

Responsive Management Report



Specializing in Survey Research on Natural Resource and Outdoor Recreation Issues

May 2015

How to Talk to the Public About Hunting

Research-Based Communications Strategies

New results from a 2015 survey conducted by Responsive Management indicate that Americans' approval of hunting has remained consistently high over the nearly two decades that Responsive Management has tracked the issue. A scientific telephone survey conducted in February found that 77% of American adults strongly or moderately approve of hunting, compared to a baseline of 73% who expressed approval of the activity in 1995. Similar surveys conducted in the intervening years found comparable levels of overall approval (75% in 2003; 78% in 2006; 74% in 2011; and 79% in 2013). Corresponding with these trends, overall disapproval of hunting has leveled off from a baseline of 22%

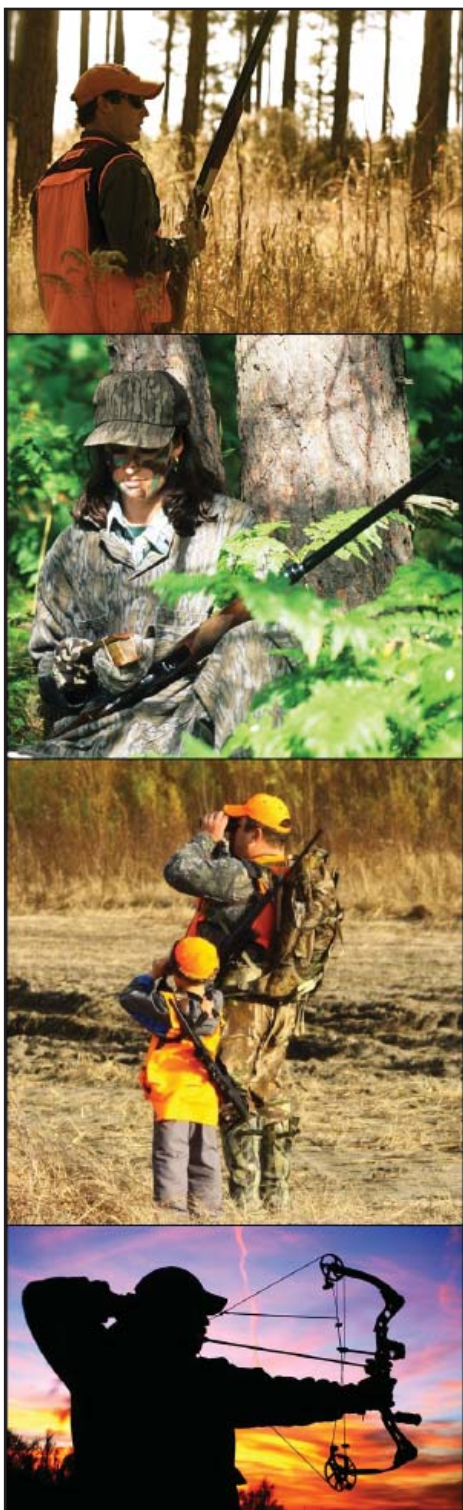
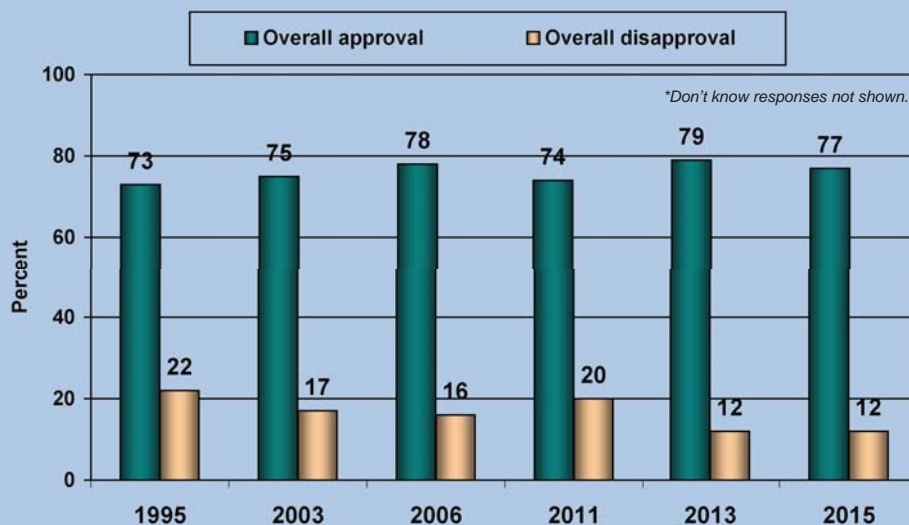
in 1995 to 12% of American adults who indicated strongly or moderately disapproving in 2015.¹

While these results may come as encouraging news to the fish and wildlife management profession, other findings from Responsive Management's research suggest that Americans' support for hunting is conditional rather than absolute.

¹ 1995-2006 surveys: Responsive Management. 2010. *The Sportsman's Voice: Hunting and Fishing in America*. Venture Publishing, Inc.; 2011 survey: unpublished data from study conducted for the National Shooting Sports Foundation; 2013 survey: unpublished data from study conducted for the Professional Outdoor Media Association; 2015 survey: study conducted for the National Shooting Sports Foundation and the Archery Trade Association. Note: 2006 and later studies include wireless numbers.

More Results Inside

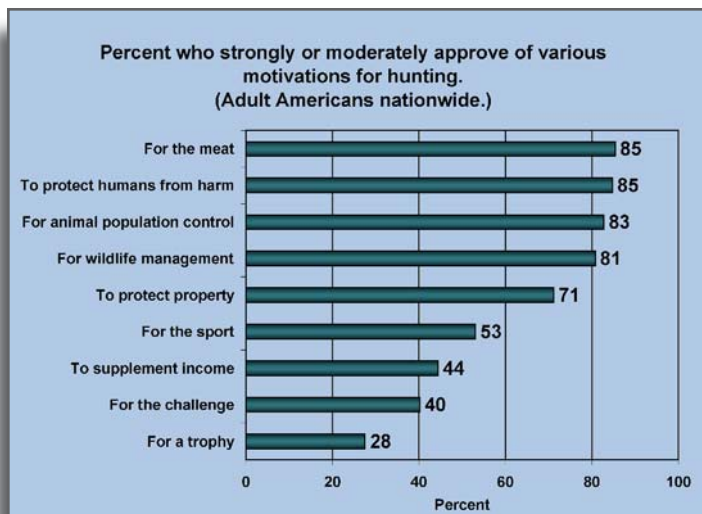
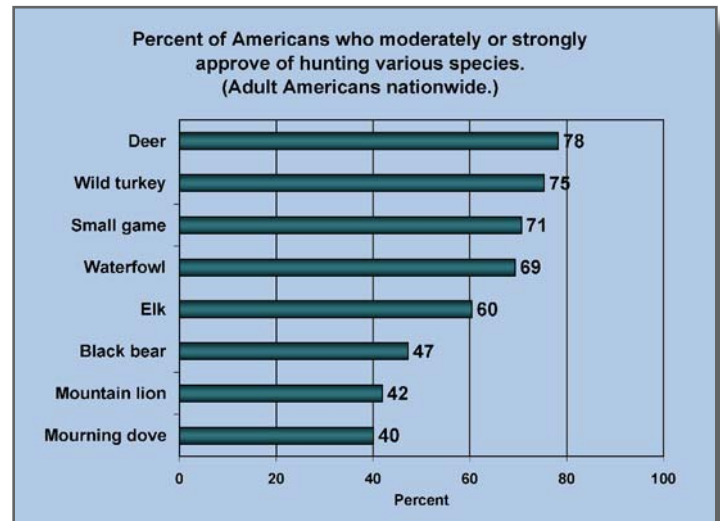
Trends in Approval and Disapproval of Hunting (Adult Americans Nationwide)



Factors Affecting Approval of Hunting

By Species

Approval of hunting tends to vary considerably according to species, motivation, and method of hunting. For example, one Responsive Management national study found that approval of hunting ranged from 78% to 40%, depending on the species being hunted. At least three-quarters of Americans approve of hunting for deer or wild turkey, while more than two-thirds approve of hunting for small game or waterfowl. On the other hand, less than half of all Americans approve of hunting for black bear, mountain lion, or mourning dove.² (See graph right.)

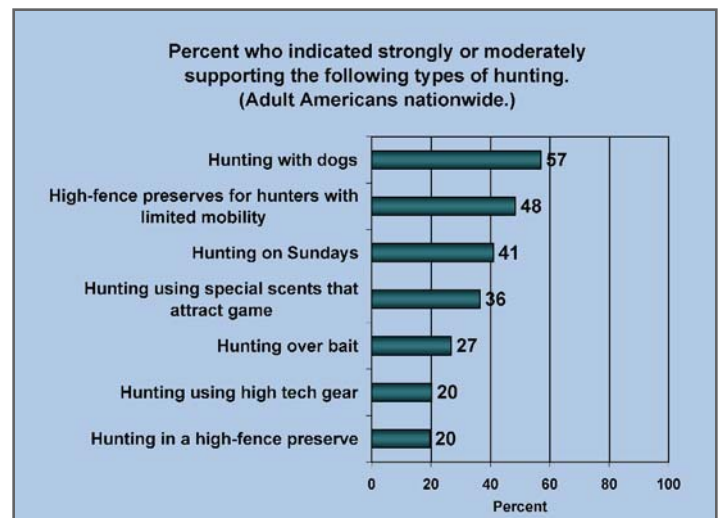


By Motivation

Equally important to Americans' overall approval of hunting is the motivation for hunting. One recent survey conducted by Responsive Management found that American adults overwhelmingly approve of hunting for the meat (85% of all respondents expressed strong or moderate approval), to protect humans from harm (85%), for animal population control (83%), for wildlife management (81%), or to protect property (71%). However, approval diminishes fairly considerably when respondents are asked about hunting for the sport (53% approve), to supplement income (44%), for the challenge (40%), or for a trophy (28%).² (See graph left.)

By Method

Additional Responsive Management research points to the impact of the specific method of hunting in influencing overall support for the activity. While more than half of American adults strongly or moderately support hunting with dogs, less than half support any of the other hunting methods asked about in the survey: hunting in high-fence preserves for hunters with limited mobility, hunting on Sundays, hunting using special scents that attract game, hunting over bait, and hunting using high tech gear or hunting in a high-fence preserve in general.³ The latter three have about a quarter or less of Americans in support. (See graph right.)



² Responsive Management. 2010. *The Sportsman's Voice: Hunting and Fishing in America*. Venture Publishing, Inc.

³ Responsive Management / National Shooting Sports Foundation. 2007. *The Future of Hunting and the Shooting Sports: Phase III Telephone Survey Results*. Harrisonburg, VA.

Other Factors Affecting Attitudes Toward Hunting

Other research has helped agencies to better understand their constituents, including which groups within the population are most likely to support hunting. For example, Responsive Management studies have shown that attitudes change as people gain direct experience—in this way, one of the greatest predictors of feelings about hunting is the extent to which a personal connection to it exists, namely knowing or being related to a hunter or having parents or other family members who approve of hunting.⁴

Additionally, research conducted by Ljung et al. (2012) has identified an important relationship between frequency of game meat consumption and attitudes about hunting—essentially, the more game meat a person consumes, the more likely he or she is to hold positive opinions about hunting.⁵ A current real-world example may be seen in the growing “locavore” movement (i.e., Americans who are taking up hunting specifically as a do-it-yourself way to obtain local, organic game meat) and its importance in building support for hunting.



Photo: Venison by Christian Jung

Responsive Management has also determined through large-scale quantitative surveys the key demographic characteristics both positively and negatively correlated with approval of hunting. Characteristics positively correlated with approval of hunting, for instance, include living in a rural area, being male, being between the ages of 45 and 64 years old, being white or Caucasian, and residing in the South Atlantic region of the United States (Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia). Characteristics negatively correlated with approval of hunting, meanwhile, include living in a large city or urban area, being female, being between the ages of 18 and 24 years old, being Hispanic/Latino or African-American, and residing in the New England or Pacific regions of the United States (the former including Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont, and the latter including Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, and Washington).⁶ Despite these tendencies, any prevailing negative attitudes toward hunting may be mitigated through the positive impacts of mentoring experiences and strong social connections.



Responsive Management Hunting Trend Studies

- 1995 Telephone Survey
- 2003 Telephone Survey
- 2006 Telephone Survey
- 2011 Telephone Survey (landline + wireless)
- 2013 Telephone Survey (landline + wireless)
- 2015 Telephone Survey (landline + wireless)
- Study Sample Sizes
n = 800 to 5,103
- Study Sampling Errors
+/- 1.4% to 3.5%

⁴ Responsive Management / National Shooting Sports Foundation. 2012. *Understanding the Impact of Peer Influence on Youth Participation in Hunting and Target Shooting*. Harrisonburg, VA.

⁵ Ljung, P. E., Riley, S. J., Heberlein, T. A. and Ericsson, G. 2012. Eat prey and love: Game-meat consumption and attitudes toward hunting. *Wildlife Society Bulletin*, 36: 669–675.

⁶ Responsive Management. 2010. *The Sportsman's Voice: Hunting and Fishing in America*. Venture Publishing, Inc.

Current and Recently Completed Projects

Wildlife Management

- ✓ Americans' Wildlife Values (in cooperation with Colorado State University)
- ✓ California Deer Hunters' Opinions on and Attitudes Toward Deer Management in the State
- ✓ A Comparison of Split and Concurrent Firearms Deer Hunting Seasons in Pennsylvania
- ✓ Virginia Residents' and Hunters' Opinions on Hunting Over Bait
- ✓ Virginia Landowners' Opinions on and Attitudes Toward Wildlife Damage and Wildlife Management
- ✓ Understanding Public Attitudes Toward Human-Wildlife Conflict and Nuisance Wildlife Management in the Northeast United States
- ✓ Idaho Residents' and Sportsmen's Opinions on Wildlife Management and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game
- ✓ Texas Residents' and Hunters' Attitudes Toward Captive Deer Breeding and Hunting Pen-Raised Deer
- ✓ Residents', Hunters', and Farmers' Opinions on Deer Populations and Deer Management in Florida
- ✓ Deer Management in Georgia: Survey of Residents, Hunters, and Landowners
- ✓ Wyoming Mule Deer Hunters' Opinions on Mule Deer Hunting and Mule Deer Management
- ✓ Pennsylvania Residents' Opinions on and Attitudes Toward Deer Management
- ✓ Attitudes Toward Mule Deer Management in the Platte Valley
- ✓ Louisiana Residents' Opinions on Black Bears and Black Bear Management in Louisiana
- ✓ Public Attitudes Toward Black Bear Management in Maryland
- ✓ Tennessee Residents' Opinions on Black Bears and the Management and Hunting of Black Bears
- ✓ Virginia Black Bear Management Plan
- ✓ Hunters' Participation in and Opinions on Elk Hunting in Wyoming
- ✓ Opinions on the Reintroduction of Elk in Western Maryland

Nongame Wildlife

- ✓ Pennsylvania Residents' Opinions on and Attitudes Toward Nongame Wildlife
- ✓ Kansas Residents' Opinions on Threatened and Endangered Wildlife and Actions to Protect Wildlife

Outdoor Recreation

- ✓ Outdoor Recreation in Nebraska: Survey for the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)
- ✓ Outdoor Recreation in Washington: State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)
- ✓ Washington State Trails Plan
- ✓ Iowa Survey for the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)
- ✓ Outdoor Recreation in Florida: Survey for the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)

Hunting & Shooting

- ✓ A Needs Assessment for Hunter Safety Training and Shooting Sports Development in Connecticut
- ✓ Deer Hunting and Harvest Management in Vermont
- ✓ Mississippi Hunters' Attitudes Toward Tagging
- ✓ Enhancing the Pennsylvania Game Commission's Hunter Access Program
- ✓ An Analysis of the Trend in Participation in Sport Shooting 2015
- ✓ Archery Participation Among Adult United States Residents
- ✓ Archery Participation Among Youth
- ✓ Americans' Attitudes Toward Hunting, Fishing, and Target Shooting
- ✓ Survey of Applicants for Special Hunts in South Carolina
- ✓ Hunters' and Anglers' Opinions on Factors Related to License Purchasing Behavior: A Comparison of Avid, Inconsistent, and One-Time License Buyers
- ✓ Tennessee Residents' and Hunters' Knowledge of and Opinions on Sandhill Cranes
- ✓ Alabama Licensed Hunters' Opinions on and Participation in Hunting on WMAs

- ✓ Understanding the Impact of Peer Influence on Youth Participation in Hunting and Target Shooting
- ✓ Residents' and Hunters' Opinions on Hunting and Game Management in Washington
- ✓ The Opinions of Hunters and Landowners on Implementing Antler Restrictions in Western Maryland
- ✓ Pennsylvania Lapsed Hunters' Attitudes Toward Hunting and Future Participation
- ✓ Virginia Kill Permit Holders' Opinions on and Attitudes Toward Kill Permits
- ✓ Hunting on Wildlife Management Areas in Georgia: Hunters' Attitudes Toward WMAs

Hunter Harvest

- ✓ California Hunter Harvest Survey
- ✓ Mississippi Resident and Nonresident Hunter Harvest Survey
- ✓ Deer Harvest in Florida
- ✓ Florida Triennial Small Game Survey
- ✓ Harvest of Wildlife in Georgia
- ✓ Harvest of Small Game in Georgia
- ✓ Georgia Turkey Harvest Survey

Fishing & Boating

- ✓ Mountain Trout Anglers' and Landowners' Opinions on the Mountain Trout Water Program in North Carolina
- ✓ Arkansas Anglers' Motivation for Expenditures on, Methods of, and Opinions on Trout Fishing in Arkansas
- ✓ Arizona Anglers' Opinions, Attitudes, and Expenditures in the State
- ✓ Understanding First-Time Fishing License Buyers
- ✓ Hunters' and Anglers' Opinions on Factors Related to License Purchasing Behavior: A Comparison of Avid, Inconsistent, and One-Time License Buyers
- ✓ New Jersey Trout Anglers' Opinions on Stocking and Other Trout Regulations
- ✓ Resident Participation in Freshwater and Saltwater Sport Fishing in Georgia
- ✓ Freshwater and Saltwater Fishing Participation Among Alabama Residents
- ✓ Washington Angler Survey Report

Current and Recently Completed Projects

- ✓ Characteristics, Participation, and Avidity of South Carolina Lifetime and Multi-Year License Holders
- ✓ Enhancing Fishing Access Through a National Assessment of Recreational Boating Access
- ✓ Boaters' Preferences for and Opinions on Web-Based Boating Safety Courses

Recruitment & Retention

- ✓ Hunting, Fishing, and Sport Shooting Recruitment and Retention: A Practitioner's Guide
- ✓ Recruiting and Retaining Nontraditional Adult Participants Into Fishing and Hunting Through Targeted Marketing, Instruction, Mentoring, and Social Reinforcement
- ✓ Washington Residents' Awareness of the Fish Washington Campaign
- ✓ Increasing Hunting License Buyers and Excise Tax Receipts Through State-Industry Cooperative Recruitment and Retention Research and Testing
- ✓ Increasing Fishing License Buyers and Excise Tax Receipts Through State-Industry Cooperative Research Into Churn Rates and First-Time License Buyers
- ✓ Evaluating the Effectiveness of Hunting, Shooting, and Fishing Recruitment and Retention Programs
- ✓ Hunter Education and Beyond: Providing the Next Steps to Course Graduates
- ✓ Increasing the Number of Hunter Education Graduates Who Purchase Hunting Licenses
- ✓ Evaluating Apprentice Licenses as a Hunter Recruitment Strategy

Coastal Resources & Wildlife

- ✓ Trends in Delaware Residents' Opinions on Climate Change and Sea Level Rise
- ✓ Delaware Decision-Makers' Attitudes Toward Coast Resilience and Related Management Issues
- ✓ South Carolina Recreational Marine Angler Survey
- ✓ Gulf Coast Anglers' Opinions on the Red Snapper Fishery and Reef Management Strategies

- ✓ Restoration of Bottlenose Dolphin and Sea Turtles in the Gulf of Mexico Following the Impacts of the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill
- ✓ Chesapeake Bay Anglers' Use of and Attitudes Toward Various Catch Reporting Methods and Technologies
- ✓ Fishing Participation and Opinions on Angler Management in the California Central Coast Area
- ✓ Attitudes Toward the Protection of Wild Dolphins and Dolphin-Human Interactions
- ✓ Corpus Christi Residents', Visitors', and Business Operators' Attitudes Toward the Illegal Feeding and Harassment of Wild Dolphins
- ✓ The Opinions of Residents of the Barnegat Bay Watershed on Fertilizer Use and the Health of Barnegat Bay
- ✓ Residents' Awareness of and Opinions on Environmental Learning in the San Francisco Bay Area
- ✓ Marine Anglers' Opinions on and Attitudes Toward Fisheries Management

Economics & Expenditures

- ✓ Understanding Anglers' Opinions on and the Economic Impact of the Tribal Fishing Program in Cherokee, North Carolina
- ✓ Understanding the Economic Impact of Fishing in Arizona
- ✓ Expenditures of British Columbia Resident Hunters
- ✓ Economic and Social Impacts of Elk Reintroduction in Western Maryland
- ✓ The Economic Impact of Saltwater Fishing in the Florida Keys
- ✓ Economic Impact of the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill in Alabama
- ✓ An Analysis of the Economic Impact of the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program on Local Economies in the Osceola National Forest Region in Florida

Marketing & Communications

- ✓ Survey of Hunters and Sport Shooters About Their Use of Optics Equipment
- ✓ Maryland Hunting and Fishing Marketing Initiative: Survey of Nonresident Hunters and Anglers

- ✓ Public Awareness of and Satisfaction With the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department's Media Resources
- ✓ North Dakota Residents' Use of Social Media and Its Influence on Their Hunting and Shooting Participation
- ✓ An Evaluation of South Carolina's Electronic Marketing Campaign to Increase Hunting License Sales
- ✓ Marketing Plan for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's Inland Fisheries Program

Assessment & Evaluation

- ✓ Izaak Walton League of America Membership Study
- ✓ Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation Membership Study
- ✓ An Assessment of Employee Morale Among U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Employees in the Alaska Region
- ✓ Club Members' and Convention Exhibitors' Opinions on the Activities and Programs of Dallas Safari Club
- ✓ An Assessment of Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Use, Knowledge of Environmental Impacts, and OHV Marketing Campaign Efforts in Utah
- ✓ An Assessment of Texas's Outdoor Adventures Education Program
- ✓ Arkansas Game and Fish Commission Employee Satisfaction Survey
- ✓ Virginia Hunters', Anglers', and Boaters' Opinions on and Satisfaction With Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' Law Enforcement Activities
- ✓ An Evaluation of the National Fishing in Schools Program

Methodology

- ✓ Exploring Data Collection and Cost Options for the *National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation*
- ✓ Planning and Coordination of the *2016 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation*

See www.responsivemanagement.com to download available reports.

Words Matter



Other findings from Responsive Management research reinforce the importance of semantics, particularly key qualifiers and adjectives applied to the term “hunting.” For instance, in the early 1990s, when Responsive Management was beginning to study attitudes toward hunting, qualitative focus group discussions with members of the general population revealed that some participants interpreted “hunting” to be inextricably tied to “poaching.” Further discussion suggested that some of the same participants viewed recreational hunting as a threat to certain wildlife populations. For these reasons, many subsequent Responsive Management surveys specified *legal* or *regulated* hunting as opposed to simply “hunting.”

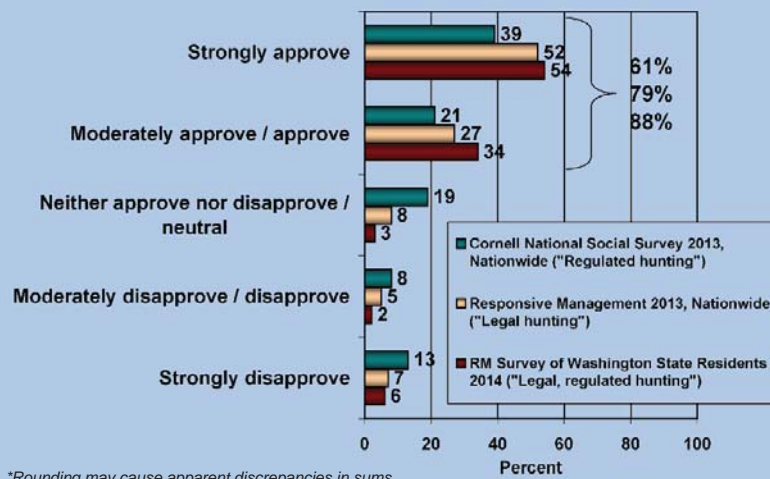
Incorporating the word “regulated” alone, however, can also pose problems, as some respondents may misinterpret or misconstrue the term as “regulating”—in other words, rather than hearing a description of the type of hunting, respondents may hear a verb describing new restrictions that may be applied to hunting (i.e., *regulating* the activity).

A comparison of similar surveys measuring approval of hunting may illustrate the effect of this minor but crucial difference in wording. In a 2013 telephone survey conducted by the Cornell Survey Research Institute, respondents were asked whether they approved of *regulated* hunting, while a 2013 Responsive Management survey asked about approval of *legal* hunting. The Cornell study found that just 61% of respondents approved of hunting, compared to 79% of respondents who expressed approval in the Responsive Management survey.⁷

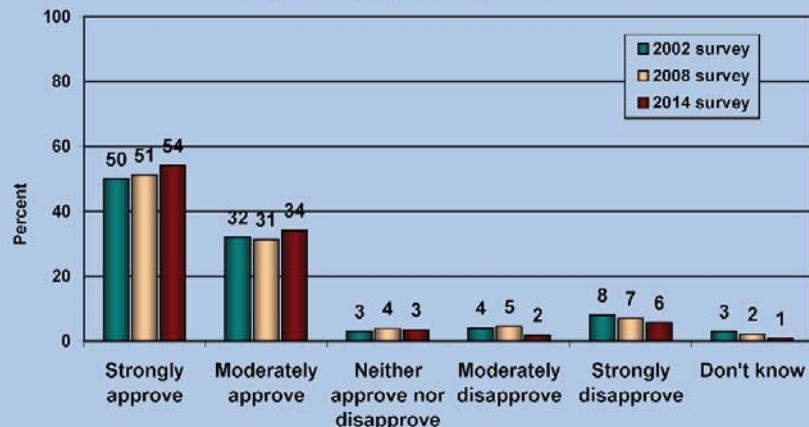
Of course, while it is impossible to verify that some of the Cornell respondents misinterpreted the phrase “regulated,” the semantic implications discussed previously are nonetheless useful to keep in mind when examining the differences in the levels of approval.

Interestingly, asking the question using the most complete phrase—“legal, regulated hunting”—may yield the highest overall level of approval: a 2014 survey of Washington State residents that used this wording found that 88% of residents approved of hunting, with 54% *strongly* approving (*see top graph left*).⁸ It may be that the added specificity helps to communicate hunting in a positive way as a carefully managed and controlled recreational activity. It is also worth noting that Responsive Management has used this exact phrase in surveys of Washington residents since 2002, and that approval of hunting over that time period has remained consistent in this relatively urbanized state (*see bottom graph left*).

Overall Approval of Legal Hunting / Regulated Hunting:



In general, do you approve or disapprove of legal, regulated hunting? (Among Washington residents.)



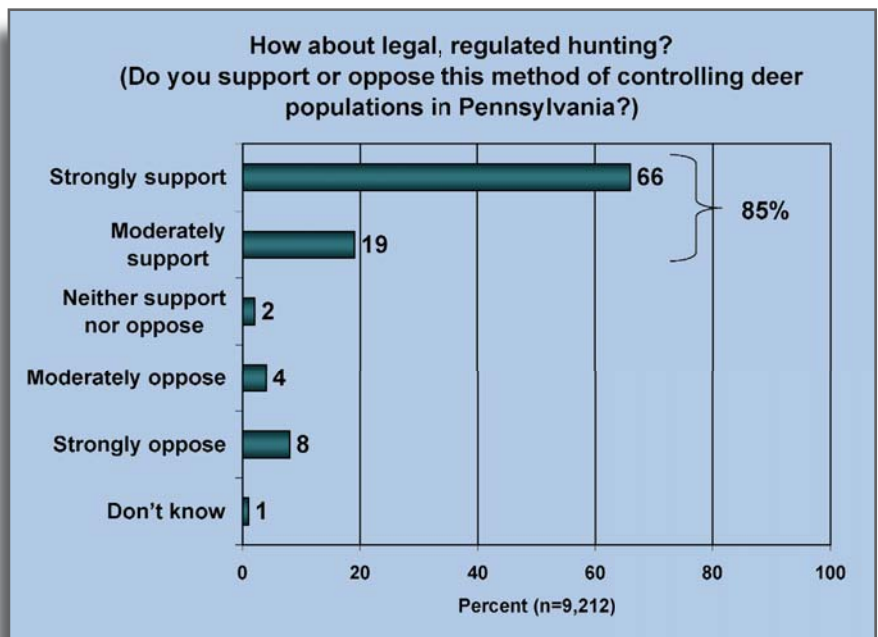
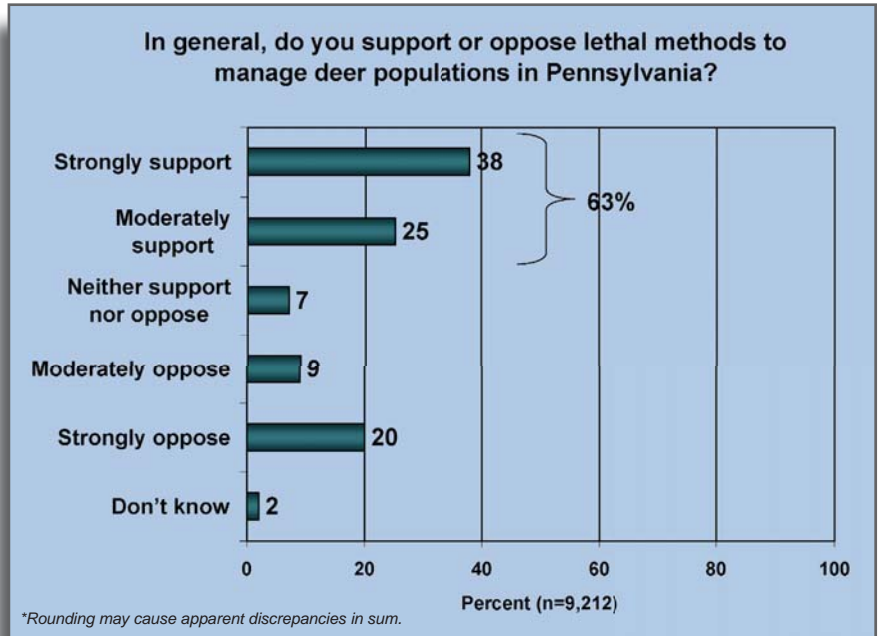
⁷ Cornell University. Survey Research Institute. Cornell National Social Survey (CNSS), 2013. CISER version 1. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Institute for Social and Economic Research, 2014.

⁸ Responsive Management/Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. 2014. Washington Residents' Opinions on Bear and Wolf Management and Their Experiences With Wildlife That Cause Problems. Harrisonburg, VA.

Words Matter

Approval of hunting also tends to shift or fluctuate when the activity is strongly implied but not explicitly stated. A Responsive Management survey of Pennsylvania residents conducted for the Pennsylvania Game Commission included two similar questions, one asking about support for lethal methods to manage deer populations, and the other asking specifically about support for legal, regulated hunting to control deer populations. While just 63% of Pennsylvania residents indicated strong or moderate support for lethal methods, an overwhelming majority (85%) supported legal, regulated hunting to manage deer populations. (See graphs right.) In this instance, respondents' uncertainty over the implications of "lethal methods" may have contributed to the lower level of support for that option, despite that "legal, regulated hunting" constitutes a lethal method of deer management.⁹

Findings such as these drawn from decades of survey research are useful reminders about the dangers of assumptions and the significance of careful and deliberate communications.



Findings such as these drawn from decades of survey research are useful reminders about the dangers of assumptions and the significance of careful and deliberate communications. These lessons may be particularly valuable in terms of the insights they provide into how the profession communicates about "hunting" to the public, including terms and phrases that members of the fish and wildlife community take for granted but about which many Americans may hold misconceptions.

⁹ Responsive Management/Pennsylvania Game Commission. 2012. *Pennsylvania Residents' Opinions on and Attitudes Toward Deer and Deer Management*. Harrisonburg, VA.

Communicating to the Public About Hunting

Wildlife Values

Other considerations based on direct research with both hunters and the general population suggest guidelines for communicating with the public about hunting. One such study, conducted in 2005 by Colorado State University, resulted in a typology of wildlife value orientations.¹⁰ These orientations



Photo: Pennsylvania Game Commission, Joe Kosack

broadly described and categorized the various mindsets of Americans as they relate to wildlife, with key groups including “utilitarians” (those holding the view that wildlife exists primarily for human use), “mutualists” (those who believe that wildlife species hold rights similar to humans and advocate humans and wildlife living side by side), and “pluralists” (those holding a combination of utilitarian and mutualist

...ecological benefits of hunting resonate more with Americans than do recreational benefits.

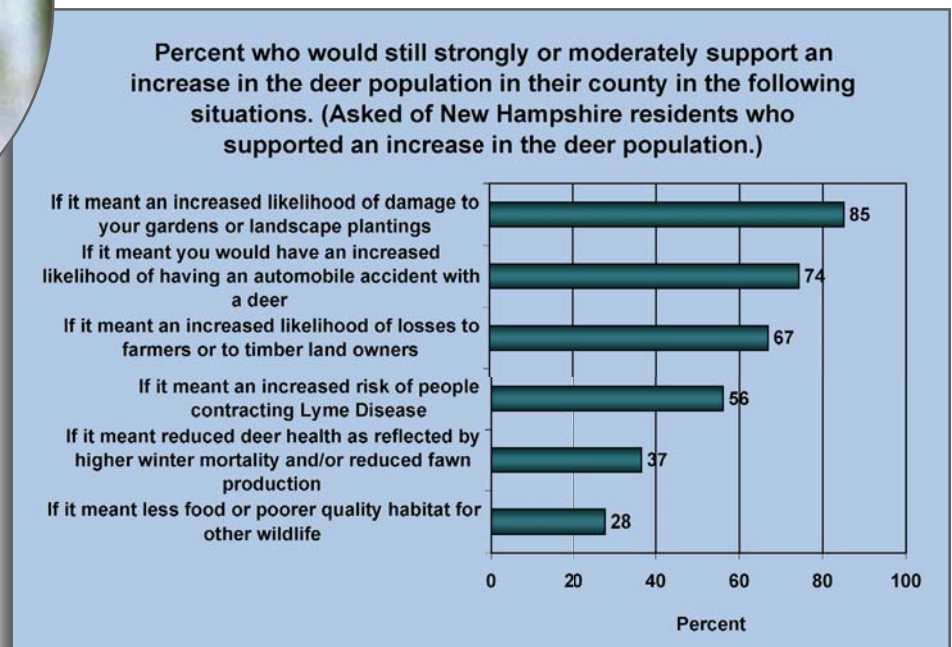
viewpoints). The study further suggested that mutualist attitudes have become more prevalent than utilitarian attitudes among the American public. For this reason, messages about hunting that address animal welfare (e.g., ethical shot placement and clean, quick kills) may be most likely to succeed.

Ecological Values

Equally instructive is other Responsive Management research suggesting that ecological benefits of hunting resonate more with Americans than do recreational benefits. For example, a recent Responsive Management survey of New Hampshire residents found that majorities of respondents who favored an increase in the deer population were still in support of the increase (see graph below) even if it meant an increased likelihood of damage to gardens and landscapes, vehicular accidents, or losses to

farmers or timber land owners, or an increased risk of Lyme Disease.

On the other hand, only 37% of respondents would support an increase in the deer population if it meant reduced deer health, while just 28% remained supportive of the increase if it meant less food or poorer quality habitat for other wildlife.¹¹ Findings such as these imply that the hunting community will realize the greatest return on investment by employing communications that connect hunting to broader conservation concerns impacting wildlife and habitat.



Hunting Versus Hunters



Despite strong approval of hunting among Americans, it is critical to keep in mind that attitudes toward hunting may not always reflect attitudes toward hunters. Consider that, in one Responsive Management study, 64% of non-hunters agreed that a lot of hunters violate hunting laws; in another survey, 50% of American adults said that a lot or a moderate amount of hunters drink alcohol while hunting.¹² For this reason, programs and communications may need to separate hunter behavior from the activity of hunting itself.

Footnotes for *Communicating to the Public About Hunting* can be found on page 10.

Communicating to the Public About Hunting

Agency Credibility

Fish and wildlife agencies themselves are highly influential when providing the public with information about legislative or policy decisions likely to affect biological resources, as research has shown that agencies enjoy strong credibility on these issues. In a Responsive Management survey of northeast state residents, respondents were asked to rate the credibility of various sources of information on fish, wildlife, and outdoor recreation. Two of the sources at the top of the ranking considered to be very credible were entities associated with the state fish and wildlife agency, including a biologist with the agency (the top source in terms of being very credible) and an agency enforcement officer (see graph right).¹³

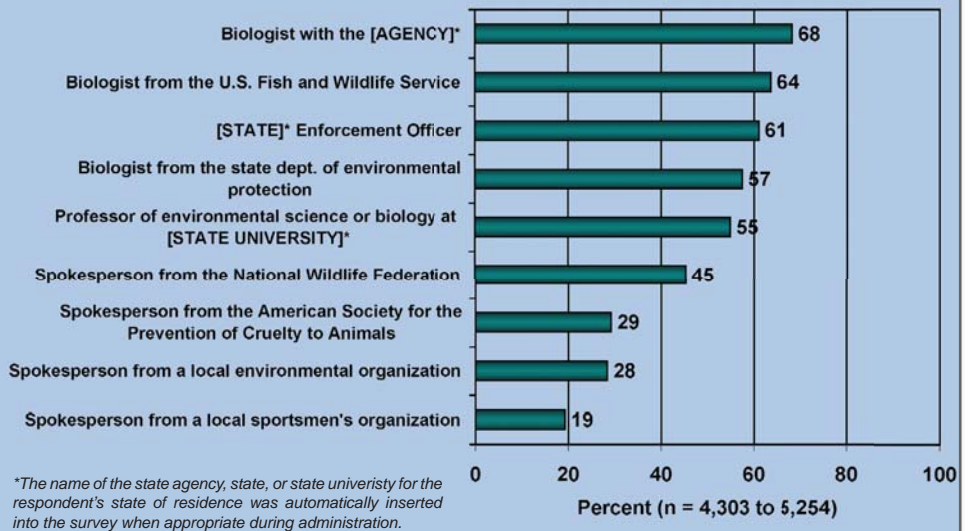
One example of the persuasive power of a fish and wildlife agency comes from the state of Maine, where residents recently considered Question 1, a ballot referendum proposing a ban on the use of traps, bait, and dogs to hunt black bear in the state. Responsive Management's research suggested that the vote would be close: just 47% of Americans support hunting for black bear, and while 57% approve of hunting with dogs, only 27% approve of hunting over bait. To further sway public opinion, supporters of Question 1 employed messaging

emphasizing a connection between baiting and trophy hunting, the latter practice being opposed by a majority of Americans.¹⁴

As the measure was defeated by just 41,000 votes, many voters likely trusted the position of the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, which publicly opposed Question 1. Arguing that a ban on the proposed methods of bear hunting would lead to an increase in the state's bear population and a corresponding uptick in the number of problematic bear-human encounters, the Department nonetheless faced

scrutiny from supporters of the referendum, who contested the right of the Department to publicly oppose the ban and provide the public with such information.¹⁵ The outcome of the election, however, appears to have validated the Department's efforts to communicate its position to the

Percent who think the following are very credible as a source of information on fish, wildlife, and outdoor recreation.
(Among northeast state residents.)



public. Had the Department not gone on record with its position, the referendum would have likely had a greater chance of passing.

Elsewhere, the 2014 elections provided more evidence of the public's support for hunting. In Alabama and



Mississippi, for example, residents voted overwhelmingly to affirm the right of citizens to hunt and fish: in Alabama, about 80% of voters clarified through Amendment 5 that "the people have the right to hunt, fish, and harvest wildlife"; and in Mississippi, 88% of voters amended the state constitution with a provision regarding the right of residents to hunt and fish.¹⁶ With each measure passing by a wide margin, Alabama and Mississippi join the 16 other states whose voters have affirmed residents' right to hunt and fish directly through ballot initiatives or referenda.



Photo: Black bear, Maine; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Communicating to the Public About Hunting

Testing and Evaluation

Finally, agencies and organizations attempting to build effective communications about hunting should develop messages based on a solid foundation of data and continually test, evaluate, and refine their messages as necessary. It is also critical to take the time prior to developing messages to identify both the objectives of the communications and the audiences that will be targeted. One irrefutable lesson drawn from the research is that, over time, attitudes and opinions may shift and knowledge levels may rise or fall—the most effective messages and outreach strategies will be those based on an awareness of prevailing public sentiment.

Photo: Wildlife biologist interviewed by media, USFWS



Key Considerations for Communicating About Hunting

- ✓ Provide opportunities to connect non-hunters to hunting (positive attitudes increase as people gain direct experience)
 - Knowing a hunter
 - Eating wild game meat
 - Thinking of hunting as part of the locavore/sustainable food movement
 - Experiencing hunting
 - Emphasizing social networks and mentoring
- ✓ Use the term “legal hunting”
- ✓ Separate hunting from poaching (unfortunately, a segment of the population still connects the two)
- ✓ Emphasize that species do not become endangered or extinct from legal, regulated hunting
 - ✓ Engage animal welfare to combat animal rights
 - ✓ Emphasize the role of hunting in wildlife management and habitat conservation
 - ✓ Target specific demographics with messages most likely to resonate with them (e.g., communicate to suburban residents the need to keep populations in balance in order to minimize negative interactions with wildlife)
 - ✓ Consider that ecological benefits resonate better than human benefits
 - ✓ Consider that approval varies based on species, motivation, and method
 - ✓ Emphasize that the vast majority of hunters (95%) eat the game they kill
 - ✓ Encourage hunters to share the meat they harvest
 - ✓ Utilize agencies, wardens, and biologists as spokespersons (preferably in uniform)
 - ✓ Connect hunting to habitat issues wherever possible
- ✓ Develop programs to address hunter behavior (hunters vs. hunting)
- ✓ Develop messages based on research
- ✓ Test and evaluate the effectiveness of programs

¹⁰ Teel, T. L., Dayer, A. A., Manfredo, M. J., & Bright, A. D. 2005. Regional results from the research project entitled “Wildlife Values in the West.” (Project Rep. No. 58). Project Report for Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. Fort Collins, CO: Colorado State University, Human Dimensions in Natural Resources Unit.

¹¹ Responsive Management / New Hampshire Fish and Game Department. 2014. *New Hampshire Residents’ Opinions on the Status and Management of Big Game Populations*. Harrisonburg, VA.

¹² Responsive Management. 2010. *The Sportsman’s Voice: Hunting and Fishing in America*. Venture Publishing, Inc.

¹³ Responsive Management / Northeast Conservation Information and Education Association. 2004. *Public Opinion on Fish and Wildlife Management Issues and the Reputation and Credibility of Fish and Wildlife Agencies in the Northeast United States*. Harrisonburg, VA.

¹⁴ Mainers for Fair Bear Hunting. Get the facts: it’s scientifically indefensible. From fairbearhunt.com/about.

¹⁵ Sarnacki, A. (2014, Nov 5). Maine rejects ban on bear baiting. *The Forecaster*. From www.theforecaster.net/news/print/2014/11/05/maine-rejects-ban-bear-baiting/216461.

¹⁶ Shinkle, D. (2014, Nov 12). State constitutional right to hunt and fish. National Conference of State Legislatures. From www.ncsl.org/research/environment-and-natural-resources/state-constitutional-right-to-hunt-and-fish.aspx.

Responsive Management



Specializing in Survey Research on Natural Resource and Outdoor Recreation Issues

Responsive Management has conducted...

- More than 1,000 research studies on natural resource, fish and wildlife, and outdoor recreation issues
- Studies in all 50 states and 15 countries worldwide
- Research for every state fish and wildlife agency, most federal resource agencies, and most DNRs and NGOs, including the National Shooting Sports Foundation, the Archery Trade Association, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Ducks Unlimited, SCI, Izaak Walton League of America, and dozens of others
- Research for numerous outdoor recreation industry leaders, including Vista Outdoor, Winchester, Trijicon, Yamaha, and many others
- Data collection for the nation's top universities: Auburn University, Colorado State University, Duke University, George Mason University, Michigan State University, Mississippi State University, North Carolina State University, Oregon State University, Penn State University, Rutgers University, Stanford University, Texas Tech, University of California-Davis, University of Florida, University of Montana, University of New Hampshire, University of Southern California, Virginia Tech, and West Virginia University

Responsive Management conducts:

- Multi-modal surveys
- Telephone surveys
- Mail surveys
- Personal interviews
- Park/outdoor recreation intercepts
- Web-based surveys (when appropriate)
- Focus groups
- Needs assessments
- Data collection for researchers and universities

Responsive Management develops:

- Marketing plans
- Communication plans
- Outreach plans
- Program evaluations
- Policy analysis
- Public relations plans

Mark Damian Duda, Executive Director

Mark Damian Duda is the Executive Director of Responsive Management, a survey research firm specializing in natural resource, hunting and fishing, and outdoor recreation issues. Mark holds a Master's degree with an emphasis on natural resource policy and planning from Yale University, where he attended on two academic scholarships. During the past 25 years, Mark has conducted more than 1,000 studies on how people relate to the outdoors, including more than 200 studies on hunting and fishing participation. Mark is the author of four books on wildlife and outdoor recreation.

Mark's research has been upheld in U.S. District Courts, used in peer-reviewed journals, and presented at major natural resource, hunting and fishing, and outdoor recreation conferences around the world. His work has also been featured in most of the nation's top media, including NPR's "Morning Edition," CNN, *The New York*

Times, *Newsweek*, and the front pages of *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, and *USA Today*. For 7 years, Mark served as a columnist for *North American Hunter* and *North American Fisherman* magazines.

Mark has been named Conservation Educator of the Year by both the Florida Wildlife Federation and National Wildlife Federation, was a recipient of the Conservation Achievement Award from the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, and was named Wildlife Professional of the Year by the Virginia Wildlife Society. He also received the Conservation Achievement Award in Communications from Ducks Unlimited, as well as an award from the Potomac Ducks Unlimited Chapter for his contributions as a researcher and writer. Mark was also honored as Qualitative Researcher of the Year by the National Shooting Sports Foundation.



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RESPONSIVE MANAGEMENT is an internationally recognized public opinion and attitude survey research firm specializing in natural resource and outdoor recreation issues. Our mission is to help natural resource and outdoor recreation agencies and organizations better understand and work with their constituents, customers, and the public.

Utilizing our in-house, full-service, computer-assisted telephone, mail, and web-based survey center with 70 professional interviewers, we have conducted more than 1,000 telephone surveys, mail surveys, personal interviews, and focus groups, as well as numerous marketing and communication plans, needs assessments, and program evaluations.

Clients include the federal natural resource and land management agencies, most state fish and wildlife agencies, state departments of

natural resources, environmental protection agencies, state park agencies, tourism boards, most of the major conservation and sportsmen's organizations, and numerous private businesses. Responsive Management also collects attitude and opinion data for many of the nation's top universities, including Stanford, University of Southern California, Colorado State University, Duke, and many others.

Responsive Management has conducted public opinion research in every state in the U.S., as well as in Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Japan, and several African countries.

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

Responsive Management conducts:

- Multi-modal surveys
- Telephone surveys
- Mail surveys
- Personal interviews
- Park/outdoor recreation intercepts
- Web-based surveys (when appropriate)
- Focus groups
- Needs assessments
- Data collection for researchers and universities

Responsive Management develops:

- Marketing plans
- Communications plans
- Outreach plans
- Program evaluations
- Needs assessments
- Policy analysis
- Public relations plans