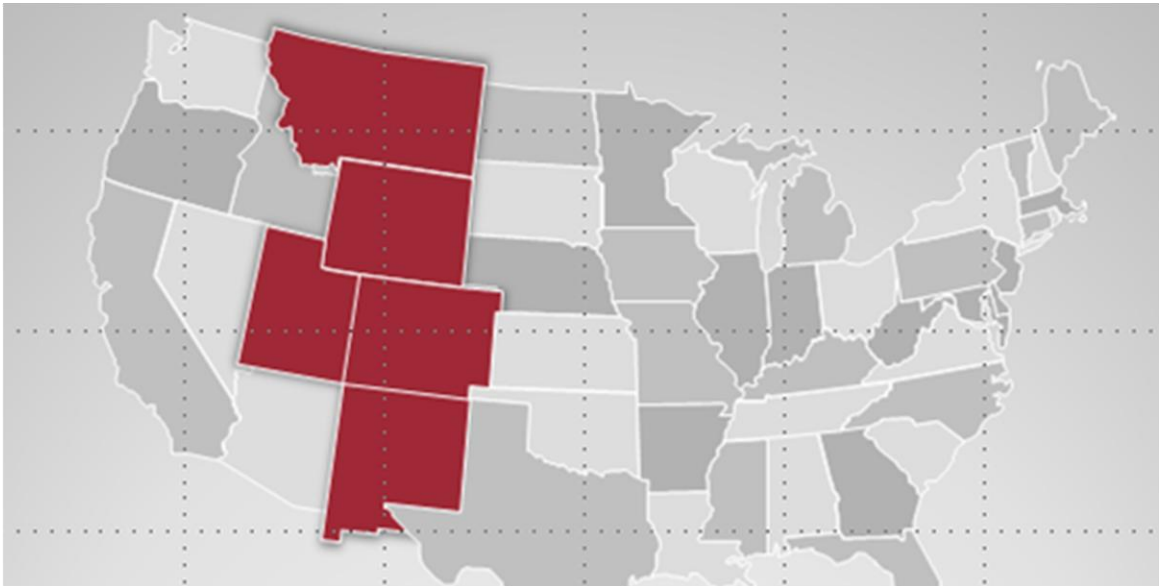


January 2011

Conservation in the West

*A survey of the
attitudes of voters in
five Western states*



LORI WEIGEL



PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES

DAVE METZ

Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates - FM3

Public Opinion Research & Strategy

SANTA MONICA • OAKLAND • MADISON • MEXICO CITY

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STATE OF THE ROCKIES PROJECT
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Conservation in the West

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Public Opinion Strategies
Denver
17145 West 62nd Circle
Golden, CO 80403
(303) 433 4424 (Phone)
lori@pos.org

FM3
Oakland
1999 Harrison St., Suite 1290
Oakland, CA 94612
(510) 451-9521 (Phone)
dave@fm3research.com

OVERVIEW

This survey of 2200 voters throughout five Western states (Colorado, Montana, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming) was conducted by the bipartisan research team of Lori Weigel at Public Opinion Strategies (R) and David Metz of Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (D) in order to examine Western voters' attitudes toward a range of conservation and environmental issues. The survey explored how views of conservation relate to perceptions of state government, budget issues, and the economy in each state. The survey was designed to create a benchmark assessment of core beliefs and broad values that relate to conservation, although a handful of current policy questions and trade-offs were explored as well.

The results of the survey demonstrate that Western voters share broad values when it comes to the environment, despite differing views of state government, budgets, and state leadership. Voters in these five states are more likely to point to something related to the outdoors – be it mountains, wide open spaces, public lands, clean air, or other natural features -- as the thing they like most about living in their particular state or the West more broadly. This is followed closely by their ability to participate in outdoor recreational activities. In fact, nearly nine-in-ten say they would prefer spending a day outdoors to spending a day in a city.

Voters in these five states attach a great deal of importance to having clean water, clean air, natural areas and wildlife as a fundamental ingredient in the good quality of life in their state. Two-thirds of these Western voters view those things as an aspect of life that is fragile and needs to be cared for and protected, rather than as an enduring feature of life that is unlikely to change.

This underlying sense of guarding a fragile yet important part of their lives appears to play a role in how Western voters respond to a range of environmental issues. Two-thirds believe the current laws protecting land, air and water should be strengthened, or at least better enforced. Even when provided with an economic rationale for reducing some of these standards on major employers such as agriculture and construction, three-quarters of Western voters believe the current laws should stand as they are.

In fact, voters in these five states tend to reject the concept that the economy and the environment are in conflict with one another. They overwhelmingly believe that environmental standards and a strong economy are consistent with one another, rather than having to choose one over the other. One area where they see the potential for job growth is increasing the use of renewable energy sources, as two-thirds perceive this to be a job creator for their state. That said, two-in-five blame “too many” environmental regulations for costing their state jobs.

Overall, Western voters indicate more positive impressions of solar and wind power as energy sources than they do for coal or oil. However, this is one area where there is a notable exception: Wyoming residents are generally positive toward *all* energy sources tested. Across all five states, though, voters indicate that they would dramatically increase the amount of their state's electricity needs being produced by renewable sources. They reject the idea that these power sources are too unreliable, and a majority in every state says it is time to start replacing coal with these other energy sources. Once informed of the actual proportion of electricity generation coming from renewable sources in their

state, a majority would be willing to pay at least ten dollars more per month to increase the use of renewable energy in generating electricity.

Air quality ranks as a top tier environmental concern in all of these states, and particularly in Utah, where a majority of 52% volunteered the issue as the most pressing environmental concern in the state. Climate change and global warming, on the other hand, rank below 11 other issues as an environmental problem facing their state. The latter is the most politicized issue tested in the survey, with attitudes about whether to take action on global warming varying dramatically along party lines.

Voters are solidly in support of the EPA requiring reductions in carbon emissions from sources like power plants, cars and factories in an effort to reduce global warming. Our past research would lead us to conclude that voters see auxiliary benefits to addressing carbon emissions and a broader benefit to air quality from such a policy.

The political landscape in which voters are reacting to these issues is one of a unique combination of skepticism and optimism, which varies from state to state. Montana, Wyoming and Utah voters are more positive about the direction of their state, while Coloradans and New Mexicans are evenly divided over how things are going in their states. New Mexicans are the most likely to think their state government is run by a few big interests and are least trusting of state government, yet they express a great deal of confidence and optimism in Governor Martinez (slightly higher than the positive sentiment hovering around new Governors in Colorado and Wyoming).

While many of these states are more financially sound than their neighbors, budget deficits and cuts in funding to state parks and environmental protections are still viewed as serious problems. One of the most resounding affirmative responses in the survey is agreement that “even with state budget problems, we should still find the money to protect” their state’s land, air and water.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

From January 23-27 2011, Public Opinion Strategies and FM3, a bi-partisan polling team, completed 2200 telephone interviews among a randomly selected sample of 600 registered voters throughout the state of Colorado, and 400 registered voters each in Montana, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming, respectively. The margin of overall sampling error is +/- 2.08% at the 95% confidence interval for the total sample; +/- 4.0% in Colorado; and +/- 4.9% each for Montana, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming. For results based on other subgroups, the margin of sampling error will differ.

The “total” numbers for the entire Western region represent numbers that have been statistically weighted to reflect each state’s true share of the regional electorate. Interviews within each state were distributed proportionally by geographic region. Quotas were set for some key demographic variables, and each sample is demographically representative of the electorate for that state.

Interviews were conducted on traditional land line (N=1696) and on cell phones (N=504). A Spanish interviewing option was provided to all respondents.

Percentages may not always add to 100, due to rounding or to the opportunity to offer multiple choices. Values less than 0.5% are indicated by an asterisk (*). “DNR” indicates that a response was not read to respondents, but rather was volunteered.

The survey was written and analyzed by Lori Weigel, partner with Public Opinion Strategies, and David Metz, partner with Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates. Additional project support was provided by Rebecca Kramer, Trip Mullen, and Scott Foster. The survey is being presented in collaboration with the Colorado College “State of the Rockies” project. In a couple of instances, comparisons are made to interviews in these five states from a national survey with Western states oversample conducted on behalf of The Nature Conservancy September 8-13, 2009.

Additional questions about the survey methodology or results may be directed to David Metz, partner with Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates: (510) 451-9521 or dave@fm3research.com ; or Lori Weigel, partner with Public Opinion Strategies: (303) 433-4424 or lori@pos.org.

THE ENVIRONMENT IN TODAY’S POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

The political landscape in these five states is one of a unique combination of skepticism and optimism, which varies from state to state. The survey found that...

- Voters in the states with new Governors at the helm are optimistic about how that individual will fare as their state’s leader. Respondents were asked “which of the following best describes” their feelings about how that person “will do as Governor.” New Mexicans are most likely to gravitate toward more positive terms in their assessment of Governor Susana Martinez, followed closely by Wyoming residents regarding Matt Mead and Colorado residents regarding John Hickenlooper.

Feelings Regarding New Governor

Feeling	New Mexico	Colorado	Wyoming
Optimistic	35%	35%	39%
Confident	26%	18%	19%
Uncertain	14%	22%	23%
Concerned	14%	13%	9%
Pessimistic	9%	8%	4%

- There is a significant difference in attitudes about the general direction of each of these states, as Wyoming and Utah residents are significantly more positive than voters elsewhere in the region.

Direction of the State	Colorado	Montana	New Mexico	Utah	Wyoming
Right Direction	48%	56%	49%	68%	71%
Wrong Track	41%	33%	36%	23%	18%

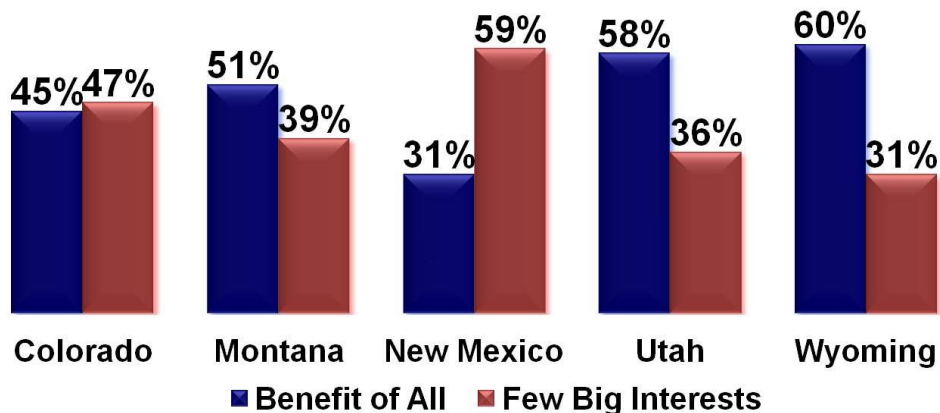
- This same state dynamic holds true for trust in state government as well. Voters were asked to think about how much of the time they think they can “trust the state government” in the capital city “to do what is right.” Majorities in Utah and Wyoming are more likely to place confidence in state government “just about always” or “most of the time,” rather than “only some of the time” or “never.”

Trust in State Government	Colorado	Montana	New Mexico	Utah	Wyoming
Always/Most of Time	41%	41%	33%	57%	62%
Only some of time/Never	58%	58%	65%	43%	36%

Distrust in state government in New Mexico cuts across demographic sub-groups, with majorities of all sub-groups indicating they only trust government some of the time or never. This sentiment is particularly pronounced among conservative Republicans (80%), Tea Party supporters (74%), self-described liberals (73%), and rural residents (70%).

- New Mexico also stands out as the only state in which a majority perceive state government as being run “by a few big interests looking out for themselves” rather than “for the benefit of all the people.” The clear contrast is significant. Interestingly, rural voters across all states are significantly more likely to perceive their state as being for a few big interests (53% few big interests).

Views of State Government by State



- Three-in-ten Western voters identify themselves as supporters of the Tea Party. While expressing strong support for renewable energy, concern about a variety of conservation problems, and a desire to maintain standards for land, air and water, these Tea Party Identifiers still tend to be more skeptical on global warming and a host of environmental issues than other voters.

THE ECONOMY & THE ENVIRONMENT

- Voters overwhelmingly believe that environmental standards and a strong economy are consistent with one another. This view has held strong throughout the economic recession, and is consistent with views expressed in a separate survey of voters in this region in 2009.

Views of Having a Good Economy and Protecting Land, Air and Water



- Across each state and key demographic group, we see a strong sense that choosing between protecting for land and water and having good jobs is a false choice that voters reject.

Views of Having a Good Economy and Protecting Land, Air and Water

	Sub-Group	Can do both	In conflict
Gender	Men	75%	21%
	Women	78%	18%
Ethnic Background	White	76%	20%
	Latino	83%	15%
	All Voters of Color	80%	17%
Party	GOP	75%	21%
	Independent	75%	21%
	Democrat	81%	16%
Key Voter Groups	Tea Party	71%	25%
	Sportsmen	76%	20%
	Environmentalist	78%	17%
	Not Environmentalist	75%	23%
State	Colorado	77%	20%
	Montana	75%	21%
	New Mexico	77%	20%
	Utah	76%	20%
	Wyoming	81%	16%

- There is a limited sense that too many environmental regulations are costing jobs. In Montana and New Mexico, 53% agree with a statement saying that “too many environmental regulations

are a major reason why companies here in (State name inserted) have eliminated jobs.” Agreement drops precipitously in Utah (31%), Colorado (37%), and Wyoming (43%).

- That said, when given an economic rationale for reducing the laws and regulations that are currently in place, the vast majority of voters opt for maintaining them. Voters were told that “as part of efforts to improve their state economy and generate jobs as quickly as possible, some people have proposed reducing protections on land, air and water that apply to major industries, including construction and agriculture,” and then asked whether they would prefer their state reduce those protections or maintain them. As the graph indicates, voters are not supportive of changing the standards in place in their state even to spur the economy:

Protections should be...	Colorado	Montana	New Mexico	Utah	Wyoming
Maintained	79%	73%	72%	78%	78%
Reduced	17%	20%	25%	16%	17%

There is a partisan distinction across the region, although two-thirds (67%) of Republicans, 78% of Independents, and 88% of Democrats say they would prefer to maintain current standards that apply to industries in their states, rather than reducing them in order to boost the economy.

- Three-quarters (76%) of voters in this region also agree with the idea that “we should ensure that undeveloped, public lands” in their state “are kept in their natural state.” Strong agreement stands at 43%, while 21% disagree (6% strongly). At least seven-in-ten voters in every state and of most key voter sub-groups agree with the idea of keeping undeveloped public lands in their natural state.

ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS

- The survey also demonstrates that voters in this region are more likely to opt for stronger laws as opposed to wanting to see them relaxed, but more voters gravitate toward better enforcement of the environmental laws already in place. Respondents were provided with four different statements about environmental laws and asked which came closest to their own view:

The laws protecting our land, air and water are not strong enough.	18%
The current laws are tough enough but should be better enforced.	48%
The current laws and enforcement of those laws should be left as they are.	20%
The current laws protecting our land, air and water and their enforcement are too strict and need to be relaxed.	11%

There is relatively little variation between states in desire for some sort of stepped up action (stronger laws/better enforcement) and those wanting the status quo or less (left as they are/need to be relaxed).

Environmental laws	Colorado	Montana	New Mexico	Utah	Wyoming
Action	65%	62%	66%	65%	62%
Status Quo/Relax	30%	35%	31%	31%	35%

- The desire to ensure enforcement of existing laws is even more strongly held when specifically applied to resource extraction industries. More than four-in-five voters across this region agree that “we need to do more to ensure oil, gas and mining companies follow laws protecting our land, air and water.” Fully 81% agree with this view (56% strongly agree), while 17% disagree. Agreement is statistically the same in every state except for Montana (76% agree, 22% disagree).
- The survey also demonstrates that voters are open to new regulatory initiatives. A solid majority of Western voters indicate support for the Environmental Protection Agency regulating carbon emissions. When asked whether they “support or oppose the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency requiring reductions in carbon emissions from sources like power plants, cars and factories in an effort to reduce global warming,” two-thirds (67%) of Western voters indicate support (43% strongly support). Three-in-ten (30%) oppose this initiative, although much of this is strong opposition (22% strongly oppose).

A majority of voters in every state support EPA requiring reductions in carbon emissions to reduce global warming:

EPA regulation of carbon	Colorado	Montana	New Mexico	Utah	Wyoming
Support	70%	62%	65%	63%	56%
Oppose	28%	34%	33%	34%	39%

There is a strong relationship between partisan and ideological affiliation and support for this policy:

EPA regulation of carbon	Conservative GOP	Mod/Liberal GOP	Independents	Conservative Democrats	Mod/Liberal Democrats
Support	42%	71%	65%	70%	89%
Oppose	54%	26%	32%	29%	10%

- While support for EPA regulation of carbon in order to reduce global warming is fairly high, there is a much more mixed response to global warming in general. Respondents were provided with a four different viewpoints about global warming and asked which one comes closest to their own opinion. As the following graph indicates, voters are about evenly split, with nearly half (48%) opting for a statement that action should be taken, and the other half either taking a wait and see approach or viewing concern about the issue as greatly exaggerated (51%).

Views of Global Warming

	<i>Total</i>	
Global warming has been established as a serious problem, and immediate action is necessary.	24%	48% Total Take Action Now
There is enough evidence that global warming is taking place that some action should be taken.	24%	
We don't know enough about global warming, and more research is necessary before we take action.	19%	51% Skeptical
Concern about global warming has been greatly exaggerated.	32%	

- Core attitudes toward global warming belie one of the most dramatic distinctions based on partisan affiliation and ideology of any issue tested. That distinction is more easily seen when dividing attitudes into a “take action” position (first two statements) or a “skeptical” position (second two statements). Other sub-groups closely related to partisan affiliation (such as main TV news information source) also demonstrate a significant divide in attitudes:

Global Warming View	Conservative GOP	Mod/Liberal GOP	Independents	Conservative Democrats	Mod/Liberal Democrats
Take Action	17%	41%	45%	42%	81%
Skeptical	82%	56%	54%	57%	18%

Global Warming View	Fox News	Broadcast	CNN	MSNBC	Other/None
Take Action	16%	57%	61%	71%	52%
Skeptical	83%	42%	38%	28%	46%

- Based on other research we have conducted on related topics, we could surmise that support for the EPA regulation of carbon emissions likely lies in perceived auxiliary benefits of addressing emissions from power plants, cars and factories. Indeed, air pollution is a prominent environmental concern among Westerners, just edging out water pollution as the most commonly volunteered environmental problem today – as seen in the following graph (percentages exceed 100% as respondents were allowed to volunteer up to three problems in an open-ended question).

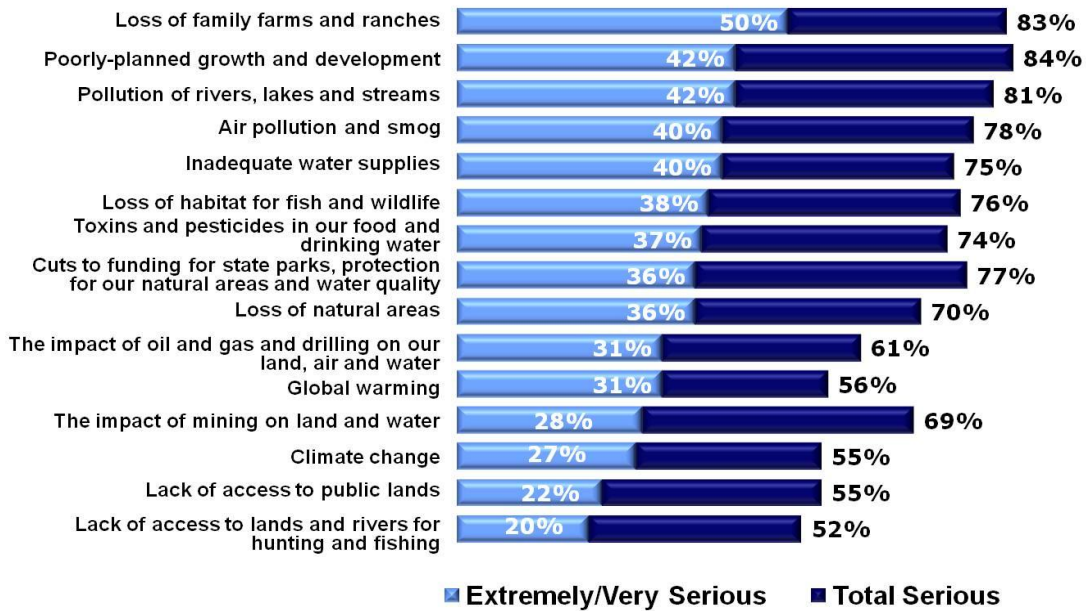
**Most Frequently Volunteered Environmental Problems
(Open-Ended Question – Responses Placed in Categories)**

<i>Problem</i>	<i>% Combined Choice</i>
Air / air pollution / clean air	32%
Water / water pollution / clean water	30%
Water supplies/drought	16%
Energy issues/general	7%
Federal government	7%
Oil/gas drilling	7%
Pollution (general)	7%
Wildlife	7%
Public lands/drilling/development on them	6%
Renewable energy/alternative fuels	5%

Air pollution is a top tier problem mentioned in every state, but stands out in one state: a majority of Utah voters (52%) volunteer air pollution or a similar phrase as the top environmental problem today – nearly double the next highest state (Colorado at 28%).

- Overall, majorities view a wide range of issues as serious problems in their state. Respondents were asked to consider each one and indicate whether they think it is an extremely serious problem, a very serious problem, a somewhat serious or not a problem in their state.

Seriousness of Environmental Problems (Rank Order by Extremely/Very Serious Problem)



ENERGY

- Western voters differentiate between energy sources, holding very positive impressions of solar and wind power, in particular. Respondents were asked to rate a number of different energy sources on a thermometer scale, where zero means they have a cold/very unfavorable feeling toward that energy source, 100 means they have a warm/very favorable feeling and 50 is neutral.

Feeling Toward Energy Source among Western Voters

Energy Source	%100	%76-100	Mean
Solar power	37%	63%	79
Wind power	35%	60%	76
Natural gas	21%	43%	73
Oil	13%	27%	58
Coal	9%	21%	52

- Wyoming voters are much more likely to view all energy sources in a positive light, rather than differentiating between them as is the case in the other four states.

Feeling Toward Energy Source among Wyoming Voters Only

Energy Source	%100	%76-100	Mean
Solar power	33%	58%	75
Wind power	33%	56%	73
Natural gas	28%	53%	78
Oil	24%	45%	72
Coal	21%	43%	71

- Western voters view renewable energy as job creators for their state’s economy. Two-thirds (67%) in this region say that “increasing the use of renewable energy sources like wind and solar power will create new jobs” in their state – five times more than believe it will cost their state jobs (12%). Another 17% think it will not affect jobs and 4% are unsure what impact that would have. The view of renewable energy as a jobs creator is consistent across all demographic, geographic, and partisan sub-groups, but is particularly pronounced among Latino voters (79% say it will create jobs), men in households with incomes under \$40,000 (76%), and those who have lived in their state fewer than 15 years (72%).

- Were it up to voters, the majority of their electricity needs would be met by renewable sources of energy. Respondents were asked “if it were up to you, what percentage of (their state’s) electricity needs would come from renewable sources like wind and solar power?” Notably 22% of respondents indicate that all of their electricity needs would come from renewable sources, while the mean percentage offered by voters across the region was 65%. There was little variation in the mean score by state: Colorado 64%; Montana 66%; New Mexico 68%; Utah 64%; and Wyoming 62%.
- In fact, there is broad agreement with the idea of “replacing coal with other energy sources like wind and solar power,” as seven-in-ten (70%) across the region agree with this concept (45% strongly agree). One-quarter (28%) disagree. A majority in every state agree with this statement.
- There are similar levels of agreement to the idea that “even with modern technology, coal-fired power plants pollute more than other energy sources.” Two-thirds (67%) of Western voters agree with this view (35% strongly agree). Again, one-quarter (27%) disagree.
- Voters tend to reject concerns about the reliability of wind and solar power. One-third (34%) agrees with a statement that “renewable energy like wind and solar power is too unreliable to be a significant part of our energy supply,” but two-thirds (65%) disagree with this view (39% strongly disagree).
- Across these states, the survey also found that voters say they would be willing to pay more per month in order to “increase the amount of our energy coming from renewable energy sources.” In fact, when provided with a range of amounts from 50 cents up to fifteen dollars, a majority of Western voters (54%) say they are willing to pay ten dollars or more per month toward meeting this goal.

Willingness to Pay to Increase Renewable Energy Use by State

Willing to pay...	Colorado	Montana	New Mexico	Utah	Wyoming
Some amount more	87%	88%	91%	89%	85%
\$10 per month or more	55%	52%	52%	53%	46%

There is some relationship between income and willingness to pay among Western voters overall, as higher income households are more likely to be willing to pay higher amounts per month. Overall willingness is well within margin of error across income sub-groups.

Willingness to Pay to Increase Renewable Energy Use by Household Income

Willing to pay...	Less than \$20k	\$20-39,999	\$40,-59,999	\$60-\$79,999	\$80k+
Some amount more	87%	91%	90%	89%	94%
\$10 per month or more	44%	51%	54%	57%	65%

- Finally, voters have a universally positive view of the concept of energy efficiency. Again, respondents were asked to rate their feelings toward the phrase “energy efficiency” on a thermometer scale, where zero means they have a cold/very unfavorable feeling toward that energy source, 100 means they have a warm/very favorable feeling and 50 is neutral. The average score for this phrase was 79, with 31% of respondents rating it the highest possible score of 100. There is little variation across geographic and demographic sub-groups.

THE CONTEXT FOR CONSERVATION

Voters’ views of these environmental policy decisions are grounded not only in their assessment of the problems facing their states and their view of government and the economy, but also in their personal experiences and interactions with the outdoors. The survey provides a great deal of context for these attitudes in this regard as well.

- There is a universal sense that “having clean water, clean air, natural areas, and wildlife” is very important to the quality of life in their state. Fully 87% of Western voters view these elements as extremely (47%) or very (40%) important to quality of life. There is little variation by state or other demographic sub-groups.
- In fact, when given the opportunity to name anything beyond the weather that they like best about living in the Western United States, voters tend to cite connections with the outdoors – be it recreation they engage in or natural features of the land from wide open spaces to mountains to forests. The following graph illustrates the prominence of key categories in what respondents mention, with the larger words more frequently cited concepts:

**Key Themes in Responses to Open-Ended Question
Asking What Voters Like Best About Living In The Western United States**



We present some of the examples of verbatim responses to this question which illustrate these prominent themes from a diverse set of respondents across these five states:

“The mountains. It's a very park oriented state and there's a lot of things to do whether you're seventy-four or seventeen.” – 65+ woman in Colorado

“Fishing, hunting, camping, and wide open spaces. I love to fish. I love to hunt. I enjoy the outdoor recreational opportunities.” – 55-64 year old man in Montana

“The scenery. Just the mountains and the deserts and stuff; I enjoy that. There's just a variety of activities to do; to ski, to hike, snowboarding and camping.” – 25-34 year old woman in Utah

“You have asked the wrong person, I am a writer and I specialize in the west. So, the beauty of the land. The desert. The sky. The colors. The starkness. The open spaces. The natural beauty.” – 55-64 year old woman in New Mexico

“I think the geological differences of Wyoming with the plains and mountains. The wildlife. Because I'm an outdoorsman and a hunter.” – 35-44 year old man in Wyoming

Participants offered similar responses when we asked about individual states, although other themes such as the friendliness of local people and the lack of people (as compared to other parts of the country or other states) also were frequently mentioned concepts.

- The survey also found that Western voters are near unanimous in preferring to spend a day of free time in the outdoors (88%) rather than in a city (9%). This preference for spending time in the outdoors was strong across every state: Colorado 89%; Montana 91%; New Mexico 87%; Utah 88%; and Wyoming 91%.
- There is broad consensus that clean air, clean water, natural areas and wildlife are things which are “fragile,” rather than enduring features of the West. Given two viewpoints about these features - whether they are “an enduring feature of life that that is unlikely to change” or whether they are “a fragile aspect of life here that could change if not cared for and protected,” nearly seven-in-ten opt for the latter viewpoint.

View of Natural Elements in the West by State

Characterization	Colorado	Montana	New Mexico	Utah	Wyoming
Fragile/could change	71%	64%	68%	70%	67%
Enduring/unlikely to change	26%	33%	26%	24%	30%

- This underlying view of nature in the West may be why there is overwhelming agreement that funding to protect land, water and wildlife should be maintained, despite difficult budget situations in many of these states. Fully 84% of voters agree with this sentiment (52% strongly agree). Only 14% disagree with this view. This view is held across the board. For example, 76% of Republicans, 84% of Independents and 93% of Democrats agree their state should still find the resources for these protections, even given difficult budget situations.

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

	Colorado	Montana	New Mexico	Utah	Wyoming
Agree	87%	81%	80%	81%	84%
Disagree	12%	16%	19%	17%	13%

- This view comes at a time when “cuts to funding for state parks, protection of our natural areas and water quality” is seen as an extremely or very serious problem by more than one-third (36%) across the region, with somewhat higher concern in Colorado (40%) and New Mexico (39%). Moreover, a 2009 survey found that 92% of voters in these five states indicated they had visited a state or local park in the last year.
- The rate of identification with sportsman activities varies significantly by state, with more than three in five residents in Montana (60%) and Wyoming (63%) indicating they consider themselves to be to a hunter, an angler or both. This self-identification is significantly lower in New Mexico (40%), Colorado (39%), and Utah (34%).
- There is a dramatic distinction in how voters identify themselves on another key attribute. Voters were split into two representative halves, with half being asked whether or not they consider themselves to be “an environmentalist” and the other half about being “a conservationist.” While nearly three-quarters (73%) say they consider themselves to be “a conservationist,” identification drops to 51% who consider themselves to be “an environmentalist.” This dynamic is evident in every single state.

Partisan affiliation appears to account for some of the distinction, as Republican and Independent voters are much more inclined to say they are a “conservationist” than “an environmentalist,” as indicated in the following graph.

Self-Identification as Conservationist or Environmentalist by Party/Ideology

	<i>% Yes Conservationist</i>	<i>% Yes Environmentalist</i>	<i>Difference Score</i>
Conservative Republican	70%	43%	+27%
Mod./Lib. Republican	74%	49%	+25%
Independent	74%	45%	+29%
Democrat	74%	64%	+10%
Tea Party	74%	47%	+27%
Non-Tea Party	71%	53%	+18%

Even with the partisan distinctions, significant proportions of every sub-group consider themselves to be an environmentalist, and majorities consider themselves to be a conservationist. For example, 69% of Latino voters, 69% of social media users, 80% of hunters, 79% of anglers, and 74% of Fox News viewers in this region consider themselves to be “a conservationist.”

THE BOTTOM LINE

-Voters in these five states attach great importance to having clean water, clean air, natural areas and wildlife. Two-thirds view those things as an aspect of life that is fragile and needs to be cared for and protected.

-Majorities believe current environmental laws should either be strengthened or better enforced. Even when provided with an economic rationale for reducing some of these environmental standards for major industries three-quarters believe the current laws should stand as they are.

-Voters overwhelmingly side with the idea that environmental standards and a strong economy are consistent with one another, and reject the assertion that we must choose one over the other.

-Overall, Western voters indicate more positive impressions of solar and wind power as energy sources than they do for coal or oil.

-Voters would dramatically increase the amount of their state's electricity needs being produced by renewable sources. They are willing to pay more in order to do so.

-Air quality ranks as a top tier environmental concern in all of these states, particularly Utah. Climate change ranks below eleven other issues, as it has become a highly politicized issue.

-Voters are solidly in support of the EPA requiring reductions in carbon emissions from sources like power plants, cars and factories in an effort to reduce global warming.

-Cuts in funding for state parks and environmental protections are viewed as serious problems. There is strong agreement that "even with state budget problems, we should still find the money to protect" land, air and water.

-There is a yawning gap in self-identification as a "conservationist" or an "environmentalist" among voters in this region, which is largely driven by a partisan reaction to the term "environmentalist."

Conservation in the West Survey

Questionnaire and Results

January 23-27, 2011

2,200 registered voters in the West

(N=600 in CO, and N=400 in MT, NM, UT, & WY)

Margin of Error: +4.0% in Colorado and 4.9% in all other states

More Detailed Results by each of the five states and total percent responses are contained in the Conservation in the West Full Report on the Colorado College State of the Rockies Project web site: http://www.coloradocollege.edu/stateoftherockies/conservationinthewestsurvey_e.html

For More Information:

The following can be obtained by visiting the Colorado College State of the Rockies Project web site:

http://www.coloradocollege.edu/stateoftherockies/conservationinthewestsurvey_e.html

**Taking the Pulse of the Mountain States:
Results of January, 2011 Bi-Partisan Poll of Western
States' Voter Attitudes on Conservation, the Environment
And Renewable Energy in
Colorado, Montana, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming**

The Colorado College "State of the Rockies Project" is pleased to make available the results of the January, 2011 "Conservation in the West Survey," conducted by Public Opinion Strategies and Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates. Polling in five western states (Colorado, Montana, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming) explores bi-partisan opinions in each state and for the five-state region concerning conservation, environment, energy, the role of government, trade-offs with economies, and citizen priorities. The research was funded by The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

Content released on Wednesday February 23rd, 2011 at 12:00 p.m. MST

Additional Information on the State of the Rockies Website:

- CONSERVATION IN THE WEST POLL RELEASE Announcement 2/23/2011
- CONSERVATION IN THE WEST FULL REPORT 2/23/2011
- CONSERVATION IN THE WEST EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 2/23/2011
- CONSERVATION IN THE WEST MEDIA COVERAGE:
- CONSERVATION IN THE WEST MEDIA COVERAGE
- HEADWATERS NEWS ARTICLE 3/9/2011
- DENVER POST ARTICLE 4/17/2011



Students Researching, Reporting, and Engaging:

The Colorado College *State of the Rockies Report Card*, published annually since 2004, is the culmination of research and writing by a team of Colorado College student researchers. Each year a new team of students studies critical issues affecting the Rockies region of Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming.

Colorado College, a liberal arts college of national distinction, is indelibly linked to the Rockies. Through its Block Plan, students take one course at a time, and explore the Rockies and Southwest as classes embark in extended field study. Their sense of “place” runs deep, as they ford streams and explore acequias to study the cultural, environmental, and economic issues of water; as they camp in the Rocky Mountains to understand its geology; as they visit the West’s oil fields to learn about energy concerns and hike through forests to experience the biology of pest-ridden trees and changing owl populations. CC encourages a spirit of intellectual adventure, critical thinking, and hands-on learning, where education and life intertwine.

The Colorado College State of the Rockies Project dovetails perfectly with that philosophy, providing research opportunities for CC students and a means for the college to “give back” to the region in a meaningful way. The *Report Card* fosters a sense of citizenship for Colorado College graduates and the broader regional community.



Research

During summer field work, the student researchers pack into a van and cover thousands of miles of the Rocky Mountain West as they study the landscape, interview stakeholders, and challenge assumptions. Back on campus, they mine data, crunch numbers, and analyze information.



Report

Working collaboratively with faculty, the student researchers write their reports, create charts and graphics, and work with editors to fine-tune each *Report Card* section. Their reports are subjected to external review before final publication.



Engage

Through a companion lecture series on campus, the naming of a Champion of the Rockies, and the annual State of the Rockies Conference, citizens and experts meet to discuss the future of our region.

Each *Report Card* has great impact: Media coverage of *Report Cards* has reached millions of readers, and the 2006 report section on climate change was included in a brief presented to the U.S. Supreme Court. Government leaders, scientists, ranchers, environmentalists, sociologists, journalists, and concerned citizens refer to the Colorado College *State of the Rockies Report Card* to understand the most pressing issues affecting the growing Rockies region.

