



Recreation Research Update



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Perceptions of Law Enforcement: Impacts to Recreation

This was the fifth in a series of studies evaluating the perceptions about U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service (USFS) law enforcement of the roles, responsibilities, and issues entailed in their jobs. The study was conducted by Dr. Debbie Chavez (PSW) and Dr. Jo Tynon (Oregon State University). One of the objectives for this study covering National Forest System line officers (NFS Line; forest supervisors and district rangers) was to determine NFS Line perceptions of the impacts of crime and violence to recreation visitors and other forest users. An e-mail survey was administered to 537 NFS Line in the USFS; 276 were completed and returned (51%). Most of the NFS Line respondents were male (67%). Most were White (76%). The NFS Line respondents had been in the USFS an average of 25 years, and had worked as NFS Line for an average of 9 years.

The NFS Line respondents ranked their highest job priority as protecting National Forest System employees and forest users, followed by protecting forest resources, and protecting public property. They believed that the law enforcement officers with whom they most commonly interacted had a similar set of priorities.

The types of crime/activities NFS Line believed to be on the increase were dumping of household waste, methamphetamine labs, natural fire hazards, road hazards, dumping of landscape waste, and methamphetamine chemical dumps.

The NFS Line respondents described law enforcement primary customers as Forest Service employees, forest users, and local agencies. They believed that forest users wanted to be assured of a safe and enjoyable experience while on the forest. They also thought customers wanted see law enforcement, and they wanted them to take action, to conserve the lands, and to allow use/access. More than half of the NFS Line respondents felt that recreation visitors were mostly safe from other visitors and mostly physically safe from site features. The types of investigations most commonly found in their area of responsibility that were thought to affect recreation visitors were urban-associated crime (e.g., theft), drug activity, and natural resource issues (e.g., timber theft). *For more*

information about this study contact Deborah Chavez at 951-680-1558 or dchavez@fs.fed.us.

Additional Insights into Sustainable Operations

This column continues the reporting on the sustainable operations study in Region 5 and PSW, conducted by Dr. Pat Winter (PSW). Using the Proenvironmental Behavior Change Model (PBCM), an analysis of forces that would encourage or discourage personal actions was conducted.

Social norms can promote or discourage proenvironmental behaviors. Respondents' beliefs in a personal and professional responsibility for behaving proenvironmentally whenever possible was associated with a greater number of responsible actions taken. Positive reminders of agency values in support of sustainable operations, tips and resources, and other means of support would help affirm the agency norm in favor of sustainable operations.

Competing attitudes is the 2nd factor in the PBCM. Some open ended comments were offered that suggested the agency has much more important issues to address than sustainable operations, such as decreasing resources and work force. It is important to recognize concerns that might be aligned with sustainable operations in addition to those about the environment, for example, cost savings or health issues.

Setting design is the 3rd consideration in PBCM, where the physical setting may increase the costs of proenvironmental behavior. For example, the lack of recycling programs at their place of employment was mentioned. Programs designed for the specific location can help overcome this barrier.

The 4th factor in the PBCM is habit, which can impede or facilitate responsible action. Some damaging actions are unthinkingly performed out of habit or tradition, for example driving an SUV around town instead of finding a more fuel efficient means of transportation for the day. Education and reminders to increase awareness are helpful interventions.

Finally, lack of knowledge is part of the PBCM. Several respondents mentioned the desire for more information about programs such as green hotels, and costs and benefits of actions taken. Providing additional information on websites and through other means can

help address knowledge-related barriers. Focusing on sustainable operations efforts that recognize and address these five factors of the PBCM may be helpful in understanding measures to reduce barriers to implementation, and pathways to increase successful implementation of sustainable operations. *For more information about this study contact Pat Winter at 951-680-1557 or pwinter@fs.fed.us.*

More on Recreation Conflict and Management

In the last update we reported on the first article from the Black Forest Nature Park (BFNP) study. A second, companion article looks at this issue with more of a management focus and provides an in depth look at two stakeholder groups. This study explored conflict in recreational use of the BFNP by six different nature sports groups as a function of infrastructure, forest management and other users. A multi-step, methodological triangulation conflict model from U.S. recreation management was applied and tested in the Park.

Results from two groups, hikers and mountain bikers, are analyzed in depth. The main conflict potentials were due to infrastructure and value conflicts. These were influenced by various visitor characteristics such as resource attachment, experiences, activity-style, expectations and motives.

Generally, the results suggest that the influence of visitor characteristics may vary greatly across groups and that a statistical analysis of survey responses may be incomplete in order to gain a satisfactory explanation of the meanings that serve the ultimate goal of nature park management.

This result points to the complexities that exist in the “real world” and suggests that additional effort needs to be taken to accommodate the diversity of user groups that use the BFNP. As a result, a further step of stakeholder involvement and feedback was used to add a practical management component. The article reports on efforts to add to the results from the quantitative data analysis by further interpretations from interviews with agency and group leaders. This methodological combination reveals a robust understanding of recreation conflict and management in the BFNP and suggests that although conflicts may never be fully reduced they can be dealt with in mutually satisfactory ways. *For more information about this study contact Jim Absher at 951-680-1559 or jabsher@fs.fed.us.*

Unit Publications

- Absher, J.D.; Vaske, J.J. 2007. Examining the sources of public support for wildland fire policies. *Fire Management Today* 67 (1): 35-39.
- Chavez, D.J.; Knap, N.E. 2007. Improving fire management: what resource managers need to know from recreation visitors. *Fire Management Today* 67 (1): 32-34.
- Chavez, D.J.; Tynon, J.F. 2007. Forest Service special agent in charge report: national study. Res. Paper. PSW-RP-253. Albany, CA: Pacific Southwest Research Station, Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture; 42 p.
- Fege, A.; Absher, J. 2007. Inviting other professions to help reduce wildfire property losses. *Fire Management Today* 67 (3): 19-23.
- In: González-Cabán, A.; Haynes, R.W.; McCaffrey, S.; Mercer, E.; Watson, A. (Tech. eds.) Fire social science research-selected highlights. Gen. Tech. Rep. PNW-GTR-736. Portland, OR: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Research Station.
- *McCaffrey, S.; Winter, P. 2007. Public perceptions. p. 47-50.
- *Winter, P. 2007. Assess and understand the interaction of fire and recreation. p. 11-16.
- *Winter, P.; Absher, J.; Watson, A. 2007. Assess and enhance public trust. p. 5-9.
- Li, C.; Absher, J.D., Graefe, A.R.; Hsu, Y. 2008. Services for culturally diverse customers in parks and recreation. *Leisure Sciences* 30: 87-92.
- Mann, C.; Absher, J. D. 2008. Recreation conflict potential and management in the northern/central Black Forest Nature Park. *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management* 51(3): 363-380.
- Olsen, C.S.; Shindler, B.A. 2007. Citizen-agency interactions in planning and decisionmaking after large wildfires. Gen. Tech. Rep. PNW-GTR-715. Portland, OR: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Research Station. 37 p.
- Winter, P.L. 2008. Pacific Southwest Research Station and Region 5 sustainable operations survey report. Misc-08-083. Albany, CA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Research Station. 84 p.
www.fs.fed.us/psw/publications/documents/psw_misc8083.pdf