

Executive Summary

Wildlife Values and Beliefs of South Dakota Residents

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General Wildlife Values

- The importance of wildlife to South Dakota citizens was relatively high and consistent between 1997 and 2002.
 - In 1997, about 64% of the general public said it was “*very important*” and 20% said “*moderately important*” that South Dakota preserves as much wildlife as possible, and in 2002, about 61-62% said “*very important*” and about 29-30% said “*moderately important*”.
 - In both 1997 and 2002, about 59% of the respondents said that healthy wildlife populations were “*very important*” to the economy and well-being of South Dakota residents; about 29-30% said “*moderately important*”.
 - The majority of South Dakota residents agreed with the statement, “the diversity of wildlife in an area is a sign of the quality of the natural environment”.
 - In both 1997 and 2002, a significant percent (88% and 91%, respectively) agreed that, “the State should protect certain levels of stream flows for fish and wildlife by restricting overuse from industry, agriculture, and municipalities”.
- Three groups of citizens were identified based on their general attitudes towards wildlife: strong support for wildlife (67.6%), medium support for wildlife (12.5%) and low support for wildlife (19.9%).
- What does this mean for an agency responsible for the management of the public’s wildlife resources? It means that a majority of residents will want the management of these resources to be based on the best scientific data available, be willing to pay for an adequate level of management, and within reason, expect wildlife and the environment in general to be protected regardless of costs. Also, based on their high personal involvement with wildlife, (fishing, hunting and wildlife watching) they will support programs that increase the ability of citizens to enjoy these resources.

Prairie Ecosystems and Associated Native Wildlife

- Overall South Dakota residents had high support for prairie ecosystems and associated wildlife, including prairie dogs.
 - However, while most South Dakota residents valued native prairie ecosystems and the efforts of private landowners to conserve and enhance native prairie ecosystems, other beliefs about prairie ecosystems and associated native wildlife had varying degrees of polarization, especially prairie dog issues, endangered species issues and use of taxes to pay for such programs.
- A significant finding was the demonstration of an incongruity between peoples’ general attitude and their attitude towards a specific case (see page 5 for a description of the findings). This was strong evidence of the importance of education and public involvement before undertaking specific wildlife projects. In spite of very high public support for wildlife in general, misunderstandings and mistrust could result in significant opposition to specific projects.

- Three different, but similar models were developed based on attitudes towards prairie ecosystems and associated wildlife. All three models showed a high support for prairie ecosystems and associated wildlife.
 - 4-cluster model:

Strongly Pro-Prairie Dog.....	36.2%
Slightly Pro-Prairie Dog.....	25.9%
Slightly Contra-Prairie Dog.....	26.2%
Strongly Contra-Prairie Dog.....	11.7%
 - 5-cluster model:

Strongly Pro-Prairie Dog.....	31.7%
Slightly Pro-Prairie Dog.....	18.8%
Slightly Contra-Prairie Dog.....	35.4%
Strongly Contra-Prairie Dog.....	14.1%
 - 6-cluster model:

Strongly Pro-Prairie Dog.....	27.7%
Moderately Pro-Prairie Dog.....	26.1%
Slightly Pro-Prairie Dog.....	12.9%
Slightly Contra-Prairie Dog.....	25.1%
Strongly Contra-Prairie Dog.....	8.1%
- People with high support for wildlife in general also had high support for prairie dogs and prairie ecosystems.

Management of Native Fish Species in the Black Hills

- Overall, South Dakota residents had high support for management of native fish species in the Black Hills. Highest support was for a balanced management approach that included some areas that maintained just native fish species while still maintaining recreational fishing in the Black Hills as a goal.
- Higher support for native fish species management was strongly related to strong support for wildlife in general.
- A five-cluster model was developed based on attitudes towards native fish species management in the Black Hills:
 - 5-cluster model:

Strong Support for Native Fish.....	38.6%
Moderate Support for Native Fish.....	9.9%
Mixed Support.....	23.0%
Neutral.....	25.2%
Strong Support for Recreational Fish.....	3.2%

Mountain Lions in South Dakota

- A majority of South Dakota residents (56%) agreed that “having a healthy, viable population of mountain lions in South Dakota is important to me,” while 23% were neutral or undecided and 21% disagreed.
- A five-cluster attitude model was identified as being useful for understanding and classifying South Dakota residents based on their attitudes related to mountain lions in South Dakota:
 - 5-cluster model:

Strong Support for Mt. Lions.....	17.8%
Moderate Support for Mt. Lions.....	18.8%
Slight Support for Mt. Lions.....	19.8%
Neutral / Slight Opposition to Mt. Lions.....	29.0%
Strong Opposition to Mt. Lions.....	14.6%

- People that had high support for wildlife in general also had high support for mountain lions in South Dakota.

Some Hunting Ethics Issues in South Dakota

- This topic was different from the other issues explored in this study in that the model produced was not linear. This suggests that hunting ethics issues are not a matter of quantitative degree but rather of a qualitative nature. In other words, it may not be possible to describe hunting ethics issues using a model that describes different levels of ethics. Rather people seem to respond to ethics issues based on each situation rather than a general overall model of ethics.
- A five-cluster attitude model was identified as being useful for understanding and classifying South Dakota residents based on their attitudes towards the five hunting ethics issues that were measured in this survey. This model is non-linear and more difficult to name and describe, therefore descriptions of each group are provided here.

Group 1 (31.1%): Group 1 thought that hunting of tame, pen-reared animals was unethical, but the level of agreement was moderate (not as high as groups 2, 4, and 5), however, they could support the activity if landowners needed this to make a living. They also felt that hunting of animals within fenced confinements was unethical, but again the level of agreement was moderate (not as high as groups 2 and 4). This group strongly felt that hunting should not become an activity that is only affordable by the wealthy (as did all the other groups) and this group had the second highest support for preserving trapping.

Group 2 (23.5%): Group 2 had the second highest agreement that hunting of tame, pen-reared animals was unethical, however unlike group 1, this group does not change their mind if landowners needed this to make a living. This group had the highest level of agreement that that hunting of animals within fenced confinements was unethical, that hunting should not become an activity that is only affordable by the wealthy, and the highest support for preserving trapping.

Group 3 (21.0%): Group 3 did not feel that hunting of tame, pen-reared animals was unethical, although the level of disagreement was slight, and as expected they would also support this activity if landowners needed this to make a living. This group also slightly disagreed with the statement that hunting of animals within fenced confinements was unethical. This group strongly felt that hunting should not become an activity that is only affordable by the wealthy, but had the lowest level of support compared to the other four groups. This group had moderate support for preserving trapping.

Group 4 (19.0%): Group 4 was unique in that they were the only group that did not support trapping, otherwise the group was similar to group 2. Group 4 had the highest agreement that hunting of tame, pen-reared animals was unethical, and their opinion does not change if landowners needed this to make a living. This group had the second highest level of agreement that hunting of animals within fenced confinements was unethical and they strongly believed that hunting should not become an activity that is only affordable by the wealthy. However, as noted above this group does not support preserving the tradition of trapping.

Group 5 (5.4%): Group 5 was unique in that they made a distinction between the hunting of tame, pen-reared animals and the hunting of animals within fenced confinements. Group 5 strongly thought that hunting of tame, pen-reared animals was unethical, and their opinion did not change if landowners needed this to make a living. However, they strongly felt that hunting of animals within fenced confinements was not unethical. This group strongly felt that hunting should not become an activity that is only affordable by the wealthy (as did all the other groups) and this group had some level of support (slight) for preserving trapping.

For a complete copy of these survey results, please send your name and address to:

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and ask for the **2002 Wildlife Values and Beliefs of South Dakota Residents** report.