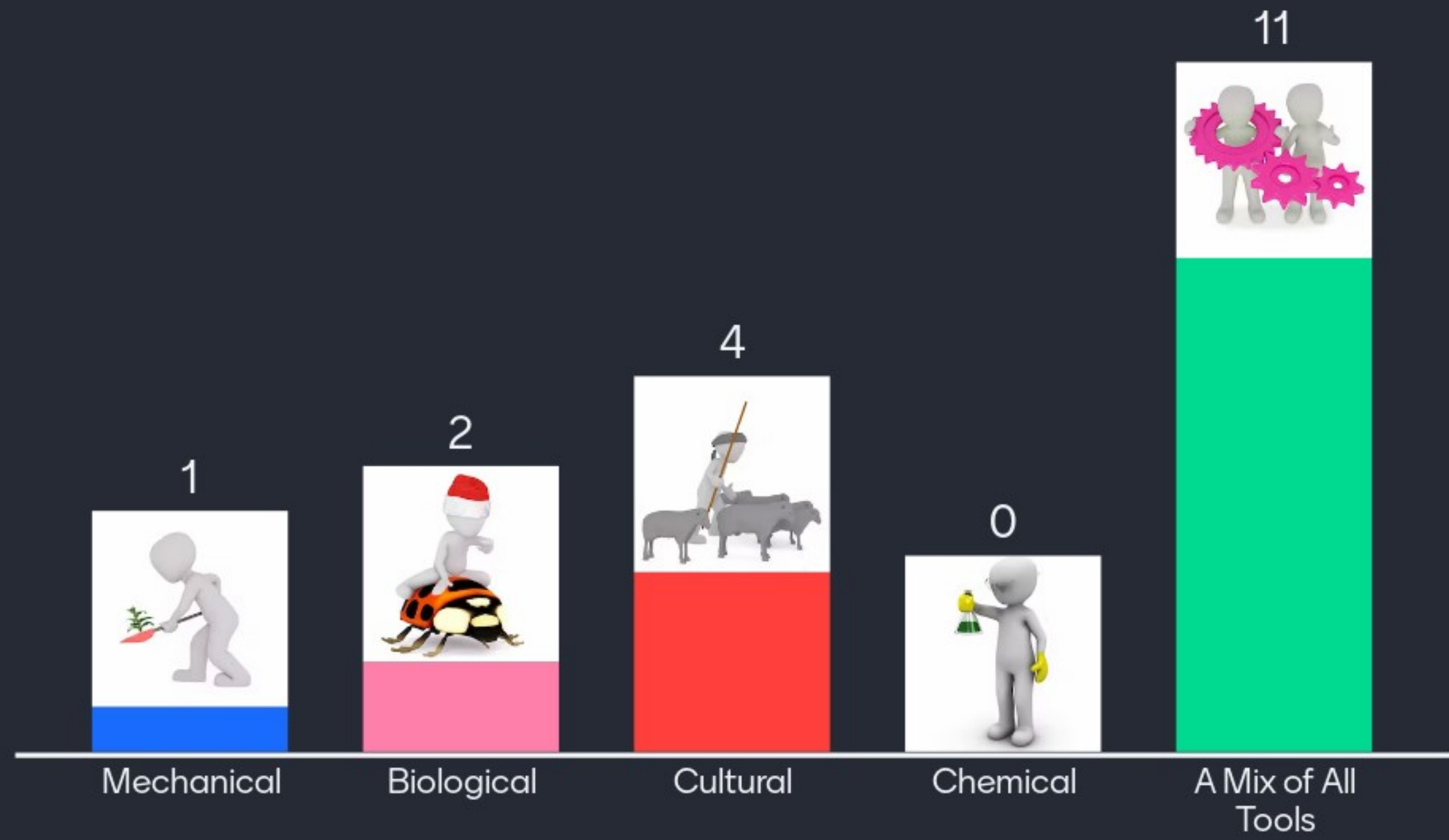


Some values have tensions/conflict within themselves!

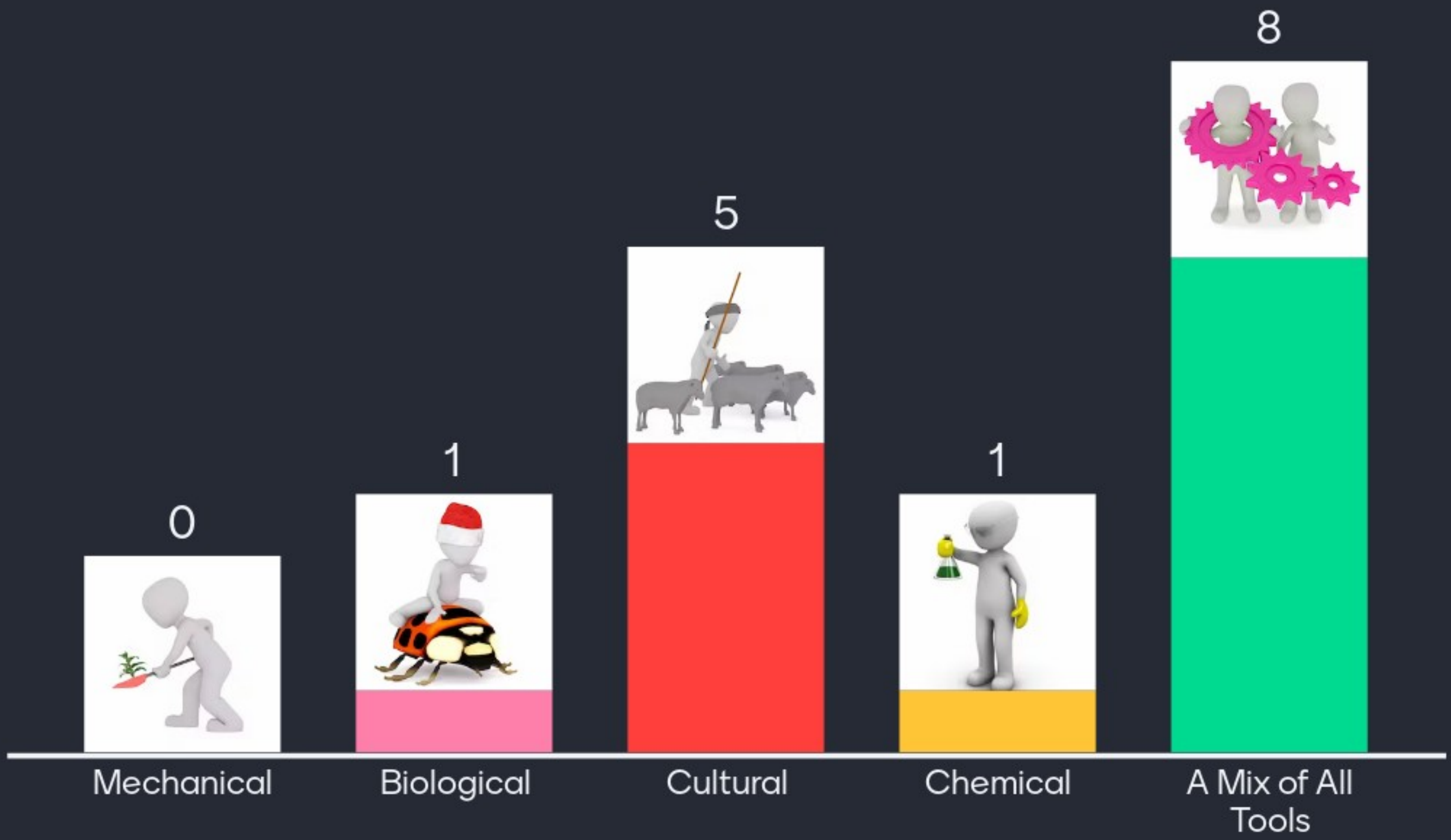
How would you rank priorities **WITHIN** the value of environmental health?



If you prioritize human and environmental health above all others, which weed tools would you recommend?



If you prioritized legality and affordability above all others, which weed tools would you recommend?



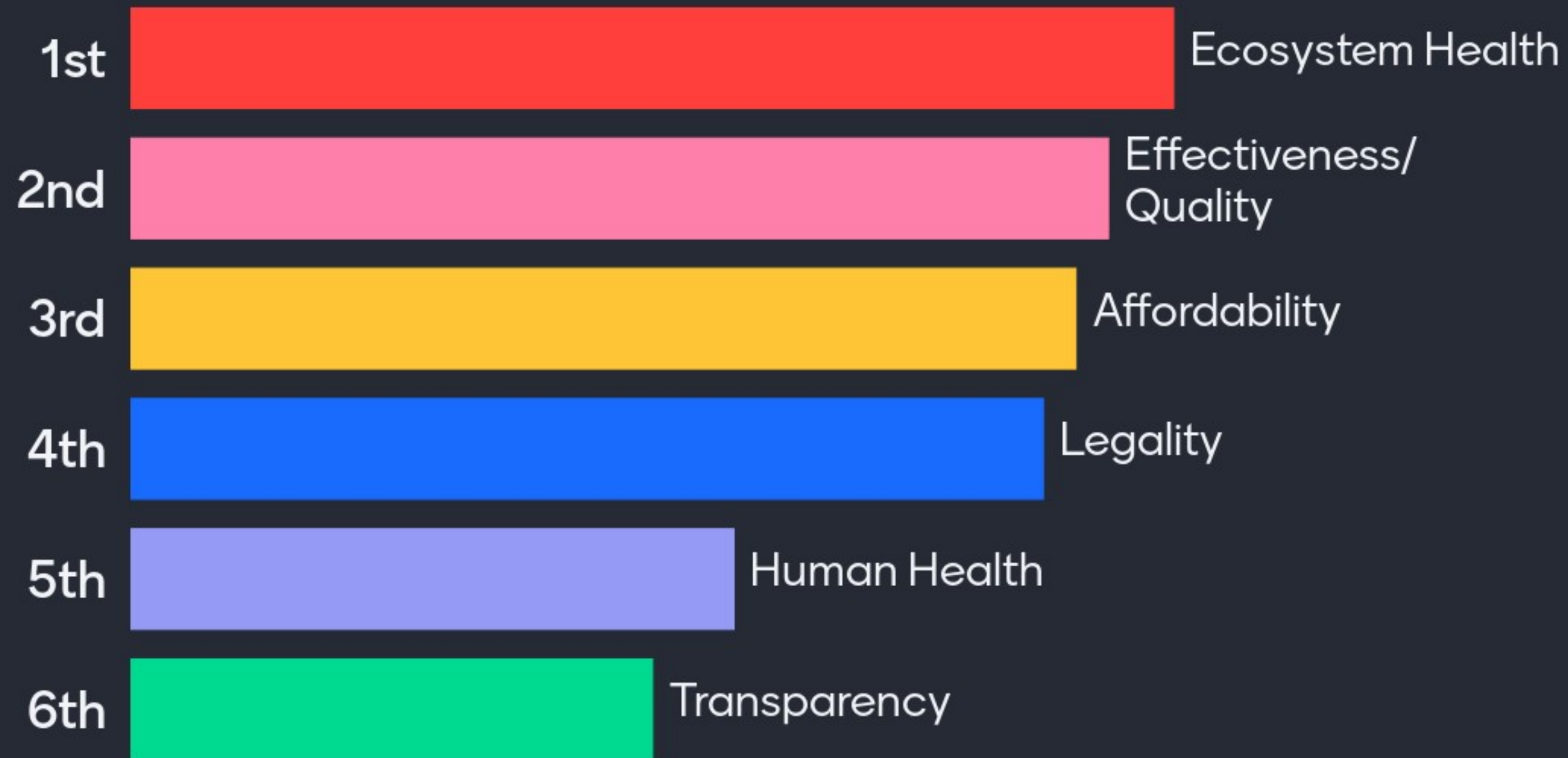


Sometimes, there are solutions that can transcend tensions...



More often, we have to strike a balance (however imperfect) between competing values.

Which values do you see represented in the draft plan? Please rank them as reflected in the plan.



What aspects of the draft plan do you like? What things are aligned with YOUR priorities?

20 responses

Curbing herbicide use.

Use of all available tools

Good to have buffer policy in the new plan.

The fact that there are alternative solutions to chemicals being considered/recognized as viable options. Preserving biodiversity

Use of a number of tools, integrated into the plan is important

The draft plan represents appropriate concern for environmental health within our beautiful county.

Like:alternatives to chemicalsDon't like use of chemicals

Like that the county staff understands well the why and how on improving the health of P& OS lands. Controlling invasive animal and plant species is highly aligned with my priorities

I don't see any science about the alternatives options. The posters feature chemical treatments.

What aspects of the draft plan do you like? What things are aligned with YOUR priorities?

20 responses

Eliminating chemical use.

Highlighting high value diversity areas within the county.
Recognizing all available tools.

I love plants and think the way we interact with them is fascinating. The alternative methods are very exciting and would love to see them explored more in depth.

Need transparency with increased education of both rural and urban users of open space

Utilizing most effective tool for the situation

Issue between State Plan & Local Municipality are they alligned.

Sometime chemicals are a must for the worst plant species.
We can't deny that reality

Attention to public education and participation

Not enough information about the herbicides that are being used and how much they are being used. Not acknowledging that these herbicides are scientifically known neurotoxins.

What aspects of the draft plan do you like? What things are aligned with YOUR priorities?

20 responses

Have the science to support chemical use

Have the science to support herbicide use

What aspects of the draft plan are still not striking a good balance for you? What changes would you suggest?

19 responses

CHEMICALS

Buffers for spraying should be larger.

Not enough information about which chemicals are being applied whether by air or land.

An acknowledgment that there are no real guidelines for aerial spraying, a recognition that wind and weather can change at any time and buffers change drastically as a result

Not nearly enough budget resources being allocated to effectively manage all the land that BoCo owns.

If budget and manpower are limiting, how to be effective?

The *feeling* of a lack of transparency makes it all harder to evaluate. (Maybe it is transparent, but I can't figure it out!)

Not enough information about which herbicides are being used and how much they are being used. Not acknowledging that they are scientifically known neurotoxins.

More caution on use of chemicals and careful analysis of unintended consequences long term. Aerial application should not be used for this reason. Too variable.

What aspects of the draft plan are still not striking a good balance for you? What changes would you suggest?

19 responses

No mountain residents here.

Not enough information about cost, legality, etc of alternative methods

Metrics of measuring "affordability" don't necessarily consider long term cost of herbicides

Herbicides staying present in the soil for years, but also a lack of understanding what happens with the breakdown of the chemicals/what it turns into...while it may "disappear", it really just changes

Citizen input on buffers virtually not considered

A simplified summary with more information linked to the plan for more information

How does this team determine "best practice"?

Tap into resources at CSU to know, understand, and apply the SCIENCE.

PR increase , utube? Decrease ignorance of need to eliminate noxious weeds especially in the user in recreational areas

What aspects of the draft plan are still not striking a good balance for you? What changes would you suggest?

19 responses

Is this staff collaborating with OSCAR?

What Questions Remain?

10 responses

What is the process for amending this draft proposal ?

How to coordinate with DOT and irrigation companies ? Is this being done?

Where is the examination of going herbicide free look like? Is this being considered seriously?

Would like to have a whole lot more community members involved in this conversation

Suggest collaborating with more private land owners who have experience managing the same invasive species the county is trying to deal with. They are not the enemy.

Who developed the survey? Are the results considered valid/scientific?

Aerial spraying sounds dangerous on so many levels. What is the science that would support this "tool"?

How do recreational groups like sierra club etc view this process and how the need should be addressed - are these groups at the table and in the discussion?

What happens in the event that public response is in opposition to what the committee votes on? The process of appeal

What Questions Remain?

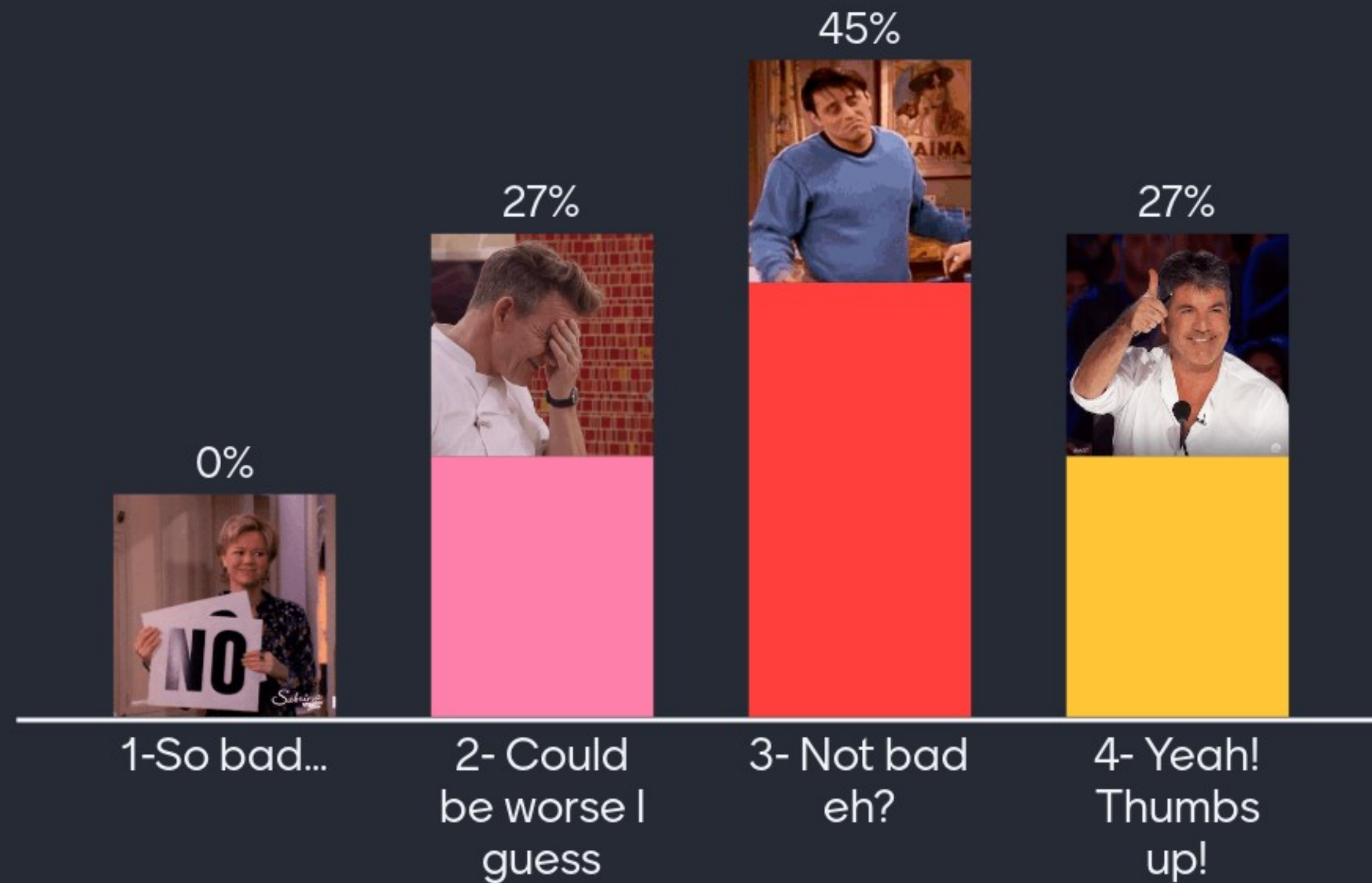
10 responses

Long term consequences of the use of chemicals."-

Thanks for caring so much
about our community!



How do you feel about the PROCESS we used tonight?



Any comments about the process tonight?

6 responses

Way more time for people to speak and ask questions!

Would love to know who was who of the presenters. The yellow sheet was hard to follow.

Didn't feel collaborative. More lecture-y.

When given the option to choose which methods preferred we should have be able to select multiple, not just select ALL if multiple wanted. Forced people want to select multiple to include chemicals

No real comments on the exploration of approaching an herbicide free avenue

All the before and after pictures are from different seasons. Not very accurate to show a green meadow in the spring as the "improved" result compared to a winter picture