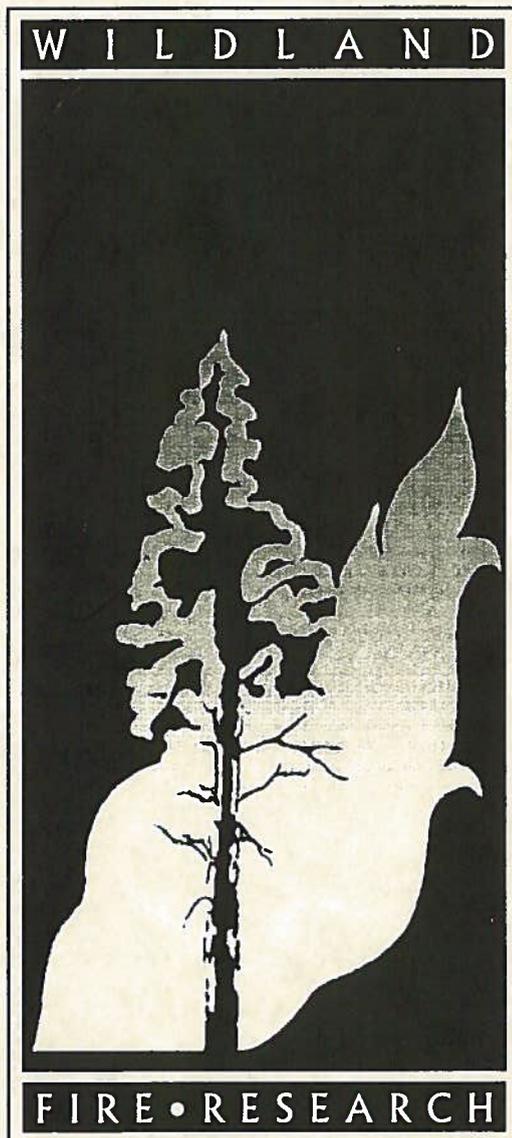


Fire Conditions on Public Forests & Rangelands

A Survey of Citizens in Central Oregon:
Jefferson and Deschutes Counties



Summary Frequency Distributions January 2002

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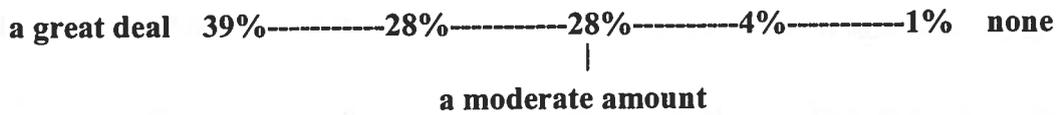
**Research conducted for the Joint Fire
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and U.S. Department of Interior**

This preliminary report summarizes responses to a mail survey of citizens in Jefferson and Deschutes counties in central Oregon. Overall, 372 citizens were contacted and 192 completed the questionnaire for a 52% response rate. This report is a summary of frequency distributions only. Some response categories have been collapsed for presentation purposes (e.g. *strongly agree* and *agree* responses were combined into a single category). A more detailed analysis will be forthcoming in the final project report.

Please note: Research for this project is still in progress. Do not cite information contained within this report without permission of the authors.

Fire Conditions on Public Forests and Rangelands A Survey of Citizens in Central Oregon: Jefferson and Deschutes Counties

1. Prior to this survey, how much had you thought about wildfires in forests, rangelands, or grasslands?



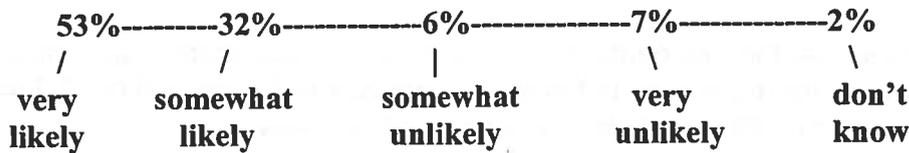
2. About how far is it from your home to a natural area where a wildfire might burn?

mean = 4 miles

3. About how often do you spend time in a National Forest or on lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management?

3%	never	18%	about once a month
6%	less than once a year	18%	about once a week
34%	a few times a year	14%	several times a week
		8%	daily

4. In your opinion, how would you rate the likelihood that a wildfire could break out in the forests, rangelands, or grasslands near your home in the next five years?



5. Public trust in natural resource agencies is essential to the success of fire protection programs. Please indicate your level of trust in these agencies to make good decisions *about wildfires and fire prevention*. If you have no basis for judgment, please mark "no opinion."

	-----Level of Trust-----		
	moderate/full	none/limited	no opinion
city government	42%	39%	19%
county government	47%	38%	15%
State of Oregon Dept. of Forestry	70%	19%	12%
Warm Springs Confederated Tribe	38%	23%	39%
Bureau of Land Management (BLM)	64%	25%	11%
U.S. Forest Service	70%	23%	8%

6. We're interested in learning more about what central Oregon residents know about wildfires. Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability by indicating whether you believe the answer is generally true, generally false, or that you are not sure.

	generally true	generally false	not sure
▶ Humans cause most of the wildfires in Oregon.	54%	38%	8%
▶ Fires kill a majority of animals in a burned area.	26%	54%	20%
▶ Fires kill a majority of large trees in a burned area.	53%	40%	7%
▶ The quality of water in streams and rivers is often badly degraded in the first year or two after a wildfire.	60%	17%	23%
▶ Fires play an important role in controlling insect and disease outbreaks in forests and rangelands.	81%	5%	13%
▶ Many plants require occasional fires so that new seeds or seedlings can sprout.	82%	7%	11%
▶ Fires play an important role in controlling noxious weeds in Oregon's forests and rangelands.	64%	11%	25%

7. The next few questions ask for your opinions about specific practices that resource managers can use to change environmental conditions in forests and rangelands. Please read the following descriptions, then answer the questions about management practices.

- **Prescribed fire** – Also called controlled burning, this practice can involve 1) letting a naturally caused fire burn under close and careful watch; or 2) intentionally setting fires in ways that can be controlled to produce desired conditions and protect against undesired results.
- **Mechanical vegetation removal** – Managers can use chainsaws, mowers, or other specialized machines to reduce the number of shrubs and small trees where they are so numerous that they increase the risk and size of wildfires.
- **Thinning** – In some high-risk areas with numerous trees, the trees are too big for mowing machines but can be thinned out using chainsaws or other harvesting equipment.
- **Grazing** – In some cases, domestic animals can be placed in areas where they graze on plants before they dry out in summer, thus reducing the amount of flammable vegetation later on.

For each of the following questions, choose the answer that best matches your opinion.

a. In my opinion, intentionally setting **prescribed fires** on public forests and rangelands is:

- ▶ a legitimate tool that resource managers should be able to use whenever they see fit. 56%
- ▶ something that should be done only infrequently, in carefully selected areas. 34%
- ▶ a practice that should not be considered because it creates too many negative impacts. 5%
- ▶ an unnecessary practice. 2%
- ▶ I know too little to make a judgment about this topic. 3%

b. In my opinion, **mechanical vegetation removal** on public forests and rangelands is:

- ▶ a legitimate tool that resource managers should be able to use whenever they see fit. 64%
- ▶ something that should be done only infrequently, in carefully selected areas. 19%
- ▶ a practice that should not be considered because it creates too many negative impacts. 4%
- ▶ an unnecessary practice. 3%
- ▶ I know too little to make a judgment about this topic. 10%

c. In my opinion, **thinning** trees to reduce fuel on public forests is:

- ▶ a legitimate tool that resource managers should be able to use whenever they see fit. 73%
- ▶ something that should be done only infrequently, in carefully selected areas. 23%
- ▶ a practice that should not be considered because it creates too many negative impacts. 1%
- ▶ an unnecessary practice. 1%
- ▶ I know too little to make a judgment about this topic. 3%

d. In my opinion, **grazing** on public forests and rangelands to reduce fuel is:

- ▶ a legitimate tool that resource managers should be able to use whenever they see fit. 60%
- ▶ something that should be done only infrequently, in carefully selected areas. 26%
- ▶ a practice that should not be considered because it creates too many negative impacts. 9%
- ▶ an unnecessary practice. 1%
- ▶ I know too little to make a judgment about this topic. 5%

8. Not everyone agrees about the impacts and effectiveness of fuel management practices. We'd like to know what *you* believe about the practices described on the previous page. For each of the following statements, please circle the number that best reflects your belief about the accuracy of the statement. You are not being judged on right or wrong answers – we are interested in your opinion. If you feel you do not know enough to give an opinion, circle “don't know” for that statement.

	agree/ strongly agree	disagree/ strongly disagree	don't know
Prescribed fire has little overall effect on the intensity or frequency of wildfires.	22%	68%	10%
Prescribed fire effectively reduces amounts of fuel in most forests and rangelands.	85%	9%	7%
Prescribed fire stimulates the growth of native plants eaten by wildlife.	81%	4%	16%
Prescribed fire effectively keeps forest insects and diseases at minimum levels.	81%	5%	15%
Prescribed fire causes unacceptable impacts on recreation uses.	16%	74%	10%
Mechanical vegetation removal often leaves behind unacceptable amounts of fuel.	19%	50%	32%
Mechanical vegetation removal has little overall effect on the intensity or frequency of wildfires.	11%	68%	21%
Mechanical vegetation removal causes unacceptable impacts on recreation uses.	10%	69%	21%
Thinning effectively reduces the amount of fuel in forested areas.	85%	8%	7%
I'm worried that thinning for fuel reduction will lead to unnecessary harvesting.	22%	71%	8%
Thinning has little overall effect on the intensity or frequency of wildfires.	14%	75%	11%

9. To further help natural resource managers make decisions, please tell us how you feel about the following by circling the number that best matches your agreement with each statement.

	agree/ strongly agree	uncertain	disagree/ strongly disagree
Following nature's way is preferable to human intervention in ecosystems.	40%	22%	38%
All fires, regardless of origin, should be put out as soon as possible.	22%	15%	63%
Selectively thinning dead and dying trees is better than leaving them in the forest.	80%	10%	12%
Fire risks are so great in Oregon that managers need to use any means necessary to reduce them.	56%	15%	29%

10. We'd like to know what you think about the scenic impact of these practices. For each practice, please circle the number that best describes how acceptable you believe the likely impacts are.

	-----Scenic Impacts-----		
	acceptable-----	neutral-----	unacceptable
▶ prescribed fire	67%	17%	16%
▶ mechanical vegetation removal	64%	24%	10%
▶ thinning	80%	13%	6%
▶ livestock grazing	67%	16%	17%

11. The use of prescribed fire may create concerns for some people. Please indicate how concerned you are about the following possible effects in central Oregon.

	moderate concern/ great concern	not a concern/ slight concern
▶ damage to private property	45%	55%
▶ effects on recreation opportunities	35%	65%
▶ loss of wildlife and fish habitat	43%	57%
▶ risk to human safety	38%	62%
▶ economic loss of useable timber	41%	59%
▶ reduced scenic quality	43%	57%
▶ increased levels of smoke	48%	52%
▶ deteriorated public water supply	44%	56%
▶ increased soil erosion	46%	54%

12. How much confidence do you have in federal agencies such as the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management to use the following practices as part of a responsible and effective fuels management program for central Oregon?

	moderate/full	none/limited	no opinion
▶ prescribed fire	63%	33%	4%
▶ mechanical vegetation removal	66%	27%	7%
▶ livestock grazing	59%	36%	5%
▶ thinning	76%	21%	3%

13. Often natural resource managers must decide how to make tradeoffs between different management approaches or goals. For each of the six pairs of statements below, please tell us what you would prefer managers do by circling the number that best reflects your beliefs about the choice between the statement in Column A and the statement in Column B. If you truly feel you do not know enough to give an opinion, circle "don't know."

<u>Column A</u>	Prefer Col. A	Neutral	Prefer Col. B	<u>Column B</u>	Don't Know
Prescribed fire should be the preferred option when reducing wildland fuels.	34%	22%	36%	Mechanical removal should be the preferred option when reducing wildland fuels.	9%
Use prescribed fire in both wild <i>and</i> populated areas to reduce wildfire danger.	32%	18%	44%	Do not attempt to use prescribed fire in populated areas even if it means a higher risk of wildfires.	7%
Do not use fuels reduction practices in highly scenic locations.	23%	18%	55%	Use fuels reduction practices in highly scenic areas even if doing so temporarily hurts scenic beauty.	5%
Allow livestock grazing wherever it is likely to reduce fuel levels.	59%	17%	20%	Prohibit livestock grazing in recreation areas even when it can be used to reduce fuel levels.	4%
Allow thinning wherever it is likely to reduce forest fuel levels.	77%	10%	10%	Prohibit thinning along highway corridors even when it reduces forest fuel levels.	3%
Use mechanical removal in any populated area to reduce fuel levels.	75%	16%	4%	Prohibit mechanical removal in recreation areas even if it reduces fuel levels.	5%

14. Did the events that took place at Los Alamos, New Mexico, in 2000 change your opinion about the use of prescribed fire in the forests and rangelands of central Oregon?

- ▶ No, the Los Alamos fire did not affect my opinion about using prescribed fire. **62%**
- ▶ Yes, the Los Alamos fire made me *less likely* to support the use of prescribed fire. **33%**
- ▶ Yes, the Los Alamos fire made me *more likely* to support the use of prescribed fire. **5%**

15. Some people worry about prescribed fire reaching their property, or a place that they care about. How concerned would you be if a prescribed fire was:

	moderate concern/ great concern	not a concern/ slight concern
▶ anywhere in the U.S.?	28%	72%
▶ within 100 miles of you?	27%	73%
▶ where you can see the smoke?	47%	53%
▶ within 10 miles of your community or property?	55%	45%
▶ one mile from your community or property?	70%	30%
▶ adjacent to your property?	81%	19%

16. For some people, reducing fuels by mechanical vegetation removal may be a concern. How concerned would you be if a mechanical vegetation removal project was:

	moderate concern/ great concern	not a concern/ slight concern
▶ anywhere in the U.S.?	7%	93%
▶ within 100 miles of you?	7%	93%
▶ where you can see the affected site?	20%	80%
▶ within 10 miles of your community or property?	20%	80%
▶ one mile from your community or property?	29%	71%
▶ adjacent to your property?	37%	63%

17. Which of the following items reflect your opinion about smoke from prescribed fire?

	agree
▶ Smoke from prescribed fire has never been an issue with me.	25%
▶ Smoke from prescribed fire is a necessary inconvenience.	54%
▶ Smoke levels from prescribed fire are a concern, but I think they are managed acceptably	51%
▶ I worry about the effects of smoke from prescribed fire on public health.	31%
▶ I worry about the effects of smoke from prescribed fire on travel safety.	38%
▶ Because of the smoke, prescribed fire isn't worth it.	6%

18. In some locations, resource managers have recently begun to use mechanical mowers to remove underbrush and small trees as an alternative to other fuel reduction strategies. What are your opinions about this practice? *(Please check all of the answers that apply to you.)*

- ▶ Mowing is preferable to using prescribed fire around private property. 55%
- ▶ I'm concerned that mowing may not be effective for reducing forest fuels. 20%
- ▶ Mowing creates unsatisfactory conditions (extra fuel, disturbed soil) on the forest floor. 14%
- ▶ I know too little about this topic to make a judgment. 26%

19. Even though prescribed fires are planned in order to minimize smoke, some smoke is usually unavoidable. We'd like to know how much smoke is acceptable to you, and what is the amount of time you could tolerate it at each level. For each statement, please place an X in the box that best matches your level of tolerance for that level of smoke intensity.

	Acceptable length of time					
	Not Acceptable	A Few Hours	One Day	Three Days	One Week	More than One Week
Visibility						
a. Smoke plumes visible in the distance, but no decrease in visual quality near my residence or workplace.	2%	6%	15%	20%	18%	39%
b. Light haze visible on the horizon and some decrease in visual quality, but not enough to affect my activities.	3%	8%	12%	24%	19%	35%
c. Smoke is apparent near my residence or workplace and visual quality has decreased so some activities are affected.	15%	18%	27%	19%	15%	6%
d. High levels of smoke have caused poor visual quality that affects my ability to do many activities.	43%	17%	21%	11%	5%	2%

Odor/Breathability

a. Smoke plumes are visible in the distance, but I cannot smell smoke when I breathe.	3%	5%	13%	14%	18%	48%
b. Occasionally I can smell smoke, but it doesn't affect me otherwise.	10%	10%	13%	16%	18%	33%
c. I notice the smoke slightly when I breathe.	22%	19%	18%	19%	15%	9%
d. Smoke is highly noticeable each time I breathe, even indoors.	56%	17%	15%	8%	3%	1%

22. In your opinion, which is the most realistic role for the public in public land management?

- ▶ **None**, let natural resource professionals make the decisions. 8%
- ▶ **Provide suggestions** and let the natural resource professionals decide. 38%
- ▶ **Serve on advisory boards** that review and comment on decisions. 35%
- ▶ **Act as a full and equal partner** in making management decisions. 17%
- ▶ The public should **make the decisions** and natural resource professionals should carry them out. 3%

23. In your opinion, how well have agencies such as the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management done in incorporating public concerns into their management strategies?

- ▶ **Excellent**, public concerns are always considered by federal public land agencies. 3%
- ▶ **Good**, public concerns are usually considered by federal public land agencies. 21%
- ▶ **Fair**, public concerns are sometimes considered by federal public land agencies. 36%
- ▶ **Poor**, public concerns are rarely or never considered by federal public land agencies. 16%
- ▶ I have no basis for an opinion on this topic. 25%

24. How interested are you in participating in the planning activities of federal public land agencies *in general*?

- 15% **very interested**
- 38% **somewhat interested**
- 24% **slightly interested**
- 23% **not at all interested**

25. How interested are you in participating in the planning activities of federal land agencies as they consider using practices that could reduce the risk of wildfire in central Oregon?

- 18% **very interested**
- 36% **somewhat interested**
- 28% **slightly interested**
- 18% **not at all interested**

