



Preserving Land, Water, Wildlife And Natural Resources: The Way To Win Americans' Hearts (And Votes!)

Four (4) out of every five (5) American voters are in favor of permanently funding land and water conservation. More than seven (7) of ten (10) say that they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who supports a permanent trust fund.

*"I feel sorry for the people here in 50 or 60 years...
Hardly anything is being done to make sure they have clean air and water."
—South Central Republican Working Man, 50s*

This recent survey of N=1,000 voters, taken nationwide over August 20-22 of this year, reveals that ***American voters are overwhelming enthusiastic about finding a way to improve the quality of our nation's land, water, wildlife and other natural resources.*** Fully 80% of voters say that they favor the proposal to take revenues from offshore oil and gas drilling and create a permanent land and water conservation fund.

Support of this magnitude is just too big to come solely from any one region, or from voters with certain partisan or ideological leanings, or even from one gender or the other. ***Support for setting up a permanent trust fund remains above 74% for every significant regional voter group, as well for every gender, employment status, occupation, age, education, race, ideological and partisan groups.***

That said, we do see some key voter groups who are even more fervently behind this proposal: 83% of voters in Great Lake/Mississippi River border states, 84% of voters in Swing House Districts (as defined by the *Cook Political Report*), 84% of working women, 84% of Moms, and fully 89% of Hispanic voters.

Furthermore, 73% say that knowing that a candidate for the U.S. House or Senate supported such a measure would make them more likely to vote for that candidate in an election.

This effect on voting behavior is stronger among Midwest voters (76% more likely), those in Great Lakes, Mississippi River states (77%), voters in Swing House Districts (76%), and voters in states with Republican Senators running for re-election (77%). It also climbs among working women (78%), blue-collar voters (83%), 18-34 year olds (77%), voters over 70 (76%), younger men (76%), conservative Democrats (85%), Hispanics (80%), single voters (79%), and Parents (76%, with Moms at 78%).

These findings, as well as those detailed below, lead us to the conclusion that voters are ready for their Senators and Representatives to act.



Overview

Besides overall support for creating a permanent land and water conservation fund, three key conclusions stand out in this survey:

1. Voters (including a majority of Republican voters) are concerned and feel a *sense of urgency* about protecting land, water, wildlife and other natural resources for future generations.
2. Voters have more trust in the ability of Congress to *make a difference* when it comes to the environment than they do on the issue of education.
3. Voter *support is through the roof* for specific provisions, like protecting our waterways, parks, and historical sites.

Some other highlights from the survey:

- Eighty-one percent (81%) of voters say that the issue of “protecting land, water, wildlife and other natural resources” is personally extremely or very important to them.
- Fully 67% of voters agree with the statement that “our area is losing more parks, open spaces and natural areas to development every year, and we need to do something about it now or it will be too late for the next generation.”
- Sixty-five percent (65%) of voters agree that “the federal government needs to be doing more to protect open spaces from development by creating more parks and public lands.”
- Sixty-one percent (61%) of voters say conservation funding should be a higher priority than highway and airport funding (combined).

A strong concern and sense of urgency about protecting land, water, wildlife and other natural resources for future generations

Underlying voter support for permanently funding land and water conservation is a deep concern about water quality, open spaces, and our country’s wildlife. The quotes below are just a sample of the types of concerns expressed by respondents.

*“Green spaces...Urbanization taking over land. They’re turning land into asphalt.
We need to save spaces where land can grow.”*
—Southern Republican Woman, 70s

“Clean water... I have a child and hopefully I will have grandchildren who can drink clean water.”
—Central Plains Republican Woman at Home, 50s

*“One would be water and having it improved and maintained...
We are sucking up property in such a fast rate it’s deteriorating everything.”*
—Midwest Independent Man, 40s

“Loss of trees. Loss of open areas that are used for recreation, or open wilderness area.”
—Southern Democratic Working Woman, 18-29

Several findings from this study support this finding, and stress the urgency felt by many Americans about finding ways to protect these resources now:



- Eighty-one percent (81%) of voters say that the issue of protecting land, water wildlife and other natural resources is extremely or very important (45% extremely important, 36% very important).

This issue is particularly important among voters in Swing House Districts (49% extremely important), and Open Senate Seat States (49% extremely important), as well as among women at home (50% extremely), 18-34 year olds (48%), Independent voters (50%), conservative Democrats (56%), Hispanic voters (59%), and white-collar workers (49%).

- Sixty-one (61%) of voters say that the quality of environment over the next twenty years will stay the same or deteriorate.

The belief that things will deteriorate (34%) is stronger in the South (39%), the Mountain States (46%), and the West (including California, at 37%). It is also higher in House Districts with Republicans running for re-election (42%), as well as in the Swing House Districts (42%) and states with an open Senate seat (45%).

Working voters (37% deteriorate), are also more pessimistic about the future of the environment, as are 18-29 year olds (38%), voters in their 40s (39%), younger men (38%), those with more education (college graduates at 39% deteriorate), Hispanic voters (41%), white-collar (39%) and blue collar (37%) voters, and single voters (45%).

- Sixty-seven (67%) of voters agree with the statement that “our area is losing more parks, open spaces and natural areas to development every year, and we need to do something about it now or it will be too late for the next generation.” 54% *strongly* agree. **A majority of Republicans (53%) say that something must be done now.** Only 28% agree “that there are enough parks, open spaces and natural lands preserved in our community right now, and it should be left up to the next generation to preserve more.”

Driving this sense of urgency are urban voters (70%, although suburban voters drive intensity at 57% strongly), working women (76%), 30-39 year olds (73%), those over 70 (68%), college graduates (70%), Independent (70%), Hispanics (76%), white-collar voters (71%), single voters (74%), and Moms (70%).

“There are too many people with too few parks and open space.”
—Mountain States Republican Man, 60s

“If they keep building houses there won’t be enough open land for the wildlife.”
—Southern Conservative Democrat Working Man, 18-29

- Given three choices (highway, airport, and conservation funding), fully 61% of voters say that “protecting land, water, wildlife and other natural resources” should be given the highest priority, followed by highway funding at 26% and airport funding at 5%.

Conservation funding receives significantly higher scores among voters in the West (64%), Great Lakes/ Mississippi River voters (69%), Swing House District Voters (64%), working women (71%), blue-collar voters (73%), voters under 45 (71%), Hispanics (78%), single voters (69%), and parents (72%, Moms at 81%).



For Congress, a “so so” job on environment so far, but now the chance to hit this one out of the park

While voters are mixed about the job that Congress is doing on the environment, they are more likely to trust the federal government (than state or local) with the issue. Furthermore, many voters agree that Congress needs to be doing more to protect open spaces specifically. Finally, more voters agree that Congress can do “a lot” on the problems of loss of resources and overdevelopment than on a variety of other problems tested, including illiteracy and immorality.

- Voters nationwide are evenly split about whether they approve or disapprove of the job the Congress is doing on the issue of the environment, at 42% approve and 42% disapprove.
- While almost half (48%) of voters say that they trust local government to deal with education issues (15% federal), a plurality of voters (34%) say that they trust federal government on the environment
- Sixty-five percent (65%) of voters across the country agree with the statement “that the federal government needs to be doing more to protect open spaces from development by creating more parks and public lands.” Conversely, 26% agree “that the federal government has gone too far in creating more parks and public lands.”

Voters in states with Open Senate Seats (68%) drive the “do more” percentage as do working women (72%), 18-39 year olds (73%), college graduates (70%), Independents (72%), conservative Democrats (72%), Hispanics (78%), white collar workers (68%), single voters (77%), and Moms (73%).

- Seventy-percent (70%) say Congress can do “a lot” about “loss of land, water, wildlife and other natural resources,” and 65% say Congress can do “a lot” about “pollution and overdevelopment.” Conversely, 56% say they can do “a lot” about “illiteracy” and just 30% say they can about “immorality.”

Voters more likely to say Congress can do a lot about *Loss of Land, Water, Wildlife and Natural Resources*- West voters (78%), voters in States with Open Seat Senate races (74%), younger women at home (79%), Independents (73%), Democrats (74%), and white-collar workers (78%).

Voters more likely to say Congress can do a lot about *Pollution and Overdevelopment*- Swing House District voters (73%), those in states with Republican Senators running for re-election (69%), working women (71%), 30-60 year olds (69%), Democrats (73%), Hispanic voters (72%), white collar (69%), blue-collar (68%), and Moms (70%).

“They’re allowing too much land to be developed so the wildlife is squeezed out.”
—Midwest Republican Working Woman, 50s

“The water issue. Clean air... The future generation should be able to enjoy some of the nice things.”
—Northeast Republican Working Woman, 50-59

“I would say that we are wasting our natural resources.”
—Southern Independent Working Woman, 70s



From the Great Lakes to Little-League to Lewis and Clark, support for protecting our land, water, wildlife and other natural resources is through the roof

Specific provisions for protecting America's land, water, wildlife and other natural resources scored off the charts:

- Ninety-four percent (94%) of voters across the country favor “protecting our waterways, such as the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River.”
- Another 94% favor “protecting national parks, open spaces and natural areas.”
- Eighty-six percent (86%) favor “protecting battlefields and other historic sites across the country.”
- Eighty-three percent (83%) favor “restoring and repairing coastal area that have been harmed by offshore oil drilling.”
- Eighty-three percent (83%) favor “restoring rare and endangered species and protecting wildlife.”
- Seventy-eight percent (78%) favor “developing new state and local parks and recreation areas.”

*“Well, I think overpopulation and growth...
We need to preserve more land for national parks, so that developers can't get it.”
—Southern Independent Working Man, 60s*

If these provisions were not convincing enough, a few additional bits of information solidify this mammoth support for land and water conservation.

- Eighty-four percent (84%) of voters say they would be more likely to support the proposal knowing that “putting money into the land and water trust fund will not harm the Social Security trust fund or take money away from the Medicare system.”
- Eighty-two percent (82%) say they would be more likely to support it knowing that “private property owners would not be forced to sell their land if they didn't want to.”
- Eighty percent (80%) are more likely knowing that “the open spaces preserved with the trust fund will make our communities more livable.”
- Seventy-nine percent (79%) are more likely knowing that “a permanent trust fund will allow for a more long-term approach to protecting land, water, wildlife and other natural resources.”
- Seventy-one percent (71%) are more likely knowing that “communities would be compensated for local property taxes lost on the open space that is purchased.”

Conclusions

Protecting land, water, wildlife and other natural resources is the best way to get to the heart of not only what American's care about, but what they believe Congress can actually have an impact on right now. Furthermore, they are willing to reward their Senators and Representatives who support such legislation with their vote on Election Day.

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