Public lands grazing and conservation: Citizen perspectives and attitudes

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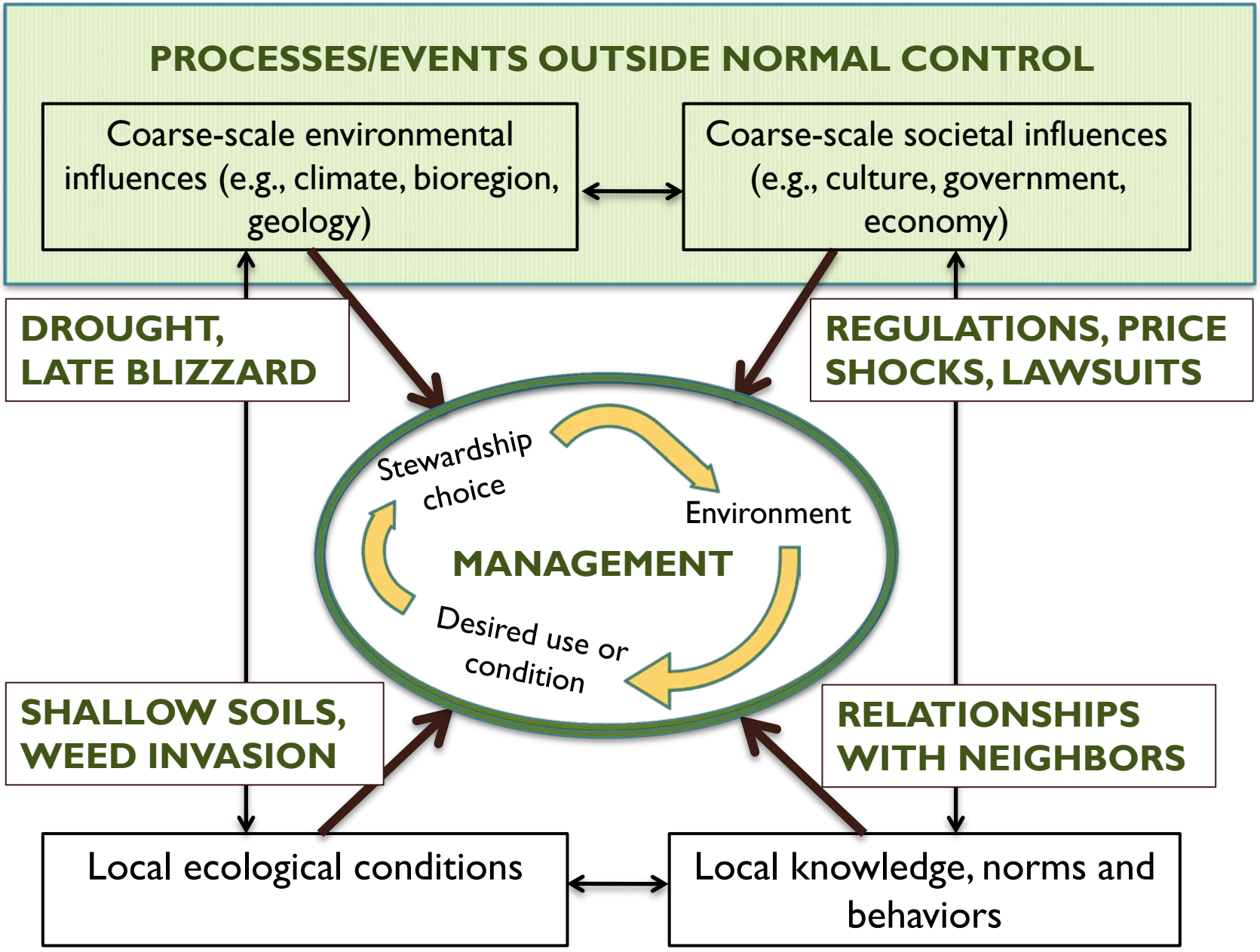
Is there such a thing as "the public"?

- Yes, there is, but the "public opinions" that matter most are when *specific* publics emerge to engage in political action
- This happens when citizens experience negative consequences of processes or events outside their normal control

Negative consequences? In the context of livestock grazing?

- Environmental degradation *has* occurred on some lands held in public trust, and occasionally due to grazing
- Specific events have sparked emergence of grazing-focused publics (opposing and supporting)


PROCESSES/EVENTS OUTSIDE NORMAL CONTROL
Coarse-scale environmental influences (e.g., climate, bioregion, geology)
Coarse-scale societal influences (e.g., culture, government, economy)
DROUGHT, LATE BLIZZARD
REGULATIONS, PRICE SHOCKS, LAWSUITS
Stewardship choice
Environment
MANAGEMENT
Desired use or condition
SHALLOW SOILS, WEED INVASION
RELATIONSHIPS WITH NEIGHBORS
Local ecological conditions
Local knowledge, norms and behaviors

National survey (Brunson & Steel 1994, 1996)

- Telephone survey of 1,360 adults
- Questions relevant to times
  - Should livestock grazing be banned?
  - Should grazing fees be raised?
  - Should wilderness be grazed?
  - Set aside ESA to protect ranching?
- Compared regions – areas west of Cascades/Sierras answered closest to environmental group positions

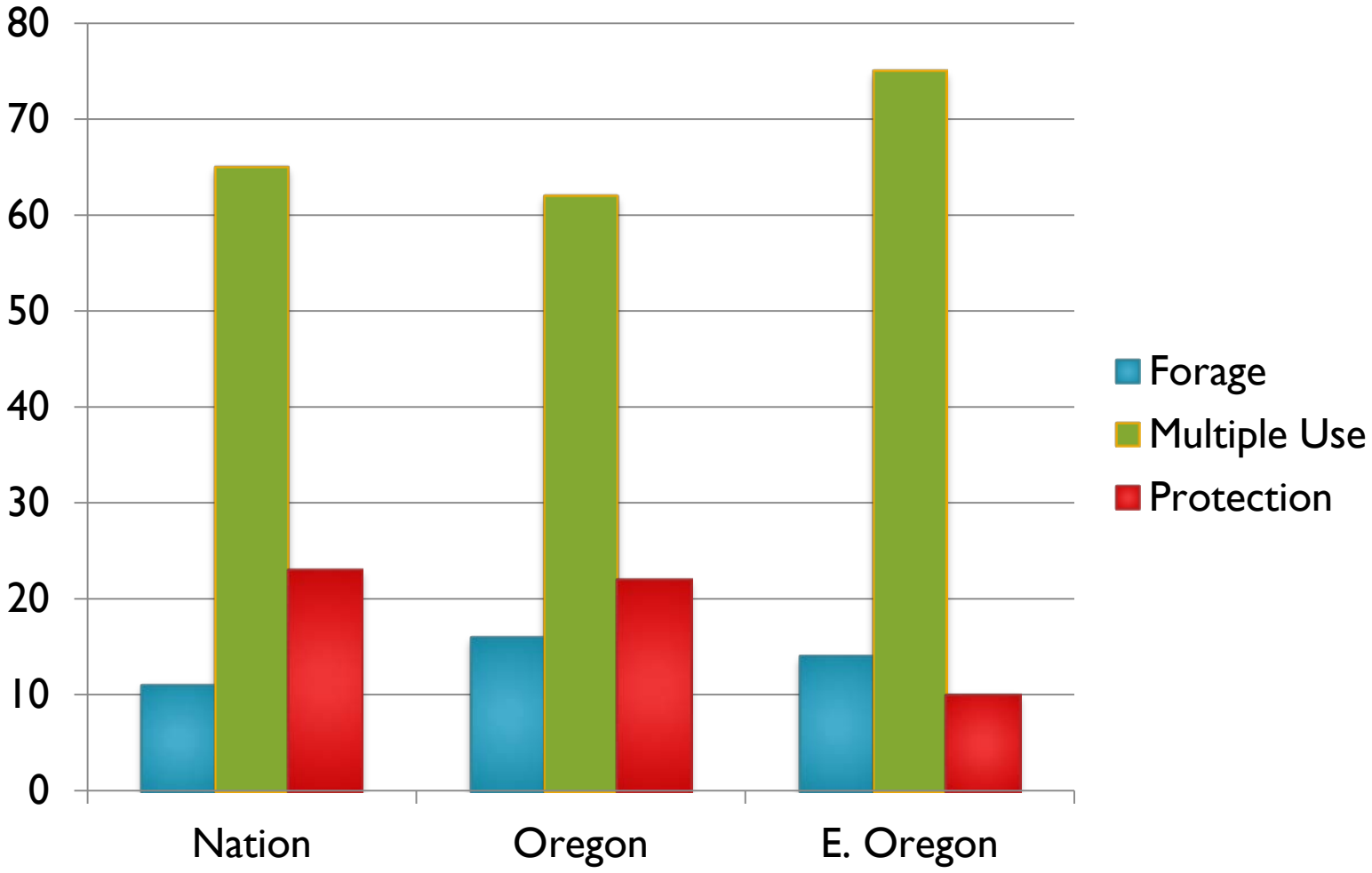
Attitudes toward grazing (1993)

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Livestock grazing should be banned on federal lands	21%	45%	34%
Federal range policy should emphasize grazing	43%	32%	25%
Ranchers should pay more to graze federal lands	14%	19%	67%
Set aside endangered species laws to protect ranching	65%	17%	20%

Beliefs about grazing (1993)

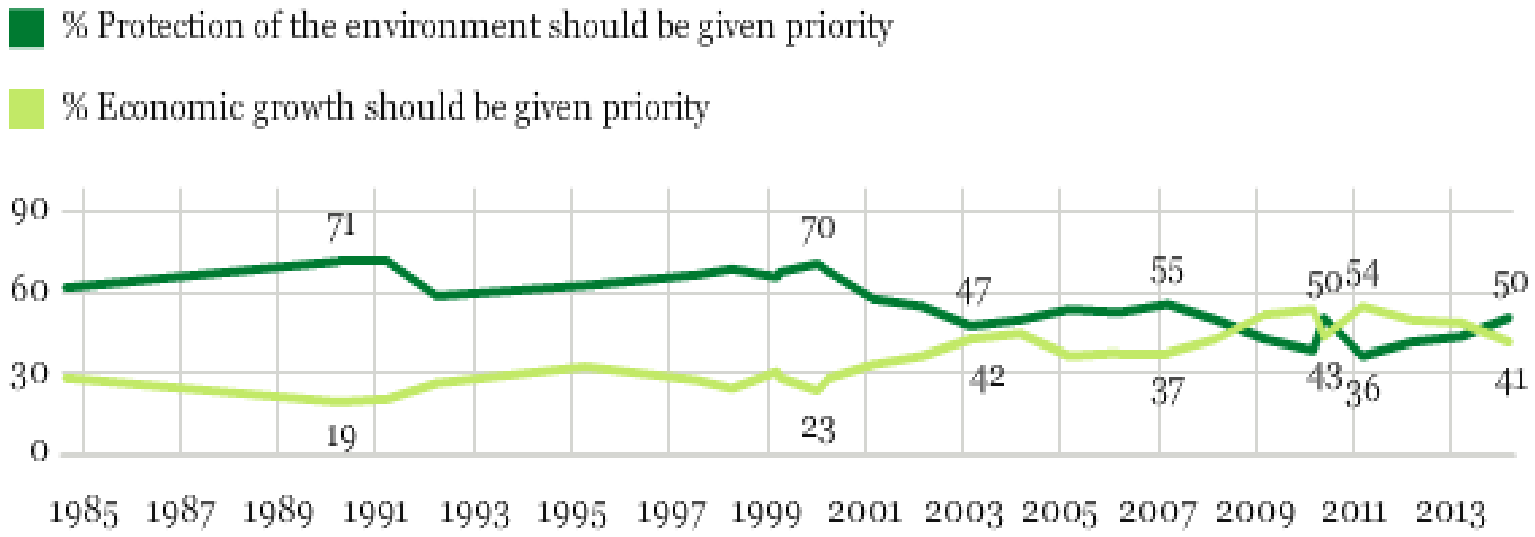
	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Most federal rangeland is overgrazed by livestock	26%	14%	60%
Extent of overgrazing has decreased in last 50 years	65%	18%	17%
Water quality on federal range has declined in past 50 yrs	7%	7%	86%
Loss of riparian vegetation is a serious range problem	8%	10%	82%

Why the picture's not so bleak: Public lands priorities (1993)



Why the picture's not so bleak: Nationwide environmental trends

With which one of these statements about the environment and the economy do you most agree -- protection of the environment should be given priority, even at the risk of curbing economic growth (or) economic growth should be given priority, even if the environment suffers to some extent?



GALLUP

Grazing as a management tool: A comparative perspective

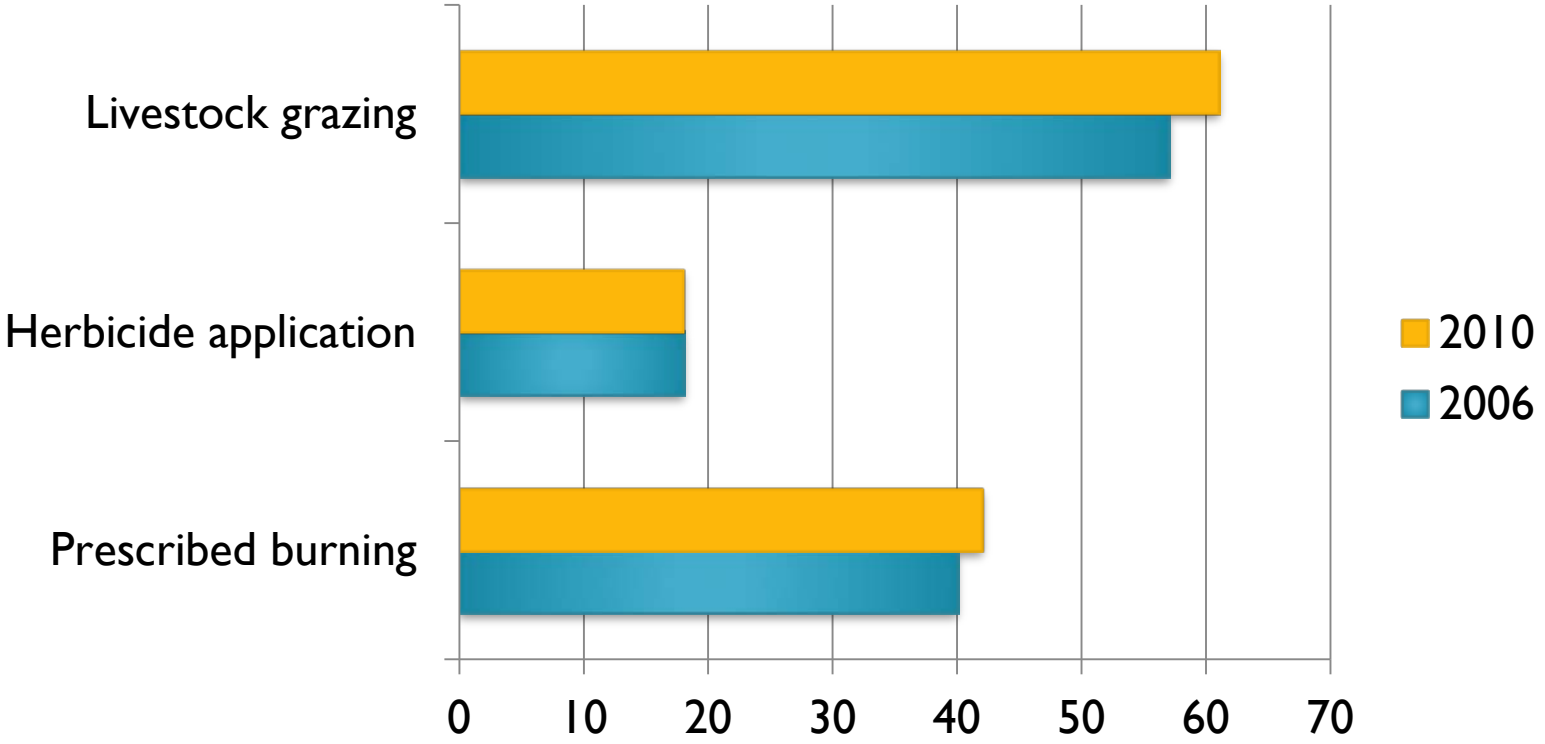
Acceptance of fuels-reduction methods (2000)

	Pct. supporting *widespread* use		
Practice	AZ	OR	UT
Prescribed burning	46%	56%	37%
Mechanical removal	61%	64%	43%
Plant fire-resistant spp.	83%	----	82%
Grazing fine fuels	70%	60%	72%

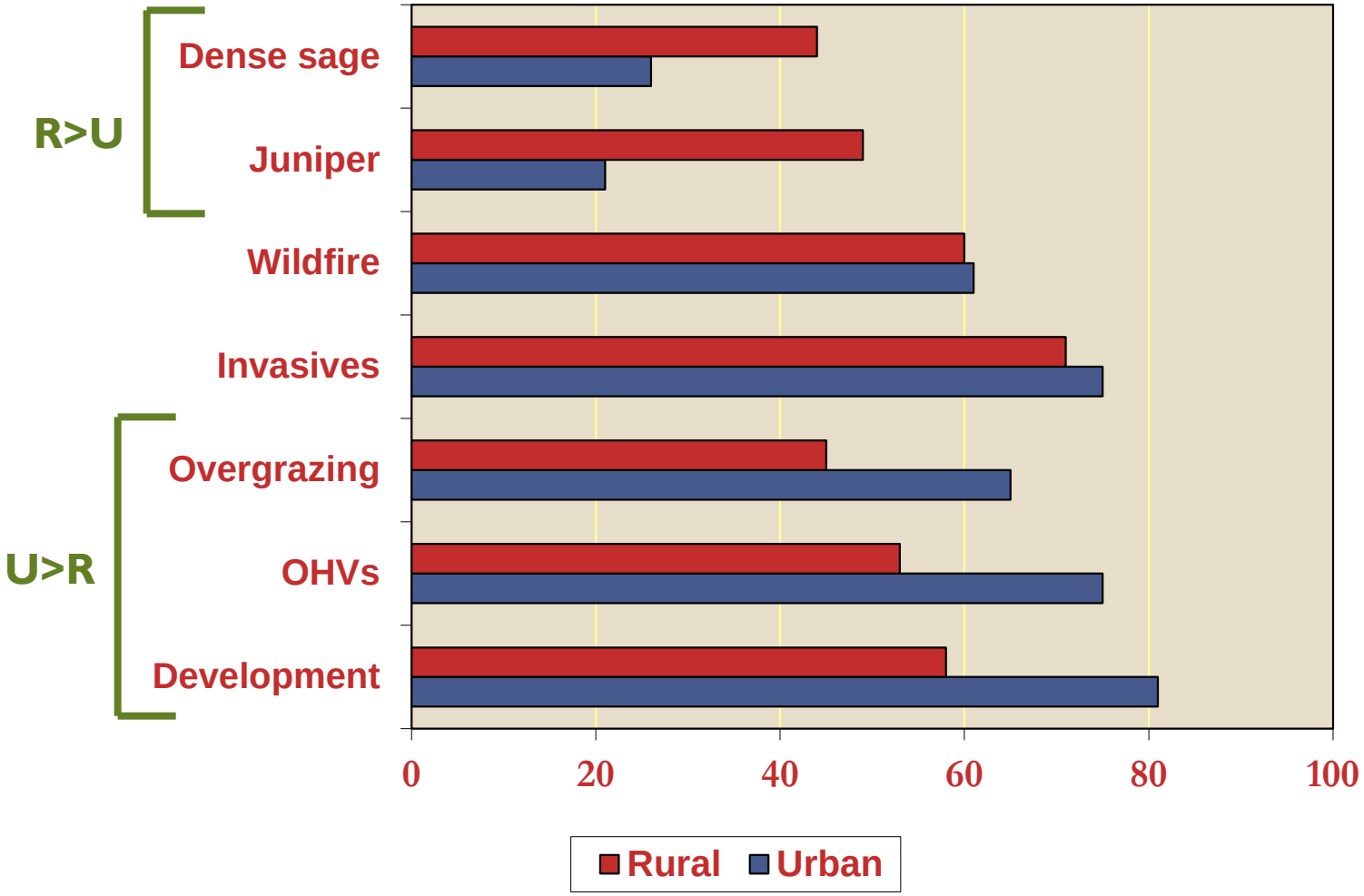
Grazing as a management tool: Gauging acceptance over time

Surveys of Great Basin residents (2006 & 2010)

Pct. indicating acceptance of practice *used widely*

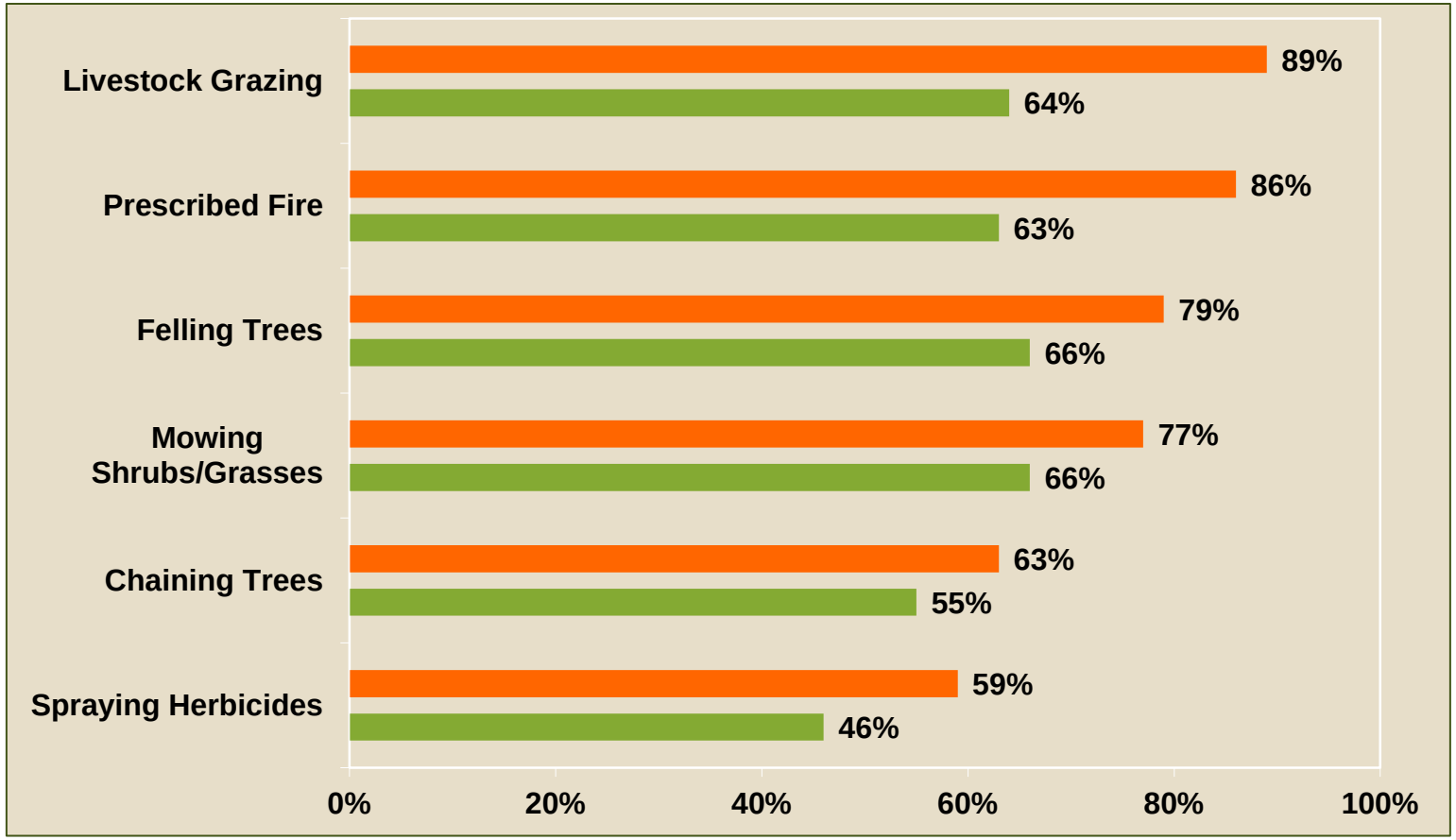


Perceived threats to public rangeland: Great Basin residents (2006)

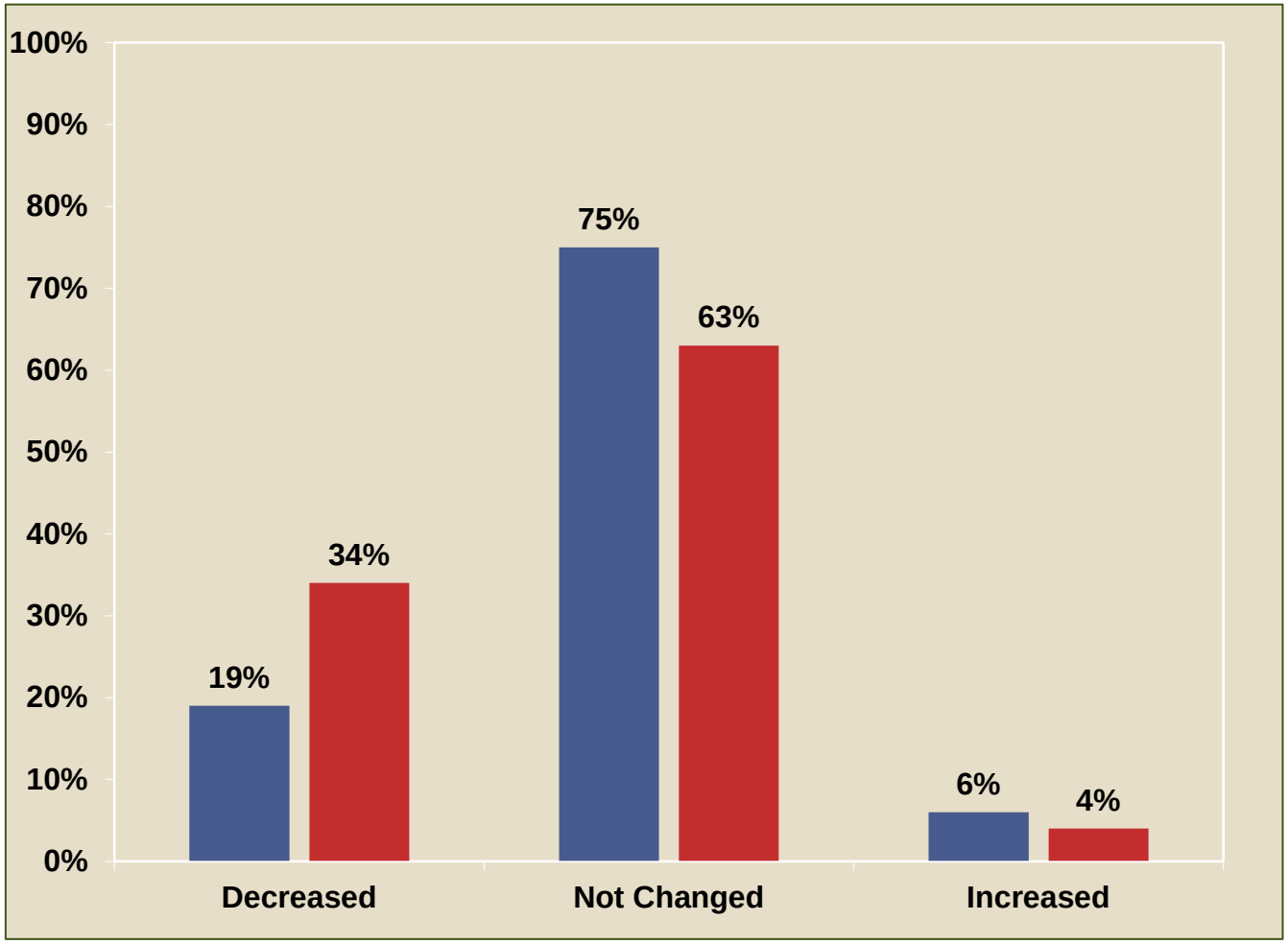


Trust, not knowledge, drives attitudes toward federal range management

2010 re-survey of Great Basin respondents



Changes in overall trust in federal management (2006 to 2010)



Recreation-grazing interactions

- Managers' know when recreation users view livestock grazing negatively
- But reverse can be true (Walnut Creek)
  - 2009 decision to curtail grazing due to negative input at public meetings
  - 2011 neighbors demand return of livestock
- Negative views of grazing diminish with increasing visits (Sanderson et al. 1986)

Effect of seeing cattle on visitors: Grand Staircase-Escalante Natl. Mon.

- Does seeing cattle detract from experience?

	Detracts	Neutral	Enhances
Hunters	39%	36%	25%
Hikers	70%	22%	8%

- How often do you see cattle on your visits?

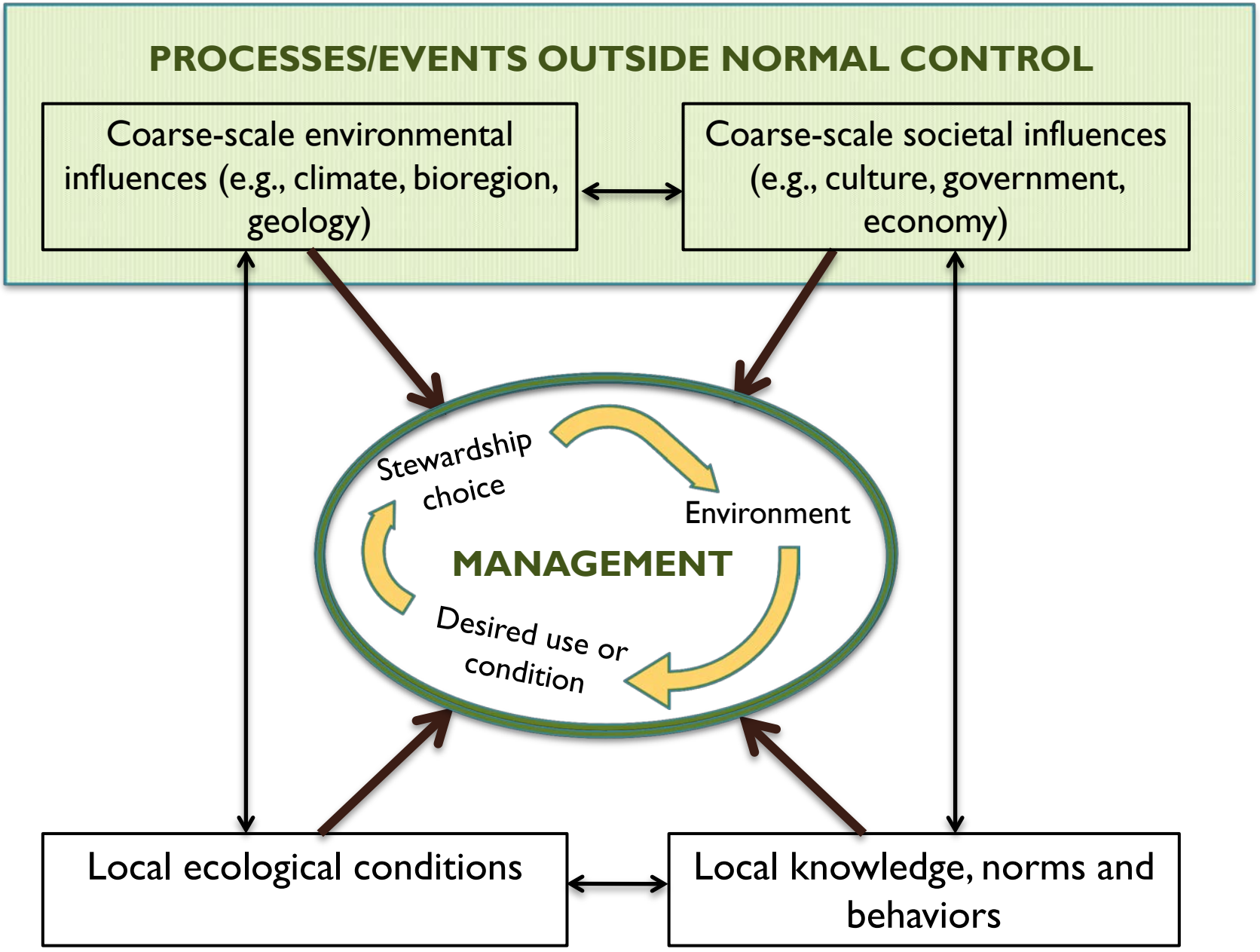
	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently
Hunters	1%	7%	28%	64%
Hikers	22%	19%	28%	31%

Social media analysis of perceptions of grazing on park lands (Barry 2013)

- Analyzed 7 yrs of Flickr™ photo-shares from East Bay parks
- 1,087 photos, 733 with comments
- 71% of photos with comments included cattle
- Most cow-related comments were positive
- About 5% indicated fear of cows

EA comment analysis: Great Basin restoration projects (2008-2012)

- Most comments about adequacy of analysis, not specific issues
- NGOs and private individuals rarely offer positive comments (but agencies do)
- Individual comments most often about effects on wild horses
- Advocacy organizations' comments:
  1. Insufficient information in EA
  2. Inadequate protection of wildlife
  3. Livestock grazing shouldn't be allowed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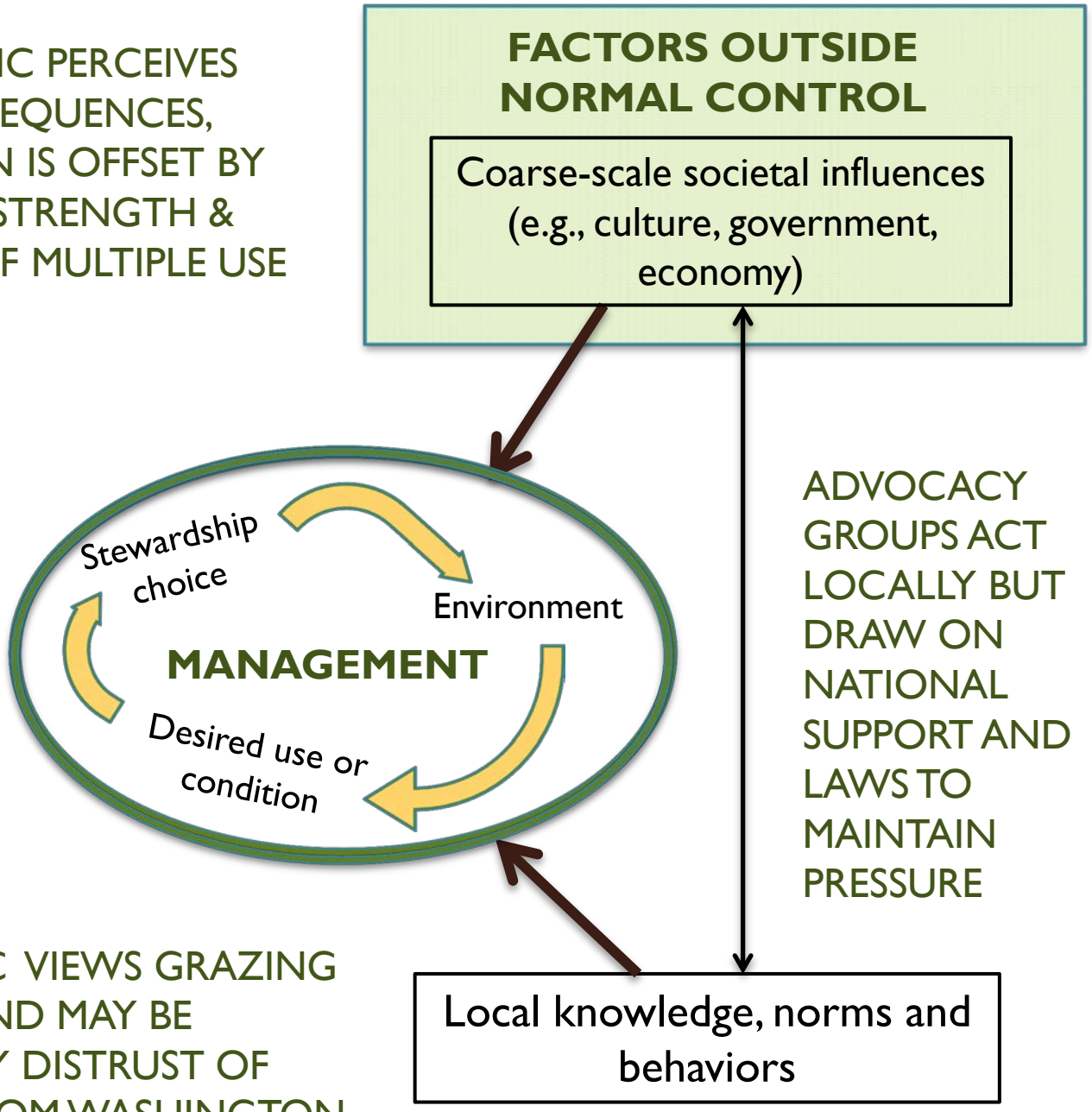
NATIONAL PUBLIC PERCEIVES NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES, BUT OPPOSITION IS OFFSET BY LOW ATTITUDE STRENGTH & POSITIVE VIEW OF MULTIPLE USE



ADVOCACY GROUPS ACT LOCALLY BUT DRAW ON NATIONAL SUPPORT AND LAWS TO MAINTAIN PRESSURE

LOCAL PUBLIC VIEWS GRAZING POSITIVELY, AND MAY BE MOTIVATED BY DISTRUST OF INITIATIVES FROM WASHINGTON

Applying the findings

- Continue demonstrating sound stewardship, embracing new science
- General public knowledge remains low – seek opportunities to inform
- Look for ways to promote positive recreation experiences
- Trust is low, but it can be built through listening and collaboration