

# State Funding for Conservation

Western voters say even with tight state budgets, we should find a way to maintain investments in land, parks, water, and wildlife protection.

Voters in six Western states overwhelmingly agree that “even with state budget problems, we should still find money” to protect their state’s land, water and wildlife. Fully 86% agree with this view, with a majority (53%) strongly agreeing. This view is on par with how voters responded last year when 84% of the electorate called on their state to continue making investments in conservation.

Notably, when asked the same statement about state parks, voters responded in nearly identical proportions as 85% agree their state should find the funds to protect and maintain state parks (51% strongly agree). Support for maintaining funding for conservation more broadly, and for state parks specifically, is strong in every state.

State	Find funds for land, water & wildlife	Find funds for state parks
Arizona	89%	87%
Colorado	86%	82%
Montana	86%	85%
New Mexico	84%	87%
Utah	84%	90%
Wyoming	87%	88%

“Even with state budget problems, we should still find money” to protect their state’s land, water and wildlife



When asked in a different manner, similarly strong proportions of voters in these states say that cuts in funding to these areas in their state are at least somewhat of a problem:



77%

Cuts to funding for state parks, protection of our natural areas and water quality



72%

Cuts to funding for state parks



There is also evidence of support for maintaining or even increasing state funding for conservation in two of these Western states.

- Wyoming voters were provided with an explanation of the Wildlife and Natural Resources Trust and then asked about their support for full funding of the Trust: “Here in Wyoming, the State Legislature created the Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resources Trust in 2005. To date, the Legislature has set aside 95 million dollars in the Trust, so that the interest can be used for protecting fish and wildlife, ranchlands, natural areas and water. But, the Legislature could set aside up to 200 million dollars under current law, without increasing taxes.”

75% support and 22% oppose the State Legislature fully funding the Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resources Trust to preserve fish and wildlife, ranchlands, natural areas and water in the state.



Support is broad-based and widespread throughout the state, including among...

- Men (77% support) and women (73%);
- Voters of all age groups including seniors (69%);
- Republicans (69%), Independents (87%) and Democrats (82%);
- Anglers (78%) and hunters (77%); and
- More than 69% in every major area of the state.

- Colorado voters would opt to keep Lottery funds for conservation, rather than re-dedicating Lottery funds to education. Centennial state voters were provided with some background on how Lottery funding is handled now and asked about how this should be dedicated in the future: *“Today, state lottery funds are distributed around Colorado for natural areas, wildlife habitat, land along rivers and streams, state and local parks, trails, and nature education. If Lottery funds exceed a certain amount in any given year, the additional money goes to a kindergarten through twelfth grade school construction fund. Knowing this, would you prefer to...”*



**76%**

Continue to have Lottery funds distributed to protect natural areas and to school construction



**15%**

Eliminate this source of funding for land and water conservation and school construction, so that all Lottery funds are redirected to the general state education budget





Voters across the political spectrum and throughout the state indicate they would prefer to keep Lottery funding for its current purposes rather than redirecting it to education. This view is dominant with every sub-group of voters, including:

Conservatives (72% support), moderates (75%), and liberals (81%);  
Anglers (78%) and hunters (79%);  
Whites (76%) and Latinos (80%);  
Men (82%) and women (70%);  
Tea Party Supporters (73%);  
Republicans (74%), Independents (74%) and Democrats (78%); and  
Voters in the Denver metro area (75%), Colorado Springs area (65%),  
Eastern Plains (76%), and Western Slope (82%).



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**For the complete 2012 Conservation in the West Poll findings and more information visit:** [www.stateoftherockies.com](http://www.stateoftherockies.com).

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