

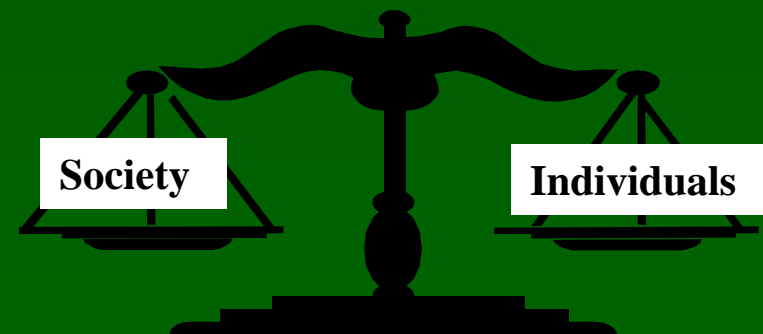
Who Defines the Public Interest?

Finding the Balance Between Public and Professional Involvement in Natural Resource Management

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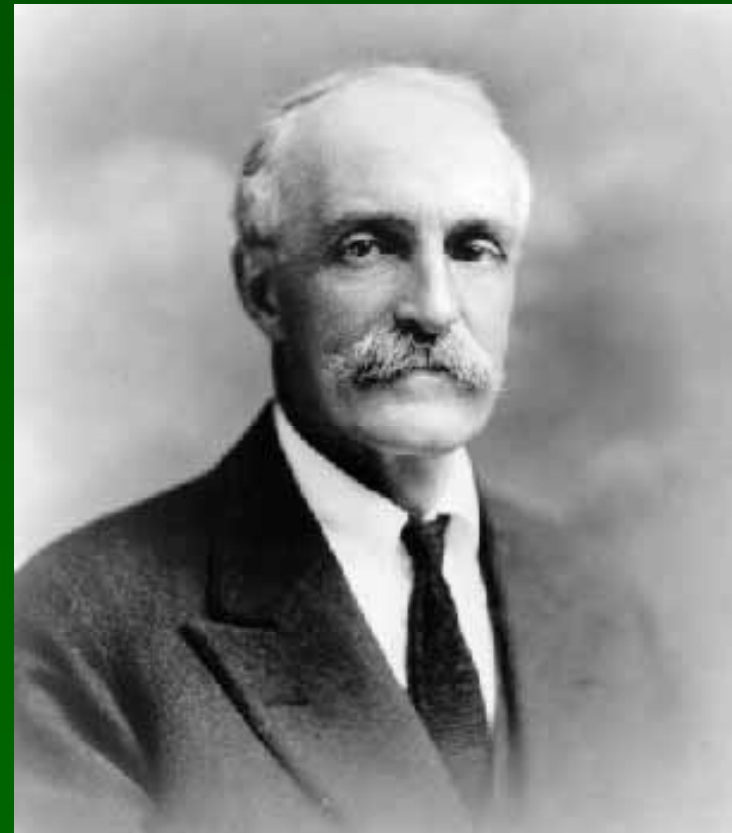
Defining the Public Interest is a Complex Process

- North American model
 - Public trust resources, managed in the public interest
 - Balancing long-term interests of society and,
 - Interests of stakeholders who get directly involved in planning and decision-making processes



Who Defines the Public Interest?

- Gifford Pinchot's definition—"The greatest good of the greatest number in the long run"
- Era of Scientific Management—largely determined by NR professionals for 60 years after Pinchot



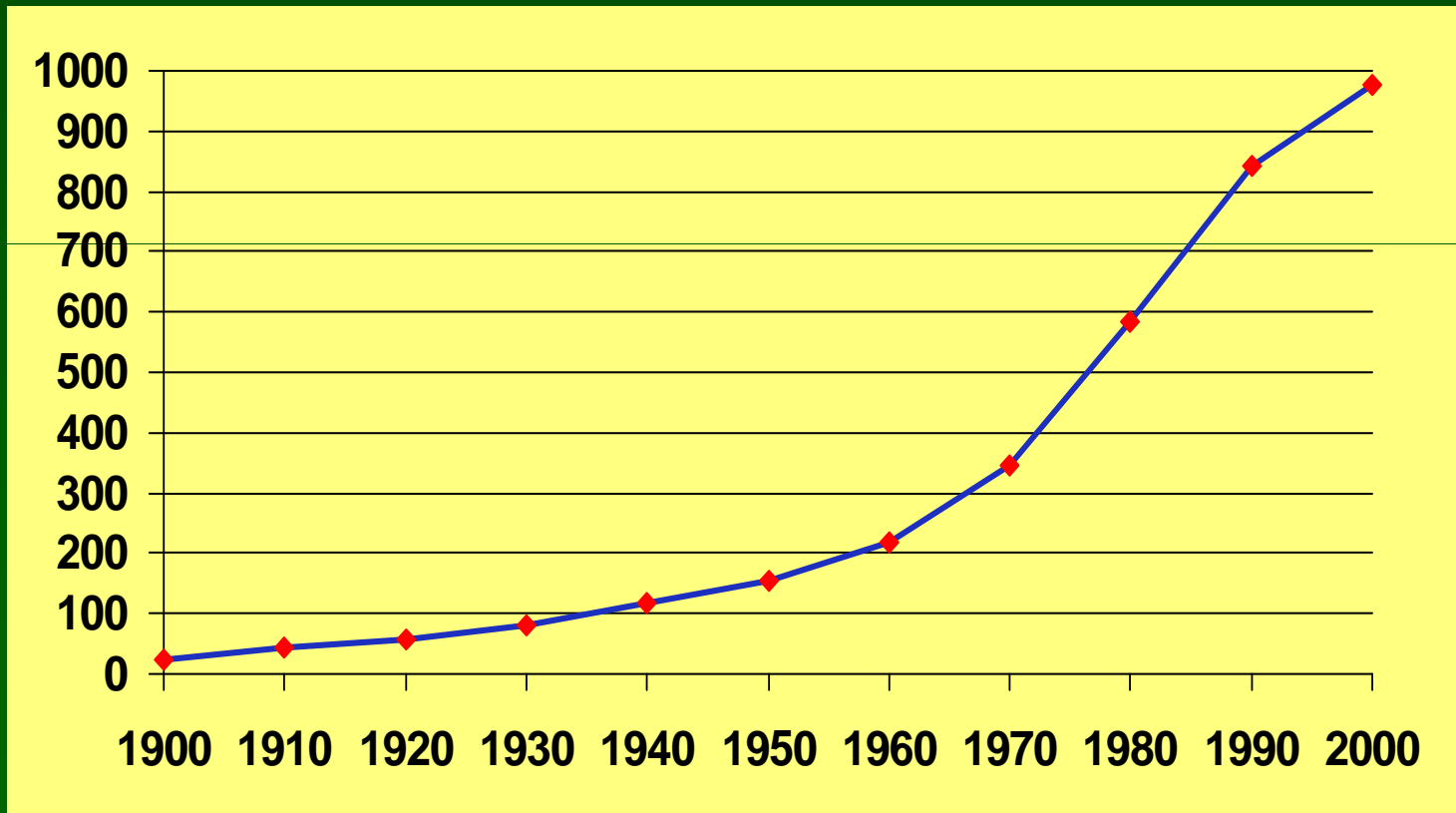
Increasing Stakeholder Involvement in Determining the Public Interest



- Greater environmental activism & new laws in late 20th century
- More diverse stakeholders

Conservation Interest Groups Fragmentation and Growth

Cumulative No. of Interest Groups



Is it any wonder that it is difficult to make decisions in the public arena?

Objectives

- How do fish & wildlife professionals feel about stakeholder involvement in planning and decision-making processes?
- How can we increase the comfort level of both professionals and stakeholders in sharing responsibility for determining the public interest?

Surveys of Participants in Public Involvement Training Workshops

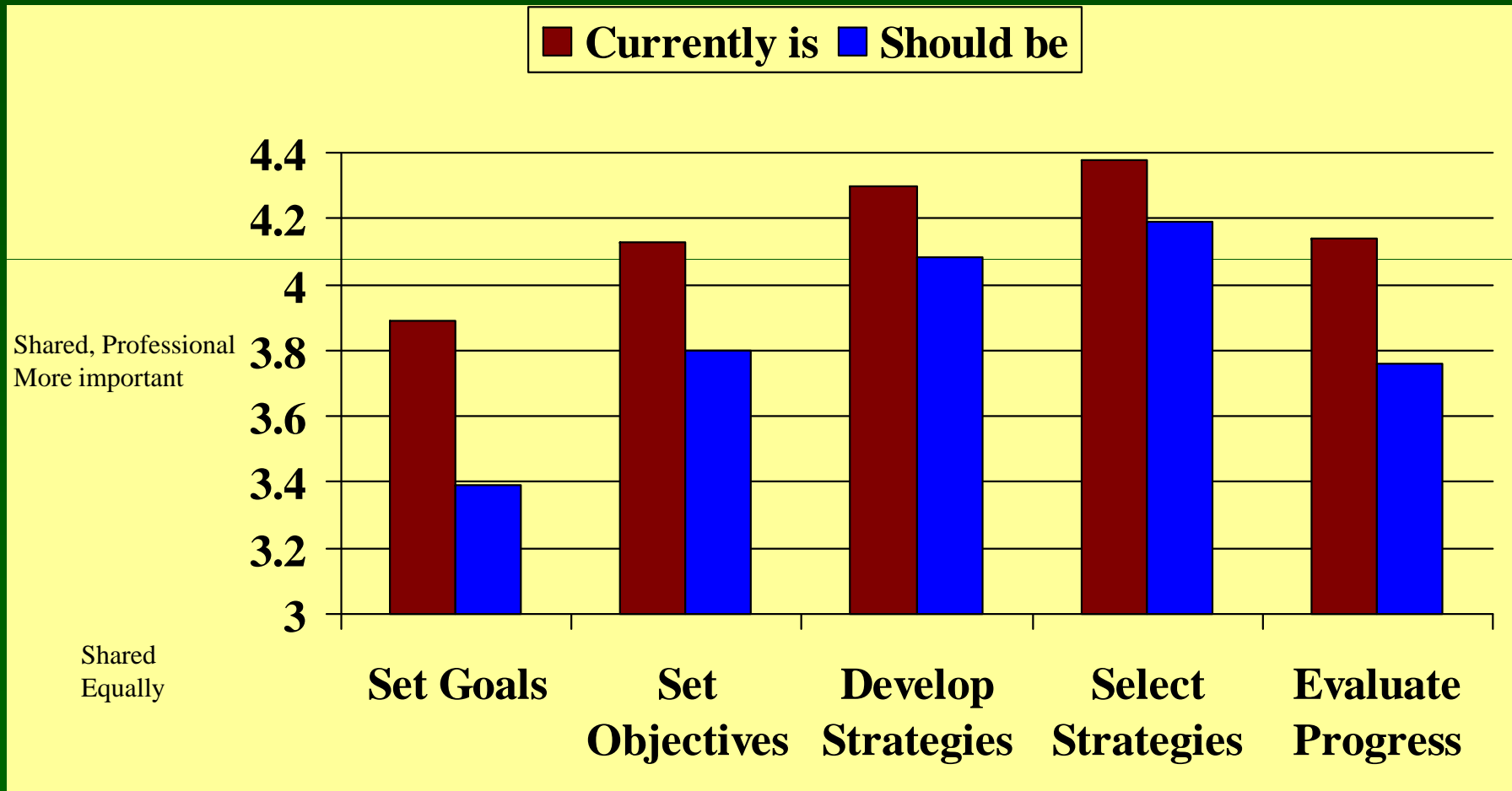
- What the roles of professionals & the public should be
- What the roles of professionals & the public really are in practice
- Response scale from mostly a public decision to mostly a professional decision



Professional & Public Roles

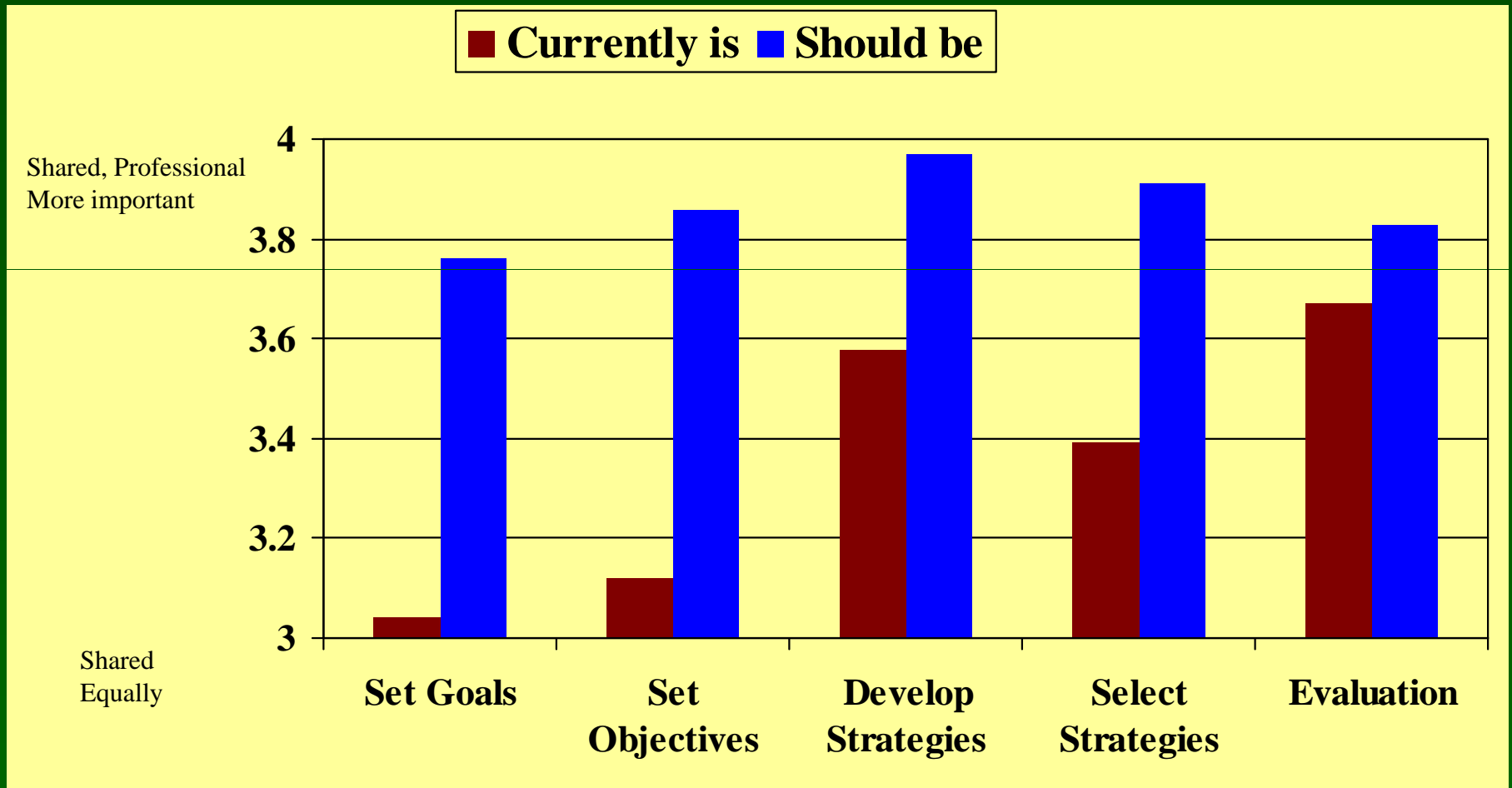
- In setting and evaluating goals for management (e.g., managing for high quality antlered deer)
- In setting specific objectives (e.g., harvest an average of 3.2 branch-antlered bucks per square mile over the next 5 years)
- In designing and selecting strategies to attain objectives (e.g., establishing a branch-antlered buck only harvest regulation)

Two Patterns—Public Should Have More Involvement



Scale: 1 = mostly a public decision, 2 = shared decision, public opinion more important, 3 = shared decision, 4 = shared decision, professional opinion more important, 5 = mostly a professional decision

Professionals Should Have a Greater Role



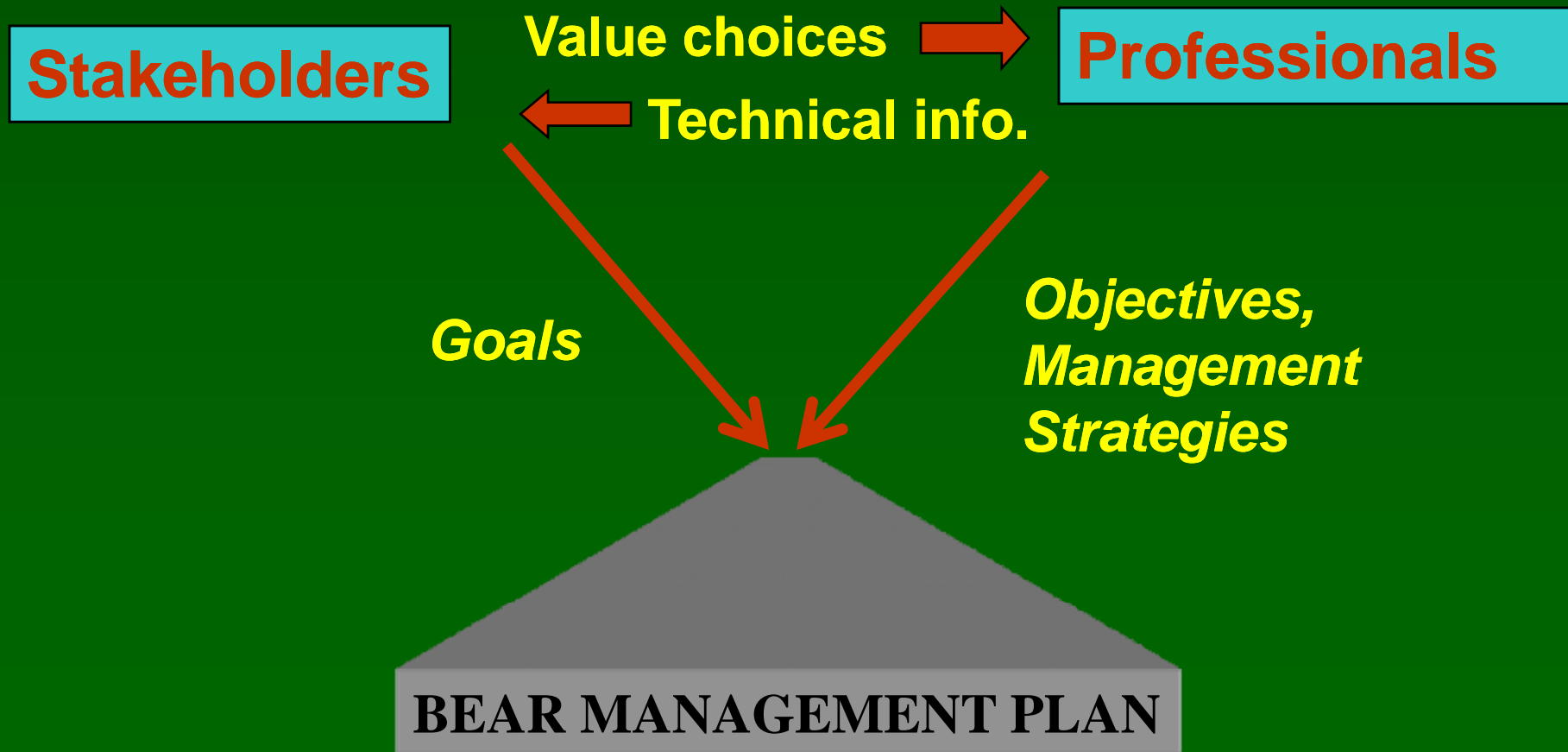
Scale: 1 = mostly a public decision, 2 = shared decision, public opinion more important, 3 = shared decision
4 = shared decision, professional opinion more important, 5 = mostly a professional decision

What Causes Problems with Public Involvement?

- Professionals making values choices
- Asking or encouraging stakeholders to make technical choices
- **Effective public involvement focuses professional involvement on making technical choices, public involvement on making values choices**

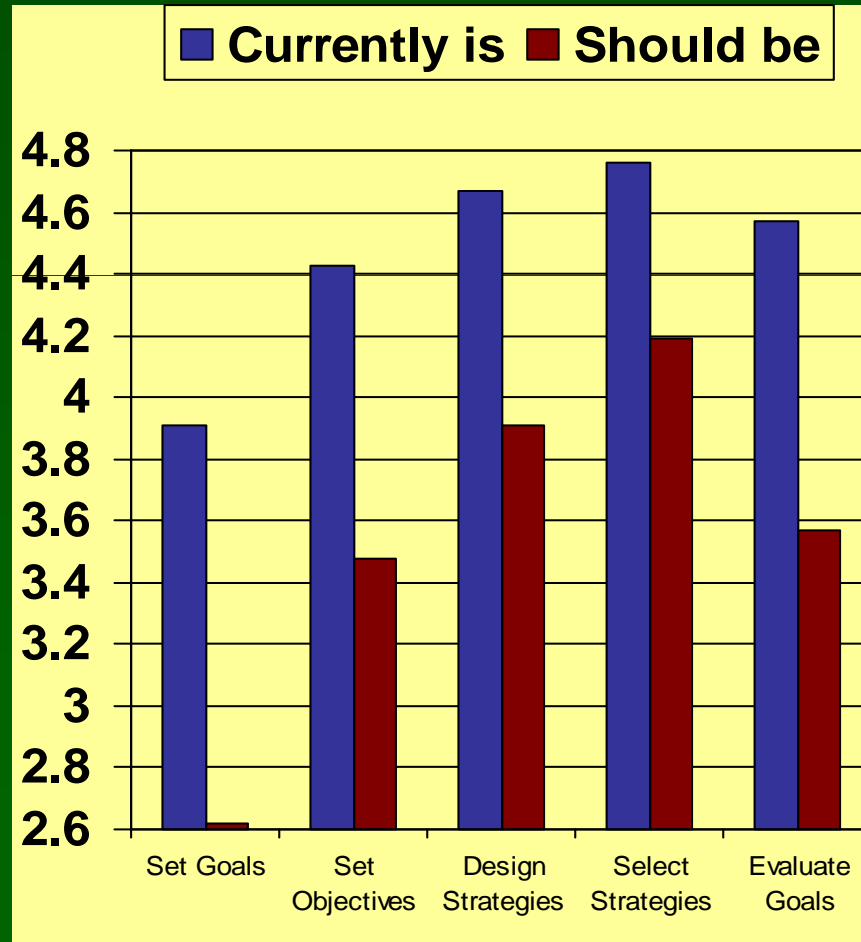
Separating Values Choices & Technical Choices in Virginia

Planning Process

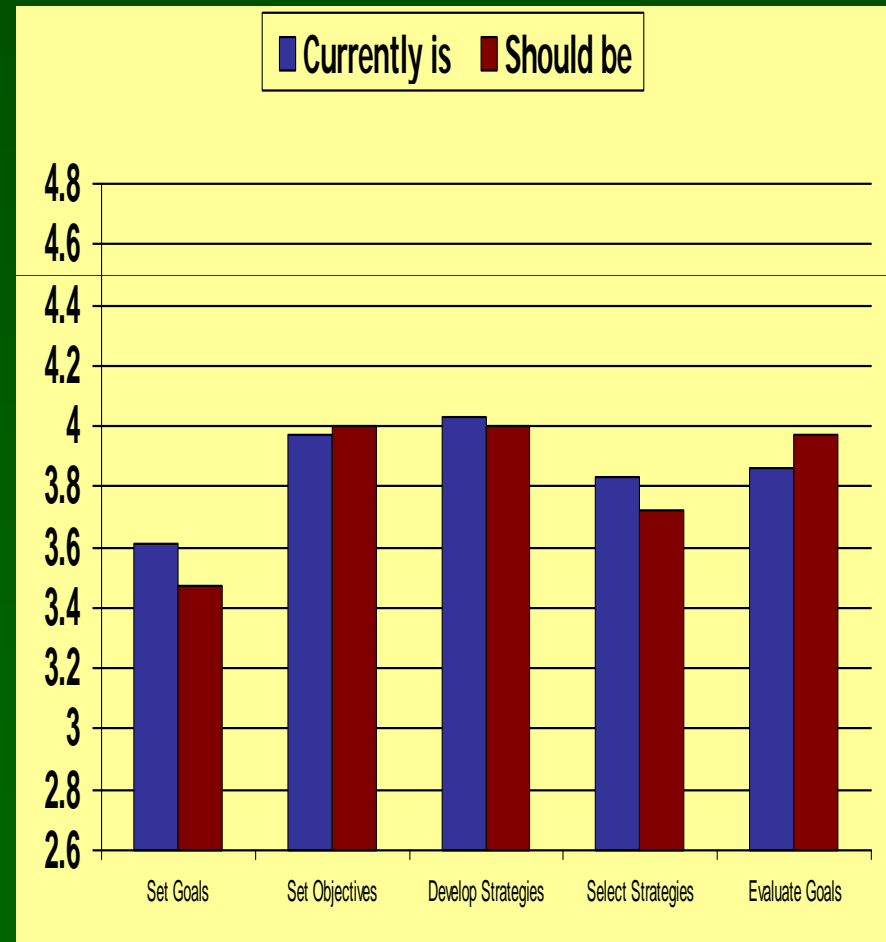


VA Professionals' Views Changed Dramatically

VDGIF 2000



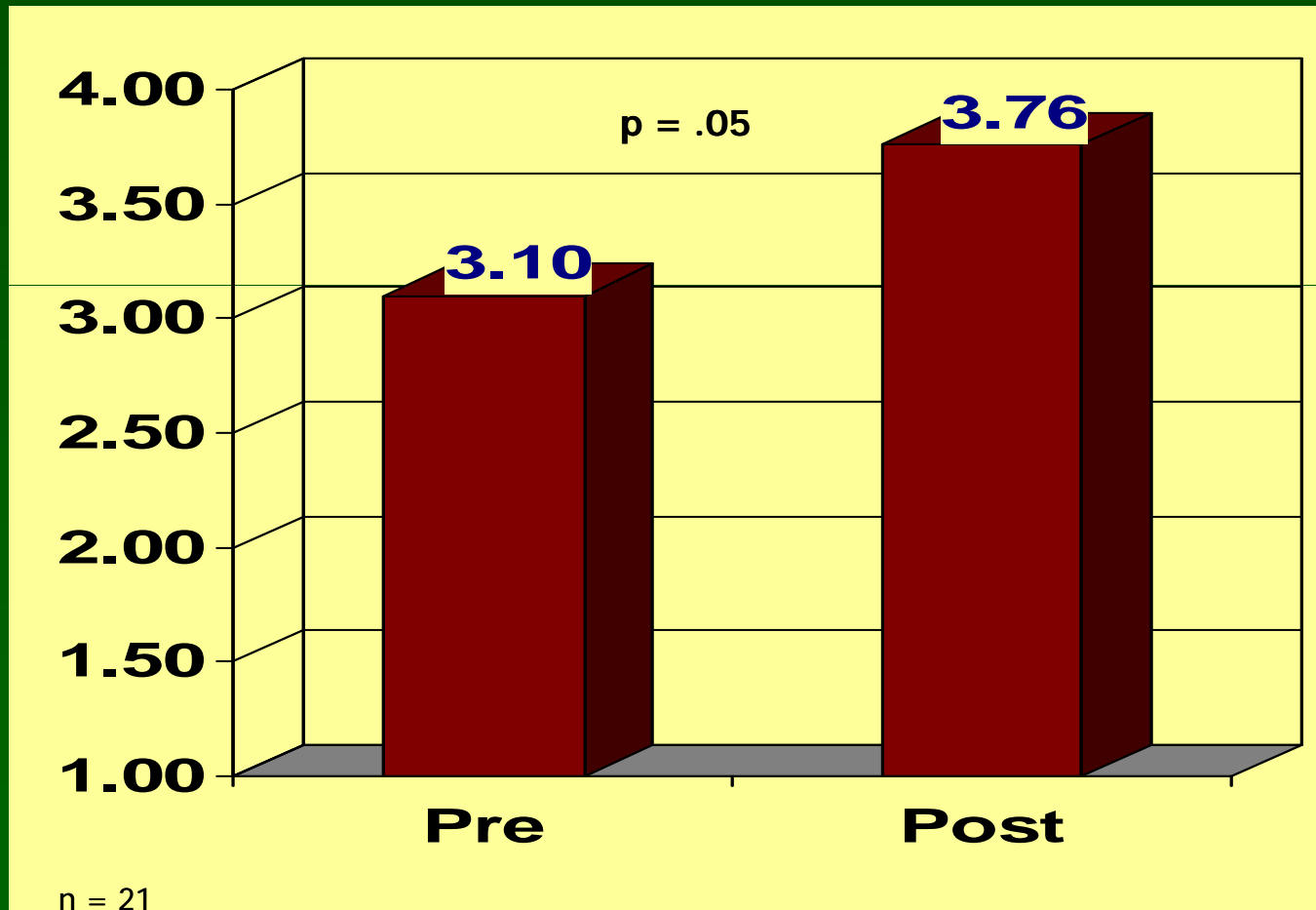
VDGIF 2006



Scale: 1 = mostly a public decision, 2 = shared decision, public opinion more important, 3 = shared decision
4 = shared decision, professional opinion more important, 5 = mostly a professional decision

Professionals' satisfaction with the process

I am uncomfortable having goals for wildlife management based on stakeholder values



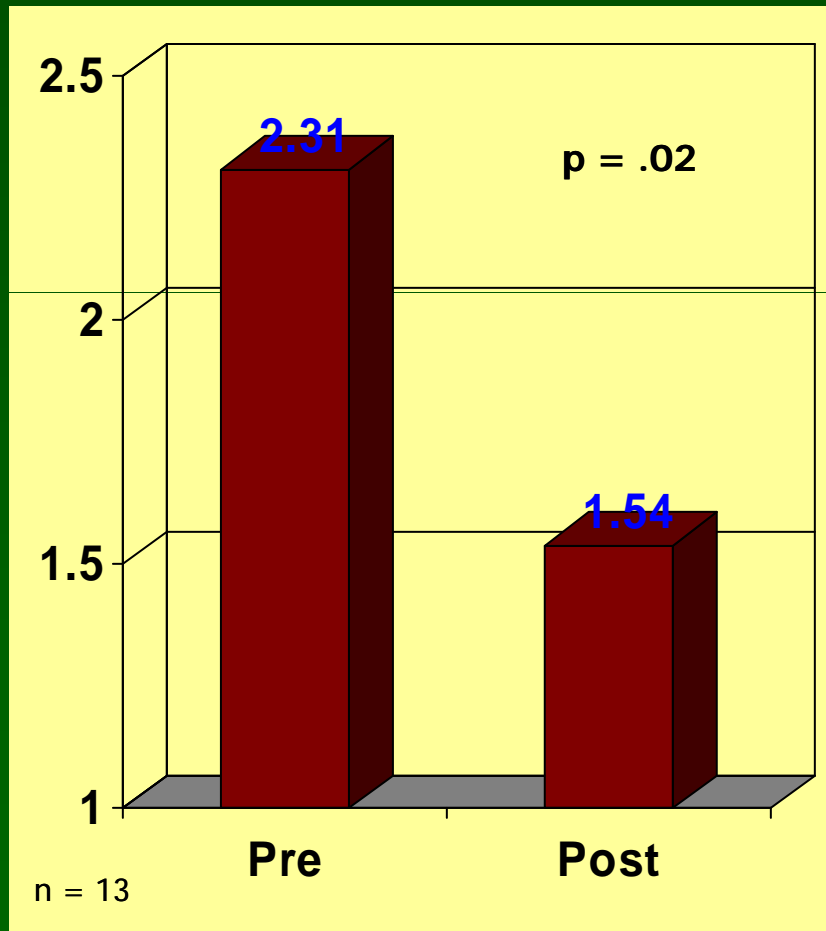
Response scale: 1 = Strongly agree, 5 = Strongly disagree

Lafon, N. W. 2002. Evolution of stakeholder knowledge, attitudes, and opinions throughout a participative process to develop a management plan for black bears in Virginia. M.S. Thesis. Virginia Tech.

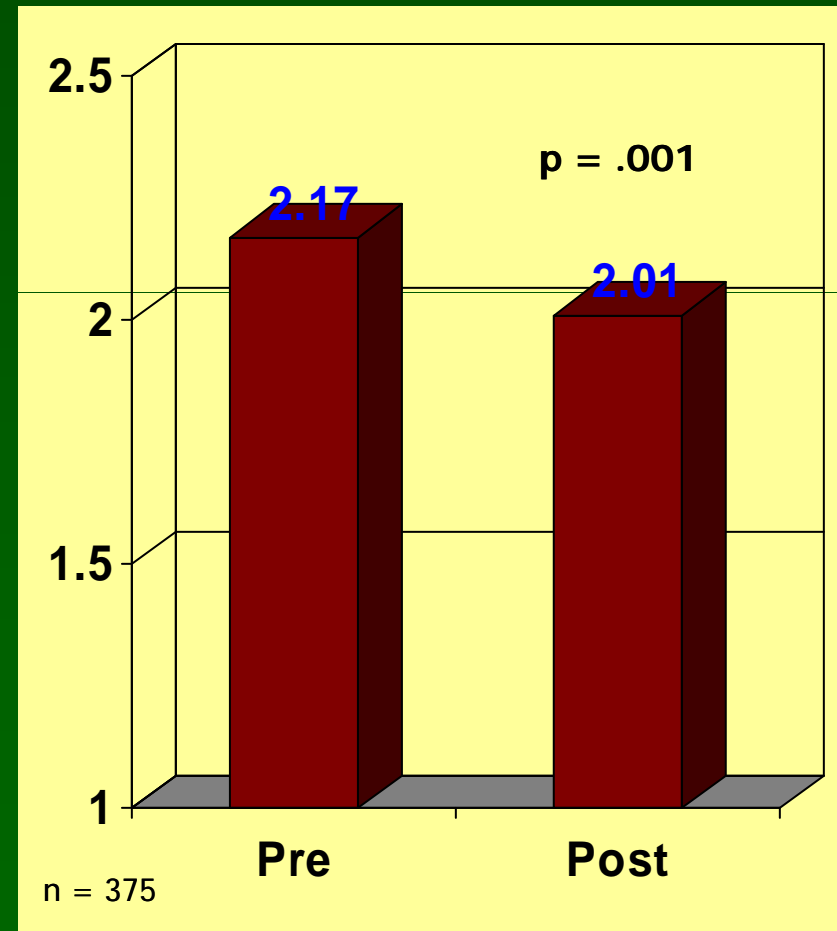
Stakeholder Satisfaction with the Process

I believe that VDGIF manages Virginia's black bears well

Stakeholder Advisory Committee



Members of Stakeholder Groups

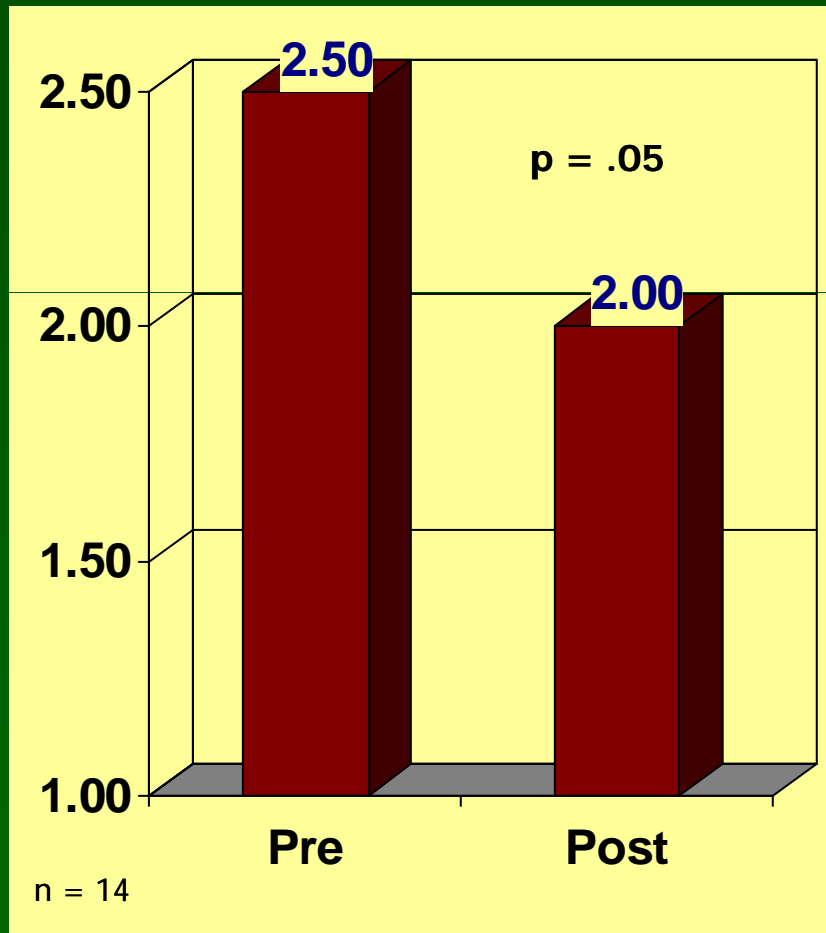


Response scale: 1 = Strongly agree, 5 = Strongly disagree

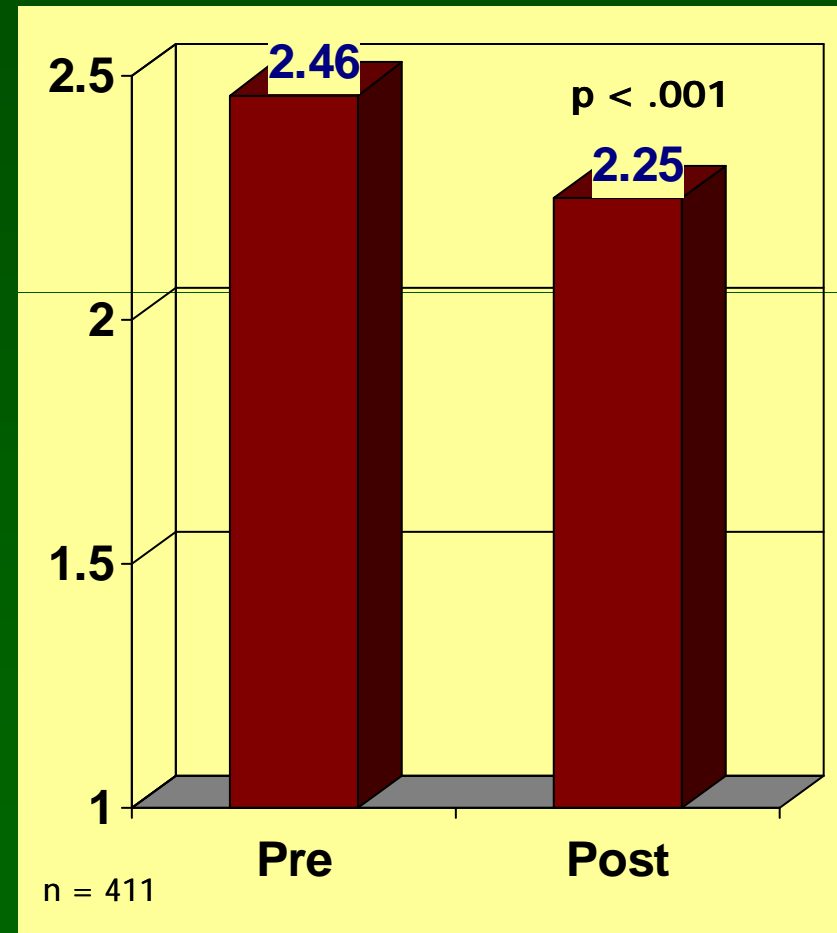
Stakeholder Satisfaction with the Process

I believe that VDGIF fairly considers the concerns of all interested parties...

Stakeholder Advisory Committee



Members of Stakeholder Groups



Response scale: 1 = Strongly agree, 5 = Strongly disagree

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Hunters were most supportive of involvement of other interests

Percent of each stakeholder group that believed involvement was important

Primary concern for bears and bear habitat



Producers with bear damage



Hunters (dogs/no dogs)



Hunters **Beekeepers** **TNC**

Determining What is in the Public Interest...

- Will always be difficult when the stakes are high
- Stakeholder and professional satisfaction increases when--
 - Public involvement is focused on making value choices—don't ask stakeholders to make technical choices
 - Professional involvement is focused on making technical choices—don't ask professionals to make public values choices

Separating Values Choices & Technical Choices

Planning Process

