

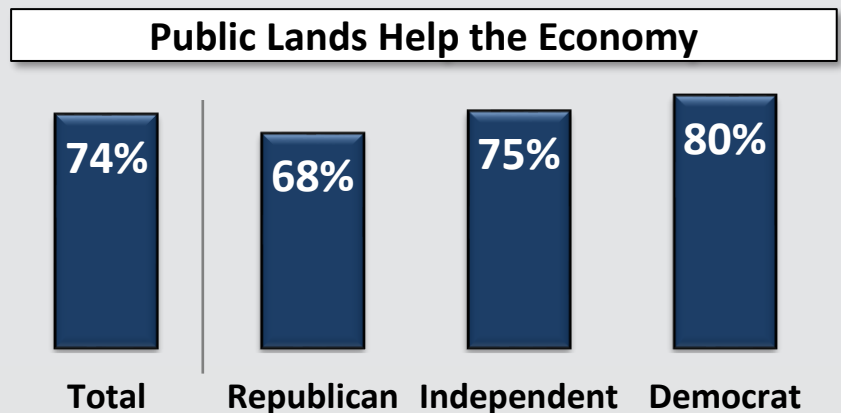
# Public Lands in the West

*Western voters perceive public lands as helping their state's economy and want to see Congress err on the side of conservation rather than energy development. They are enthusiastic about broad and specific proposals to strengthen protections and create new public lands for historic and recreation purposes.*



**The vast majority of Westerners continue to perceive public lands as boosting their state economies.** Seventy-four percent of Western voters say that the presence of national public lands in their state helps the state economy, while a mere 5 percent says it hurts the economy, and 19 percent says it has little impact.

The view that national public lands help the economy is particularly intense in Colorado, Montana, Utah, and Wyoming, but holds true in every state. Moreover, the view is held by a majority across the political spectrum.



Consistent with the past three years, two-thirds of Western voters would prefer that their Member of Congress place more emphasis on protecting and conserving public lands, rather than allowing mining and drilling on public lands. By more than a 2-to-1 margin, Westerners (67 percent) 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” versus “ensuring we produce more domestic energy by maximizing the amount of national public lands available for responsible oil and gas drilling and mining” (28 percent).

2019

2020

2021

2022

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%

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%

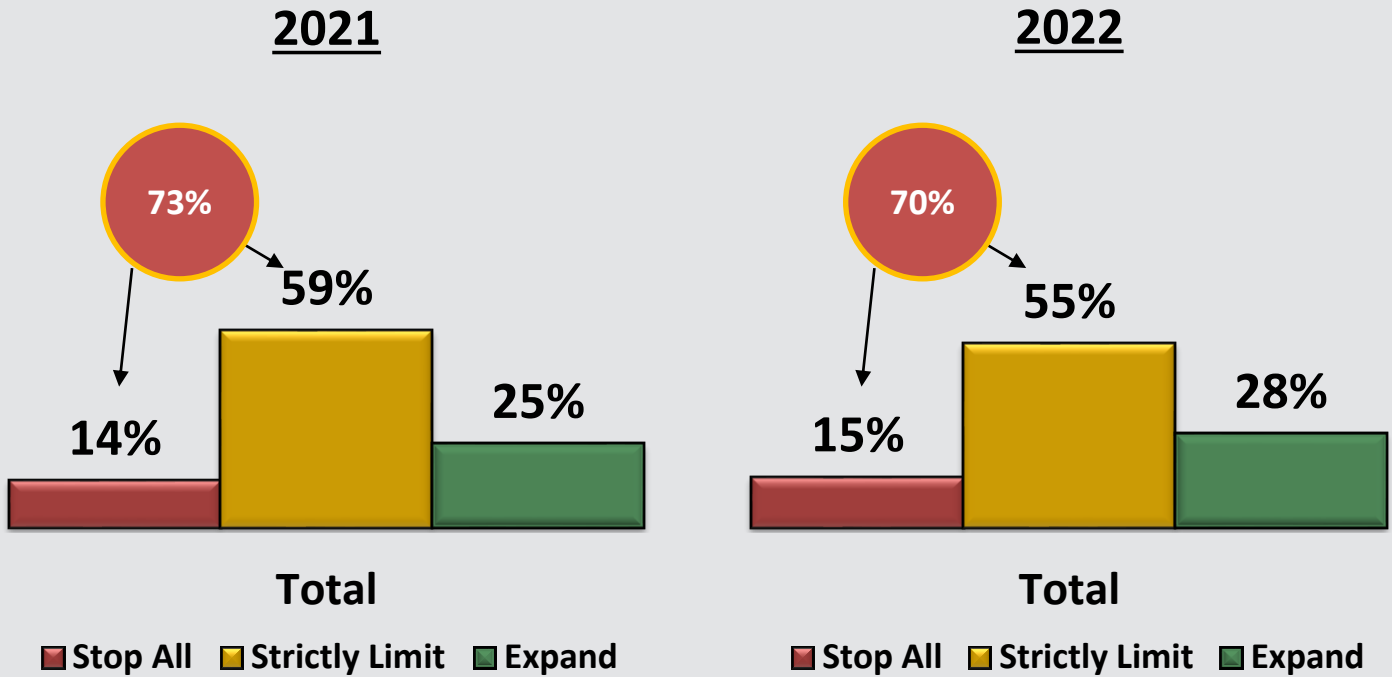
28%



Voters of color are one of the strongest sub-groups to say we should prioritize conservation on public lands (73 percent conserve). Majorities in every type of community also prioritize the conservation value of these lands over maximizing energy production—from urban (74 percent) and suburban voters (68 percent) to those in small towns (62 percent) and rural areas (61 percent).

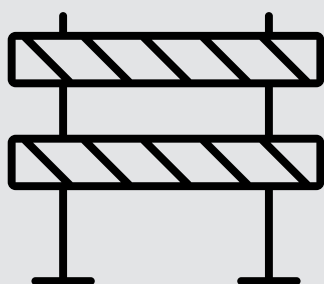
Western voters also say we should strictly limit oil and gas development on public lands. Overall, more than half of Westerners (55 percent) prefer the option of strictly limiting “where and how new oil and gas development takes place on public lands” versus 28 percent who say it should be expanded or 15 percent who say it should be stopped altogether. The majority support for strict limitations is consistent across states and greatest in Colorado, Montana, and Utah.

### Views on Oil & Gas Development on Public Lands





**There is almost-universal use of public lands among Westerners.** Virtually all Westerners (88 percent) have visited national public lands at least once in the last year, with a majority (68 percent) visiting 3 or more times. Additionally, nearly all voters (93 percent) report participating in outdoor recreation, with hiking (74 percent) and camping (49 percent) topping the list of numerous reported activities.



**Six-in-ten (61 percent) of Westerners who recreate in the outdoors say that they have had to change where or when they engage in these activities.**

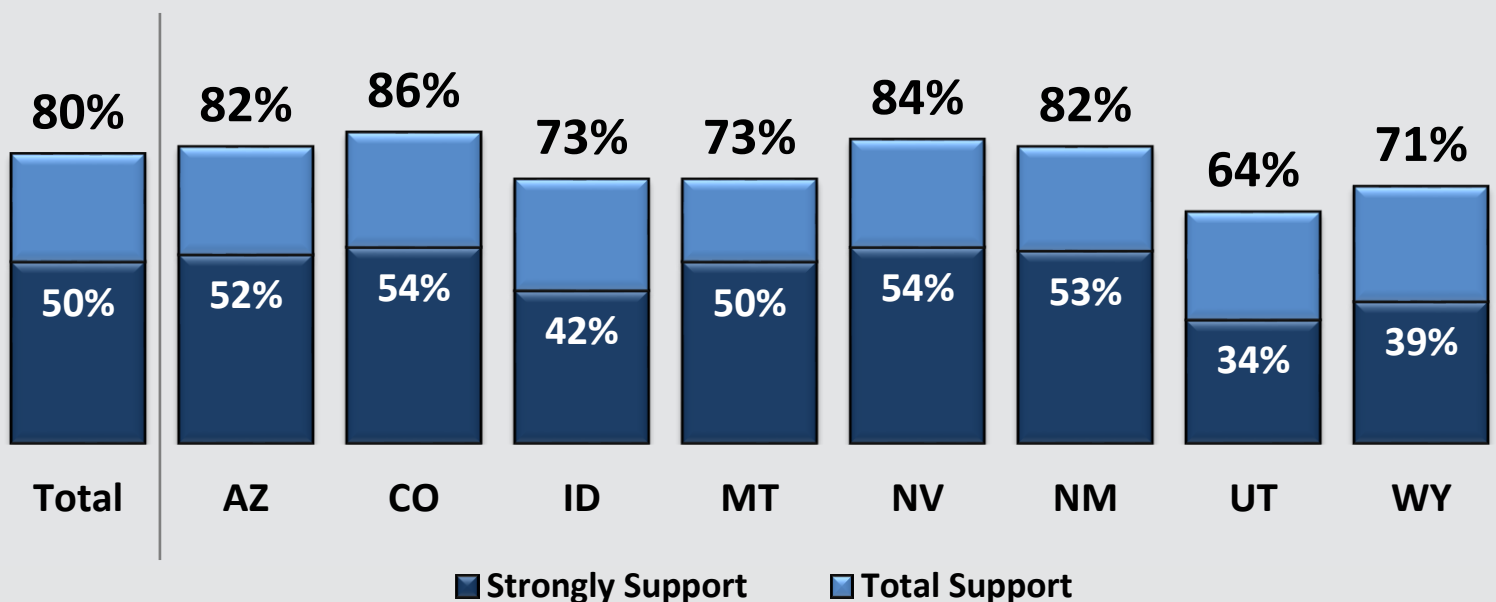
Among the 93 percent of Western voters who engage in outdoor recreation, nearly half say they have changed where or when they recreate due to “crowding and more people” (48 percent), while another one-in-four have altered their recreation habits due to “changes in the climate, such as fires or less snow or water” (26 percent). The responses are strikingly similar no matter the type of community or type of outdoor recreation. These concerns about crowding and having to change their outdoor recreation may be driving support for a number of proposals we tested to conserve more natural areas.



Voters in every state support setting a national goal of conserving 30 percent of land and inland waters in America and 30 percent of its ocean areas by 2030. Consistent with last year, 77 percent of Westerners support this proposal, with solid support across party lines. Fully 60 percent of Republicans, 79 percent of Independents, and 92 percent of Democrats support the land and sea conservation proposal.

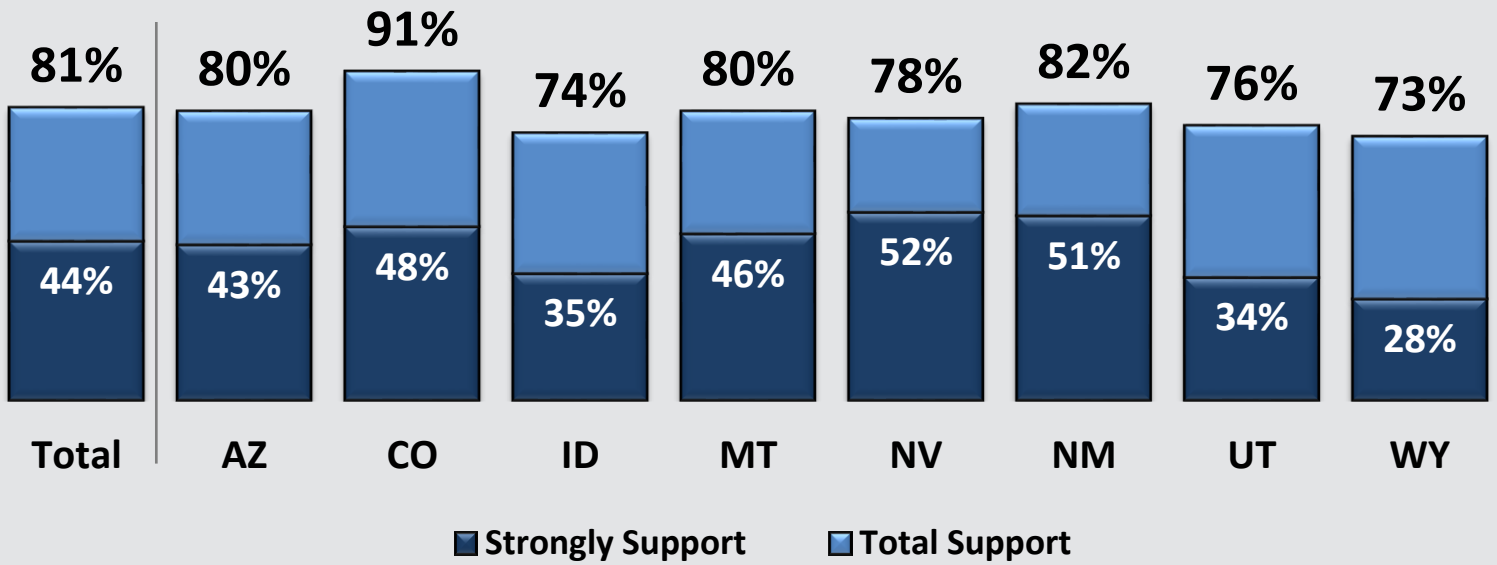
Voters continue to overwhelmingly support creating more public lands for historic or recreation purposes. There is broad and deep support for a proposal that would create “new national parks, national monuments, national wildlife refuges and tribal protected areas to protect historic sites or areas for outdoor recreation.” Overall, 80 percent of Westerners support the proposal, with 50 percent saying they “strongly” support it. The proposal is well-favored among all key subgroups, including gender, age, ethnicity, party, or type of community. Two-thirds of Republicans (65 percent) support this proposal, as do 83 percent of Independents and 94 percent of Democrats.

### New Parks, Monuments, Refuges, and Tribal Lands to Protect Historic Sites or Provide Areas for Outdoor Recreation



Westerners also offer solid support for providing funding to ensure more communities have access to parks and natural areas. Eight-in-ten voters (81 percent) favor the proposal, again with broad support across all major sub-groups, including party. Sixty-eight percent of Republicans, 84 percent of Independents, and 93 percent of Democrats support the proposed funding.

### Ensuring Access to Parks and Natural Areas



**There is overwhelming support for state-specific proposals to strengthen protections on public lands among voters of that respective state.** As the following chart indicates, in each state where we tested a specific proposal related to public lands, there is a strong desire to put those protections in place.

	Strongly Support	Total Support
<b>Arizona:</b> Enacting legislation that would make permanent the current ban on new uranium and other mining on existing public lands, roughly one million acres, surrounding the Grand Canyon.	42%	61%
<b>Colorado:</b> Protecting 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.	60%	89%
<b>Montana:</b> Enacting the Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Act in western Montana, which would ensure hunting and fishing access, safeguard streams flowing into the Blackfoot River, add nearly eighty thousand acres of existing public lands to the Bob Marshall, Scapegoat, and Mission Mountains wilderness areas, and create two new recreation areas and sustain timber harvest and habitat restoration.	48%	79%
<b>New Mexico:</b> Designating existing national public lands in the Caja del Rio plateau as a National Conservation Area, which would increase protections for the grasslands and canyons along the Santa Fe River and other small rivers flowing into the Rio Grande. This means these lands would continue to be accessible for outdoor recreation, but a proposed highway and power transmission would not be built.	44%	73%
<b>Nevada:</b> Designating existing public lands just east of the Mojave National Preserve in southern Nevada as the Spirit Mountain national monument, which would ensure outdoor recreation and help preserve sacred Native sites while not allowing energy development or mining on these lands.	55%	79%

Similarly, Utah voters are twice as likely to say it was a good thing that Biden “restored protections for over a million acres of existing public lands in southeastern Utah, known as Bears Ears National Monument...” after a brief explanation of the situation (60 percent good thing; 30 percent bad thing).