

Responsive Management Report



Specializing in Survey Research on Natural Resource and Outdoor Recreation Issues

April 2012

Lessons Learned: Identifying Successful Hunting, Shooting, and Fishing Recruitment and Retention Strategies

Responsive Management completed more than 30 projects regarding public opinion on and attitudes toward natural resource and fish and wildlife issues in 2011, including several major studies on hunting, shooting, and fishing recruitment and retention strategies. Highlights include an evaluation of nearly 40 hunting, shooting, and fishing programs; a study of apprentice licenses as a hunter recruitment strategy; an assessment of hunter education as a gateway to license purchases; and a study on the impact of peer influence on youth participation in hunting and target shooting. The full reports for these studies and more can be accessed at www.responsivemanagement.com.

~Mark Damian Duda, Executive Director



Photo: SCDNR

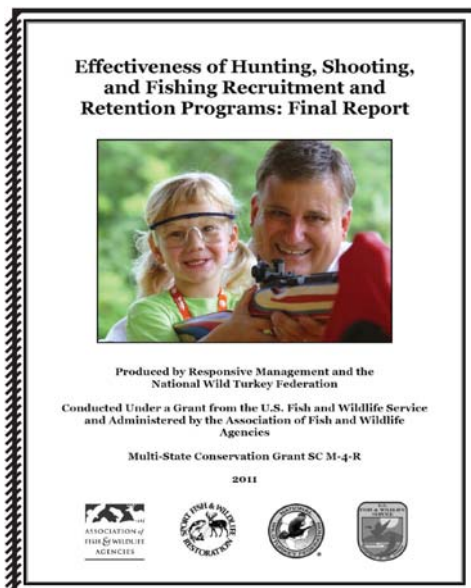
Nationwide Study of Hunting, Shooting, and Fishing Recruitment and Retention Programs Produces Key Strategies for Developing Programs That Work

In a study conducted under a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Multistate Conservation Grant in 2011, Responsive Management and the National Wild Turkey Federation

examined the effectiveness of nearly 40 national and state recruitment and retention programs providing instruction on hunting, sport shooting, and fishing. The study was conducted to develop a greater understanding of the respective approaches, programmatic elements, targeted audiences (including youth and adult participants), subject matter, and impacts of the programs. To this end, the research entailed a thorough investigation of the participation rates, attitudes, opinions, and levels of interest of program participants.

The study methodology called for an evaluation of program effectiveness through data collected in a pair

of standardized questionnaires administered to program participants prior to their participation in a recruitment and retention program as well as three months after their participation in the program. Program impacts and overall effectiveness were then examined through a comparison of the results from the two surveys, both of which were administered by telephone to participants who had pre-registered for the programs. To view the full report, please visit www.ResponsiveManagement.com/download/reports/R&R_Evaluation_Report.pdf. (continued on next page)



Find out more about Responsive Management at
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Major Recruitment & Retention Findings

The study results revealed a number of important details related to the characteristics and personal attributes of participants, many of which lend insight into the ability of programs to function as recruitment initiatives, retention initiatives, or both. Other findings revealed encouraging changes in attitudes and knowledge levels among participants. Some of the major highlights from the research include the following:

- **The majority of program participants come from hunting, shooting, and/or fishing families:** 73% of adult participants and 89% of youth participants came from a hunting, shooting, and/or fishing family.
- **The majority of program participants participated in hunting, shooting, and/or fishing before the program:** 62% of adult participants and 72% of youth participants had hunted prior to the program; 91% of both adult and youth participants had shot prior to the program; and 89% of adult participants and 92% of youth participants had fished prior to the program.

Is there a need to cast a wider net? 62% of adult participants and 72% of youth participants had hunted prior to the program; 91% of both adult and youth participants had shot prior to the program; and 89% of adult participants and 92% of youth participants had fished prior to the program.

These findings suggest that many recruitment and retention programs are more effective at retaining those already initiated into hunting, shooting, and fishing than they are at recruiting true newcomers. Indeed, many program coordinators acknowledged that their programs tend to reach only a modest percentage of newcomers to hunting, shooting, and fishing each program cycle.

- **Most recruitment and retention programs are increasing overall factual knowledge about hunting, sport shooting, and fishing:** In measuring how much participants thought they had learned from the programs about various aspects and concepts directly related to hunting, shooting, and fishing (e.g., locations, equipment, safety, ethics, fish and wildlife management), the surveys found that participants most often said they learned “a great deal” (the top option of the ratings scale in the adult survey) or “a lot” (the top option of the ratings scale in the youth survey) about each topic.
- **Most recruitment and retention programs are increasing factual knowledge about fish and wildlife agencies:** The pre- and post-program surveys asked respondents whether they could name the agency responsible for managing hunting and fishing in their state, and many programs demonstrated substantial increases in the percentages of respondents correctly naming the agency (in fact, many programs saw increases in excess of twenty-five percentage points between the pre- and post-program surveys).

Other indicators from the research suggest guidelines and strategies for increasing the effectiveness of programs and encouraging lasting involvement in hunting, sport shooting, and fishing among participants:

- **Successful programs encourage the “natural path” of recruitment and retention:** The natural path entails an introduction at an early age among family members, particularly male relatives, initiation by way of simple activities tailored for beginners (e.g., small game hunting, fishing trips to stocked ponds that provide a good chance of catching a fish, or simple target shooting with introductory firearms or airguns), and general immersion in the culture of the activity. An excellent model of a program that follows the natural path of recruitment and retention is the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources’ Youth Dove Hunt Program, which encourages parent-child mentoring, is held in open fields and overseen by personnel from the sponsoring state agency, and allows learning via direct participation or observation at the events. Further, the Youth Dove Hunt Program reinforces the social aspect of hunting by providing an annual event that hunters, parents, and community members anticipate each year: this program structure encourages repeat participation and socialization among participants. Finally, the program makes use of fields opened by private landowners, thus fostering good will between hunters and community members.
- **Successful programs focus on involvement of families and the recruitment of adults through youth:** Because ample past research suggests that the desire to spend time with family and friends is a key motivating factor among those who hunt, shoot, and fish, youth who enroll in a program based on their own interests may be ideally positioned to encourage the involvement of their other family members and parents, effectively recruiting them at the same time that they themselves are being initiated. In this sense, family programs that encourage the involvement of parents along with their children may be particularly effective in capitalizing on an enthusiasm factor that originates with the youth but spreads to other family members through a common desire to share time and new experiences together. Fishing programs seem particularly suited to this concept, as fishing enjoys the most widespread appeal of the three activities: two examples from the study that were rated highly in a number of areas are the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection’s Connecticut Aquatic Resources Education Program, which offers family fishing events, and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission’s Ladies Let’s Go Fishing program, which may hold appeal for those wishing to engage in hands-on mother-daughter events. Whereas mentoring depends on an experienced older person imparting instruction on a younger, less experienced individual, family programs for hunting, shooting, and fishing activities may be effectively marketed as opportunities for youth and adult family members to learn together.
- **Successful programs are explicit about providing a safe and controlled environment:** In any recruitment and retention program, the importance of a safe and controlled atmosphere cannot be overstated, no matter what the age group, subject matter, or environment. Newcomers to hunting and shooting may be the audiences most in need of reassurances regarding safety, but an additional challenge may lie with parents who are reluctant to enroll their children in programs that involve firearms or in fishing programs that take place on the water. There may be a tendency for some program coordinators to attempt to minimize such safety concerns, perhaps assuming

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Upcoming and In the News

Preaching Beyond the Choir: Promoting Hunting in the 21st Century Through Effective Communications

Responsive Management was contracted by the World Forum on the Future of Sport Shooting Activities to develop a workshop to identify the strategies and messages to better communicate the economic, ecological, environmental, and social values of hunting. Responsive Management is partnering with internationally recognized hunting research and marketing experts to deliver this 2-day workshop on June 19-20, 2012, in Rome, Italy. Presenters include Mark Damian Duda, Executive Director of Responsive Management (USA); Dr. Mary Zeiss Stange, Professor, Skidmore College (USA); Tammy Sapp, Communications and Marketing, Kalkomey Enterprises, Inc. (USA); Dr. Rolf D. Baldus, Economist (Germany); and Andrea Luminati, Owner, Andrea Luminati Marketing Communications Consulting (Italy).

First Ever Canadian National Fish and Wildlife Conservation Congress

The first ever Canadian National Fish and Wildlife Conservation Congress will be held in Ottawa, Canada, from May 27-31, 2012, marking one of the largest gatherings of fish and wildlife conservation professionals from across North America. Mark Damian Duda, Executive Director of Responsive Management, was invited to speak at the opening plenary session of the conference. Mark will share the stage with the Honorable Michael Gravelle, Minister, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources; Shane Mahoney, Director, Conservation Force; Steve Williams, President, Wildlife Management Institute; Virginia Potter, Director General, Canadian Wildlife Service; Daniel Ashe, Director, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service; and Jon Gasset, President, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

Upcoming National Shooting Sports Foundation's Hunting Heritage Partnership (HHP) Grant Program Projects

- **Hunter Education and Beyond: Providing the Next Steps to Course Graduates.** In continuation of a previously funded HHP project, Responsive Management will partner with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources to conduct a 2011-2012 assessment examining the rate at which hunter education graduates go on to purchase hunting licenses and actively participate in hunting.
- **From Media to Motion: Improving the Return on Investment in State Fish and Wildlife Marketing Efforts.** Responsive Management is partnered with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries on a study to determine the most successful messaging and distribution methods for reaching lapsed hunters with communications.
- **Surveying the Social Media Landscape: Identifying the Most Effective Social Media Delivery Methods to Increase Support for and Participation in Hunting and Shooting.** Responsive Management and the North Dakota Game and Fish Department have partnered on this study to determine which social media and new technology modes of delivery are the most effective at encouraging public support for and participation in hunting.

In the news...

Responsive Management's research on public attitudes toward black bears and bear hunting was recently featured in a nationally broadcast segment on NPR's "Morning Edition." The broadcast was featured on the front page of NPR's online site on February 20, 2012. To listen to the broadcast or read the story, visit <http://www.npr.org/2012/02/20/147060406/as-bear-population-grows-more-states-look-at-hunts>.

This study was conducted by Responsive Management for the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency to determine residents' opinions on black bears, including interactions they may have had, their opinions on the size of the black bear population in Tennessee, their level of tolerance of black bears, and their opinions on the hunting of black bears. The study entailed a scientific telephone survey of Tennessee residents 18 years old and older.

Increasing the Number of Hunter Education Graduates Who Purchase Hunting Licenses

- Between 74% and 76% of hunter education students came from a hunting family.
- Between 74% and 78% of hunter education students had gone hunting before the course (mostly on private land).
- Between 24% and 48% of hunter education students possessed a hunting license of some type before the course.
- Overall, between 70% and 78% of hunter education students of license-purchasing age obtained a hunting license after their course.
 - * Between 53% and 70% of hunter education students of license-purchasing age who had never hunted or possessed a license before obtained a license after their course.
- Overall, between 59% and 82% of hunter education students went hunting in their state of residence after their course.
 - * Between 47% and 63% of hunter education students who had never hunted or possessed a license before went hunting in their state of residence after their course.

To access the full report, visit http://www.responsivemanagement.com/download/reports/Hunter_Ed_License_Report.pdf.

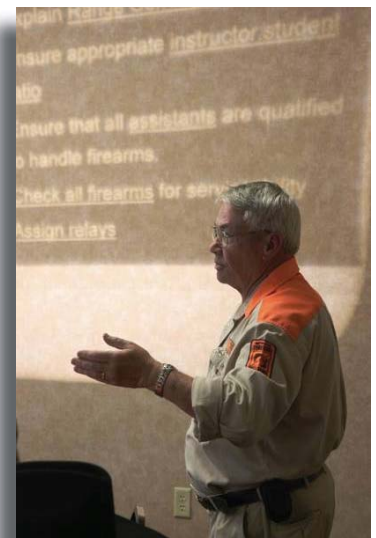


Photo: ODFW

About Responsive Management

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 50 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.

Specializing in research on public attitudes toward natural resource and outdoor recreation issues, Responsive Management has completed a wide range of projects during the past 22 years, including dozens of studies of hunters, anglers, wildlife viewers, boaters, park visitors, historic site visitors,

hikers, birdwatchers, campers, and rock climbers. Responsive Management has also conducted studies on endangered species; waterfowl and wetlands; and the reintroduction of large predators such as wolves, grizzly bears, and the Florida panther.

Responsive Management has assisted with research on numerous natural resource ballot initiatives and referenda and helped agencies and organizations find alternative funding and increase their membership and donations. Additionally, Responsive Management has conducted major organizational and programmatic needs assessments to assist natural resource agencies and organizations in developing more effective programs based on a solid foundation of fact.

Responsive Management has conducted research on public attitudes toward natural resources and outdoor recreation in almost every state in the United States, as well as in Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Japan. Responsive Management has also conducted focus groups and personal interviews with residents in the African countries of Algeria, Cameroon, Mauritius, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Responsive Management routinely conducts surveys in Spanish and has conducted surveys in Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Vietnamese and has completed numerous 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 upheld in U.S. District Courts; used in peer-reviewed journals; and presented at major natural resource, fish and wildlife, and outdoor recreation conferences across the world. Company 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:

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

Responsive Management develops:

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

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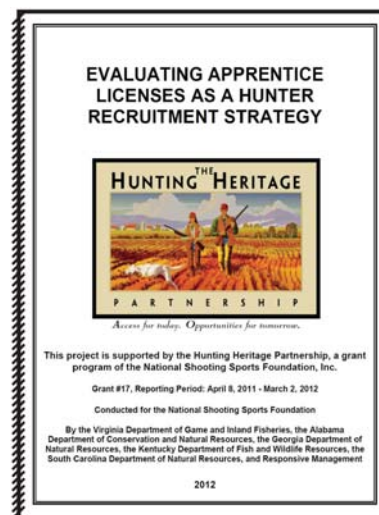
that mentioning them will only call attention in an unnecessary or alarming manner. However, research suggests that these concerns are best addressed proactively—effective programs will give prominence to the importance of safety and immediately communicate to participants the controlled nature of the program environment.

- **Successful programs provide a positive social atmosphere and encourage social interactions among participants after events:** Many programs in the evaluation entailed field days, hands-on demonstrations, camps, and other open air events in which participants had the opportunity to socialize, interact with and meet other people, and make new friends—these types of programs will always be the most effective and enjoy the greatest participation. Prior research has shown that male and female participants of all ages regard the desire to have fun as a key motivating factor for their involvement in hunting, shooting, and fishing. Both youth and adults alike desire programs that are fun and enjoyable, and a social atmosphere (particularly one that encourages interaction and follow-up after program events) will make participants more likely to return to the program and recommend it to friends.
- **Successful programs provide age- and audience-appropriate activities:** All recruitment and retention programs should be tailored to specific age groups and audiences; one-size-fits-all programs, while inclusive and structured for convenience, may nonetheless alienate certain participants by being too specialized, too general, not sophisticated enough, too challenging, or simply unappealing. Participants who outgrow certain programs or activities as they acquire new skills or become more advanced in their learning will require new challenges and goals: for example, youth hunters initiated through small game hunting will eventually require opportunities to pursue bigger game as a way of progressing to the next level of the sport. The most effective programs will be the ones that guide participants along a path of specialization according to age, audience, and overall experience level.
- **Successful programs train instructors:** Recruitment and retention programs are only as good as the instructors, teachers, counselors, mentors, and guides they employ. All programs should develop standards in instructor training as a way of ensuring consistency in the direction and focus of program content. Additionally, standards in instruction will help reinforce the findings of future program evaluations—potentially insightful or valuable differences in the instruction styles of various programs can be studied and measured as a way of determining the programmatic elements that work. Finally, research suggests that individuals who enroll in a program to learn a new skill want to receive instruction from a capable, trained expert. Instructor training will help to ensure that programs are being taught in a dependable, proven manner with reliable techniques.
- **Successful programs consider the skill levels of participants:** The degree of difficulty and/or competitiveness of program activities should match the interests and goals of participants. It is highly important for recruitment and retention programs to provide newcomers, especially younger individuals, with early feelings of achievement and visible indications of success or accomplishment as a way to ensure their continued interest. Opportunities to increase confidence and develop skills are essential to any effective recruitment and retention program. Particularly challenging or competitive activities may alienate those who are just beginning to learn or develop skills in the particular area—skeet shooting or sporting clay shooting events, for example, may be fun for intermediate or more advanced shooters but may prove difficult and potentially discouraging for beginners. The skill levels of participants and the activities in which they participate should be kept in mind during the planning and development of programs.
- **Successful programs match instructor-participant backgrounds and demographics:** Whenever possible, recruitment and retention programs should strive to involve instructors and teachers who share common demographic traits with participants of the program. Research has shown that participants are most comfortable learning from and emulating the actions of those they consider to be like themselves. One example comes from the evaluation results of a state fishing program, which found that new female anglers were most comfortable receiving instruction from other females. Programs that are able to match participant and instructor backgrounds and demographics will encourage not only feelings of trust and security but an overall sense of identification—the feeling that hunting, shooting, or fishing take place in an inclusive atmosphere and are not activities dominated by a particular type of person or group. This concept is illustrated in the Responsive Management finding, “You buy things that look like you.”
- **Successful programs contextualize activities as a way of encouraging crossover appeal:** Hunting, shooting, and fishing often benefit from an introductory approach that surrounds these activities with other, similar opportunities to learn about a variety of other outdoors topics and skills. For example, camps that include opportunities to participate not just in hunting, fishing, and sport

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Evaluating Apprentice Licenses as a Hunter Recruitment Strategy

This study was funded by the National Shooting Sports Foundation's Hunting Heritage Partnership and was conducted to determine apprentice hunting license holders' motivations for obtaining a first-time license, their expectations related to hunting, and their satisfaction with the hunting experiences afforded through the apprentice license.



The project included focus groups and a survey to analyze apprentice license purchasers in five southeastern states to determine the factors and characteristics most likely to create lifelong hunters out of apprentice license holders. The findings from this study will then be used to develop strategies to encourage apprentice license holders to become regular hunters and license purchasers. To access the full report, visit http://www.responsivemanagement.com/download/reports/Apprentice_License_Eval_Report.pdf.

shooting, but also camping, ethics, biology and ecology, archery, and survival techniques, tend to appeal strongly to younger audiences interested in trying a number of new things. Further, the purpose of hunting and fishing are generally communicated better in the context of wider concepts like conservation and wildlife management, which contextualizes the activities and encourages crossover appeal.

- **Successful programs market hunting to other outdoor recreation program participants:** Prior research suggests that the top activities competing with hunting for participation tend to be other outdoor, natural resource-based pastimes like fishing, hiking, camping, boating, and wildlife viewing. In this sense, hunting may be effectively presented as a natural extension of involvement in other related activities, and a similar approach to marketing shooting and fishing may be effective in this regard as well: natural resource-based recreation should be presented as a wide umbrella under which many different opportunities exist—participants should be encouraged to try as many as possible.
- **Successful programs provide the next step:** The model for any effective recruitment and retention initiative is a true cradle-to-grave approach: the participant is initiated through his or her first event or program, is provided next-step information on how to become proficient and increasingly experienced, and is continually notified of follow-up opportunities paving the way toward mastery of hunting, shooting, or fishing. Such an approach will guarantee continued involvement and dedication to the activity—participants who never reach a ceiling in their development will have reason to continue their participation.
- **Successful programs identify program markets and disseminate information effectively (markets first; programs second):** All programs should be based on the identification of markets, with program content and delivery designed to fit each market. Unfortunately, many agencies and organizations develop recruitment and retention efforts in the opposite sequence: by first designing their programs and activities and then trying to market them to a general audience of potential participants, they ignore the obligation to tailor-fit programs to audiences as effectively as possible. It is essential that program development and outreach use appropriate and relevant messages and themes to connect with different audiences and groups; such marketing will be strongest if it targets motivations according to age, gender, and other demographic and lifestyle characteristics.
- **Successful programs are committed to periodic evaluation:** As this study demonstrates, one critical aspect of recruitment and retention programs that must not be overlooked is an evaluation component to measure the progress and ultimate effectiveness of these efforts. The stated goals and demonstrated results of programs should be continually compared and evaluated. Evaluations allow coordinators and sponsoring agencies to learn new and possibly unanticipated observations about the effects and results of the programs, as well as valuable data regarding the post-program behaviors of participants. Evaluations can also reveal important insights into the allocation of program funding and other critical resources.
- **There is a need for a consistent assessment that will help categorize programs by progression and skill level along a continuum of learning (e.g., beginner, intermediate, advanced):** Evaluation of programs must consider the respective goals of each program based on participant skill level and intended outcomes. While several hundred recruitment and retention programs are available throughout the United States, each one addresses a different aspect of hunting, shooting, and fishing instruction, just as each one is intended to connect with a different audience or market. To identify and track useful milestones in the development of those new to hunting, sport shooting, and fishing, the recruitment and retention community should create a continuum of programmatic objectives and categorize available programs according to their purpose and intent (e.g., beginner-, intermediate-, or advanced-level programs). The consistent, community-wide assessment of programs according to type will ensure the proper evaluation of results and accomplishments.

The complete final report from the study provides extensive survey results by individual program, as well as overall rankings based on almost 50 factors related to program effectiveness. To download a copy of the full report, please visit www.ResponsiveManagement.com/download/reports/R&R_Evaluation_Report.pdf.



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