

Responsive Management Report



Specializing in Survey Research on Natural Resource and Outdoor Recreation Issues

April 2014



Photo Credit: Arkansas Game and Fish Commission

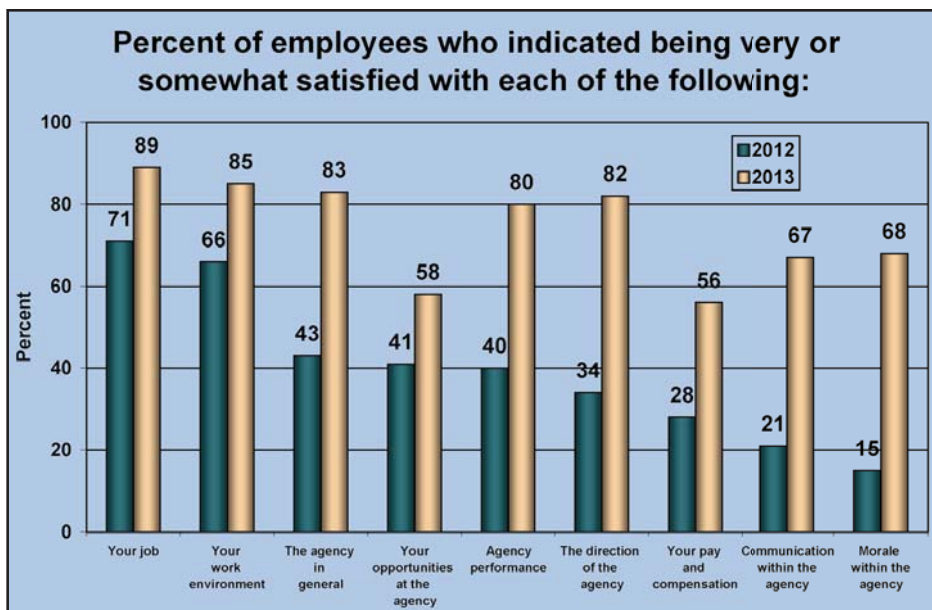
New Arkansas Game and Fish Commission Employee Survey Shows Dramatic Increases in Morale, Confidence in Agency Direction

Employee morale and confidence in the overall direction of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission improved considerably in the last 18 months, according to the findings of a recent agency evaluation survey conducted by Responsive Management. The results come as welcome news after a much publicized 2012 survey revealed apparent widespread discontent within

the agency. The new survey, by contrast, suggests a markedly more positive atmosphere at the Commission today, thanks in part to new leadership.

The employee survey, which measured opinions on topics ranging from personal satisfaction with various aspects of work to attitudes toward agency direction and performance, was

last conducted in mid-2012. Results from the new version, based on 414 completed surveys with Commission employees collected throughout November and December 2013, are notable for confirming how sharply opinion at the agency has changed within a relatively short amount of time: employee ratings increased, often dramatically, in each category of survey questions and across each Commission division.



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Key Findings



Photo Credit: Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism

- Employee satisfaction increased for all questions asked in the survey.
- The greatest increases in satisfaction were with the agency overall (includes performance, direction, communication within the agency, and morale) (see graph on page 1).
- Every agency group received higher mean peer ratings in every category in the 2013 study, and the most dramatic increases (roughly double in each category) were observed for the Directors' Office (overall) and the Commissioners.
- Since 2012, employees are less likely to think that personal and political interests influence the direction of the agency and are more likely to think that scientific data and field information influence the direction of the agency.

Employee Satisfaction

Employee satisfaction in nine different areas rose sharply between 2012 and 2013, with staggering increases in the percentages of Commission employees who indicated being satisfied with morale within the agency, communication within the agency, the direction of the agency, agency performance, and the agency in general (see graph on page 1).

Commenting on the new findings, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission Director Mike Knoedl mentioned that the earlier survey results helped kick off a series of meetings around the state, at which the director met face-to-face with employees.

“Our employees were brutally honest with the last survey. I read that report and studied it like a college exam, and there were a lot of things that jumped out at me,” said Knoedl. “Before I ever went to the statewide meetings and traveled around to talk with employees, I had a pretty good idea of their major concerns: communication, the disconnect from top to bottom, the ability for them to feel like they’re a part of the agency and that what they have to say matters.”

Knoedl continued, “I wanted our employees to know that I was sincere when I looked them in the eyes and said, ‘I need your help to make

this agency better than it was yesterday. You have to help me do that, and your opinion counts.’ People say, ‘Look what you’ve done,’ referring to me, but I didn’t do anything except gather information, listen to the employees, and let them do their jobs.”

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Graphic Credit:
Arkansas Game and Fish Commission

Agency Direction and Performance

Overwhelming majorities of Commission employees in 2013 agreed that the efforts of the Commissioners are consistent with the overall direction of the agency (just 19% thought so in 2012), that the agency has a clear strategic direction (compared to 22% in 2012), and that efforts across the agency reflect a consistent shared vision (compared to 22% in 2012). Meanwhile, about four in five employees agreed that the overall direction of the agency is consistent with the mission (compared to only a third in 2012), and that the overall direction of the agency is benefiting fish and wildlife resources in Arkansas (compared to slightly more than half of employees in 2012) (see graph below).

According to both Director Knoedl and Commissioner Steve Cook, Chairman of the Personnel and Governance Committee that oversaw the survey, the pronounced improvement in attitudes toward the vision and direction of the agency has much to do with its adoption of a strategic plan, which had been written but never formally implemented.

“The survey brought out the fact that we needed a long-range strategic plan,” says Cook. “We have a strategic

plan in place that’s been voted on by the Commission, and that’s going to be our model to move forward. It’s going to be a work in progress – times will change, attitudes will change, the way we do business will change – but we have to take everything we’ve learned from this survey and change with it.”

Knoedl remembers, “As an employee of the agency for many years, I saw that we didn’t have a clear direction of where we were going. Our strategic plan had been put on a shelf to collect dust, and no one really did anything with it.”

After his promotion to director, Knoedl recovered the plan and worked to create support for it. “I got that document down, brought a group of employees from every division in, got them to go over it, and they tweaked some things here and there. It’s like going into the woods: if you don’t have a compass, you’re going to get lost. And we were lost.”

But, Knoedl notes, “Our compass is going to get us out. We got the strategic plan put together, got it in front of the Commission, and got it passed, and I think that was huge.”

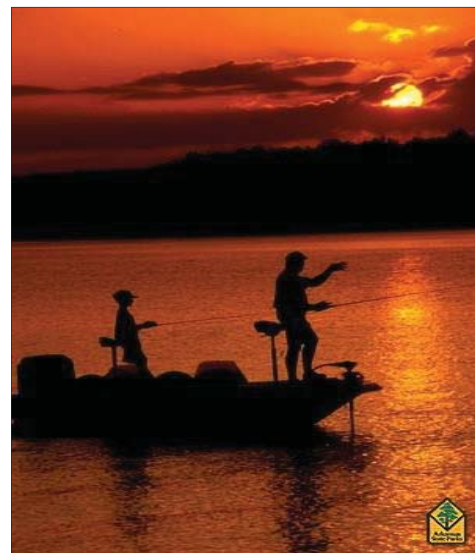
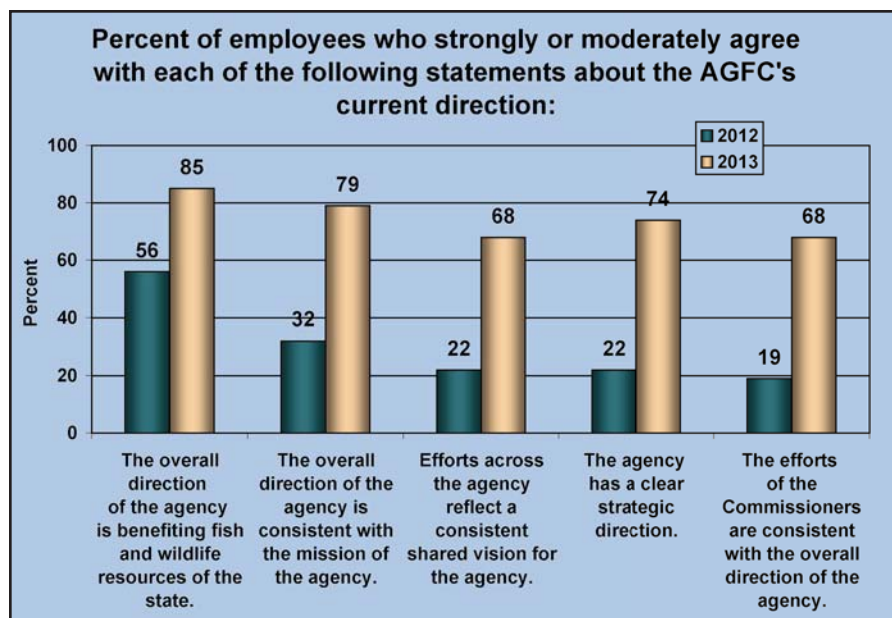


Photo Credit: Arkansas Game and Fish Commission

Adoption of the plan appears to have helped the Commission become a more effective agency: in a basic question regarding the Commission’s overall performance as the agency responsible for managing fish and wildlife in Arkansas, the percentage of respondents rating the agency’s performance as “excellent” nearly doubled, increasing from 17% in 2012 to 33% in 2013. Meanwhile, the percentage describing the agency’s performance as only “fair” declined from 25% to 10% (see graph on page 7).

A series of questions asked respondents to rate the overall job performance of colleagues, supervisors, and other agency personnel on a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 being extremely poor and 10 being excellent. While every group in 2013 received higher mean ratings than in 2012, the most substantial increases in ratings occurred at the highest levels of management, indicating a vast improvement in attitudes toward the top-down structure of the agency: in 2013, Commission employees gave the Directors’ office a mean rating of 8.0, a dramatic, night-and-day increase over the 3.8 mean rating in 2012; similarly, the Commissioners in 2013 received a mean rating of 7.3, compared to 4.4 in 2012; finally, division chiefs in 2013 had a mean rating of 8.3, an improvement of two percentage points over 6.3 in 2012.



Current and Recently

Wildlife Management

- ✓ 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
- ✓ Maryland Deer Hunters' Attitudes Toward Chronic Wasting Disease and Its Impacts on Their Hunting Participation
- ✓ Wyoming Mule Deer Hunters' Opinions on Mule Deer Hunting and Mule Deer Management
- ✓ Hunters' Attitudes Toward Chronic Wasting Disease and the Effects of Management Efforts on Hunting Participation in Hampshire County, West Virginia
- ✓ Pennsylvania Residents' Opinions on and Attitudes Toward Deer and Deer Management
- ✓ Attitudes Toward Mule Deer Management in the Platte Valley
- ✓ Deer Management and Deer Hunting in Indiana
- ✓ 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
- ✓ West Virginia Residents' Opinions on 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

- ✓ Kentucky Residents' Awareness of and Opinions on Elk Restoration and Management Efforts

Nongame Wildlife

- ✓ Pennsylvania Residents' Opinions on and Attitudes Toward Nongame Wildlife
- ✓ Kansas Residents' Opinions on Threatened and Endangered Wildlife and Actions to Protect Wildlife
- ✓ Participation in and Opinions on Birding in Florida and Satisfaction With the Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail
- ✓ 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

Outdoor Recreation

- ✓ Outdoor Recreation in Washington: The 2013 State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)
- ✓ Washington State NOVA Plan 2013-2018
- ✓ 2013-2018 Washington State Trails Plan
- ✓ Iowa 2012 Survey for the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)
- ✓ Outdoor Recreation in Florida: Survey for the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)
- ✓ Outdoor Recreation in Delaware: Survey and Report for the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)

Hunting & Shooting

- ✓ An Analysis of the Trend in Participation in Sport Shooting 2008-2012
- ✓ Archery Participation Among Adult United States Residents in 2012
- ✓ Americans' Attitudes Toward Hunting, Fishing, and Target Shooting
- ✓ Understanding Activities That Compete With Hunting and Target Shooting
- ✓ Sport Shooting Participation in the United States in 2012
- ✓ Exploring Recent Increases in Hunting and Fishing Participation
- ✓ 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
- ✓ 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
- ✓ Alabama Licensed Hunters' Opinions on and Participation in Hunting on WMAs
- ✓ Virginia Kill Permit Holders' Opinions on and Attitudes Toward Kill Permits
- ✓ Hunting on Wildlife Management Areas in Georgia: Hunters' Attitudes Toward WMAs

Hunter Harvest

- ✓ Mississippi Resident and Nonresident Hunter Harvest Survey 2013
- ✓ Deer Harvest in Florida 2012-2013 Hunting Seasons
- ✓ Florida Triennial Small Game Survey
- ✓ Harvest of Wildlife in Georgia 2012-2013
- ✓ Harvest of Small Game in Georgia 2012-2013
- ✓ Georgia Turkey Harvest Survey 2013
- ✓ Mississippi Resident and Nonresident Hunter Harvest Survey 2012
- ✓ Deer Harvest in Florida 2011-2012 Hunting Seasons
- ✓ Harvest of Wildlife in Georgia 2011-2012
- ✓ Georgia Turkey Harvest Survey 2012
- ✓ Harvest of Wildlife in Georgia 2010-2011
- ✓ Georgia Spring Turkey Harvest Survey 2011
- ✓ West Virginia Hunter Survey: 2010 Hunting Participation and Success in West Virginia

Completed Projects

Fishing & Boating

- ✓ Arizona Anglers' Opinions, Attitudes, and Expenditures in the State
- ✓ Understanding First-Time Fishing License Buyers: Focus Groups for the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation
- ✓ Identifying Sportfishing's Competition to Improve Angler Recruitment and Retention
- ✓ Washington 2013 Angler Survey Report
- ✓ Marine Anglers' Opinions on and Attitudes Toward Fisheries Management
- ✓ Hunters' and Anglers' Opinions on Factors Related to License Purchasing Behavior: A Comparison of Avid, Inconsistent, and One-Time License Buyers
- ✓ North Carolina Catfish Anglers' Participation in Catfishing and Their Opinions on Management of Catfish
- ✓ New Jersey Trout Anglers' Opinions on Stocking and Other Trout Regulations
- ✓ Freshwater and Saltwater Fishing Participation Among Alabama Residents
- ✓ Resident Participation in Freshwater and Saltwater Sport Fishing in Georgia
- ✓ Licensed Anglers' Participation in Fishing on the McKenzie River and Opinions on Various Aspects of Fishing Regulations Pertaining to the McKenzie River
- ✓ Characteristics, Participation, and Avidity of South Carolina Lifetime and Multi-Year License Holders
- ✓ Enhancing Fishing Access Through a National Assessment of Recreational Boating Access
- ✓ South Carolina Charter Vessel License Holders Survey
- ✓ Boaters' Preferences for and Opinions on Web-Based Boating Safety Courses

Recruitment & Retention

- ✓ Recruiting and Retaining Nontraditional Adult Participants Into Fishing and Hunting Through Targeted Marketing, Instruction, Mentoring, and Social Reinforcement
- ✓ 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

Environment & Conservation

- ✓ Trends in Delaware Residents' Opinions on Climate Change and Sea Level Rise
- ✓ Trends in Sportsmen's Opinions on and Attitudes Toward Global Warming and Climate Change
- ✓ 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
- ✓ West Virginia Residents' Opinions on and Tolerance Levels for Algae in West Virginia Waters

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 the Reintroduction of Elk into Western Maryland
- ✓ The Economic Impact of Saltwater Fishing in the Florida Keys
- ✓ Economic Impact of the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill in Alabama
- ✓ Understanding the Impact of Changes to North Carolina's Hunting and Fishing License Structure and Fee Schedule

- ✓ 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

- ✓ Public Awareness of and Satisfaction With the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department's Media Resources
- ✓ From Media to Motion: Improving the Return on Investment in State Fish and Wildlife Marketing Efforts
- ✓ Survey of Hunters and Sport Shooters About Their Use of Optics Equipment
- ✓ 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
- ✓ 2011 Marketing Plan for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's Inland Fisheries Program

Assessment & Evaluation

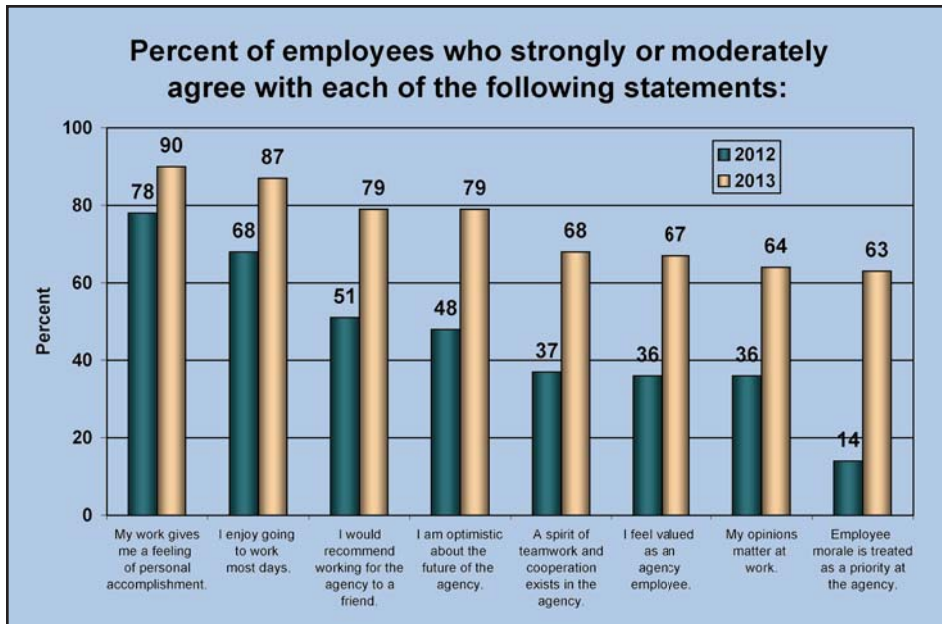
- ✓ An Assessment of Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Use, Knowledge Regarding Environmental Impacts of OHV Use, and OHV Marketing Campaign Efforts in Utah
- ✓ An Assessment of Texas' Outdoor Adventures Education Program
- ✓ Arkansas Game and Fish Commission Employee Satisfaction Survey
- ✓ Virginia Hunters', Anglers', and Boaters' Opinions on and Satisfaction With the 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*

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Employee Morale and Work Environment



2012). Meanwhile, the percentages of employees who agreed that their opinions matter at work, that they feel valued as an agency employee, and that a spirit of teamwork and cooperation exists in the agency, increased by around thirty percentage points each between 2012 and 2013 (see graph left).

Expectations are high that the Commission will continue to move in the right direction. “We would’ve never known how bad it was or how good it could be if it wasn’t for the survey and Responsive Management helping us identify the issues to move forward,” explains Commissioner Cook. “When you’re looking at an agency like the

The survey reflected a generally positive current outlook at the agency: two-thirds of Commission employees say that agency morale has increased in the past 12 months, compared to 26% who say it has stayed the same and just 5% who say it has decreased.

Additional questions examined respondents’ opinions on the professionalism and leadership of their colleagues, supervisors, and other agency personnel (again measured on a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 being extremely poor and 10 being excellent). In both series of questions, the largest increases in mean ratings between 2012 and 2013 were again observed at the upper levels of management: regarding professionalism, the mean rating for the Directors’ office rose from a 4.2 in 2012 to an 8.1 in 2013; the mean rating for Commissioners increased from a 4.4 to a 7.4; and the mean rating for division chiefs went from a 6.7 in 2012 to an 8.5 in 2013.

Similar improvements applied to perceptions of leadership at the upper levels of the Commission: regarding this quality, the mean rating for the Directors’ office went from a 3.6 in 2012

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– Arkansas Game and Fish Commissioner Steve Cook

to an 8.0 in 2013; the Commissioners’ mean rating increased from a 3.8 in 2012 to a 7.2 in 2013; and the mean rating for division chiefs rose from a 6.3 to an 8.3.

Knoedl attributes some of the improvement to a policy of simply making sure employees’ opinions are heard. “It’s about listening,” he says. “Today, I hear more people say, ‘I feel like I’m part of the agency.’”

In a final note of encouragement, employees’ agreement with a series of statements regarding morale and the work environment of the Commission increased substantially between 2012 and 2013. A sizable majority of Commission employees in 2013 agreed that employee morale is treated as a priority (compared to just 14% who thought so in

Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, it’s all about the employees. I want them to know that their voices are loud and strong. The employees who are out there every day, who see what’s going on, who relate that information back to the administration to bring it before the Commission—it’s all about the people in these surveys and their voice within the agency.”



Photo Credit: Arkansas Game and Fish Commission

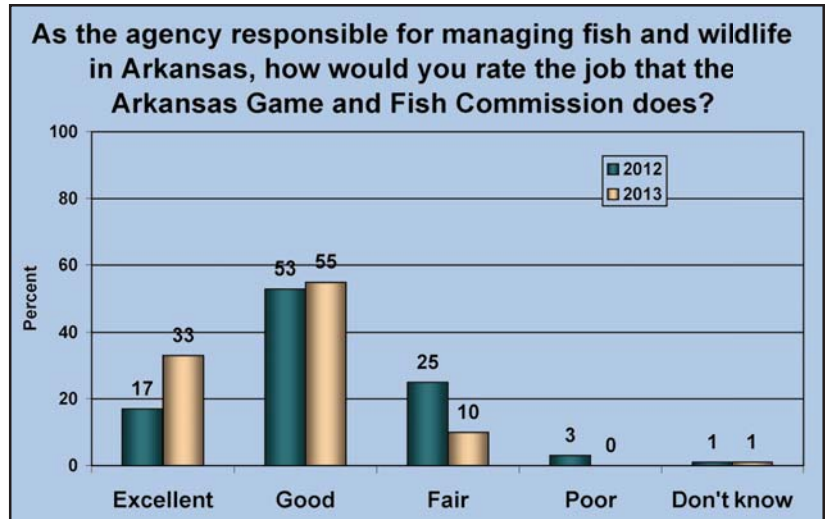
Employee Morale and Work Environment

For his part, Director Knoedl echoes the optimism of the employees. “I’m so proud of our employees and what they’ve done to make the dramatic difference in the agency. When I became director, I said that we would roll up our sleeves and go to work, and never forget who we work for, which is the people of Arkansas. When I leave the agency, I want to know that it’s in good shape. When I’m hunting and fishing and reflecting on my career, I want to know that I left the agency a lot better than I found it.”

But Knoedl says that his long history with the Commission has taught him to avoid complacency. “This agency is like a family to me, and it has been since I was 21 years old. It was a dysfunctional family when I took over, and it’s been very important to bring everyone back together and get back the family atmosphere. But we have to make sure that we keep it going—we can’t stop today just because we got a good report. There’s still a lot of hard work to do.”

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– Arkansas Game and Fish Director Mike Knoedl



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, including Stanford University, University of Southern California, Duke University, 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.

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Responsive Management develops:

- Marketing plans
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- Outreach plans
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Responsive Management Awarded 5-Year Contract With Georgia DNR

Recently, Responsive Management won a competitive bid for a major long-term contract to conduct survey research for the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Resources Division. The contract includes six different specific survey projects on hunting participation and harvest, most of which are to be conducted annually or multiple times during the five-year term of the contract.

The contract award was determined by both cost and qualification criteria. Responsive Management has extensive survey

research experience and specializes in human dimensions research on natural resource and outdoor recreation issues. While price is always an important budgetary consideration for state agencies, experience and established expertise are paramount to ensure the quality of the research and to get the most out of your investment.

In addition to the contract with Georgia, Responsive Management currently holds numerous long-term contracts with other state agencies, including the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks.

Please contact Mark Damian Duda, Executive Director of Responsive Management, to discuss any survey research needs you may have at (540) 432-1888 or mark@responsivemanagement.com.

