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April 21, 2015

UNH Research Finds Attitudes Shifting about Environment in Northeast Oregon

DURHAM, N.H. – In a recent University of New Hampshire survey of northeastern Oregon residents showed an increased interest in prioritizing renewable energy and supporting limiting development, compared to a similar 2011 survey.

Residents also expressed support for increased user fees to improve forest health on federal land. Sixty-five percent said they believed that forests are less healthy than they were 20 years ago.

“The shifts in public opinion appear to be due to changes in perceptions among longtime residents, rather than demographic changes, and suggest that communities may be more receptive to regulations and programs that address ecological restoration and stewardship goals, as well as climate change impacts,” noted the authors in the brief, published today by the Carsey School of Public Policy at UNH.

Coauthor Lawrence Hamilton, sociology professor at UNH, noted, “The challenges faced in northeast Oregon are important in their own right, but of wider interest too. Many other places throughout rural America face such combinations of ecological, economic and social change.”

The survey was conducted by the Communities and Forests in Oregon (CAFOR) project, in collaboration with the University of New Hampshire, University of Colorado, University of Louisville, Oregon State University College of Forestry extension, and Wallowa Resources. Interviewers at the UNH Survey Center conducted 1,752 surveys between August and October of 2014 as part of the ongoing CAFOR project, where the landscape and local livelihoods have strong interconnections. The project seeks to understand how public perception of climate change and forest management intersect.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 13,000 undergraduate and 2,500 graduate students.

Editors, Producers: The complete report about this research is available at <https://carsey.unh.edu/publication/forest-views>.

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