

Public Lands

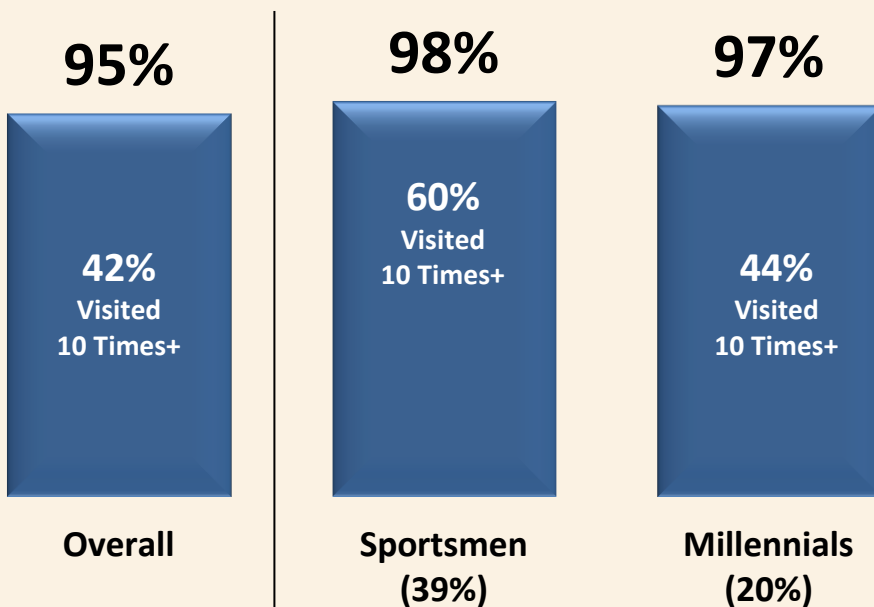
The 2015 survey clearly demonstrates that Westerners value our national public lands. They visit them regularly and prioritize preserving them for future generations.

A stunning 95% of Western voters have visited public lands managed by U.S. government agencies, such as national parks and national forests, in the last year.

Voters in the West ought to have frequent visitor cards, they have been to public lands managed by U.S. agencies so many times. In every single state, the proportion of non-visitors is in the single digits. Instead, we see incredible use of these public lands, such as national parks, national forests, national monuments, national wildlife refuges or BLM lands. A majority (58%) of voters say they visit public lands six or more times per year, with 42% visiting more than 10 times per year.

Not surprisingly, sportsmen are the most frequent visitors to public lands: 38% have visited more than 20 times per year and an additional 22% visiting more than ten times each year. Fully 98% - virtually all sportsmen – have visited public lands in the last year.

Millennials (voters age 18-32), are also more likely than the overall electorate to visit public lands, with 62% of these younger voters visiting six or more times per year.



■ Visited Public Lands in Past Year

Voters' top priority for public lands is protection and conservation, over economic.

When asked how important certain priorities for public lands are to them, protecting and conserving natural areas for future generations and protecting and conserving wildlife habitat top the list.

Protecting public lands for future generations is a top priority across every state in the West. Republicans, Democrats and Independents select it most often as the highest priority, and the same is true for all age groups and ethnic backgrounds.

Access to public lands for recreational activities is especially important to hunters and anglers.

Seventy-nine percent (79%) of sportsmen say access to public lands for recreational activities is very important to them, compared to 67% of those who do not identify as hunters or anglers.

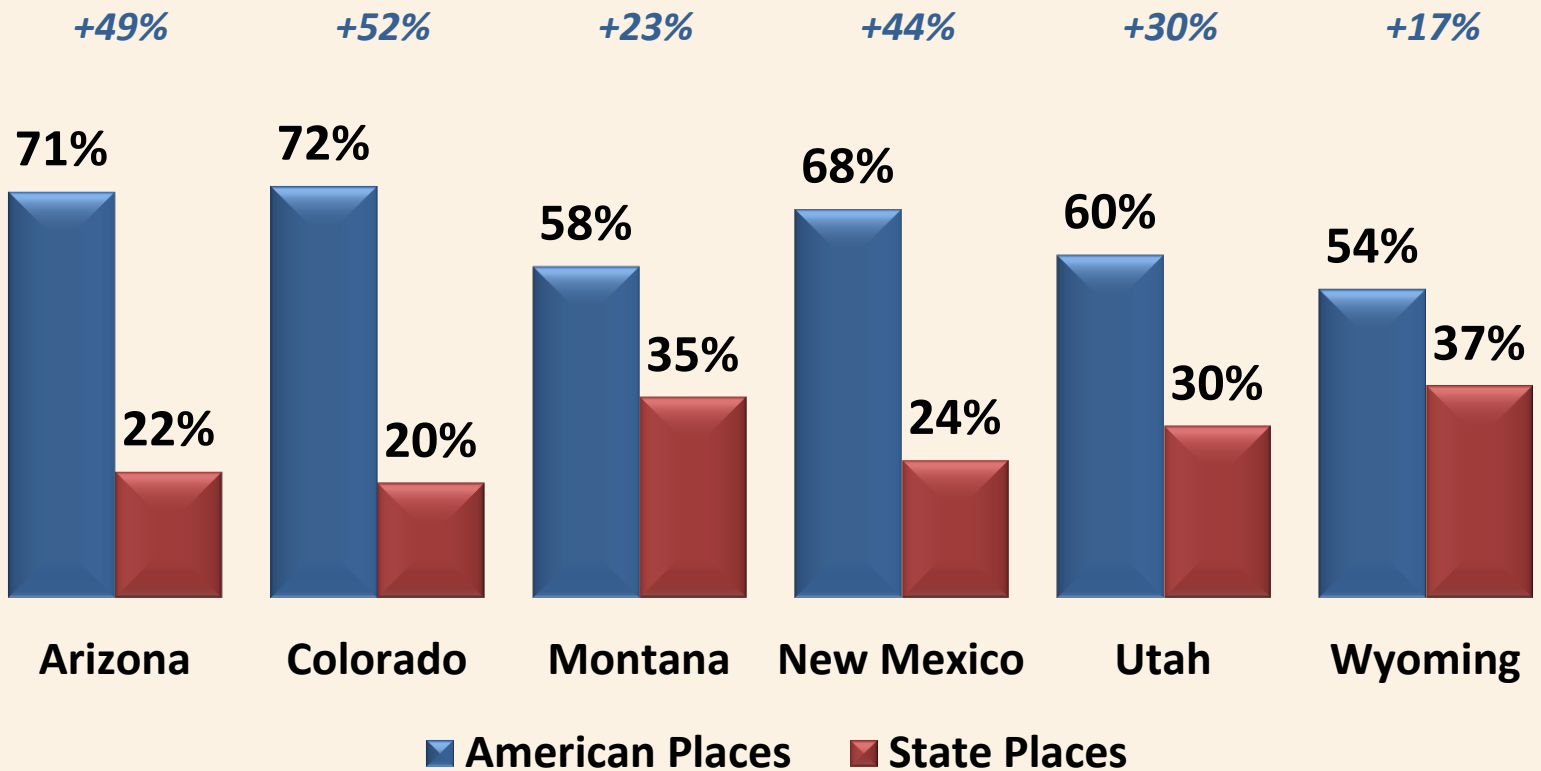
Priorities for Public Lands Ranked By Very Important	Very Important	Total Important
Protecting and conserving natural areas for future generations	82%	96%
Protecting and conserving wildlife habitat	75%	95%
Making sure that rangers have the resources they need to take care of public lands and provide services to visitors	72%	95%
Ensuring access for recreational activities such as hiking, biking, hunting and fishing	71%	96%
Making sure resources such as oil and gas, minerals or coal are available for development and mining	40%	72%
Making them available for livestock grazing	35%	76%



Voters in the West see these lands managed by federal agencies as American places that belong to everyone in our country.

More than two-thirds of Western voters (68%) think of public lands as American places that belong to the country as a whole, while just 24% say these lands belong more to the people of their respective state. A majority of voters in every single state, including more conservative states, say that these public lands belong to the country as a whole. In fact, a majority of those who consider themselves to be supporters of the Tea Party movement believe that these lands ought to be considered American places belonging to all, rather than as places belonging to the state in which they are located.

Public Land Position By State



Western state voters see big problems facing these public lands as a lack of resources.

Seventy-two percent (72%) of voters in the West say the lack of resources to properly maintain and care for public lands is a serious problem, with one-third (33%) saying this is an extremely or very serious problem. A majority of voters in every Western state view the lack of resources as a serious problem, with voters in Arizona, Colorado, and New Mexico especially concerned.

This is reinforced by the fact that making sure rangers have the resources they need to take care of public lands and provide services to visitors is the third highest priority when it comes to public lands. The more one visits public lands the more apt one is to cite this as a priority.

Voters' concern over the loss of habitat for fish and wildlife is also seen in their support for greater protection for sage-grouse habitat that is on public lands.



Voters are also worried about the loss of habitat for fish and wildlife, as 69% of voters in the West say this is a serious problem.

Interestingly, this is the exact same proportion of voters (69%) which support BLM establishing stronger protections for sage-grouse habitat. Voters in Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah are especially supportive of plans to further protect the habitat of sage-grouse and other wildlife on their habitat, and a majority of voters in all states support these additional protections.

Sage Grouse Habitat Protections By State

