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Public Involvement in State Fish and Wildlife Agencies in the U.S.: A Thumbnail Sketch of Techniques and Barriers

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Abstract:

Increasingly, the public is demanding greater voice in decisions over the management of natural resources. Limited case studies indicate that state fish and wildlife agencies have public involvement programs, but there is a knowledge gap regarding which public involvement techniques are being used by what states and with what level of effectiveness. This article presents the results of a national survey of staff identified as being responsible for public involvement in all 50 state fish and wildlife agencies. The survey results are descriptive, providing information about the frequency of use of public involvement techniques, perceptions of the importance of each technique, and barriers to effective public involvement. Respondents ranked commission or governing board meetings, public meetings, and advisory boards as frequently used techniques. Respondents ranked scientific surveys, citizen task forces, and commission or governing board meetings as the most important techniques. The top barrier to effective public involvement was a lack of public understanding of agency decision-making processes. Respondents also indicated that a combination of public involvement approaches is used, depending on the management issue.

Keywords: [public involvement](#); [wildlife management](#)

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