

Public Opinion and Federal Forest Management

2014 OSAF Conference

Seven Feathers Casino, Canyonville

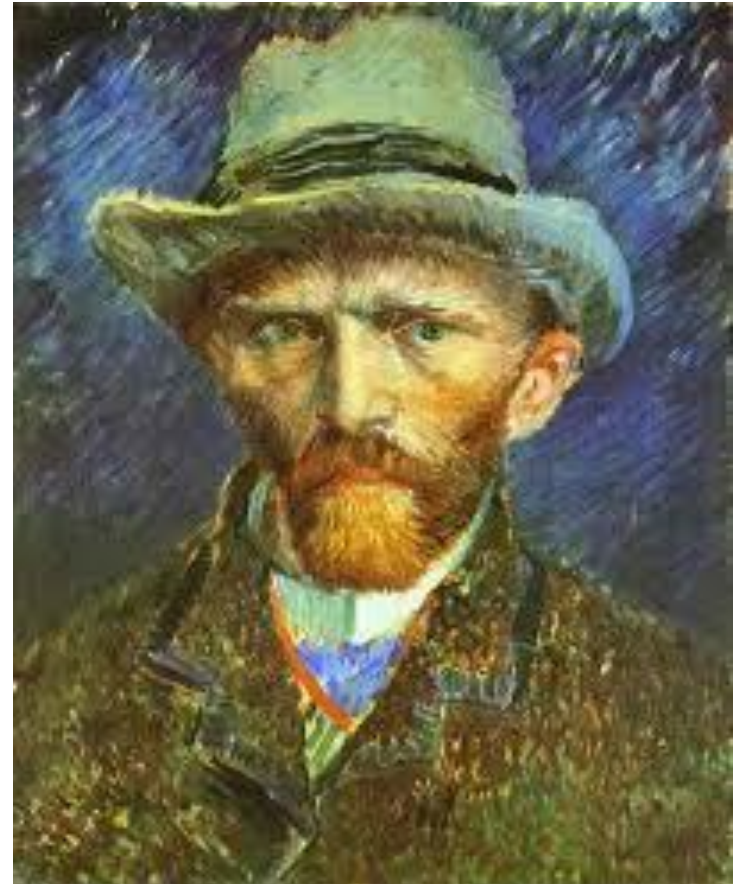
May 1, 2014



Public opinion and federal forests

**“Painting is a
faith, and it
imposes the duty
to disregard
public opinion.”**

Vincent Van Gogh



Public opinion and federal forests



“The force of public opinion cannot be resisted when permitted freely to be expressed. The agitation it produces must be submitted to.”

Thomas Jefferson

Millennials – Our next challenge

- **Generation Y**
- **Born between 1980 and 2000**
- **Largest generation by population in the U.S.**
- **Currently between the ages of 14 and 34**
- **Greater interest in innovation and social change**
- **Adaptive, open-minded, entrepreneurial, innovative and tech savvy**
- **But also....., entitled, not hardworking, over educated, in debt**

Millennials view the world differently than Boomers

	Millenials	Boomers
Do you favor or oppose changing the Oregon constitution to allow same-sex marriage	67%	37%
Oregon should increase timber harvests in dense, overcrowded forest stands (agree / neutral)	15% 29%	30% 13%
Oregon needs to focus on maintaining / improving historical Oregon industries such as logging	30%	43%

Millennials view the role of government differently than Boomers

The government should reduce regulations in Oregon to support economic development	Millenials	Boomers
Strongly desirable - 😊	14%	26%
Somewhat desirable - 😐	19%	29%
Strongly undesirable - ☹️	13%	9%

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**Gifford Pinchot...
flooded the press
with the nation's
need for forestry and
*began to influence
public opinion.***



OFRI 2013 Ad Test

Statewide Survey Research

PREPARED FOR
Oregon Forest Resources Institute
July 2013

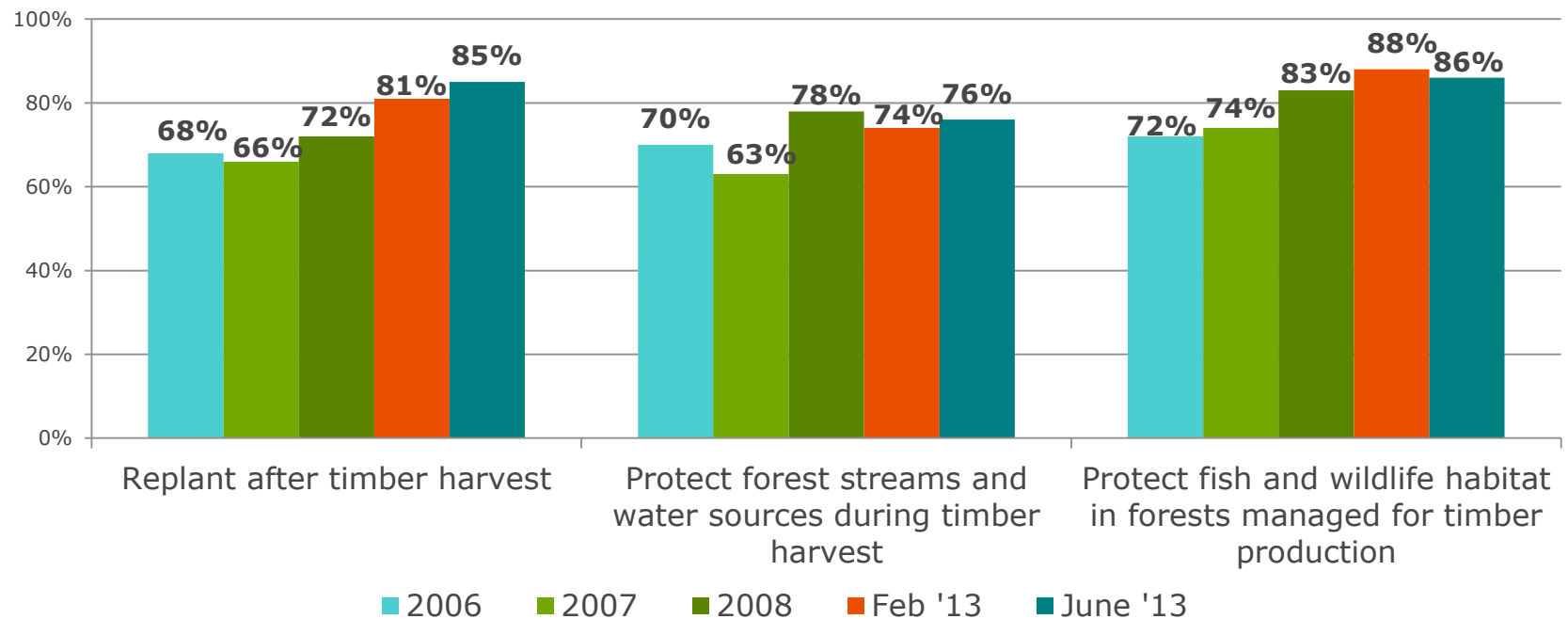
www.dhmresearch.com

Key findings – June 2013

- **The upward trend in awareness of Oregon's laws on replanting and wildlife protection during harvest continues.**
- **Residents continue to prefer wood products over alternatives such as steel, plastic, and cement as the better environmental choice.**
- **Most residents (71%) understand the need and support thinning to reduce forest fires.**

Upward trend in awareness of Oregon's forest laws continues

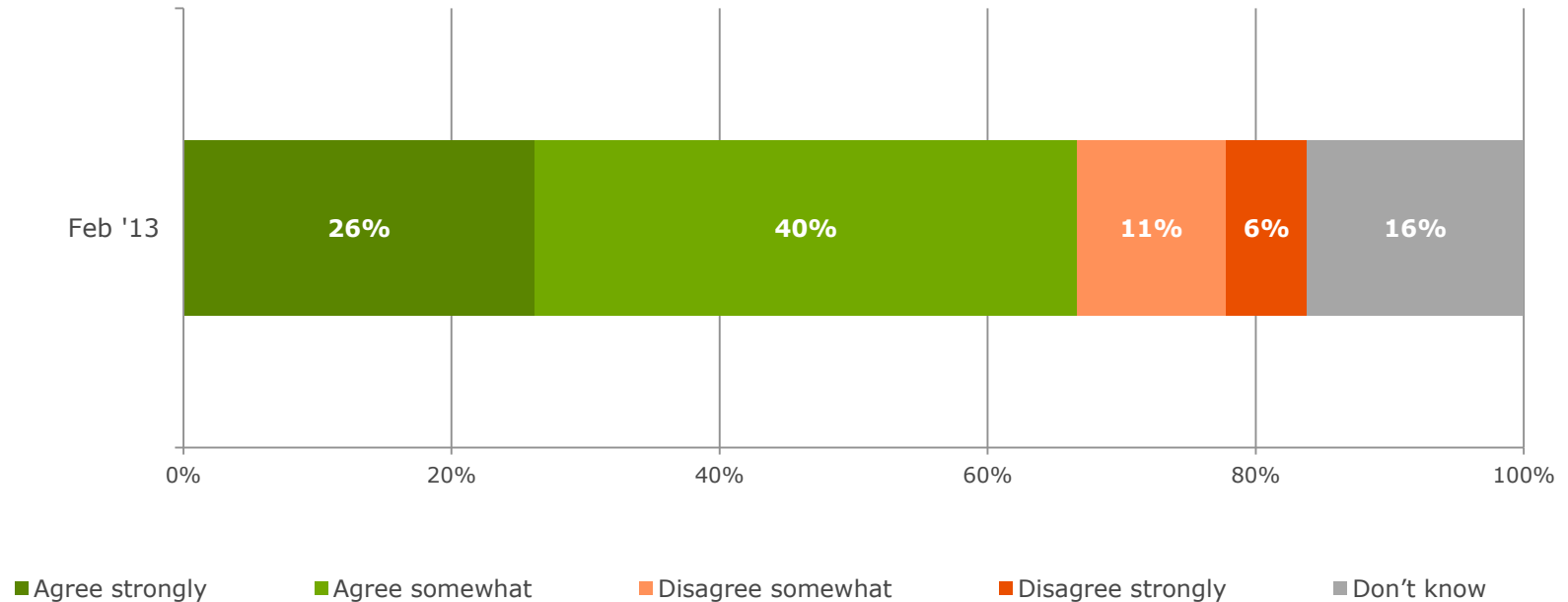
Forest Landowner Requirements (Yes Responses)



- **Newer residents (82%), experienced a 20-point increase in awareness of replanting from pre-test figures (62%).**

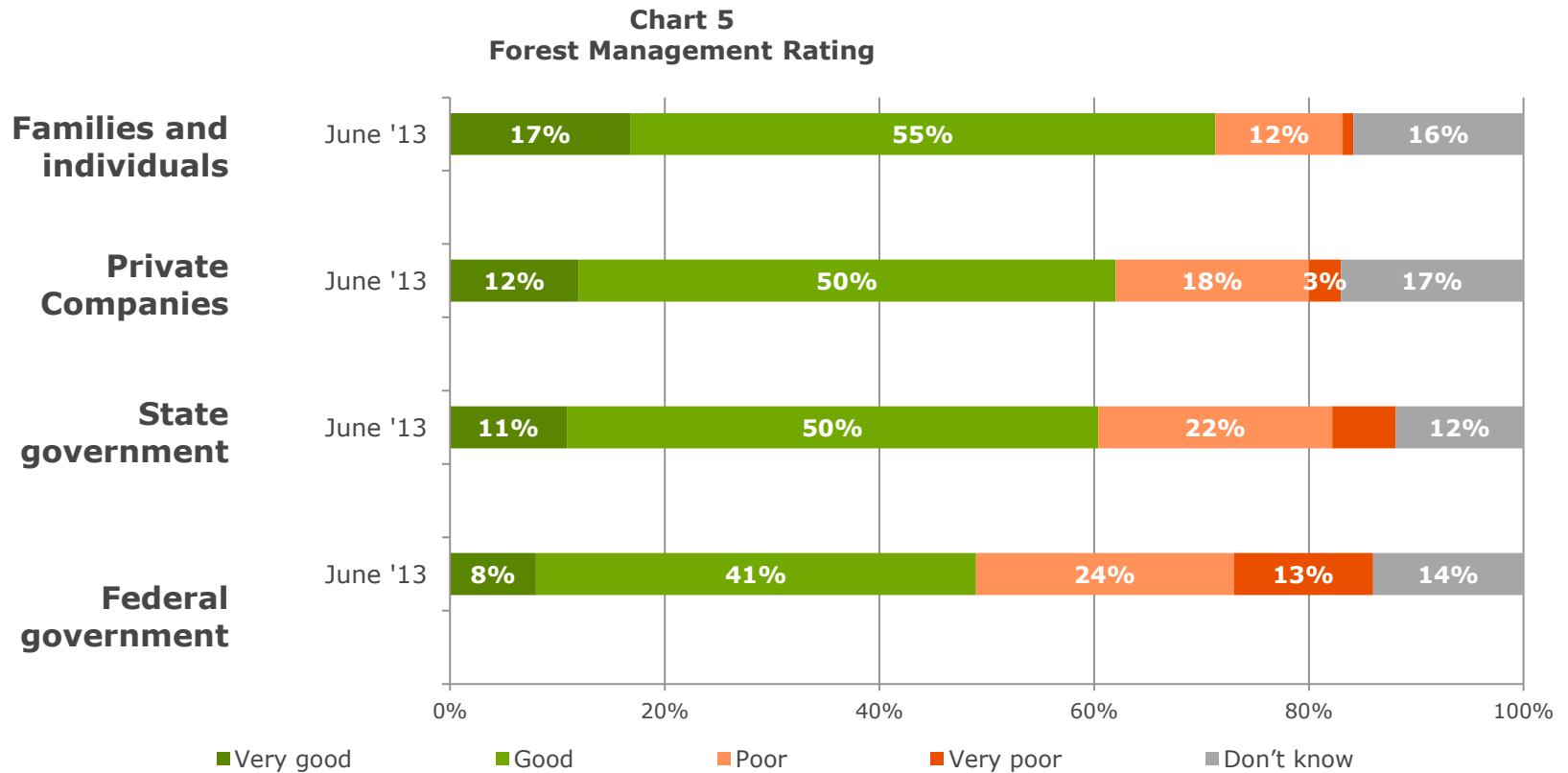
7 in 10 residents agree that Oregon does a good job enforcing forest laws

Chart 4
Forest Protection Laws Enforcement



Source: DHM Research June 2013

Majorities give good ratings to all landowners – highest for families



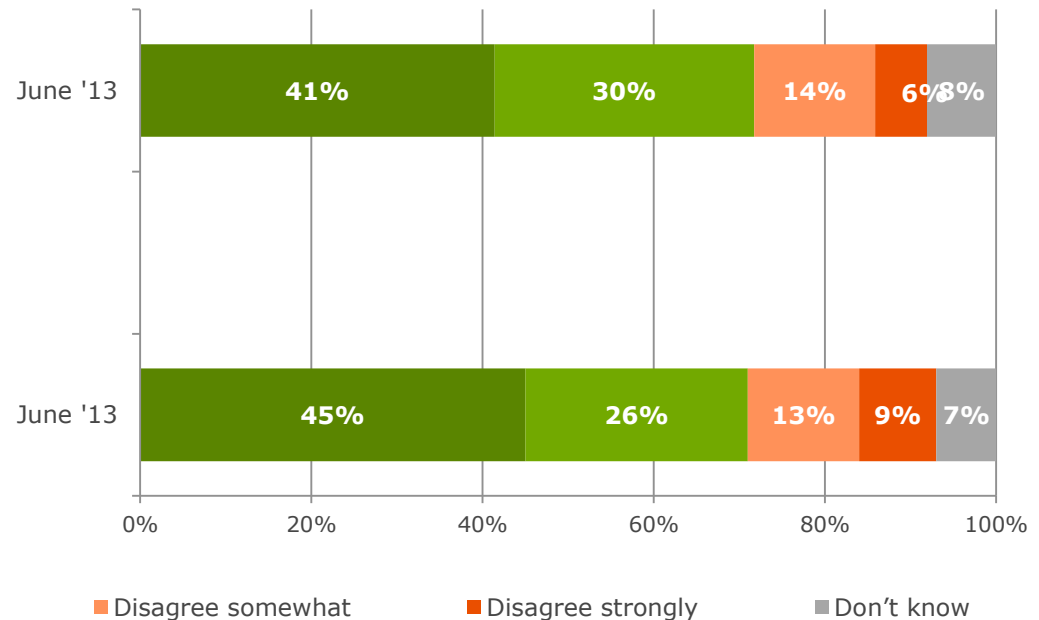
Source: DHM Research June 2013

7 in 10 believe overstocked forests in eastern Oregon should be thinned

Chart 6
Agreement About Forest Management Statements Regarding Forest Fires

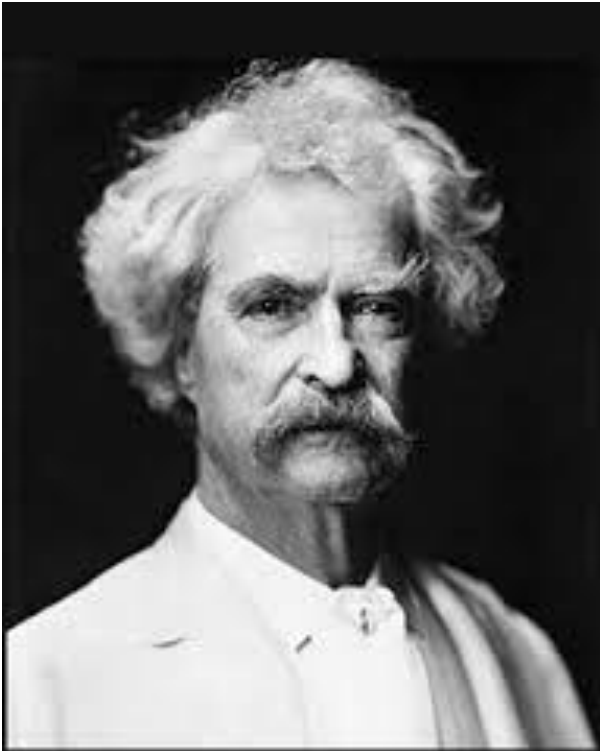
Lack of thinning or harvesting in dense, over-crowded forest stands can threaten fish and wildlife habitat by making the stands vulnerable to unusually hot, destructive fires.

Dense, overstocked forests in Eastern and Southwest interior Oregon should be thinned to reduce the risk of severe wildfire.



Source: DHM Research June 2013

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“The public is the only critic whose opinion is worth anything at all.”

Mark Twain



DCFP/OFRI

Deschutes County Forest Management Survey

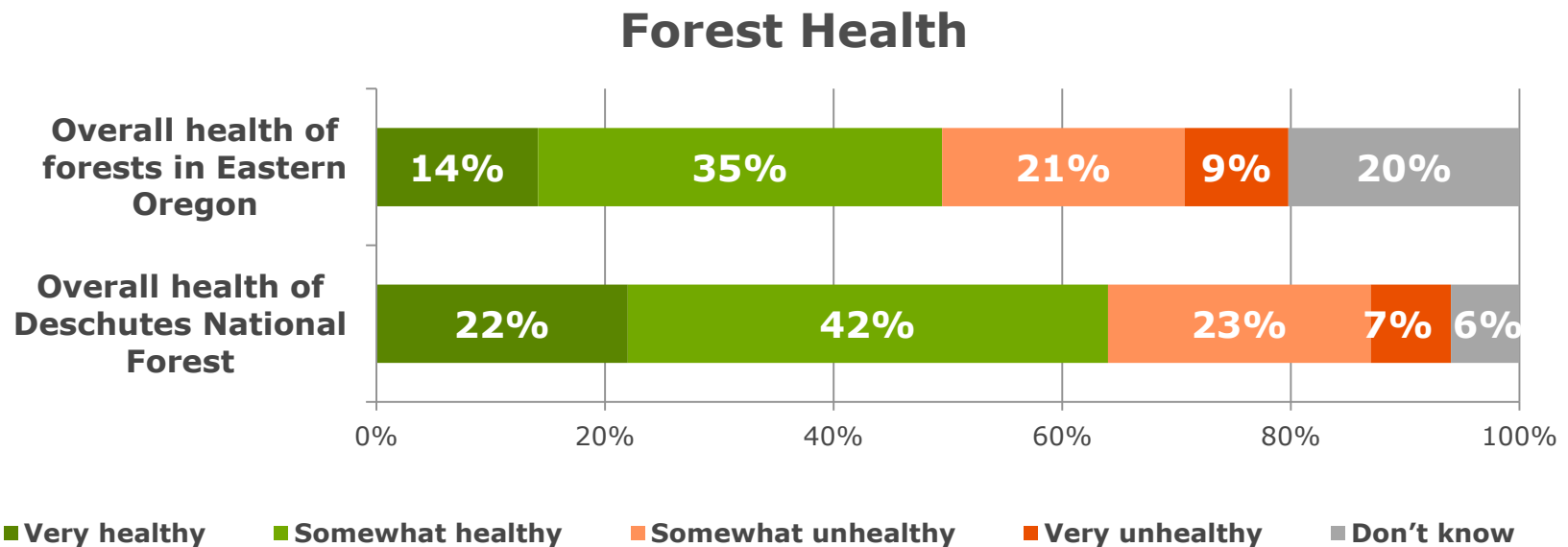
PREPARED FOR
Deschutes Collaborative Forest Project
December 2013

www.dhmresearch.com

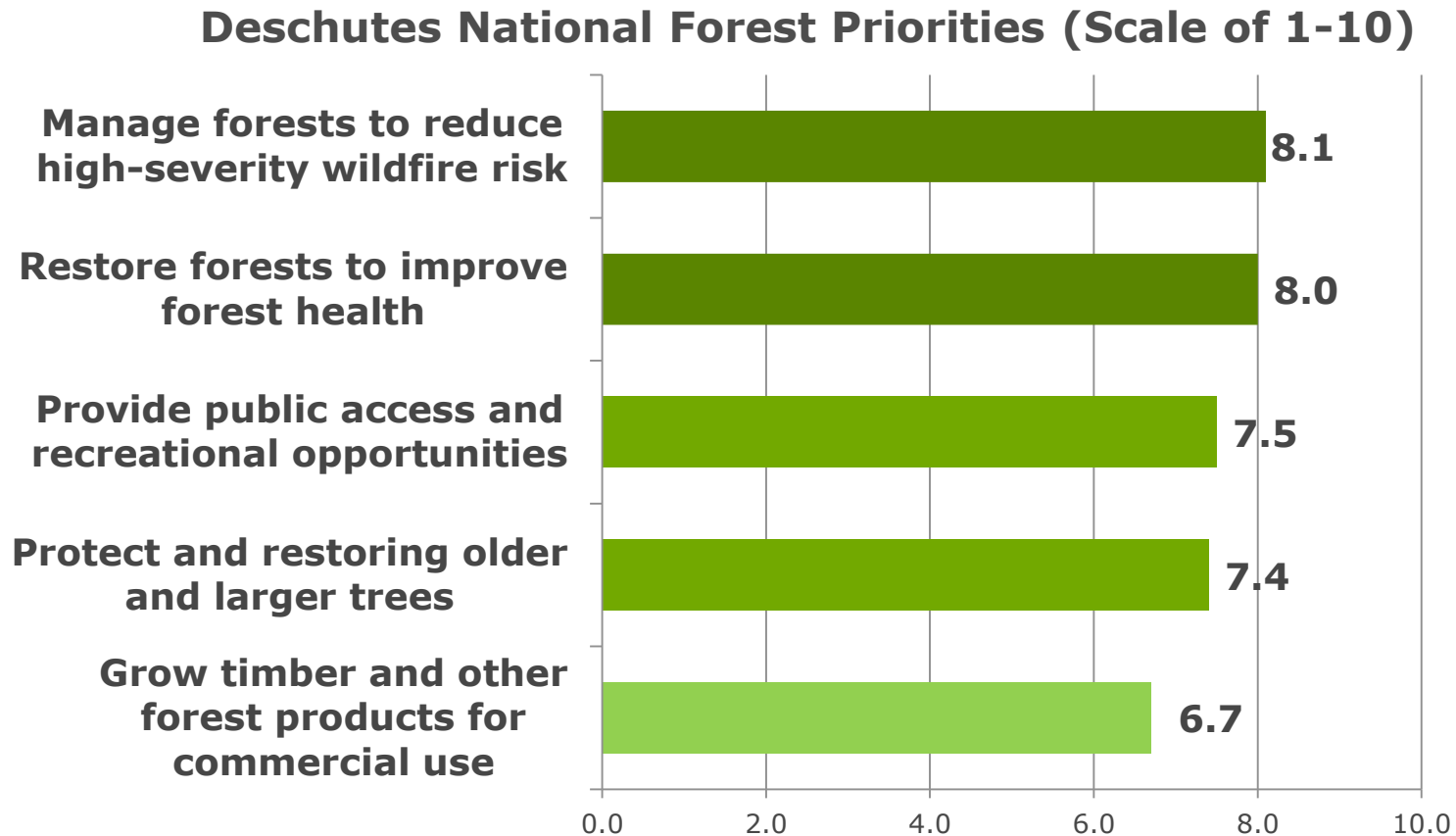
Research design – November 2013

- Telephone survey of Deschutes County registered voters
- N=300, margin of error $\pm 5.7\%$
- Quotas set by age, gender, area of county, and political party for a representative sample
- 10 minutes

Forest health – “My forest is better than yours...”

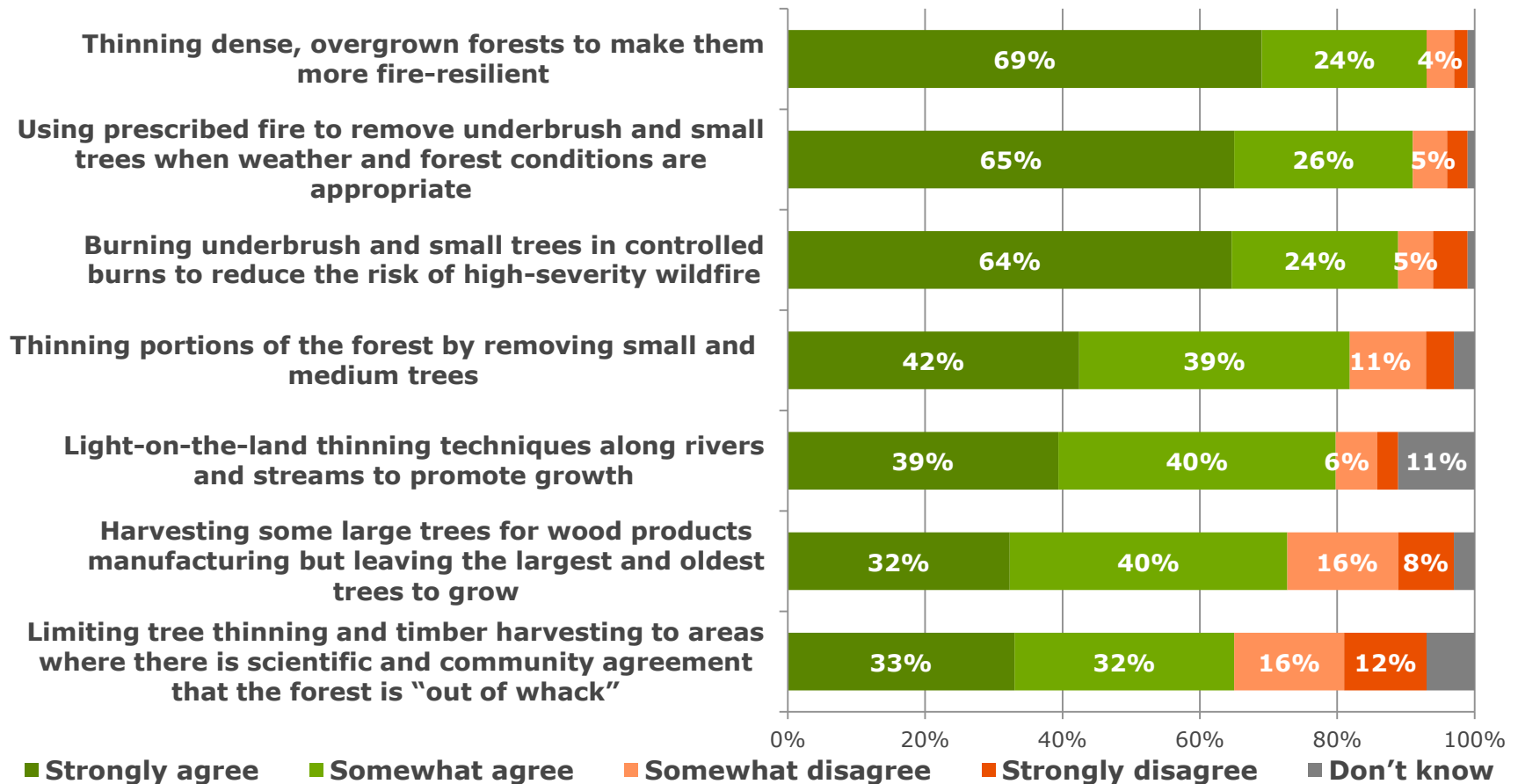


The management priorities of the DNF should be....

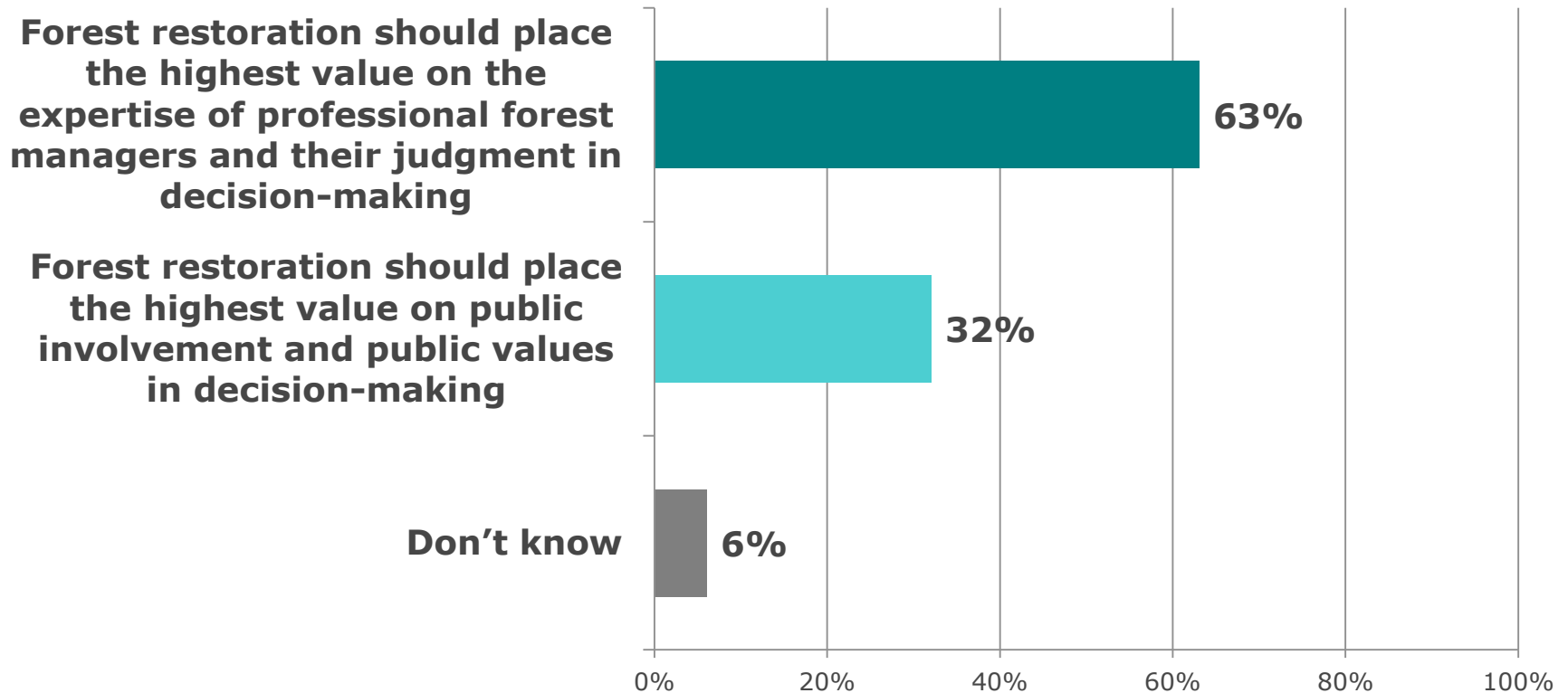


What management methods would you like to see employed in the DNF?

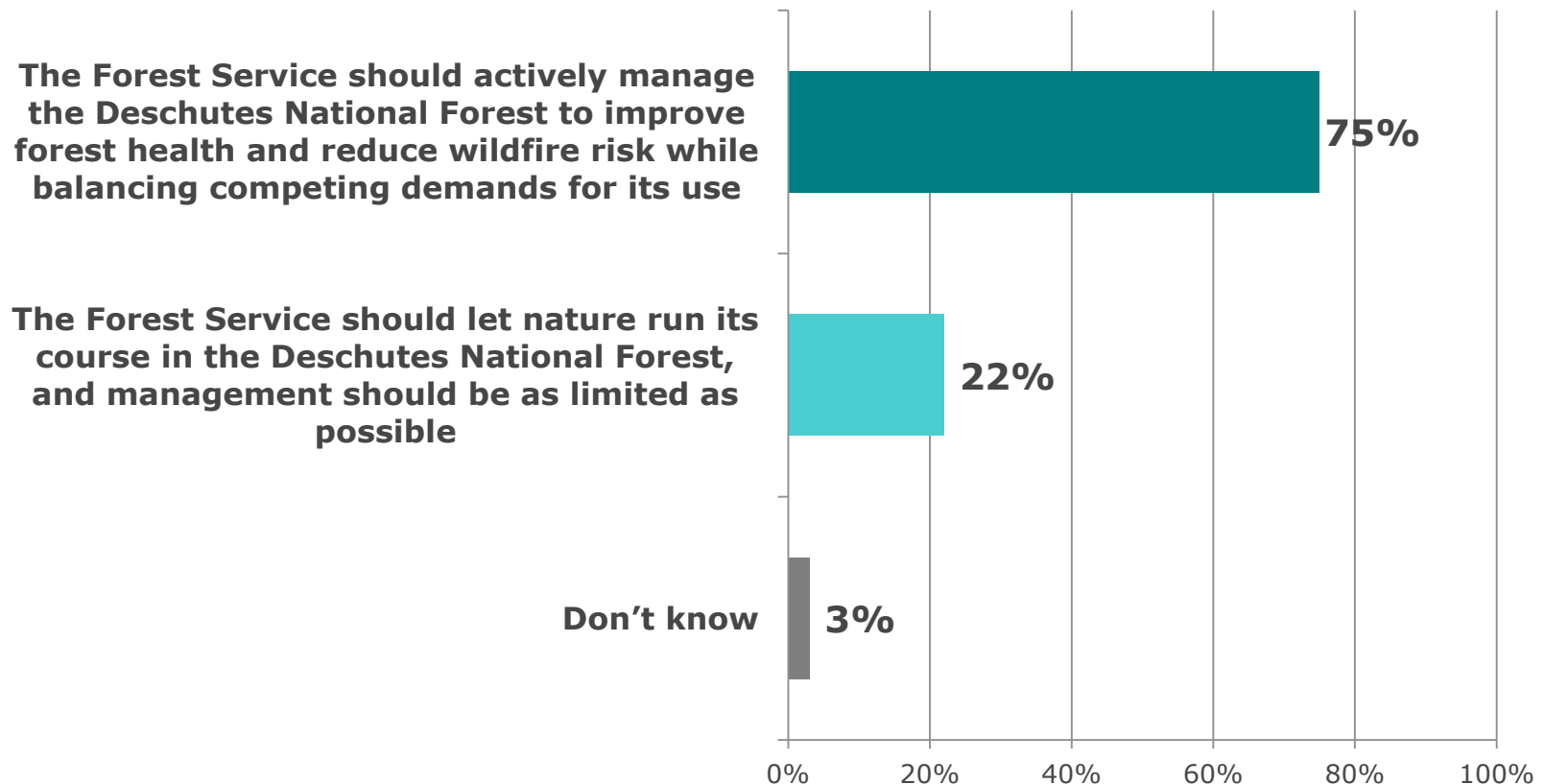
Methods for Forest Management



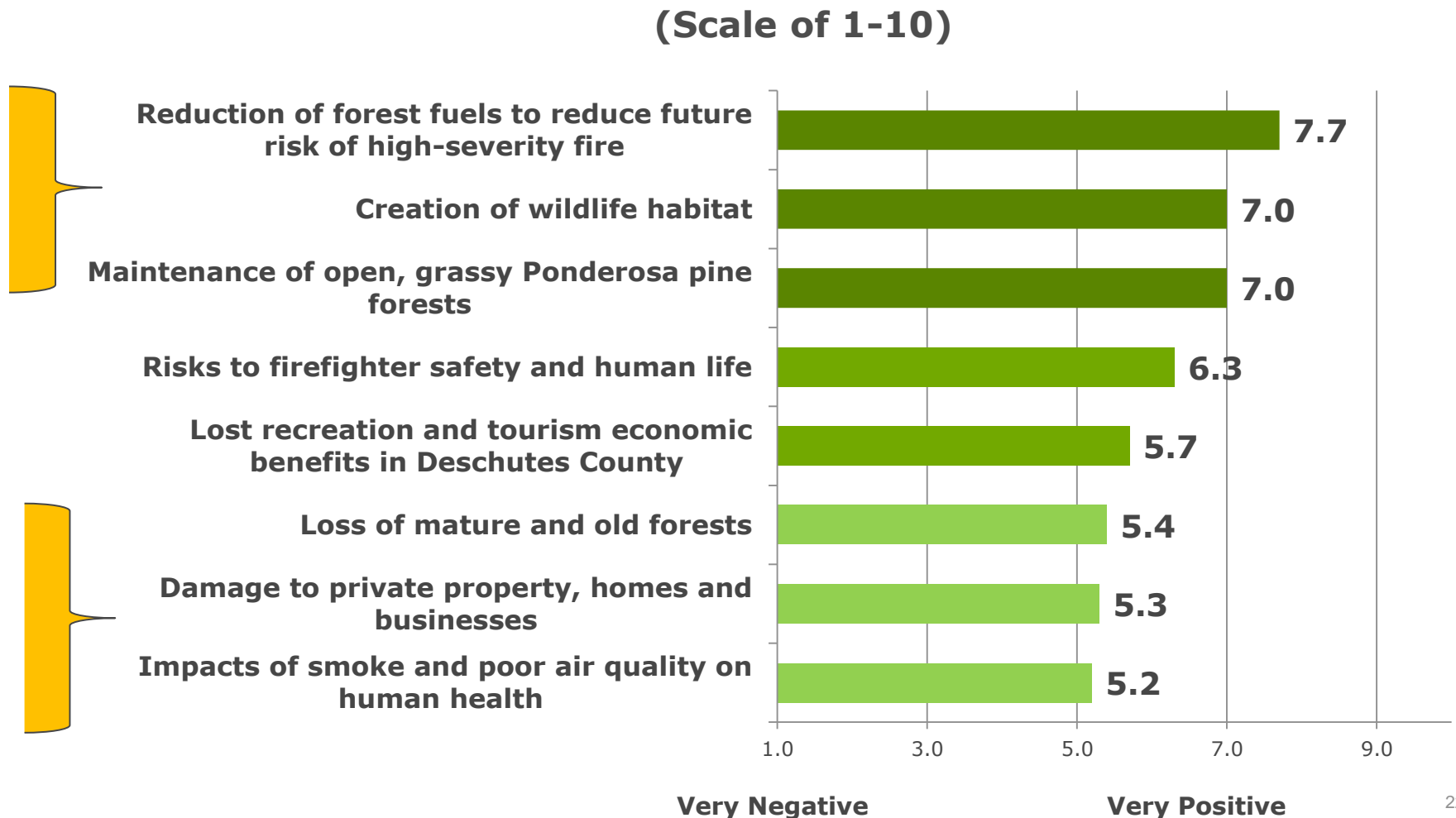
Which statement about forest restoration is closest to your opinion?



Which statement about forest management is closest to your opinion?

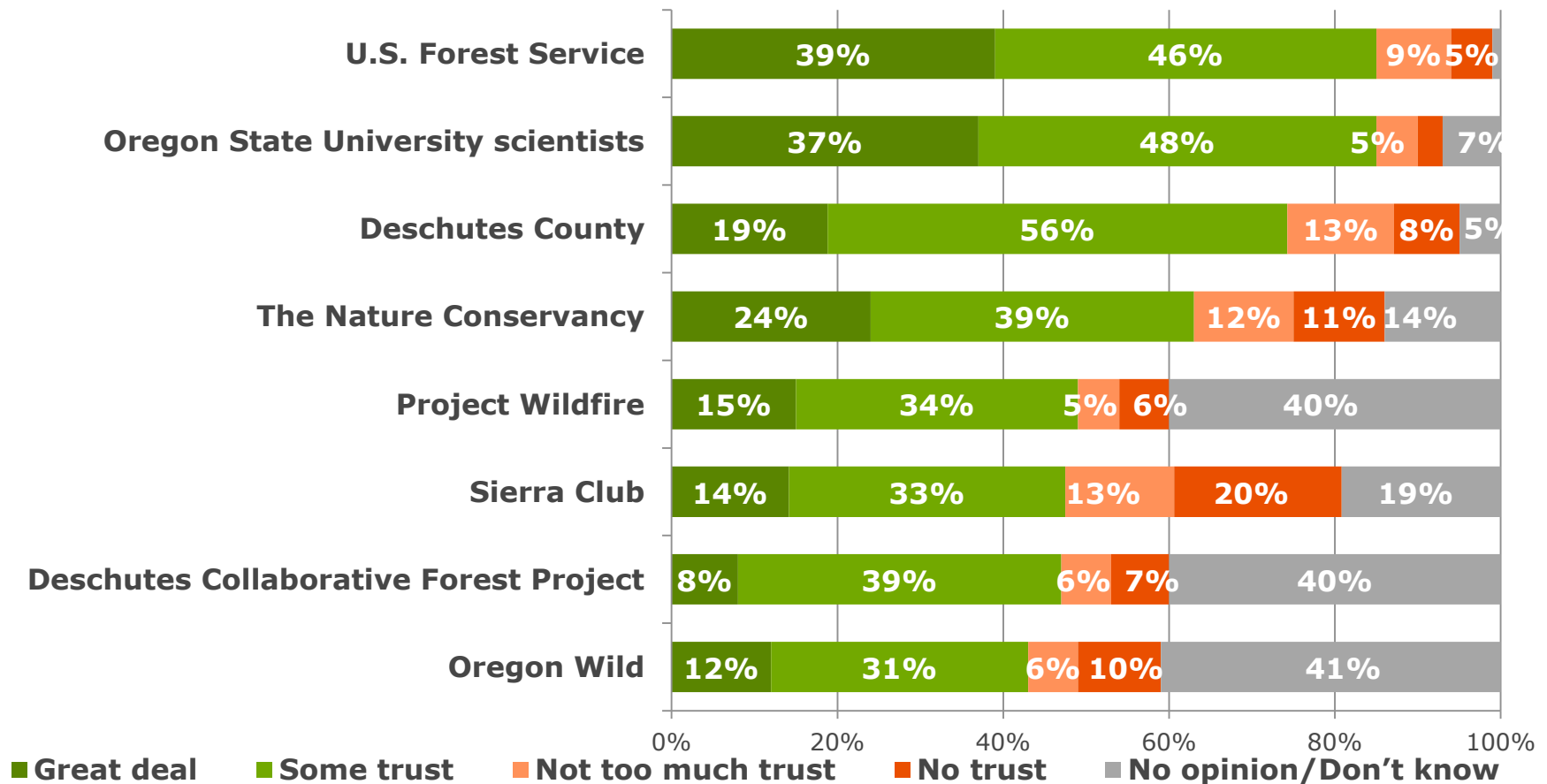


Positive vs. negative impacts of wildfire in DNF



“Please indicate how much trust you place in each of the following...”

Organizational Trust for Forest Management



Key takeaways from study

- **Overall, it's good news. There is no crisis of public opinion**
- **The public sees the DNF as a healthy, and believes that management is necessary**
- **The public's top priority for the DNF is reducing the risk of high severity wildfire. They are highly supportive of:**
 - **Thinning "overgrown" forests**
 - **Thinning "small and medium" size trees**
 - **Using prescribed burns**

Key takeaways from study

- **The public trusts forest managers to make wise decisions about forest health and to control wildfire risks**
 - **Put greater trust in the expertise of professional forest managers than in public decision-making**
 - **Caution: that does not mean that you won't hear from (loud) stakeholders or should diminish your public outreach**
 - **We find this willingness to accept expert judgment when policy has been effective and the public feels that there are means to influence policy**

Key takeaways from study

- **Best messengers:**
 1. **US Forest Service**
 2. **Oregon State University**
 3. **Deschutes County**
 4. **Scientists, experts & technocrats**

Key takeaways from study

- **Messages**

- **What are risks of wildfires to property, human life, economy, drinking water, air quality and wildlife**
- **How active forest management has already benefited the community, and will continue to do so**
- **Tone should be calm, reasoned, science-based, and collaborative**
- **Look ahead to future to communicate the why, how and value of management activities**

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**“I like good
strong words
that mean
something.”**

Louisa May Alcott

Words ARE important and MUST connect with people's values

- “The **lack of active management** has degraded the **health** of federal forests ...”
- “The NWFP has taken a very real and heavy **toll on working people.**”
- “...such an approach will not provide the long-term timber supplies our region needs to promote **healthy forests.**”

Words ARE important and MUST connect with people's values

- "...the most significant contributor to the loss of spotted owl habitat has been **catastrophic and severe wildfires...**"
- "Dense, overstocked and neglected federal forests have become vulnerable to **wildfires that threaten our air and water quality.**"
- "As forestry has evolved, we need a **new approach** that recognizes the importance of **active forest management.**"

Public opinion and federal forests



“Positive public opinion toward active management of federal forests is emboldening elected leaders to risk political capital in support of policies to accelerate the pace and scale of federal forest management.”

Conclusion

- **Use strong words, but recognize the meaning will be contextual based on values**
- **Use survey results to ensure that you are communicating with words that resonate with Oregonians' values**
- **Continue to build positive public opinion to give our elected leaders the “air cover” they need to enact sound legislation**