

PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PUBLIC INPUT IN THE  
PARKS AND RECREATION PLANNING PROCESS AT THE BOONE COUNTY  
FAIRGROUNDS

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by  
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ABSTRACT

The United States government process is open to the public, allowing the public to be involved with decisions that will shape their lives. Professionals still dominate the planning process and make the final decisions which shape government policy. Citizens who participate in the planning process would like to feel as if the final decisions are shaped by their input.

The research design for this study was a cross sectional, relationship study to determine the relationships between perceived effectiveness of public input, access and availability of information, understanding of the process, setting and timing, fairness of the process and onsite participation. The results of this study prove that the public who participate in master planning processes feel as if their input is used by the professionals who make the final decisions.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The United States government process is open to the public, allowing the public to be involved with decisions that will shape their lives. Public participation is the idea that everyone can shape or influence their own community (Bedford, Clark, & Harrison, 2002). Citizens are allowed to come to government meetings or hearings to present their ideas or voice their opinions. The driving philosophy behind America's democracy is that American citizens should be involved in the government process (Jack, 1993). The Sunshine Law makes this possible and the public planning process is designed to give the public a chance to participate and have a voice in government issues. Public hearings are an important part of public involvement and create the possibilities for improved government and planning (Sinclair, Diduck, & Fitzpatrick, 1995).

The driving force behind the original concept of a representative democracy was "the values of society could be safeguarded by the judgments of professional planners and democratically elected politicians" (Davies, 2001, p. 194). Because of an increasingly diverse society, the concept of the representative democracy and its effectiveness was questioned by society (Davies). Could the untrained public, aid trained professionals in making wise choices? Even though government planning is open to the public, professionals still dominate the planning process and make the final decisions which shape government policy. In some sense professionals who are involved in planning are part of the public even though they are professionally involved. A better representation of the public, who is not professionally involved in the government decision-making process, should be represented in the planning system (Davies).

Public involvement is positive because public input and participation are the foundation of democracy (Steelman & Ascher, 1997). Some of the benefits of public involvement are policy that is better suited for the public, justification for government decisions, and political empowerment of the people (Steelman & Ascher). Lindstrom and Nie (2000) stated,

proactively soliciting substantive public participation: positive public relations, more public trust and support, greater ability to deal with various contingencies and angered constituencies, heightened citizen interest, and knowledge of agency activities, protection against costly delays and lawsuits, and increased overall planning success (p. 33).

Downsides to public involvement also exist. It can be inefficient because involving the public is a labor and time intensive process, the general public may not be a particularly competent, interested, or knowledgeable in the matters at hand, and the public can be inconsistent with the input they provide (Steelman & Ascher, 1997). The public can be very helpful but it may also leave decision makers confused about their policies (Steelman & Ascher).

Public input is important to the field of recreation. The Recreation Needs Assessment is a technique used by parks and recreation departments to incorporate public input into the planning process. The development of a Recreation Needs Assessment comes from what participants feel is needed or what is not currently offered in a specific community (Knap & Propst, 2001). From this assessment, the local government can better determine what is needed in the development of parks and recreation facilities. Recreation Needs Assessments can also be used to “justify capital improvements to

parks” in the grant application process, and to “minimize the biases of designers, planners, and decision makers in prioritizing the goals of public recreation providers” (Knap & Propst, p. 63). Overall, developing effective citizen participation in the recreation planning process is beneficial and increases the chances of program and facility success (Lindstrom & Nie, 2000).

### Purpose

This study focused on the perceived effectiveness of the public park planning process. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to determine the perceived effectiveness of public input in park planning, profiles of participants and reasons for online participation.

### Sub-problems

1. To determine if public participation is perceived as effective in park planning.
2. To determine if access and availability affects the level of the participants’ perceived effectiveness.
3. To determine if understanding of the process and information affects the level of the participants’ perceived effectiveness.
4. To determine if the place and timing affects the level of the participants’ perceived effectiveness.
5. To determine if the level of fairness affects the level of the participants’ perceived effectiveness.
6. To determine if online participation affects the level of the participants’ perceived effectiveness.

7. To determine a profile of the participants of the Boone County Fairgrounds master planning process.

### Hypotheses

1. The level of effectiveness of public participation in park planning is perceived as ineffective by the public.
2. There is no significant relationship between access and availability and perceived effectiveness.
3. There is no significant relationship between understanding of the process and perceived effectiveness.
4. There is no significant relationship between setting and timing and perceived effectiveness.
5. There is no significant relationship between fairness and perceived effectiveness.
6. There is no significant relationship between onsite participation and perceived effectiveness.

### Limitations

Due to the nature of this study and the lack of a previous survey instrument, a new survey instrument was developed. The development of a new survey instrument may create an instrument that is low in terms of reliability and validity.

This study was conducted using people who were present at the public planning sessions for the Boone County Fairgrounds located at the Boone County Fairgrounds Coliseum, the Ashland Senior Center, and the Centralia Satellite Office. Therefore it is only be representative of participants in the Boone County fairgrounds planning process who were involved in the months of February through March of 2003. The delayed post-

test was mailed to the participants three months after their participation in the master planning process. Participants may not have been able to accurately remember their level of participation and other variables may affect their answers.

### Definitions

The following terms are used throughout this study.

**Access and Availability:** Participants are provided with the information that is necessary to make an informed decision in the park planning process (Webler & Tuler, 2000).

**Boone County Fairgrounds:** Fairgrounds located North of Columbia, Missouri on Highway 63. The property is partially owned and operated by Boone County and the City of Columbia. Data will be collected from participants in the master planning process of these fairgrounds.

**Fairness:** An individual's ability to present and defend their own ideas as well as being able to challenge others' ideas and opinions in a public setting (Webler & Tuler, 2000).

**Online Participation:** Participants of the Boone County Fairgrounds master Planning process who participated using the World Wide Web and were not present at the master planning meetings.

**Perceptions:** An individual's perception is also developed from their feelings, beliefs, opinions and the perceived assumption of satisfying needs (Hu & Ritchie, 1993).

**Perceived effectiveness:** Expectations of participants in the park planning process in terms of the park planning professionals' ability to involve the public, "provide information and education," "seek public input and advice," "promote mutual

understanding of the substantive issues,” “increase the quality of the project and final decisions,” and “foster trust, communication, and understanding among stake holders” (McKinney & Harmon, 2002, p. 156).

**Public input:** The input from public participants in a government meeting to create policy and justification for government actions (Steelman & Ascher, 1997). Participants involved in a planning process that affect the outcomes.

**Public participation:** Participants who are not members of government groups and have personal interest in government policy which may not be represented by professional participants (Davies, 2001).

**Recreation needs assessment:** The government’s assessment of what is needed in a specific area to fulfill recreation requirements. “The identification of states of deprivation and those things (e.g., programs, facilities) that reduce or eliminate expressed states of deprivation as they relate to recreation. The assessment is necessarily fixed in time and attempts to measure the gap between that which exists (i.e., “what is”) and some future condition (i.e., “what should be”)” (Knap & Propst, 2001, p. 63).

**Setting and Timing:** The location and the time in which the master planning meetings occurred. For this study, the setting and timing is defined as the four Boone County Fairgrounds master planning meetings taking place on February 15, 2003 from 1:00pm - 5:00pm at the Boone County Fairgrounds Coliseum, February 24, 2003 from 6:00pm - 9:00pm at the Ashland Senior Center, March 10, 2003 from 6:00pm - 9:00pm at the Centralia Satellite Office and on March 31, 2003 from 6:00pm - 9:00pm at the Boone County Fairgrounds Coliseum.

Understanding: The participant's level of "comprehension and agreements" based on what the participant has learned from the master planning process (Webler & Tuler, 2000, p. 571).

### Need for Study

Little is known about the level of effectiveness of public involvement in the government process. Currently, excellent input from professionals, some input from the theorists, but very little or no input from participants in the area of public participation is available (Tuler & Webler, 1999). In a study of the effectiveness of the public hearing, Cole and Caputo (1984) stated, "in spite of the literally hundreds of studies of direct citizen participation in the public sector...there has been little consensus about the effectiveness of such behavior" (p. 404). If public participation is to advance and be effective it must be developed more. For this to be accomplished, the documentation of how public participation is conceptualized and implemented by professionals should be studied (Smith, McDonough, & Mang, 1999).

Despite the unknown level of effectiveness from public participation, its use is becoming more widely practiced in natural resource decision-making (Smith & McDonough, 2001). Most organizations make an attempt at public involvement but they often fail to meet the goals of the public which are to reduce the level of conflict, increase support for government decisions and to raise the level of trust between the community and government groups (Wondolleck, 1988). Participants in a study by Sinclair *et al.* (2002) felt that even with public input, most of the issues, such as need, purpose and alternatives, were largely forgone conclusions. Public participation in the hearing process was simply a symbolic formality. Many participants agreed that only a small amount of

discussion occurred around participant raised topics and issues (Sinclair *et al.*, 2002). Public participation may simply be a formality of the government process.

An example of effective citizen participation is the planning for Stephens Lake Park. In 1999, the city of Columbia, Missouri developed a master plan for Stephens Lake Park and is now developing the property. Four ideas came out of the open forum that was held to find ideas for the development of the Stephens Lake property (Missouri Park & Recreation Association, 2002). The four major ideas that came out of the open forum and were voted on by the public were a traditional park, golf and park development, an arboretum and a combination of a park and arboretum. Also the public, in the open forum setting, asked the city to keep the property from being overdeveloped, by maintaining the area's natural beauty and the general topography of the land and to develop minimal infrastructure (Missouri Park & Recreation Association). After reviewing the comments, the city developed a master plan that is a modification on the park and arboretum option. By itself, the arboretum option did not receive as many votes as the general park option but the city included it on another option so that the public would accept it as part of the plan that they had voted on. The plan that was adopted encompasses the both public's desires as well as adding what the city of Columbia felt would be a good fit for the area. Overall, the development of Stephens Lake shows that there is a correlation between the publics' input and the core plans of the site development as well as the cities use of professional license to finish the park as they see fit.

There are differences in opinion on the level of effectiveness of public participation. Therefore it is necessary to study public input in the planning to determine

if the public perceives public participation as effective and if the process by which the public provides input is satisfactory.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous studies have shown there is a level of indecision in the area of public participation. Many of the previous studies are based on the outcomes of public participation and not how participants in the public planning process define what makes a process successful (Tuler & Webler, 1999). To understand the implications of previous research on this topic, this chapter reviews prior investigations in the field of public participation.

### Public Involvement in Government

“The purpose of participation is to enhance the quality of decision making by providing an opportunity for the public to contribute pertinent information” (Duram & Brown, 1999, p. 456). Even though it may not always succeed, government officials should make efforts to make sure that all elements of the general public are represented (Duram & Brown). Participation from the public is an important part of the democratic decision-making process and must be considered a valuable goal by natural resource managers (Duram & Brown). The general public has knowledge and experiences which are beneficial to professionals in the development of policy making. Professionals should utilize the public and the expert community for natural resource policy making (Wებler & Tuler, 2000). Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), passed in 1969, and environmental policy acts passed by individual states, “public officials are required to notify the public and offer them an opportunity to comment on proposed environmental decisions” (as cited by McKinney & Harmon, 2002, p. 149). At the national level, public participation is required for federal actions, and general guidelines for its use have evolved (Lawrence & Deagan, 2001). On state and local levels,

governments are incorporating increasing public participation requirements into their activities. Even with the increasing levels of public participation, the United States government has not passed any laws to mandate how public participation should be incorporated (Steelman & Ascher, 1997).

In the private setting, decision makers do not have to seek input from the public. Shareholders may pass on their ideas to members of a planning committee within the company, whereas in the public sector the participants hold many different roles, and public managers cannot ignore public input (Lawrence & Deagan, 2001). The public holds additional roles besides input into planning. “If the affected publics believe that the administration of regulations and policies is unfair or unjust, they can turn to the power of lobbying and the judicial system in order to influence elected representatives to change the policies or laws” (Lawrence & Deagan, p. 860). The public cares about the outcomes that come from government policy because it can have major impacts on their lives (Smith & McDonough, 2001).

#### Public Involvement Models

Smith and McDonough (2001) discussed Lind and Tyler’s (1988) Group Value Model for fair public participation in natural resource decision-making. Through focus groups, principles of representation, participation in decisions, consideration of input, need for logical decisions and desired outcomes were found to create a fair environment for public participation (Smith & McDonough). The Group Value Model relates more to how participants perceive the process than how a process should be facilitated. When group participants feel as if the environment is fair, they are more satisfied with the outcomes of the process. The intended outcome of the decision-making process is for a

greater voice for citizens participating in natural resource decision-making (Robbins, Summers, Miller, & Hendrix, 2000). Fair treatment of participants should leave them to feel respected by the facilitators, and possibly proud of what they provided in the process (Robbins *et al.*). This makes participants more likely to identify and be satisfied with the outcomes of the process.

Lawrence and Deagen (2001) adapted the Vroom-Yetton model, which was originally developed for business managers “to aid in determining what level of participation by subordinates would improve the quality and acceptance of decision making in the corporate business setting” (p. 858), to fit the needs of public participation. The adapted model is called the Natural Resource Adapted Model. Initially, the model was developed from criteria applicable to decision making in general. “These criteria relate to (1) quality of decisions, (2) commitment to decisions, (3) development of human capital, (4) time, and (5) worker satisfaction” (Lawrence and Deagen, p. 860). The revised model that Lawrence and Deagen presented shows the process by which managers should include the public in their decision-making and could be most useful for a manager who has no previous experience with public involvement. In such cases, the process of working through the model can assist the manager in deciding which participation method should be used (Lawrence & Deagen, 2001). Lawrence and Deagen warn that the model should be used as a guide and not as a mandate.

In a working situation, the natural resource adapted model focuses on the decision making process, in terms of managers and subordinates (Lawrence & Deagen, 2001). An example of a situation in which forest managers work through a large number of routine day-to-day decisions is Oregon State University’s McDonald-Dunn Research Forest. The

manager works through a series of questions to decide if and/or how the public should be involved. Examples of questions in the decision making process are in Appendix A. The questions and answers conclude that separate consultations with segments of the public would be beneficial (Lawrence & Deagen, 2001). They also state,

if (1) the staff is having problems identifying points of consensus, (2) the publics accept the forest's constraints, and (3) consensus would develop from assembling the publics, then ..... consultation with the public as a single assembled group. The lack of adequate knowledge about community preferences and the need for community acceptance effectively preclude autonomous decision making. The lack of alternatives in the Forest Plan precludes group decision making (Lawrence & Deagen, 2001, p. 869).

Both models presented ways for managers and public officials to fit the needs of the public. Both models show the logical steps which must be taken by public managers to involve the public fairly. The natural resource adapted Vroom-Yetton model is directed more towards helping decision makers decide when public participation is appropriate or beneficial. The Group Value model is more along the lines of understanding group dynamics in the decision making process. A natural resource manager may use the Vroom-Yetton model to decide when the public should be involved and then use the Group Value Model to decide how to involve the public in a beneficial manner.

## Research in Public Involvement

Many studies have asked participants to define what successful outcomes might be, but there appears to be very little or no published literature about how participants define what makes a good process (Tuler & Webler, 1999). To make progress on the idea of public participation, input should be collected from practitioners, theorists, and participants (Tuler & Webler). In 2000, Webler and Tuler studied the discourse-based or discussion approach to public participation. This type of involvement levels the playing field so that all participants have a chance to be involved. The ideal setting for public involvement is one that involves both fairness and competence from the public and professionals who are involved. Fairness is the right of the participants to have an equal chance to be heard or to affect the final outcomes of the process (Webler & Tuler). To be fair, the policy making body must look at who has legitimate rights to participate, defining the population which will be affected, and then make sure that all parties involved are not put at a disadvantage due to meeting time and location. This allows people who will be affected by developed policy to participate and have an equal voice in the outcomes of the planning process.

Smith *et al.* (1999) state, “the best way to foster cooperation and determine public needs and desires is through comprehensive public involvement, a continuing challenge in natural resource management” (p. 32). The involvement of the public is beneficial but can be difficult. In spite of the difficulties, natural resource agencies continue to try to practice ecosystem management that includes meaningful public involvement (Frentz, Voth, Anderson, & Pell, 1997).

Propst and Bently (2000) stated “much of the research across fields focuses on the processes (advisory boards, public hearings, surveys, focus groups, etc.) and the outcomes (providing labor, decision making authority, etc.) rather than the extent” (p. 1). Citizen participation ranges from participation in recreational activities to involvement in policymaking and management. Both citizen and professional participants in the study were asked, “When you think about the term 'citizen participation', what comes to mind? (That is, please describe what “citizen participation” means to you.)” (Propst & Bently, p. 3). Managers described public input to have a “great deal” of influence in the outcomes of policy but only a small portion of citizens felt that their input was crucial to decision-making (Propst & Bently, 2000, p. 5). Both public and professional groups agreed that the benefits outweigh the costs in terms of public involvement in natural resource recreation and policy (Propst & Bently).

Knapp and Propst (2001) studied the focus group interview process as an alternative to traditional survey methods for a recreation needs assessment. The focus group interview process helps to present results in a format that better explains the public’s needs, establishes contacts with stakeholders, and obtains dependable measures. The focus group interview also helped to enhance community relations through its personal nature. The study found, focus group interviews were effective and despite their limitation of less control for the interview facilitator and potential for unanticipated topics, they should be considered for the public involvement process.

## Public Perceptions of Involvement

Many times the participants' level of satisfaction with the outcomes of the planning process is directly related to whether participants feel as if they were treated fairly in the development process (Lind & Tyler, 1988). Simply being present at a decision-making meeting is insufficient (Webler & Tuler, 2000). Participants want to have a say in the outcomes of policy. The development of good decisions comes from the free deliberation of all issues that are important to the topic (Webler & Tuler). Some participants in public meetings feel that outcomes to issues that are brought up are often known in advance and very little is gained from public input (McKinney & Harmon, 2002). "State, local, and federal agencies said that comments are fairly and accurately incorporated, while most conservation groups, business and industry, and citizens disagreed" (McKinney & Harmon, p. 160). Many participants raise the concern that very little discussion occurs on the topics brought up by hearing participants (Sinclair, Diduck, & Fitzpatrick, 2002). If there is little or no clarity about how the public input affects the outcome, then the level of "legitimacy" of the final decision is questioned by the public (Steelman & Ascher, 1997, p. 82). If the outcomes of the process are favorable to the participant then the level of satisfaction in the participant is high.

Smith and McDonough (2001) identified fairness, consideration, and logic to be three key items for the public to leave from a public involvement process with a feeling of satisfaction from involvement.

A fair process requires that anyone interested must be able to attend, initiate discourse, participate in discussion, and influence the collective consensus decision. A competent process requires access to information

and its interpretations, and the use of the best possible procedures for selecting knowledge (Smith & McDonough, p. 241).

Consideration of public input by government officials is also important for participants. Simply providing the opportunity for the public to be heard is not enough. People who participate are interested in knowing if government officials give public input serious consideration (Smith & McDonough, 2001). Many participants feel that even with public input, most of the issues covered are largely forgone conclusions (Sinclair *et al.*, 2002). Participants in public meetings want decisions to be logical and rationally based.

When asked what would be necessary for him to accept a decision he didn't agree with, one man stated, "I think if there is a rational reason for why it's being done, it's easier for me to understand and accept even if I don't agree with it." This concern about rationality in decision-making was supported by the desire for experts to make the decisions, and the need for accurate information (Smith & McDonough, 2001, p. 241).

The public who are involved want to feel as if they have an active part in the planning process. Therefore, the optimum planning process should reflect "democratic values" (Steelman & Ascher, 1997, p. 83)

Public participants in the survey conducted by Propst and Bentley (2000) were asked to fill out a checklist to describe the ways they were utilized by managers in terms of public participation. "Resource monitoring and stewardship (e.g., bird counts, prescribed burns, exotic species eradication), trails management or maintenance and general maintenance (e.g., facility inspections, litter pick-up, painting)" were most

frequently listed (Propst & Bentley, p. 4). When asked how the public benefits from public participation, the public responded: “satisfaction in helping the environment”, “satisfaction in helping others”, “meeting other people”, “learning about organizations and agencies”, “learning a new skill” and “self satisfaction” (Propst & Bentley, p. 5).

### Government Involvement with the Public

Duram and Brown (1999) contend, in terms of environmental planning problems, public participation is not always a flawless solution. There tend to be problems with public participation such as time, money, and representation. Natural resource managers may question the value of the public’s participation because of increased cost, need for human resources, and time (Blahna & Yonts-Shepard, 1989). Increased public participation creates increased costs to government agencies. In some cases the public may not be interested in involvement or simply uninvolved until the end of the process. In these cases the public may give a negative response to the developed plans and confrontation may ensue. Some managers also question whether the general public (i.e., all potentially affected parties) or smaller special interest groups and individuals with specific purposes should be involved (Duram & Brown).

In a study of public participation of the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA), McKinney and Harmon (2002) asked participants to rank government objectives for involvement with the public. The outcome of the ranking was evenly split between “provide information and education,” “seek public input and advice,” “promote mutual understanding of the substantive issues,” “increase the quality of the project and final decisions,” and “foster trust, communication, and understanding among stake holders, including agencies” (McKinney & Harmon, 2002, p. 156). Beyond the desire for

MEPA to serve multiple purposes, this outcome suggests that the objectives of public participation are not clear (McKinney & Harmon).

The quality of public involvement varies by situation. There are many different government agencies and each of those agencies has many different objectives. Many of the people surveyed by McKinney and Harmon (2002) felt that the lack of a public involvement standard is its own problem. Beyond public involvement in decision-making, there are no set standards about how the public's input should be handled.

McKinney and Harmon (2002) recommended that the MEPA statute concerning the value of public participation should be clarified, a consistent approach to public participation should be developed, and a more interactive process to integrate the input of the public and government information. Sinclair *et al.* (2002) recommended a more civic-minded approach, which would include “encouraging earlier public involvement, higher degrees of participation, mutual learning through deliberative discussion of key issues, greater collaborative resolution of conflicting interests, and greater sensitivity to alternative perspectives” (p. 32).

Propst and Bentley (2000) asked natural resource managers to check a list the ways in which they involved the public in management and planning functions. Managers listed “interpretation”, “resource monitoring and stewardship”, “office assistance”, “campground host”, “fundraising”, “general maintenance”, “trails management or maintenance”, “member of a planning team”, “member of an informal advisory board or task force” and “policy-making” (Propst & Bentley, p. 5). When asked how public participation benefits government policy and agencies, managers responded: “building agency/citizen relations”, “providing extra personnel”, “saving money”, “helping

understand citizen needs”, “providing advisory services”, and “helping raise funds” (Propst & Bentley, p. 5). This shows the many differences in the perceptions of the publics’ involvement between the public and government professionals.

### Types of Public Involvement

Currently there is no uniform format for public involvement between agencies. The quality and level of public involvement varies widely from agency to agency and from case to case (McKinney & Harmon, 2002). There are many different formats for public involvement as well as many different state agencies that conduct them. The number of public involvement types and different agencies that employ them often lead to a confused public (McKinney & Harmon).

The public hearing, also known as the public meeting or public discourse, is a general type of public involvement process. They involve the interested public in an open meeting, where all ideas, interests and concerns can be raised and discussed. Often time’s public hearings form an important part of environmental assessment and they often improve the development of plans and decisions (Sinclair *et al.*, 2002).

One of the most widely known and practiced examples of public input is the survey process. Surveys are typically conducted by mail, telephone, or personal interview (Propst, 1998). A mail survey may be used in an area where a good list of potential participants is available and there is a high interest in the topic, mail surveys can be highly successful (Sudman & Blair, 1999). In most general situations mail surveys are not used because of the low response rate (Sudman & Blair). Personal interviews can be effective but are seldom used to “conduct recreational needs assessments because of the

high costs, length of time and training requirements for the interviewers” (Propst, 1998, p. 3).

### Summary

Since the passage of NEPA in 1969 there have been a number of studies involving the public and its role in public policy. Models such as the natural resource adapted Vroom-Yetton model and the Group Value model have been used to explain when and to what capacity to use the public to make decisions. Both models are useful tools but neither show how the public input is used once it is collected.

Sinclair *et al.* studied the public meeting or public discourse process where all ideas, interests and concerns can be raised and discussed and found public hearings to be important in the field of environmental assessment and they can improve the development of plans and decisions (2002).

Propst and Bently’s 2000 study on focus groups found that most of the research in public input focuses on the processes and outcomes rather than the extent. The study also found conflicting views between managers who involved the public felt that the public’s input has a “great deal” of influence in the outcomes of policy versus a small percentage of citizen participants felt that their input was crucial to decision-making (Propst & Bently, 2000, p. 5). One thing that the public did agree on in the study was that the benefits outweigh the costs in terms of public involvement in natural resource recreation and policy (Propst & Bently).

The negative aspects of public participation were studied by Duram and Brown and Blahana and Yonts- Shepard. Duram and Brown (1999) contend that public participation is not always a flawless solution and that some managers question whether

all potentially affected parties or smaller special interest groups and individuals with specific purposes should be involved. Blahana and Yonts-Shepard found that agencies might question the value of public participation due to the increased costs and need for agency representation (1989). In many cases the public may not be interested enough to be involved or agencies leave the public uninvolved until the end of the process. In these cases the public may give a negative response to the developed plans and confrontation may ensue.

Previous studies have had some focus on how public participants view their roles. McKinney and Harmon's 2002 study of public participation involved with the MEPA, found that participants in the public process wanted them to "provide information and education," "seek public input and advice," "promote mutual understanding of the substantive issues," "increase the quality of the project and final decisions," and "foster trust, communication, and understanding among stake holders, including agencies" (p. 156). There was no clear outcome to what the public wanted in public participation.

In terms of participant satisfaction, Smith and McDonough's 2001 study identified fairness, consideration, and logic to be the key items. People want their voices to be heard and their ideas to be considered. It is important for participants to feel like their input was useful to the process and that public involvement is not just a formality.

In the studies of Webler and Tuler and Lind and Tyler, the participants' level of satisfaction with the outcomes of the planning process is directly related to whether participants feel as if they were treated fairly in the development process (Lind & Tyler, 1988). The participants wanted to be a part of the decision making process.

Participants want to have a say in the outcomes of policy because development of good decisions comes from the free deliberation of all issues that are important to the topic (Webler & Tuler).

Due to a changing and more diverse public, citizen involvement is a rapidly changing force in government. Inclusion of public input is the key for government decisions that are fair and efficient. Natural resource managers and the public who are involved in government agree the public can understand or can quickly learn about issues in management, planning and policy (Propst & Bentley, 2000). Public involvement has been studied many times but there is little agreement on whether public input is beneficial to government processes (Cole & Caputo, 1984). Studying the effectiveness of public input is important for the continuing desire of the public to be involved in government meetings.

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS

This study focuses on the perceived effectiveness of public participation in recreational planning. The evaluation was made using the public participants' involvement and their perceived effectiveness in the Boone County Fairgrounds master planning process. The names and contact information have been collected from the Boone County Fairgrounds master planning process meetings. The site description, survey instrument, data collection, research design, and statistical analysis that were used are discussed in this chapter.

### Site Description

The site involved in this study is the Boone County Fairgrounds. The Boone County Fair originated in 1835 in the eastern suburbs of Columbia, Missouri. In 1991, the Boone County Fair moved from property inside the city of Columbia, Missouri, to its current location north of Columbia at 5212 North Oakland Gravel Road. Previous to the Fairgrounds, the current location was E.W. "Cotton" Woods Memorial Airport. The airport existed from 1973 into the late 1980's, when it could no longer meet FAA standards for runway length (Boone County Fairgrounds-Site and Space Analysis, 2001). The property remained as agricultural zoning until the arrival of the Fairgrounds (Boone County Fairgrounds-Site and Space Analysis). In 2002, Mr. Tom Atkins donated the 80 acres north of the main Fairgrounds, designated as the Atkins tract with the stipulation that it be developed jointly by the City of Columbia and Boone County.

Overall, the Boone County Fairgrounds encompasses approximately 214 acres (Appendix B). The land consists of rolling hills and mainly loess and glacial till (Boone County Fairgrounds-Site and Space Analysis, 2001). The sixty-five acres of the land that

is zoned for commercial use make up the core use area of the fairgrounds. The buildings on the site are special purpose buildings that are used on a limited basis throughout the year. They include livestock housing and showing facilities, buildings supporting the special events track, equine stables, concessions, remnants of Cottonwoods Airport, and a multi-use coliseum. Paved roads run throughout the site, with the main road and entrance for the site being the former runway for the airport.

### Survey Instrument

To accurately gauge public perception of the effectiveness of public participation in the planning process required a survey instrument that reflected standard research methods. In researching the literature, no instrument with questions specific to this study was found, so a cover letter (Appendix C) and survey instrument (Appendix D) were developed with input from Mr. David Vaught from the University of Missouri and from criteria from the researched literature. The survey questionnaire consisted of 34 questions in eight different sections. The first six sections consisted of perceived effectiveness, access and availability, understanding, setting and timing, fairness and openness and reasons for online-participation. The final two sections consisted of background information and an open-ended question. Each of the first six sections was scored and the scores from the sections were used for statistical purposes. The seventh section, background information, contains the questions that were used for profiling participants. The eighth section asked the participants to provide any additional comments on the Boone County Fairgrounds master planning process that they felt were important.

In this study, a five point Likert scale was used to provide the participants a range of options to select from. A Likert-type scale is appropriate for this study because it

measures attitudes of participants (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2000). It also allows participants to give a quantitative measure to a qualitative item such as perceived effectiveness. The background information section consists of two questions in relation to demographic information. The demographic information was used to profile participants. The surveys were coded to keep the anonymity of the participants while providing help in data analysis and the follow-up processes.

Due to its similarity in the development process, and lack of a survey follow-up, Russell property participants were selected to test the survey instrument for the Boone County Fairgrounds. The City of Columbia provided names and contact information of participants of the Russell property master planning process who were helpful in the process. The participants were called and/or emailed to set up meeting times. In an interview setting the participants were asked to complete the survey (Appendix E) and to provide input on the instructions, questions and responses. The pre-test survey was identical to the Boone County Fairgrounds survey and participants were asked to look at the survey as if it were given after the Russell property planning process. The input provided by the Russell property participants guided further development of the survey instrument by determining which questions were difficult or do not make sense. The results of the study were used to test the readability of the survey and to make sure that the questions were understandable.

#### Data Collection

Previous surveys in Boone County served as a guide for the method of data collection. In 1999 the University of Missouri and Boone County, administered a Boone County Fairground user survey to 2,000 Boone County residents via e-mail. The

respondents for the 1999 survey were randomly selected from a mailing list of citizens who paid personal property taxes in 1998. Of those 2,000 surveyed, 677 responded (Boone County Fairgrounds-Site and Space Analysis, 2001). For the current study, a mail survey was administered due to the low response rate of the previous email survey. A high success rate for a mail survey was possible because of the interest in the topic within the population (Sudman & Blair, 1999). At each Boone County Fairgrounds master planning meeting and online, participants were asked to sign in and provide contact information so the participants could be contacted at a later date for the purposes of this survey.

All persons who participated in the Boone County Fairgrounds Master Planning process make up the population of this study. This included participants who attended the four planning meetings and people who participated online at the Boone County Fairgrounds web site: <http://www.showmeboone.com/COMMISSION/Fairground/default.asp>.

Data were collected from the returned and completed mail surveys, which were filled out by the person who previously attended the Boone County Fairgrounds master-planning meetings. To reduce confusion about which family member should fill out the survey, the letters were addressed to the specific person who left contact information at the master planning meetings. If more than one family member was present at the meetings, multiple surveys were sent individually to the household addressed to the individual who participated. All people who participated in the meetings and the online participants were mailed surveys via the contact information that was collected at the fairgrounds meetings and through the fairgrounds website. Because of the small population, a low response rate could affect the results of the study so follow-ups were

sent to participants who did not respond to the initial survey and the resulting follow-ups (Curtin, Presser & Singer, 2000). The initial surveys were June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2003, with a follow-up survey sent November 7<sup>th</sup>. Follow up letters (Appendix F) were sent with the second and third surveys. Follow-up calls and emails followed the deadline of the second mailing. To make sure participants do not complete the survey more than one time, the surveys were coded and the people who have already completed the survey were recorded.

### Research Design

The research design was a cross sectional, relationship study. The purpose of this study was to determine the perceived effectiveness of public input, relationships between age groups and participation, access and availability and effectiveness, understanding of the process and effectiveness, setting and timing and effectiveness, onsite participation and effectiveness, location and participation, and timing and participation, so a non-experimental post-test survey was used.

### Statistical Analysis

Data collected from the surveys were analyzed using the SPSS (12.0.1) program (SPSS, Inc., 2004). The survey questions were divided into five different sections by perceived effectiveness, access and availability understanding, setting and timing, and online-participation. Participants were asked to score their experiences on a scale of one to five, with five being the best experience. Gender and age were coded. Descriptive statistics were taken from the results to provide necessary steps to move on statistically and to provide general information on the participants. The developed mean, median,

mode, standard deviation and variance helped to provide information on the participants from the Boone County Fairgrounds.

Pearson's  $r$  tests were used to develop a correlation matrix which shows relationships between the independent and dependent variables (Bogo, Regehr, Hughes, Power, & Globerman, 2002). The variables that were used in the Pearson's  $r$  consist of the independent variables of understanding, setting and timing, and online-participation and the dependent variable, which was experience. The results showed the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable as being strong or weak and positive or negative (Jaisingh, 2000). The data was then entered into a correlation matrix to "present a convenient method of summarizing the correlations between each pair of predictors as well as the correlation between each predictor and the dependent variable, thus providing considerable information on the direction and magnitude of the linear relationships among the variables" (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003, p. 115).

Stepwise regression looked at the independent variables and showed which independent variable has the most effect on the dependent variable (Cohen *et al.*). This type of regression looks at all of the independent variables against the dependent variables. Stepwise regression allows the independent variables to be ranked, by beta weights, to show which independent variable has the most effect on the dependent variable. It also shows if any independent variable has a larger role than another independent variable as each is removed. The beta weights were taken from analysis of variance.

An alpha level of .05 is customarily used for statistical research (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2000). For this study an alpha level of .05 was used due to the

lack of previous studies in this area and the desire to avoid a type one statistical error (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias). Gender and age information were coded for participant profiling.

## CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

The results of the Boone County Fairgrounds master planning process survey are presented in this chapter. The chapter is broken into sections describing the participants' demographics, the relationship between variables and the effect of the independent variables on perceived effectiveness. Comments from the final section of the survey are in Appendix H.

Survey data were entered into SPSS (Version 12.0.1) file and analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Where necessary (gender, ethnicity), data were coded for entry and recoded or computed using SPSS functions. Comments included with the completed surveys were placed into the appendices (Appendix H).

### Sample Size

To collect data, a written questionnaire was sent to participants of the four master planning workshops of the Boone County Fairgrounds. Twenty-five surveys were collected through two mailings and two people returned the cover letter choosing to not participate. The first surveys were sent June 30th ,2003 and were returned by July 15th. All participants in the Boone County Fairgrounds survey who did not return the first surveys were sent follow up surveys. The second mailing took place November 7th , 2003 with a deadline of November 24th. Mailing dates and received surveys are presented in table 1.

Table 1

Number of Surveys Collected in Each Mailing

---

Mailing	Completed Surveys	Non-Participation
June 30 <sup>th</sup>	15	3
November 7 <sup>th</sup>	10	0
Total	25	3

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To raise the level of participation, follow-up calls and emails to people who were involved in the process but did not participate and to participants who listed incorrect addresses followed the deadline of the second mailing. Participants who were contacted by telephone or email were included in the November 7th mailing. Propst (1998) noted that some groups simply do not respond to surveys. Participants from this master planning process may simply have not been interested in taking the steps necessary to complete the survey.

Due to small numbers present at the Boone County Fairgrounds Master Planning Process, the entire population of seventy-five participants was surveyed. For a population of seventy-five, sixty-three participants or an eighty four percent response rate is suggested for an effective sample size (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). For this survey, only twenty-five of the participants or thirty-three percent of the participants responded. Much of the low response rate is due to the incorrect or unreadable addresses and contact information and a number of participants who did not live in the same place as when they filled out the contact information at the master planning meetings. A low response rate is “not entirely bad as long as there is a cross-section of residents who respond” (Propst, 1998, p. 4). Efforts that were taken to increase the sample size had limited effect. The surveys that were returned due to incorrect addresses were corrected by checking

participant names through the local telephone book and internet search engines (Yahoo! People Search). If a correct address was found, the survey was resent with the second mailing. Participants who could not be found through the phone book or online means were called or emailed, depending on which information they provided at the master planning meetings, and asked if they would complete a survey. If they responded with yes, they were sent a survey. Online participants who were contacted via email were given the option of receiving and submitting a survey electronically.

Table 2

Means of Data Sets

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Perceived Effectiveness	25	16	30	23.12	3.887	15.110
Access & Availability	25	11	20	14.48	2.023	4.093
Understanding	25	17	30	23.84	3.636	13.223
Setting & Timing	25	12	23	19.04	2.806	7.873
Fairness	25	15	25	19.71	2.606	6.790
Online Participation	4	8	17	13.00	3.916	15.33

#### Demographic Information

Demographic information was obtained through three questions asking the participants ethnic group, age and gender. The results will be used to profile participants in the Boone County Fairgrounds master planning process.

The seventh section of the survey collected demographic information to help profile participants in the Boone County Fairgrounds Master Planning Process. Three questions were asked in regards to age, gender and ethnic background. Participants were asked to fill in or circle the appropriate answers.

Of the respondents, twenty-four (ninety-six percent) were of Caucasian decent and one (four percent) was of African American decent (Table 3).

Table 3

Descriptive Ethnic Statistics

	Frequency	Percent
African American	1	4.0
Caucasian	24	96.0
Total	25	100.0

The mean age of the Boone County Fairgrounds respondents was 46.72 with a range of twenty-three to seventy-nine (Table 4). Only one person responded below the age of thirty.

Table 4

Descriptive Age Statistics

Mean	Median	Mode
46.72	42.00	42(a)

(a) Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

Of the fairgrounds participants, seventeen (sixty-eight percent) were male and eight (thirty two percent) were female (Table 5).

Table 5

Descriptive Gender Statistics

	Frequency	Percent
Male	17	68
Female	8	32
Total	25	100

Comments

The section of the survey asked for participants to provide additional comments. Comments received had a wide range of topics including compliments for the University of Missouri to questioning the validity of the information gathered due to the low turnout. All participant comments are included in Appendix H.

Regression Analysis

A Pearson's r test was run and output into a correlation matrix to determine the relationship between the variables. Table 6 indicates that all variables have a significant relationship with perceived effectiveness at a of .01 or .05 level of significance. The variables of understanding and fairness have the strongest relationship with the dependent variable of perceived effectiveness. This shows that the general participant perceived their participation as effective. The relationships between the variables access and availability, understanding and fairness were significant but not strong. The relationship between access and availability and setting and timing was not significant. The relationships between understanding, setting and timing and fairness are significant,

positive and strong. The relationship between setting and timing and fairness is positive, strong and significant at the 0.01 level.

Table 6

Correlation Matrix

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Perceived Effectiveness Sig. (2-tailed)	1	.469(*) .01	.794(**) .000	.431(*) .031	.703(**) .000
2. Access and Availability Sig. (2-tailed)		1	.453(*) .023	.363 .074	.428(*) .033
3. Understanding Sig. (2-tailed)			1	.687(**) .000	.672(**) .000
4. Setting and Timing Sig. (2-tailed)				1	.545(**) .005
5. Fairness Sig. (2-tailed)					1

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

Table 7 indicates the relationships with participants whose only participation was online. A weak correlation that was not significant was found between online participation and perceived effectiveness. The only significant relationship that was found for online participation was with setting and timing, which is strong and negative. People who participated online did not feel setting and timing was important to their level of perceived effectiveness.

Table 7

## Online Participation Correlations

	PE	A&A	Und	S&T	Fair
Online Participation	.225	.720	.223	-.962(*)	-.309
Sig. (2-tailed)	.775	.280	.777	.038	.691

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

## Stepwise Regression

Stepwise regression is used to show which independent variable has the most effect on the dependent variable (Table 8). The R statistic of .854 states that the independent variables are strongly related to perceived effectiveness. The coefficient of determination or R Square statistic of .730 indicates that seventy-three percent of the variance in the participants' perceived effectiveness can be explained by variation in the variables of fairness, access and availability, setting and timing and understanding (StatSoft, 2004).

Table 8

## Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics		
				R Square Change	F Change	Significant F Change
.854(a)	.730	.676	.36902	.730	13.493	.000

a Predictors: (Constant), FAIR\_AVE, AA\_AVE, ST\_AVE, UND\_AVE

Analysis of variance is a byproduct of linear regression using SPSS (Cronk, 2004). The significance level (Table 9) of .000 indicates that there is a significant linear regression between the variables (Cronk).

Table 9

ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	7.350	4	1.837	13.493	.000(a)
Residual	2.724	20	.136		
Total	10.073	24			

Dependent Variable: Perceived Effectiveness

The absolute Beta Weights (Table 10) show the order of most to least effect on the perceived effectiveness as understanding, fairness, setting and timing and access and availability. The B value indicates the level and direction of the relationships (Cronk, 2004)

Table 10

Coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	-.063	.687		-.092	.928
Access & Availability	.135	.170	.105	.792	.438
Understanding	.768	.199	.718	3.849	.001
Setting & Timing	-.321	.187	-.278	-1.717	.101
Fairness	.406	.201	.327	2.024	.057

Dependent Variable: Perceived Effectiveness

To test the validity of the survey scales, Cronbach's Alpha (Table 10) test was run on each of the sections. Cronbach's Alpha produces a number between zero and one. The closer the number is to one, the higher the level of reliability.

Table 11

Cronbach's Alpha

	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items Tested
Perceived Effectiveness	.783	6
Access & Availability	.055	4
Understanding	.826	6
Setting & Timing	.539	5
Fairness	.602	5
Online Participation	.329	5

The scores for perceived effectiveness and understanding are the closest to one; therefore they represent a good level of internal consistency (Cronk, 2004). The scores for setting and timing and fairness represent a moderate level of consistency. Finally, the scores for the sections of access and availability and online participation represent poor internal consistency of the items tested.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

### Summary of Results

Demographic information was obtained from the participants through three questions asking their, age, gender and ethnic background. The mean age of the Boone County Fairgrounds respondents was 46.72 with a range of 23 to 79. Only one person responded below the age of 30. Of the fairgrounds participants, 17 (68%) were male and 8 (32%) were female. The respondents of the survey were overwhelmingly Caucasian. 24 (96%) were of Caucasian decent and one (4%) was of African American decent (Table 2).

Most participants felt as if their participation was somewhat effective. The mean of the participants' scores fell just under the category of agree on the five point likert scale.

Access and availability was found to have an effect on the participants' perceived effectiveness. The Pearson's r test showed a 0.469 at the .05 level of significance. This moderate correlation states that as access and availability to information increases, so does the level of perceived effectiveness.

There was a significant relationship between understanding of the information presented and the level of the participants' perceived effectiveness. The Pearson's r test resulted in a 0.794 at the .01 level of significance. This shows that there is a positive and strong relationship between perceived effectiveness and understanding of the process. Higher levels of understanding lead to greater perceived effectiveness of the participants.

The Pearson's r tests run to determine the relationship between setting and timing of the meetings and the participants' level of perceived effectiveness resulted in a 0.431

at the .05 level of significance. This shows that there is a positive relationship between perceived effectiveness and the setting and timing of the meetings. The setting and timing does affect the participants' level of perceived effectiveness but not as strongly as some of the other variables.

The Pearson's r test resulted in a .703 at the .01 level of significance between fairness and the participants' level of perceived effectiveness. The relationship between the two variables is positive and strong.

The relationship between online participation and the level of perceived effectiveness is positive but not significant. The Pearson's r test resulted in a .225 at a .775 level of significance. The results show that the online participants did not see their participation in the process as effective. The low level of online participation may have been due to the set up of the Boone County Fairgrounds website. The researcher was not involved in the collection of contact information of online participants. Participants were asked to provide their contact information each time they accessed the page. There is a possibility that many participants simply did not access the webpage because of the information that was required.

The purpose of stepwise regression in this study was to show the relationships between the independent variable (perceived effectiveness) and the dependent variables (StatSoft, 2004). The beta weights from stepwise regression show that understanding (.718) has the greatest effect on perceived effectiveness with fairness (.327), setting and timing (-.278) and access and availability (.105) following in that order.

## Limitations

Research on the perceived effectiveness of public participation in park planning has been limited. There are some limitations to the data presented in this study.

For this study a new survey instrument had to be developed due to the lack of a previously used instrument. The development of a new survey instrument may create an instrument that is low in terms of reliability and validity. From the Cronbach's Alpha test, the scores for setting and timing and fairness represent a moderate level of consistency and the scores for the sections of access and availability and online participation represent poor internal consistency. The results of the statistical analysis in these areas may not be as reliable as the fields of perceived effectiveness and understanding, which received better scores in terms of consistency.

This study was conducted using people who were present at the public planning sessions or involved online for the Boone County Fairgrounds; therefore it may only be representative of participants in the Boone County fairgrounds planning process who were involved in the months of January through July of 2003.

During this study, there were three months of elapsed time between the actual planning meetings and the survey collection. Participants may have not been able to remember their experiences accurately or there may have been other influences in their results. The recommendations for the Boone County Fairgrounds Master Plan were finished on July, 24<sup>th</sup> of 2003 and presented to the county and public shortly thereafter. A timeline of the Boone County Fairgrounds master planning process and the survey period of this study is presented in Appendix I. The master plan document contained three options for the master plan of the Boone County Fairgrounds. The document and

presentation were not widely publicized but their availability during the survey period may have affected the results of the study.

The final limitation is the number of returned surveys. Twenty-five of the seventy-five participants returned surveys. Further methods were taken to raise the level of participation but no more than twenty-five completed surveys were obtained. The small sample size may have affected the results of the study by creating higher levels of relationships between the independent and dependent variables. Regardless of the limitations of this study, the results are still useful to future park planners who are in a setting where the involvement of the public is vital.

#### Recommendations

Getting a high level of response is important to any survey. This study used a mailed posttest survey to collect data and received a response rate of 33%. Because of the low response rate, it is recommended the future research be done onsite, immediately following the master planning meetings and in a fact to face manner. This will raise the response rate by eliminating incorrect addresses and illegible handwriting as well as giving the researcher a better understanding of the participant's thought process.

Surveying for the process should be done before there is a presented master plan. This will keep the results of the study based purely on the participants' opinions of how the process went rather than having their opinions based on the outcomes of the master planning process.

## Conclusion

The idea of learning in this study was critical. Participants were asked to provide input on their level of perceived effectiveness in the process of the Boone County Fairgrounds master planning process. Ideally their input into this study was based on the process rather than the outcomes of the fairgrounds master plan so their understanding of the information and the actual master planning process was critical to their judgment on their level of effectiveness.

Participants in public master planning processes must feel as if they are effective in the process or they will be unsatisfied with the final product that is developed. Public participation in governmental planning is critical to the democratic process and in general, participants who are involved in these planning processes feel as if they are effective.

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## Appendix A: Questions and Answers from the Natural Resource Adapted Model

Questions and answers are taken directly from choosing public participation methods for natural resources (Lawrence & Deagan, 2001, p.868).

*Question 1.* Does the manager have sufficient information to make a high quality decision?

“No,” the manager does not know the visual preferences of the community in relation to this stand.

*Question 2.* Is the problem structured such that alternative solutions are not available for redefinition?

“Yes,” the Forest Plan specifies where the harvest will take place and that it will be a two-storied harvest.

*Question 3.* Is public acceptance of the decision critical to effective implementation?

“Yes,” the visual concerns along this roadway in particular, and of the forest in general, are of documented concern to the community. The affected public would probably translate opposition to the project into political opposition, or the Forest Plan possibly could be challenged. Political opposition would result in delays to implementation of the harvest plan.

*Question 4.* If public acceptance is necessary, is it reasonably certain if the manager decides alone?

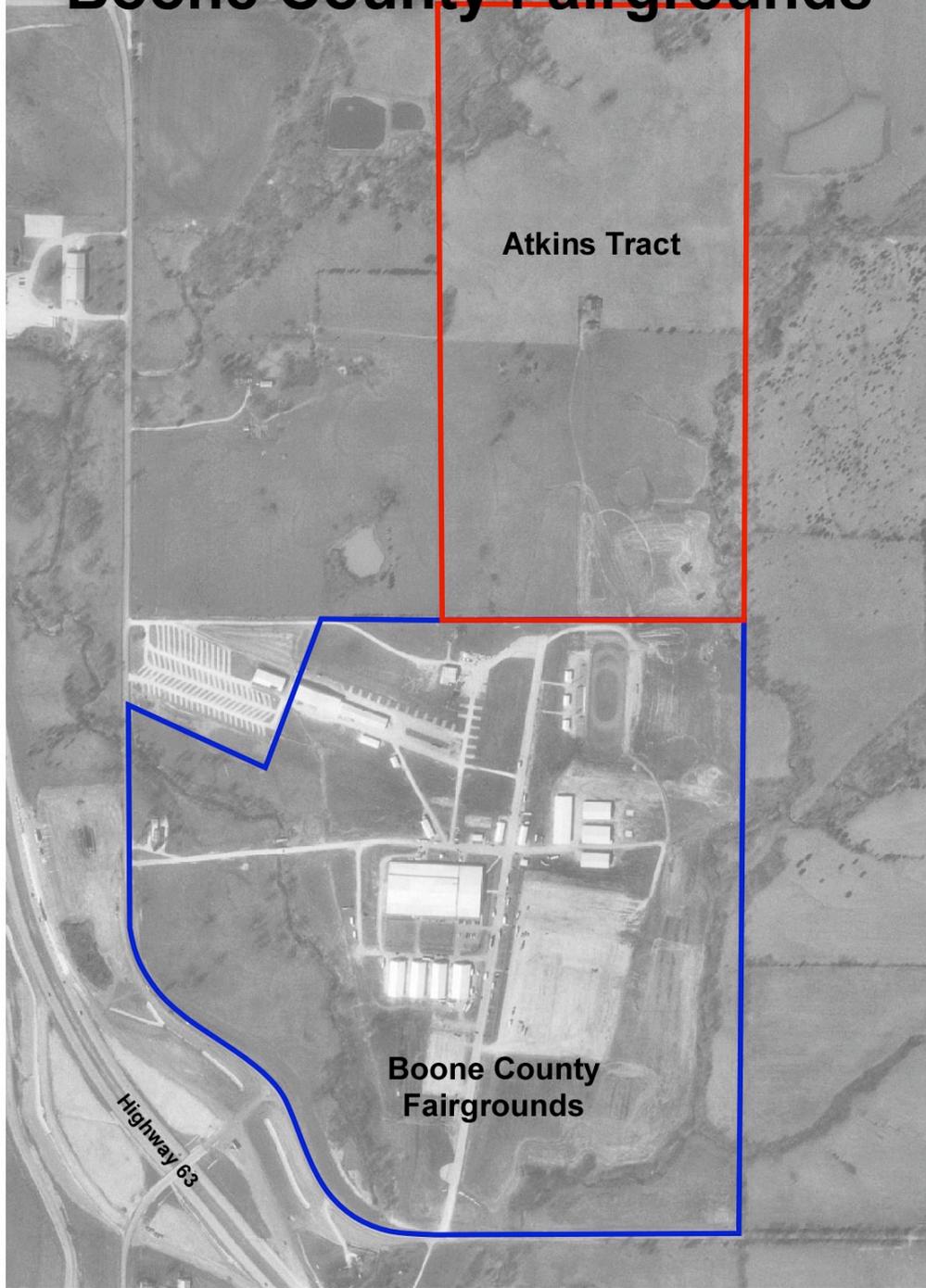
“No,” because this is in such a visually prominent location, and because the trust levels are not high between the community and the forest, the community would probably not defer judgment to forest managers.

*Question 5.* Would the quality of the input or future relations be improved if learning occurs among the “publics” about the situation’s issues?

“No,” the quality of the input could be improved if adjacent neighbors and commuters on the county road realize they have common concerns and begin developing consensus about priority visual areas. The forest staff, however, could probably identify these points of consensus after speaking with the publics separately. There are no significant relational distances between the publics that would benefit from the publics learning about each other.

## B: Map of Fairgrounds

# Boone County Fairgrounds



## Appendix C: Cover Letter

## Boone County Fairgrounds Master Planning Process Survey

The Boone County Parks Commission and the University of Missouri, Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism are conducting a study regarding the perceived effectiveness of public input in the master planning process. The results of the study will help park and recreation planners evaluate the level of effectiveness of public participation.

Please take a few minutes to complete this survey about your experiences in the Boone County Fairgrounds master planning process. The survey is completely voluntary and you may choose to not participate at any time. Choosing to not participate will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits. This study is non-invasive and the answers you provide will be kept completely confidential. When you are finished the survey, please return it in the addressed, stamped envelope provided. Please return the finished survey by July 15<sup>th</sup>. If you have any further questions regarding this study please contact me, Ryan Atkinson, at (573) 884-8028. Further questions regarding this study may also be directed to the project supervisor, Mr. David Vaught at (573) 882-9517. You may direct questions on human subjects can be directed to the University of Missouri – Columbia Campus Institutional Review Board at (573) 882-9585.

Thank you for your participation.

## Appendix D: Survey Instrument

## Boone County Fairgrounds Master Planning Process Survey

I. Please respond to the following statements regarding your **perceived effectiveness** in terms of your expectations of the public’s involvement during the Boone County Fairgrounds master planning process. On the scale provided next to each statement, please circle your level of agreement with one being the lowest and five being the highest.

- |   | Strongly<br>Disagree | No<br>Opinion | Strongly<br>Agree |
|---|----------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| 1. The involvement of the public in the master planning process was effective.  | 1.....               | 2.....        | 3.....4.....5     |
| 2. My input in the Boone County Fairgrounds meetings was important to the planning process.                           | 1.....               | 2.....        | 3.....4.....5     |
| 3. My input will have an impact on the final plans for the Boone County Fairgrounds.                                  | 1.....               | 2.....        | 3.....4.....5     |
| 4. The purpose of the Boone County Fairgrounds master planning process was to seek public input and advice.           | 1.....               | 2.....        | 3.....4.....5     |
| 5. My involvement in the planning process helped to increase the quality of the Boone County Fairgrounds master plan. | 1.....               | 2.....        | 3.....4.....5     |
| 6. I trust the county to make a good decision from the public input that was collected.                               | 1.....               | 2.....        | 3.....4.....5     |

II. Please respond to the following statements regarding your **access** and the **availability** of information during the meetings and online in the Boone County Fairgrounds master planning process. On the scale provided next to each statement, please circle your level of agreement with one being the lowest and five being the highest.

- |   | Strongly<br>Disagree | No<br>Opinion | Strongly<br>Agree |
|---|----------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| 7. I had access to necessary information.   | 1.....               | 2.....        | 3.....4.....5     |
| 8. There was sufficient information available to me.  | 1.....               | 2.....        | 3.....4.....5     |
| 9. I wish there had been more information available.  | 1.....               | 2.....        | 3.....4.....5     |
| 10. I had access to information from sources outside the meetings and the Boone County website. | 1.....               | 2.....        | 3.....4.....5     |

III. Please respond to the following statements regarding your **understanding** of the information provided in the Boone County Fairgrounds master planning process meetings. On the scale provided next to each statement, please circle your level of agreement with one being the lowest and five being the highest.

	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion	Strongly Agree
11. I understood the information that was provided in the master planning process.	1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5
12. My level of understanding was due to the information provided.	1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5
13. The master planning process was clear and easy for me to understand.	1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5
14. I have a better understanding of the master planning process because of the Boone County Fairgrounds Meetings.	1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5
15. I learned something from the Boone County Fairgrounds master planning process	1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5
16. My involvement in Boone County Fairgrounds master planning process helped to promote mutual understanding of the substantive issues between the public and professionals.	1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5

IV. Please respond to the following statements regarding the **setting and timing** of the Boone County Fairgrounds master planning process meetings. On the scale provided next to each statement, please circle your level of agreement with one being the lowest and five being the highest.

	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion	Strongly Agree
17. The timing of the meetings was convenient.	1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5
18. The location of the meetings was convenient.	1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5
19. The locations provided for the meetings were conducive to public input.	1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5
20. Having the meetings at different locations in Boone County was beneficial.	1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5
21. More meetings would be beneficial.	1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5

V. Please respond to the following statements regarding the **fairness** of the Boone County Fairgrounds master planning process meetings. On the scale provided next to each statement, please circle your level of agreement with one being the lowest and five being the highest.

	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion	Strongly Agree
22. The meeting facilitation method was fair to the involved meeting participants	1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5
23. The facilitator was fair to me.	1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5
24. Fair procedures were used to handle the development of a master plan for the Boone County Fairgrounds.	1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5
25. Having the meetings at different locations in Boone County was beneficial in terms of fairness.	1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5
26. More meetings would better promote fairness.	1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5

VI. Was your only participation in the master planning process online? Yes\_\_ No\_\_ If no, please go to section VII. If yes, please complete section VI.

**Reasons for online-participation** in the Boone County Fairgrounds master planning meetings. On the scale provided next to each statement, please circle your level of agreement with one being the lowest and five being the highest.

	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion	Strongly Agree
27. I had access to the information provided online.	1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5
28. I do not like onsite public planning meetings.	1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5
29. Online participation was as effective as onsite participation in the meetings.	1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5
30. I participated online because I could not attend the master planning meetings.	1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5
31. The timing of the meetings prevented me from participating.	1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5

**VII. Background Information**

32. Age: \_\_\_\_\_

33. Gender:        Male    Female

34. Ethnicity:    African American      Asian    Caucasian      Hispanic  
                         Pacific Islander      Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

VIII. Please use the space provided below to provide any additional comments on the Boone County Fairgrounds master planning process. Use the back of this page if necessary.

**Thank you for your participation.** Please return the completed survey in the addressed and stamped envelope that is provided.

## Appendix E: Pre-Test Instrument

## Boone County Fairgrounds Master Planning Process Survey

I. Please respond to the following statements regarding your perceived effectiveness in terms of your expectations of the public’s involvement during the Boone County Fairgrounds master planning process. On the scale provided next to each statement, please circle your level of agreement with one being the lowest and five being the highest.

- |   | Strongly<br>Disagree | No<br>Opinion | Strongly<br>Agree |
|---|----------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| 1. The involvement of the public in the master planning process was effective.  | 1.....               | 2.....        | 3.....4.....5     |
| 2. My input in the Boone County Fairgrounds meetings was important to the planning process.                           | 1.....               | 2.....        | 3.....4.....5     |
| 3. My input will have an impact on the final plans for the Boone County Fairgrounds.                                  | 1.....               | 2.....        | 3.....4.....5     |
| 4. The purpose of the Boone County Fairgrounds master planning process was to seek public input and advice.           | 1.....               | 2.....        | 3.....4.....5     |
| 5. My involvement in the planning process helped to increase the quality of the Boone County Fairgrounds master plan. | 1.....               | 2.....        | 3.....4.....5     |
| 6. I trust the city to make a good decision from the public input that was collected.                                 | 1.....               | 2.....        | 3.....4.....5     |

II. Please respond to the following statements regarding your access and the availability of information during the Boone County Fairgrounds master planning process. On the scale provided next to each statement, please circle your level of agreement with one being the lowest and five being the highest.

- |   | Strongly<br>Disagree | No<br>Opinion | Strongly<br>Agree |
|---|----------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| 7. I had access to necessary information.   | 1.....               | 2.....        | 3.....4.....5     |
| 8. There was sufficient information available to me.  | 1.....               | 2.....        | 3.....4.....5     |
| 9. I wish there had been more information available.  | 1.....               | 2.....        | 3.....4.....5     |
| 10. I had access to information from sources outside the meetings and the Boone County Fairgrounds website. | 1.....               | 2.....        | 3.....4.....5     |

- i. Please respond to the following statements regarding your understanding of the information provided in the Boone County Fairgrounds master planning process meetings. On the scale provided next to each statement, please circle your level of agreement with one being the lowest and five being the highest.

	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion	Strongly Agree
11. I understood the information that was provided in the master planning process.	1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5
12. My level of understanding was due to the information provided.	1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5
13. The master planning process was clear and easy to understand.	1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5
14. I have a better understanding of the master planning process because of the Boone County Fairgrounds Meetings.	1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5
15. I learned something from the Boone County Fairgrounds master planning process	1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5
16. The Boone County Fairgrounds master planning process helped to promote mutual understanding of the substantive issues between the public and professionals.	1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5

- IV. Please respond to the following statements regarding the setting and timing of Boone County Fairgrounds master planning process meetings. On the scale provided next to each statement, please circle your level of agreement with one being the lowest and five being the highest.

	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion	Strongly Agree
17. The timing of the meetings was convenient.	1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5
18. The location of the meetings was convenient.	1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5
19. The locations provided for the meetings were conducive to public input.	1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5
20. Having the meetings at different locations in Boone County was beneficial.	1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5
21. More meetings would be beneficial.	1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5

V. Please respond to the following statements regarding the fairness and openness of the Boone County Fairgrounds master planning process meetings. On the scale provided next to each statement, please circle your level of agreement with one being the lowest and five being the highest.

	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion	Strongly Agree
22. The meeting facilitation method was fair to the involved meeting participants	1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5
23. The facilitator was fair to me.	1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5
24. Fair procedures were used to handle the development of a master plan for the Boone County Fairgrounds.	1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5
25. Having the meetings at different locations in Boone County was beneficial in terms of fairness and openness.	1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5
26. More meetings would better promote fairness and openness.	1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5

VI. Was your only participation in the master planning process online? Yes\_\_ No\_\_ If no, please go to section VI. If yes, please complete section V.

Reasons for online-participation in the Boone County Fairgrounds master planning meetings. On the scale provided next to each statement, please circle your level of agreement with one being the lowest and five being the highest.

	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion	Strongly Agree
27. I had access to the information provided online.	1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5
28. I do not like onsite public planning meetings.	1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5
29. Online participation was as effective as onsite participation in the meetings.	1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5
30. The location of the meetings prevented me from participating.	1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5
31. The timing of the meetings prevented me from participating.	1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5

VII. Background Information

32. Age: \_\_\_\_\_

33. Gender:            Male    Female

VIII. Please use the space provided below to provide any additional comments on the Boone County Fairgrounds master planning process. Use the back of this page if necessary.

Thank you for your participation. Please return the completed survey in the addressed and stamped envelope that is provided.

## Appendix F: Follow-up Letter

## Boone County Fairgrounds Master Planning Process Survey

My records did not show that I received a completed survey form you. It is important that you complete the survey to help provide accurate data for the Boone County Fairgrounds master planning process.

The Boone County Parks Commission and the University of Missouri, Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism are conducting a study regarding the perceived effectiveness of public input in the master planning process. The results of the study will help park and recreation planners evaluate the level of effectiveness of public participation.

Please take a few minutes to complete this survey about your experiences in the Boone County Fairgrounds master planning process. The survey is completely voluntary and you may choose to not participate at any time. Choosing to not participate will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits. This study is non-invasive and the answers you provide will be kept completely confidential. When you are finished the survey, please return it in the addressed, stamped envelope provided. Please return the finished survey by July 28<sup>th</sup>. If you have any further questions regarding this study please contact me, Ryan Atkinson, at (573) 884-8028. Further questions regarding this study may also be directed to the project supervisor, Mr. David Vaught at (573) 882-9517. You may direct questions on human subjects can be directed to the University of Missouri – Columbia Campus Institutional Review Board at (573) 882-9585.

Thank you for your participation.

## Appendix G: IRB Approval Letter

**CAMPUS INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL FORM  
UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-COLUMBIA/Assurance No. M-1502**

Campus IRB Docket #1037888

Funding #

This is to certify that the research proposal entitled, "*Public Perception of the Effectiveness of Public Input in Parks and Recreation Planning at the Boone County Fairgrounds*"

and submitted to the Office of Research by:

Name: **Ryan Atkinson**  
Department: Parks Recreation & Tourism / 705 Marion Dr; Columbia, MO  
65203  
Name of Advisor: David Vaught/ Parks Recreation & Tourism/ 105d Anheuser  
Busch Nat Res

has been reviewed by the Campus IRB and approved with respect to the study of human subjects and appropriately protects the rights and welfare of the individuals involved, employs appropriate methods of securing informed consent from these individuals and does not involve undue risk in the light of potential benefits to be derived there from.

Type of Approval: (b)( ) Exempt (F) (  ) Expedited \_\_\_\_\_ Full Board

Campus IRB Approval Date: 6/11/03 Expiration Date: 6/11/04

\_\_\_\_\_ Contingent upon receipt of: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Contingency Due Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
D. Vaught 6-4-03  
\_\_\_\_\_

Campus IRB Authorized Representative

Date

**Approval of this research is contingent upon your agreement to:**

- (1) Report potentially serious events to the Campus IRB (573-882-9585) by the most expeditious means within five (5) days of the occurrence. The Campus IRB may request an additional written report.
- (2) Submit a **Change in IRB Approval - FORM 99-2** to the Campus IRB if your project changes in any way that affects human subjects. Those changes affecting human subjects **may not be initiated without prior IRB review and approval** except where necessary to eliminate apparent and immediate dangers to the subjects. These necessary changes must also be submitted to the IRB.
- (3) Maintain copies of all pertinent information related to the study, including video and audio tapes, copies of informed consent agreements (if written consent is required) obtained from all participants for a period of three (3) years from the date of completion of your research.
- (4) Adhere to all UMC Policies and Procedures Relating to Human Subjects, as written in accordance with 45 Code of Federal Regulations 46.
- (5) Be aware that federal and university regulations require continuing review of research projects involving human subjects. **Therefore, this approval will expire one (1) year from date of approval unless otherwise indicated.** Before the one (1) year period ends, the Campus IRB will forward to you a **Continuing Review Report - FORM 99-4**. Any unexpected events are to be reported at that time. The Campus IRB reserves the right to inspect your records to ensure compliance with federal regulations at any point during your project period and three (3) years from the date of completion of your research.

M. Deane 6/9/03  
Campus IRB Authorized Official Date  
Cheryl JUN 11 2003  
Institutional Review Board Member Date

## Appendix H: Additional Comments

This was a great coordination between the county and the university! Great Idea. My only suggestion would be better communication or public announcement of the meetings. I attended only one meeting because I did not know of the others. I would have gone to them.

Thank you so much for all of your hard work. I'm sure that the Boone County Fairgrounds will grow to be one of the best assets for Boone County. And a place where everyone can show off, play, and have fun. Thanks again!!!

From the meetings, I do not recall a clear explanation of how the county plans to coordinate with the city in developing the newly gifted Atkins tract. I believe some discussion about the whole process and the fact that at some point the city and county would have to work together to develop and fund the development would have been helpful.

There was large representation by certain special interest/sports groups that may sway what the "public" wanted to see built. The planners seemed to acknowledge this and the plans seem to reflect that large numbers of organized groups did not distort what was designed.

There was ample opportunity for public input. Great job!

I am the chairman of the Boone County Board of Parks Commissions so perhaps my responses to your survey are biased. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Very poor turnout at the meetings I attended. There were many more reporters, commissioners, city staff, etc. than citizens.

The effort was made to collect input. Unfortunately, I saw few people actively participate.

Thanks for involving the public, especially the rugby club.

I was only at the meeting held at the fairgrounds. The biggest problem was the auction going on at the same time.

Meetings not advertised enough-

I didn't find out about most of them until they were over

I saw info about the meetings on TV after they were over.

Website didn't let me give opinions and ideas I wanted to express.

I didn't know about the website until it was almost too late.

I found the layout of the website confusing.

My participation in the planning process was minimal. Many of my answers reflect my overall confidence, or lack thereof, in community leaders and the process they use to plan facilities. I wrote one email message to express support for buildings baseball fields at the fairgrounds because I think Columbia lacks baseball facilities.

The only problem I had with the whole process is that I was not aware of the scheduled meetings. I'm sure an ad was run in the paper etc. but I did not hear about it until it was too late. Instead I sent comment via e-mail to the County Commissioners.

-Not able to view last meeting at the fairgrounds on the website

-Were other "special interest" groups invited to the meetings, other than adult baseball teams?

-It appears that all of the votes were not tallied from the March 31<sup>st</sup> meeting.

It was the first time that I ever participated in the planning process of the Boone County. Good idea on using the University and spreading the meetings around Boone County. Well organized.

I think that the process was very informative and open. I wish the turnout at the forums would have been more. It is difficult to get people involved.

I believe in general that the citizen input process was beneficial, but I question the validity of the information gathered. The attendance figures at the meetings seemed very low and many of those who did come and spoke had interest in a single development issue.

## Appendix I: Timeline of Master Planning Process and Study

**September, 2001** Site and Space Analysis

**October 17, 2002** Master Plan Proposal

Master Planning Meeting  
**February 15, 2003** 1:00pm - 5:00pm - Boone County Fairgrounds Coliseum

Master Planning Meeting  
**February 24, 2003** 6:00pm - 9:00pm - Ashland Senior Center

Master Planning Meeting  
**March 10, 2003** 6:00pm - 9:00pm - Centralia Satellite Office

Master Planning Meeting  
**March 31, 2003** 6:00pm - 9:00pm - Boone County Fairgrounds Coliseum

**June 30, 2003** First Survey mailing

**July, 2003** Boone County Fairgrounds Master Plan document is finished

**November 7, 2003** Second Survey mailing