

# Fish and Wildlife Reference Service Newsletter

Number 100  
Spring 1994



## Incorporating Public Attitudes into Fish and Wildlife Management

What types of facilities do wildlife watchers want? Will hunters and anglers accept an increase in license costs? Does the public support wildlife diversity programs? What are the factors related to hunting and fishing participation in the U.S.? What are public opinions and attitudes toward alternative funding mechanisms? These are some of the questions Responsive Management has been investigating recently.

As wildlife conservation becomes as much a social endeavor as a biological endeavor, our approach to interfacing with the public must become as sophisticated as our biological approach to wildlife management. The mission of Responsive Management is to provide natural resources organizations with the services, tools and training to monitor public attitudes and perceptions, anticipate change, and tailor programs to meet these changes. Initiated and developed as a non-profit entity of the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Responsive Management provides an innovative combination of public attitude survey techniques, focus groups, marketing plans, literature reviews, program evaluations, and training courses developed to enable agencies to meet the challenges of changing publics.

Marketing research techniques provide the foundation of fact necessary upon which to develop new programs and enhance or evaluate existing programs; much in the same way that wildlife management programs are based on biological research. There are numerous techniques from which to gain the appropriate information; for example, literature reviews provide the manager with a contextual framework from which to begin, eliminating the potential to duplicate research efforts. Focus groups provide in-depth qualitative information about a single subject, sacrificing reliability for validity. Focus groups can be used to test potential educational messages on target audiences, evaluate message impact, and provide managers with insights into why survey participants responded the way they did. Focus groups allow constituent groups to define what issues they see as important and provide the basis for a survey to quantify these opinions and attitudes. Surveys provide reliable, quantified answers to specific questions. Surveys can be used to measure public opinion about a potential program change or to evaluate the effectiveness of an education campaign by measuring awareness before and after the campaign to see if opinions or knowledge levels have changed. Toward these ends, Responsive Management utilizes telephone, mail and in-person surveys based on the population to be investigated and the survey's goals and objectives.

The following is a sample of projects recently conducted by the Responsive Management National Office in affiliation with the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies: National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation Stakeholder Surveys; Public Opinion Toward Wildlife Diversity; South Carolina Wildlife and Marine Resources Department Public Opinion Survey; Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation Funding Survey; University of Florida Public Opinion Survey; Wildlife Diversity Funding Initiative Booklet; Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission Hunter, Angler, and Wildlife Viewer Satisfaction Study; Public Opinion Toward Black Bear Hunting in Florida; Maryland Wildlife Division Deer Hunting Season Structure Conflict Resolution Project; Arizona Game and Fish Department Law Enforcement Public Opinion Survey; Factors Related to Hunting and Fishing Participation in the U.S.; Maryland Wildlife Division Wildlife Viewing Public Opinion Survey; Directory of Sport Fishing, Boating and Aquatic Resources Outreach Projects in the U.S.; Georgia Game and Fish Division Public Opinion Surveys; Florida Deer Hunter Satisfaction Survey; and Training Workshops in Responding to Change, Marketing in a Fisheries and Wildlife Agency, Public Opinion Polling, and Communication and Dispute Resolution

The Fish and Wildlife Reference Service collection contains related materials from other projects and will obtain some of the Responsive Management reports in the near future. For additional information on Responsive Management, please contact Mark Damian Duda