

Public Input on Stream Monitoring From Residents of the Willamette Valley, Oregon

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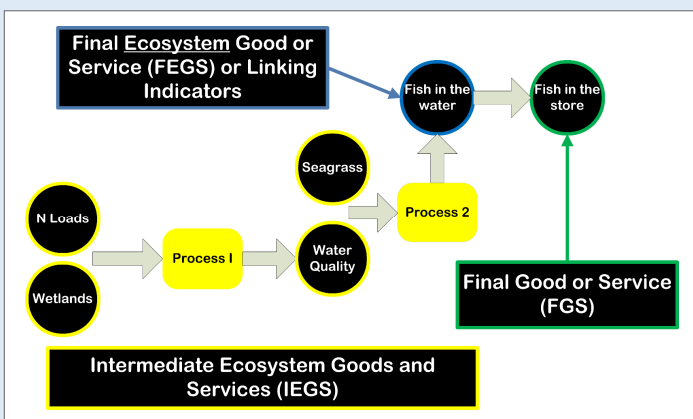
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Introduction

Monitoring design inevitably includes strategic judgments since budget constraints limit what can be assessed. Using focus group and interview methods, in-depth feedback on important river and stream attributes were recorded and analyzed from 99 Oregon residents recruited from diverse backgrounds. Feedback coalesced on recurring themes with some variation between socio-demographic groups. These public perspectives can be used to inform natural scientist priorities for monitoring, as well as the target variables for ecological modeling, and communicating resource condition.



Methods

Participants were recruited from the general public by a marketing firm that relied mainly on cold calls. Incentive fees were paid to reduce self-selection bias. Within focus group and interview sessions a defined script was used with relatively few open-ended questions regarding rivers and streams. To elicit feedback on measurable features ultimately important to participants, the Final Ecosystem Goods and Services conceptual model was utilized. For example, if a participant expressed concern about pollution, our follow-up question was to ask about specific impacts of pollution that were of concern.

The Participants

Socio-Demographic Segment	Number of Focus Group Participants	Number of Focus Groups	Member-Checking Interviews	Area of Residence
Urban Low-Income	17	2	2	Portland or Corvallis
Urban Recreationalist	18	3	2	Portland or Corvallis
Urban Non-Rec.	17	2	10	Portland or Corvallis
Rural Non-Farming	14	3	2	Linn, Benton, Clackamas, or Marion Counties
Rural Farming	15	2	2	Linn, Benton, Clackamas, or Marion Counties
Totals	81	12	18	Oregon

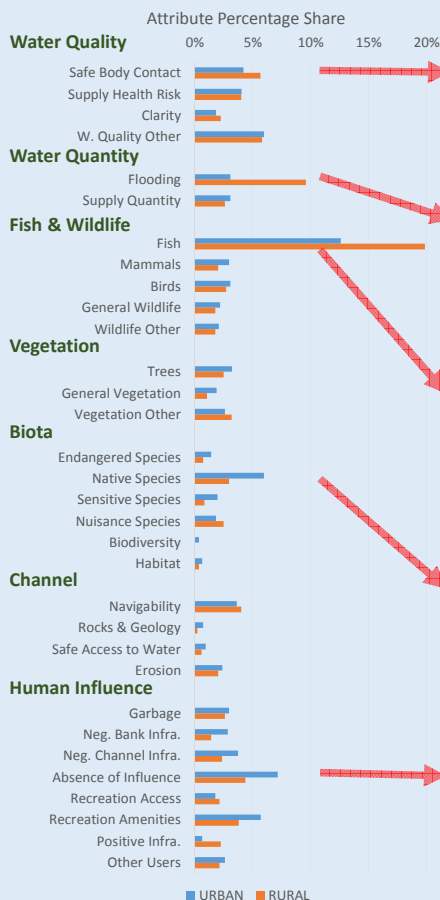
Record

Transcribe

Analyze



Which photos do you prefer, and why? (visual aids used to assist discussion)



“...I’ve never been able to go in the water without swallowing some of it. So what are you swallowing when you get in there?”
– Walter, Rural Non-Farmer

“...when you’ve got ground that is jeopardized, there is a possibility it could go away, you’ve bought it, you don’t want to lose it.”
– Ted, Rural Farmer

“...the symbolic value and the image of salmon in our culture...there is a huge spiritual issue because the salmon so beautifully exemplify the indomitable force of nature...”
– Sarah, Urban Non-Rec

“Is there any invasive species that aren’t supposed to be there that are a concern and hurting the productivity of what’s supposed to be there?”
– Amy, Urban Non-Rec

“For number one I chose [photo] C. For me it was the greenest. It seemed the most pristine and untouched by humans, and that’s what I liked about it.”
– Leann, Urban Low-Income

Main Points

- Input on ecological features consistently focuses on relatively few attributes, such as fish and the safety of recreational water contact.
- Human influenced river attributes were tremendously important, especially lack of apparent influence.
- Urban and rural code frequencies often varied; there were also differences in context. For example urban residents often cited flood flows as a positive phenomenon, while for rural residents this was overwhelmingly negative.
- It was challenging for participants to focus on specific attributes – underscoring the importance of probe and follow-up questioning abilities of field qualitative methods to document Final Ecosystem Goods and Services.