# Appendix A: Focus Group Discussion Guide

**Introduction**:

* Explanation of ground rules
* Participants introduce themselves
* Distribute workbooks

**I. Overall Mood and Views of Environmentalism**

1. **[HANDOUT A]** I want to start by having you answer a couple of questions in the first handout in your packet. Please write down your answers, then we’ll discuss them.

*1) How satisfied are you with how things are going in North Carolina these days?*

*\_\_\_ Very satisfied*

*\_\_\_ Somewhat satisfied*

*\_\_\_ Mixed feelings—satisfied and dissatisfied*

*\_\_\_ Somewhat dissatisfied*

*\_\_\_ Very dissatisfied*

*2) Please list three issues that are particularly important in your community and area of the state.*

* First, tell me your answer for #1. If you feel satisfied, explain why you feel that way.
  + If dissatisfied, what are you dissatisfied about in particular? What could be improved?
  + If you have mixed feelings, explain the good and the bad to me.
* Now let’s talk about your answers for #2. Tell me some of the issues that are important in your community these days. (CANVASS TABLE.)
  + Why are those issues top of mind for you?
  + Do you feel that those issues are getting enough attention, or not? Why do you feel that way?
* This area might be considered a little more rural that some other areas of the state. Is there anything unique or different about living in a more rural area of North Carolina rather than a more urban or suburban area?
  + Do you feel like you and your neighbors have a different perspective on things than folks who live in cities or suburbs? How do you think your perspective might be different?

1. **[HANDOUT B]** Now turn to the next page in your packet, which just has some numbered blank lines.

On *Line #1* I want you to write down the word “Environmentalism”. Then I want you write down whatever comes to mind when you hear that word. What are the ideas that come to mind? What are the pictures or images that pop into your head? Describe for me what comes to mind.

On *Line #2* I want you write down the word “Environmentalist,” then do the same thing in terms of what comes to mind.

On *Line #3* I want you write down the phrase “Natural resource conservation,” then do the same thing in terms of what comes to mind.

* (FOR EACH WORD/PHRASE:) Does this word have more of a positive or more of a negative connotation to you, or is it just neutral?
* What types of things does it bring to mind? Tell me what you wrote down.
* Do you have different or similar images in your mind for “environmentalism” and “environmentalist”? How are they similar or different?
* What about environmental organizations? What is your view of groups that focus on the environment?
  + Do you find that you more tend to agree or disagree with the goals and objectives of these kinds of groups?
  + Are there specific environmental groups you can name that you like and respect—or do NOT like and respect? Why do you feel that way?
* What about environmentalism vs. natural resource conservation? Are these similar or different things in your mind? What makes them so?
* Do you personally associate yourself with any of these words? I.e., do you consider yourself an environmentalist? Or a conservationist? Why or why not?

**II. Environmental Priorities**

1. **[HANDOUT C]** The next handout lists a few issues. I would like to know how much each one of these is a priority for you personally. Please rate each one on a scale from 0 to 10—a “0” means this is not a priority in your mind at all, and a “10” means it is an extremely high priority in your mind. After you rate each one, please circle the TWO that you consider to be the highest priorities on this list.
2. *Protecting wildlife*
3. *Protecting and conserving national parks, national monuments, and other public lands*
4. *Ensuring clean water*
5. *Addressing climate change*
6. *Reducing pollution in the world’s oceans*
7. *Ensuring clean air*
8. *Protecting earth’s diverse habitats and ecosystems*
9. *Protecting and conserving crop lands, range lands, and forests*
10. *Reducing deforestation*
11. *Developing renewable sources of energy, like solar and wind power*
12. *Addressing overpopulation*

* Tell me the two you circled as being the highest priorities? (CANVASS TABLE.) Why are those so important to you?
* Are there any items on this list that you gave low ratings to (4 or lower)? Why do you not consider those to be high priorities?
* Are there other issues or priorities related to the environment and conservation that you think are particularly important and that are not listed here? What would those be, and what makes them important?
* Some of these issues (deforestation, overpopulation, ocean pollution, climate change, ecosystems) could be considered global problems. Do these kinds of global environmental issues have any effect on you personally? Do these issues affect folks here in North Carolina, or are they more problems that “other people” face?
  + Should it be a priority for the government to address these global environmental problems, or should they focus on the more local ones.

1. Regardless of how big a priority you think these things are, how would you say North Carolina is doing in these different areas?
   * In which of these areas, if any, are things pretty good here? Are there any areas where things are not so good here? Why do you feel that way?

**III. Role of Government and Environmental Policy**

1. When it comes to the items on this list, whose job do you think it is to make sure these things are done? Whose responsibility is it to ensure there is clean air, that wildlife is protected, etc?
   * To what degree do each of the following have a role and responsibility?
     + The federal government
     + North Carolina state government
     + Businesses and corporations
     + Farmers and forest landowners
     + Individuals
   * Among those five groups, who do you think has the *most* responsibility? If that varies depending on the issue we’re talking about, explain to me how it differs by issue.
   * Do you trust each of these groups to act in an appropriate and responsible manner when it comes to the environment and conservation? Who do you have more or less trust in, and why?
2. Thinking specifically about government policies related to the environment and conservation—do you think government policies tend to go too far in protecting the environment, not go far enough, or usually strike the right balance?
   * Explain your thinking to me on that.
   * Can you think of specific examples—in your community or in North Carolina—of policies that have either gone too far or struck the right balance?
   * In cases where you think it goes too far, what do you see as the consequences of that? What do you see as the effects of environmental/conservation policies that you think go too far?
   * In cases where it does not go far enough, what do you see as the consequences and effects?
3. What are your opinions of the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)? Do you think it tends to do a good job and have the right priorities, or not? Why do you feel that way?
   * Do you have a different or similar view of the EPA of today versus the EPA of 5 or 10 years ago?
   * What about the departments in North Carolina state government that oversee environmental rules and standards—good job and right priorities, or not? Why do you feel that way?

**IV. Talking about Environmental Policy**

1. **[HANDOUT D]** This next handout gives two different points of view about policies related to the environment and conservation. I’d like you to read through both of these statements. As you do so, please underline any words/phrases/sentences you think are particularly persuasive. And then put a star next to the statement that you personally agree with more.
2. ***Supporters*** *of government environmental and conservation regulations say that regulations protect public health and safety and support the economy and create jobs.* *Environmental regulations protect against the pollution that leads to severe asthma attacks in children, worsening heart disease, and toxic substances in our air and water. Additionally, these regulations can help protect against extreme weather like droughts, forest fires, and floods that are becoming more frequent and more powerful and that have devastating effects on safety, agriculture, and the economy. These policies also promote homegrown American industries and energy sources like solar and wind power that create thousands of good-paying jobs across the country and reduce our need for foreign oil.*

***Opponents*** *of government environmental and conservation regulations say that regulations tend to place more value on wildlife and the environment than on people’s day-to-day lives. Regulations often lead to increased costs to businesses, ultimately causing job losses and higher prices for consumers. They are usually made by bureaucrats who don’t understand the effects these regulations can have on people in the real world, and regulations from different agencies are often either duplicative or contradictory. These policies decrease production of American oil, coal, and natural gas: industries that have long been important sources of energy and create thousands of good-paying jobs. Additionally, US regulations can only protect the environment so much when major polluters such as India and China are slow to make changes in their own policies.*

* Which statement did you agree with more? (CANVASS TABLE.) Explain to me why you starred that one.
* Did you underline anything—from either statement—that you found to be particularly persuasive?
* Is there anything in either statement that you just reject completely or strongly disagree with?

1. It has been said that rural areas have unique needs and a unique perspective when it comes to environmental and conservation issues. Do you think that is the case?
   * In what ways do you think the needs and perspectives of people in rural areas might differ from those of people who live in cities or suburbs when it comes to these issues?
   * Do you think the needs and interests of rural residents are being taken into account as environmental and conservation policy is made? Explain your thinking on that.

**V. Messengers and Climate Change**

1. Thinking about environmental and conservation policy broadly—not just climate change, but all of the various issues we discussed—if you wanted more information to help you make sense of it all and understand whether environmental regulations are a good or bad thing generally speaking, where would you go to find that kind of information? What sources would you look to?
   * Are there particular groups or individuals whose information you would trust on this topic?
   * I’ve written some different groups and individuals here. Which of these would you be most interested in hearing from on these kinds of issues, and why? (WRITTEN ON EASEL:)

Hunter and sportsmen groups

Government environmental agencies

The Farm Bureau

President Trump

Scientists at North Carolina universities

Elected officials

Generals and other US military leaders

Local farmers and ranchers

Environmental and conservation groups like the Sierra Club

* (PROBE ON PUBLIC VS. PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES.)

1. We talked a little bit about climate change before. Do you think there is too much, not enough, or the right amount of focus on climate change these days? What makes you say that?
   * Do you think that the perspectives of rural residents about climate change are unique in any way? How so?
   * Is climate change more or less of a problem for people in rural areas than elsewhere?
   * Do you feel that climate change affects you personally in any way?
   * Are there challenges related to climate change that people in rural areas face that others do not? Are you aware of anything being done to address those challenges?
2. **[HANDOUT E—IF TIME ALLOWS]** The next handout lists some reasons that have been given for why it is important to address climate change. Please rate each one on a scale from 0 to 10. A “10” means you find this statement to be extremely persuasive, and a “0” means you do not find it to be persuasive at all. After you’ve read each one, please circle the TWO that you find to be MOST persuasive.
   * + 1. ***[EXTREME WEATHER]*** *Scientists say that climate change is increasing the frequency and severity of weather events that destroy communities and ruin people's lives. The result is more severe droughts, worsening floods, more wildfires, and more and stronger hurricanes.*
       2. ***[WILDLIFE/CONSERVATION]****Climate change is having a damaging effect on wildlife.  Rising temperatures mean food and water supplies are becoming scarcer for many species, and others are having trouble adapting and finding safe habitats to raise their young.  If this continues, fish to catch and game to hunt are going to become more and more scarce.  This is bad for animal species, and it is also bad for people for whom hunting, fishing, and outdoor activities are a way of life.  Reducing climate change is an important part of nature conservation.*
       3. ***[PUBLIC HEALTH]*** *Climate change contributes to air pollution, such as smog, that makes serious health problems worse, including chest pains, asthma attacks, and shortness of breath for people with emphysema—all problems that children and the elderly are especially vulnerable to.*
3. ***[AGRICULTURE]*** *Climate change has a particularly negative effect on U.S. farmers and ranchers. North Carolina farmers could see significant annual crop losses over the next two decades because of climate change. Droughts have a devastating effect on crops and herds, making life for already-struggling farmers and ranchers even worse, and forcing many to declare bankruptcy or otherwise go out of business.*
4. ***[AIR/CARBON POLLUTION]*** *Until last year, there was no federal limit on the amount of carbon pollution that power plants can pump into our air. We have successfully limited the amount of toxic chemicals like mercury, sulfur, and arsenic in our air and water for years, but never before has carbon pollution been regulated. We need to continue taking steps like this in order to ensure that we have clean air going forward.*

* Which two of these did you circle as being most persuasive? (CANVASS TABLE.) Tell me why you found those particularly convincing.
* Are there any statements you gave very low ratings to? Why did you not find those persuasive?

1. Thinking about everything we have discussed this evening, what information, if any, do you think will be sticking with you?
   * If I brought you back here in a month, what parts of our discussion will you still be thinking about?

**Thank and dismiss.**

# Appendix B: Semi-Structured Interview Guide

1. Introduction. Ground rules.
   * Interviewer introduces themselves
   * Short description of the project: We are doing a nationwide research study on the environmental and conservation attitudes of rural Americans. As a stakeholder leader in a rural community, we’re hoping to hear both your own attitudes to some of the issues we have to discuss today, but also the attitudes of the people you work with in your organization [or position].
   * I also want to emphasize that our conversation is anonymous, and nothing you share will be attributable to you by name or organization. We are really interested in your own personal perspective, not organizational position or talking points.
   * You can skip any question that you do not want to answer. You can also stop our interview at any time, for any reason. I would also like to record this conversation just for my own notes later on – is that ok with you?
2. Setting the stage
   * Can you tell me about your professional position?
   * How long have you been in that role?
   * What types of individuals do you frequently interact with in your capacity as X?
   * What about you personally…How did you get involved in this group/organization? Did you grow up in a rural community? Do you live in one now?
3. Care and Priority.
   * Next I’d like to ask you about the attitudes of the people that you interact with in your capacity as X
   * What would you say are the biggest concerns and priorities of your constituents/people in this community?
   * To what extent do you think members of this community think and care about conservation of natural resources and the environment?
   * Compared to those other things that you listed, how much of a priority do you think conserving natural resources is for people in this community?
4. Rural Values.
   * One of the things we’re interested in is whether folks in rural parts of the country view issues differently because of their rural experiences….If you had to identify the core values of rural Americans, what would they be?
   * How do these values inform their perspectives on natural resource conservation?
   * In your opinion, do you think rural people have a different perspective on conservation and environmental protection as compared to Americans that live in suburbs or cities?
     + If so, how do their views differ?
     + Would you say that members of your community agree or disagree with that?
5. Economic benefits and trade-offs.
   * Among the communities that you work with, do you think there is a conflict between protecting the environment and economic prosperity? Or do they go hand in hand? (Might use a local example.)
     + Does it vary across different environmental issues?
     + If the answer is yes, how should government address the trade-offs?
6. Environmental policy.
   * Turning now to the question of government regulation of the environment and natural resources. Do you think that the government should do more to protect the environment, do less, or is it currently about right?
     + Or do you think, government simply needs to take a different approach altogether?
   * Do you have specific experience with the implementation of federal environmental laws? If yes, what experiences and how has it shaped your views of environmental policies?
   * Do you believe state governments or the federal government are better suited to implement environmental laws? Why?
   * [OPTIONAL] Do you believe environmental policies such as the Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act and Endangered Species Act do a good job of balancing environmental and economic concerns?
     + (If no) What do you think are the major drawbacks of these policies?
     + (If yes) What specifically about these policies do you think works for rural Americans?
7. Environmental advocates.
   * We’re interested in your views of environmental and conservation organizations. Have you worked with any of these organizations or had interactions with them? Tell me about that experience.
     + [OPTIONAL – Probe on environmentalist vs. conservationist]
   * Do you think environmentalists understand the views and needs of rural residents and communities? What has worked and what has not worked?
8. Environmental information.
   * Are people in your community frequently discussing environmental issues and concerns? What issues come up most often?
     + What are people saying about how the government is managing these issues?
   * Where do people in your community get most of their information about environmental issues?
   * Who do you think they trust when it comes to communicating about environmental issues? Is there anyone you think they would *not* trust?
   * [OPTIONAL.]Are rural communities listened to when it comes to environmental policies that impact them?
9. Climate change.
   * Do you see evidence of a changing climate in your community/region?
     + If yes, what do you see?
     + Are people in your community talking about this issue?
   * Do you think the federal government should take steps to address climate change?
   * If the federal government takes steps to address climate change, do you see opportunities for rural communities to benefit?
   * Likewise, do you have concerns about how climate policy might impact rural communities? What concerns?
   * Do you believe your community is concerned about a changing climate? Do they believe it should be a policy priority?

# Appendix C: Coding Structure

Round 1: Inductive coding of rural identity evidence

* Evidence of rural identity
  + Community/Rootedness
  + Connection to nature
    - Economic dependence
    - More direct experience
    - Stewardship
  + Differentiation from urban
    - Ahead
    - Disconnected from nature
    - Hard workers
    - Pragmatism
    - Slow pace of life
  + Place identity
  + Religion
  + Resentment/Disenfranchisement
    - Anti-elitism
    - Blamed
    - Disconnected from gov
    - Left behind economically
  + Self reliance/Independence

Round 2: Coding for components of rural identity and environmental policy attitudes

* Components of rural identity
  + Connectedness to nature
    - Evidence
    - Policy implication
  + Disconnectedness\_resentment
    - Evidence
    - Policy implication
  + Rootedness
    - Evidence
    - Policy implication
  + Self-reliance
    - Evidence
    - Policy implication