

Responsive Management Report



Summer 2002

“Excellent companies are better listeners.” —Tom Peters

Measuring Public Opinion on, Attitudes Toward and the Economic Value of the Fish and Wildlife Resource in Wyoming

The mission of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD), the only entity of Wyoming state government directly charged with managing Wyoming’s fish and wildlife resources, is “conserving wildlife, serving people.”

Since its establishment, the Department has worked to incorporate biological and ecological research into the management of Wyoming’s wildlife resources. By working to base management decisions on fact, rather than speculation or conjecture, the agency has been able to provide the state’s populous with productive fisheries and abundant wildlife populations. Through these efforts, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department works to succeed in “conserving wildlife.”

Just as the Department’s fish and wildlife management programs are more successful when based on a solid foundation of research, the second part of the Department’s mission, “serving people,” has also been made more successful when based on a solid foundation of research.

Through the use of a variety of social science research methods and a long-term agency-wide commitment to “serving people” based on

a solid foundation of fact, the Department has developed programs responsive to the Wyoming public and its numerous constituent groups, especially hunters, anglers, and wildlife viewers.

“Basing important fish and wildlife management program decisions on the input of a few individuals or on speculation and conjecture is just not good business,” notes Larry Kruckenberg, Special Assistant for Policy for the WGFD.

“We base our natural resource programs on research and the scientific method,” states Walt Gasson, WGFD Policy Coordinator, “so it only makes sense to understand public attitudes based on a solid

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Public Attitudes Toward Wyoming Game & Fish Department Law Enforcement Activities

The purpose of this study was to evaluate Wyoming adult residents' attitudes toward, knowledge of, and priorities of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department's law enforcement programs and activities. Awareness of the activities and functions of Wyoming game wardens were assessed along with the attitudes and opinions toward various duties performed by Wyoming game wardens.

Some of the topics explored in this survey were:

- The importance of game warden activities.
- Game warden effectiveness and professionalism.
- Knowledge of Wyoming game and fish regulations.
- Opinions on why people violate game and fish laws.
- Information and education provided to the public about game and fish regulations.

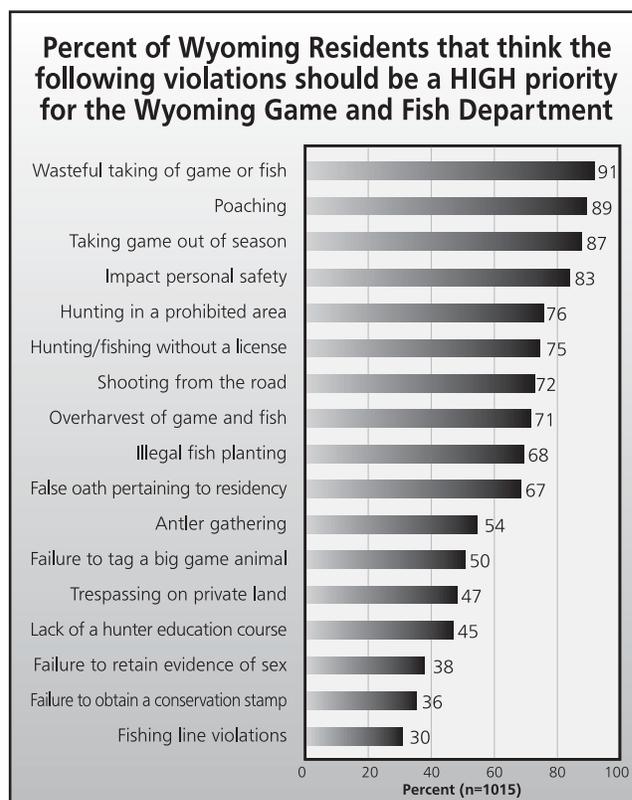
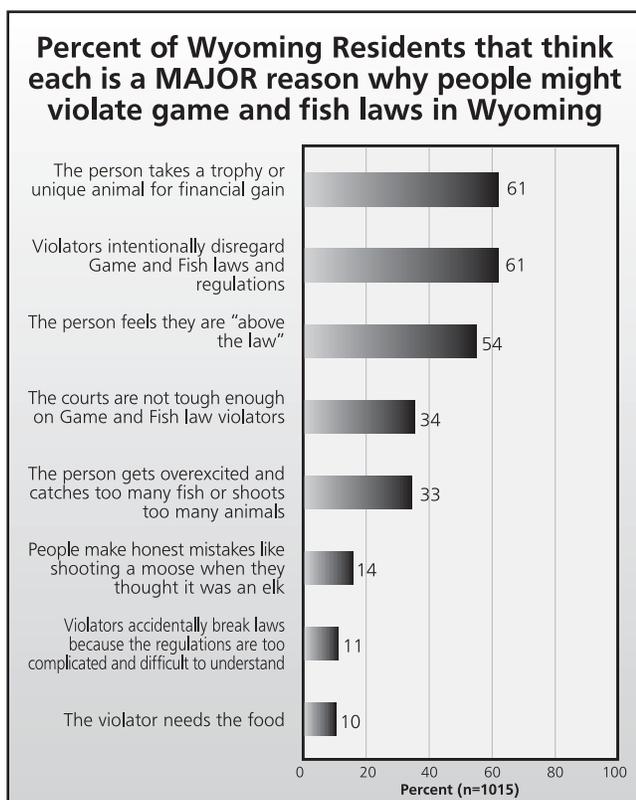
Wyoming residents' opinions toward Wyoming Game and Fish game wardens were extremely positive. Most Wyoming residents held game wardens in high regard, and their personal experiences with war-

dens supported their positive opinions.

Ninety-nine percent of Wyoming residents felt the enforcement of Wyoming's game and fish laws was either a very (91%) or somewhat (8%) important activity for game wardens. There were no responses that indicated the enforcement of Wyoming game and fish laws was not an important activity.

The top three violations that Wyoming residents felt should be a high priority for the Department were wasteful taking of game or fish (91%), poaching (89%), and taking game out of season (87%). Violations of game and fish laws were attributed to deliberate disregard for game and fish laws and regulations rather than a lack of knowledge and understanding of the laws or by accident.

Seventy-nine percent of residents agreed (either strongly or moderately) that the Wyoming Game and Fish Department did a good job in educating the public about regulations. Eighty-three percent of residents felt that the information provided in hunting and fishing regulation booklets was adequate to inform the public of hunting and fishing laws.



The Wyoming Game and Fish Department

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foundation of research. This doesn't mean that public opinion should dictate what we do all of the time, but developing programs with a solid understanding of public attitudes and values often means the difference between success and failure of a program...and after all, we are a *public* agency."

"Individual phone calls from the public to the Department, input at public meetings, and informal conversations with the public in the field or at a club meeting provide valuable public input to the Department," notes Chris Burkett, Strategic Management Coordinator for the Department. "But only through formal scientific studies, such as scientifically designed public attitude surveys, can the Department be sure—with statistical accuracy—of where different public and constituent groups stand on various issues," states Burkett.

"Excellent companies are better listeners" notes management expert Tom Peters. Through a formal research program of listening to its constituents—the Wyoming public and various groups—the Wyoming Game and Fish Department is not only working to achieve its mission of "serving people" but is also striving to become an excellent and responsive public agency.



Public Opinion on Wolf and Grizzly Bear Management

In 1995 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service initiated a wolf reintroduction program in Yellowstone National Park. In ensuing years, the wolves began to expand to areas outside of the Park. To better understand public attitudes toward wolves and the management of wolf packs that became established outside of the Park, the Department commissioned Responsive Management to conduct a scientific study of Wyoming residents' attitudes toward various options for wolf management.

Overall, a majority (77%) of respondents supported the state's involvement in wolf management. Only 12% of respondents strongly opposed the state's involvement.

Respondents provided their opinions on five alternatives for wolf management within Wyoming. Overall, Alternative 3, which involved restricting wolves to 10 packs inside and near the Park, was most highly supported (60%), and Alternative 1, which called for no state involvement, was least supported (27%). The five alternatives and the percent of support and opposition among the Wyoming public were:

1. No state involvement: 27% supported, 68% opposed.
2. Restrict wolves to 10 packs inside the Park; wolves that leave the park for an extended time would be relocated or killed: 52% supported, 42% opposed.
3. Restrict wolves to 10 packs inside the Park and surrounding areas; state would assist federal agencies

with wolf management: 60% supported, 33% opposed.

4. Limit wolves to Yellowstone and surrounding areas; manage three separate surrounding areas, with no more than 2 packs per area; state would assist federal agencies with wolf management: 55% supported, 37% opposed.
5. Allow a maximum of 12 packs in the Western two-thirds of Wyoming outside the Park, plus the wolves in the Park; state would assist federal agencies with wolf management: 43% supported, 53% opposed.

A similar study was conducted in 2001 to gather data on Wyoming residents' attitudes toward the possible removal of the grizzly bear from the Endangered Species List. Since Wyoming's grizzly bear population had been increasing, and the presence of grizzly bears near populated areas had created conflicts in the past, the Department needed to develop acceptable methods to address bear/human conflicts.

Results indicated that a majority of residents (87%) felt that grizzly bears are a beneficial component of the ecosystem. Respondents were equally divided on the issue of whether the grizzly bear should be removed from (36%) or left on (36%) the Endangered Species List, and 25% did not know.

Most residents (79%) strongly or moderately supported regulated sport hunting of grizzly bears, if Wyoming's grizzly bear population reaches a large enough size.

Licensed Hunters' Attitudes Toward Game Management Issues

To better understand the opinions of elk, antelope and deer hunters regarding game management issues, the Department conducted three surveys with hunters in Wyoming. Although a separate survey was conducted for each group of hunters, similar questions were presented to each group.

The survey of licensed antelope hunters found that antelope hunters felt there were enough antelope in their hunt area. They also believed the number of antelope was

appropriate for the habitat, and the number of bucks in the hunt area was adequate.

Opinions from mule deer and whitetail deer license holders indicated that they primarily hunt mule deer and prefer to hunt mule deer over whitetail deer.

The majority of mule deer and whitetail deer license holders thought the number of deer had decreased in the last 10 years and that the size of bucks had also decreased. A majority (63%) also felt that habitat quality has remained the same.

The survey of licensed elk hunters showed that the majority of elk hunters hunt almost every year.

Seventy-eight percent of elk hunters hunted on public land. More than half of all elk hunters felt the total number of elk statewide has increased in the past 10 years.

A common finding of all the surveys was that elk, deer and antelope hunters supported restrictions on the use of off-road vehicles for hunting. Overall, the majority of hunters rated the Department as doing a good or excellent job, although very few elk, deer or antelope hunters had attended Game and Fish meetings during the past 5 years.

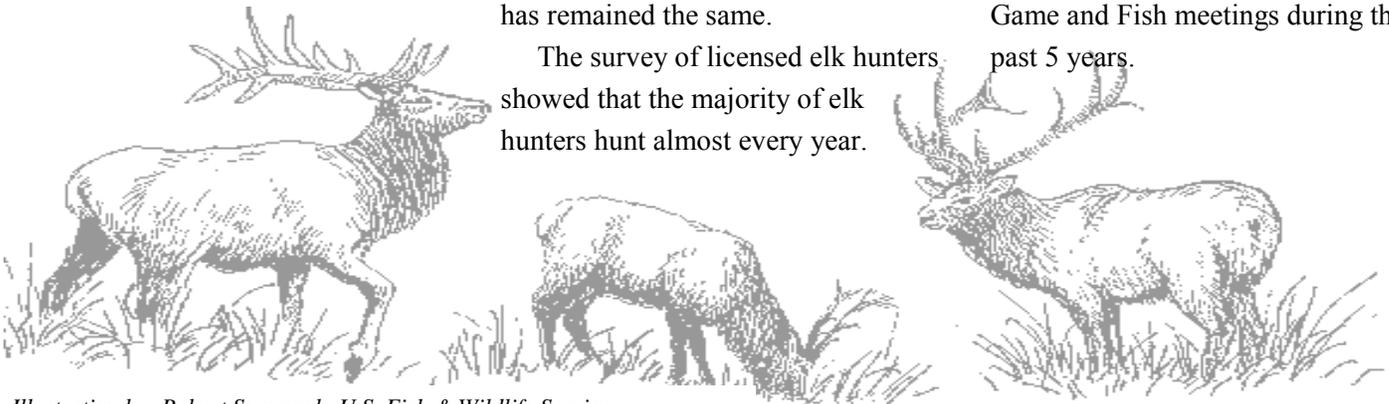


Illustration by: Robert Savannah, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Sportsmen's Attitudes Toward Wyoming Resident Hunting & Fishing License Fees

In recent years, fee increases for resident hunting and fishing licenses in Wyoming have not kept up with the annual rate of inflation. Due to the need for additional funding to maintain hunting and fishing programs and services, Responsive Management conducted a survey to assess resident hunting and fishing license holders' attitudes toward potential hunting and fishing license fee increases.

Those surveyed included antelope, deer, elk, small game/upland

bird, and resident fishing license holders.

Although nearly half (46%) of the respondents believed that license prices had been increasing at a rate that kept pace with inflation, a majority of hunting and fishing license holders supported the idea of increasing hunting and fishing license fees to the annual inflation rate to maintain existing programs.

Smaller cost increases occurring more frequently to match the rate of inflation were preferred by both

hunters and anglers rather than a large increase every few years. Both hunters (60%) and anglers (55%) opposed raising resident hunting license fees more than inflation to expand hunting/fishing programs.

When hunting and fishing license holders were asked for their opinion on the overall performance of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department in providing hunting and fishing opportunities, a majority of them felt the Department was doing a good to excellent job.



Expenditures: Hunting & Fishing is Big Business and Good for Wyoming's Economy

To document the expenditures of sportsmen and women in Wyoming, Responsive Management conducted a series of expenditure surveys on fishing and hunting.

The purposes of these surveys were to review economic impacts and recent spending trends of Wyoming hunters and anglers. The results from these expenditure studies are being used to develop long-term planning and management strategies and to document the economic importance of hunting and fishing to the state of Wyoming.

The "Wyoming Fishing Trip Expenditures Survey" was conducted to estimate fishing-related expenditures. The survey was directed at resident annual license holders, resident youth annual license holders, and nonresident annual license holders. These categories were further evaluated by contrasting those who did not take packaged fishing trips and those who took packaged fishing trips. Average individual expenditures were contrasted per day, per trip, and per season.

The "Wyoming Hunting Expenditure Survey" estimated expenditures related to antelope, deer and elk hunting. Survey results indicated that Wyoming resident antelope hunters spent an estimated \$9.9 million related to their hunting. Non-resident antelope hunters spent an estimated \$19.1 million the same year.

Resident deer hunters spent an estimated \$60.7 million, while non-resident deer hunters spent approximately \$29.5 million. Resident and nonresident elk hunters spent an estimated \$56.3 million and \$16.4 million, respectively. The majority of antelope, deer and elk hunters thought the quality of wildlife management in Wyoming was excellent or good.

To gather hunters' opinions and estimate expenditures for small game and upland game bird hunting in Wyoming, the "Wyoming Small

Game/Upland Game Bird Expenditure Survey" was recently conducted. Small game/upland bird hunters spent over \$52 million on hunting trips in 1999.

Results from this study included how much was spent on packaged hunting trips and non-packaged hunting trips, and the number of hunting trips in which hunters participated.

Currently, Responsive Management is conducting the final phase of this expenditure study series to estimate hunting trip expenditures in Wyoming in 2001.

Wyoming Resident Deer Hunters Expenditures on Deer Hunting Trips

Lodging	\$1,021,991	\$\$
Eating & drinking establishments	3,835,987	\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$
Groceries and/or liquor	6,758,494	\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$
Gasoline	10,473,448	\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$
Motor vehicle repairs & service	3,082,666	\$\$\$\$\$\$
Outfitter & guide service	3,652	
Trespass or access fees	75,123	
Campground fees & permits	121,032	
Entertainment	305,189	\$
Freezer, meat locker & meat processing	2,269,352	\$\$\$\$
Taxidermy	3,604,356	\$\$\$\$\$\$
Gifts & souvenirs	164,332	
Local transportation	2,087	
Other hunting & fishing licenses*	3,839,117	\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$
Minor equipment (items less than \$100)	8,220,445	\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$
Major equipment (items over \$100)	15,826,509	\$
License	1,071,030	\$\$
Total Expenditures	\$60,654,810	

*(not inc. your license)
Calculated using the total number of Wyoming resident deer licenses sold: 52,169

Examining the Attitudes of Motorboat Operators and Personal Watercraft Users in Wyoming

Boating participation in Wyoming by those ages 16 and older has increased from 73,000 participants in 1995 to 83,000 participants in 2001. To better understand the issues of importance to this growing constituency, Responsive Management conducted a study for the Department to assess licensed boat operators' and registered personal watercraft users' opinions on and attitudes toward motorized boating in Wyoming.

A few of the many topics surveyed were motorboat use and location, safety and education, interference from other recreationists while boating, and introduction of parasites and non-native species to Wyoming waters. Highlights from the survey include:

For Boaters, the Most Important Factors for Selecting an Area to Boat Were:

- √ Proximity to home (87%).
- √ Visiting the area before (82%).
- √ Good fishing reputation (79%).
- √ Free public motorboat access to the water (72%).
- √ Liking the regulations of the area (68%).

The Most Important Boating Facilities to Boaters Were:

- √ Plenty of boat ramps (80%).
- √ Parking for vehicles and trailers (80%).
- √ Well maintained roads leading to the area (80%).

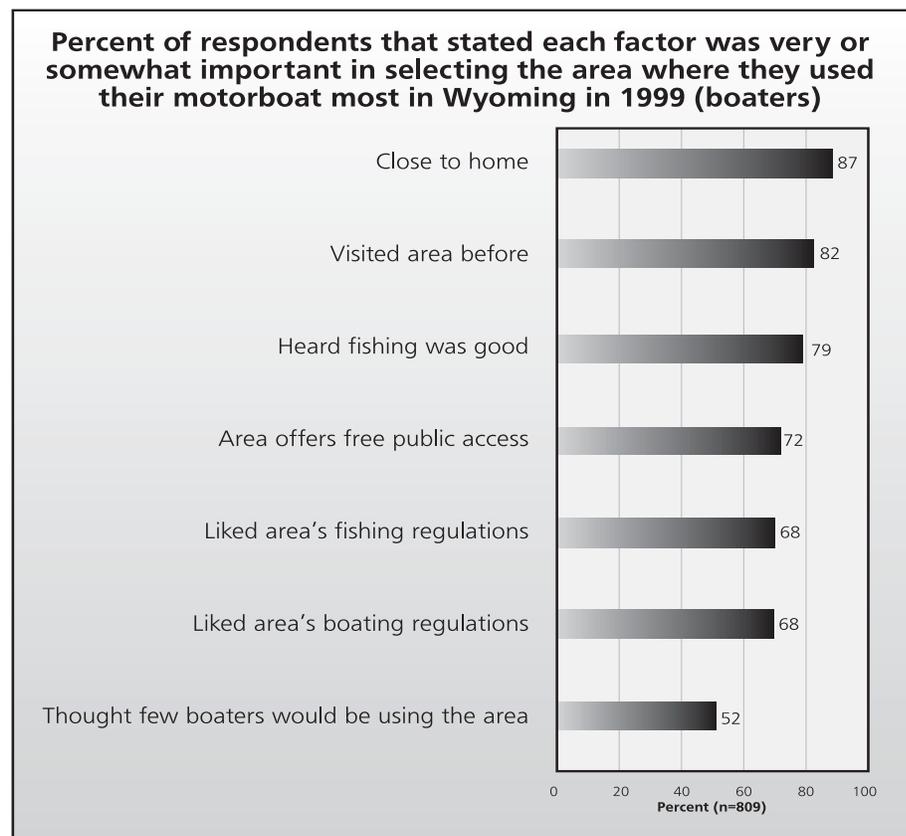
Introduction of Parasites and Non-Native Species to Wyoming Waters

√ 70% of boaters and 66% of personal watercraft users agreed that it is possible to introduce parasites and non-native species by failing to properly rinse their boat's hull or clean out live storage tanks, but 16% of boaters and 25% of personal watercraft users did not know if it was possible.

Boaters (81%) and personal watercraft users (88%) agreed that the Department maintained a sufficient law enforcement presence. Nearly all those who had personal contact with law enforcement officers while boating felt they were professional, courteous and knowledgeable.

Boaters attributed boating accidents primarily to reckless operation and alcohol use. Fifty percent of boaters and 54% of personal watercraft users supported efforts to develop a mandatory boater education course in Wyoming for all motorboat operators. Forty-four percent of boaters and 45% of personal watercraft operators opposed such efforts. The majority of boaters (74%) and personal watercraft users (80%) supported a change in legislation requiring boat occupants under the age of 12 to use a personal flotation device at all times.

Nearly all respondents (97% of boaters and 96% of personal watercraft users) were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their boating experiences in the past 5 years.



About Responsive Management

Responsive Management is a nationally recognized public opinion and attitude survey research firm specializing in natural resource and outdoor recreation issues. Our mission is to assist natural resource and outdoor recreation agencies and organizations better understand and work with their constituents and the public.

Utilizing our in-house full-service computer-assisted telephone and mail survey center with 40 professional interviewers, we have conducted more than 500 telephone surveys, mail surveys and focus groups, as well as numerous marketing and communications plans and needs assessments.

Clients include most of the federal natural resource and state fish and wildlife agencies, many state departments of natural resources, environmental protection agencies, state park, tourism and conservation departments, and most of the major conservation and sportsmen's organizations.

Responsive Management also collects attitude and opinion data through telephone and mail surveys as well as personal interviews for many of the nation's top universities, including the University of Southern California, Virginia Tech, Penn State, Colorado State University, Auburn University, Texas Tech University, Michigan State University, the University of Florida, West Virginia University, and others.

Among the wide range of work we have completed during the past 12 years are studies on how the general population values natural resources and outdoor recreation, and their opinions on and attitudes to-

ward an array of natural resource-related issues. We have conducted dozens of studies of hunters, anglers, wildlife viewers, boaters, landowners, park visitors, historic site visitors, hikers, birdwatchers, campers and rock climbers.

We have conducted studies on animal rights and animal welfare, endangered species, waterfowl and wetlands, and the reintroduction of large predators such as wolves, grizzly bears, and the Florida panther.

We have assisted in numerous natural resource ballot initiatives and referenda and helped agencies and organizations find alternative funding and increase their memberships and donations. We have conducted major agency and programmatic needs assessments and helped natural resource agencies and organizations develop more effective programs based upon a solid foundation of fact.

We have developed Web sites for natural resource organizations. We have conducted training workshops on the human dimension of natural resources and presented numerous studies each year, including numerous keynote speeches at major natural resource and outdoor recreation conferences and meetings.

Responsive Management has conducted research on public attitudes toward natural resources and outdoor recreation in almost every state in the United States. We have also conducted natural resource and outdoor recreation studies in Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Japan. We routinely conduct surveys in Spanish and have also conducted surveys and focus groups in Chinese, Korean, Japanese and Vietnamese.

We have also conducted numerous natural resource and outdoor recreation studies with specific target audiences, including Hispanics, African-Americans, Asians, women, children, senior citizens, urban, suburban and rural residents, large landowners and farmers.

Responsive Management's research has been featured in most of the nation's major media including CNN's *Crossfire*, *The Washington Post*, *The Washington Times*, *The New York Times*, *Newsweek*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and on the front page of *USA Today*.

RM Conducts:

- Telephone surveys
- Mail surveys
- Personal interviews
- Park/Outdoor recreation intercepts
- Web-based surveys
- Focus groups
- Needs assessments
- Literature reviews
- Data collection for researchers and universities

RM Develops:

- Marketing plans
- Communication plans
- Outreach and Education plans
- Business plans
- Program evaluations
- Policy analyses
- Public relation plans

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Opinions of Wyoming State Residents on **Alternative Funding Mechanisms**

Responsive Management recently conducted surveys for the Wyoming Game and Fish Department to better understand opinions of Wyoming residents toward alternative funding for the Department. Alternative funding would allow the Department's budget to become more diversified and, therefore, more stable, countering effects of inflation.

The sample for the general population survey was constructed to be representative of Wyoming as a whole (residents 18 years or older).

From the survey, "Preferences of Wyoming Residents Toward Alternative Funding Mechanisms for the Wyoming Game and Fish Department," five options for alterna-

tive funding were presented.

- Establishing a trust fund from the state's extractive industries (mining, logging, etc.).
- Increasing the state general sales tax.
- Increasing the state gasoline tax.
- Reallocating a portion of the state's gasoline tax.
- Instituting special sales tax on outdoor equipment.

Out of the five options, the majority of the residents supported the establishment of a trust fund from extractive industries (62%) and a small increase in the general sales tax (53%). The greatest opposition (76%) was for increasing the state gasoline tax. Support was evenly

divided for the reallocation of a portion of the state's gasoline tax (46%) and the institution of a special sales tax on outdoor equipment (45%).

Residents also suggested other alternative funding sources the Department should consider. When asked for ideas for new funding sources that would generate at least \$500,000 per year for the Department, residents cited increasing out-of-state license fees and using revenue generated by tourism more often than other mechanisms.

Lastly, the survey revealed that public meetings held by the Game and Fish Department for exploring potential funding mechanisms had been attended by only 3% of Wyoming residents.