

2013



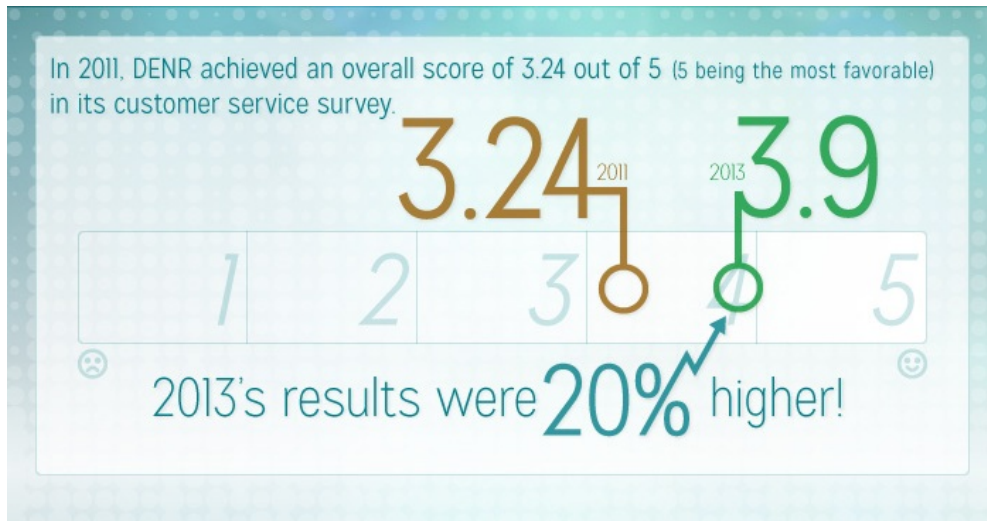
2011 DENR *Customer Service* 2013

RESULTS

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Executive Summary

Results of a recent customer service survey illustrate a significant improvement in how responsive and helpful people consider the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources to be today as compared to 2011 survey results. The survey showed a 20 percent overall improvement in how customers feel the agency is performing its customer service function. There were more than 260 responses to the question asking what group in DENR exemplifies great customer service.



This year, the survey gathered 371 responses, an 85 percent increase from the number of responses to a similar survey in 2011. Respondents in the 2013 survey reported living or working in 80 different counties, a 20 percent increase in the number of counties represented from the previous survey.

The survey shows improvements in the average ratings for every category the department measured, meaning respondents found DENR employees in 2013 to be more approachable, transparent and fair than in 2011. Categories were ranked from a score of 1, which would indicate poor performance, up to a 5, which indicates excellent performance. Average responses in 2011 ranged from between 2.9 and 3.5 overall. But average responses in 2013 improved from between 3.3 and 4.4 overall. For being helpful, factual and accurate, and easy to work with, DENR scored between 3.3 and 3.4 in 2011 but improved in those same three categories to 4.1 in 2013.

The 2013 survey shows across-the-board improvements in how DENR scored in nine categories for assistance, including seeking new permits and environmental assistance. Taken as a whole, average ratings improved from around 3.24 in 2011 to 4.0 in 2013. The results also identified some areas for improvement. The DENR website was an area that was identified in the 2011 survey as needing improvement. Even as more DENR divisions are having a greater presence on the new portal system, it appears that this is again an area that the 2013 respondents feel needs more improvement.

Consistency in compliance, enforcement, and assistance along with customer service focused on a more timely response were also identified as the top areas in need of improvement.

Comparing the 2013 Customer Service Survey to the 2011 Customer Service Survey

In 2011, DENR conducted a customer service survey to get a baseline of customers' perceptions of the department in several different categories and ask for recommendations on improving customer service. In May of 2013, DENR conducted a follow up survey to measure improvements in each of the categories and to ask again for any suggested improvements. The 2013 survey had a total of 371 responses, an 83 percent increase from the 2011 survey.

The first question of the survey asked what category best describes the survey taker and gave 12 different categories as options. The largest percentage of respondents in the 2013 survey was the DENR permitted (industrial, government and individual) entities with 31 percent followed by the consultant category with 26 percent as shown in Figure 1. This also held true in the 2011 survey with 29 percent of the respondents from permitted entities and 18 percent consultants.

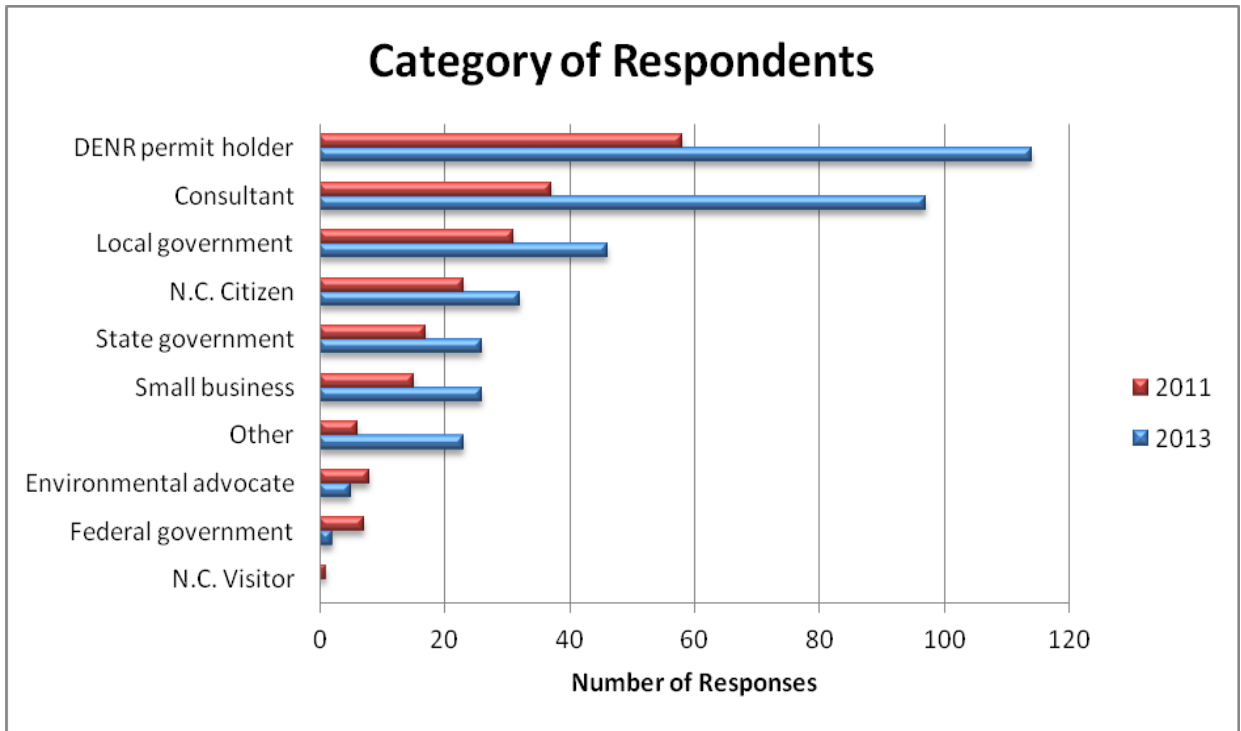


Figure 1. How respondents categorized themselves.

When asked in what N.C. county the survey takers live and or work, Wake County was the top for both of the surveys, as shown in Figure 2. Guilford County came in second in the 2013 data and third in the 2011 while New Hanover County came in second in the 2011 survey and fifth in the 2013 survey. Mecklenburg was third in the 2013 survey and fifth in the 2011 survey, of those living within the state. Respondents in the 2013 survey reported from 79 different counties and in 2011 respondents reported from 55 different counties.

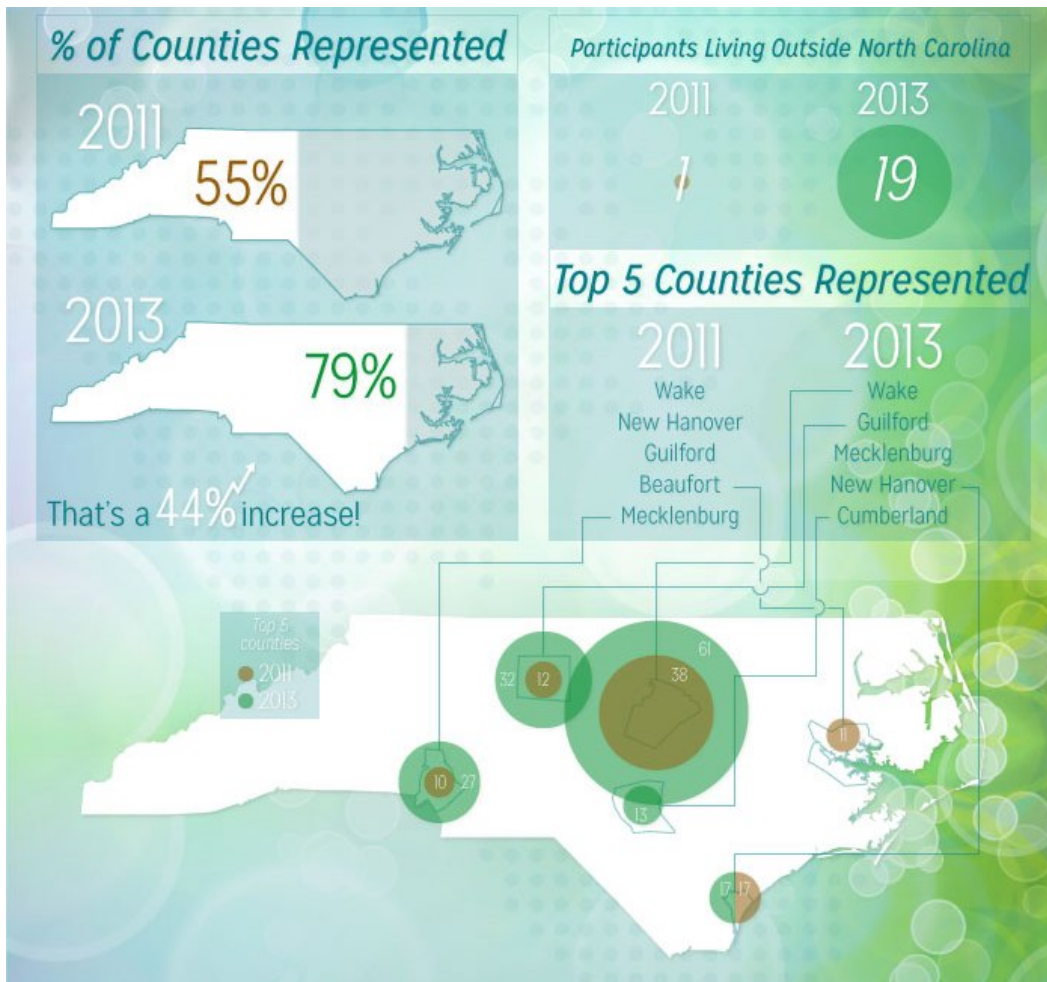


Figure 2. Counties represented in 2013 and 2011 surveys

Question three of the surveys asked which agencies the survey takers have worked with from DENR. Resoundingly, shown in Figure 3, the top five answers were Water Quality, Waste Management, Air Quality, Water Resources and Land Resources (now the Division of Energy, Mineral and Land Resources).

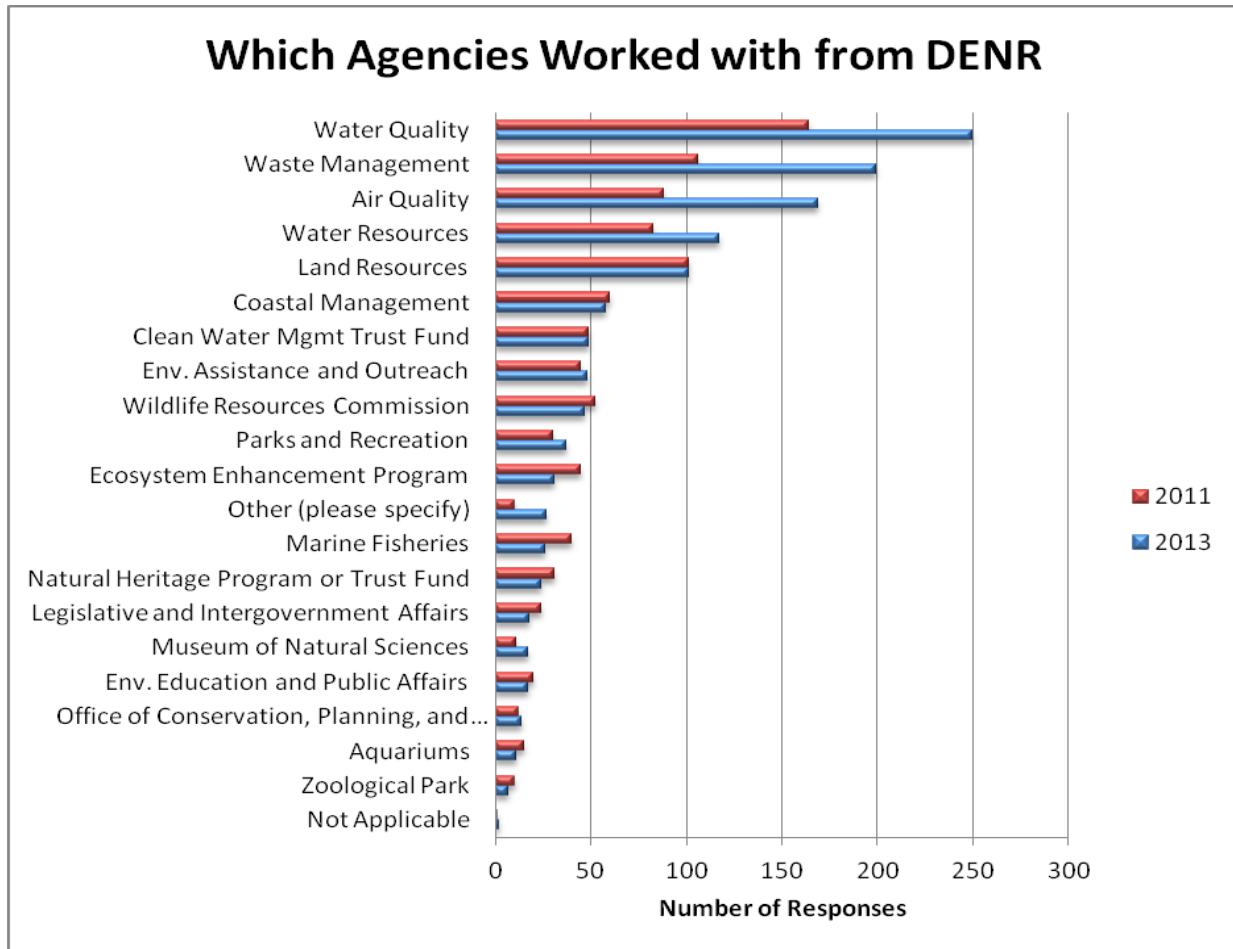


Figure 3. Graph of agencies the respondents have worked with from DENR.

While these divisions changed rank depending on whether the responses were from all categories, permit holders or consultants, it was interesting that the Division of Environmental Assistance and Outreach ranked third with the local government category for both surveys as shown in Figures 4-6.

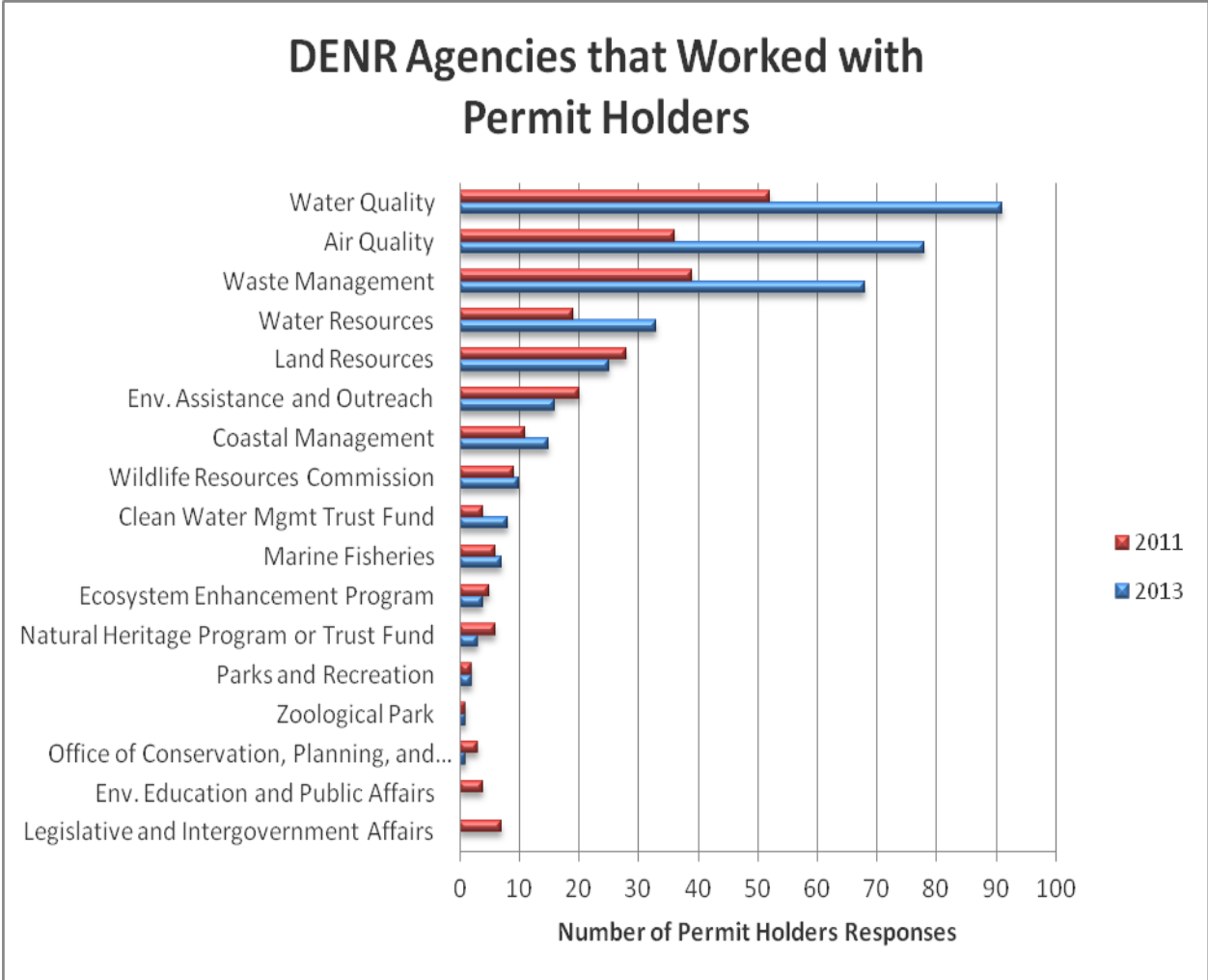


Figure 4. Graph of DENR agencies that worked with permit holders

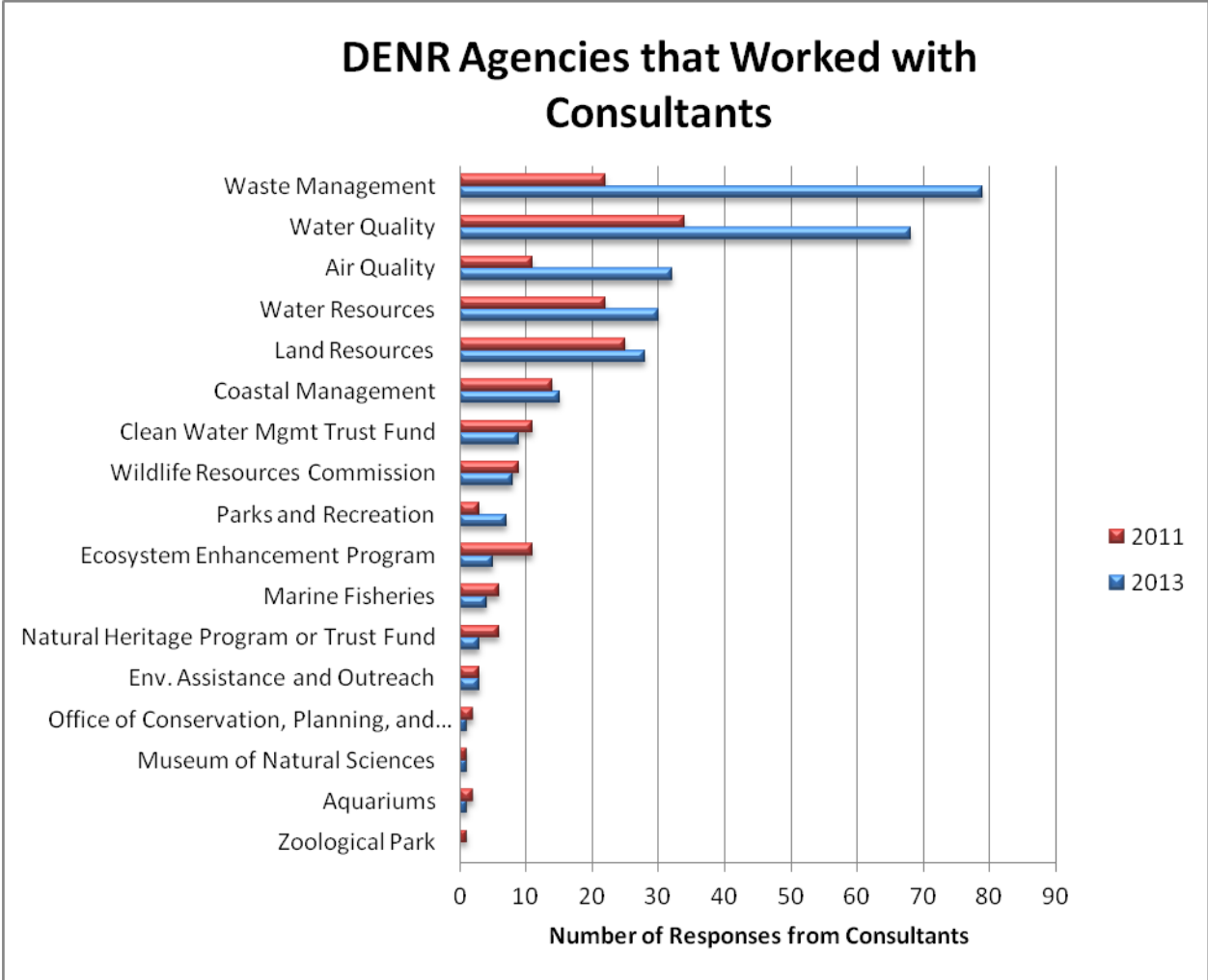


Figure 5. Graph of DENR Agencies that worked with Consultants

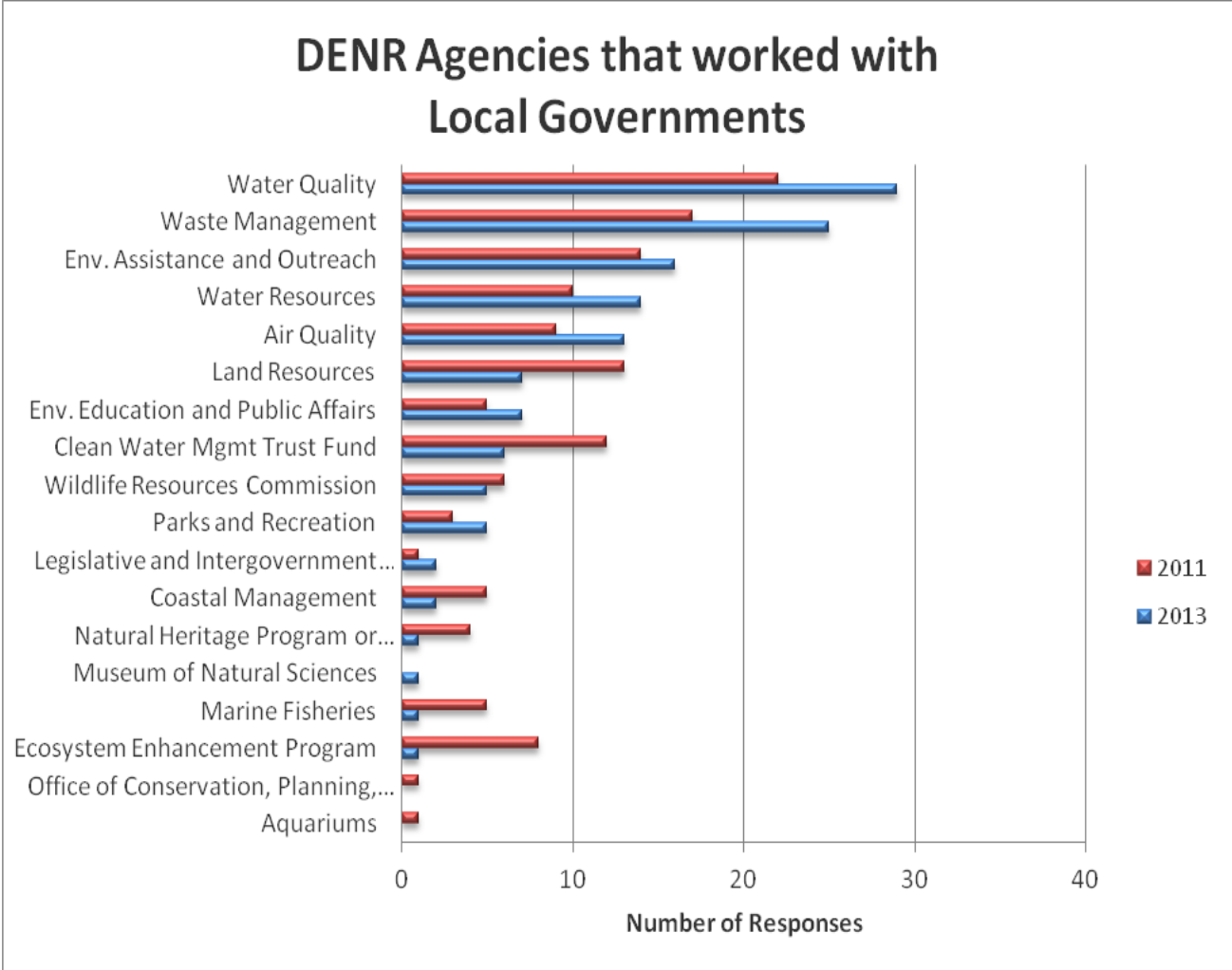


Figure 6. Graph of DENR agencies that worked with local government respondents.

Question 4 asked which of the offices within the DENR agencies from question 3 have you worked with. Below in Figure 7, the responses show the same trend from 2013 and 2011 surveys with the most interactions happening with the Raleigh headquarters.

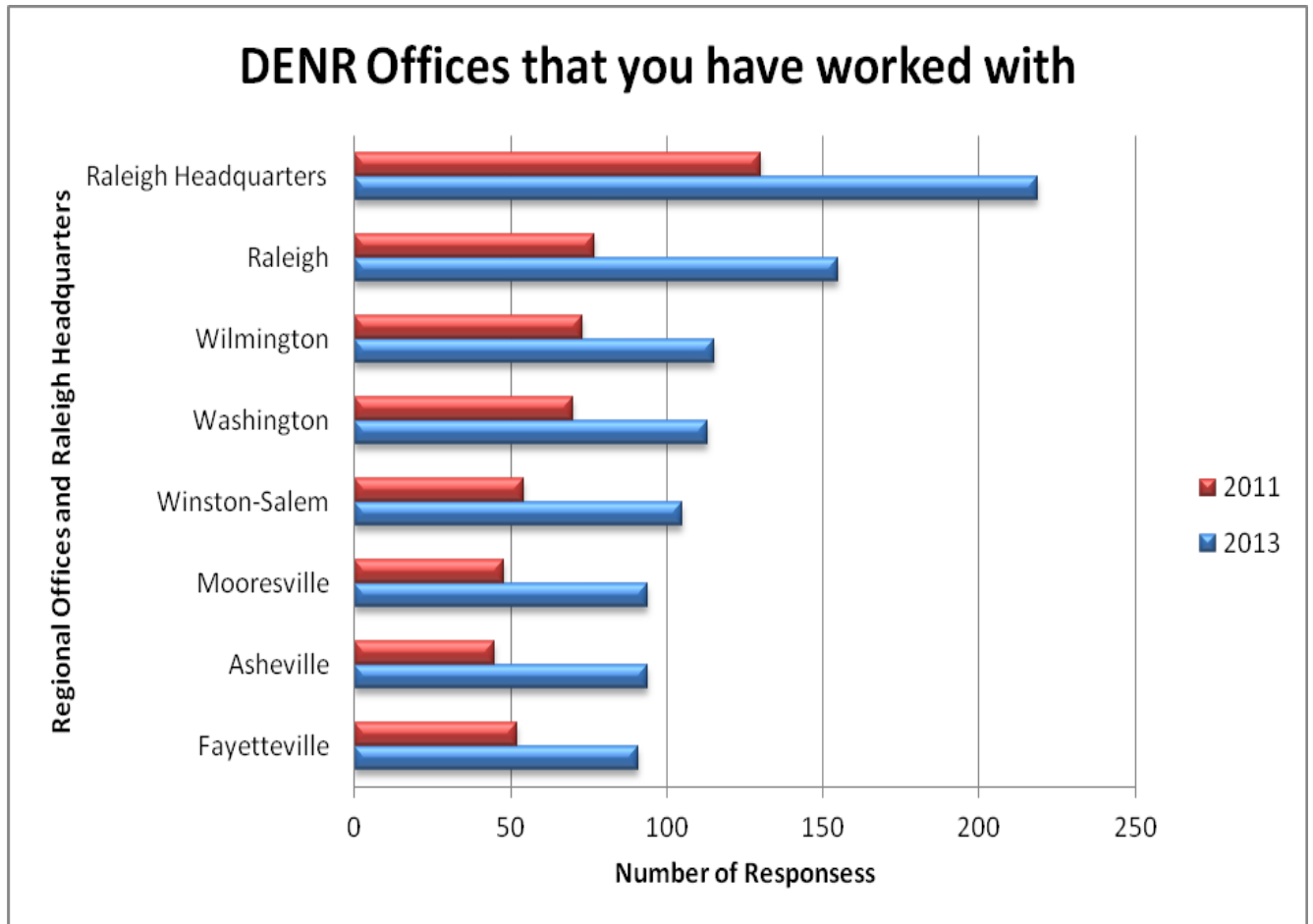


Figure 7. Graph of the offices within DENR that had most dealing with survey takers.

The top three issues, in both the 2013 and 2011 surveys, that customers contacted DENR for information were permitting, environmental regulations questions and compliance assistance as shown in Figure 8. The fourth most popular response was for information only, which was an additional option for the 2013 survey. The 2013 permit holder category ranked training or certification as fourth.

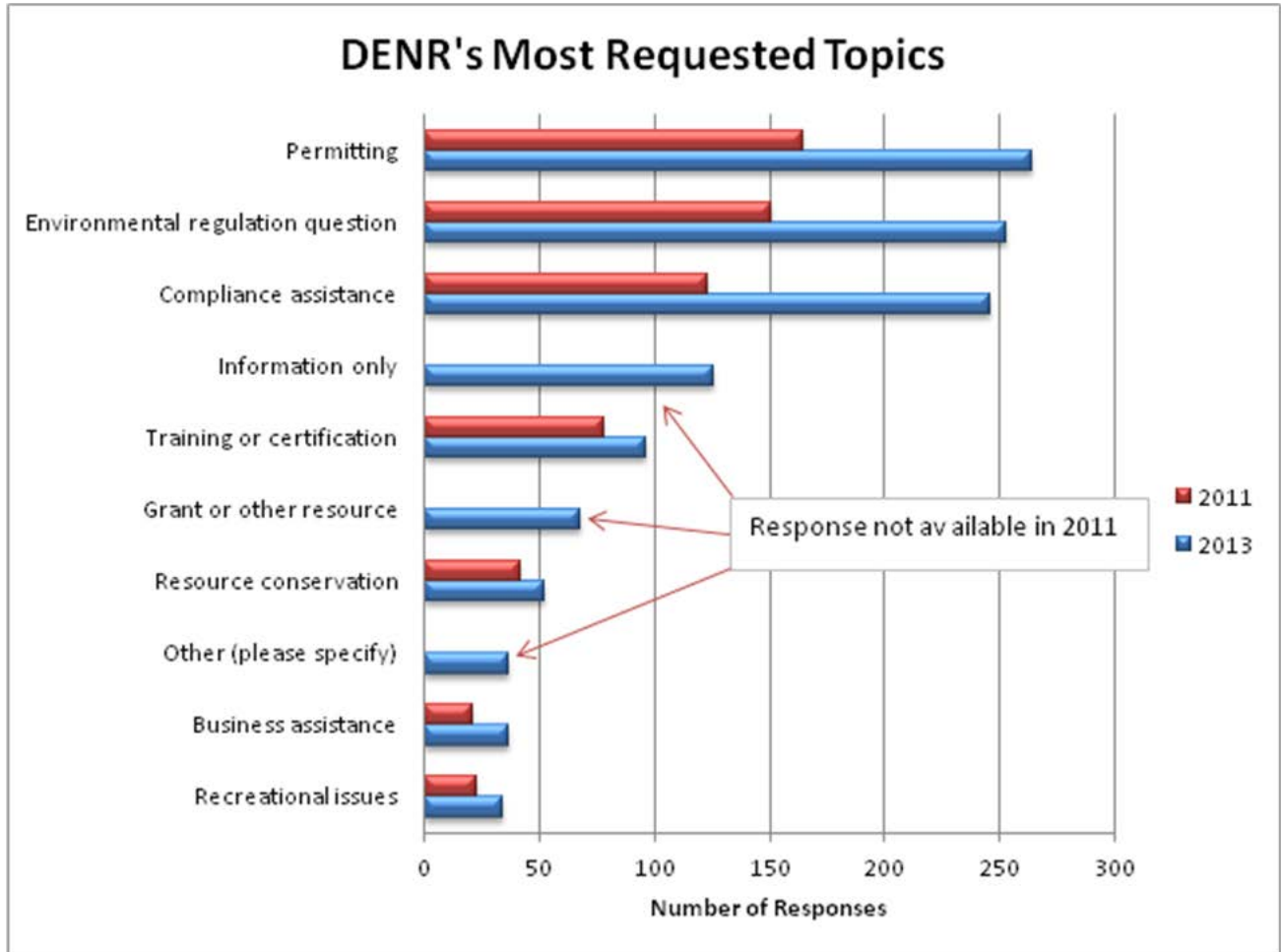


Figure 8. DENR's most requested topics from customers

Question 6 asked survey takers to rate their experience with the DENR agencies that they had worked with in nine categories. Each category was ranked from a score of 1, indicating a poor performance, to a 5, indicating an excellent performance. This question was only available on the 2013 survey so there are no comparisons to the 2011 survey. The highest ranking categories were friendly, professional, helpful and knowledgeable with an overall average ranking of 4.3 from all survey takers. No category scored below a 4.2 as shown in Figure 9.

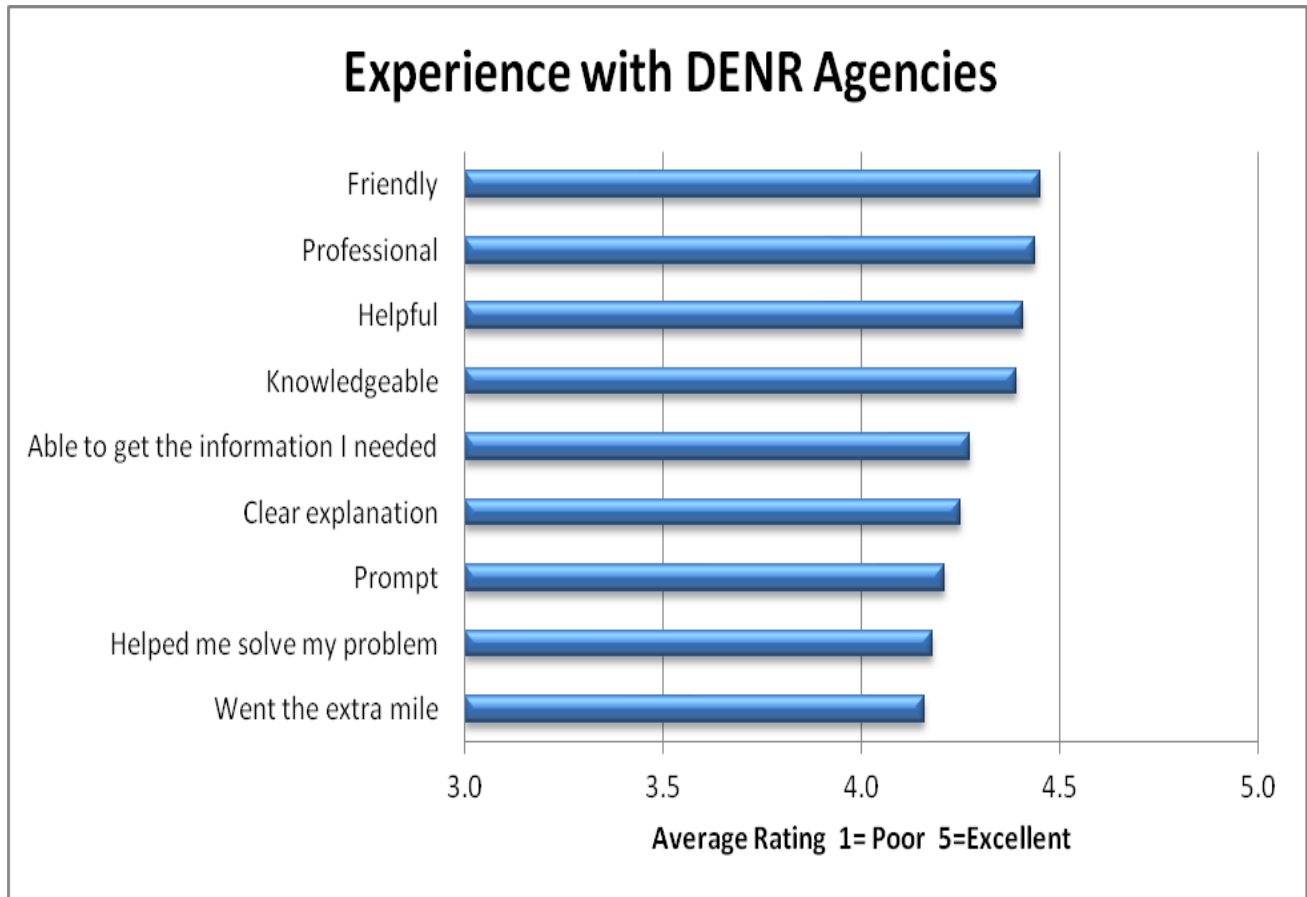


Figure 9. Graph showing ratings of survey takers experience with DENR agencies

The ratings from the consultant sector show an overall average of 4.2 with one category, went the extra mile, falling just below 4.0 (Figure 10). Ratings from the local government sector averaged 4.6 with all categories falling between 4.5 and 4.8.

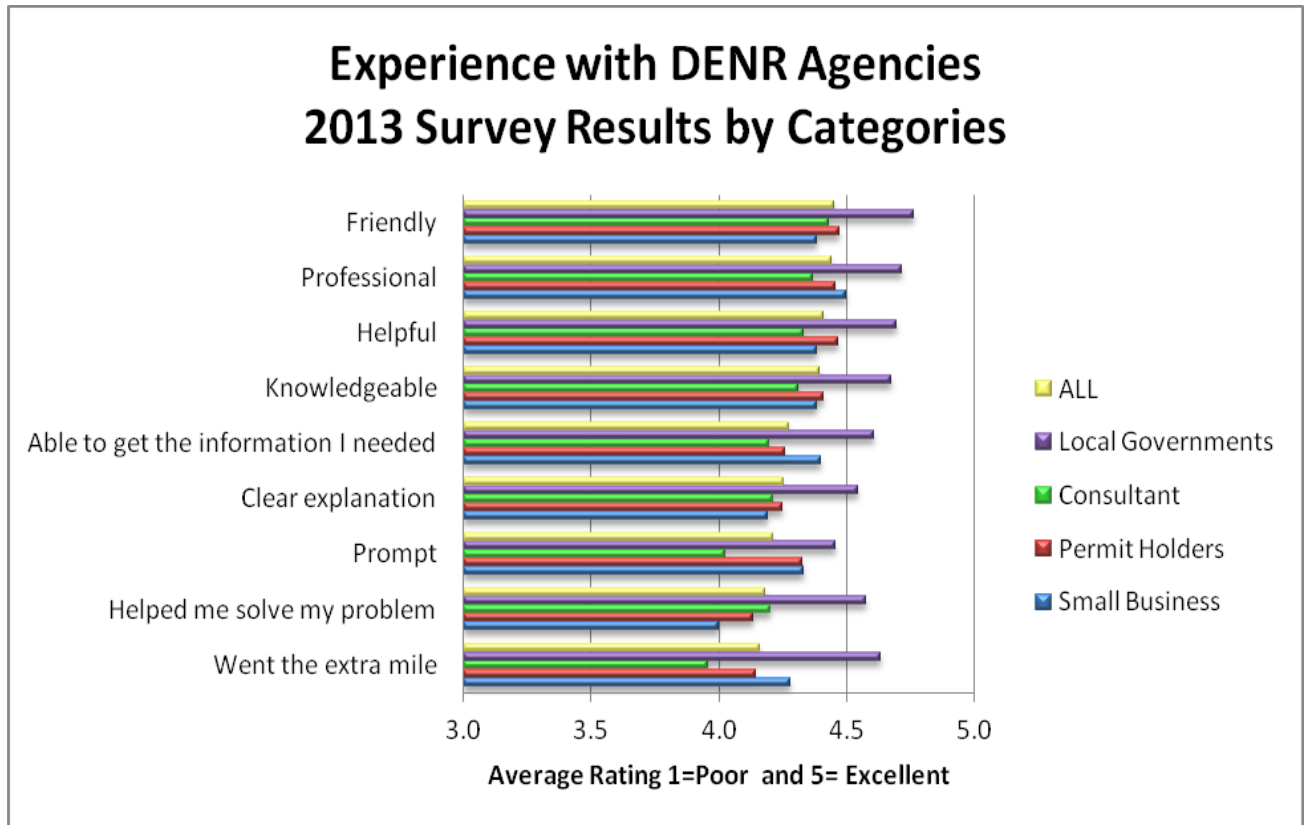


Figure 10. Rating of survey takers experience with DENR agencies by category.

Question 7 asked the survey takers to rate the efforts of DENR in providing the assistance to its customers in nine different categories. The scale used to rank each category was ranked from a score of 1, indicating a poor performance, to a 5, indicating an excellent performance. This question was in both the 2013 survey and the 2011. Interestingly, both surveys revealed almost the same trends. The 2013 survey showed a marked improvement from the 2011 rankings in the overall perception of DENR assistance to its customer. The overall average rating was 3.9 in 2013, a 19 percent increase from the 3.3 average rating in 2011. As shown in Figure 11, the top three categories were customer service, general environmental assistance and new permit assistance.

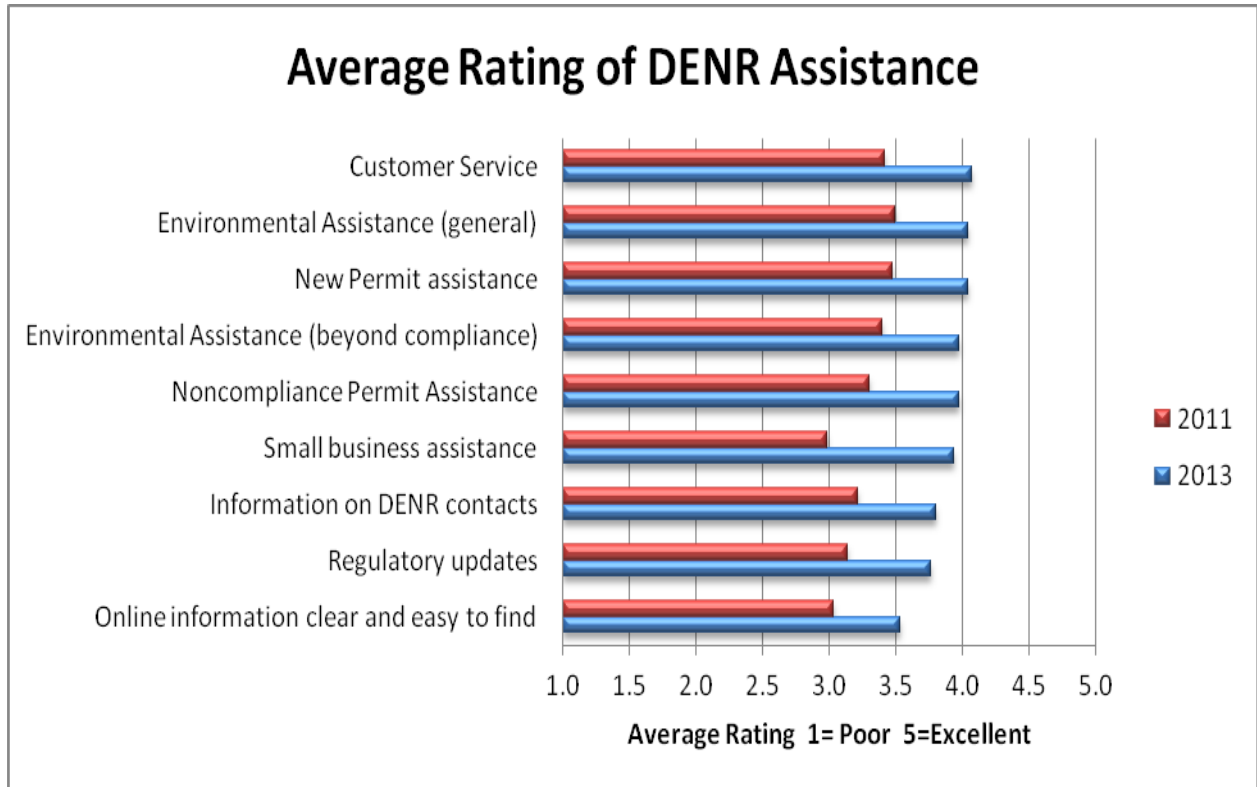


Figure 11. Graph of average rating of DENR assistance by survey takers.

In the permit holders sector, there was a 26 percent increase in the average rating from the 2011 survey as shown in Figure 12. The top three categories were new permit review and environmental assistance (both general and beyond compliance). For consultants, the average rating dropped to 3.7 with an 18 percent increase from the 3.1 rating in 2011. The top three categories were the same as the overall. For local governments the top three categories were noncompliance assistance, customer service and regulatory updates with an average rating of 4.4 and a 15 percent increase from the 2011 survey.

The categories most consistently ranked below 4.0 were online information clear and easy to find, regulatory updates, information on DENR contacts and small business assistance.

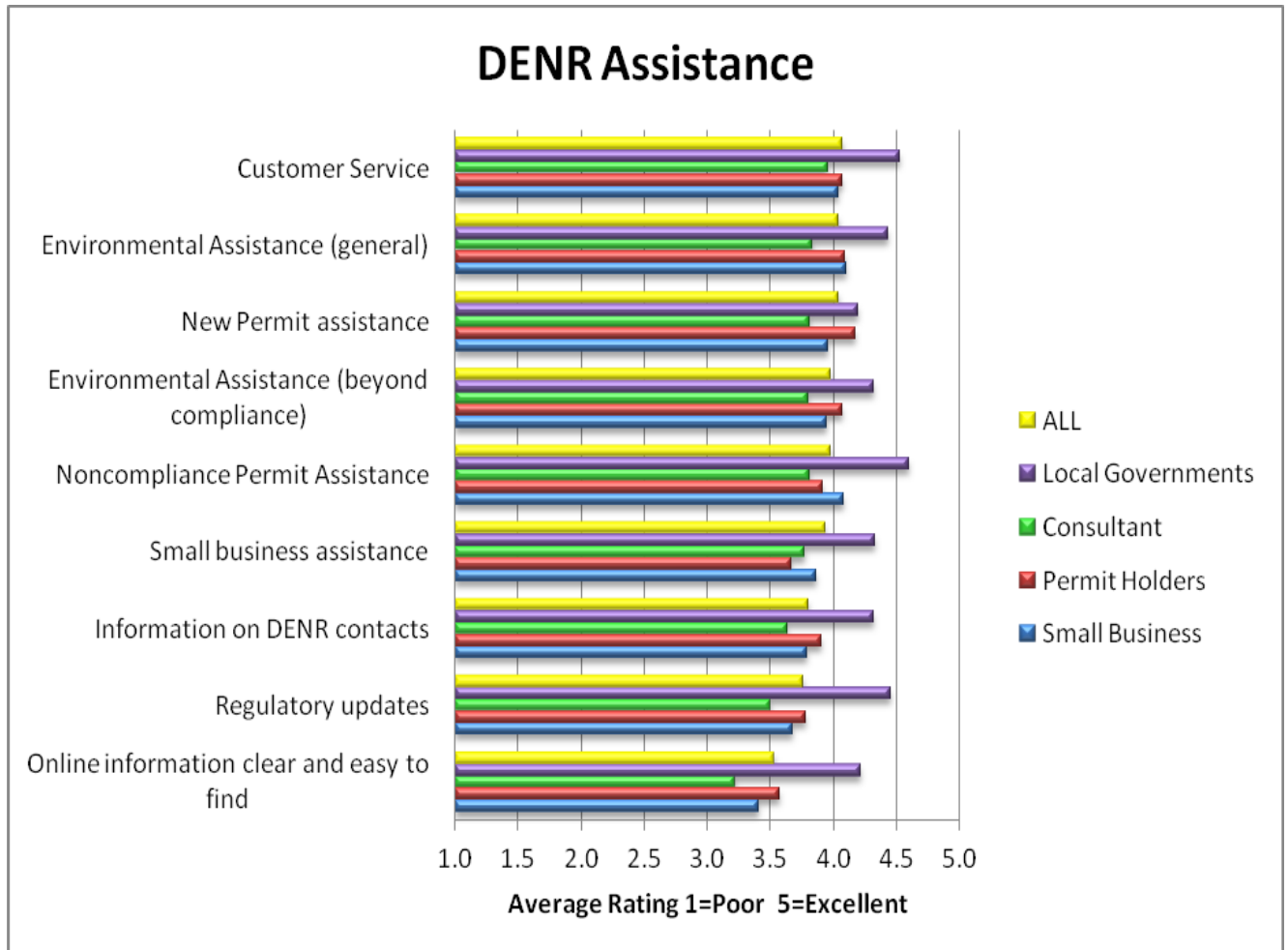


Figure 12. Graph of average rating of DENR assistance by category.

Question 8 of the 2013 survey asked respondents to rate their customer experience with DENR in eight different categories. The scale used to rank each category was ranked from a score of 1, indicating a poor performance, to a 5, indicating an excellent performance. This question also appeared in both the 2013 and the 2011 surveys and had closely related trends. The average ranking in 2013 was 4.0, a 23 percent increase from the 3.2 ranking in the 2011 survey. More than half of the categories in 2013 ranked above a 4.0 rating while none were above a 3.5 rating in 2011. The top three categories in both surveys were factual and accurate, helpful and approachable, as shown in Figure 13.

The bottom three categories were appropriate balance (regulatory/business), consistency and transparency. Of the comments left by survey takers, more than half were complimenting DENR and its agencies. The other comments asked for such things as more regulatory consistency between offices, improving the website, and improving communications issues with various offices.

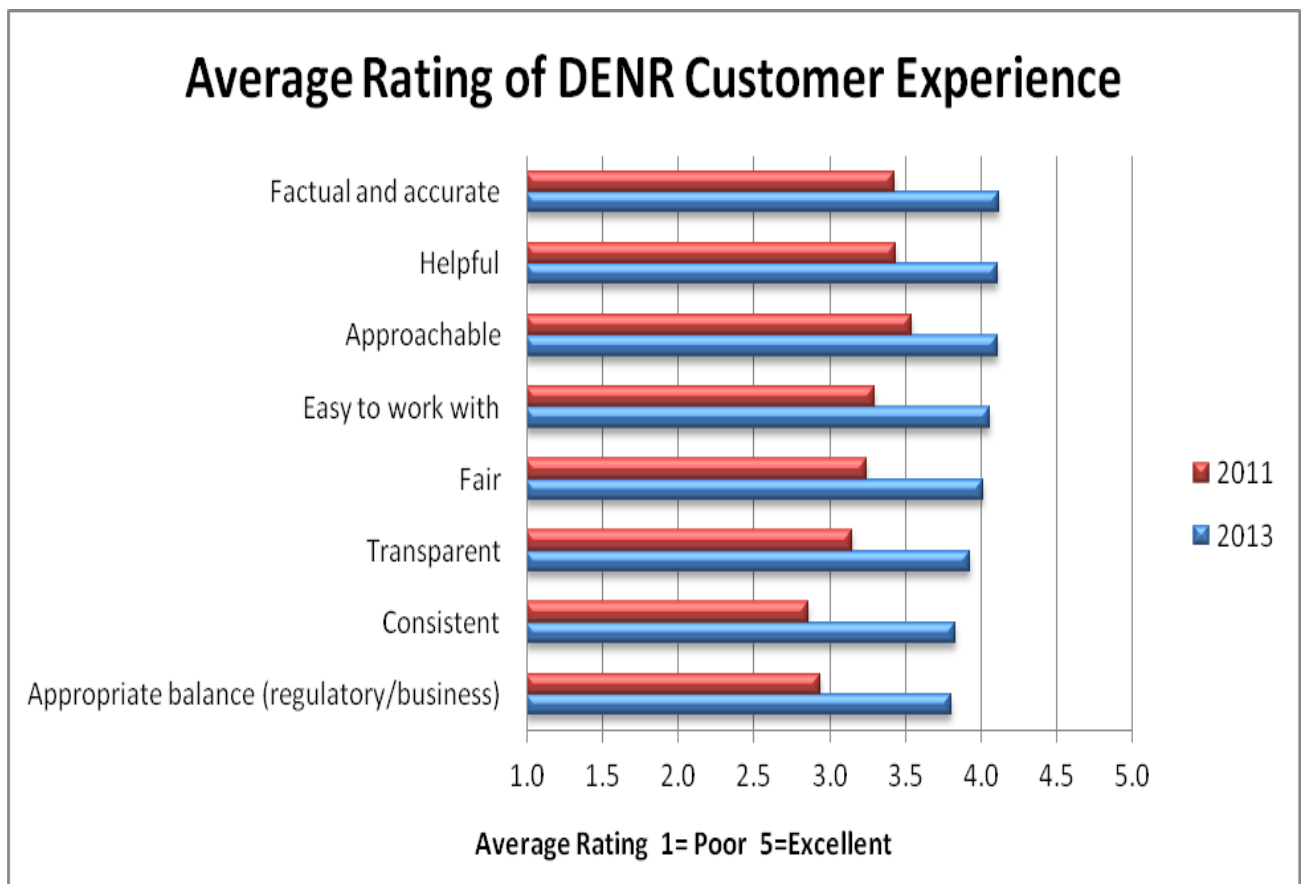


Figure 13. Graph of average rating of customer experience with DENR.

In the 2011 survey, one of the top recommendations for improvements was the structure, content and quality of materials or search features of the DENR website. Since the 2011 survey, there have been a number of marked improvements made to the website based on the feedback. Some of the notable projects completed have been DENR's new and improved search engine, its new permit tracker application, more DENR sections with websites on the portal site, development of a department forms web page and the Division of Air Quality introduced a searchable permit database. New to the 2013 survey was a question specifically asking for feedback on the DENR website. The three categories were navigation, search and the ability to find information quickly. The scale used to rank each category was from 1 to 5 with 1 indicating a poor performance and 5 indicating an excellent performance. Figure 14 shows an average satisfaction of 3.4 on both the ease of navigation and a helpful search feature. The ability to find information quickly ranked the lowest with an average rating of 3.3. Figure 15 shows the breakdown of responses for each answer.

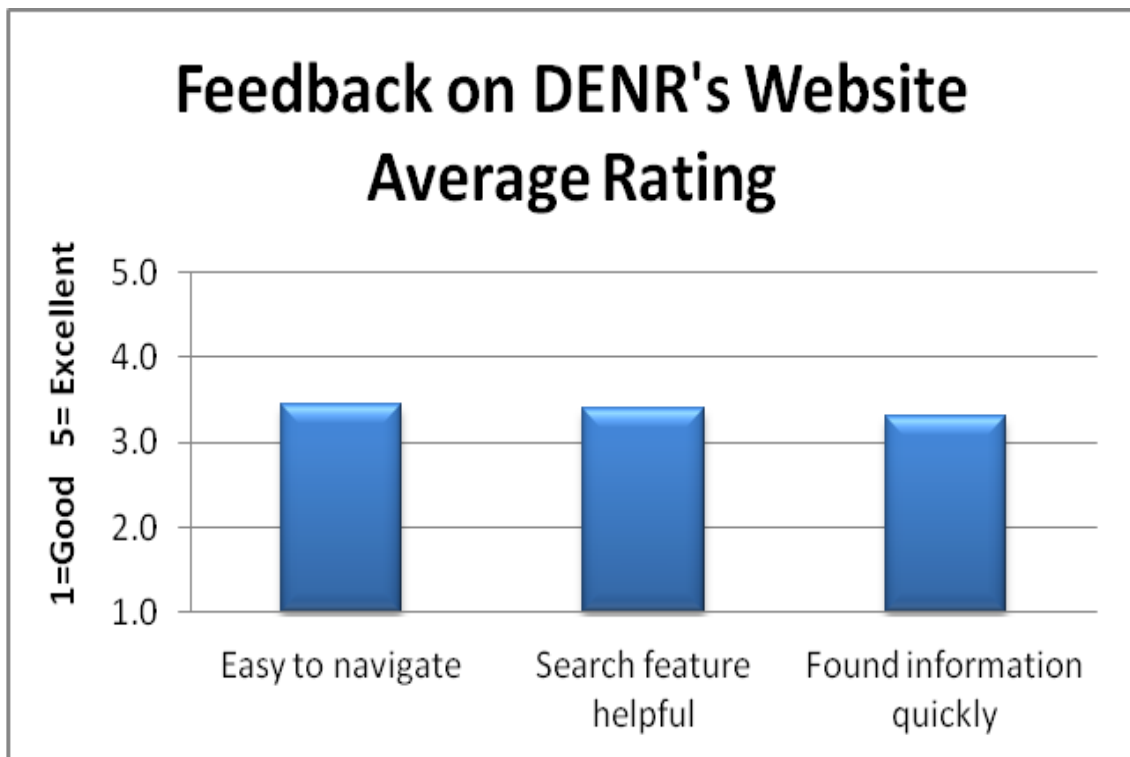


Figure 14. Average rating of DENR's website

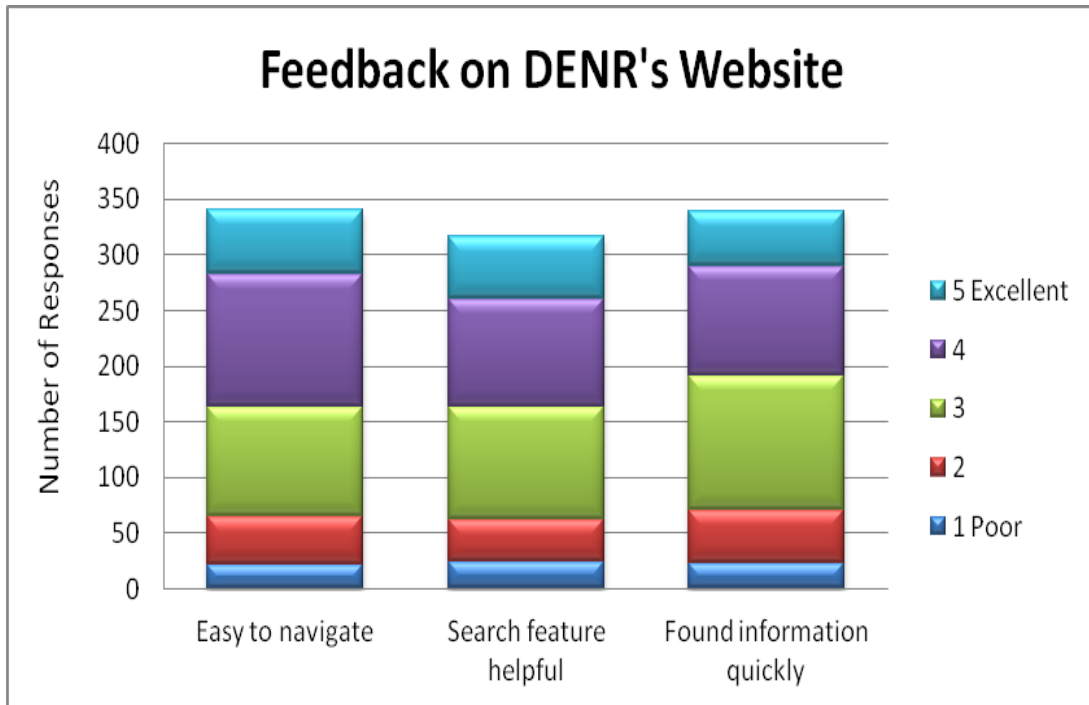


Figure 15. Graph of feedback on DENR's website

In order to gain further insight into improvements, DENR added two new open-ended questions. When asked in question 10 of the 2013 survey what group in DENR exemplifies great customer service, 260 of the 371 people responded with positive comments about DENR divisions and programs.

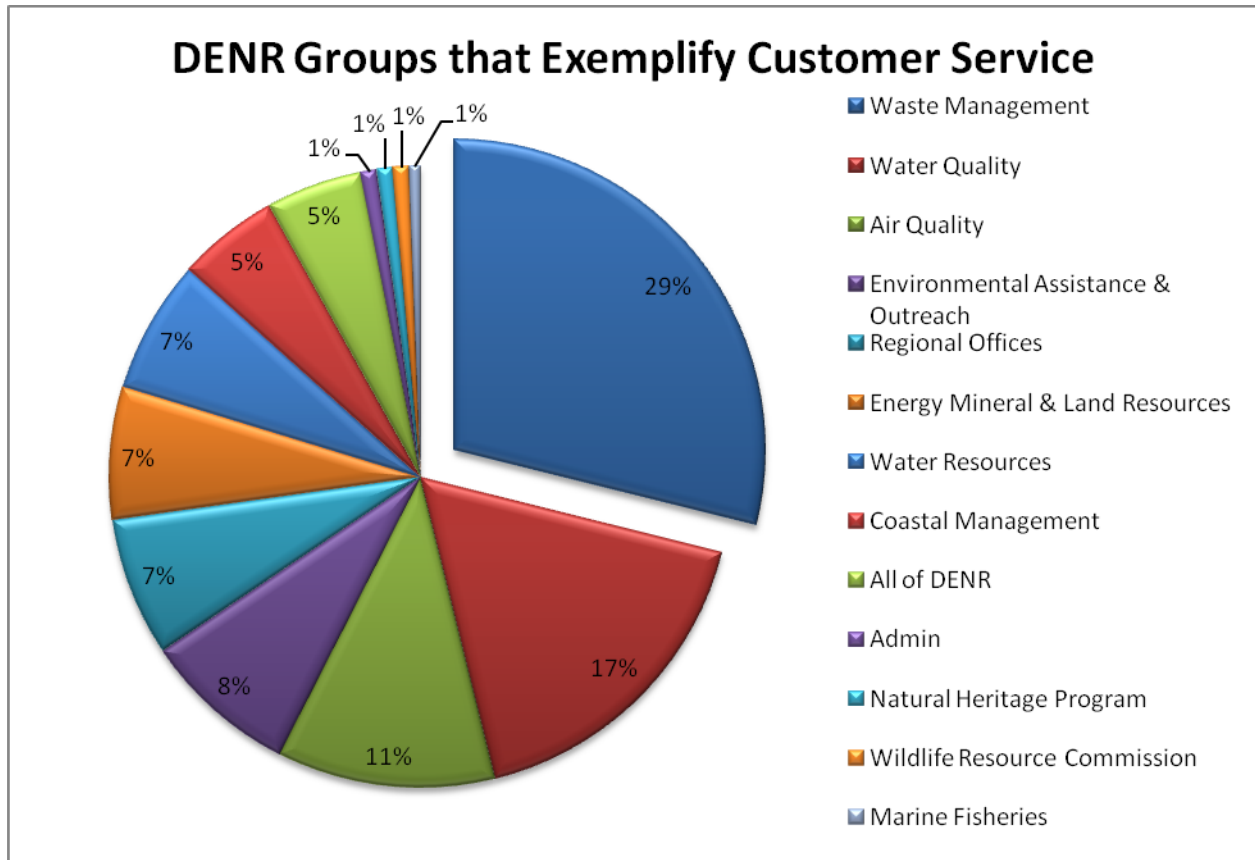


Figure 16. Graph of DENR groups that respondents consider exemplify customer service

The final question of the 2013 survey asked for suggestions on how DENR could serve its customers better. Of the 371 respondents, only 128 responded to this question. (Figure 17) Twenty five offered compliments about individuals, offices or divisions and eighteen replied with complaints.

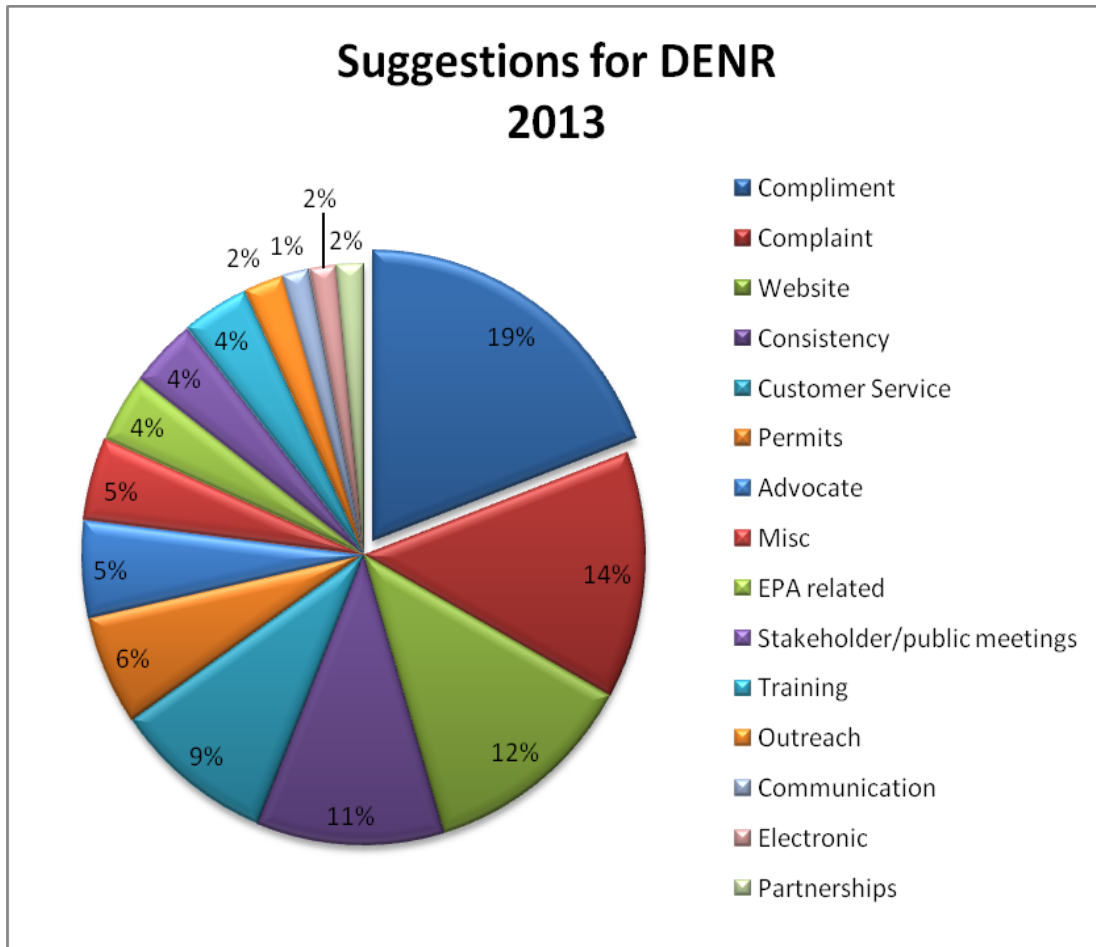


Figure 17. Pie chart showing all responses to the suggestion for DENR

After removing the compliments and complaints from the chart, the actual suggested areas of improvements can be viewed (Figure 18). Once again, the DENR website is by far the greatest area suggested for improvement, followed by consistency and customer service.

Website:

“Improve the website”

“Web sites not consistent through out. Needs more consistency so you can navigate through them better.”

“Make the website more user friendly.”

Consistency:

“Consistency in the application of regulations”

“Creating consistency between the regional offices”

“More consistency in compliance, enforcement, and assistance across regions is definitely needed.”

Customer Service:

“Timely response to submittals needs to be addressed.”

“Require folks to return or at least acknowledge phone messages and emails.”

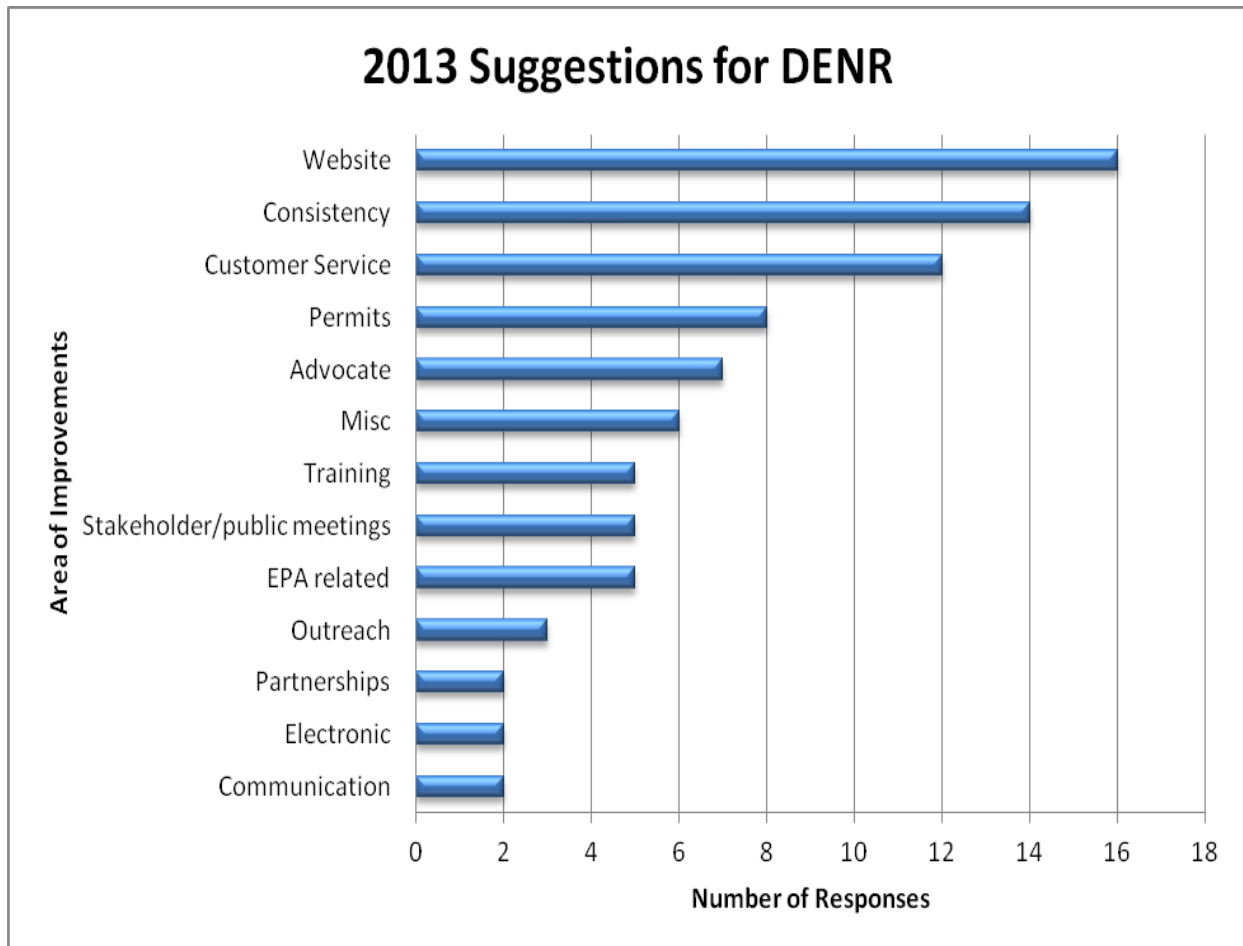


Figure 18. Graph of suggested areas of improvements for DENR.

In conclusion, while it appears that customer satisfaction with DENR is steadily increasing across the state, there are still some areas that the department can improve upon. Specifically, within the customer service aspects of DENR are improvements to the website, timeliness of responses (phone and email) to customers, and the consistency of the regulating divisions within the department.