

Social Acceptance of Fuel Treatments

Issue: Fuel reduction has the best chance of success if managers understand the factors that influence public acceptance of fuel management sufficiently to provide effective responses to the questions, objections, and concerns of wildland-urban interface (WUI) residents.

Objectives: The study's overall objective is to provide land managers with a standardized decision support tool that enables them to assess public acceptance and understanding of fuel treatments in areas where they are needed. The three fuel treatment approaches considered were **prescribed burning**, **mechanical treatment**, and **defensible space ordinances**. Specific objectives include:

- Identify the issues related to fuel management which are salient to residents of fire-prone wildland-urban interface areas.
- Develop and test a model of the causal factors and processes by which individuals evaluate the acceptability of a fuel management policy or plan.

Preliminary Results:

- Focus group findings were used to develop a standardized survey questionnaire employed in this study to assess WUI homeowners' attitudes toward the three fuel treatment approaches. Findings are based on survey responses from 2,154 WUI homeowners in California, Florida, and Michigan.
- In CA, where support for a defensible space ordinance is highest (75%), homeowners are twice as likely to have removed flammable vegetation from near their homes (91% versus 44% in FL and 42% in MI), and are much more likely to have sought fire-safety information from local fire officials (22% versus 6% in FL and 5% in MI).
- In FL, where support for prescribed burning is highest (87%), homeowners are more likely to have witnessed prescribed burns and wildland fires.

A diverse set of study sites ensures a broadly applicable tool

California	Florida	Michigan
El Dorado and Placer Counties	Clay County	Crawford, Ogemaw and Oscoda Counties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Oak woodland, pine and mixed conifer ● USFS managed public land ● Frequent wildfires ● Prescribed burns rare and limited in scope ● Defensible space ordinances enforced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pine forest ● Primarily private ownership ● Historically frequent use of prescribed fire and renewed interest in using it more ● No defensible space ordinances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Jack pine forest ● Federal and state-managed public land ● Frequent wildland fires; recent fires associated with life and property loss ● Frequent prescribed burning ● No defensible space ordinance

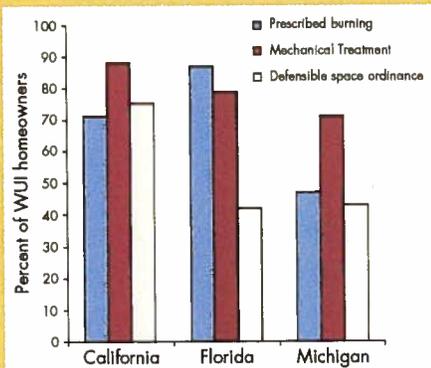


Figure 1 Percent of WUI homeowners who approve of fuel treatment approach

- In MI, where support for prescribed burning is lowest (47%), homeowners or their friends and neighbors are more like to have suffered property damage from wildland fires and more likely to have had to evacuate their homes due to the threat of fires.
- In CA, where support for mechanical treatment is highest (88%), homeowners are more familiar with programs near their homes.
- Results show that high levels of support for any fuel treatment approach depend on the levels of trust in land management agencies in carrying out their programs and perceived cost-effectiveness of the fuel reduction approach.

