



# Recreation Research Update



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## Effectiveness of Visitor Information Programs in Giant Sequoia National Monument

In summer 2001 Giant Sequoia and black bear campground program attendees and non-attendees (329 usable surveys) were surveyed. The focus was on program effectiveness and use of information services.

Results indicate that the majority of visitors to GSNM use information services. Prior to visiting, most people seek functional information such as directions, entrance fees, weather, or things to do. Their prior sources are primarily family and friends, maps, web sites, or printed sources. On-site, visitors continue to seek functional information, including forest rules and regulations, campsite availability, activities to do, and current fire restrictions.

Use of interpretive information increases on-site, with at least a third of the respondents reporting they sought information about plants and animals in the forest or the history of the forest. Visitor centers were not the most common source of on-site information. Instead these were visitor maps, signs, and ranger station staff. Information used during GSNM visits included both functional and interpretive information, such as directions to specific sites, nature trails, staff available to answer questions, interpretive talks, and exhibits/displays. First time visitors rated staff available to answer questions significantly higher than return visitors. Frequent visitors rated the importance of directions to specific sites significantly higher than infrequent or new visitors.

Data on knowledge gained from the programs showed that those who attended a bear program scored significantly higher than non-attendees. Those who attended Giant Sequoia programs perceived their knowledge of Sequoias to be higher than those who did not attend these programs. However, objective measures of Sequoia knowledge were not significantly higher for those attending campground programs.

Assessments of the importance respondents place on forest management objectives showed the highest averages for protecting Sequoias, providing wildlife habitat, and opportunities to see Sequoias.

The data also suggest that the managers may be able to use information sources, including campground programs, maps, signs, web sites, and nature trails to increase visitor knowledge and appreciation of how forest management can improve the health of Giant Sequoia

groves. **For more information about this study contact Jim Absher at 909-680-1559.**

## Successful Law Enforcement: Case Studies in the U.S. Forest Service

Since 1997 Debbie Chavez (PSW) and Jo Tynon (Oregon State University) have been examining the types and impacts of crime and violence on public lands. Recent efforts looked at three successful cases of managing crime and violence in order to develop a toolbox of key characteristics of success.

The first case study examined a site that was recovered from criminal elements/crime or violent events; in the second we examined best practices of crime prevention that primarily addressed excellence in communication; and in the third one we examined hot spots and hot issues. Common to all sites were problems such as assaults and drug and alcohol abuse. Other problems identified were gang activity or extremist groups, resource damage, thefts and homicide. In the first two case studies there were watershed or breaking point events that led to action. The call to action was not always precipitated by one of these events; sometimes it was a series of problems or seemingly intractable ones that preceded action.

At all three sites specific actions included adding law enforcement, having closures as needed (and for as long as necessary) and checkpoints. The key characteristics of success in law enforcement were: (1) Force of Personalities-- Attention to an area depended upon individuals not on policies; (2) Resources-- expressed as time, money and people. This can also include direct visitor management and resource hardening. (3) Persistence-- It takes a lot of planning, and the process is slow; (4) Collaboration-- Collaboration and partnering within the Forest Service, with other law enforcement agencies, with community and volunteer groups, and with recreation visitors and recreation clubs, and (5) Communication-- Communication varied depending on the issue being addressed though some key components were to make a communication plan, get the word out to the public, be reliable and be consistent.

Seeing families returning and recreating in an area was considered a measure of success. Using these tools and following the guidelines from these case studies should result in successful management of crime and violence on public lands. **For more information about this study contact Debbie Chavez at 909-680-1558.**

## Homeowners' Concern about Wildland Fire

A cooperative study between Dr. Christine Vogt at Michigan State University and Pat Winter focused on homeowners' attitudes about fire. Permanent and seasonal homeowners were asked to share their level of concern about wildland fires and attitudes toward fuel management approaches. Homeowners in Big Bear Lake, California (San Bernardino National Forest), in three Colorado counties (Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests), and in three Florida counties (Apalachicola National Forest), were included in the study. Participants lived in the wildland-urban interface (WUI), or areas at risk of being affected by wildland fires and fuel management efforts.

A total of 9,388 homeowners were identified with the assistance of county tax assessors. Samples were drawn from these county lists; 939 questionnaires were completed.

Homeowners rated level of concern for wildland fires at various points of home tenure. Level of consideration of wildland fire occurring near the area where they were interested in purchasing a home was nonexistent, or fairly low, prior to their home search. For most, consideration grew slightly during the home buying process, and then substantially after purchase. Exceptions were permanent homeowners in California (20% of them expressed wildland fire was a big consideration from before, to after purchase) and seasonal homeowners in Florida (approximately 10% or less listed fire as a big consideration).

Homeowners were asked about home and lot characteristics considered during home purchase. For all, the strongest consideration was having fire protection service available in the form of firefighters and fire trucks. A majority of residents indicated "no consideration" of several important items that reduce fire risk in the WUI (e.g., nonflammable roofing materials).

View of management approaches varied geographically. For example, homeowners in California were most positive about defensible space, in Colorado, defensible space and mechanical fuel reduction, and in Florida, prescribed burning, mechanical fuel reduction and defensible space were all positive.

Findings suggest potential wildland-urban interface homebuyers know very little about potential risks and resource management efforts. Once a person lives in the WUI awareness increases. **For more information about this study contact Christine Vogt at vogtc@msu.edu or 517-353-0793 x128.**

## Unit Publications

Absher, E. M.; Absher, J. 2002. **Small-scale, applied research to guide interpretive planning.** In Paris, R. S. (ed). 2002 Interpretive Sourcebook, Proceedings of the National

Interpreters Workshops; 2002 November 12-16; Virginia Beach, VA. Fort Collins, CO: National Association for Interpretation: p. 102-103.

Ewert, A.; Voight, A.; McLean, D.; Hronek, B.; Beilfuss, G. 2002 Book of Abstracts, The Ninth International Symposium on Society and Resource Management, Revised Edition; June 2-5; Bloomington, IN. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University. 272 p. Included are:

Andereck, K.L.; Absher, J.D.; Knopf, R.C.; Baker, D.A.; Virden, R.J. 2002. **The relationship between communication and visitor satisfaction.** p. 12-14.

Chavez, D.J. 2002. **Communicating through international symbols.** p. 65-66.

Chavez, D.J.; Tynon, J.F. 2002. **Response to crimes on public lands: National Forest case studies.** p. 216-217.

Cindrity, S.; Vogt, C.A. 2002. **A changing landscape in the wildland-urban interface: Seasonal and permanent residents' adoption and approval of fuel mitigation programs.** p. 172-173.

Hendricks, W.W.; Chavez, D.J.; Phippen, K.D. 2002. **Cruising, surf's up and power lounging: Place attachment, constraints, observations, and fire management.** p. 148-149.

Hendricks, W.W.; Chavez, D.J.; Phippen, K.D. 2002. **Placement [Place] attachment in Big Sur: Observance-influence of fire management practices.** p. 107-108.

Kneeshaw, K.; Bright, A.D.; Vaske, J.; Absher, J.D. 2002. **Scale development and predictive validity of fire management value orientations.** p. 242-243.

Tynon, J.F.; Chavez, D.J. 2002. **Testing Pizam's model: Classification of outdoor recreation crimes.** p. 222.

Winter, P.L.; Cvetkovich, G.T. 2002. **Findings from three studies on public reaction to threatened and endangered species management.** p. 224-225.

Winter, P.L.; McColum, D. [McColum, D.] 2002. **Californians' opinions of wildland and wilderness fire management.** p. 143-144.

James, K.; Absher, J. 2002. **Do visitors know how much they don't know?** In Paris, R. S. (ed). 2002 Interpretive Sourcebook, Proceedings of the National Interpreters Workshops; 2002 November 12-16; Virginia Beach, VA. Fort Collins, CO: National Association for Interpretation: p. 87-88.

James, K.; Absher, J. 2002. **Information services: Content and timing to meet visitor needs.** In Paris, R. S. (ed). 2002 Interpretive Sourcebook, Proceedings of the National Interpreters Workshops; 2002 November 12-16; Virginia Beach, VA. Fort Collins, CO: National Association for Interpretation: p. 97-98.

Winter, P.L. 2002. **Californians' opinions on the management of threatened and endangered species.** Unpublished report. Riverside, CA: Pacific Southwest Research Station, Forest Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture. 43 p.

Winter, P.L. 2002. **Californians' opinions on the management of wildland and wilderness fires.** Unpublished report. Riverside, CA: Pacific Southwest Research Station, Forest Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture. 42 p.