

# Research Summary



**Montana Fish,  
Wildlife & Parks**

## Selected Findings from Montana's Becoming an Outdoors Woman (BOW) Program Assessment (2009)

HD Unit Research Summary No. 30

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Becoming an Outdoors Woman (BOW) is an international educational program that provides women with opportunities to learn outdoor skills in a non-threatening environment. The first BOW program was offered in Wisconsin in 1991. Montana offered its first BOW program in 1994.

Managed by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP), Montana's BOW program has helped approximately 1,200 women discover and cultivate new outdoor interests by teaching them the skills they need to be more confident and competent in the outdoors.

BOW offers a hands-on learning experience, provides the necessary equipment, and engages knowledgeable instructors. Montana's BOW program offers multi-day, multi-topic, and single day, single-topic in-depth experiences. BOW is committed to helping women discover and cultivate new outdoor interests and equipping them with the necessary skills. Participants say the supportive environment is conducive to learning new skills, making friends, and having fun.

In Montana, one-third of the program's activities are focused on fishing related activities, one-third on hunting related activities, and one-third on non-fishing/hunting outdoor activities such as hiking, camping, canoeing, snowshoeing, plant identification, dutch oven cooking, etc. The main goal of the workshops is to encourage women to participate in hunting, angling, and other outdoor activities by teaching them the skills they need to enjoy them.

### **SURVEY GOALS – HOW IS BOW MAKING A DIFFERENCE?**

To evaluate the success of the BOW program, FWP conducted a survey of randomly selected past participants. The goals of the survey were to:

- 1) *Determine whether or not BOW workshop participants have increased their level of participation in outdoor activities since attending a workshop. (Is BOW creating new outdoor users?)*
- 2) *Determine if the BOW program is helping to enhance hunting and fishing recruitment and retention in Montana.*

- 3) *Determine whether participants have encouraged friends and/or family members to spend more time doing outdoor activities. (Are women using their skills to train children, grandchildren, and/or increase family outdoor activities?)*
- 4) *Examine participant's motivation for enrolling in a BOW workshop and determine if the workshop met those expectations.*
- 5) *Determine participants' understanding and attitudes toward FWP as it relates to natural resource-based outdoor recreation management and sponsorship of the BOW program.*

### **SURVEY METHODS**

The BOW survey was an online survey conducted in October 2009 using Survey Monkey, a professional online survey tool established in 1999. Four hundred women who have participated in a BOW one-day or three-day workshop over the past ten years, and for whom FWP had an email address, were randomly selected to participate in the online survey. An additional 400 randomly selected participants without email addresses were sent a mail back version of the survey. In total, N=324 past BOW participants completed the survey.



# SURVEY RESULTS

Participation in Montana’s BOW program has increased women’s fishing & hunting participation, and increased women’s involvement in other outdoor activities.

## FISHING

Thirty-nine percent (39%) of the participants attended a fishing class at BOW.

- 92% stated that “attending BOW helped improve my fishing skills.”
- 86% stated that “attending BOW helped improve my confidence to go fishing in the future.”
- 23% stated they had fly fished, eight percent had bait/lure fished, and four percent had ice fished in the past 12 months as a **direct result** of the BOW program.
- 25% stated they frequently fished before attending BOW and after attending BOW that percentage increased to 41%.



## HUNTING

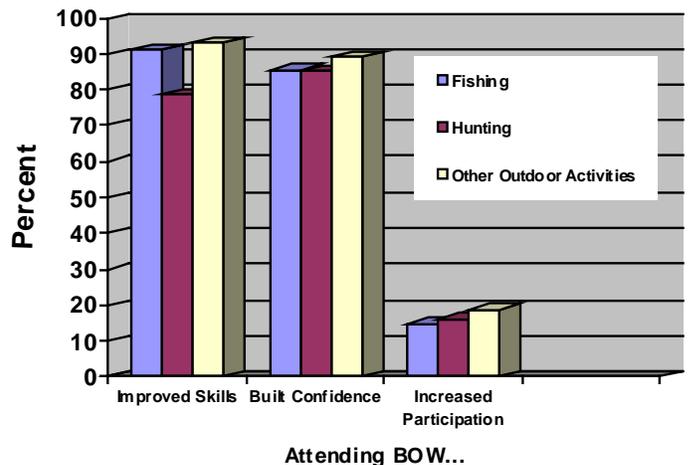
Thirty-eight percent (38%) of participants attended a BOW hunting related class (e.g. basic gun safety, rifle or shotgun shooting, deer/elk hunting, upland game bird hunting, waterfowl hunting, and turkey hunting).

- 80% stated that “attending BOW helped improve my hunting skills.”
- 86% stated that “attending BOW helped improve my confidence to go hunting in the future.”
- 22% stated they had participated in shooting sports, 13% had gone upland bird hunting, 3% had gone waterfowl hunting, and 6% had gone deer/elk hunting in the past 12 months as a **direct result** of the BOW program.
- 32% stated they had frequently hunted before attending BOW and after attending BOW that percentage increased to 46%.

## NON-FISHING/HUNTING OUTDOOR RECREATION

Seventy-seven percent (77%) of the participants attended a non-fishing/hunting outdoor recreation skills class at BOW.

- 93% stated that “attending BOW helped improve my non-fishing/hunting outdoor skills.”
- 89% stated that “attending BOW helped improve my confidence to participate in non-fishing/hunting outdoor recreation activities in the future.”
- 20% stated they had gone snowshoeing, 19% had gone backpacking/hiking, 17% had dutch oven cooked, 16% had used their knowledge to identify birds, and 15% had gone kayaking as a **direct result** of the BOW program.
- 51% stated they had frequently participated in non-fishing/hunting outdoor recreation activities before attending BOW and after attending BOW that percentage increased to 68%.



## REMOVING BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

**The BOW program in Montana has helped remove significant barriers to women’s participation in outdoor recreation activities by teaching women skills and providing hands-on outdoor experiences.**

**Table 1.** Response to: “What were barriers to you participating in outdoor recreation activities **BEFORE** and **AFTER** attending BOW?”

	<u>Before BOW</u>	<u>After BOW</u>
Not sure how to become involved in the activity	50%	16%
Fear of looking stupid or unskilled	40%	9%
Being the only female in the group	14%	5%
Fear of getting hurt while participating	13%	6%
Fear of rejection (e.g., not fitting in, etc.)	8%	3%

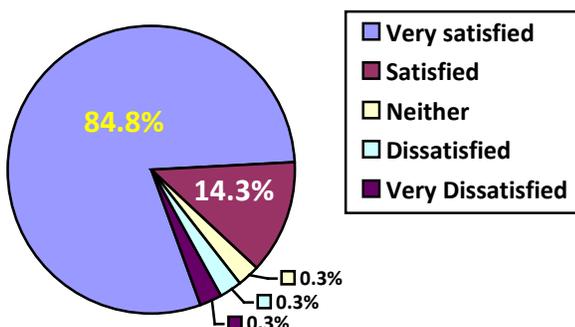


*I know I can... I know I can.*

## OVERALL SATISFACTION

**A 99 percent satisfaction rating indicates the BOW program in Montana is doing an excellent job of meeting the expectations of its diverse participants.**

**Figure 1.** Response to: “How satisfied were you with the BOW workshops you attended?”



What participants liked most about their BOW experience:

- 94% Learning new skills
- 67% Being with people who have similar interests
- 65% Gaining confidence in myself to participate in outdoor activities
- 64% The instructors
- 55% The variety of classes
- 43% Making new friends
- 33% Getting away from family/work responsibilities

Respondents said that BOW was an overwhelmingly positive experience that left them feeling good about the program classes, presentations, instructors, facilities and overall organization.

After attending BOW, 90% of the respondents said they have encouraged their female friends, children/grandchildren, spouse/significant other, and others to participate in outdoor recreation activities. Furthermore, 86% have encouraged other women to participate in the BOW program.

Ninety-three percent (93%) of survey respondents stated they were aware that Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) sponsors the BOW program and ninety-two percent (92%) felt FWP is doing a good job of coordinating BOW.

## ABOUT THE SURVEY RESPONDENTS

- The top two reasons they participated in the BOW program was to “to learn new skills” (93%) and “to have fun” (82%).
- On average, they participated in two BOW workshops.
- Average age (52 years).
- 23% have children under the age of 18 living at home.
- 33% live in a city of 15,000-50,000 people and 27% live on a farm or in a rural area.
- 57% said the best way to inform them about programs such as BOW is via email.



# DISCUSSION



The purpose of this survey was to assess and evaluate Montana's BOW program. In particular, this survey focused on assessing whether or not attending a BOW workshop(s) translates into

increased participation in fishing, hunting, and other outdoor recreation activities.

The data overwhelmingly indicates that women who have attended a Montana BOW workshop(s) have developed or increased their skills and gained the confidence necessary to participate in a variety of outdoor activities, including fishing and hunting. The Montana BOW program is helping to remove barriers that have traditionally kept women from participating in outdoor recreation activities. These barriers include: (1) uncertainty about how to become involved in an activity, (2) fear of looking stupid or unskilled while participating in an activity, (3) fear of being the only female in the group, (4) fear of getting hurt while participating in an activity, and (5) fear of rejection (e.g., not fitting in).

Overall satisfaction with BOW program in Montana is very high. And, results of the survey demonstrate that past BOW participants are enthusiastic ambassadors of the program. This is reflected by survey results and comments that show past BOW participants are encouraging other women and family members to enjoy a variety of natural resource-based outdoor recreation activities.

Most BOW participants are enrolling in the BOW program to learn new skills and have fun. Results from this assessment indicated that FWP is doing an excellent job of meeting these expectations by offering a quality program with opportunities to learn a diverse array of new skills in a fun, supportive, and non-threatening environment.

In summary, the BOW program in Montana is successfully promoting the mission and goals of FWP by providing quality opportunities for women to appreciate and enjoy the fish, wildlife and park resources of Montana. In doing so, the BOW program is promoting the importance of maintaining the health of Montana's natural environment and the vitality of our fish, wildlife, park resources. 🌲



## MONTANA'S BOW PROGRAM

BOW is a great opportunity for women with no experience or support in outdoor activities to try different things, find out what they like, and become knowledgeable enough to do that activity. For more information about Montana's BOW program, you can contact Liz Lodman by phone at (406) 444-2615 or via email: [lodman@mt.gov](mailto:lodman@mt.gov)

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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## TO OBTAIN COPIES OF THIS SUMMARY

Contact the Human Dimensions Unit of FWP by phone (406) 444-4758, or visit FWP's website at <http://fwp.mt.gov> (and click on the following links..."Doing Business", "Reference Information", "Surveys", "Social & Economic Surveys").

*"I greatly appreciate Montana's BOW Program. The opportunities afforded me in becoming comfortable with myself, my abilities and skills has allowed me to really enjoy and embrace what this great state of ours has to offer outdoors. Thank you!"*

*"BOW is a great opportunity for women with no experience or support in outdoor activities to try different things, find out what they like, and become knowledgeable enough to do that activity."*

*"This program has given me so much more confidence and enthusiasm for the outdoors and it has also given me a chance to try things I would never have thought I'd do."*

**~ Quotes from past Montana BOW participants**