



Project Impacts

NSRC-FUNDED RESEARCH FINAL REPORT

Views Toward Wildlife and Involvement in Recreation Influence Public Acceptability of Development

PROJECT AWARD YEAR AND TITLE:

2013

Does Wildlife Information Influence Public Acceptability of Development?

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Increasing development, such as roads and houses, will alter the future landscape of Vermont. Development provides important resources for people and society but results in consequences for wildlife and opportunities for recreation. Managing development requires information on the public's acceptability of development and how acceptability is shaped by information on various consequences. NSRC researchers sent a visual preference survey to 9,000 households in Vermont and received a 44% response rate. The survey included illustrations of a fictitious town showing increasing amounts of development and asked questions about development, wildlife, recreation, and demographics.

Maximum public acceptability of development in Vermont was slightly more than 32 households/km², and clustered housing patterns were strongly favored over sprawled development. Maximum acceptability of development was significantly influenced by views on some wildlife species, including bear, fisher, raccoon, and coyote, but not by deer, fox, and bobcat. If respondents were more accepting of bear and fisher, they favored less development. Those involved in two common outdoor recreation activities, birding and hunting, were significantly less accepting of development than those not involved in those forms of recreation. Respondents born in Vermont were less accepting of development than non-native Vermonters. Younger people, homeowners, and those living in larger towns were more accepting of development.

These results provide a baseline measure of the public's acceptability of development, which can be used to guide decision-making about amount and pattern of development, wildlife management, and efforts to promote recreation in the state.



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