

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

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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 anonymous, 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 note card 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 identity secure.

During our group discussion, 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 my research coding team and me. 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. If you are not comfortable with, or do not agree to us recording your conversation, you are free to leave now, by staying you are agreeing to the recording.

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.

In the next part of our discussion we'll be focusing on fire and fire management by looking at the objectives for fire management, concerns you have about fire, and alternatives

### **Objectives/Concerns/Alternatives**

- A. Fire management can address numerous objectives on a National Forest. In your opinion, what are the most important objectives for fire management on the (fill in name of forest) and why? When we are talking about objectives, we are asking you to think of things like "reducing forest fuels," "creating a healthier forest," or "preventing dramatic uncontrolled fires."
- B. What are your main concerns about fire risk and fire management? We are asking you to tell us what concerns you the most about fire, not to evaluate current effectiveness of management. Examples here might include things like concerns about community safety, smoke, or decreased property values in high-risk areas.
- C. Keeping in mind the most important objectives for fire management and your concerns about fire management, what alternatives for arriving at the objectives do you feel will work best. Let's try to keep in mind costs, and the desire to address multiple objectives if possible. Examples of alternatives would be starting prescribed burns, allowing naturally caused fires to burn in designated areas, or thinning of forest through logging or mechanical thinning. In other words, alternatives are management techniques to accomplish fire management objectives.
  1. When you hear the alternatives discussed among this group, what are the most important risks involved with using each?

2. So, what I am hearing in light of everything we have discussed so far is that you support...and...but are concerned about... and ...is that correct?
3. Now when we think about the objectives and alternatives for arriving at them, who do you trust to accomplish those objectives?

### **Values/Goals/Trust**

In the survey, we asked you to indicate the level of shared values and goals you hold similar to the Forest Service.

#### **D. Values and Goals**

1. What values and goals does the FS share with you that are important to accomplishing important fire management objectives?
2. What are the most important values and goals that the FS does **not** share with you?

E. 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?

F. Let's go back to values you believe the FS shares with you, and see if you can think of instances when the FS acted in ways inconsistent with those values.

1. Can you think of a specific example when that has happened?
2. In your view, were the inconsistencies between shared values and actions taken by the Forest Service legitimate? Did the Forest Service have a reason acceptable to you for being inconsistent?

### **Information Needs**

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

### **Additional Remarks/Comments**

Thinking back through everything we've discussed during this session, is there any else you would like the Forest Service to know from you regarding fire and fire management on the (fill in name of forest)?

We want to be sure you have had every chance to express your opinions on the issues most important to you about fire and fire management on (name of forest). We also want to be sure you have a chance to tell us if there was anything that you want us to know about participating in this focus group, including filling out the survey (so if you have comments for the researchers, we want that too). To make sure that happens we have given you a sheet of

paper to enter any thoughts you have now and we'd like you to take a moment to write those down and leave them in the box by the door as you leave. If you feel you need more time, the form has a mailing address and we want you to take the time you feel you need and mail your comments back to the address on the form. Please be sure that you do not include your name anywhere on this form or on the envelope if you mail something to us.

Thank you for coming to today's session and participating in this important discussion with us!