



Recreation Research Update



Pacific Southwest Research Station
Wildland Recreation and Urban Cultures

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Caring for the Land and Serving People

Evaluation of the Unit's Efforts

The Wildland Recreation and Urban Cultures work unit (WRUC) has produced many recommendations aimed at incorporating new knowledge and innovative ideas into recreation management practices. While change in some practices are more common today in resource management institutions, it is far from clear what set of factors contribute to successful implementation of innovative behavior. In 2004, PSW entered into an agreement with Dr. Robert Pfister, East Carolina University, to examine diffusion of innovations among USFS and other federal personnel.

The population consisted of individuals requesting recreation research publications from the unit or who had attended the short course for recreation managers at Utah State University. 279 individuals were contacted via mail and email, of whom 120 participated in the study. Data collection was implemented employing a web-based internet survey consisting of six socio-demographic items and 21 Likert-scaled statements pertaining to seven attributes of innovations. The WRUC has four major study areas, and respondents were asked to evaluate any two of the four. The focus of this write-up is the characteristics of the respondents.

The majority of respondents were USFS personnel (73%). Others were university or training center employees, National Park Service or other federal employees. They had worked in their current position an average of 8.5 years. Most described their position duties to mainly be general administration or planning and/or facility design, followed by education/interpretation.

One in eight (12%) reported their superiors expected them to use the new information provided by WRUC in their work. Almost half (45%) reported they were among the first to try out new ideas in their organization. About two in ten (19%) reported that they enjoyed being the first person to try out new ideas in their organization. No one reported that they prefer to approach change very slowly and wait to see the experience of others before trying the ideas themselves.

Future Update issues will describe the results by the four problem areas and will examine the key attributes to adoption of innovative ideas. *For more information about this study contact Deborah Chavez at 951-680-1558 or dchavez@fs.fed.us.*

Community Action Research

An annotated bibliography on community action research was recently completed by Linda Kim, University of California, Riverside, in cooperation with the unit. The bibliography provides a brief review of 50 references drawn from literatures on community action research, incorporating diverse publics, and effective management and public collaboration.

Community action research is most commonly found in the medical, health, and education fields. In this type of research, scientists rely heavily on the local knowledge of community members as experts in situ. In turn, community members rely on researchers who bring their expertise in helping the community address their problems. Hence, trust and relationship building are essential components of this research approach.

Incorporating diverse publics into collaborative endeavors requires an effort to address the barriers to participation in natural resource decision-making. Socioeconomic constraints weigh into difficulties with transportation, available childcare, and time to devote to such efforts. Modes of participation have also been documented as barriers to engaging a diverse public, where concerns about hearings and public meetings were centered in issues about meaningful exchanges. Knowing that a tangible difference can be made increases interest in collaborative endeavors, and shifting modes as options for participation can help reduce constraints.

Public collaboration in natural resource management can help diffuse distrust and increase civic dedication. Such endeavors have been instrumental in empowering ordinary citizens. Conditions that are focused on assuring trust and equity are likely to be more effective. Other desirable attributes include those that are community-based, inclusive, representative, participatory, democratic and diverse. Participation in research is one avenue for consideration, and participants don't always require payment in exchange for their efforts. Recognition of individual efforts and contribution was found to be sufficient in some cases.

With an increasingly diverse society the participation of diverse publics is an essential element in efforts to understand public values. *For more information about this study contact Patricia Winter at 951-680-1557 or pwinter@fs.fed.us.*

Risk, Trust, and Responsibility for Fire Management

Dr. George Cvetkovich (Western Washington University) and Patricia Winter are preparing a report based on the study "Perception of Risk, Trust, Responsibility, and Management Preferences among Fire Prone Communities", conducted in communities surrounding the San Bernardino National Forest. Residents (n=89) participated in focus group discussions and completed a survey.

The Forest Service was judged as having the greatest responsibility for fire management, followed by the California Department of Forestry. Respondents and those who live with them, fellow community residents, and local fire departments were also rated high in responsibility.

Respondents were asked what they believed the primary objective of fire management to be. The largest percentage of the 143 responses involved the reduction of tree density (18.2 percent of responses), fuel removal (7.7 percent), and/or prescribed burns (3.5 percent) in order to establish and maintain a healthy "natural" forest (10.5 percent). Education about wildland fire and management was also expressed as an important goal (9.1 percent). The planning and control of residential and other human development was also identified as important (5.6 percent).

Three aspects of management during fire events were also mentioned. These were the need for coordination between different agencies (3.5 percent), communication between officials and the public (5.6 percent), and the availability of the evacuation routes (5.6 percent).

A number of actions that could effectively reduce fire risk were reported. The vast majority had read about what could be done to protect their homes from wildland fires (97.8 percent), implemented defensible space around their property (94.4 percent), and attended a public meeting about wildland fire (93.3 percent). A majority had also reduced flammable vegetation on their property (75.3 percent), worked with a community effort focused on fire protection (75.3 percent), made inquiries of the local fire safe council or volunteers on how to reduce fire risk (73.0 percent), made inquiries of the local fire department on how to reduce fire risk (64.0 percent), and made inquiries of the local forest ranger (56.2 percent). Reported actions were viewed to be fairly effective in reducing risk.

Future updates will provide additional findings from this study. *For more information about this study contact Patricia Winter at 951-680-1557 or pwinter@fs.fed.us.*

Unit Publications

Absher, J.D.; Graefe, A.R.; Burns, R.C. 2006.

Monitoring public reactions to the U.S. Forest Service Recreation fee program. In Siegrist, D., Clivaz, C., Hunziker, M. and Iten, S. (eds). The 3rd International Conference on Monitoring and Management of Visitor Flows in Recreational and Protected Areas; 2006 September 13-17; Rapperswil, Switzerland. Rapperswil, Switzerland: Publisher; p. 50-51.

Absher, J.D.; Vaske, J.J.; Bright, A.D.; Don Carlos, A. 2006. **Effective communication about wildfire management along the Colorado Front Range.** Proceedings of the Third International Fire Ecology and Management Congress; 2006 November 13-17; San Diego, CA.

Chavez, D.J.; Knap, N.E. 2006. **Manager perceptions of issues and actions for off-highway vehicle management on National Forests of California.** Res. Paper PSW-RP-250. Albany, CA: Pacific Southwest Research Station, Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. 253 p.

Cindrity, S.J. 2005. **Home ownership and fire in the wildland-urban interface: A study of permanent and seasonal homeowners.** Masters Thesis. Department of Park, Recreation and Tourism Resources, Michigan State University, 140 p.

Kyle, G.T.; Absher, J.D.; Hammitt, W.E.; Cavin, J. 2006. **An examination of the motivation-Involvement Relationship.** *Journal of Leisure Sciences* 28: 467-485.

Li, C.; Zinn, H.C.; Chick, G.E.; Absher, J.D.; Graefe, A.R. 2006. **Segmentation of visitors' cross-culture values in forest recreation.** In Siegrist, D., Clivaz, C., Hunziker, M. and Iten, S. (eds). The 3rd International Conference on Monitoring and Management of Visitor Flows in Recreational and Protected Areas; 2006 September 13-17; Rapperswil, Switzerland. Rapperswil, Switzerland: Publisher; p. 324-328.

Mann, C.; Absher, J.D. 2006. **An improved methodological approach to recreation conflict analysis in the black forest.** In Siegrist, D., Clivaz, C., Hunziker, M. and Iten, S. (eds). The 3rd International Conference on Monitoring and Management of Visitor Flows in Recreational and Protected Areas; 2006 September 13-17; Rapperswil, Switzerland. Rapperswil, Switzerland: Publisher; p. 293-294.