

Discussion

The scientists believe that studies like this can help forest managers do a better job of managing fire. By understanding what people believe and feel about the way forest managers manage fire, they can improve what they do. They can also communicate better with the public about their decisions.

The scientists caution, however, that citizens' opinions should not be the only way that success is measured. Forest managers, and especially those who manage fire, must consider many things. They must consider the animals and plants that live in the forest, for example. They

must consider the long-term health of the forest. The scientists concluded that understanding public trust is just one way to evaluate how well forest managers are doing. They believe, however, that understanding and building trust should be used more often as a way to evaluate how well forest managers are doing.

Reflection Section



- How can better communication build more trust between an individual and a trustee? Use an example from your own life.
- Think about any public land close to your home. This can be a local park, a State park, a national park, or State or national forest land. Do you trust the managers to do a good job of managing the land? Why or why not?

This article was adapted from Liljebblad, A.; Borrie, W.T.; Watson, A.E. 2009. Determinants of trust for public lands: Fire and fuels management on the Bitterroot National Forest. *Environmental Management*. 43: 571–584. <http://www.treeseearch.fs.fed.us/pubs/34155>.

Glossary

Biosphere ('bī-ə-,sfīr): The part of Earth where life can exist.

Extinguish (ik-'stīŋ-(g)wīsh): To bring to an end.

Forest manager ('fōr-əst'ma-nī-jər): Skilled individual who takes care of natural resources.

Manage ('ma-nij): To have charge of or direct the work of.

Sample ('sam-pəl): A part or piece that shows what the whole group or thing is like.

Accented syllables are in **bold**. Marks taken from Merriam-Webster Pronunciation Guide.



FACTivity

In this FACTivity, the question you will answer is: How much do some adults trust Federal forest managers?

The method you will use to do this is the following:

Make a copy of the questions on the following page: One set of questions will be needed for each adult surveyed. You should survey between two and five adults.

After the information has been collected, share your results with the other students. Create a chart that shows the total numbers of answers to each of the questions. Determine the level of trust by adding the score for each adult who responded. A high trust level would be represented by a score between 30–35, a score showing moderate trust levels is between 21–29, and low trust level scores are between 9–20. Combine your information and determine how to display results in a graph or chart.

If you do not live near a public land area that is managed by Federal forest managers or State of local park managers, then survey adults about how much they trust their local fire departments.

What Do You Think?

Please circle the choice that best describes how you feel about Federal employees who manage public land (Federal forest managers). You may substitute local fire department employees for Federal employees if you do not live near Federal public land.

When Federal forest managers speak on television, radio, in newspapers, or at public meetings how often, if at all, do they tell the truth?

- Always – 4
- Mostly – 3
- Less than half the time – 2
- Never – 1
- Don't know – Do not count

Generally speaking, how satisfied are you, if at all, with the way Federal forest managers fight fires?

- Very satisfied – 4
- Somewhat satisfied – 3
- Somewhat dissatisfied – 2
- Very dissatisfied – 1
- Not sure – Do not count

How much attention, if any, have Federal forest managers paid to what people think when they decide what to do about forest fires?

- A good deal of attention – 3
- Some attention – 2
- Not much attention – 1
- Don't know – Do not count

Federal forest managers respond to the needs of local residents when fighting fires.

- Strongly agree – 4
- Somewhat agree – 3
- Somewhat disagree – 2
- Strongly disagree – 1
- Don't know – Do not count

In the past, how pleased, if at all, have you been with the way fires in your local national forest were managed?

- Very pleased – 4
- Somewhat pleased – 3
- Somewhat displeased – 2
- Very displeased – 1
- Does not apply – Do not count

Based on your observations and experiences, what portion, if any, of the people who manage forest fires know what they are doing?

- All – 4
- Most – 3
- Less than half – 2
- None – 1
- Don't know – Do not count

In your community, how would you rate the effectiveness of your local Federal forest managers in dealing with fire-related issues?

- Excellent – 4
- Good – 3
- Fair – 2
- Poor – 1
- Don't know – Do not count
- Does not apply – Do not count

How sure, if at all, have you felt that forest fires threatening your community or your property would be put out in time?

- Very sure – 4
- Somewhat sure – 3
- Somewhat unsure – 2
- Very unsure – 1
- Don't know – Do not count
- Does not apply – Do not count

I find the local Federal forest managers to be reliable when managing fires.

- Strongly agree – 4
- Somewhat agree – 3
- Somewhat disagree – 2
- Strongly disagree – 1
- Don't know – Do not count

FACTivity Extension

Compare and contrast between Federal forest managers and local park managers. To do this, conduct more surveys, substituting “Federal forest managers” with “local park managers.”

If you do not live near a public land that is managed by Federal forest managers or State or local park managers, then compare and contrast the trust level between the local fire department and the local police department.



Correlation to National Science Education Standards

Science as Inquiry:

Understandings About Scientific Inquiry;
Abilities Necessary To Do Scientific Inquiry

Science in Personal and Social Perspectives:

Natural Hazards;
Risks and Benefits

Science and Technology in Society:

Understandings in Science and Technology

History and Nature of Science:

Science as a Human Endeavor;
Nature of Science

Additional Web Resources

Bitterroot National Forest

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/bitterroot/>

Fire and Aviation Management

<http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/management/>

Forest Fires

<http://www.foresthistory.org/ASPNET/Policy/Fire/FamousFires/FamousFires.aspx>



Teachers: If you are a PLT-trained educator, you may use Activity #34, “Who Works in this Forest?” or Activity #81, “Living With Fire,” as additional resources.