

Public Perceptions of Endangered Species Protection

*A Comparative Study of Collaborative Approaches to ESA
Compliance and Salmon Recovery in the Methow Valley and
Walla Walla River Basin of Washington State*



Conducted by

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In cooperation with

NOAA Fisheries
Office for Law Enforcement
Northwest Enforcement Division

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Enforcement Program

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NOAA Fisheries

National Marine Fisheries Service

The first setting studied, the Methow Valley, entailed an attempt to implement a collaborative process on the heels of a substantial period of acrimonious and confrontational conflict over appropriate protective measures for fish species listed as "endangered" wherein a federal agency (NOAA Fisheries) was seen as the primary natural resource protection agency leading the process, and the WDOE played a key role as a principal state resource agency. In this scenario, environmental advocacy groups also had a significant history of involvement in assertive measures aimed at promoting stronger resource protection in the area.

The second setting, the Walla Walla River Basin, was one wherein a "threatened" listing of fish species allowed the application of an approach of collaborative problem solving from the outset and involved a state agency (WDFW) assuming a lead role through the promotion of a program designed to achieve "cooperative compliance" framed under state natural resource protection statutes and regulations. The USFWS played a significant role within this basin through their involvement in settlement negotiations with local irrigators involving a take of listed species (Bull Trout) as a result of dewatering portions of the Walla Walla River. In both the Methow and Walla Walla cases, however, federal (NOAA Fisheries, USFWS) and state (WDFW, WDOE) resource agencies were major actors and worked in partnership in an effort to achieve ESA compliance in rural, agriculturally-oriented communities typical of much of the western United States.

The parallel surveys of citizens in these two areas were conducted by the application of a modified "Dillman total design"¹¹ methodology that entails making multiple wave mailings to households selected at random from the area being surveyed.

Random samples of approximately 1,800 household addresses in each of the two areas were purchased from a commercial sampling firm (Survey Sampling, Inc., of Connecticut), and non-respondents were contacted by follow-up mailings a minimum of three times after an initial mailing. The Methow Valley citizen survey produced a total of 801 completed questionnaires, with a response rate (for valid addresses) for that survey of 48%. The Walla Walla citizen survey produced a total of 946 completed questionnaires, and a response rate of 60%. The staff of the Division of Governmental Studies and Services at Washington State University performed all citizen survey work, including survey instrument development, survey field administration, data entry, and survey comment typing.

The content of the two citizen surveys was designed to be virtually identical so as to permit direct comparisons across the two sites. The content of the survey instruments featured, in addition to the items referenced above, "*measures of trust*" in major agencies and groups, assessments of respondents' perceptions of the extent of "*good faith*" efforts being made to achieve acceptable natural resource protection outcomes, support for the ESA, support for the collaborative process attempted vis-à-vis transferability to other comparable areas, and a range of demographic traits, environmental attitudes, and ideological predispositions. In addition to these focused questions, respondents were also asked open-ended questions, and they were provided the opportunity to comment at length as part of the survey response.

The levels of response received from the Methow citizen survey (48%) and the Walla Walla survey (nearly 60%), when coupled with a comparison of respondent and area demographics, provides the basis for confidence that the results observed from those

surveys are representative of the Methow and Walla Walla areas. There is, however, an identifiable skew towards educated older males among the respondents to these surveys. Both sets of respondents are over 70% male (not unusual, given that the survey was mailed to heads of households), with average ages of 58 (Methow) and 59 (Walla Walla), and with over 40% of the respondents in each area holding a bachelors degree or higher. These observed differences might be indicative of non-response error, a phenomenon which can be evaluated by post-survey check procedures. Respondents' household income and race/ethnicity distributions, on the other hand, are right in line with the latest Census demographics. Although these apparent skewings do detract to a degree from the presumed representativeness of the results, they have very little substantive impact on the findings reported herein given the comparative nature of this study. Coupled with the higher-than-usual response rates, these several survey characteristics allow discussion of observed comparative results with confidence.

The mail survey administered to NOAA Fisheries and WDFW agency personnel yielded 19 responses (substantially all personnel who were provided with a survey) in the Methow. In the Walla Walla Basin a total of ten agency personnel responded to the survey, (again nearly all that were involved). Significant overlap in questions marked the citizen and agency personnel questionnaires.

Finally, a total of twenty-plus key actors were interviewed either in person or over the phone in both the Methow Valley and in Walla Walla River Basin. Transcription and analysis of those interviews provided very useful context and insight for more in-depth analysis of the survey data. A more complete discussion of those interviews, and the

findings which arise from them, may be found in a paper delivered by author Edward P.

Weber at the Mid-West Political Science Association's 2002 conference.

QUANTITATIVE SURVEY ANALYSIS

PART TWO

ENVIRONMENTAL AND POLITICAL VALUES

Environmental and Political Values

Respondents' Environmental Attitudes were evaluated using responses to four statements taken from the Dunlap New Environmental Paradigm Scale.¹² This scale asks respondents to agree or disagree with the following statements:

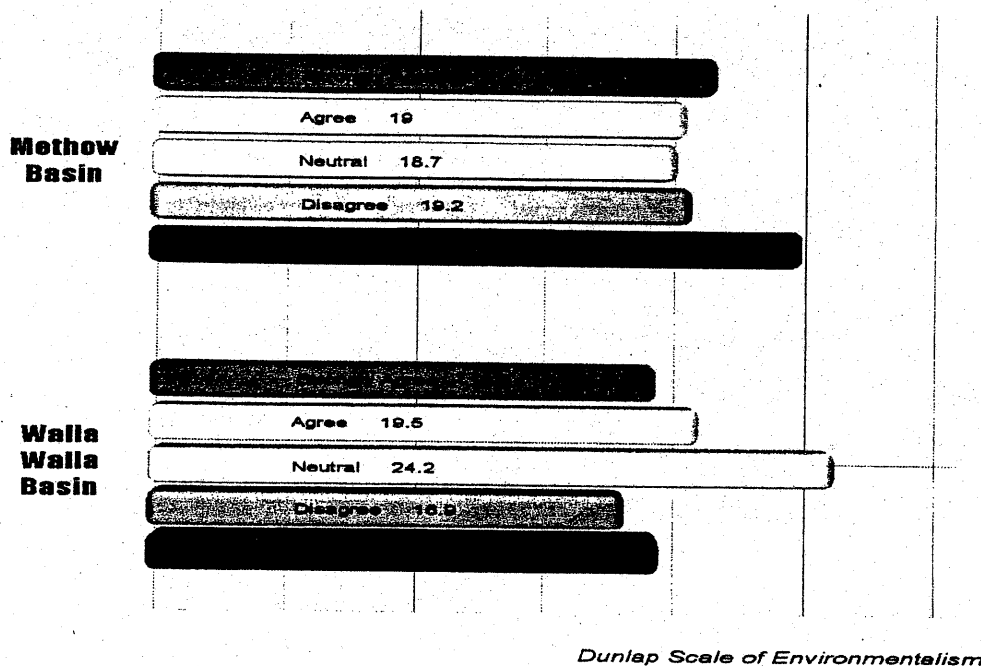
- Plants and animals are primarily for human use
- Mankind was created to rule over nature
- Humans have an ethical obligation to protect plants and animals
- The Earth should have far fewer people on it

On the first two measures, a positive response to the statements indicates support for an anthropomorphic, or human-centered, perspective on environmental values. What is remarkable here is how little difference there is in the responses given by the respondents from the two watersheds. Almost 39 percent of Methow Valley respondents and 37.5 percent of Walla Walla respondents, agree or strongly agree that "plants and animals are primarily for human use," while about 45 percent of those surveyed in the Methow Valley and almost 43 percent in the Walla Walla agree or strongly agree that "mankind was created to rule over nature." The last two statements, on the other hand, indicate the degree of positive support for a more environmentally sensitive viewpoint. Again, there is remarkable agreement between the two communities, especially on the statement "the earth should have far fewer people on it." In the Methow, 42.8 percent agree or strongly agree with this sentiment, while in the Walla Walla roughly 40 percent so respond. With respect to the value statement related to the ethical obligation of humans to protect plants and animals, there is some difference. Walla Walla respondents display extremely strong support for this proposition, with over 74 percent agreeing or strongly agreeing, while in the Methow residents register 62.4 percent support for this statement.

Comparable Environmental Attitudes

Between The Methow and Walla Walla Basins

Value Statement #1: Plants and animals are primarily for human use.

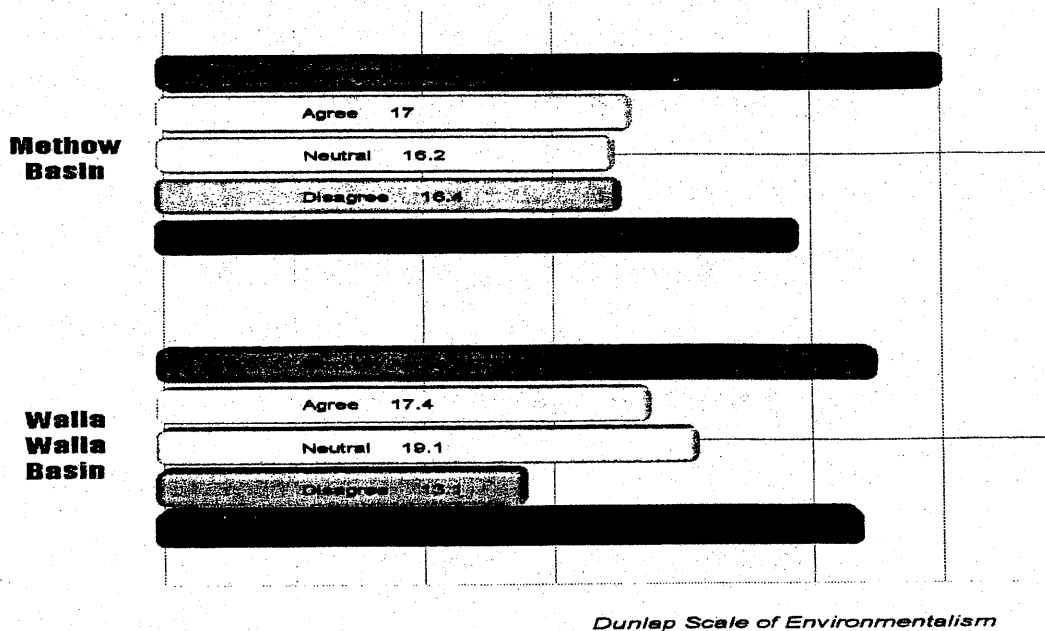


Value Statement 1: Plants and animals are primarily for human use.

	<u>Methow Valley</u>	<u>Walla Walla River Basin</u>
<u>Strongly Agree</u>	20.1%	18.0%
<u>Agree</u>	18.5%	19.5%
<u>Neutral</u>	18.7%	24.2%
<u>Disagree</u>	19.2%	16.9%
<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	23.4%	18.1%

Comparable Environmental Attitudes Between The Methow and Walla Walla Basins

Value Statement #2: Mankind was created to rule over nature.



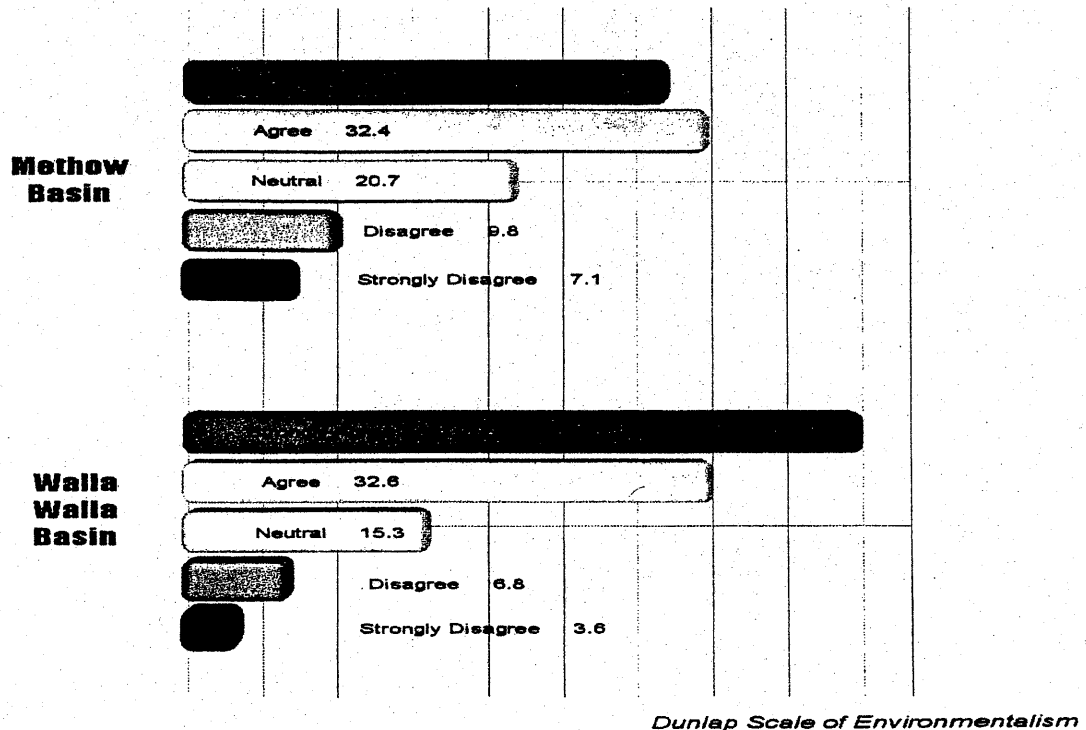
Value Statement 2: Mankind was created to rule over nature

	<u>Methow Valley</u>	<u>Walla Walla River Basin</u>
<i>Strongly Agree</i>	27.9%	25.5%
<i>Agree</i>	16.8%	17.4%
<i>Neutral</i>	16.2%	19.1%
<i>Disagree</i>	16.4%	13.1%
<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	22.7%	24.9%

Comparable Environmental Attitudes

Between The Methow and Walla Walla Basins

Value Statement #3: *Humans have an ethical obligation to protect plants and animals.*



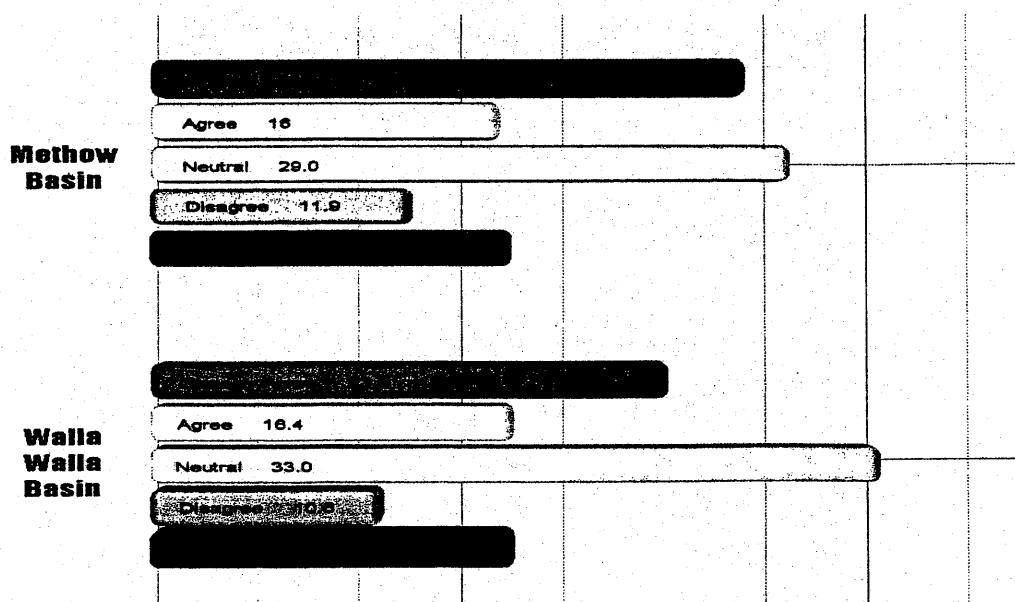
Value Statement 3: *Humans have an ethical obligation to protect plans and animals*

	<u>Methow Valley</u>	<u>Walla Walla River Basin</u>
<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	7.1%	3.6%
<i>Disagree</i>	9.8%	6.8%
<i>Neutral</i>	20.7%	15.3%
<i>Agree</i>	32.4%	32.6%
<i>Strongly Agree</i>	30.0%	41.7%

Comparable Environmental Attitudes

Between The Methow and Walla Walla Basins

Value Statement #4: The Earth should have far fewer people on it.

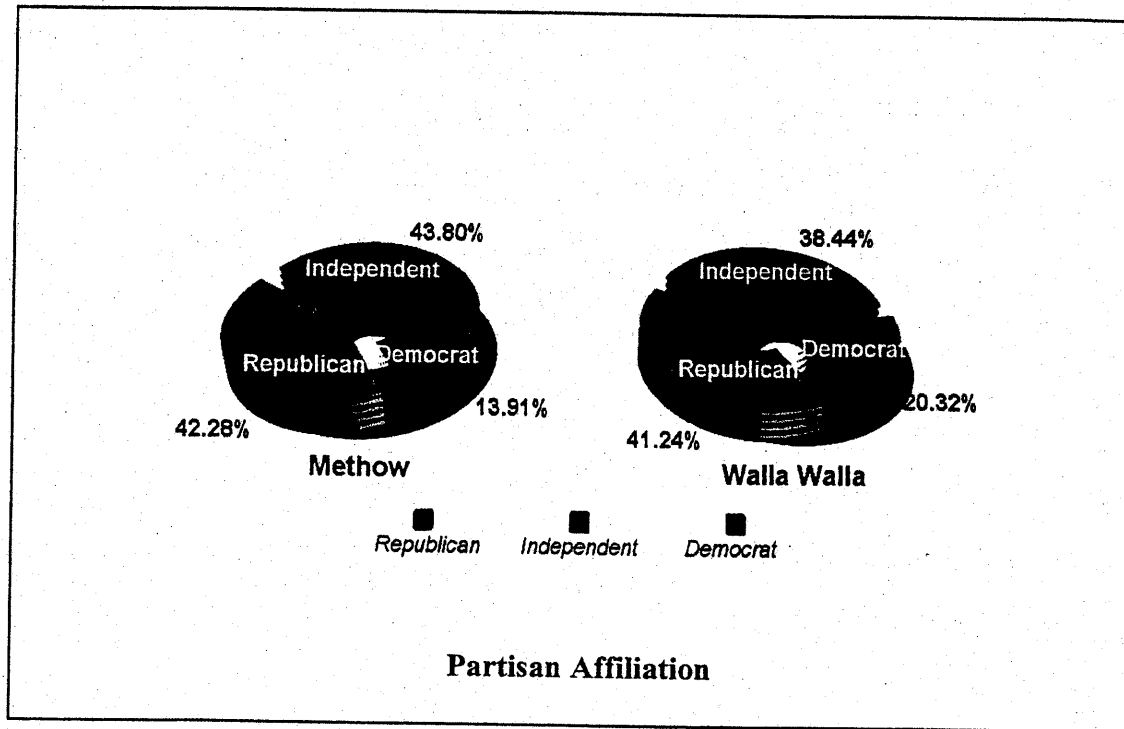


Dunlap Scale of Environmentalism

Value Statement 4: The Earth should have far fewer people on it

	<u>Methow Valley</u>	<u>Walla Walla River Basin</u>
<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	16.3%	16.4%
<i>Disagree</i>	11.9%	10.6%
<i>Neutral</i>	29.0%	33.0%
<i>Agree</i>	15.8%	16.4%
<i>Strongly Agree</i>	27.0%	23.5%

Environmental and Political Values



Political Party Preferences (1=Strong Republican 4=Moderate/Independent 7=Strong Democrat)

	<u>Methow Valley</u>	<u>Walla Walla River Basin</u>
1 – Strong Republican	6.9%	7.3%
2	16.4%	18.4%
3	15.6%	15.5%
4 – Middle of the road/Independent	40.3%	38.4%
5	8.5%	9.1%
6	8.5%	7.5%
7 – Strong Democrat	3.8%	3.7%