

Focus Group Protocol

Perceptions of Risk, Trust, Responsibility, and Management Preferences Among Fire-Prone Communities on the San Bernardino National Forest

Hello and welcome. I want to thank you for coming here today. My name is _____ and I am here with _____ and _____. We will be talking together about the Forest Service, other agencies, and residents in your community regarding fire and fire management. We want your own views as a community member, and will not be expecting you to represent other's opinions or a particular group you belong to aside from yourself. I have a few questions for you, and mostly want to hear from you about what your thoughts are. This is an open discussion and we want to encourage each of you to share your ideas, whether you feel others in the room may have already expressed that idea, or a contradictory opinion to your own. Since we want to hear from each of you, we are asking that you give each other a chance to speak, and that you treat each other with respect. If you have a cell phone with you either turn it to silent mode or turn it off so that our discussion is not interrupted. We will not be attempting to reach consensus on any topic, or ask for any votes.

Your identity will be kept confidential, but we need to identify speakers with their comments, and to match those with the questionnaire. We are using the ID assigned to you and as placed on the notecard in front of you. Once the responses are matched up your identity is kept separate from the databases we will create. Any contact information we collected to invite you to this meeting will not be stored with these data. If you have any questions or concerns about this please see me at the end of the group session so we can explain our procedures to keep your confidentiality secure.

We will be having our group discussion for the next hour and a half. We will not take any breaks, but if you want to get up and move around feel free to do so quietly. We are tape recording and making written summaries of our discussion. This is just for our use, so we don't miss any of your ideas. These tapes will not be heard by anyone else other than myself and my research coding team. The transcripts will not contain your names. We ask that you speak one at a time, so that the recordings are clear and we can track the discussion.

Most people find these focus group discussions enjoyable and informative. I want to acknowledge that you are of course, under no obligation to answer anything that you do not wish to and that your participation is voluntary so you may leave at any time.

To begin things, let's go around the table and introduce yourselves...some of you may already know each other. Just give your first name, and tell how long you have been a resident of this community. Also, please let us know if this community is your primary or secondary place of residence.

Objectives/Values/Concerns

- A. There are numerous objectives that fire management can address on a National Forest. In your opinion, what objectives for fire management are critical for this forest? Specifically, what should fire management accomplish on this forest...what should it do?

B. What values are linked to the objectives we just discussed?

C. Views on key concerns about fire risk and fire management

What are your main concerns about fire risk and fire management? Which are most important to you? We are asking you to tell us what concerns you the most about fire, not to evaluate current effectiveness of management. Examples might include scenic beauty, property values, community safety, etc.

D. Now that we've listed your concerns, do we need to go back and revise our objectives? Did we miss something in our first round of objectives that we need to pull in now?

Alternatives

E. What alternative approaches are there for arriving at the objectives this group has listed? Let's try to keep in mind costs, and the desire to address multiple objectives if possible

F. What are the expected impacts and consequences of these various alternatives?

G. What are the risks inherent in each of these alternatives?

H. Which alternatives then, in light of everything we've discussed so far, can you support?

I. What concerns do you have about these alternatives?

J. Now, as we've listed these objectives together, individuals, groups, and agencies were identified. Let's go through these and examine your level of trust in each... What's your level of trust in the various parties you see necessary to address each alternative?

Values/Goals and Trust

K. In the survey we asked you to indicate the level of shared values and goals you hold similar to the Forest Service. What are the most important values and goals that the FS shares with you?

L. What are the most important ones that the FS does not share with you?

M. Thinking back to your trust/distrust rating for the FS, what did you consider in making your rating? Tell me what experiences or information came to mind as you were answering this question. Was it personal interactions, media accounts, or something else?

N. Let's go back to the idea of shared values with the FS, and see if you can think of instances when the FS acted in ways inconsistent with those values. Can you think of examples of when that has happened?

- O. And if that happened, were the reasons for inconsistency valid in your mind, that is, when talking about inconsistency, can you think of reasons why that might have occurred? What might be some valid reasons for inconsistency? What might be some instances where inconsistency was not valid?

- P. On the questionnaire, we asked the extent to which certain factors, such as the Forest Service's past record on fire management, affect your reliance on their fire management. Other factors were laws, personal relationships, existing procedures, accountability to Congress, opportunities to voice your opinions, and media coverage. What were you thinking about when you answered these questions? Is there anything that has been most influential in your reliance on Forest Service fire management?

Information Needs and Mode of Receipt

- Q. What information, if any, would you be interested in receiving or do you feel you need from the FS regarding fires and fire management on this forest?