

USDA Forest Service Sustainable Recreation and Tourism Survey Results

Funded by the USDA Forest
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Research Station

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Current Study

- Explores Forest Service (FS) managers' perceptions of sustainable recreation and tourism
- Goal is to inform current and future efforts focused on sustainability



Background: Sustainable Recreation and Tourism (SRT)

- Initial concepts derived from
 - Previous sustainable operations survey results (see Winter, 2008)
 - Conversations with key recreation and tourism contacts within USDA FS
 - Replication of concepts explored by Cottrell et al. (2007)

Sustainability Defined

- SRT meets the needs of present visitors/tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. It is envisioned as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems (UNWTO, 1996).

Methods

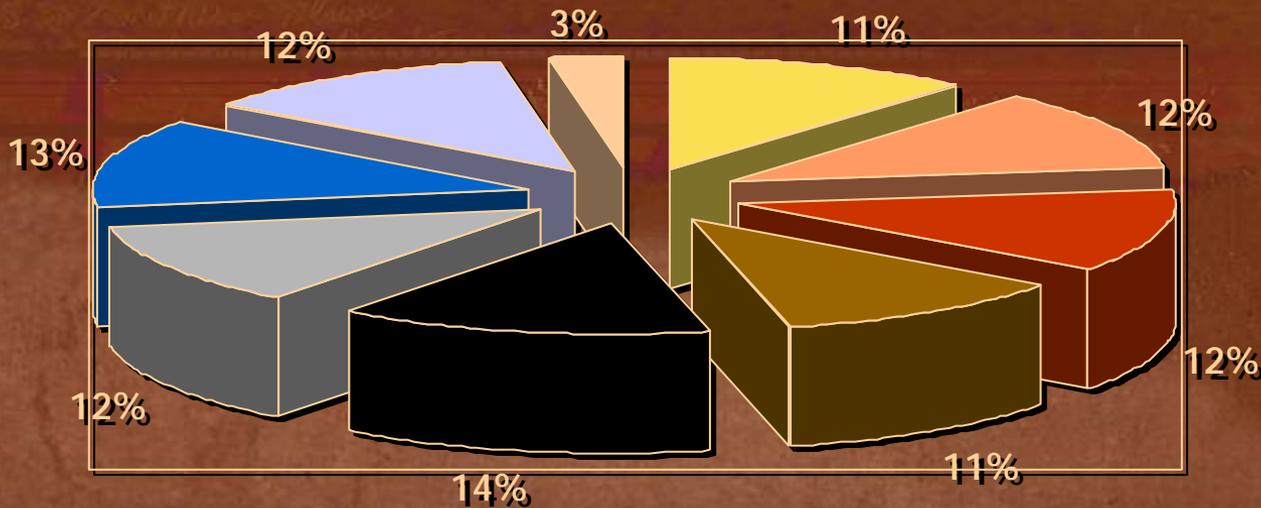
- Conducted through online survey
- Gathered names from directories and FS contacts
- 872 surveys sent out, 1 volunteer
- 433 responses, 50.5% response rate



Who Responded?

- **Most:**
 - Were recreation managers (47.8%) or recreation staff officers (28.9%)
 - Worked full-time (97.9%)
 - Were assigned at district (57.0%), or forest-level (33.5%)
 - Had been in current assignment an average of 7.4 years
 - Were well educated
 - Degrees included 59.1% BA, 21.7% MA, and 8.5% Ph.D.

Respondent Distribution by Region



Overview of Findings

- **How important is SRT?**
 - Was viewed as important and included professional responsibility
 - Was not always viewed as a FS priority

Results: importance of sustainability

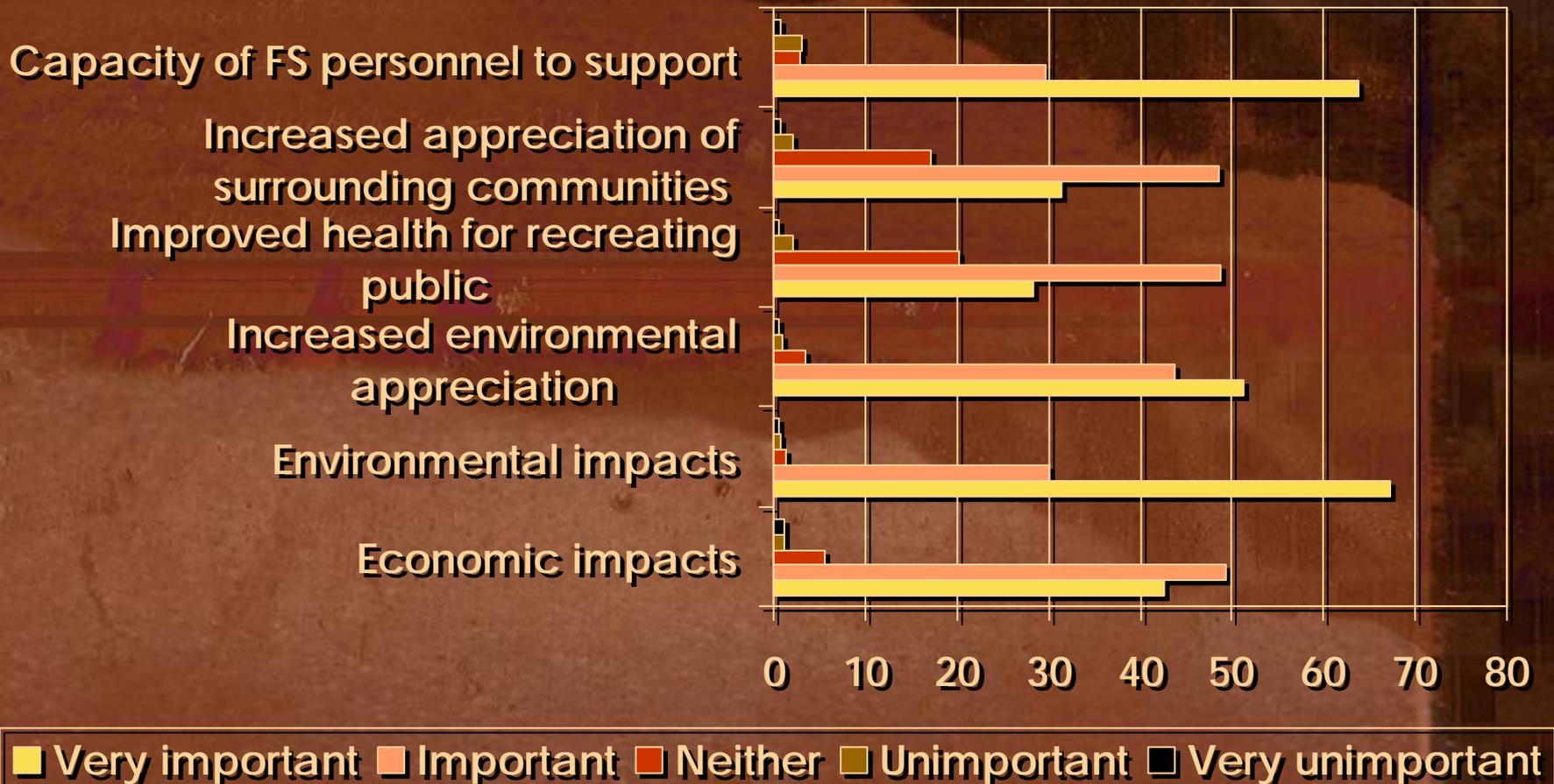


Note: Management is abbreviated as mgt.

Overview of Findings

- How did respondents rate considerations important to sustainability?
 - A majority viewed the following considerations as important
 - Environmental impacts and capacity of FS personnel to support SRT were rated 'very important' by the vast majority

Results: importance of considerations in sustainability



Overview of Findings

- Perceived impact of SRT development in respondents' management area was examined in relation to economic and community/cultural impacts....
 - Most agreed that positive economic impacts were an outcome
 - Local cultures were considered in the provision of information and in opportunities
 - Most agreed that visitors were encouraged to learn about local cultures

Results: economic aspects of SRT development



Note: Recreation/tourism is abbreviated as RT

Results: community and culture aspects of SRT development



Overview of Findings

- Perceived impact of SRT development in respondents' management area was examined regarding partnerships and collaboration....
 - Partnerships were a part of RT development, though not typically with local businesses
 - Concessionaires/outfitters were expected to minimize impacts while maximizing visitor satisfaction
 - Most agreed opportunities for collaboration with local community were important, fewer agreed that good communication among involved parties existed

Results: partnership aspects of SRT development



Results: aspects of SRT development linked to outfitters/concessionaires

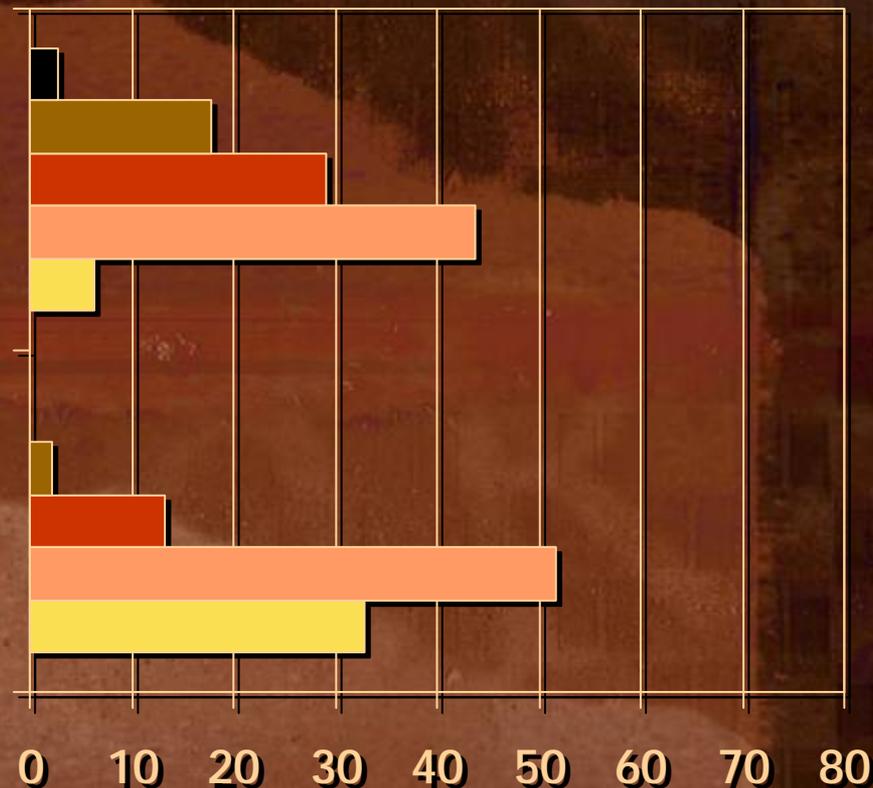
The FS should require outfitters/concessionaires to follow established sustainability guidelines for all recreation activities in order to



Results: collaborative aspects of SRT development

There is good communication among parties involved in the policy and decision making processes regarding RT

Community residents should have an opportunity to be involved in RT decision making



Strongly agree Agree Neither Disagree Strongly disagree

Overview of Findings

- Among additional aspects of SRT were the following:
 - FS operations were viewed as part of the SRT industry
 - Most agreed that visitor satisfaction should be monitored
 - The vast majority felt FS resources were not adequate to cover the demand for recreation and tourism
 - RT was not believed to be associated with a decrease in criminal activity

Results: remaining aspects of SRT development



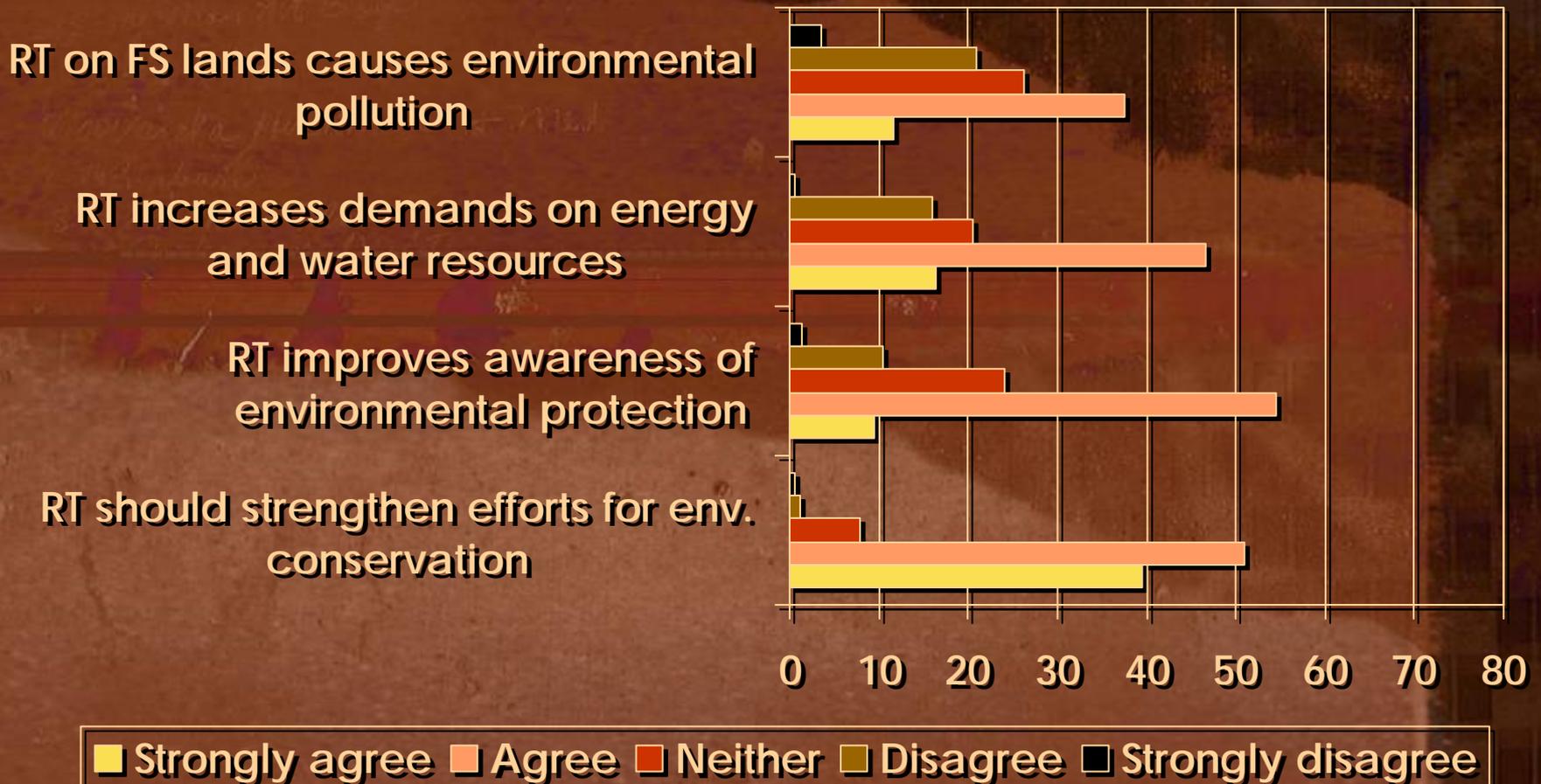
Overview of Findings

- **Additional items with majority agreement surrounding RT and the FS were:**
 - **FS lands increase the value of the tourist experience (94.3% agreed)**
 - **FS lands increase quality of life for surrounding residents (89.8%)**
 - **The quality of the available supply of RT services in my mgt. area is good (60.1% agreed)**

Overview of Findings

- The majority of respondents agreed:
 - RT should strengthen environmental conservation efforts
 - RT increases the public's awareness for environmental protection
 - However, RT puts increased demand on water and energy resources and may be associated with environmental pollution

Results: environmental aspects of RT



Overview of Findings

- **Additional items with majority agreement and an environmentally-oriented theme were:**
 - RT on FS lands must be developed in harmony with natural env. (93.2% agreed)
 - The FS should provide env. interpretive/educational programs to visitors (90.4% agreed)
 - The FS should provide env. interpretive/educational programs to employees (84.3% agreed)
 - The FS supports environmental conservation (85.6% agreed)

Sources of Concern about Environmental Problems

- Respondents were most concerned about environmental problems because of the consequences for future generations and children
- They were least concerned about these same problems because of consequences for their lifestyle, their future, and their prosperity

Issues Facing Mgt. Area of Most Concern

- An array of concerns were expressed...the most common themes were
 - Lack of resources (funding and personnel)
 - Unmanaged use
 - Increased use
 - Agency relationship with the public

Personal Concern about Climate Change Related to FS Lands

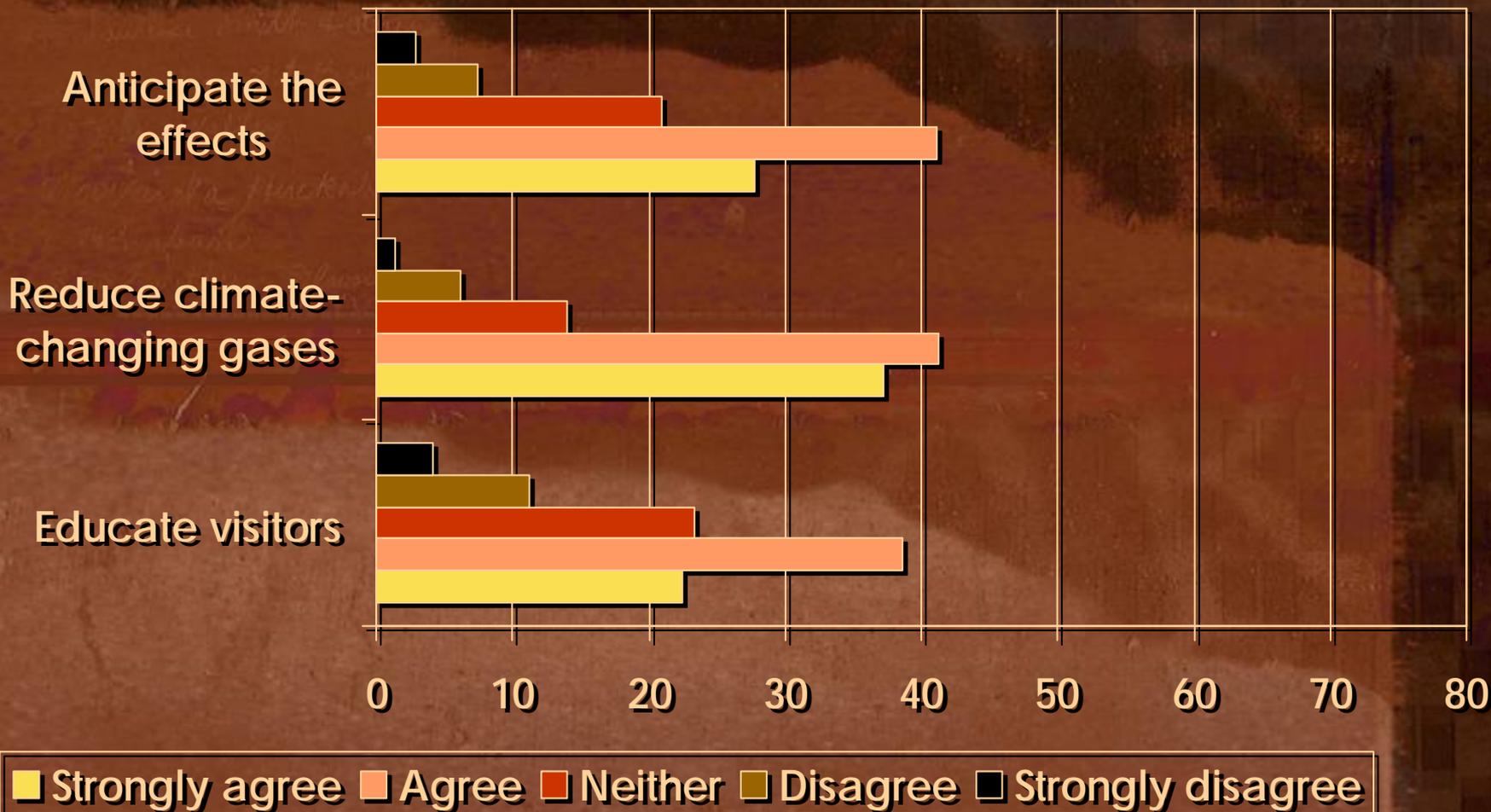


Most expressed somewhat to a great deal of concern about climate change and FS lands.

Impacts from Climate Change that will affect RT on Mgt. Area

- Some of our respondents felt climate change was not occurring
- Others felt if it was occurring it would not make a difference in recreation
- Some expressed concern over increases in wildfire risk and changes in vegetation
- Others suggested a shift in where recreation would take place
 - Geographic-based variations were evident
 - Decreased recreation was not always anticipated, sometimes more recreation was expected

Results: Actions to Assist with Global Climate Change



Most agreed the FS should take each of the above actions. Only 8% felt the agency should do nothing.

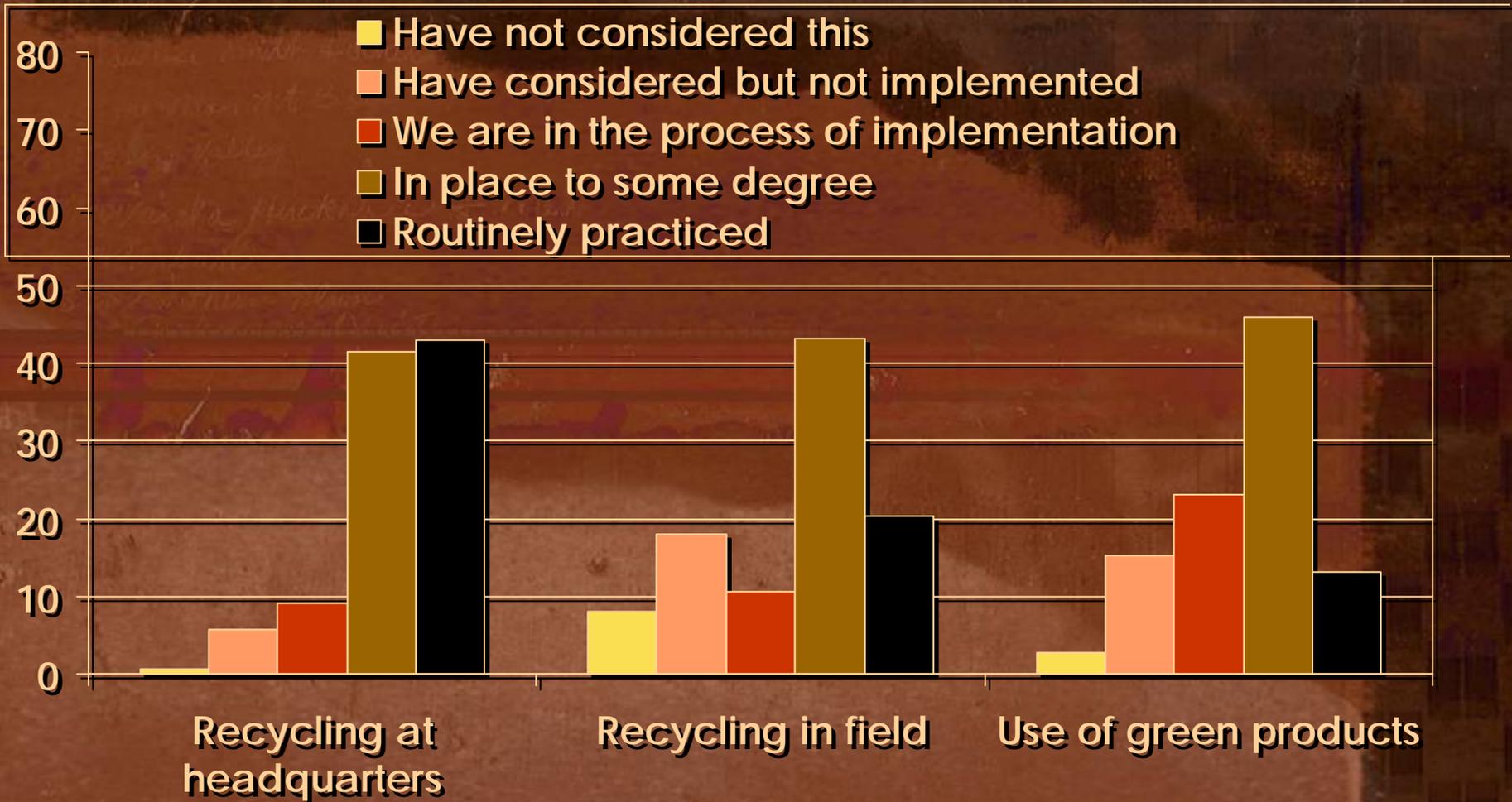
Overview of Findings

- Other FS actions respondents offered to address global climate change included...
 - Invest in educational programs and delivery
 - Design FS buildings around sustainability guidelines
 - More science to examine impacts and how to manage
 - Encourage non-motorized recreation
 - Lead by example, show the public how it's done

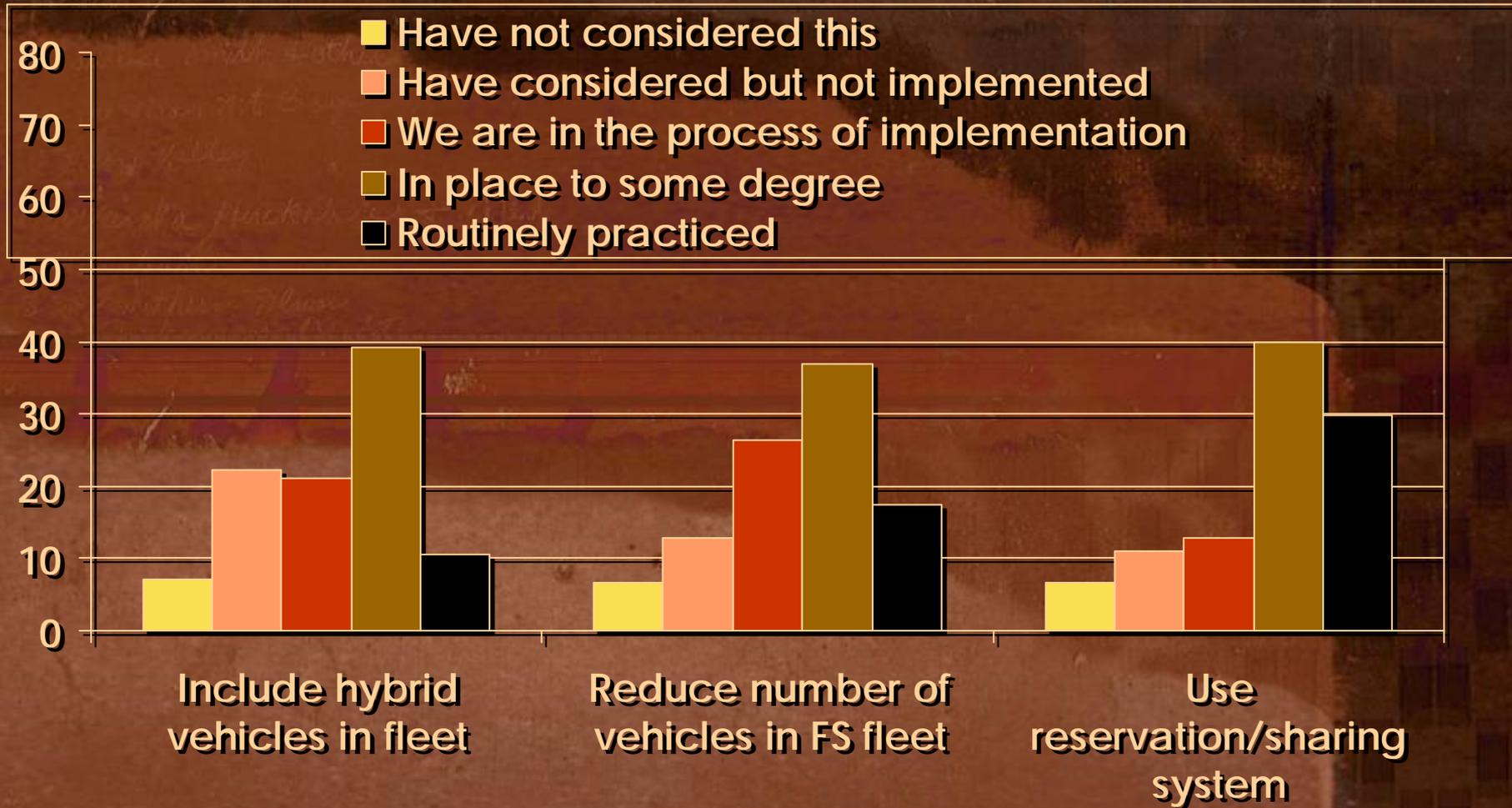
Overview of Findings

- The following slides show degree of consideration given to actions that would ensure SRT in the future on FS lands
 - Most respondents are recycling
 - Fleet-related measures are in place to some degree, with more being implemented
 - Visitor education programs focus on environmental issues
 - Some partnering with local community and business is used to develop RT
 - Less than one-fifth have transportation mgt. in high use areas involving shuttles or buses

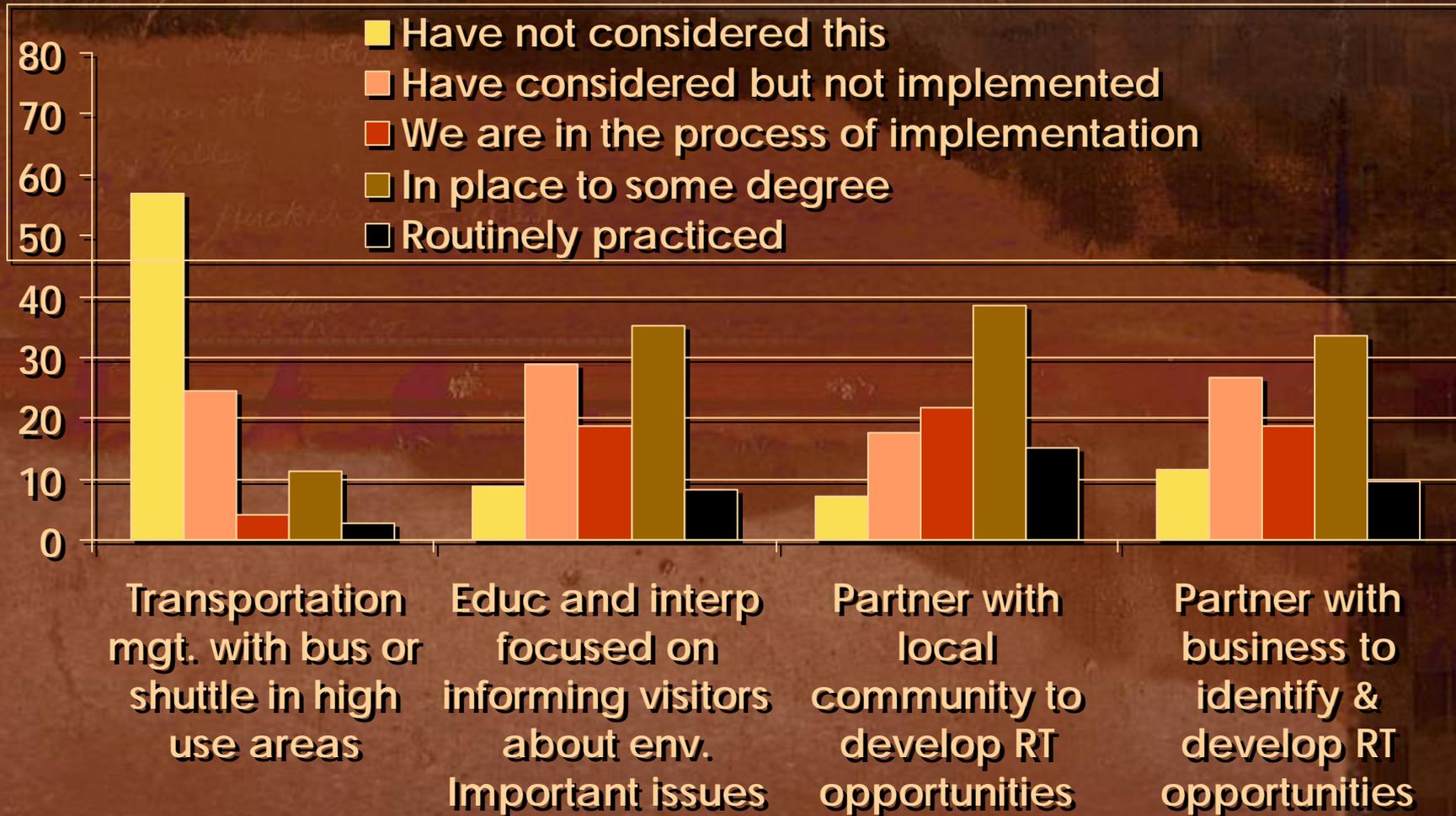
Results: Actions to Ensure SRT in the Future on FS Managed Lands



Results: Actions to Ensure SRT in the Future on FS Managed Lands



Results: Actions to Ensure SRT in the Future on FS Managed Lands



Additional Measures to Ensure SRT on FS Lands

- "The quality of sustainable recreation/tourism on FS lands will continue to spiral downward with the agency until there is appropriate staffing and budget support for the task at hand."
- "FS needs to become more proactive in the field of educating the public about natural resources and their role in enjoying them, using them wisely and protecting them."

Where do We Go from Here?

Additional work is being planned...if you are interested in these future studies or additional details from this manager study contact us.

