

Policymakers and scientists agree on top research questions

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Natural resource managers, policymakers and their advisers, and scientists have similar ideas about which research questions could, if answered, most increase the effectiveness of US natural resource management policies. A survey of over 600 members of those professional groups revealed how they ranked the importance of 40 management-relevant research questions identified in earlier work. Respondents judged the most important of the 40 questions to be the quantity and quality of surface and groundwater that will be necessary to sustain US human populations and ecosystem resilience during the next 100 years.

The Internet-based survey that yielded the rankings is described in an article to be published in the March issue of *BioScience* by Murray Rudd, of the University of York, United Kingdom, and Erica Fleishman, of the University of California, Davis.

The researchers used a technique called best-worst scaling to eliminate some of the biases that often confound rating studies: respondents repeatedly ranked small subsets of the 40 questions.

The questions had been identified earlier by natural resource managers, policymakers, and their advisers.

Statistical analysis of the survey results revealed the existence of subgroups with similar ideas about the importance of some questions, but there were no significant differences between policymakers and

scientists, a result that surprised Rudd and Fleishman.

They are continuing to analyze results from this and a follow-up survey on related questions.

More information: The earlier study identifying the 40 management-relevant research questions was published in *BioScience* in 2011 and can be read at [bioscience.oxfordjournals.org/ ... ontent/61/4/290.full](https://www.bioscience.oxfordjournals.org/...ontent/61/4/290.full)

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