

Activity 4: Community Survey

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Salmon illustration, Lewis and Clark expedition. Photo from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Overview

Participants create and conduct a survey to find out what members of the community know and believe about salmon and steelhead.

Background Information

For many communities throughout California, salmon and steelhead represent a complex set of issues that may involve jobs, property rights, water rights, food resources, and more. In other communities, the majority of people may not even know that salmon and/or steelhead live or once lived there. One way for participants to learn how people in your community view salmon and steelhead is through a survey.

A survey is the collecting of information about a group through interviews or questionnaires. It usually uses a representative sample of the group to learn about the whole group. Surveying is a great way for participants to get to know their community. It provides a vehicle for talking with people throughout the school or neighborhood about salmon and steelhead. It also promotes inquiry-based learning and gives participants practice in doing first-hand research.

Objectives

Participants will: (1) create a community survey about salmon and steelhead, (2) find out community attitudes and beliefs about salmon and steelhead, (3) get to know members of the community, and (4) organize and present survey results using graphs and text.

Time

Setting the Stage: One group session

Activity: At least one or two group sessions, plus time between to complete surveys (more time needed if group will develop own survey)

Materials

- Sample surveys (see Advance Preparation)
- Strips of chart paper for designing survey (optional)
- Marker Pens (optional)
- Chart paper for recording survey results

- Camera (optional)
- KWLR chart (started in [Activity 1: Getting to Know Salmon and Steelhead](#))

Advance Preparation

1. Look at a couple of resources to find out how to design an effective survey (see [Resources: Surveys and Community Mapping](#)).
2. Decide whether your group will create its own survey or whether you will provide one. A survey you create may include questions such as:
 - How long have you lived in our community?
 - What do you think is the best thing about our community?
 - What do you think is our community's biggest challenge?
 - Do you know whether salmon or steelhead live in our creek? How do you know?
 - Do you think salmon and steelhead are important to our community? Why or why not?
 - What do you think people do that may harm or impact salmon and steelhead in our creek?
 - What do you think people do that may enhance salmon and steelhead in our creek?
3. Consider different possibilities for conducting the survey to propose to participants. For example, participants may survey with a written questionnaire or an oral interview; they may survey other youth at the school or program site, parents and family members, landowners along a local creek or river, people who live and work at the local harbor or seaport, attendees at a community event, customers at a grocery store, or people they encounter on a walk through town.
4. Depending on what you and the group plan for the survey (see Setting the Stage), make the necessary arrangements to carry out the plan.
5. Collect a few example surveys to share with participants (see [Resources: Surveys and Community Mapping](#)), and make enough copies so that teams can look at a few or have them look at them online.
6. If participants will be designing survey questions, look over a few [resources on designing surveys](#).
7. Plan what final product you want participants to create from the survey. Participants may create simple graphs with paper and pencil that can be included in [Activity 8: Mapping Our Community](#). Participants may also prepare a more elaborate presentation using computer software, digital photos, and so on.
8. Prepare a chart for participants to record the results of the survey. The chart should list all the survey questions and have space for recording the responses.

Setting the Stage

1. Ask participants, “What is a survey?” If they do not know, explain using the definition in the [Background Information](#).
2. As an example of a survey, ask participants whether they prefer chocolate or vanilla ice cream (or other food choice). Using raised hands, count the participants who prefer chocolate and those who prefer vanilla. Lead participants in a quick analysis of the results by asking:
 - Which flavor is more popular in our group?
 - Do you think the results would be different in another group?
 - Do you think we could use this survey as representative of the whole community’s preferences?
 - Why might it be useful to know what flavor the kids in our group prefer?
3. Point participants to the “W” (What We Wonder) sheet of the KWLR chart, and ask:
 - What do we want to learn from our survey?
 - How might we use the information we get?
 - What might we want to ask in our survey?
 - List on the board these possible survey topics.
4. Talk with participants about different possibilities for conducting the survey (see [Advance Preparation](#)), and help them decide on a plan for carrying it out. The plan should include where, when, how, and how many surveys they will conduct.

Conducting the Activity

Part One – Designing the Survey

Note: If your group will be using a survey you provide (see [Advance Preparation](#)), skip to Part Two.

1. Give teams a few [example surveys](#) to read (either on paper or online).
2. Based on what they observe about surveys, have them list three or four guidelines for writing survey questions (for example, questions have no right or wrong answer, questions offer possible responses, and so on).
3. Ask a participant from each team to share one or two of their guidelines. Record their responses on the board.
4. Look over the guidelines and, if necessary, add other suggestions for designing a strong survey (see [Advance Preparation](#)).

5. Remind participants of the topics they identified for the survey (see Setting the Stage), and direct each team to write two or three possible questions for the survey. They should write each question on a strip of chart paper using a marker pen.
6. Post the draft questions and have the group read them over. Look for any duplicates or near-duplicates. Help the group identify the strongest set of questions from the list.
7. Divide the set of questions among teams and ask them to review the question they've been given. They should try answering the question as if it were new to them. Encourage them to edit the question if needed to make it clearer or stronger. Have them write the final question on another strip of chart paper.
8. Post the final questions and have the group make sure that the questions are in the best order and are as clear as possible.
9. Ask a participant or team to write or type up the questions to make the final survey.

Part Two - Conducting and Analyzing the Survey

1. Give participants copies of the survey, and review survey safety and etiquette:
 - If surveying people outside of your family, have a parent or other adult go with you.
 - If people don't want to participate, don't force them.
 - Thank people for their time, whether they participate or not.
 - Accept all ideas without laughing or reacting.
 - Don't try to change people's minds.
2. Ask participants to predict how other people will respond to the survey questions.
3. Have participants conduct the number of surveys they have decided is appropriate.
4. Help participants put the results of the survey onto the group chart.
5. Give each team a survey question to analyze. Have them prepare a graphic representation (pie chart, bar graph, or other) of their question results. If it is a quantitative question, they should compute the range, mean, median, and mode of the data. They should also write a summary or conclusion from the results.
6. Have teams present their analysis to the group.

Wrap-Up

1. Lead a discussion about the survey, including:
 - What did we learn from the survey?
 - What was the most interesting thing we learned?

- What was the most surprising thing we learned?
 - On which questions did people seem to agree most?
 - What value do people in our community place on salmon and steelhead? How has that changed over time?
 - On which questions did people seem to disagree most?
 - Does there seem to be any controversy in our community regarding salmon and steelhead? If so, what is the issue?
2. Have teams place a copy of their work in their portfolios, and also save a copy to be used in [Activity 8: Mapping Our Community](#).
 3. Have participants look at the KWLR chart. Have them think about the guiding question: How do people affect salmon and steelhead, and how do salmon and steelhead affect people? Ask whether there is anything they would add to or adjust on the chart given what they learned from the community survey.

Enrichment

- Participants may use a spreadsheet program or word processing software to create graphs, tables, and charts to display their results.
- Participants can begin to collect newspaper articles about salmon and steelhead, and add to their collection over the course of the unit. They might analyze how the viewpoints or information presented correlate to participants' findings in the survey.
- Have participants find and bring to the group news items or advertisements that quote survey results. For each item, help participants analyze what is being reported or claimed. For example, what does it mean when a commercial claims that a product is the “most popular choice according to a recent survey” or when someone running for office is two points ahead in one poll, but two points behind in another?