

Conservation and Public Lands in the West

By the largest margin to date, Westerners want their Member of Congress to place more emphasis on protecting public lands versus allowing more energy production on those lands. They also offer overwhelming support for several conservation proposals, including 30x30, creating new national public lands, and minimizing light pollution.

Seven-in-ten (70%) Western voters would prefer that their Member of Congress emphasize conserving public lands, rather than encouraging energy development on public lands—the largest majority support for conservation we have recorded. By the largest margin ever, Westerners want Congress to focus on “ensuring we protect sources of clean water, our air quality, and wildlife habitat while providing opportunities to visit and recreate on our national public lands” (70 percent) versus “ensuring we produce more domestic energy by maximizing the amount of national public lands available for responsible oil and gas drilling and mining” (26 percent).

2019

2020

2021

2022

2023

2024

Ensuring we protect sources of clean water, our air quality and wildlife habitat while providing opportunities to visit and recreate on our national public lands.

65% 67% 69% 67% 68% 70%

Ensuring we produce more domestic energy by maximizing the amount of national public lands available for responsible oil and gas drilling and mining.

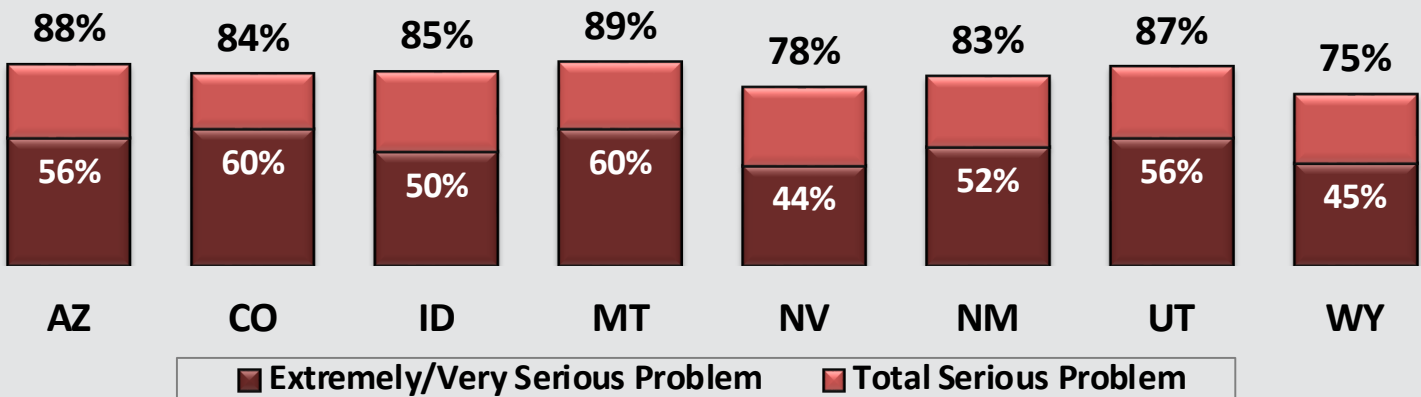
24% 25% 27% 28% 26% 26%

For the first time, prioritizing conservation over maximizing energy production receives majority support across the political spectrum (52% conservation among Republicans, 72% among Independents, and 89% among Democrats). Younger voters under 35 (81 percent conservation), women (76%), and voters of color (75%) are also some of the strongest sub-groups to say the Member of Congress should prioritize conservation over energy production on public lands. Additionally, majorities favor conservation in every type of community, including in rural areas (63 percent).



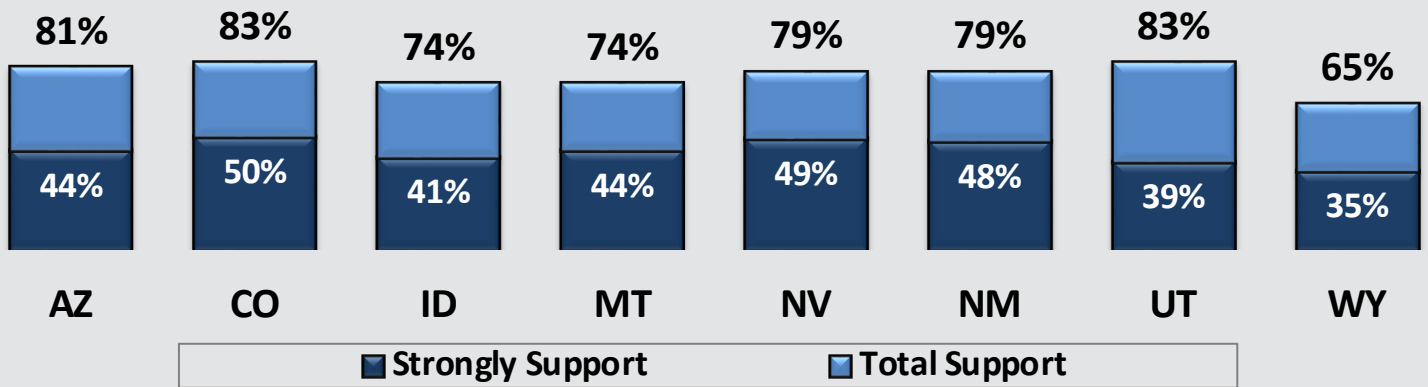
Western voters are more intensely concerned about the loss of natural areas than at any time in the past 14 years. Overall, more than four-in-five Westerners (85 percent) are now expressing concern about the loss of natural areas, characterizing it as a serious problem. Coloradans and Montanans express the greatest concern (84 percent and 89 percent, respectively). Among the five states asked about this issue in 2011 (Colorado, Montana, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming), those saying loss of natural areas is an “extremely” or “very” serious problem is at all all-time high – 57 percent, up 21 points from 2011. This big jump in concern may be playing a role in the overwhelming support for land conservation evident throughout this survey.

Loss of natural areas

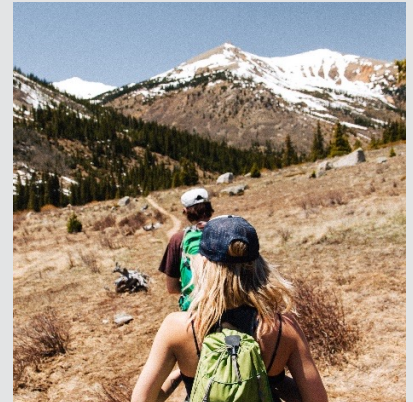


Voters in every state overwhelmingly support achieving a 30 by 30 conservation goal. Eight-in-ten (80 percent) support conserving 30 percent of land and inland waters in America, and 30 percent of its ocean areas by 2030, with overwhelming support across party lines. A solid 68 percent of Republicans, 83 percent of Independents, and 91 percent of Democrats support the 30 by 30 conservation proposal.

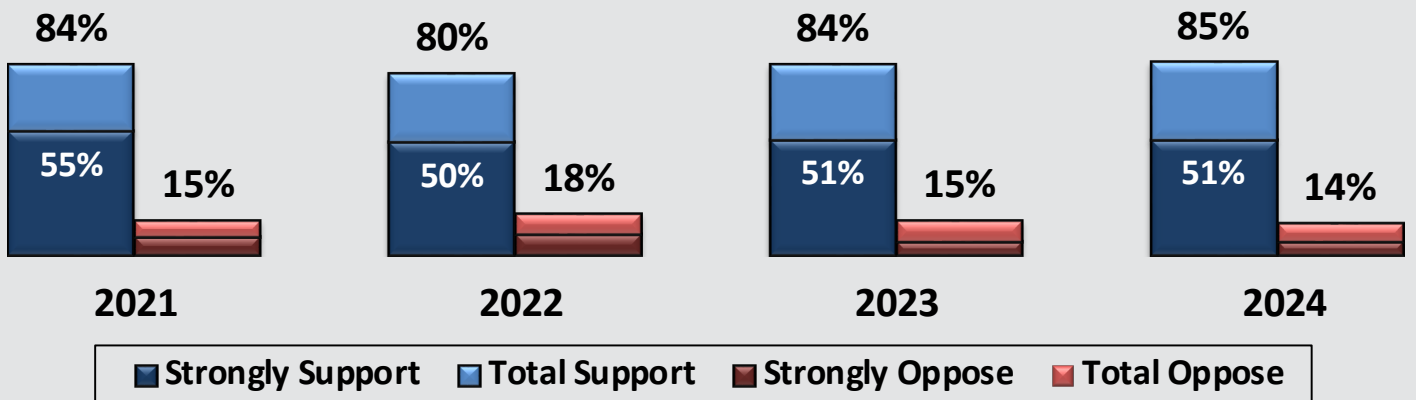
30x30 Conservation Goals



Westerners are also heavily supportive of creating new national parks, national monuments, national wildlife refuges, and tribal-protected areas to protect historic sites or areas for outdoor recreation. More than four-in-five (85 percent) support the creation of additional public lands, including a majority (51 percent) who “strongly” support it, consistent with the overwhelming support for additional public lands in past surveys.



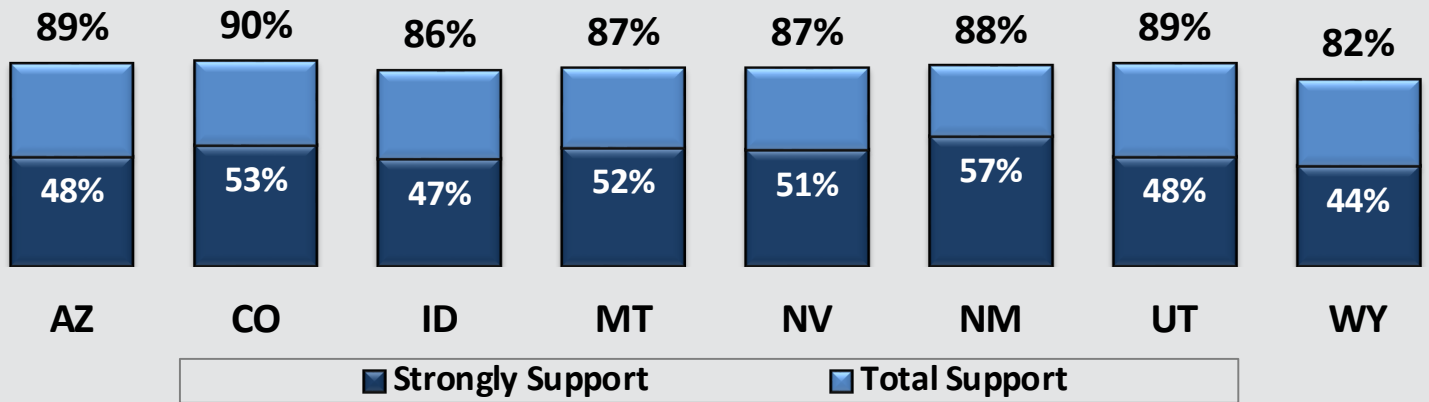
Creation of New National Public Lands



Westerners offer near unanimous support for a “dark skies” proposal, one of the most popular potential policies examined. Almost nine-in-ten (89 percent) voters in this region back “managing public lands to ensure there are more outdoor places free of light pollution to see the stars at night.” Every single state supports this “dark skies” proposal by 82% or more, and there is deep agreement across party lines with 82% of Republicans favoring it alongside 89% of Independents and 96% of Democrats.



Managing Public Lands to Ensure More Outdoor Places Free of Light Pollution to See the Stars at Night



A Colorado-specific proposal to protect public lands around Dolores River Canyon continues to be overwhelmingly embraced. Consistent with prior years, 92 percent of Colorado voters support the proposal to protect “existing public lands surrounding the Dolores River Canyon in western Colorado to conserve important wildlife habitat and safeguard the area’s scenic beauty and support outdoor recreation.”

Dolores River Canyon Proposal in Colorado

