

Preliminary Results

**Public Attitudes Toward Wildfire in
Central Oregon**



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Introduction

The following are results for a mail survey of Central Oregon households conducted between February and April, 2011. The survey was administered to a random sample of 1,414 households in Crook, Deschutes, Jefferson, Klamath, Lake, and Wasco Counties. The survey asked recipients to respond to a variety of questions associated with wildfire, wildfire risk, wildfire management, and experience with wildfires.

We present preliminary results for several questions below. Because of rounding, percentages may total between 99% and 101%. The response rate for the survey is as follows:

| | |
|--------------------------|-------|
| Sample size: | 1,414 |
| Surveys returned: | 720 |
| Response rate: | 51% |

Section 1

In this first section of the survey we asked some general questions about interests in, activities relating to and knowledge of wildfire issues in Central Oregon.

Q-1 In general, how well informed would you consider yourself to be concerning wildfire issues in Central Oregon?

| | |
|--------------------|-----|
| Not informed | 13% |
| Somewhat informed | 40% |
| Informed | 31% |
| Very well informed | 17% |

Q-2 How familiar are you with your county's Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)?

| | |
|--------------------|-----|
| Not informed | 44% |
| Somewhat informed | 31% |
| Informed | 19% |
| Very well informed | 6% |

| | | |
|------------|---|-----|
| Q-3 | Do you feel wildfire management is a problem in Central Oregon? | |
| | Yes, it is a problem (go to Q-4) | 69% |
| | No, not a problem (go to Q-5) | 14% |
| | Don't know (go to Q-5) | 17% |

| | | |
|------------|---|-------|
| Q-4 | What factors do you feel contribute to wildfire in Central Oregon? (Circle all that apply.) | |
| | Climate change | 29.4% |
| | Lack of proper forest management (e.g. thinning) | 63.6% |
| | Diseased and dead trees | 77.8% |
| | Human carelessness (e.g. fireworks, campfires) | 73.6% |
| | Increasing development in forested areas (e.g. new home building, etc.) | 52.2% |

Q-5a We are interested in your perceptions about previous exposure to and future risk of wildfires. *How much risk do you feel about a future Wildfire?*

| | No Risk | Low Risk | Moderate risk | High risk |
|--|---------|----------|---------------|-----------|
| Wildfire in Central Oregon forests | 5% | 10% | 41% | 44% |
| Wildfire in your county | 4% | 13% | 44% | 39% |
| Wildfire in your community | 17% | 41% | 25% | 17% |
| Wildfire in your neighborhood | 33% | 36% | 17% | 14% |
| Wildfire threats to your residence or property | 39% | 33% | 16% | 12% |

Q-5b We are interested in your perceptions about previous exposure to and future risk of wildfires. *Please indicate exposure—if any—with each event (since 2006).*

| | No exposure | 1 to 2 days | 3 to 5 days | 6 days & more |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|
| Wildfire in Central Oregon forests | 41% | 16% | 16% | 26% |
| Wildfire in your county | 36% | 21% | 19% | 24% |
| Wildfire in your community | 56% | 25% | 10% | 8% |
| Wildfire in your neighborhood | 74% | 16% | 5% | 5% |
| Wildfire threats to your residence or property | 80% | 14% | 3% | 3% |

Q-6 Were you ever evacuated as a result of a wildfire? If yes, how many times?

| | |
|---------------------------|-------|
| Yes | 8.8% |
| No | 91.2% |
| If “yes,” how many times? | |
| 1 | 76.2% |
| 2 | 19.0% |
| 3 | 4.8% |

Q-7 For reducing the threat of wildfire, how much confidence do you have in natural resource managers (Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, etc.) in your area:

| | None | Limited | Moderate | Full | Not sure |
|--|-------|---------|----------|-------|----------|
| ...to responsibly & effectively use prescribed fire? | 6.7% | 15.4% | 46.7% | 26.0% | 5.2% |
| ...to safely allow some natural ignited fires to burn? | 10.8% | 26.4% | 35.6% | 21.1% | 6.1% |
| ...to responsibly use thinning to reduce forest fuels | 7.7% | 17.0% | 38.1% | 30.5% | 6.7% |

Q-8 We are interested in your personal participation in the following activities to mitigate wildfire risk. Please indicate if you have participated in any of these activities or not by circling the responses “yes” or “no.” If you did not participate in the activity (answered “no,”) please indicate the possible reason(s) you did not.

| | Yes | No | → | Not relevant | No interest | Too costly | Takes too much time | One person makes little difference |
|--|-----|-----|---|--------------|-------------|------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| General planning: | | | | | | | | |
| a. Prepare an evacuation plan in case of wildfire. | 36% | 64% | | 76% | 14% | 1% | 5% | 4% |
| b. Plan recreational activities that involve fire (e.g., campfires, fireworks) around weather service reports. | 66% | 34% | | 74% | 18% | 1% | 0% | 7% |
| Community activities: | | | | | | | | |
| c. Attend community-based meetings related to wildfire. | 21% | 79% | | 45% | 39% | 0% | 12% | 3% |
| d. Obtain information from a land management, community group or firefighting agency on how to prepare for wildfire. | 43% | 57% | | 58% | 34% | 1% | 5% | 3% |
| e. Volunteer within the community to help clear and remove combustible material (e.g., brush, litter). | 25% | 75% | | 39% | 31% | 1% | 27% | 3% |
| f. Help organize community education programs related to wildfire. | 9% | 91% | | 34% | 42% | 1% | 20% | 3% |
| Property protection activities: | | | | | | | | |
| g. Plant fire-resistant plants. | 47% | 53% | | 75% | 14% | 7% | 1% | 2% |
| h. Plant trees and shrubs at least 15 feet apart. | 48% | 52% | | 78% | 14% | 5% | 2% | 1% |
| i. Prune the branches of all trees within 85 feet of your house to a height of 10 feet above the ground. | 49% | 51% | | 74% | 15% | 5% | 3% | 3% |

Q-8

| | Yes | No | → | Not relevant | No interest | Too costly | Takes too much time | One person makes little difference |
|---|-----|-----|---|--------------|-------------|------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| j. Reduce the density of trees within 100 feet of your home. | 41% | 59% | | 83% | 12% | 4% | 1% | 0% |

Home Protection Activities:

| | | | | | | | | |
|--|-----|-----|--|-----|-----|-----|----|----|
| k. Clean roof surfaces/gutters and surrounding vegetation to avoid accumulation of needles, leaves and dead plants. | 80% | 20% | | 81% | 10% | 1% | 5% | 3% |
| l. Stack firewood/lumber at least 30 feet from house. | 52% | 48% | | 90% | 5% | 0% | 4% | 1% |
| m. Use nonflammable building materials such as tile, slate, stone, etc. | 50% | 50% | | 72% | 7% | 20% | 0% | 1% |

Q-9 If you answered yes for any of the activities in Q-8, how important were the following factors in your decision to participate?

| | Not important | Somewhat important | Moderately important | Very important |
|--|---------------|--------------------|----------------------|----------------|
| a. Fire risk | 10% | 21% | 29% | 39% |
| b. Recent wildfire activity | 37% | 26% | 18% | 19% |
| c. Neighbors property condition | 37% | 25% | 19% | 19% |
| d. Property owner association | 57% | 17% | 14% | 12% |
| e. County or state requirements | 41% | 21% | 22% | 16% |
| f. Insurance company requirements | 40% | 20% | 21% | 18% |
| g. Like the aesthetics better | 26% | 26% | 29% | 19% |

SECTION 2

This section of the survey concerns attitudes toward the environment and politics.

Q-10 Listed below are statements about the relationship between humans and the environment. For each, please indicate your level of agreement.

| | Strongly disagree | Mildly disagree | Neutral | Mildly agree | Strongly agree |
|--|-------------------|-----------------|---------|--------------|----------------|
| a. The balance of nature is very delicate and easily upset by human activities. | 8% | 13% | 7% | 32% | 40% |
| b. Humans have the right to modify the natural environment to suit their needs. | 24% | 26% | 15% | 22% | 13% |
| c. We are approaching the limit of people the earth can support. | 12% | 13% | 19% | 26% | 30% |
| d. The so-called "ecological crisis" facing humankind has been greatly exaggerated. | 26% | 21% | 13% | 21% | 18% |
| e. Plants and animals have as much right as humans to exist. | 9% | 12% | 12% | 28% | 39% |
| f. Humans were meant to rule over the rest of nature | 33% | 25% | 11% | 16% | 15% |

Q-11 From what you've read and heard, is there solid evidence that the average temperature on earth has been getting warmer over the past few decades, or not?

| | |
|-------------------------|-----|
| Yes (go to Q-12) | 64% |
| No (go to Q-13) | 26% |
| Don't know (go to Q-13) | 10% |

Q-12 Do you believe that the earth is getting warmer...?

| | |
|--|-----|
| Mostly because of human activity such as burning fossil fuels. | 53% |
| Mostly because of natural patterns in the earth's environment. | 31% |
| Don't know | 16% |

SECTION 3

The final section of the survey asked a few concluding questions to check to see if our survey is representative of all types of people.

Q-13 What is your current age in years? Average age = 54 years; Range 18 to 91 years

Q-14 Please indicate your Gender: Female 46% Male 54%

Q-15 What level of education have you completed?

| | | | |
|------------------------------|-----|------------------|-----|
| Grade school | >1% | Some college | 36% |
| Middle or junior high school | 1% | College graduate | 31% |
| High school | 21% | Graduate school | 6% |
| Vocational school | 5% | Other | >1% |

Q-16 Which of the following best describes your current work situation?

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----|---------|-----|
| Employed full time | 44% | Retired | 35% |
| Employed part time | 12% | Student | 1% |
| Not employed outside the home | 3% | Other | 3% |
| Unemployed | 2% | | |

Now we'd like to ask about your neighborhood and residence.

Q-17 How long have you lived in Central Oregon? Average years = 24

Q-18 How long have you lived in your current residence? Average years = 13

Q-19 Do you own or rent your residence?

| | | | |
|-----|-----|------|-----|
| Own | 85% | Rent | 15% |
|-----|-----|------|-----|

Q-20 Is this your permanent residence or seasonal/vacation home?

| | | | |
|----------|----|-----------|-----|
| Seasonal | 3% | Permanent | 97% |
|----------|----|-----------|-----|

Q-21 Regarding the property adjacent to your house, is it developed or undeveloped?

| | | | |
|-----------|-----|-------------|-----|
| Developed | 79% | Undeveloped | 21% |
|-----------|-----|-------------|-----|

Q-22 Are there rules about landscaping or building materials in your area to help protect against fires?

Yes 41% No 59%

Q-23 In which type of residence do you live?

| | | | |
|--|-----|---|-----|
| Mobile home or trailer | 7% | One family house (more than 5 acres) | 11% |
| One family house – detached (less than 1 acre lot) | 54% | A building with apartments | 4% |
| One family house (1 to 5 acres) | 21% | A one family house attached to one or more houses | 3% |

Q-24 How close is your residence to a wildland area (either forest or rangeland)?

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----|--|-----|
| Live within a wildland area | 7% | More than 300 yards but less than a mile | 14% |
| Adjacent to a wildland area | 15% | Between 1 and 3 miles | 29% |
| Between 100 and 300 yards | 6% | More than 3 miles | 28% |

Q-25 Finally, concerning your residence in Central Oregon, would you say you have an emotional attachment to the place?

Yes 82% No 12% Not sure 6%