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# THE HUMAN DIMENSIONS *of* WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

**Susan Jacobson** received a USDA Honor Award for Excellence in 2002 for pioneering research and education concerning the human dimensions of wildlife management.



Since 1987, Susan Jacobson, a professor of wildlife ecology and conservation in UF's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, has conducted pioneering research on the human dimensions of wildlife management with a focus on promoting sound resource management through environmental communication and education.

"My research provides the interdisciplinary data necessary for natural resource managers to understand and measure over time the human context of their management objectives," Jacobson said. "My work aids in the design of effective communication strategies to involve the public and key stakeholders."

Some of her findings are published in her book, *Communication Skills for Conservation Professionals*, which received outstanding reviews in the *Journal of Wildlife Management* and other professional publications. The latest edition of the monograph on wildlife techniques, published by The Wildlife Society, includes a new section by Jacobson on communications as a recognized strategy for effective wildlife management.

Grant support from the U.S. Department of Defense provided the opportunity to work with the natural resource division at Eglin Air Force Base in northwest Florida to test relationships between communication techniques and new ecosystem management mandates. A key result was education materials that increased land management awareness among more than 15,000 Eglin AFB visitors and more than a half million residents in surrounding areas.

In 1999, a grant from the Florida Advisory Council on Environmental Education provided the opportunity to work with an interdisciplinary team, including scientists from The Nature Conservancy and the Florida Division of Forestry, to research public perceptions about prescribed fire on public lands. The resulting extension program and materials were used to train several hundred agents and reached more than two million Florida residents through mass media.

Research supported by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission on boaters' knowledge, attitudes and behavioral intentions toward manatee conservation and management provided a framework for public educational interventions. Jacobson and her graduate students worked with the Florida Marine Research Institute to assess the development of educational materials for boaters. Her current work with the commission identified barriers to implementing an adaptive ecosystem management program on their 26 wildlife management areas throughout Florida.

Another study in North Florida helped expand the role of agricultural lands and farmers in environmental stewardship. Her survey results explain the basis of producer opinions and knowledge about birds, pest management and land management, and provide insight into new practices that can be successfully implemented on Florida farms in Central and North Florida.

Jacobson's work on resource management problems also includes international work. She has studied the failure of environmental and development initiatives in Africa and other developing nations to achieve conservation objectives. She has graduate students working in Uganda, Kenya, Zambia, and Central America analyzing the outcomes of large-scale resource management efforts.

The studies, built on Jacobson's systems model for the design and evaluation of environmental management education programs, have been adopted in a dozen countries. Her book, *Conserving Wildlife: International Education and Communication Approaches*, highlights this approach and offers innovative solutions to many human dimension challenges facing resource managers.

Jacobson also has been active in developing curricula and training opportunities for students as graduate coordinator in the wildlife ecology and conservation department and through interdepartmental programs. As co-director of UF's Center for Environmental Education, she developed in 1999 a new graduate certificate in environmental education and communications with faculty from 10 departments. A dozen students have been awarded the certificate each year.

As director of the Program for Studies in Tropical Conservation, Jacobson collaborated with faculty in eight departments to obtain more than \$300,000 in outside support to offer a competitive grants program in tropical conservation and sustainable development open to all UF graduate students. She was a co-investigator on a National Science Foundation training grant for more than \$2 million focused on tropical forest management. Last year, Jacobson obtained almost a half-million dollars in funding to provide fellowships in tropical conservation biology to students from developing countries.

In recognition of Jacobson's outstanding accomplishments, she received a UF Research Professorship in 1999. A popular teacher, Jacobson received the UF/IFAS College of Agricultural and Life Sciences Teacher of the Year Award in 1996. ■

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—SUSAN JACOBSON