



THE COLORADO COLLEGE
STATE OF THE ROCKIES PROJECT

Conservation in the West Poll

CONTACT:

BRENDAN BOEPPLE
BRENDAN.BOEPPLE@COLORADOCOLLEGE.EDU
(719) 227-8145

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JANUARY 31, 2017

Mountain West Voters Outline Priorities for Trump Administration on Public Lands in New Survey

Support for public land protections, improved recreation access and renewable energy investments remain high in Mountain West as leadership changes hands in Washington

COLORADO SPRINGS—Mountain West voters weighed in on the Trump Administration’s priorities for managing the use and protection of national public lands in a new Colorado College State of the Rockies Project *Conservation in the West Poll* released today.

The poll, now in its seventh year, surveyed the views of voters in seven Mountain West states on some of the most pressing issues involving public lands as the new administration begins its time in office.

Asked what the Trump Administration should emphasize, 68 percent of respondents said they prefer protecting water, air and wildlife while providing opportunities to visit and recreate on national public lands. That compared to 22 percent of respondents who said they prefer the administration place an emphasis on producing more domestic energy by increasing the amount of national public lands available for responsible drilling and mining.

Looking to potential actions the Trump Administration might undertake on public lands, voters in the Mountain West prioritized efforts that improve access, support the outdoor recreation economy and invest in renewable energy. Drilling for oil and gas or mining for coal on public lands was much less popular with voters.

Percent of voters who support

94% Improving and repairing infrastructure in national parks and other outdoor destinations

80% Allowing more wind and solar energy production on public lands

82% Improving access to public lands for hunters, anglers and hikers

79% Promoting the outdoor economy

67% Streamlining the permitting process for hunting, rafting and other recreation activities on public lands

34% Allowing oil and gas companies to purchase the right to drill in new areas of national public lands

33% Allowing more coal mining on public lands

“As leadership changes hands in Washington D.C., and Congress votes in new budget rules removing any monetary value from public lands, voters in the Mountain West are sending a clear statement that they do not want to see a dramatic change of course when it comes to national public lands,” said **Dr. Walt Hecox, Professor Emeritus of Economics at Colorado College and founder of the State of the Rockies Project.**

Approval of the federal land management agencies was high as the new administration begins its tenure. 76 percent of respondents approved of the U.S. Forest Service, 82 percent approved of the National Park Service, 76 percent approved of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and 56 percent approved of the Bureau of Land Management.

The poll asked voters about efforts to turn national public lands owned by all Americans over to state government control. The proposal remained unpopular, with 56 percent of respondents opposed. Strong majorities reject the proposal in every state sampled, with Utah as the lone exception, where voters remain narrowly divided.

“The national political winds change direction every few years, but a passion for the outdoors and strong support for American public lands remain constant in the Mountain West,” said **Montana Governor Steve Bullock.** “Public lands drive our economy and define our way of life in Montana and in surrounding states. We have too much to lose if we allow these national treasures to be put at risk.”

The idea of removing existing national monument designations put in place over the past decade to protect public lands was a non-starter for Western voters. 80 percent of respondents supported keeping the monument designations in place compared to just 13 percent who wanted them removed.

Support for national monuments was reflected at the local level when voters in Nevada and Utah were asked about two designations announced towards the end of the Obama Administration. In Nevada, 63 percent of respondents believed making Gold Butte a national monument was a good thing, compared to 13 percent who thought it was a bad idea. In Utah, 47 percent of respondents supported the designation of Bears Ears as a national monument, compared to 32 percent who opposed the decision.

The poll showed strong support for cleaner forms of energy in Mountain West. Voters in six of the seven states surveyed pointed to solar, wind and renewable energy as their top choice when asked about the types of business and jobs they would like to encourage more of, outpacing the technology and healthcare industries.

When it comes to oil and gas drilling on public lands, voters in the Mountain West continued to support a balanced approach. 50 percent said oil and gas drilling should continue in some areas while permanently protecting environmentally sensitive places. 35 percent believed oil and gas drilling on public lands should be strictly limited, while just 9 percent favored opening public lands up to more expansive drilling.

A Bureau of Land Management rule to require oil and gas producers who operate on national public lands to use updated equipment and technology to prevent leaks of methane gas during the extraction process received widespread approval, with 81 percent of respondents wanting the policy to continue. Members of Congress are in the process of using the Congressional Review Act to eliminate the policy.

The drought remained a top concern this year, as 80 percent of respondents said low levels of waters in rivers was a serious issue facing their state.

This is the seventh consecutive year Colorado College has gauged the public’s sentiment on public lands and conservation issues. The 2017 Colorado College *Conservation in the West* survey is a

bipartisan poll conducted by Republican pollster Lori Weigel of Public Opinion Strategies and Democratic pollster Dave Metz of Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates.

The poll surveyed 400 registered voters in each of seven Western states (AZ, CO, MT, NV, NM, UT & WY) for a total 2,800-person sample. The survey was conducted in late December 2016 and early January 2017 and has a margin of error of +/-2.74 percent nationwide and +/-4.9 percent statewide. The full survey and individual state surveys are available on the Colorado College website.

###

About Colorado College

Colorado College is a nationally prominent, four-year liberal arts college that was founded in Colorado Springs in 1874. The college operates on the innovative Block Plan, in which its 2,000 undergraduate students study one course at a time in intensive three and a half-week segments. For the past fourteen years, the college has sponsored the State of the Rockies Project, which seeks to increase public understanding of vital issues affecting the Rocky Mountain West through annual reports, free events, discussions and other activities.

About Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates

Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3)—a national Democratic opinion research firm with offices in Oakland, Los Angeles and Madison, Wisconsin—has specialized in public policy oriented opinion research since 1981. The firm has assisted hundreds of political campaigns at every level of the ballot—from President to City Council—with opinion research and strategic guidance. FM3 also provides research and strategic consulting to public agencies, businesses and public interest organizations nationwide.

About Public Opinion Strategies

Public Opinion Strategies is the largest Republican polling firm in the country. Since the firm's founding in 1991, they have completed more than 10,000 research projects, interviewing more than five million Americans across the United States. Public Opinion Strategies' research is well respected, and prestigious media outlets such as The Wall Street Journal, NBC News, and CNBC rely on Public Opinion Strategies to conduct their polling. The firm conducts opinion research on behalf of hundreds of political campaigns, as well as trade associations, not-for-profit organizations, government entities, and industry coalitions throughout the nation.

###

Colorado College State of the Rockies Project
14 E. Cache La Poudre St., Colorado Springs, CO 80903
719-227-8145