



A social scientist studies people's values, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes (VOBAs). The social sciences include economics, sociology, psychology, anthropology, and a number of other disciplines, each of which has its own background and approaches to studying VOBAs.

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## Dr. Ken Cordell



### Important Scientist Characteristics

To be successful at research, one needs technical skills, patience to carefully observe, and, more than anything, a deep curiosity. A successful scientist can identify what new information is most needed for managing our public lands and forests. A research project should be of interest to the scientist, but also should contribute new, useful information. When designing a new project, I try to focus on what will be most useful in solving problems and improving how natural resources are managed.

### Example of a simple research question I have tried to answer:

What do people value in our natural lands, especially protected wilderness lands?

**Technology or equipment used in research:** The technology I use along with my collaborators involves asking questions of people by calling them on the phone, contacting them by internet and mailing them questionnaires. We use computers in making these contacts, receiving their answers to our questions, and summarizing and comparing the data from their answers.

### • Most Exciting Discovery

• One of my most recent exciting  
• discoveries is that Americans  
• are very interested in, and place  
• value on, our natural resources,  
• such as rivers, mountains,  
• forests and wildlands. Many of  
• the people show this interest  
• by participating in outdoor  
• recreation in areas where these  
• natural resources are prominent.  
• This is called nature-based  
• outdoor recreation and the  
• number of people participating  
• is growing.

### • When did you know you wanted to be a scientist?

• When I graduated from North  
• Carolina State University with  
• a B.S. degree in forestry, I was  
• approached by a Forest Service  
• scientist asking if I would like to  
• do a research study with him.