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Research Report

Focus Groups & Survey

Florida Forest Service

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Center for Public Issues Education
IN AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

UFIFAS

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Background

The Florida Forest Service (FFS) was established in 1927 and the name was changed to Division of Forestry (DOF) in 1969. In 2011, the name was changed back to the Florida Forest Service. To coincide with the name change, the FFS commissioned the UF/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources (PIE Center) to conduct research to obtain the Florida public's perceptions of forestry and the Florida Forest Service. The PIE Center was also commissioned to conduct research of FFS employees' perceptions of FFS.

Methods

Six focus groups were conducted in September 2011: two in Orlando, two in Tallahassee, one in Gainesville, and one in Ft. Myers. Two of the focus groups – one in Tallahassee and one in Gainesville – included participants from rural areas. Using audio recordings of the focus groups, the focus groups were transcribed verbatim to insure accuracy of the information. An experienced moderator was used to lead the focus groups. Participants were recruited using the Florida Survey Research Center and were provided a \$50 stipend for participating. Analysis was an on-going process that occurred during the focus groups, through debriefing after each focus group location, and through coding the transcripts for major themes using standard content analysis techniques.

The demographics of the focus group participants were as follows: 28 female and 23 male participants; the average age of participants was 53, ranging from 26 to 87; 36 participants participated in outdoor recreation and 15 did not; 39 were White, 8 participants were Black or African-American, and 4 were Hispanic; and 8 participants earned less than \$20,000 annually, 4 earned \$20,000-30,000, 10 earned \$30,000-35,000, 12 earned \$35,000-50,000, 9 earned \$50,000-\$75,000, and 6 earned more than \$75,000.

FFS employees were surveyed in October 2011. The online survey was distributed to approximately 1,175 employees, with 683 responses (58.1%). Two waves of e-mails were sent from FFS Director Jim Karels to solicit participation.

Results

Results of focus groups will be presented first, followed by results of employee survey.

Focus Groups

Focus group results were analyzed by question across all six groups. Because of time constraints, it was not always possible to ask every question for all groups. In these instances, it is noted in the results.

Themes are generally deemed to have occurred when at least four out of the six groups mentioned the same or similar concept or idea, noted in bold. In instances where themes were not present for four or more groups, themes present for fewer groups are presented.

To present the theme, representative quotes are included to give a sense of the meaning for participants. There are two types of quotes. The first is when only one speaker is used. The second is when multiple speakers are used for the same quote. In this case, P1 identifies the first speaker, P2 identifies the second speaker, and so on.

Forests

The first section of the focus groups focused on perceptions of forests. Overall, participants had positive perceptions of forests. Their main associations with forests were plants, animals, parks and recreation, and business. Their perceived benefits for forests were air/oxygen, recreation, wildlife, and timber. The things they perceived as threats to forests were fire, people, development, and natural threats, including invasive species. The impacts the participants perceived forests had on water and air quality related to oxygen creation and nonspecific positives, such as “tremendous” and “essential.”

What comes to mind when you think of forests?

All groups mentioned plants.

QUOTE: “The diversity of the forests too, I think, different. Usually in an ecosystem that has been there for a while, especially things that are like a state forest or a national forest; you have got areas that have not really been trod on so much by man. And there’s so many different kinds of plants and flora and fauna in there.”

Five groups mentioned parks and/or recreation.

QUOTE: “For me, the first thing is camping.”

QUOTE: “Riding trails and hiking trails.”

Five groups mentioned animals.

QUOTE: P1, “Birds.”

P2, “I think it is animals.”

P3, “Wildlife.”

P2, “Yeah. Small, mostly small animals.”

P4, “Yes, I was thinking snakes.”

Four groups discussed business.

QUOTE: “Well, I need to just to talk about the money part. There is a lot of lumber. It has to be done, unless we come up with some better materials.”

When you think of forests, what benefits come to mind?

All groups mentioned air/oxygen.

QUOTE: “And the oxygen. All those trees; the air is good out there.”

QUOTE: P1, “Oxygen.”

P2, “Yeah, oxygen.”

P1, “It is quite important, I think.”

All groups mentioned recreation.

QUOTE: “It is a nice place to take a good walk and have a feeling of well-being.”

QUOTE: “I used to do a lot of hunting and fishing. My biggest thing up in New Jersey was hiking and fishing up there.”

Five groups mentioned wildlife.

QUOTE: “Wildlife. Somewhere they might live and...”

QUOTE: “The animals that are in there that you can go to see and to learn about, hunt.”

Five groups mentioned timber.

QUOTE: P1, “And then of course there is the lumber that you get for making all kinds of furniture, walking sticks...”

P2, “Tables.” (knocks on table)

P1, “There you go.”

QUOTE: “When we are talking about Florida pine forests; newspapers. Because most of them are pulp.”

What do you think threatens forests?

All groups mentioned fire.

QUOTE: P1, “Fires.”

P2, “Yeah, definitely the fires.”

Threats related to people are divided into two groups: individuals and development.

All groups mentioned development.

QUOTE: “I lived in Boca for a while, and there was this forest that was relatively near our development, it was beautiful because it had wild orchids all through it. And one day, the bulldozers showed up and it just became this vast...as far as you can see of wasteland. I don’t know if they ever did build the development. They just tore it all out and put it for sale. It was sad.”

QUOTE: “Short sightedness, I think. People just look at the immediate benefits of this project or that project and don’t look at the long term effects of deforestation.”

QUOTE: P1, “Greedy politicians.”

P2, “Developers.”

P1, “Developers can’t do it without the greedy politicians.” (crosstalk and laughter)

Five groups mentioned individuals.

QUOTE: P1, “Lack of consideration for the outdoors and just carelessness. It is another reason why I got into Scouting. Everybody loves to make a fire, but then there is a difference between a bonfire and just a moderate fire that you can enjoy and cook with and sit around and enjoy. There is no need to be wasteful. We try to teach them that.”

P2, “City people. (laughter) Because I have seen many times, you get a bunch of old country boys out there and they leave and nothing is disturbed, but then you get a bunch of city slickers that destroy the place.”

Five groups mentioned natural threats.

QUOTE: P1, “I think some of those diseases; beetles and stuff, can take over if it is not caught in time.”

P2, “And the fish that are not from here.”

P3, “And the plant life, for that matter, too.”

What impacts do you think forests have on water and air quality?

Five groups made nonspecific positive statements.

QUOTE: P1, “Tremendous.”

P2, “Huge.” (Agreement and crosstalk)

P3, “Essential.”

Five groups mentioned creation of oxygen.

QUOTE: “The more trees that are taken away, the less oxygen that they are putting out for us. The more deforestation that happens, we are not going to benefit from that. So, forests definitely need to be protected so that they are not eliminated.”

Forest Management

This section dealt with participants’ perceptions of forest management. When they heard the term forest management, participants thought of harvesting and replanting trees, fire, and protection of forests. When provided with a definition of business resources, some participants were confused by its inclusion in the definition. The definition also led participants to think of caring and protecting forests. The participants saw government’s role in forest management as a role of ensuring that forests were protected. Only one group was able to specifically name DOF when asked what state agency was responsible for forests in Florida. All rural participants were aware of FDACS, but some urban participants were not. The participants associated FDACS with education, farming, and weights and measures. Many of the participants did not have enough information about FDACS, while others had positive perceptions of FDACS, and others associated FDACS with regulation.

What comes to mind when you hear the term “forest management”?

All groups mentioned harvesting and replanting.

QUOTE: “I don’t know, proper logging is...cutting the timber so you just don’t have the stuff so thick, the forests so thick that trees can’t really grow properly. They need to be thinned out, to be healthy. Then you want to use what you thin out.”

QUOTE: P1, “I think about when you see them and you can see what woods are like, and then you see somebody that has planted pines and everything is in a straight line and everybody has got it mowed. The trees don’t look happy there.” (laughs)

P2, “Yeah, that is not my idea of reforestation; pine trees all in a row. That is not my idea of reforestation, at all.”

QUOTE: P1, “And the planting of new trees, in a sense like farming. Because you have got some pine farms that they use specifically for Christmas trees. But then there are others that they are reintroducing certain trees to areas that either died or they are supposed to be indigenous to the area, but they are just not growing or dying off for no particular reason. Maybe because of insect infestation or maybe even a forest fire. So, they are putting in more trees, which is the management.”

P2, “Or trying to bring it back to the way it used to be, there is one area that they went in and bush hogged everything out from the bottom and burned it, bush hogged it in, burned it again, and the last time I have seen anything done to that area was a fire. There are all kinds of vines and everything. Nothing could grow because of the vines, and they are trying to bring it back to the natural state without all the vines.”

P3, “Conservation programs of replanting, or small farm management, tree farm management.”

Five groups mentioned fire.

QUOTE: “Controlled wildfires to keep the undergrowth from causing wildfires at a natural time. I think it is a very unknown thing to the public, and they need more education that sometimes controlled forest fires are necessary because otherwise, much larger wildfires happen. You have to clean the undergrowth out. In nature, these massive wildfires that were the size of states happened. There is evidence of it, and they would happen periodically. Without that, you are in danger of entire states catching on fire if they are not managed properly.”

QUOTE: P1, “Yeah, I think of the controlled burns as management, so if there was a fire it wouldn’t take it all down.”

P2, “Are there a lot of forest fires here in Florida?”

P1, “Yeah, there can be.”

P3, “A couple of years ago they had a bad drought, just a few years ago. (crosstalk) We are not built up yet this year with water.”

P4, “Just because we are up so high in the lightning capital aren’t we? (crosstalk) This area?”

P5, “Even a month ago there was a bad forest fire in the Everglades.”

Four groups mentioned protection.

QUOTE: “Or trying to bring it back to the way it used to be, there is one area that they went in and bush hogged everything out from the bottom and burned it, bush hogged it in, burned it again, and the last time I have seen anything done to that area was a fire. There are all kinds of vines and everything. Nothing could grow because of the vines, and they are trying to bring it back to the natural state without all the vines.”

QUOTE: P1, “Management of, control of, certain kinds of trees so they don’t get extinct, I guess.”

P2, “Like you talked about before, the melaleuca.”

With this definition, what comes to mind when you hear the term “forest management”?

While asking this question, a PowerPoint slide was shown on a screen with the following definition:

Forest management is the process of ensuring the health and safety of forests through maintenance and the management of natural resources and business resources.

Five groups mentioned the business resources.

QUOTE: P1, “Well, I thought it was interesting that you said business resources, too. As opposed to natural and business, so they have to consider the business interests. I didn’t realize that.”

P2, “It brings an understanding of why they go in and they cut down large areas of trees and...you know, it’s an outside company that will have forestry on them, but that made me realize the business part of it.

QUOTE: “It started out good and then it got to the business and then I got a little bit worried.”

Four groups mentioned aspects of caring for the forests.

QUOTE: “Well, you have to have it if you have a diseased sector in your forest. They have got to be cut down or sometimes it is called...it is almost like culling the herd. You take the bad out. (crosstalk) They will go in a forest and they will find trees that are a danger of falling or whatever, maybe near hiking trails, it’s culling of the herd.”

QUOTE: “Well, forests need to be managed. As we saw in California where they had adopted a hands-off approach and now they have whole neighborhoods burning down because deadfall hasn’t been cleared, and we do have responsibility to mind.... I mean, nature will take care of itself, but sometimes it needs a little help. (crosstalk) It needs a little help.”

Four groups mentioned protection and regulation.

QUOTE: “Well, maybe even more protection, because if you find that there is some kind of natural resource there and then all of a sudden everyone is saying well then, take the forest down and get the natural resource. If it’s protected, then keep it protected.”

QUOTE: P1, “Except for the fact that we are to that point now where I think it is being misused so much.”

P2, “Right.”

P3, “Yeah, because people are trying to (two people talking at once, unintelligible). You have to have somebody to be the overseer. Because people will try to take advantage of our natural resources.”

*What role do you think government agencies have in regard to forest management?***Five groups mentioned preservation.**

QUOTE: P1, “And I think they have a role also to protect the forests, like when it comes to controlled burns and doing some of the things that protect the forest.”

P2, “I would hope that the government would do what it can to ensure that we have good air quality and water.”

QUOTE: “Well, regulation. (Agreement heard; Yeah, Yes) That’s a dirty word today to a lot of people, but without regulation you have got chaos. You saw it in the last decade, where you let people go, I mean, totally different spectrum, but on Wall Street. Greed, unfortunately, greed will trump what are our instincts to preserve natural resources. So, I think you have to have regulation, I really do.”

Four groups mentioned that government agencies were necessary.

QUOTE: “You have to have it. It’s a necessary evil.”

QUOTE: “Well, without it, there would be a lot less, that’s for sure because there are a lot of incentives provided by the government. That is what I did for all these years, I am a little bit familiar with it. Like the county forester as well as other USDA programs that provide incentives for people to manage as well as increase forests.”

Do you know what state agency is responsible for forests in Florida?

The rural Tallahassee group was the only group that stated Division of Forestry. The other five groups said Department of Forestry.

Five groups mentioned Department of Agriculture.

Both Tallahassee groups mentioned DOF were related to the Department of Agriculture.

Three groups mentioned Fish and Wildlife Commission by name. Every group mentioned wildlife, game, and/or fish.

Three groups mentioned Department of Environmental Protection.

Two groups mentioned Department of Natural Resources

Two groups mentioned Department of Wildlife and Forestry

Have you heard of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services?

There were participants in all groups who had heard of FDACS.

There were participants in three of the four urban groups who had not heard of FDACS.

What services do you think this organization (FDACS) provides?

Three groups mentioned extension and education.

QUOTE: “They help consumers with questions that they have about their own homes and things that they are doing like this Extension program.”

Three groups mentioned farming.

QUOTE: P1, “Farming.”

P2, “Department of Agriculture.”

P3, “That’s what comes to mind for me, like to me, forestry doesn’t come to mind. To me, it is farming. Yeah.”

P1, “For agriculture.”

P4, “Crops, I would think.”

P5, “And even shrubs and plants and domestic plants, I think.”

Three groups mentioned weights and measures.

QUOTE: P1, “Are they the Department of Weights and Measures also, that goes around and checks consumer scales?”

P2, “Mmm, hmm.”

P1, “It is a function of consumer services, go to delis and make sure a pound of ham is a pound of ham.”

What are your perceptions of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services?

Four groups mentioned either being confused or not having enough information.

QUOTE: P1, “It seems like it is real hush-hush. Everybody wants to keep it to their own little kingdom. Nobody wants to share.” (Agreement heard; Mmm,hmm)

P2, “As a former federal employee like you, we experienced all of that firsthand in our little fiefdoms.” (laughter)

Three groups had positive perceptions of FDACS.

QUOTE: “I think it’s probably a good thing we have got them there.”

Three groups had perceptions related to regulation.

QUOTE: “I think that, I think they just regulate a bunch of different laws like how much fertilizer or how much spray and stuff they can put on the crops, how much...you know...they regulate what the rules are supposed to be as far as what they are putting on our food and well as about the animals in the forest. Do they need to burn it before lightning? They make those decisions and regulate that.”

Perceptions of Division of Forestry

This section addressed participants’ awareness and perceptions of DOF. All participants in three groups had heard of DOF, but there were participants who had not heard of DOF in the other two groups who were asked this question. The associations participants made to DOF were forest management, wildfires, parks and park rangers, and fish and wildlife. The participants thought DOF was responsible for preservation and conservation in regards to managing forests and natural resources. There were no specific DOF programs that a majority of the groups were aware of. Fish and Wildlife, and the Department of the Interior were the other organizations that participants associated with managing forests and their natural resources.

The majority of participants had heard of the U.S. Forest Service and associated it with working with federal land and protection of forests. The majority of participants had heard of the Florida Park Service and associated it with managing parks, keeping parks clean, and controlling access to the park. The majority of participants had heard of the U.S. National Park Service and associated it with managing federal parks. Only one participant had not heard of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. The participants associated it with hunting/fishing licenses, law enforcement, and the control/monitoring of wildlife populations. The majority of participants had heard of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and associated with the federal level and the oil companies in the Gulf of Mexico. The majority of participants had not heard of the Florida Forestry Association and associated it with non-profits, lobbying, and providing information. The majority of participants had not heard of Friends of Florida Forests and associated it with “tree huggers.”

Some participants were not sure of how these organizations related to each other and whether or not there was duplication between the organizations. To differentiate itself from the other organizations, the participants said DOF should focus on protecting forests and providing information to the public about DOF.

Have you heard of the Florida Division of Forestry?

Five groups were asked this question. The Gainesville group was not asked the question.

All participants in the both Tallahassee groups and the first Orlando group had heard of DOF.

There were participants in the Ft. Myers and second Orlando focus groups who had not heard of DOF.

What do you think it does/what services do you think it provides?

Five groups mentioned forest management.

QUOTE: P1, “Seems like I have seen signs by forests, ‘monitored by’(crosstalk, and laughter)

P2, “That is exactly what I was going to say.”

Five groups mentioned wildfires unprompted. A follow-up question was asked related to wildfires.

QUOTE: P1, “The first thing that I think of with them would be firefighting. It just comes to my mind. Forest firefighting and prevention. They manage the cut lines to make sure that the fire doesn’t...”

P2, “What about lightning strikes and everything, and our droughts?”

P1, “Well, yeah.”

Four groups mentioned parks and/or park rangers.

QUOTE: P1, “Aren’t they the ones...well, you aren’t going to answer...(laughter) I would imagine that they are the ones that do the training for park rangers. So that they, in turn, can manage the parks that they are in charge of, as well as educate those that come to enjoy it.”

P2, “I don’t think that they Division of Forestry trains park rangers.”

P1, “Okay, I guess” (crosstalk, unintelligible)

P2, “I could be mistaken. And that may have changed. Because for a while I was looking into trying to get on as park staff because I thought that would just be the perfect job, as far as I could see.”

Four groups mentioned fish and wildlife.

QUOTE: P1, “Licenses for hunting and stuff like that?”

P2, “Right.”

P1, “Yeah, I don’t know. Seems like they would.”

What do you think it (DOF) does to manage forests and natural resources?

Three groups mentioned preservation/conservation.

QUOTE: “To make sure they are replanting in the areas that they are using it, so that they are always keeping it, making sure that the forests are still there.”

Are there any specific Division of Forestry programs that you are aware of?

Five groups were asked this question. No themes emerged in more than two groups.

Two groups mentioned fish and wildlife

QUOTE: P1, “Fish and Wildlife Management?”

P2, “Water education.”

P3, “We still haven’t decided, now, whether the Fish and Game Commission is under the Forestry or not. She is not going to answer that question for us. (crosstalk) So, Forestry...does Forestry do the fishing and the hunting and the...?”

P1, “You figure they are very closely related because where do you go to do the hunting and the fishing?” (crosstalk)

P4, “I think they are ‘big brother.’”

P5, “I don’t think they have any authority to head up (three people talking at once, unintelligible) I don’t think they do that, it’s the game people. They have a lot of authority.”

Two groups mentioned wildfires.

QUOTE: P1, “We just stated one, provides technical assistance to farmers as to what type of trees...all the technicalities of planting the trees themselves. They do that. And of course, we mentioned fire control, they also assist individual landowners in that, too. They even have a service where you can get them to help you burn on your own property for fire control.”

P2, “And they put signs all over the place telling you what the fire risk is for that particular day.”

Are there any other organizations/agencies that you are aware of that deal with managing forests and their natural resources?

While asking this question, a PowerPoint slide was shown on a screen with the following description:

The Division of Forestry is a state-based organization that is responsible for forest management in Florida. This includes preventing, detecting and suppressing wildfires, managing state forests for public use, and assisting rural and urban landowners, while also serving urban communities.

Four groups mentioned fish and wildlife.

Three groups mentioned the Department of the Interior

Have you ever heard of the U.S. Forest Service?

All participants had heard of USFS in both Tallahassee groups and the first Orlando group

Most participants had heard of USFS at the Ft. Myers, Gainesville, and second Orlando groups

What do you think USFS does?

All groups mentioned the distinction of USFS working with federal land.

QUOTE: P1, “I think they do pretty much the same thing on federal land as the Florida Division of Forestry does on other land. That’s what I think.”

P2, “He answered it the way I was going to answer it.”

P3, “I third that.”

Three groups mentioned conservation/protection of forests.

QUOTE: “I think that they regulate which trees can be cut and which trees can’t be cut. There are certain trees that you are not supposed to cut down because there is a shortage of certain trees.”

Have you ever heard of the Florida Park Service?

All participants at the Gainesville and both Tallahassee groups had heard of FPS.

The majority of participants at the Ft. Myers and Orlando groups had heard of FPS.

What do you think FPS does?

Five groups mentioned maintaining/managing the parks.

QUOTE: “Maintains the parks for people to use, like the pathways...”

Three groups mentioned keeping the parks clean.

QUOTE: P1, “Picks up litter.”

P2, “Keeps parks clean.”

Three groups mentioned controlling access to and within the parks.

QUOTE: “I imagine they oversee access. Because I think those are probably the things, certainly most of those crew teams are from high schools and whatnot. They probably regulate who is allowed to use it; when and how and so forth.”

Have you ever heard of the U.S. National Park Service?

All participants in the Gainesville, Orlando, and Tallahassee groups had heard of USNPS.

The majority of participants in the Ft. Myers group had heard of USNPS.

What do you think USNPS does?

All groups mentioned managing/maintaining the parks.

QUOTE: P1, “And basically they take care of the parks for the use of the public.”

P2, “And maintenance.”

Three groups mentioned USNPS being specific to federal land.

QUOTE: “Different property on the other hand. Yeah, whether it is federal property or state property, would dictate if they have direct oversight over it.”

Have you ever heard of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission?

All participants at the Ft. Myers, Gainesville, second Orlando, and Tallahassee groups had heard of FFWCC.

One participant in the first Orlando group had not heard of FFWCC.

What do you think FFWCC does?

Five groups mentioned hunting/fishing licenses.

QUOTE: P1, “Yeah, I think they also do fishing licenses to restrict where fishing can and can’t happen, to allow certain areas to repopulate.”

P2, “And hunting licenses.” (crosstalk)

P1, “I don’t know if they actually issue the fishing licenses, but they do make the policies. The fishing licenses (unintelligible), I believe.”

P3, “I think they are directly involved in setting limits on fish that you can catch, closed seasons. I know we are trying to protect the red snapper, the American Red Snapper, the grouper. There are closed seasons on those right now and I think they are directly involved in that. There is always a big push back by the commercial guys, you know, who I work with. I love them, but they would catch every last fish. And that is just the way it is. I mean, that is how they make their living, so you have got to understand that. That is how they feed their families, but there has to be some kind of regulation, because the oceans will not be able to feed us with fish. We are going to have to farm in order to sustain the appetite that we have for these things.”

P4, “I think that there is also wildlife that is involved too, not just the fish aspect of it.”

P5, “Are they in charge of all the signs to protect the manatees and whatnot along the road?”

P6, “Do you have to apply to that for the gator tags?”

P5, “Probably.”

Five groups mentioned law enforcement.

QUOTE: P1, “They are also the only organization, and I swear to God this, that can arrest the President of the United States. Every state’s Fish and Wildlife Commission, they are the only ones that have the power to arrest a President.”

P2, “They would arrest him? For what?”

P3, “For shooting a deer out of deer season.” (loud crosstalk and laughter)

P1, “No, I am serious. Look it up. A Fish and Wildlife officer, but only a federal Fish and Wildlife officer.”

P4, “Hopefully they are not Tea Party people.”

Four groups mentioned controlling/monitoring wildlife populations.

QUOTE: P1, “Well, I have seen them out on the Suwanee River counting sturgeon and stuff.”

P2, “They also monitor the type of fish that are in our waters. They also take care of fisheries which put more fish back into the waters. They restock different lakes and ponds for our recreation.”

Have you ever heard of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

The second Orlando group did not answer the question. They went directly into what the organization did.

All participants in the Tallahassee, Ft Myers and Gainesville groups had heard of USFWS.

The majority of the first Orlando participants had heard of USFWS.

What do you think USFWS does?

Four groups mentioned USFWS being specific to federal level.

QUOTE: “There again, I think the demarcation has to do whether it is federal land or state land. They manage issues that are congruent to managing federal wildlife.”

Three groups mentioned the BP oil spill and one more mentioned the oil companies in the Gulf.

QUOTE: P1, “They were probably the ones involved with the oil spill in the Gulf.”

(Agreement heard; Right, Yes.)

P2, “That’s a good point.”

Have you ever heard of the Florida Forestry Association?

None of the Ft. Myers, Gainesville, or first Orlando group participants had heard of FFA.

The majority of the second Orlando and both Tallahassee groups had not heard of FFA.

What do you think FFA does?

Three groups mentioned it was a non-profit.

QUOTE: P1, “It could be an association of people who are landowners who do tree farming and all the people interested in those things, but in the form of an association instead of a government agency.”

P2, “Yeah, like a not-for-profit.”

Three groups mentioned lobbying.

QUOTE: “Lobby. (laughter and crosstalk) Based just on what you said.”

Three groups mentioned providing information.

QUOTE: P1, “Florida Forestry Association, I believe has local foresters in the different communities that you can contact if you have questions. They provide information and a variety do conservation services...”

P2, “Kind of like the County Extension Agents for forest matters instead of farming and gardening?”

Have you ever heard of the Friends of Florida Forests?

None of the Ft. Myers, first Orlando, and both Tallahassee groups had heard of FFF.

One Gainesville participant thought they had heard of FFF, and one participant in the second Orlando group had heard of FFF.

What do you think FFF does?

Five groups explicitly used the term “tree huggers” to describe FFF.

QUOTE: “They are tree huggers like I am.”

Two groups mentioned lobbying, nonprofit, volunteering, requesting funds, and the potential their “tree hugger” perceptions could be the opposite of what FFF actually does.

When you think about all of these organizations, what do you think is distinct about Division of Forestry? What should the Division of Forestry do to differentiate itself from these organizations?

All groups mentioned government and how the organizations related to each other.

QUOTE: P1, “One thing that I am confused by, and I am not born and raised in Florida either but, you know, for state agencies...you know...in federal agencies, certainly all the cabinet level things are all departments. I don’t have a clue what the difference is between a commission or a division or a department, whether they are cabinet level things or....I mean obviously the heads of most of them were not elected. It seems like it would be clear...maybe they aren’t parallel. I couldn’t for one million dollars tell you what the difference is between a commission, a division or a department in the state of Florida.”

P2, “Well, I think a department is...a department has a secretary. The secretary works directly for the governor, so I would suspect that the department oversees every division and a commission is sub of a division.”

P1, “You are probably right.”

P2, “I would think, but I am probably wrong, though. It makes sense, and if it makes sense in Florida then it’s probably not true.” (laughter and crosstalk)

P1, “It is in the ‘Bizarro World.’”

P2, “Now that is confusing, because if you have the Division of Forestry, now. When you say the Division of Forestry, I understand this is the Division of Forestry that we are dealing with, but if I wanted to speak with...who oversees the Division of Forestry? What is the Division of Forestry? What do they do? Really?”

P1, “See, I can’t tell you, just like I could I couldn’t tell you for a million dollars the differences between all three of those US (crosstalk) departments, I could tell you with utter certainty that they are under the Department of the Interior. Which is a department and that’s...”

P3, “Well, there must be a Florida department of something...”

P1, “State, I think.”

Five groups mentioned aspects related to forests and protection of forests.

QUOTE: “It seems to, just by the name Forestry, I would think their main focus would be the botanicals as opposed to, necessarily, the wildlife population. I am sure they are very aware of the wildlife population, but I don’t think that is their primary motive. They are probably looking more in relation to urban sprawl, in relation to what we have in the state.”

Four groups mentioned a perception of duplication between the organizations.

QUOTE: “I think that all that would be subject to a lot of confusion, and overlap. It seems like you could have one particular regulatory agency, they could probably include all of the state ones there, and the federal ones with another one and I think probably you could lump some of these as just subdivisions of one big one. I would think that that would be the better way to go. I think there would be some confusion there with overlapping authority. For instance, the Leon County Sheriffs, then you have got the Tallahassee Police, and then you have got each campus with their own police, and you have got the Capital Police. It just seems like it would be...I think this way, because I am not from here originally, it seems like a lot of overlap in organizations here. It looks like a lot of redundancy. I think it leads to confusion. I think that if they could streamline it and have just one organization that is responsible for it. And then they could have little divisions among them, I think it would be a lot better than all that. My opinion.”

Four groups mentioned DOF should provide information to the public.

QUOTE: P1, “A public relations campaign that lets people know that that is involved in forests.”

P2, “I was just going to say...” (unintelligible)

P3, “Right.”

P1, “If you have a problem with forests, if you think there are poachers in the forest, if you think that there is going to be a fire, that is who you call.”

P5, “I agree, I was just going to agree absolutely. Let us know why we need them. Make it clear as to what they are up to and why money should keep going there. Because as they talk about budget cuts and whatnot, I get angrier and angrier about the cuts in education. So, one of my thoughts is, why do we need the Division of Forestry when our children have to buy their own school books now and stuff like that?”

P6, “What?!”

P5, “And so, that kind of thing goes through my head.”

QUOTE: P1, “Educate people as to what they actually do.” (Agreement heard)

P2, “Isn’t their money better spent managing forests than educating us about what they do? I mean, we see the results of what they do so we don’t have to know everything.”

P1, “But as someone who lives in the community where...you know, I would like to know...hey, if it is funded by taxpayer dollars, what it is that they are doing. I would, at least, like to have the information available to me or...”

P3, “Put it on a website.”

P2, “They might be doing the same thing, you can’t tell. They might be doing the same thing and there is different money for all these different groups when they are doing the same thing.”

Value of Government Organizations

This section addressed what participants valued about government organizations. For value to the participants individually, the participants valued help, protection, and services that could not be provided by individuals or the private sector. For value to the general public, the participants said keeping order, being honest, communicating with the public, and generating revenue were valuable. Protection and fire control were the characteristics of DOF participants valued personally. Protecting forests and tourism/economics were the characteristics of DOF participants said were valuable to the state of Florida.

What characteristics come to mind when you think of a government organization that is valuable to you?

Four groups mentioned help and resources provided by organizations.

QUOTE: P1, “Department of Agriculture is very important to us.”

Moderator, “And (name omitted), what characteristic of the Department of Ag is important?”

P1, “They control the imports of South American FC (?) OJ. They help control the futures market, the price per pound.”

Moderator, “So, control?”

P1, “Yeah. They help us. I mean, we are farmers.”

Three groups mentioned protecting people and resources, and the organization being protected from politics.

QUOTE: P1, “Protection.”

P2, “Law enforcement.” (crosstalk)

P3, “Protection in what regard, protecting us or...?”

P1, “Protecting me.”

P2, “Law enforcement agencies...”

P4, “Consumer Services, is that what you are referring to?”

P5, “Excuse me?”

P4, “Consumer Services, is that what you are referring to?”

P5, “Oh, I don’t know, when I think of a government organization that is...I am thinking of police and something that is there to help me be a more orderly part of society.”

P4, “Okay, I see what you are saying.”

P5, “The Highway Department.”

P3, “The reason I asked, I completely agree with you, but I think there is another aspect of protection. I think that effective government organizations...that which is insulation from the legislature. That there is...you know, so they are not utterly at the behest of which way the political wind is blowing.”

Three groups mentioned providing what private businesses/individuals could not provide.

QUOTE: “Protecting what big business won’t protect or providing a function that big business can’t profitably provide. That is the purpose of government.”

What characteristics come to mind when you think of a government organization that is valuable to the general public?

No themes emerged for more than two groups.

Two groups mentioned keeping order and general public safety.

QUOTE: P1, “I think that keeping society in order, what is it? Order to, you know, like the driving and the...if there wasn’t any regulations people would be driving all over the place. But we have streets, lights and everything...”

P2, “Rules, like she was saying.”

Two groups mentioned honesty/integrity.

QUOTE: “I think integrity of the entire organization is a standard that people in general expect. We don’t want to find out that the chairman of Florida Fish and Wildlife is pulling in one hundred and eighty grand a year and works a twenty hour week, six months of the year.”

Two groups mentioned communicating with the public.

QUOTE: “I think the challenge is always going to be; how do you get information to a broad spectrum of people when they are going to make a decision on something? If you are going to do something for hunting, all the hunters are going to know about that, but folks over here....the word may not get to them that you have a meeting about this land use over here or this government program. But, the group that is going to get benefits from that, they are going to know. Word is going to get back to them that this is available, but how do you get information to a broad populous?”

Two groups mentioned the same characteristics that applied to them as individuals.

QUOTE: “I think all those things apply to...if it applies to us individually, it should apply across the board.” (Agreement heard: Yeah, Exactly)

Two groups mentioned generating revenue.

QUOTE: “How about like...okay, like the Bronx Zoo. You know, at the Bronx Zoo they have tough animals and stuff like that? Why don’t they do something like that in the parks? And they sell stuff. At least it is helping them and it is helping others. Like trees, or little bears or whatever they have in the park. You know?”

When you think of the Division of Forestry’s services, what value are they to you?

Five groups mentioned protection.

QUOTE: P1, “We have already decided that all of us value the forests, so if they are protecting the forests then they are of value to us.”

P2, “Well, and our quality of life, it affects our quality of life. Protects the wildlife...”

P3, “Protects the ecosystems that are a part of that wildlife. They are managing; maybe doing controlled burns and so on. Then we have less worry of major forest fires affecting the area where we may live. I am pretty sure all of us, at one point

or another, have come across a fire where the smoke is affecting your area. (Agreement heard; Mmm, hmm) And, it gets pretty dense, it's nasty. So, if they are doing their job right, you have less to worry about in that area."

Four groups mentioned fire control. This theme overlapped with protection.

QUOTE: P1, "Yeah, fire control is a form of protection because everyone of us in this room, we live in an area where there are...I think all of us live in an area where there is a significant amount of forest so that is a form of protection, just like law enforcement is a form of protection to a degree."

P2, "Exactly, that's exactly right."

P1, "It is worth a couple of days of smoke."

When you think of the Division of Forestry's services, what value are they to the state of Florida?

Three groups mentioned protecting the forests.

QUOTE: "Forestry is a huge industry, from what I understand they have 16.6 billion dollar industry in Florida. I would assume that the Division of Forestry is all over that to make sure that it stays a sustainable industry."

Three groups mentioned tourism/economics.

QUOTE: "Forestry is a huge industry, from what I understand they have 16.6 billion dollar industry in Florida. I would assume that the Division of Forestry is all over that to make sure that it stays a sustainable industry."

Perceptions of the Name Change

This section dealt with participants' perceptions of the name change. While some participants thought the name sounded more helpful, it did not change the perceptions for some participants and led to uncertainty for other participants. The new name helped differentiate FFS by denoting its association with Florida and Forests, but hurt differentiation by including "service" in the name, which was present in the names of many of the other organizations.

What comes to mind when you hear the name "Florida Forest Service?" What do you think of this new name?

Five groups mentioned they thought the name sounded helpful.

QUOTE: P1, "I like the word service because it does denote service."

P2, "Yeah, if I own a forest would they come in and help me? They probably would."

QUOTE: P1, "More openness between them. Kind of service more... instead of Division of... Division of sounds like...you know...like [Orlando Police Department] or something." (laughter)

P2, "I agree, that does sound more military."

P1, "FBI or something like that. Services sounds more like you get your hair cut or something."

P2, "More people friendly."

P1, "Yeah, exactly."

Four groups mentioned the name change did not change their perceptions.

QUOTE: "I don't think it means anything. It is just one term for another. I mean, what is the difference?"

Four groups expressed confusion or uncertainty about the name change.

QUOTE: P1, "Confusing."

P2, “It’s not enough... Not enough to explain what it is.”

QUOTE: P1, “I still don’t know the difference between a division and a service and all those things we were talking about before.” (crosstalk)

P2, “Maybe they are the supreme rulers, now.”

P1, “I mean, I am sure that there must be some...or maybe there isn’t. Maybe it is completely arbitrary. But you would think that there would be a different...I know what the difference is between a colonel and a captain and a sergeant. (crosstalk) I don’t know what these different...if they are gradations and what they mean.”

P3, “Maybe it is intentionally confusing.” (crosstalk and laughter)

How well does this name differentiate the Florida Forest Service from the organizations mentioned earlier?
While asking this question, all of the organizations were shown, with FFS in the place of DOF.

Five groups mentioned the name differentiates between federal/state and type of service.

QUOTE: P1, “Not as much, it is more specific now that you know that it is for Florida, but just like he said, with all the other ones that have service...if they were going to go for a name change, they probably should have gone all out and been a little more specific about...The only fear there is that maybe it would be too long of a name. But...”

P2, “I think it well defines what they are doing as the service. What you have got up there is the Florida Forest Service, US Forest Service, then you go into the Park Services, and then you go into Wildlife and Fish; two different organizations. And then you have two non-governmental agencies there. Sounds like it is pretty well defined that way.”

Four groups mentioned there were more similarities with the new name.

QUOTE: P1, “Now it looks the same as a bunch of them because it has service in it.”

P2, “Yeah, yeah.”

P3, “That’s the new fashion, call it revision.”

P1, “Like you said, make it sound like they are helping people. A play on words.”

P4, “Friends of the Florida Forests should change it to Florida Forest Services.” (laughter)

P5, “Yeah, there are only three on there without service on the end.”

Description of the Florida Forest Service.

This section addressed participants perceptions of the description of FFS provided on the organization’s homepage. The participants noticed that fire was a focal point of the description, while other activities were given secondary consideration. They liked the information provided and thought it was a good description provided it was an accurate reflection of FFS.

While asking this question, a PowerPoint slide was shown on a screen with the following description:

The Florida Forest Service consists of more than 1250 dedicated employees with the mission to protect and manage the forest resources of Florida, ensuring that they are available for future generations.

Wildfire prevention and suppression are key components in our efforts to protect homeowners and forest landowners from the threat of fire in a natural, fire-dependent environment. We are dedicated to training individuals to meet these goals.

In addition to managing over one million acres of State Forests for multiple public uses including timber, recreation and wildlife habitat, we also provide services to landowners throughout the state with technical information and grant programs.

What are your general thoughts about this description?

Four groups mentioned fire as a focal point the other services seeming secondary in comparison.

QUOTE: “That’s okay. From reading this, it sounds like they want to maintain that their priority is the wildfire prevention and suppression. Because I recall that being in the description before. But it sounds like part of the reason why that it is maybe longer than most people like is because they are looking to extend their services. And that is what that bottom paragraph is all about. And part of what we saw in that little thing that we filled out, which is the recreation, timber... I like it.”

Four groups mentioned the description was good provided it was an accurate reflection of FFS.

QUOTE: P1, “It’s a pretty cool thing, but is it valid? Are they really doing this? I don’t know.”

P2, “Will they, can they?” (crosstalk, several people talking at once, unintelligible)

P3, “Well, they say so many things and then they do things halfway...”

Four groups mentioned the information being provided in the description.

QUOTE: “It provided me with a little bit more information, it tells the amount of employees it has, it tells me...it educates me how much forest land that we have. Over a million acres of land. All information, although it may not be that valuable to me to have it, I have it now. It is something that I didn’t have before I read it.”

Perceptions of the Logo

Participants were asked their overall perceptions of the logo. The participants paid particular attention to the trees, which helped associate the logo with forest; the badge shape of the logo, which associated the logo with authority; and the inclusion of FDACS in the logo, which helped associate the two organizations. The participants also talked about how the logo would look on uniforms and signs, with participants mixed about how it would look. The participants tended to like the simplicity of the logo. Participants were mixed about the colors, if the logo was eye-catching, and if the logo was memorable.

While asking these questions, a PowerPoint slide was shown on a screen with the logo.

When you see this logo, what comes to mind?

All groups mentioned the trees.

QUOTE: P1, “Is that a tree that is natural or native to Florida that is on there? That picture” (crosstalk, unintelligible)

P2, “A pine, it looks like a pine.” (crosstalk)

P1, “They should have a native tree on there and I don’t know if that is.”

P2, “That is a good call out.”

P3, “We have an awful lot of pines.”

P4, “That is a good call.”

All groups mentioned the badge shape.

QUOTE: P1, “I think it’s fine, I mean it has the shape of a badge, it shows authority...”

P2, “That is exactly what I was thinking.”

All groups mentioned how the logo would look on uniforms and signs.

QUOTE: P1, “Don’t they usually wear brown or green uniforms? (crosstalk) So, if that is on a green or a brown uniform, it is going to get lost. To me. If this badge is on a brown or green uniform, (crosstalk) then it would get lost, that patch. To me.

P2, “I am trying to visualize...”

P3, “I have seen them on, they put them on those brown shirts and it does not get lost.”

P1, “It doesn’t get lost?”

P3, “No. You see it right away. (Agreement heard; Right, right.) Because it looks like it is out of place.” (crosstalk)

P4, “It is a really brown shirt (crosstalk, unintelligible).”

P1, “I guess I was thinking more of a lighter brown color.”

P5, “A tan.”

P6, “No.”

P1, “A tan, yeah.”

Five groups mentioned FDACS

QUOTE: P1, “The Consumer...Agriculture and Consumer Services...that is a part of the Department of Ag, I guess. It is telling you that it is actually....they are talking about Agriculture and Consumer Services, I guess they are trying to say they are a part of that.”

P2, “That answers one of the questions we had a few minutes ago of if they still remained a division of the Agriculture Department and they do, so...”

Five groups mentioned the simplicity of the logo.

QUOTE: P1, “Like the state seal has got the sun, it has got the lagoon, it has got a palm tree, it has got an Indian, it has got a ship, it has got a space shuttle on it... This has just got three trees. (crosstalk) It’s great.”

P2, “I think the subtleness is nice, huh?”

Is it eye-catching?

Every group except Gainesville was mixed about it being eye-catching. The Gainesville group thought it was eye-catching.

What do you think of the colors?

The Ft. Myers, second Orlando, and first Tallahassee groups were mixed. The first Orlando and Gainesville groups liked the colors. The second Tallahassee group discussed whether or not the colors would get lost on uniforms.

How easy would it be to recognize?

The Ft. Myers and both Tallahassee groups thought the logo would be easy to recognize. The Gainesville and both Orlando groups were mixed.

Checklist of Birds Pamphlets

The participants were shown two sets of pamphlets. The participants received photocopies of the front and back of the pamphlets because those would be the parts of the pamphlets that would be seen first.

The first set of pamphlets was for a checklist of birds from different state parks. The first page of each pamphlet included the name of the state forest at the top of the page, followed by “checklist of birds,” a picture of a different bird for each forest, and FDACS, the FDACS commissioner, DOF, and the DOF director at the bottom of the page. The pamphlets were all different colors, but all used pastel colors. With the exception of one pamphlet, another bird was on the back, an area was available for writing about the birding area, an area for additional information, and the old logo in the bottom-right corner.

For the *Checklist of Birds* pamphlets, the participants liked the birds and were mixed about the colors. Participants were mixed about whether or not it was clear the pamphlet was from DOF. While they were mixed about where the logo should be placed, they thought the logo was too small. The participants would associate the information in the pamphlet to DOF because DOF and the logo were on the document.

*What are your thoughts about the design of this pamphlet?***Five groups mentioned the birds.**

QUOTE: “I disagree with putting it on the front. A person who picks this up really is picking it up because of their interest in birds. The whole point of even putting the logo on there at all, is so that they know that that it is a function of it. They will eventually get to it, if they use it. If they use it, it will be on there, otherwise we want to catch a person’s eye. If you want them to pick it up and go, “ooh, what’s this?” Bird makes me pick it up. Big logo, so what.

Four groups mentioned the colors.

QUOTE: P1, “I think it has nice colors.”

P2, “Yeah, good colors.”

QUOTE: “I don’t know about these guys, but a lot of the state parks and that one is brown... but I was just going to say that that is a nice background color compared to some of the stuff that I have seen, the green is a real green, which is okay. But the background is like that, that has got some color to it, this little bird here, it’s a little, not that it is neutral, but it doesn’t catch your eye or stand out or make stuff stand out, it looks good.”

Is it clear that this document came from the Division of Forestry?

The Ft. Myers and Gainesville groups thought it was clear. The second Tallahassee group and both Orlando groups did not think it was clear. The first Tallahassee group was mixed.

What are your thoughts about where the logo is placed? What are your thoughts about the size of the logo?

All groups wanted the logo to be moved and to be bigger. Participants within the groups were mixed about whether the logo should be on the front or back.

Would you associate the information in this pamphlet with Division of Forestry/Florida Forest Service?

Four groups were asked this question. All four had participants mention they would associate the information with DOF/FFS only because DOF and/or the logo were on there.

Welcome to... Pamphlets

This set of pamphlets included the title of the pamphlet (Welcome to ... State Forest), with the old logo beneath it. The lower two-thirds of the front was a picture or illustration, presumably of the state forest. At the bottom of the front were FDACS, the FDACS commissioner, DOF, and the DOF director. On the back of each were “Things to Know When Visiting the Forest. The colors of the pamphlets were different, including two with dark shades of green, one dark brown, and one a reddish-brown.

The participants liked the design of the *Welcome to...* pamphlets better than the *Checklist of Birds* pamphlets. The participants were mixed about the logo placement. They thought the logo should be bigger and placed on a background color that contrasted with green. The participants were mixed about whether or not it was clear the document was from DOF but would generally associate the information with DOF.

What are your thoughts about the design of this pamphlet?

Five groups liked this set of pamphlets better than the *Checklist of Birds*.

QUOTE: P1, “Much better. Not great, but much better.”

P2, “Well, it’s a whole different thing. This is artwork and I like it, but this is a real picture and it is very eye appealing as well. (crosstalk) So, it is just different.”

Three groups mentioned how the logo shows up on different color backgrounds.

QUOTE: P1, “Oh, I love anything with the bright orange of Florida on it.”

(crosstalk, unintelligible)

P2, “I agree with you on the green, it doesn’t pop. Looks better on that though.”

P3, “Yeah.” (crosstalk)

P4, “Everybody that has got one that is not green, I think, is perfect.”

Is it clear that this document came from the Division of Forestry?

Five groups responded to this question.

The second Orlando group and first Tallahassee groups thought it was clear.

The Gainesville, first Orlando, and second Tallahassee groups were mixed. There was confusion in all three groups about whether FDACS or DOF was responsible for the material.

What are your thoughts about where the logo is placed? What are your thoughts about the size of the logo?

The Ft. Myers, first Orlando, and second Tallahassee groups thought the logo was too small.

The Gainesville and second Orlando groups thought the logo showed up better because of the color contrast.

The first Tallahassee group thought the size would be fine with the new logo.

QUOTE: “Yeah, it will be easier to interpret because it doesn’t have this circle of writing around the badge shape and in the middle of it. I think it will be fine.

The five groups that mentioned the placement liked it better on the set of pamphlets than the *Checklist of Birds* pamphlets.

Would you associate the information in this pamphlet with Division of Forestry/Florida Forest Service?

Three groups were asked this question.

The Gainesville and first Tallahassee groups would associate the information with DOF/FFS.

The first Orlando group was mixed.

FFS Communication

This section dealt with participants' recommendations related to FFS's external communications. The participants thought FFS's audiences were everyone, children/schools, and those who use forests, with the main audiences being those who use forests and children and schools. The participants felt FFS should focus on conservation, the value of forests, and that forests were welcoming visitors to help FFS stand apart from other organizations. Participants recommended FFS use the Internet, billboards/signs, broadcast, paper-based communications, and events to communicate about FFS. To directly reach the participants, they recommended Internet and mail. If they were seeking out information about FFS, the Internet was the main source. If they wanted information about emergencies, broadcast communications and phone-based communication were recommended.

What audiences should the Florida Forest Service communicate with?

Five groups mentioned everyone.

QUOTE: P1, "Everyone."

(Agreement heard; Everybody, Everyone.)

P2, "Every single person." (Agreement heard; Yes.)

Five groups mentioned children and schools.

QUOTE: P1, "Working with schools, if you want to preserve the forests, get children caring about it and take that passion (Agreement heard: Yes, exactly; Yes; Mmm, hmm) into their adulthood."

P2, "Find fun someplace so they can actually take class trips there every year."

Four groups mentioned forest users.

QUOTE: P1, "They should run a promotion with Dicks' Sporting Goods. (crosstalk) Or Sports Authority and the other big sporting goods stores. Because that would be their most targeted audience."

P2, "Or conservationists. I don't believe in hunting or fishing or anything like that, so I don't want... The only way I recognize this to be through that source, I want it to be through something more peaceful and happy and friendly and not..."

P1, "Well, Dick's Sporting Goods is primarily bicycles and hiking gear..."

P2, "Yeah, and canoeing or hiking or nature. I just want it to be through nature not through hunting and game."

Who is the main audience?

Four groups mentioned forest users.

QUOTE: P1, "Hunters."

P2, "Hikers, bikers, hunters, fishermen, anybody that likes nature."

(crosstalk, unintelligible)

P3, “Canoeists, campers, students.”

P2, “Target Bass Pro Shops, it might be a great place for them to do something with. You have got to target your advertising.”

Four groups mentioned kids and schools.

QUOTE: P1, “Young people. Little three and four year olds. I say that because I did a presentation on a book that I wrote, reading with daycare. I followed Smokey the Bear and kids would have liked to kill me, they wanted Smokey the Bear and didn’t want anything to do with me. They love him, it is time to start teaching children.”

P2, “I would think more towards the ones that are going to be a little bit more impressionable, would be younger teenagers. Give them drastic comparisons. Something that has been taken care of and still looks great today in comparison to something that has been neglected or destroyed through whatever; oil spills, for example. What can happen if it is not managed properly. And as they are getting older, it is a responsibility that they need to be aware of.”

What aspects of Florida Forest Service should be focused on to help Florida Forest Service stand apart from other organizations?

Three groups mentioned conservation.

QUOTE: P1, “Conservation, protection.”

P2, “Absolutely.”

P3, “Preserving the forests.”

Two groups mentioned the value of the forest.

QUOTE: “The value of the forest to the individual.”

(Agreement heard: Mmm, hmm; Yeah)

QUOTE: “People need to know how vital it is to our health and well-being, it’s not just out there, it’s...”

Two groups mentioned welcoming visitors to the forests.

QUOTE: P1, “And that they are open and ready to receive visitors.”

P2, “Tourists.”

(three people talking at once, unintelligible)

P1, “The taxpayers here, that live here.”

P2, (crosstalk) “Yeah, that they are public lands.”

No other themes were mentioned by more than one group.

What means should the Florida Forest Service use to communicate what it does?

Five groups mentioned Internet-based communications.

QUOTE: P1, “Internet.”

P2, “Yeah, internet is big.”

P3, “Websites.”

Five groups mentioned billboards and highway signs and signs at parks.

QUOTE: P1, “Public service announcements, that’s a good one. How about anytime you are entering any national or state forest, more information on their...just things to do, not to do. Which some of them do now. But even stating how much of a fine they will get if they are littering or poaching or chopping a tree down that they are not supposed to, you know.”

P2, “That brings up something that me and my son and mom saw just Saturday. We went into Lake Eaton, down off 314A north. Big giant sign there, “It is your responsibility to know the rules and regulations of the forest.” It’s like...okay.”

P1, “Oh yeah, because Fish and Wildlife...”

P2, “They have got a camping area. And they have got a dock and a boat ramp and we went there to go fishing. So, it’s like okay, we are supposed to know the rules and regulations of the forest. And how many are there? A lot.”

QUOTE: “How about signs on the highway, just small signs that say something while you are driving?”

Four groups mentioned broadcast, including TV, radio, and public service announcements.

QUOTE: P1, “Not advertisements, but...”

P2, “Public service announcements?”

P1, “Public service announcements, that’s a good one. How about anytime you are entering any national or state forest, more information on their...just things to do, not to do. Which some of them do now. But even stating how much of a fine they will get if they are littering or poaching or chopping a tree down that they are not supposed to, you know.”

Four groups mentioned paper-based communications.

QUOTE: P1, “You could do some of the travel brochures.”

P2, “Everybody stops at the visitor centers at the state border and picks through those things. The kids love them.”

Three groups mentioned events.

QUOTE: “What about marathons? You know what, we are doing them out at Disney all the time and tens of thousands of people check in for those damn marathons. And then they shut down all the roads in the process, which kills traffic rather than having it in a forest and whatnot. Create...what a great way to get ten thousand people out in...granted it would create a lot of foot traffic, but what a much more beautiful place to be. Go after the runner and the jogger and the fitness freaks. Me, my idea of a good time is sitting in the dark in a movie theatre eating nachos and going out for sushi afterwards. But there is lots of people out there that like healthy experiences.”

If the Florida Forest Service wanted to reach you, which would be the best means of communication?

All groups had participants mention Internet-based communications.

QUOTE: P1, “So, killing trees to tell me about them. That would [expletive] me off. (laughter) We are going to stop having mail in about a year or two, let’s just get over it. I really do think electronic communication and in a way that is non-obtrusive. Where...if there is a need to publicize things, just to make it something...not just junk email that you are

going to put in your spam filter, but something where there is value to what you are getting from the email so that you don't take yourself off the mailing list.”

P2, “Except if you have personal use of the area, and if you have a...for lack of a better analogy, which is like a dog in the fight...which is bad...I mean, but unless you have a specific reason, I would feel that most people are going to throw the mail in the can. That email, they are going to delete it. I just don't think that anything is going to be all that great. I think you should just save the money and do something else besides try to communicate.”

Four groups mentioned mail.

QUOTE: “I don't have email, you are going to have to send me a letter or call me.”

QUOTE: P1, “You know. I don't see them calling everybody or emailing. Just have a website. Times are tough, I don't see them wasting all that money on postage and things like that. They need to spend it on saving forests.”

P2, “I agree with that because there are so many people that don't....”

P1, Everyone just throws their mail in the trash. (crosstalk) Junk mail, junk mail.”

P2, “There is a low percentage of the population that owns a piece of property and to mail to everybody would be an extreme expense, just to get the message to a few. I am saying that as though their services doesn't apply to everybody and it does to an extent, but only a small portion of their services apply to the general public that they actually have to depend on the public's input for, or to participate in.”

If you were trying to find information about the Florida Forest Service and its services, which means of communication would you use?

Three groups were asked this question. All three groups mentioned online media.

Which means of communication do you think would be best if you were seeking emergency information and updates related to a wildfire?

Two groups were asked this question. Broadcast communications and phone-based alerts were mentioned in both groups.

QUOTE: P1, “Probably a TV station.”

P2, “The emergency broadcasting, 13.”

P3, “God, I miss that station. I was on vacation, my husband switched it from Bright House to AT&T. I can't find anything and I never thought I'd say I miss ‘Weather on the Ones,’ but I don't know what is going on around anymore. (laughter and crosstalk) Yeah, but you get a thousand stations, you just can't find anything.”

QUOTE: P1, “Texting to your phone.”

P2, “Yeah, that too, texting to your phone.”

Participant Recommendations

This was the last part of the focus group and addressed participants general recommendations for FFS to be more visible. Participants recommendations were for FFS to be more visible, get a mascot, and keep up the good work.

All six groups mentioned FFS needed to make itself and its information more visible and available.

QUOTE: P1, “Let the community or public know exactly what your services are, because obviously we didn’t know all that they did for us. If we can get out what they actually do for us, I think...or not just for us, but for our state.”

P2, “For the whole community.”

P1, “Yeah.”

QUOTE: P1, “Put yourself out there.”

P2, “Advertise.”

P3, “I think making all their information available on a website. Everybody can just go to the website to find out stuff.”

Three groups mentioned a mascot.

QUOTE: P1, “A mascot.”

P2, “Like a mascot, like Smokey the Bear. Perfect. She just verbalized what I wanted to say. (laughter and crosstalk) Thank you, (name omitted).”

P1, “No problem.”

P3, “I like the t-shirt idea. If you go to a state park, (loud crosstalk)”

P2, “With the bear, with the bear. With the mascot, you could have a t-shirt saying (loud crosstalk, unintelligible) It could be an alligator.”

P3, “I would rather have the logo.”

P4, “Whatever is in the forests, whatever kind of animals they have, put them on the t-shirts.”

P2, “That is a great idea, the logo, instead of the mascot, yeah.”

P3, “Then you would be wearing their logo or wearing their advertisement.”

QUOTE: P1, “They need a mascot. (laughter) I mean, think about that. Everyone knows who Smokey the Bear is.”

P2, “Yes they do.”

P3, “That’s true.”

P4, “Anything other than a Gator.” (crosstalk and laughter)

P5, “Just to attract people there.”

Both Tallahassee groups mentioned “keep up the good work.”

General Notes From Focus Groups

During the review of the pamphlets, four groups mentioned the names of the commissioner and director being on the brochures.

QUOTE: P1, “‘Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services,’ and then ‘Division of Forestry.’ And then the commissioner’s name and the director’s name. Okay, which one did it actually come from?”

P2, “It could be confusing if someone is really wanting to do something.”

P3, “Umm, how long is the director and the commissioner...?”

Comment, “He is no longer commissioner.”

P3, “How long are these terms for?”

Comment, “Four years? I think they are four years.”

P2, “What’s his name had to go...”

P3, “Well, when you print somebody’s name on here every four years, you have got to change the whole thing, which is silly.”

Comments, “Right; Yeah.”

P3, “Umm, I mean, who really cares? If you want to talk to somebody from the Florida Department of Agriculture, I promise you that you are not going to get Charles Bronson when you call.” (crosstalk)

Comment, “Charles Bronson wants his name on there.”

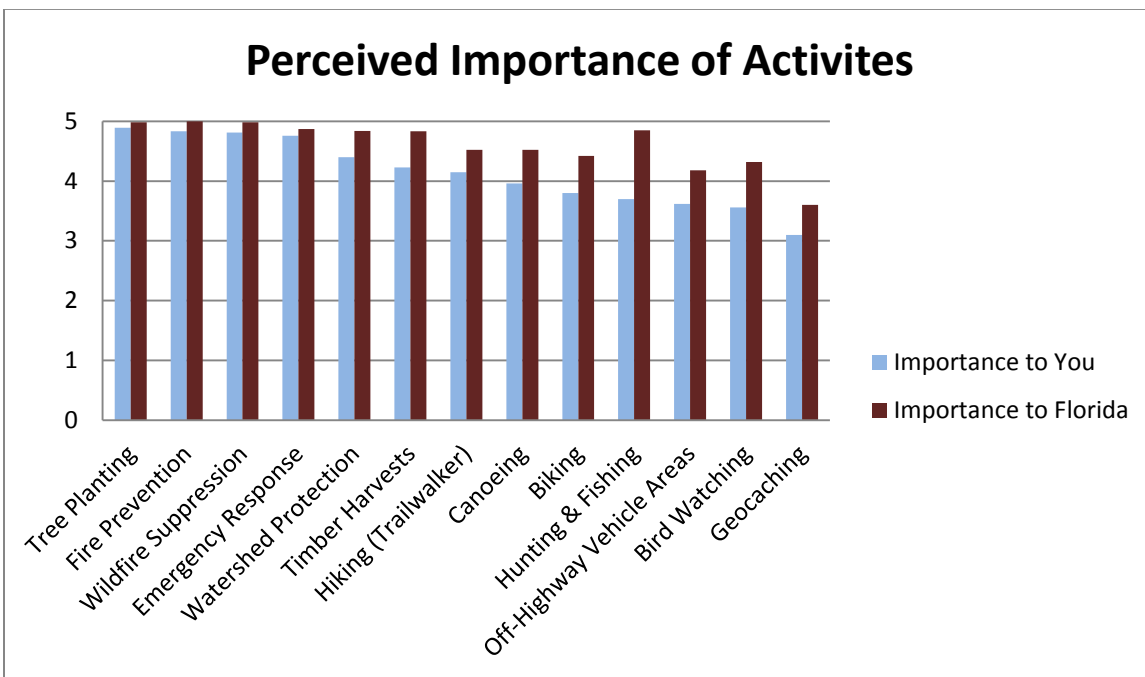
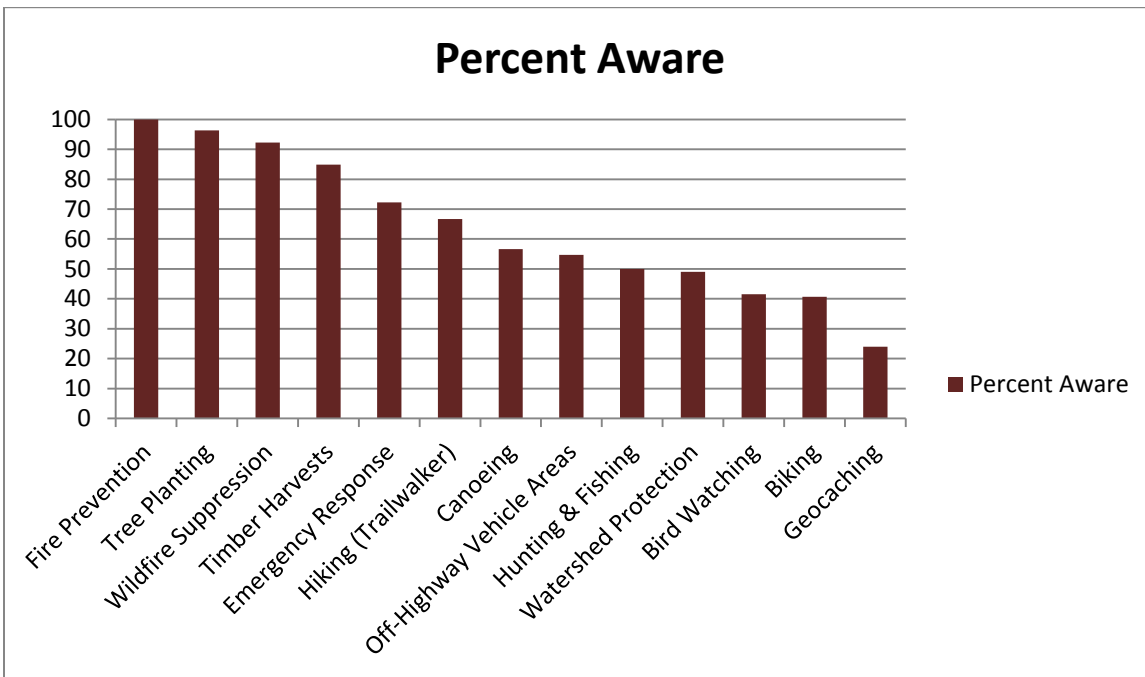
P4, “And then you have to do reprints? Don’t even put their names on there.”

Though they did not appear as themes within individual questions, five groups mentioned Smokey Bear, and four groups mentioned Yogi Bear.

Focus Group Questionnaire: Awareness & Importance of FFS Activities

In the middle of each focus group, participants completed a questionnaire about different FFS activities. The questionnaire asked the participants if they were aware of each activity, how important the activity was to the participant, and how important the activity was to the state of Florida.

Participants were most aware of the fire- and tree-related activities of FFS. They were less aware of FFS activities relating to recreation. The activities that were most important to the individual participants were tree planting, fire prevention, wildfire suppression, and emergency response. The activities least important to the individual participants were geocaching, bird watching, off-highway vehicle areas, and hunting and fishing. The activities participants believed were most important to the state of Florida were fire prevention, wildfire suppression, tree planting, emergency response, hunting and fishing, and watershed protection. The activities participants believed were least important to the state of Florida were geocaching, off-highway vehicle use, bird watching, and biking.



Employee Survey

The following data are the results of the questionnaire that FFS employees completed. The data presented are the percent of respondents per response.

Perceived Importance of FFS Activities

The employees perceived all of the listed FFS activities as important, though multiuse management and wildfire activities were rated the most important.

How important you believe the following FFS activities are to the state of Florida

Activity	Neither Unimportant					<i>M</i>
	Unimportant (%)	Slightly Unimportant (%)	Nor Important (%)	Slightly Important (%)	Important (%)	
Forest management for private landowners	2.8	3.1	6.5	21.3	66.4	4.45
Personalized urban and rural landowner assistance	2.0	4.7	8.1	24.7	60.5	4.37
Opportunities for recreation	2.2	2.8	6.2	23.2	65.7	4.47
Multiuse management of state forests, including timber, water, recreation, wildlife, etc.	1.4	0.8	3.9	13.6	80.3	4.71
Wildfire prevention, suppression, mitigation, and protection	0.6	0.5	2.0	5.1	91.8	4.87
Revenue generation – timber sales, leases (cattle, apiary, oil & gas)	2.6	2.3	6.2	21.8	61.7	4.48

Perceived Importance of Differentiation

The employees thought it was important for FFS to differentiate itself from other organizations and thought differentiation was less important to the public. All of the activities listed were perceived by employees as important for differentiating FFS from other organizations, though wildfire activities and multiuse management were the most important. The employees thought the individual activities were less important to the public for differentiation, though wildfire activities were the most important.

How important do/does _____ believe it is for FFS to differentiate itself from other natural resources and/or land management organizations?

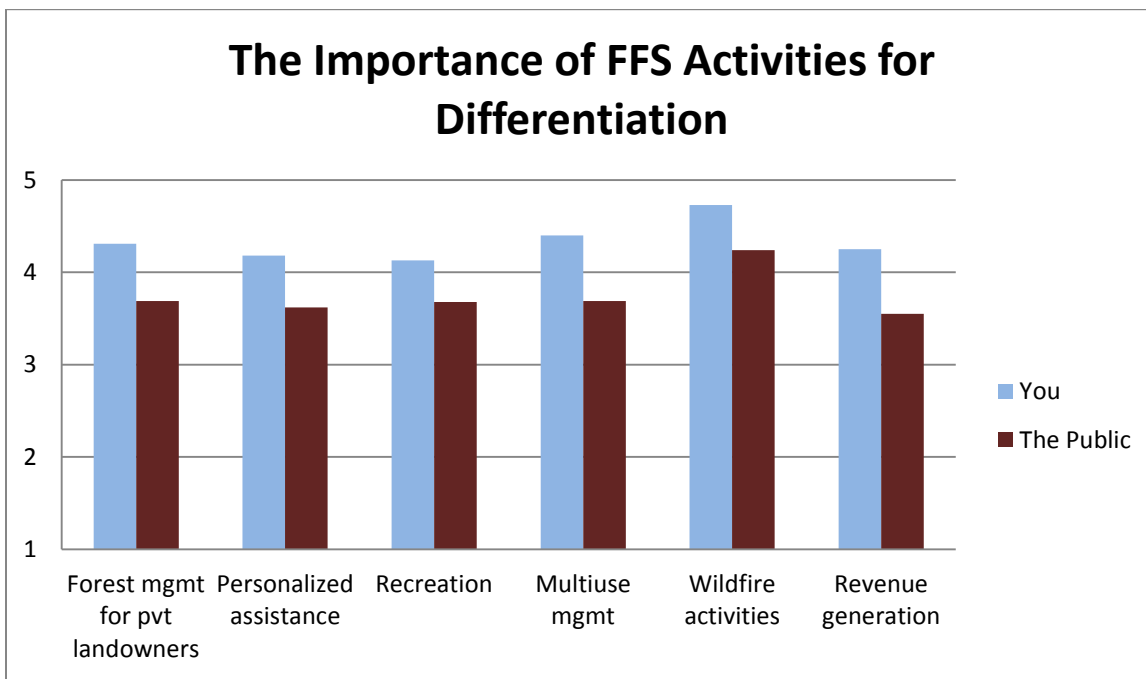
	Unimportant (%)	Slightly Unimportant (%)	Neither Unimportant Nor Important (%)	Slightly Important (%)	Important (%)	<i>M</i>
You	3.6	2.0	8.6	18.3	67.6	4.44
The Public	13.7	6.1	36.1	18.4	25.7	3.36

How important do YOU believe the following activities are for differentiating FFS from other natural resources and/or land management organizations?

Activity	Unimportant (%)	Slightly Unimportant (%)	Neither Unimportant Nor Important (%)	Slightly Important (%)	Important (%)	<i>M</i>
Forest management for private landowners	5.2	2.5	8.9	22.5	61.0	4.31
Personalized urban and rural landowner assistance	5.3	4.8	10.0	26.3	53.6	4.18
Opportunities for recreation	6.0	3.3	12.9	27.6	50.2	4.13
Multiuse management of state forests, including timber, water, recreation, wildlife, etc.	4.3	1.6	7.4	22.7	63.9	4.40
Wildfire prevention, suppression, mitigation, and protection	3.0	0.5	3.1	7.9	85.5	4.73
Revenue generation – timber sales, leases (cattle, apiary, oil & gas)	5.1	2.6	11.6	23.9	56.8	4.25

How important the PUBLIC believes the following activities are for differentiating FFS from other natural resources and/or land management organizations?

Activity	Unimportant (%)	Slightly Unimportant (%)	Neither Unimportant Nor Important (%)	Slightly Important (%)	Important (%)	<i>M</i>
Forest management for private landowners	11.5	4.1	24.3	24.2	36.0	3.69
Personalized urban and rural landowner assistance	11.4	4.7	26.3	25.8	31.9	3.62
Opportunities for recreation	10.7	4.8	25.6	23.5	35.4	3.68
Multiuse management of state forests, including timber, water, recreation, wildlife, etc.	10.6	4.4	25.0	25.6	34.4	3.69
Wildfire prevention, suppression, mitigation, and protection	6.1	2.9	13.1	17.3	60.7	4.24
Revenue generation – timber sales, leases (cattle, apiary, oil & gas)	12.9	5.1	28.2	21.9	31.8	3.55



Perceptions of FFS Functions

The majority of employees thought wildfire prevention and suppression was the main function of FFS and thought the public believed the same. The employees thought the public was most informed about the wildfire prevention and suppression activities of FFS and least informed about non-wildfire emergency response.

What is the main function of FFS?

Function	You (%)	The Public (%)
Forest management for private landowners	2.3	3.8
Wildfire prevention and suppression	71.0	59.5
Forest management of state forests	15.2	19.1
Laws and regulations	0.2	2.8
Non-wildfire emergency response	0.2	0.5
Provide outdoor recreation opportunities	0.8	6.4
Other	10.4	8.0

In the open-ended explanation of the “other” response, there were two major categories for what was important to the employees: all of the functions are equally important and a combination of forest management and wildfire prevention and suppression.

For employees’ perceptions of what the public believed the major function of FFS to be, there was one major theme: the public does not know. Many expressed exasperation in their statements. Other themes that recurred were all of the above and it would depend on the location.

In your opinion, on a scale from uninformed to informed, please rate how informed the PUBLIC is regarding the following functions of the Florida Forest Service.

Activity	Uninformed (%)	Slightly Uninformed (%)	Neither Uninformed Nor Informed (%)	Slightly Informed (%)	Informed (%)	<i>M</i>
Forest management for private landowners	16.6	20.1	11.4	43.3	8.6	3.07
Wildfire prevention and suppression	7.1	11.0	6.0	34.7	41.2	3.92
Forest management of state forests	11.3	16.9	16.6	41.4	13.8	3.29
Laws and regulations	18.6	21.8	21.1	30.6	7.8	2.87
Non-wildfire emergency response	39.4	18.8	19.9	18.1	3.8	2.28
Provide outdoor recreation opportunities	12.0	18.3	18.3	41.2	10.3	3.20

Overall Perceptions of FFS

The employees perceived FFS as good, ethical, important, beneficial, and positive. The employees thought the public's perceptions were generally favorable but not as favorable as the employees' views.

Bad - Good

	Bad (%)				Good (%)		<i>M</i>
Yours	2.9	4.7	12.8	29.7	49.8	4.19	
The Public's	1.9	3.0	26.6	37.1	31.5	3.93	

Unethical - Ethical

	Unethical (%)				Ethical (%)		<i>M</i>
Yours	4.1	6.8	18.3	28.9	41.9	3.98	
The Public's	1.5	2.6	28.4	36.1	31.3	3.93	

Unimportant - Important

	Unimportant (%)				Important (%)		<i>M</i>
Yours	1.2	1.9	6.8	19.5	70.7	4.57	
The Public's	4.7	7.8	31.9	34.1	21.6	3.60	

Not Beneficial - Beneficial

	Not Beneficial (%)				Beneficial (%)		<i>M</i>
Yours	1.2	2.4	8.0	20.6	67.8	4.51	
The Public's	3.6	6.2	31.2	35.6	23.5	3.69	

Negative - Positive

	Negative (%)			Positive (%)		<i>M</i>
Yours	3.2	5.4	16.7	28.3	46.4	4.09
The Public's	2.5	4.4	27.6	40.9	24.5	3.81

Perceived Importance of Audiences

The employees believed the general public's opinions were most important to FFS and special interest groups' opinions were the least important.

On a scale from unimportant to important, how important do you believe the opinions of the following audiences are to the Florida Forest Service?

Activity	Unimportant (%)	Slightly Unimportant (%)	Neither Unimportant Nor Important (%)	Slightly Important (%)	Important (%)	<i>M</i>
General Public	2.1	1.2	4.8	18.5	73.5	4.60
Politicians	6.6	3.0	6.4	15.0	69.0	4.37
Businesses	3.3	4.0	12.3	32.8	47.6	4.17
Florida Forest Service Employees	6.4	4.5	8.9	11.1	69.1	4.32
Media	3.3	3.1	10.4	22.6	60.6	4.34
Special Interest Groups	6.4	4.0	14.9	31.4	43.3	4.01

Mission Statement

The employees liked the mission statement, thought it was an accurate reflection of FFS, and helped to differentiate FFS from other organizations.

The mission of the Florida Forest Service is to protect Florida and its people from the dangers of wildland fire and manage the forest resources through a stewardship ethic to assure they are available for future generations.

Statement	Disagree (%)	Slightly Disagree (%)	Neither Disagree Nor Agree (%)	Slightly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	<i>M</i>
I like this mission statement	2.8	3.6	6.3	19.9	67.4	4.46
I believe this mission statement is an accurate representation of the Florida Forest Service	4.4	5.6	7.2	23.5	59.2	4.27
I believe this mission statement helps differentiate the Florida Forest Service from other organizations	6.4	5.6	14.7	26.1	47.2	4.02

Name Change

Based on overall means, the employees were generally neutral to somewhat positive about whether or not the name change was a good idea and if the new name was effective for communicating the duties of the division.

Opinions about the name change.

Statement	Disagree (%)	Slightly Disagree (%)	Neither Disagree Nor Agree (%)	Slightly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	<i>M</i>
I believe it was a good idea to change the name from "Division of Forestry" to "Florida Forest Service."	21.5	6.6	23.5	14.1	34.2	3.33
I believe the name "Florida Forest Service" is effective for communicating the duties of the division.	14.3	4.8	26.2	19.3	35.4	3.57

External Communications

The employees believed the public received the majority of its information about FFS from TV; websites; workshops, demonstrations, and presentations; and print articles. The employees believed TV, websites, print articles, and workshops, demonstrations, and presentations were the most important for communicating FFS’s duties to the public. For communicating emergency information, TV, radio, websites, and print articles were considered the most important. The employees had a generally neutral to somewhat positive view of the effectiveness and consistency of FFS’s external communications, but they believed it was important.

Where do you believe the public receives the majority of its information about the Florida Forest Service?

Medium	%
Radio	1.5
TV	31.5
Websites	16.1
E-mail	0.2
Social Media (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, etc.)	1.7
Print Articles (newspapers, magazines)	14.7
Flyers, posters, and handouts	8.2
Workshops, demonstrations, and presentations	16.8
Advertising, such as billboards, movie theater ads, and other signs	9.4

On a scale from unimportant to important, please rate how important you believe the following channels are for the Florida Forest Service when communicating its duties to the public.

Activity	Unimportant (%)	Slightly Unimportant (%)	Neither Unimportant Nor Important (%)	Slightly Important (%)	Important (%)	<i>M</i>
Radio	4.3	3.8	9.2	37.6	45.1	4.15
TV	2.2	1.0	2.6	17.2	77.0	4.66
Websites	1.7	1.2	6.3	26.8	63.9	4.50
E-mail	8.3	8.1	30.3	28.2	25.0	3.53
Social Media (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, etc.)	8.9	9.5	23.9	27.6	30.2	3.61
Text Messaging	21.8	14.8	35.7	18.4	9.4	2.79
Print Articles (newspapers, magazines)	1.2	2.9	6.4	27.6	62.0	4.46
Flyers, posters, and handouts	3.9	4.4	14.6	37.2	39.9	4.05
Workshops, demonstrations, and presentations	2.7	3.4	8.6	27.4	58.0	4.35
Advertising, such as billboards, movie theater ads, and other signs	4.7	3.5	10.8	30.8	50.3	4.18

On a scale from unimportant to important, please rate how important you believe the following channels are for the Florida Forest Service when communicating emergency information to the public.

Activity	Unimportant (%)	Slightly Unimportant (%)	Neither Unimportant Nor Important (%)	Slightly Important (%)	Important (%)	<i>M</i>
Radio	1.5	0.3	3.1	12.0	83.1	4.75
TV	0.7	0.5	2.4	4.5	91.9	4.87
Websites	3.3	3.1	10.2	21.7	61.6	4.35
E-mail	9.1	6.6	23.3	24.3	36.7	3.73
Social Media (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, etc.)	7.8	7.4	20.2	23.0	41.6	3.83
Text Messaging	14.6	9.6	29.4	19.7	26.7	3.34
Print Articles (newspapers, magazines)	4.9	3.9	11.3	24.9	54.9	4.21
Flyers, posters, and handouts	8.1	6.9	19.2	28.5	37.2	3.80
Workshops, demonstrations, and presentations	8.6	6.7	21.4	24.9	38.3	3.78
Advertising, such as billboards, movie theater ads, and other signs	10.3	6.7	17.9	23.3	41.7	3.79

How effective is the Florida Forest Service in communicating to external audiences?

Ineffective (%)	Slightly Ineffective (%)	Neither Ineffective Nor Effective (%)	Slightly Effective (%)	Effective (%)	<i>M</i>
8.6	12.7	13.4	49.0	16.2	3.51

How consistent is the purpose of the Florida Forest Service communicated externally?

Inconsistent (%)	Slightly Inconsistent (%)	Neither Inconsistent Nor Consistent (%)	Slightly Consistent (%)	Consistent (%)	<i>M</i>
10.0	15.8	17.7	38.8	17.7	3.38

How important is it for the Florida Forest Service to effectively communicate with the public?

Unimportant (%)	Slightly Unimportant (%)	Neither Unimportant Nor Important (%)	Slightly Important (%)	Important (%)	<i>M</i>
0.5	1.3	2.8	10.3	85.1	4.78

How can the Florida Forest Service improve its communications with the public?

321 participants responded to this question. The types of responses included increasing and improving FFS interactions with the public, increasing FFS media exposure, embracing new technologies, increase presence of Smokey Bear, decrease presence of Smokey, providing the full scope of what FFS does and why, consistent messages from all FFS employees, reach a wider range of Florida residents, quit letting fire departments take all the credit, let local FFS employees interact with local publics, and more effective work by public information officers.

Internal Communications

The majority of employees received the majority of their information about FFS through e-mail and the majority prefers it that way. Supervisors and coworkers were generally viewed as accurate sources of information about FFS. They viewed internal communications as slightly effective and slightly consistent but considered it important.

Source of Information	How do you CURRENTLY receive most of your information about the Florida Forest Service? (%)	How would you PREFER to receive most of your information about the Florida Forest Service? (%)
E-mail	65.1	57.1
Phone	0.3	0.0
Fax	0.2	0.0
Written memo	1.8	3.5
Social media (Facebook, Twitter)	0.5	1.2
News media	1.0	2.5
Face-to-face from your supervisor(s)	14.0	28.8
Face-to-face from fellow employees	16.6	6.4
Non-Florida Forest Service individuals	0.5	0.5

On a scale from inaccurate to accurate, how accurate are the following sources for information about the Florida Forest Service?

Source	Inaccurate (%)	Slightly Inaccurate (%)	Neutral (%)	Slightly Accurate (%)	Accurate (%)	<i>M</i>
News Media	6.4	17.1	17.1	47.5	12.0	3.42
Social Media	8.5	11.6	48.4	25.2	6.3	3.09
Coworkers	3.6	10.3	17.9	47.0	21.2	3.72
Supervisors	2.9	50	11.9	35.1	45.0	4.14
Non-Florida Forest Service Individuals	15.4	22.8	43.1	16.8	1.9	2.67

How effective is the Florida Forest Service in communicating internally?

Ineffective (%)	Slightly Ineffective (%)	Neither Ineffective Nor Effective (%)	Slightly Effective (%)	Effective (%)	<i>M</i>
13.0	17.7	12.4	39.1	17.9	3.31

How consistent is the purpose of the Florida Forest Service communicated internally?

Inconsistent (%)	Slightly Inconsistent (%)	Neither Inconsistent Nor Consistent (%)	Slightly Consistent (%)	Consistent (%)	<i>M</i>
11.1	18.6	15.7	35.3	19.3	3.33

How important is it for the Florida Forest Service to effectively communicate internally?

Unimportant (%)	Slightly Unimportant (%)	Neither Unimportant Nor Important (%)	Slightly Important (%)	Important (%)	<i>M</i>
0.8	1.5	2.5	9.3	85.8	4.78

How can we improve internal communication at the Florida Forest Service?

The major themes for this question were making sure information was reaching all employees, that communications should be two-way between higher-level and lower-level employees, communicate ahead of rumors, improve communication between Tallahassee and field offices, be honest in communications, more open communications, more face-to-face communications, do not hold on to information as a show of power, and make sure all employees have access to needed technology (e.g., internet at all stations).

Awareness at Different Organizational Levels

The employees were aware of field unit/bureau issues but unaware of issues outside their field unit/bureau. They believed their supervisors were aware of state-level FFS issues but that state-level employees were not aware of field-unit issues.

How aware are you of FFS issues occurring _____?

Source	Unaware (%)	Slightly Unaware (%)	Neutral (%)	Slightly Aware (%)	Aware (%)	<i>M</i>
in your field unit/bureau	8.6	17.1	9.4	36.0	28.9	3.59
outside of your field unit/bureau	26.9	22.7	18.9	25.3	6.2	2.61

How aware do you believe your immediate supervisor is of state-level Florida Forest Service issues?

Unaware (%)	Slightly Unaware (%)	Neutral (%)	Slightly Aware (%)	Aware (%)	<i>M</i>
8.4	13.5	12.3	30.2	35.5	3.71

How are aware do you believe employees at the state office are of field-unit issues?

Unaware (%)	Slightly Unaware (%)	Neutral (%)	Slightly Aware (%)	Aware (%)	<i>M</i>
29.1	25.7	13.1	21.8	10.3	2.58

Morale

The employees' morale was somewhat average, but they viewed overall employee morale as low.

How high is _____ morale?

Source	Low (%)	Slightly Low (%)	Neutral (%)	Slightly High (%)	High (%)	<i>M</i>
Your	21.8	19.8	20.2	22.2	16.0	2.91
Overall Employee	32.2	32.8	18.7	14.1	2.2	2.21

What ideas do you have for improving employee morale in the Florida Forest Service?

The themes that emerged were pay increases, being appreciated/recognizing employees' good work, frustration with the state political situation, more effective communications, improved relations between field offices and Tallahassee personnel, and perceptions that lower-level employees were receiving the brunt of the financial cuts.

Perceptions of Potential Problems

The employees perceived the most serious problems facing FFS were funding, employee morale, and political support.

Source	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neither Agree Nor Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	<i>M</i>
Funding is a serious problem facing the Florida Forest Service.	1.0	3.4	6.3	28.0	61.4	4.45
Political support is a serious problem facing the Florida Forest Service.	0.9	6.0	15.5	28.7	49.0	4.19
Public support is a serious problem facing the Florida Forest Service.	2.2	12.6	21.1	31.0	33.0	3.80
Public understanding is a serious problem facing the Florida Forest Service.	1.7	8.0	16.0	34.0	40.3	4.03
Employee morale is a serious problem facing the Florida Forest Service.	1.0	3.9	11.9	29.4	53.8	4.31
Communicating with the public is a serious problem facing the Florida Forest Service.	1.9	14.3	27.7	33.3	22.8	3.61
Communicating internally is a serious problem facing the Florida Forest Service.	1.4	9.7	23.5	33.0	32.5	3.86

What other important issues do you feel are facing the Florida Forest Service?

The issues mentioned were funding, retention/turnover of employees, a lack of employees, morale, pay, political factors, and poor management.

What is the most rewarding aspect of working for the Florida Forest Service?

The most rewarding aspects were caring for natural resources, helping people, protecting citizens and the state from fire, working outdoors, the coworkers, and performing a public service.

What is the least rewarding aspect of working for the Florida Forest Service?

The least rewarding aspects were low pay; lack of appreciation from superiors, politicians, and the public; dangers of the job, low morale, other employees having low morale, and bureaucracy.

Conclusions

Focus Groups

Forests and Forests Management

Participants had positive perceptions of forests and those who protected forests. Forest management was generally perceived as promoting the long-term viability of forests by ensuring harvesting is sustainable, protecting forests from out-of-control fires, and protecting forests from extinction. The three primary threats to the health of forests were people, fire, and natural threats, such as invasive species. Business resources as a component caused some confusion for participants. While including business resources helped some realize the need to balance forests for natural resources and business resources, it also led to distrust for some.

Government Agencies

Unprompted, participants did not generally associate the responsibility of forests in Florida with the DOF/FFS by name, though they did say Department of Forestry. The majority of groups also mentioned the Department of Agriculture, not Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Both organizations were not as well known by urban participants as they were by rural participants. The topics and activities participants associated with DOF/FFS were forest management, wildfire prevention and suppression, parks/park rangers, and fish and wildlife.

Many participants had difficulty understanding how the different public organizations related to each other and whether there was overlap between the groups. Forests and protection of forests were the characteristics participants believed could serve to distinguish DOF/FFS from the other organizations. The participants valued public organizations whose functions related to help and protection. The participants also valued honesty/integrity and open communications. In regard to DOF/FFS, participants valued the protection of forests and fire control.

Public organizations depend on public support. Differentiating FFS from similar organizations can improve the salience of FFS for the public. Creating differentiation can also serve to add to the value of FFS's brand in the minds of the public. The members of the focus groups were perceiving overlap between the organizations, which took away from FFS's value to them. The message of protecting Florida forests could differentiate FFS from the other organizations.

Name Change

Response to the name change was mixed. The positive was that the name sounded more helpful to some participants, the neutral was that the name did not change perceptions for some participants, and the negative was that some participants expressed confusion or uncertainty toward the new name. Participants were also mixed regarding the ability of the name to differentiate FFS from the other organizations. Including the word "service" made participants feel it would be harder to differentiate, but it also helped differentiation by making it clear that it was associated with Florida and forests.

Description of FFS on homepage

The aspect of the description that participants liked was the amount of information provided in the description that is on the FFS homepage. Participants also talked about how fire was focused on in the description and how the other FFS activities were treated as secondary in the description. Participants also held a caveat that the description was good if that was what FFS was actually doing.

Logo

Participants in all groups gravitated toward the trees and the badge shape in their comments. The trees helped identify the context of FFS's work, but some participants would have liked different trees. The badge shape tended to elicit perceptions of authority from participants. Responses to the colors and if the logo was eye-catching and memorable were mixed.

Pamphlets

Participants tended to think that the design of the *Welcome to ...* pamphlets was better than the design of the *Checklist of Birds* pamphlets. The logo on the pamphlets was generally seen as too small. Participants were mixed about where the logo should be placed. It was not always clear that DOF/FFS was responsible for the pamphlets. There was also confusion regarding whether FDACS or DOF/FFS was responsible for the pamphlets. Participants did not like the names of the commissioner and the director being on the pamphlets, especially on the front.

FFS Communications

Participants believed the audiences of FFS were everyone, kids and schools, and forest users. Conservation/protection of forests, the value of the forest, and that the forests are welcoming visitors were the messages participants thought would help differentiate FFS from other organizations. Participants mentioned the Internet, signs/billboards, broadcast, paper-based, and events as means FFS could use to communicate what it does. The best way to reach participants varied by participant, though Internet and mail were mentioned the most. If they were seeking out information about FFS, the Internet was the most-mentioned source. For emergency information, broadcast media and phone-based communications were mentioned.

Overall Participant Recommendations

Increasing communications with the public and increase awareness of FFS among members of the public was the biggest recommendation mentioned by participants. Three groups also mentioned getting a mascot.

Focus Group Survey

Participants reported being most aware of FFS activities for fire preventions, tree planting, wildfire suppression, and timber harvests. Participants reported being least aware of geocaching, biking, bird watching, and watershed protection. The activities perceived as most important to the participants were tree planting, fire preventions, wildfire suppression, and emergency response. The activities perceived as least important to participants were geocaching, bird watching, off-highway vehicle areas, and hunting and fishing. The activities participants perceived as most important to the state were fire prevention, tree planting, fire suppression, and emergency response. The activities participants perceived as least important to the state were geocaching, off-highway vehicle areas, bird watching, and biking.

Employee Survey

Perceived Importance of Activities

All activities were perceived as important, though wildfire prevention, suppression, mitigation, and prevention, and multiuse management of state forests were rated as more important. Personalized urban and rural landowner assistance was rated lowest.

Perceived Importance of Differentiation

The employees perceived that it was important for FFS to differentiate itself from similar organizations. They were neutral in regard to whether or not the public believed it was important, which contrasts with the focus group participants not understanding the differences and perceiving possible overlap between the government organizations. Wildfire activities were perceived by employees as most important for differentiating from similar organizations and recreation and personalized assistance to landowners were perceived as least important for differentiation. The employees thought the public believed wildfire activities were most important for differentiation, while the other activities were rated about the same.

Perceptions of FFS Functions

The employees tended to view wildfire prevention and suppression as the main function of FFS and thought the public held the same view. In the open-ended question, many believed the role of FFS could not be boiled down to one main

function. The employees also tended to believe the public did not know the main function of FFS. Employees believe the public was most informed about wildfire prevention and suppression activities of FFS and least informed of non-wildfire emergency response.

Overall Perceptions of FFS

The employees perceived FFS as good, ethical, important, beneficial, and positive. Their perceptions were highest for FFS being important and beneficial. They were lowest for FFS being positive and ethical. The employees reported more positive perceptions of FFS than what they believed the perceptions of the public were, though they still thought the public's perceptions were generally positive. The employees' beliefs of the public's perceptions were highest for FFS being good and ethical. They were lowest for FFS being important and beneficial.

Perceived Importance of Audiences

While all audiences were considered important, employees believed the opinions of the general public were most important to FFS and special interest groups were least important. FFS employees rated their own opinions and the opinions of politicians about equally important to FFS.

Mission Statement & Name Change

The employees liked the mission statement, believed it was accurate, and that it helped differentiate FFS from similar organizations. The employees held relatively mixed views about whether the name change was a good idea and if the name effectively communicated the duties of FFS.

External Communications

The employees believed the public received the majority of its information about FFS from TV; workshops, demonstrations, and presentations, and websites. They believed TV, websites, and print articles were the most important media for communicating FFS's duties to the public. Text messaging, e-mail, and social media were viewed as the least important. For communicating emergency information, TV and radio were rated most important, while text messaging was viewed as least important. This view of text messaging contrasts the viewpoint of some focus group participants who wanted to receive alerts on their phones. The employees held relatively neutral opinions of the effectiveness of FFS communications with external audiences and consistency of in the external communication of FFS's purpose. The employees believed it was important for FFS to communicate effectively with the public. In the open-ended question, increasing communications was a general trend in the answers.

Internal Communications

E-mail was the highest current source of information for employees and was also the preferred source of most information. More employees wanted to receive most of the information from supervisors than were currently receiving most of their information from supervisors. Fewer employees wanted to receive most of their information from fellow employees than was currently the case. Employees believed supervisors were the most accurate source of FFS information, while non-FFS individuals were rated the least accurate. Like external communications, employees held relatively neutral views of the effectiveness of internal communication and consistency of FFS purpose in the communication, but believed it was important for internal FFS communications to be effective. In the open-ended question, employees wanted it to be ensured that all employees were receiving information and that two-way communications be improved in the organization.

Awareness at Different Organizational Levels

Employees were more aware of issues within their field unit than issues outside their field unit. They believed their immediate supervisor was aware of state-level FFS issues. They did not believe state office employees were aware of field-unit issues.

Morale

The employees' moral was generally neutral, but they believed overall employee morale was low. In the open-ended question of how to improve morale, pay increases was the most frequent response. The biggest non-fiscal response was that the employees wanted to feel appreciated and be acknowledged for their work.

Perceptions of Potential Problems

All problems were rated as serious, though funding, employee morale, and political support were rated as the most serious problems. Communicating with the public, public support, and communicating internally were rated as the least serious problems. This less serious view of public support as a serious problem contrasts with their perceptions that the public's opinions were the most important to FFS. There is a disparity between the views that political support was more important than public support.

Recommendations

External

- FFS should increase its communications with the public. The participants largely lacked awareness of FFS and how it was different from similar organizations. There is no single communication tactic that can be utilized to reach all members of the general public. To reach the general public, FFS should increase its presence in the media and develop a key message/theme that resonates with all audience segments. This message should be used consistently, on everything, along with logo. FFS could be aided by the employees' recommendation that FFS take more credit in the media for their role in fire prevention and suppression.
- Though FFS needs to communicate with the general public, there are specific audience segments to target. The two audience segments that FFS can target are youth and forest users, including those engaging in recreation and those involved in the timber industry. To target a youth audience, FFS should interact more frequently with K-12 schools to show students the duties of FFS personnel and how FFS ensures the health of forests. Targeting K-12 schools may help students develop and appreciation for state forest which could benefit FFS in the long-term. To target those who use the forests for recreation, FFS could hold promotions at recreation stores (i.e. Bass Pro Shop or Dicks Sporting Goods) to increase the awareness of FFS and its state forests.
- To communicate emergency information, FFS should use a combination of traditional and modern communication technology. Traditional communications would include the use of TV and radio to broadcast information. Modern technology would include something similar to REVERSE 911 to call phones, send text message notifications, and create social media updates.
- The FFS should use the basic message of protecting Florida forests. The participants held positive perceptions of forests and those positive views transferred to organizations that protect forests. This message will help differentiate FFS from similar organizations, such as the U.S. Forest Service, the park services, the fish and wildlife services, and local fire departments. Where other organizations have more narrowly defined purposes and interact more frequently with the public, FFS does not have that advantage. The aspect of FFS that can best differentiate it from similar organizations is its role in ensuring the long-term viability of forests in Florida.
- FFS should be aware of the design of communications materials. When implementing the logo, be mindful of color contrasts. Participants tended to not like logo on green backgrounds because the logo would blend into the background. For pamphlets, the logo needs to be big enough for people to see. Though preferred logo placement is uncertain, make sure that it is easy to identify. While the primary focus of pamphlets will not be FFS, it should still be clear that FFS is responsible for the materials. To avoid confusion, the relationship between FFS and FDACS should be made clear on the materials. A statement like "The Florida Forest Service is a division of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services" could suffice. If the names of the commissioner and

director must be on the pamphlets, put them on the back. The FFS may consider enlisting the help of the Division of Marketing within FDACS to help with consistent branding and communication materials.

Internal

- FFS should make the communication between all personnel levels more open. Many employees complained about a lack of information flow, with some reporting that information was being hoarded as a show of power. For information that needs to reach all employees, send it directly to all employees instead of depending on the information to go through the hierarchy. The employees also expressed a desire to feel that their voices were being heard by superiors.
- FFS should also take steps to ensure that all employees have access necessary technologies. There were some complaints that individuals were required to read e-mails but did not have access to e-mail at work.
- FFS should encourage more frequent formal and informal recognition of employees for their work. If employees are recognized more frequently, they will feel appreciated and the FFS has the opportunity to create a more positive working environment and change the current perception of low employee morale.
- Increased recognition of good work overlaps with employees' external communications desires. Many felt overshadowed by local fire departments and park rangers in the public eye. They wanted FFS to be more proactive in ensuring FFS was recognized for the work it did and that the public understood what FFS did and why.
- The final recommendation is for FFS to improve the connection between Tallahassee and field offices. The employees felt detached from their counterparts in Tallahassee. To help alleviate the problem, staff from Tallahassee should visit personnel at field offices more regularly. FFS should also consider what personnel are best suited for field office visits. For instance, a director, assistant director or bureau chief might viewed with more importance, seniority and respect and therefore field staff may value their visit more than other personnel. The FFS should also consider the number of visits to field offices and attempt to keep visits among the field offices equal so as not to appear as having favorites. This could serve two purposes. First, the field-level employees did not feel that Tallahassee employees appreciated what they did, and this could serve as an opportunity to say thank you informally in person. Second, it could serve to lessen psychological distance between the two groups by attaching a face to the other group, someone the employees have met.

Appendix

Detailed Results of Focus Group Questionnaire

Participants were asked to their awareness and perceptions of the importance of FFS activities.

Hunting and Fishing

	Yes (%)	No (%)				
	Unimportant (%)	Slightly Unimportant (%)	Neutral (%)	Slightly Important (%)	Important (%)	<i>M</i>
Aware	50.0	50.0				
To you	9.3	11.1	18.5	22.2	38.9	3.70
To Florida	0.0	0.0	3.8	7.5	88.7	4.85

Watershed Protection

	Yes	No				
	Unimportant	Slightly Unimportant	Neutral	Slightly Important	Important	<i>M</i>
Aware	49.0	51.0				
To you	4.0	2.0	12.0	14.0	68.0	4.40
To Florida	0.0	0.0	6.1	4.1	89.8	4.84

Hiking (Trailwalker Program)

	Yes	No				
Aware	66.7	33.3				
	Unimportant	Slightly Unimportant	Neutral	Slightly Important	Important	<i>M</i>
To you	1.9	5.6	14.8	31.5	46.3	4.15
To Florida	0.0	0.0	11.5	25.0	63.5	4.52

Biking

	Yes	No				
Aware	40.7	59.3				
	Unimportant	Slightly Unimportant	Neutral	Slightly Important	Important	<i>M</i>
To you	5.6	5.6	27.8	25.9	35.2	3.80
To Florida	0.0	0.0	19.2	19.2	61.5	4.42

Bird Watching

	Yes	No				
Aware	41.5	58.5				
	Unimportant	Slightly Unimportant	Neutral	Slightly Important	Important	<i>M</i>
To you	13.0	3.7	27.8	25.9	29.6	3.56
To Florida	1.9	1.9	15.1	24.5	56.6	4.32

Geocaching

	Yes	No				
Aware	24.0	76.0				
	Unimportant	Slightly Unimportant	Neutral	Slightly Important	Important	<i>M</i>
To you	14.6	6.3	47.9	16.7	14.6	3.10
To Florida	2.1	6.4	46.8	19.1	25.5	3.60

Off-Highway Vehicle Areas

	Yes	No				
Aware	54.7	45.3				
	Unimportant	Slightly Unimportant	Neutral	Slightly Important	Important	<i>M</i>
To you	9.4	5.7	28.3	26.4	30.2	3.62
To Florida	2.0	2.0	19.6	29.4	47.1	4.18

Canoeing

	Yes	No				
Aware	56.6	43.4				
	Unimportant	Slightly Unimportant	Neutral	Slightly Important	Important	<i>M</i>
To you	11.3	1.9	13.2	26.4	47.2	3.96
To Florida	0.0	3.8	5.8	25.0	65.4	4.52

Timber Harvests

	Yes	No				
Aware	84.9	15.1				
	Unimportant	Slightly Unimportant	Neutral	Slightly Important	Important	<i>M</i>
To you	7.5	0.0	15.1	17.0	60.4	4.23
To Florida	0.0	0.0	3.8	9.4	86.8	4.83

Wildfire Suppression

	Yes	No				
Aware	92.3	7.7				
	Unimportant	Slightly Unimportant	Neutral	Slightly Important	Important	<i>M</i>
To you	0.0	0.0	5.8	7.7	86.5	4.81
To Florida	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.9	98.1	4.98

Fire Prevention

	Yes	No				
Aware	100.0	0.0				
	Unimportant	Slightly Unimportant	Neutral	Slightly Important	Important	<i>M</i>
To you	0.0	0.0	1.9	13.0	85.2	4.83
To Florida	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	5.00

Response to Emergencies

	Yes	No				
Aware	72.2	27.8				
	Unimportant	Slightly Unimportant	Neutral	Slightly Important	Important	<i>M</i>
To you	0.0	0.0	9.3	5.6	85.2	4.76
To Florida	0.0	0.0	5.6	1.9	92.6	4.87

Tree Planting

	Yes	No				
Aware	96.3	3.7				
	Unimportant	Slightly Unimportant	Neutral	Slightly Important	Important	<i>M</i>
To you	0.0	0.0	1.9	7.4	90.7	4.89
To Florida	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.9	98.1	4.98