

Wildlife in the West

Westerners continue to express concern about loss of habitat and population declines of fish and wildlife, as well as loss of pollinators. A proposal to construct wildlife crossing structures across major highways that intersect with known migration routes receives overwhelming support, and by almost a four-to-one margin, voters would prioritize wildlife migration routes over economic development. A majority of voters say Congress passing the Endangered Species Act fifty years ago was a good thing.

By almost a four-to-one margin, Western voters say conserving wildlife migration routes is more of a priority than economic uses of land in migration routes. Western voters were asked to consider decisions about lands that include wildlife migration routes and resoundingly say that more emphasis should be placed on wildlife, rather than on economic uses of those areas:

78%

More emphasis should be placed on conserving wildlife migration routes, providing crossings over or under highways and limiting new development in those areas

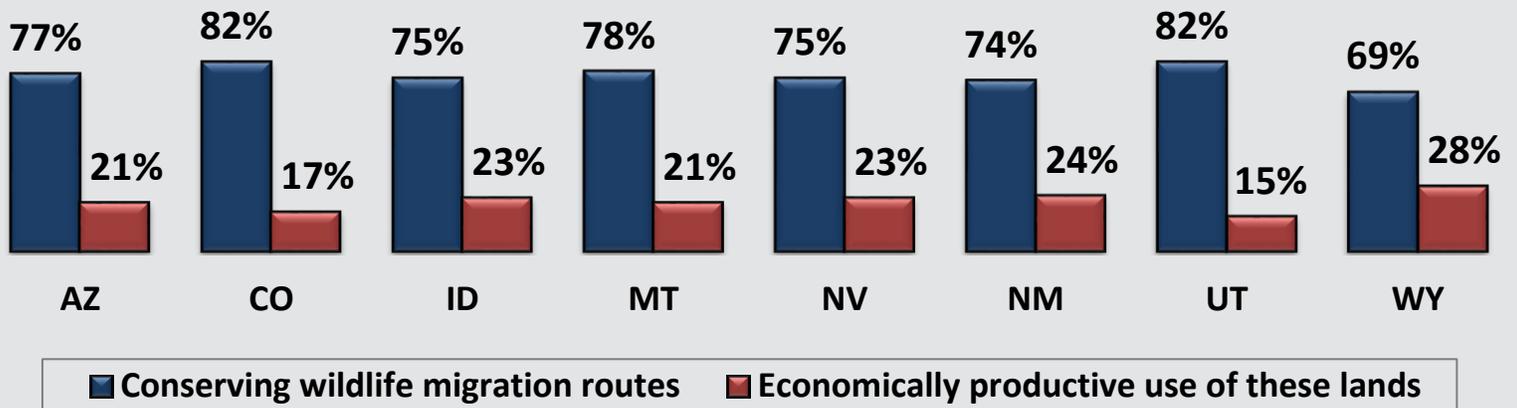
20%

More emphasis should be placed on economically productive uses of these lands such as new development, roads, ranching, or oil and gas production



Voters across the political spectrum say that more emphasis should be on wildlife in these migration routes. A majority of Republicans (64 percent) side with wildlife migration along with 81 percent of Independents and 91 percent of Democrats. Additionally, 82 percent of city dwellers, 79 percent of suburbanites, 77 percent of small town residents, and 71 percent of rural residents would prioritize wildlife migration over economic development.

Clean Energy Production vs. Natural Area Preservation

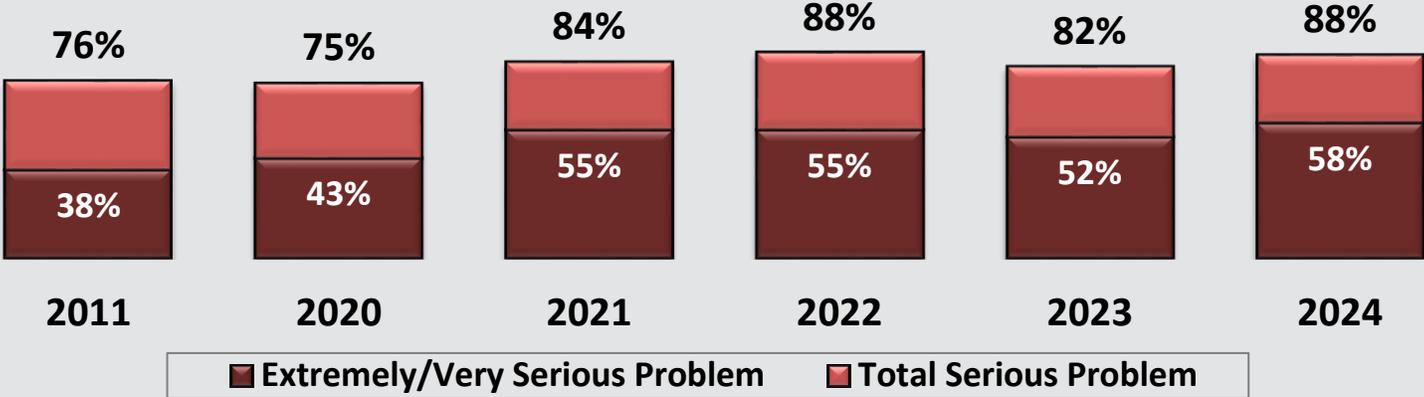


On the 50th anniversary of the Endangered Species Act’s passage, Westerners deem its legacy to have been more of a good thing than a bad thing by a six-to-one margin. A majority (54 percent) say it has been more of a good thing versus just 9 percent who say it has been more of a bad thing. Just over one-third (37 percent) are unsure of their views on its legacy. There is little difference in opinion between sportsmen (50 percent good thing) and those who do not hunt or fish (56 percent). In fact, there is not a single sub-group among which more voters deem the ESA to have been more of a negative than a positive.



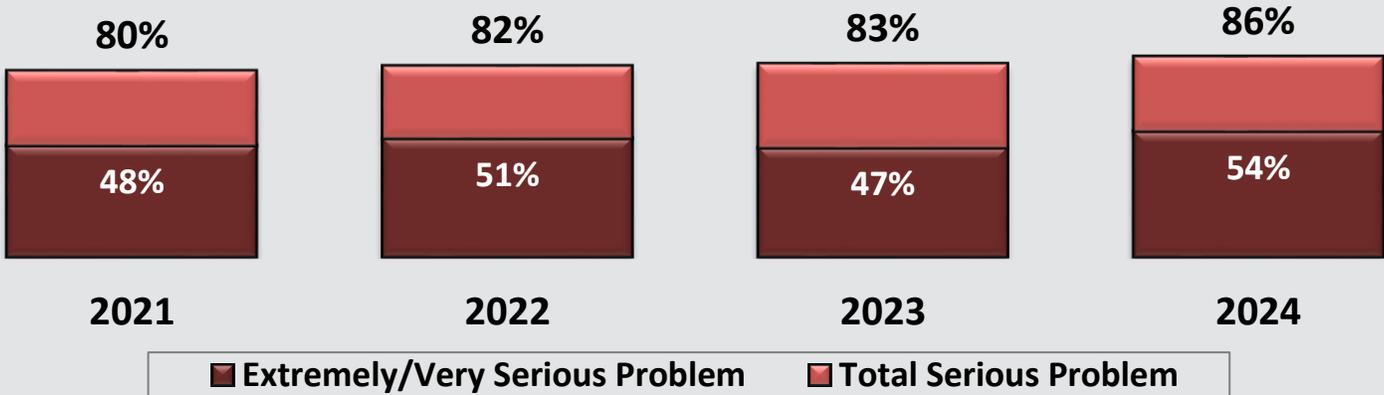
Concern about loss of habitat for fish and wildlife is at a record high. Almost nine-in-ten (87 percent) Westerners say the loss of habitat is a serious problem, just short of the all-time high in 2022. However, those who say it is an “extremely” or “very” serious problem reached 58 percent this year—the deepest concern recorded to date and up six points from last year when it was 52 percent. Concern is only modestly higher among voters who are actively involved in conservation (91 percent serious problem) compared to those who are not (81 percent). There are similar levels of concern regardless of whether or not voters are sportsmen (87 percent serious problem among both groups).

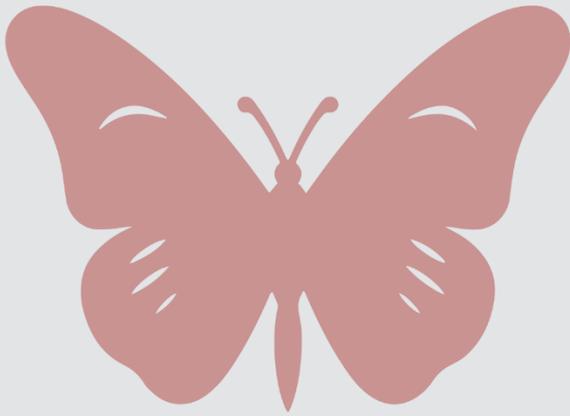
Loss of Habitat for Fish & Wildlife



Population declines of fish and wildlife also reached peak levels of concern among voters. This year, 86 percent of Westerners describe the fish and wildlife population decline as a serious problem, with more than half (54 percent) saying it is an “extremely” or “very” serious problem—both measures are all-time highs. Eighty-five percent of sportsmen and 87 percent of non-sportsmen say it is a serious problem, while 90 percent of active conservationists and 80 percent of non-conservationists are concerned.

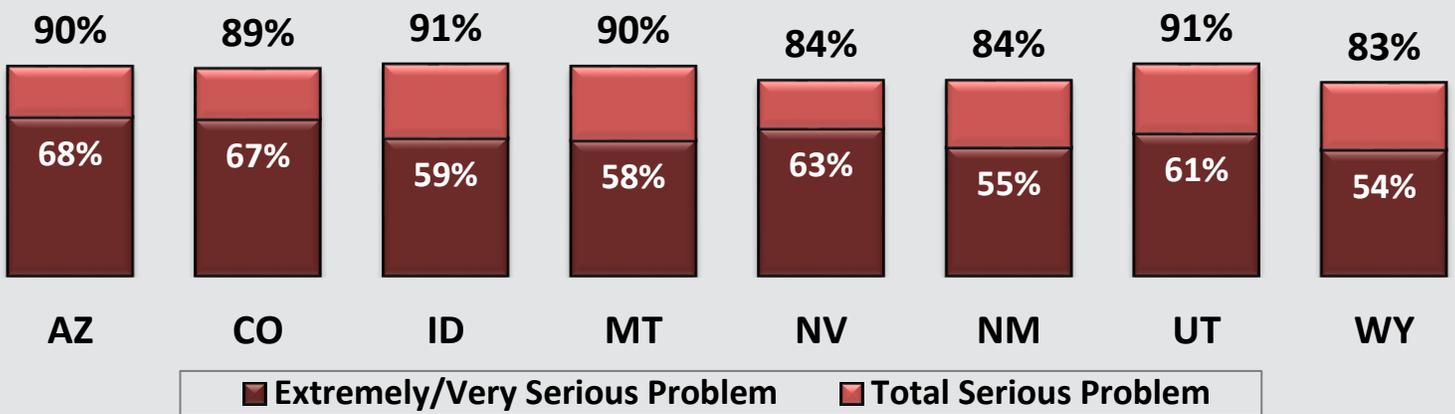
Population Declines of Fish & Wildlife





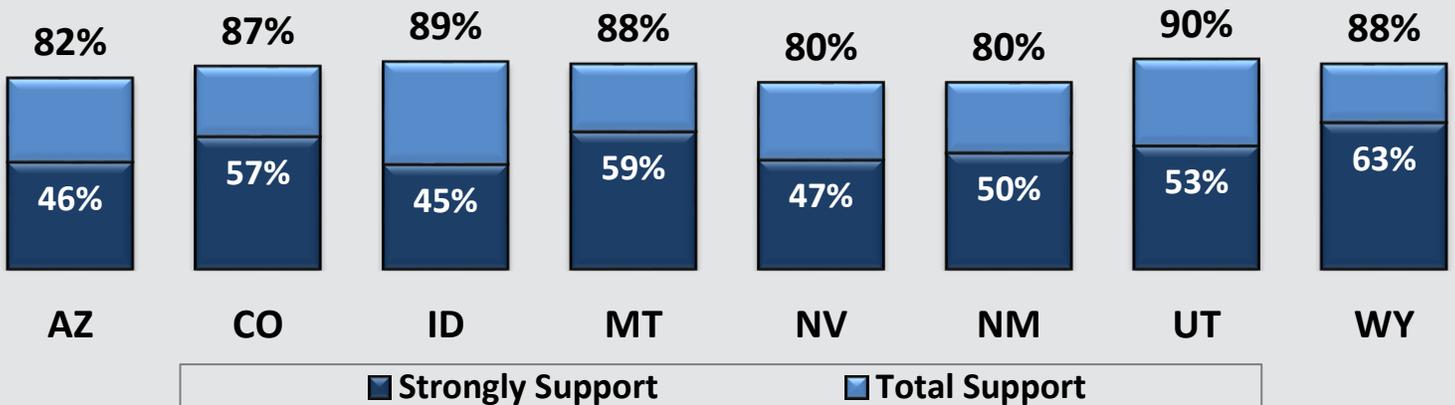
There is grave concern about loss of pollinators, such as bees and butterflies. Consistent with 2021, 89 percent of Western voters says the loss of pollinators is a serious problem, and almost two-thirds (63 percent) say it is an “extremely” or “very” serious problem. Similar to other wildlife issues, voters who are more engaged in the outdoors express more concern (92 percent) than those who are not active (84 percent).

Loss of Pollinators



There is overwhelming support for constructing wildlife crossing structures. More than eight-in-ten (85 percent) of Westerners favor building these structures “across major highways that intersect with known migration routes,” with a majority (51 percent) saying they strongly support it. The proposal also garners broad support across the political spectrum with 79 percent of Republicans, 87 percent of Independents, and 89 percent of Democrats favoring it.

Constructing Wildlife Crossing Structures Across Major Highways



Hunters and anglers in the West are some of the more active in the outdoors and more engaged with wildlife and conservation than their non-sportsmen counterparts. As the following graph illustrates, hunters and anglers are not only on public lands more often but are also more likely to have engaged in a range of nature-related activities:

	Hunters and Anglers	Non-sportsmen
Sought out news on nature, wildlife or recreation	66%	51%
Been camping in the last year	65%	38%
Donated to or volunteered with a conservation or wildlife related Organization	47%	34%
Have a nature or wildlife app on your phone	46%	33%
Listened to a nature podcast or follow someone online related to nature and the outdoors	40%	31%
Been on national public lands 20+ times	20%	7%

Sub-groups who are more likely to hunt and/or fish include Native Americans (57 percent), rural residents (52 percent), men (52 percent), active conservationists (50 percent), small town dwellers (49 percent), conservatives (49 percent), Republicans (48 percent), and those who are life-long residents of their state (46 percent).

