EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE 2013 SURVEY OF THE ATTITUDES OF VOTERS IN SIX WESTERN STATES

JANUARY, 2013

SPONSORED BY: THE COLORADO COLLEGE STATE OF THE ROCKIES PROJECT
CONDUCTED BY:
LORI WEIGEL / PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES • DAVE METZ / FAIRBANK, MASLIN, MAULLIN, METZ & ASSOCIATES
Colorado College State of the Rockies Project
Conservation in the West Poll

2013 Survey of the Attitudes of Voters in Six Western States

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For the complete 2013 Conservation in the West Poll findings and more information visit: www.stateoftherockies.com.

To contact the Survey Firms:
Lori Weigel / Public Opinion Strategies: lori@pos.org
Dave Metz / Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Assoc.: dave@fm3research.com

For information about The State of the Rockies Project and Colorado College contact:
Leslie.Weddell@ColoradoCollege.edu

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Colorado College State of the Rockies 2013 Conservation in West Survey

February 7, 2013 Press Release

New Survey: Westerners Link Public Lands to Economic Prosperity, Quality of Life

**Strong majorities reject selling off public lands; want protections for sensitive lands subject to drilling and prioritize renewable energy production in their state.**

COLORADO SPRINGS – Westerners place a strong value on public lands, saying they are “essential” to their state’s economy and quality of life, according to the *2013 Colorado College State of the Rockies Conservation in the West* poll.

“Westerners see the permanent protection of their public lands as an economic imperative, and essential to their quality of life,” said Colorado College economist and State of the Rockies Project faculty director Walt Hecox, PhD. “Decision makers would do well to take notice and cure the often one-sided tendency to pursue development rather than protection that we’ve seen emerge over the last four years.”

This year’s bipartisan survey of 2,400 Westerners, representing a cross section of the region’s population, found near unanimous — 91 percent — agreement that public lands like national parks, forests, monuments and wildlife areas are an essential part of their state’s economy. Further, 71 percent oppose proposals to sell off public lands, and overwhelmingly reject arguments for the sale of public lands.

Highlights from the *2013 Conservation in the West* poll:

- 79 percent believe public lands support their economy and enhance their overall quality of life.

- 74 percent believe our national parks, forests, monuments, and wildlife areas help attract high quality employers and good jobs to their state.

- 71 percent believe selling off public lands to corporations for development will hurt their economy and quality of life.

- 52 percent perceive public lands to be a job creator in their state.
The survey also illuminates Westerners' view of energy production. For the second year in a row, Westerners vastly prefer that renewable energy development be encouraged in their state, rather than nuclear power or fossil fuels.

Drilling on public lands has flown under the radar of most Westerners. Only 34 percent of those interviewed knew with certainty that oil and gas drilling occurs on public lands. Those polled call for a balanced approach to any energy development occurring in these areas, with 56 percent saying that environmentally sensitive public lands should be permanently protected from this type of activity.

The 2013 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 six western states (AZ, CO, NM, UT, WY, MT) for a total 2,400-person sample. The survey was conducted from January 5 through 10, 2013, and yields a margin of error of +/- 2.0 percent nationwide and +/-4.9 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 3½-week segments. For the past nine years, the college also has run the State of the Rockies Project, which seeks to increase public understanding of vital issues affecting the Rockies through annual report cards, 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.

About the Polling Partnership of FM3 and Public Opinion Strategies
FM3 and Public Opinion Strategies have conducted bipartisan research on a wide range of public policy issues over the last decade, in particular on conservation-related initiatives and policies. Together, the two firms have jointly conducted research on behalf of political campaigns, businesses, not-for-profit organizations and public agencies in 40 states and nationally. In these states, the two firms have conducted 680,000 interviews among voters and consumers.
ARIZONA

Grand Canyon state voters have a great appreciation for public lands; believe they contribute to the state’s economy and quality of life.

On Public Lands:

- Arizona voters have a great appreciation for the state's public lands, with 82% saying public lands in the state support the economy, provide recreation opportunities and enhance quality of life, rather than being a fiscal burden and preventing creation of jobs in traditional industries.
- Residents clearly value the impact public lands have on their economy – 88% say they are an essential part of Arizona’s economy and 69% agree that the state's public lands help attract high quality employers and good jobs.
- There is scant support for selling off federal public lands as a way to reduce the nation’s budget deficit. Just 28% of voters support selling some land as a means of deficit reduction, while 67% oppose it. A majority of 50% are strongly opposed.

Arizonans' Connection to Conservation:

- A solid majority (58%) of Arizona voters say they are conservationists. This view crosses party lines, with majorities of Republicans, Independents, and Democrats considering themselves conservationist.
- Arizona voters like being outside. A majority (56%) hike regularly, and 44% are regular campers. One third (33%) of voters are hunters or anglers.
- Sixty-five percent (65%) of voters in the state plan to visit a national park this year.
- Voters in Arizona are worried that children do not spend enough time in the outdoors. An overwhelming majority (86%) say this is a problem, with more than half (52%) saying it is an extremely serious or very serious problem.
On Energy Development:

- There is overwhelming support for more solar power being used in Arizona. Sixty-two percent (62%) of voters say that it is the first source of energy they would encourage the state to use more of. No other power source was the first choice of more than 40% in any of the other Western states we surveyed.

- When thinking about energy development on public lands in the West, 57% of Arizona voters say environmentally sensitive places on public lands should be permanently protected from drilling, and a similar 59% side with a statement advocating stronger standards for drilling/setting aside some areas over a statement advocating for opening more lands to energy development.

On Water:

- Arizona voters are concerned about the state's water supply, with 77% saying that inadequate water supplies are a serious problem.

- Relatedly, Arizona voters also say that the low levels of water in the state's rivers are a problem. Fully 87% of voters say it is a serious problem, and a majority (59%) view it as an extremely serious or very serious problem.

- Well more than half (59%) of voters in Arizona agree that climate change is at least one reason for the increasing number of extreme weather events, such as wildfires, droughts, and hurricanes.

On the Politics of Conservation:

- Conservation and protecting public lands is a political positive in Arizona. More than half (52%) of voters would view a Republican elected official more favorably if they spoke out in favor of protecting public lands. Speaking out in support of public lands is also helpful to Democratic elected official, especially with Latino voters. 53% of Latinos say they would view a Democratic elected official more favorably if they voiced their support for public lands.

- A majority of Arizona voters acknowledge they are not paying attention to their Member of Congress' position on protecting land air and water – 58% say they are not sure what position their Member has taken on these issues.
Voters express strong connection to public lands and the desire to protect them; Concern about water tops economic concerns amidst drought.

Coloradans’ Connection to Conservation:

- State voters overwhelmingly identify as a conservationist – fully 68% say that label describes them, with majorities throughout the state and of all partisan persuasions in this camp.
- 38% consider themselves to be a hunter or angler.
- 82% plan to visit a national park in 2013.
- 81% say that children not spending enough time in the outdoors is a serious problem here in Colorado.

Coloradans engage in a wide array of outdoor recreation activities, including...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>West</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hiking</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camping</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bird watching/viewing wildlife</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain biking</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boating</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riding an off-road vehicle or snowmobile</td>
<td>16%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On Water:

- 93% say low levels of water in rivers in Colorado is a serious problem (69% believe it is an extremely or very serious problem), matched by concern about low levels of snowpack in the mountains (93% serious; 68% extremely or very serious).

- Concern about rivers and snowpack exceeds the proportion of the electorate which say “unemployment” is an extremely or very serious problem in the state (94% at least somewhat serious and 58% extremely or very serious problem).

- Half (49%) say pollution of rivers, lakes and streams is an extremely or very serious problem in Colorado, the highest concern registered in the last three years.

- More than three-in-five (63%) attribute the increasing number of extreme weather events – like droughts – at least in part to climate change.

On Public Lands:

- 98% - virtually all Coloradans – say that public lands are an “essential part” of Colorado’s economy.

- 85% believe the presence of these areas in the state helps to attract high quality employers and good jobs to Colorado.

- 74% oppose the sale of some public lands in order to reduce the budget deficit.

- Even when presented with two points of view about this issue, state voters become more opposed – 79% side with opponents of selling public lands.

79% believe public lands in the state support the economy, provide recreation opportunities and enhance quality of life, rather than being a fiscal burden and preventing creation of jobs in traditional industries.
On Energy Development:

- Coloradans continue to say the state should encourage the use of solar (56% say it is one of the two they would encourage) or wind (56%) – twice as many as point to any other energy source including natural gas (24%).

- 48% perceive oil and gas drilling as booming in Colorado.

- Only two-in-five can say with any certainty that drilling is occurring on public lands in the state.

- A solid majority of 54% want environmentally sensitive public lands to be “permanently protected” from oil and gas production.

When presented with two viewpoints about drilling on public lands, nearly twice as many Coloradans side with those who want stronger standards on drilling in place with none allowed near recreational areas, water sources and wildlife.

More than 38 million acres of public lands - including land in six national parks - are currently leased by oil and gas companies, and oil production on public lands has been steadily climbing. Public lands that are drilled are often closed for other uses - like hunting or hiking - and the effects of contamination on the land can linger for generations. We need to ensure strong standards are in place and that drilling is not allowed in critical locations near recreation areas, water sources, and wildlife.

Bureaucratic red tape, burdensome federal regulations, and government policies that block access to federal lands have stood in the way of the West reaching its full energy and jobs potential and our country gaining energy independence. Energy production on public lands has declined, while increasing by double digits on private lands. We need to allow more public lands to be opened to responsible energy development.
On the Politics of Conservation:

- Majority of 54% say they are not sure of the positions their Member of Congress has taken on conservation – more assume it is a lower priority than for themselves personally (22%).

- Sportsmen are most likely to say they know their Member’s views, but more apt to say their Representative is not as conservation-oriented as they are personally (26%).

- GOP candidates have more to gain from supporting pro-conservation policies. Colorado voters are more impressed if a GOP candidate expresses support for protection of public lands than if a Democrat takes the same position – 59% and 48%, respectively, would have a more favorable view of that candidate.

61% of Independent voters are positively swayed when a GOP candidate espouses this view.
Avid outdoors enthusiasts, Montanans espouse strong pro-conservation views; perceive public lands as boon for economy.

On the Politics of Conservation:

- When it comes to the position their Member of Congress has taken on protecting land, air, and water, a plurality (45%) of Montana voters say they are not sure what position their Representative has taken.

- Both Democrats and Republicans would be seen more favorably by half (50%) of Montana voters if they spoke out in support of public lands.

- For Republican elected officials, speaking out in support of public lands would be especially helpful with Independent voters, as 57% of Independents would view them more favorably.

Montanans’ Connection to Conservation

- An overwhelming majority (73%) of voters in Montana say they are conservationists.

- Montanans love being outdoors. Sixty percent (60%) are regular campers and 57% say they hike regularly. Bird watching or viewing other wildlife and boating are also popular activities in the state, with more than one-third of voters regularly participating in them.

- Younger voters in the state are especially active outdoors, with 77% of 18-34 year-olds saying they camp regularly and 68% saying they are regular hikers.

- Given their high level of outdoor activity, it is not surprising that 71% of Montana voters plan to visit a national park sometime in 2013.

- Montanans’ clear affinity for the outdoors means that they want children in the state to spend time outside and worry they are not --77% of voters in the state say that children not spending enough time outdoors is a serious problem.
On Public Lands:

- Voters in Montana overwhelmingly support public lands, with 91% of voters saying they are an essential part of the state’s economy.

- Support for public lands in Montana is driven by the 72% of voters who believe public lands in the state support the economy, provide recreation opportunities, and enhance quality of life, rather than being a fiscal burden and preventing creation of jobs in traditional industries.

- Montana voters also see public lands as a job creator. Fully 70% of voters agree that national parks, forests, monuments, and wildlife areas help attract high quality employers and good jobs to Montana.

- Voters are strongly opposed to selling off public lands as a way to reduce the deficit, with just 27% supporting selling off the land, compared to 66% who oppose it. Intensity is especially strong, as more than half (52%) of Montana voters are strongly opposed to selling off public land.

On Energy Development:

- Montana voters are strong advocates of wind power, with 53% of voters listing it as one of the top two sources of energy they would encourage the state to develop – 20 points higher than would choose natural gas (33% of voters) or coal (28%).

- Montanans overwhelmingly believe that oil and gas drilling is “booming” in their state (67%).

- Montana voters are unsure on whether oil and gas drilling is taking place in the state’s national parks or national forests. Less than a third (27%) say that this is probably true, while 44% say they don’t know or have not heard enough.

- A strong majority of voters in Montana (57%) say environmentally sensitive places should be permanently protected from oil and gas drilling.
State residents demonstrate the most concern in the region about rivers and water supplies; strong affinity to and support for retaining public lands.

New Mexicans’ Connection to Conservation:

- Two-thirds (67%) of New Mexico voters consider themselves conservationists. A majority of voters throughout the state and across party lines hold this view.

- New Mexicans are very active in the outdoors. Half (50%) of New Mexico voters are regular hikers or campers, and more than one-in-three engage in other outdoor activities such as bird watching or boating.

- Forty-one percent (41%) identify themselves as a hunter or angler.

- Two-thirds (67%) plan to visit a national park in the next year.

- Despite their high level of outdoor activity, 87% say children not spending enough time outdoors is a serious problem.
On Water:

- Ninety percent (90%) say inadequate water supplies are a serious problem, with 69% saying it is an extremely serious or very serious problem. These are by far the highest numbers in the six states surveyed.

- The low levels of water in the state’s rivers is also seen as a major concern, with 94% saying it is a serious problem, and 83% saying it is an extremely serious or very serious problem. Again, these are the highest percentages recorded across the six states.

- New Mexico voters are also worried about the pollution of lakes, rivers, and streams, with 76% of voters saying it is a serious problem.

- Two-thirds (67%) of New Mexico voters agree that the increasing number of extreme weather events such as wildfires and droughts is the result of climate change.

On Public Lands:

- New Mexico voters are strong supporters of public lands, with 77% believing public lands in the state support the economy, provide recreation opportunities and enhance quality of life, rather than being a fiscal burden and preventing creation of jobs in traditional industries.

- Voters in the state overwhelmingly agree that public lands are an essential part of the state’s economy (84% agree/13% disagree).

- Public lands are seen as a job creator in the state, with 69% of voters agreeing that national parks, forests, monuments, and wildlife areas help attract high quality employers and good jobs to New Mexico.

- There is minimal support for selling off federal public lands as a way to reduce the nation’s budget deficit (29% support/62% oppose).

- Support for selling off public lands actually diminishes when voters are presented with arguments on both sides of the issue. After hearing both arguments, just 24% support selling off public lands, while 69% oppose it.
On Energy Development:

- Voters in New Mexico continue to want the state to develop solar power (56% say it is one of the two energy sources they would encourage) and wind power (43% would encourage) in the state. Natural gas is their third most preferred energy source (31% would encourage).

- Just 37% can confidently say that oil and gas drilling is taking place on some public lands. More than half (52%) say they have not heard enough or don’t know.

- A majority (52%) say environmentally sensitive places on public lands should be permanently protected from drilling.

On the Politics of Conservation:

- A majority of voters in New Mexico are not sure on the position their Member of Congress has taken on protecting land, air, and water.

- Conservation is a winning issue with New Mexico Independents. Among this key group, 67% would view a Democratic elected official more favorably if they spoke out in support of protecting public lands. The issue would also help Republican elected officials with Independents, as 58% of Independent voters would view a Republican more favorably if they supported protecting public lands.
Some of the region’s most active outdoor recreationalists, Utah voters want to protect and retain public lands.

On Water

- While Utah voters are not as concerned about their water supply as some of their neighbors in the West, it is still seen as a problem. Seventy-four percent (74%) say “inadequate water supplies” are a serious problem, with one-in-three saying it is an extremely serious or very serious problem.

- Similarly, the condition of rivers and streams in the state is also on their radar as three-quarters regard the “low levels of water in the state's rivers” (76%) as a serious problem, as well as “pollution of the state's lakes and rivers” (75%).

- More than half (54%) of Utah voters agree that the increasing number of extreme weather events such as wildfires and droughts is the result of climate change.

Connection to Conservation:

- Two-thirds (60%) of Utah voters say they are conservationists. Majorities of Republicans, Independents, and Democrats all share this self-description.

- Voters in Utah are some of the most active in the outdoors – the most apt to hike regularly of any state (66% - and the same number are regular campers). Fully 91% engage in at least one outdoor recreation activity on a regular basis, and half (50%) engage in three or more activities in the outdoors regularly.

- Forty-four percent (44%) of Utah voters are hunters or anglers.

- The vast majority (81%) of voters in the state intend to visit a national park sometime in 2013.

- Utah voters spend a lot of time enjoying the natural beauty of their state, but they still worry that children in the state do NOT spend enough time outdoors. Fully 82% of voters in the state view children not spending enough time outside as a serious problem.
On Public Lands:

- Voters in Utah are avid supporters of public lands, with 74% believing public lands in the state support the economy, provide recreation opportunities and enhance quality of life, rather than being a fiscal burden and preventing creation of jobs in traditional industries.
- By a nearly unanimous margin (96% agree/3% disagree), Utah voters say that public lands are an essential part of the state’s economy.
- Utahans also see public lands as a job creator in the state, with 77% of voters agreeing that national parks, forests, monuments, and wildlife areas help attract high quality employers and good jobs to Utah.
- A majority of Utah voters oppose selling some federal public lands as a way to reduce the nation’s budget deficit (37% support/57% oppose).
- Support for selling off public lands is further diminished when voters are presented with arguments on both sides of the issue. After hearing a simulation of the debate on this issue, just 26% of Utah voters support selling some public lands, while 67% oppose it.

On Energy Development:

- Voters in Utah want their state to encourage the use of renewable energy in the state, as well as use of natural gas. When asked for the two energy sources they want to see encouraged, 47% prefer wind power followed by solar power (39%), and natural gas (39%).
- Conversely, they would discourage the use of nuclear (37%) and coal (24%).
- By a strong consensus (62%), voters say environmentally sensitive places on public lands should be permanently protected from drilling.

On the Politics of Conservation:

- Conservation is a winning issue that crosses party lines in Utah. Forty seven percent (47%) of voters would view a Republican elected official who spoke out in support of protecting public lands more favorably. The same number (47%) would view a Democratic elected official more favorably if they spoke in support of public lands.
- That said, most in the state acknowledge this is not an issue to which they are paying close attention. One-half (51%) of voters in Utah are not sure of the position their Member of Congress has taken on protecting land, air, and water.
Wyoming voters are registering a strong affinity for outdoor recreation and increasing concern about rivers and water.

On Water:

- Voters in Wyoming are concerned about the state’s water supply, with 66% saying inadequate water supplies are a serious problem.
- These concerns about water extend to the state’s rivers, as 83% of Wyoming voters say the low levels of water in the state are a serious problem.
- Voters are also worried about water levels at the state’s higher elevation, with 87% saying a low level of snowpack in the mountains is a serious problem. This number includes the significant majority (63%) of voters who say it is an extremely serious or very serious problem.

Connection to Conservation:

- The vast majority (73%) of Wyoming voters say they are conservationists.
- Wyomingites spend a great deal of time outdoors. Sixty-seven percent (67%) are regular campers and 58% say they hike regularly. Close to half (47%) spend time bird watching or viewing other wildlife.
- Fully 69% of voters in Wyoming plan to visit a national park in 2013.
- More than three-quarters (77%) of Wyoming voters say children not spending enough time outdoors is a serious problem.
On the Politics of Conservation:

- A plurality (40%) of Wyoming voters say they are not sure what position their Representative has taken on protecting land, air, and water in the state.
- Support for public lands is a winning political issue in the state, as 45% of Wyoming voters say they would view a Republican elected official more favorably if they spoke in support of public lands. A Democratic elected official would enjoy a similar amount of good will, as 41% say they would have a more favorable impression if they spoke in support of public lands.

On Public Lands:

- Support for public lands is close to unanimous among Wyoming voters, as 94% agree that they are an essential part of the state’s economy.
- Fully 78% of Wyomitingites believe public lands in the state support the economy, provide recreation opportunities, and enhance quality of life, rather than being a fiscal burden and preventing creation of jobs in traditional industries.
- Voters in Wyoming view public lands as a job creator, with 74% of voters agreeing that national parks, forests, monuments, and wildlife areas help attract high quality employers and good jobs to the state.
- Wyoming voters strongly oppose selling off public lands as a way to reduce the deficit, with only 28% supporting selling off the land, compared to 66% who oppose it. More than half (53%) of voters in the state say they are strongly opposed to selling public lands for that purpose.

On Energy Development:

- Wind power (44%) and natural gas (42%) top the list of power sources that the Wyoming voters would encourage use of in the state.
- Interestingly, a majority (52%) of voters in Wyoming believe oil and gas drilling is taking place in national forests, but a much smaller percentage (29%) believe it is happening in national parks.
- Two-thirds (66%) of Wyoming voters say that oil and gas drilling is booming in the state.
Nearly two-thirds of Westerners consider themselves a conservationist and virtually all engage in outdoor recreation; Four-in-five worry about children not spending enough time in nature.

Fully 63% of voters interviewed across these Western states say they consider themselves to be a “conservationist.” This self-perception is wide-spread, with the strongest identification in Montana and Wyoming where 73% of voters in each state consider themselves to be conservationists.
With the amount of time these Western voters are spending in natural areas engaged in outdoor recreation, it is no surprise that such a sizeable majority connect with conservation. Looking at the six states as a whole, fully 85% say they engage regularly in at least one outdoor recreational activity.

The state most likely to engage in outdoor recreation? Wyoming, where 92% say they regularly hike, camp, view wildlife, or enjoy other activities outdoors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>87%</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>92%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Coloradans and Utah residents have the highest number of regular hikers and mountain bikers. Wyoming and Montana voters are most apt to view wildlife or bird watch, boat, while Utah and Wyoming residents rate highest in the proportion who say they regularly camp or use ATV’s or snowmobiles. Not surprisingly, rural residents are most likely to pursue these activities (91% engage in at least one activity – compared to 83% elsewhere). More than one-in-three Westerners have embraced the outdoor lifestyle to such an extent that they say they regularly engage in three or more activities, while half (47%) take part in two activities on a regular basis.

The survey also dispels some common assumptions about outdoor recreation:

- Two-thirds of seniors (67%) say they engage in at least one of these outdoor recreation activities regularly;
- Latino voters are just as likely as white respondents to report regularly pursuing at least one of these (85% of each); and
- Pursuing outdoor activities is completely bi-partisan. Those who voted for Governor Romney in last fall’s presidential election are just as likely to hike, bird watch or view wildlife, and actually more likely to go camping than their counterparts who supported President Obama.
Given these predilections, it is no surprise that almost three-quarters of survey respondents (73%) plan to visit a national park sometime in 2013. More than four-in-five residents of Colorado (82%) and Utah (81%) say they plan to spend time in national parks this year, while a still impressive two-thirds in New Mexico (67%) and Arizona (65%) echo this view. 79% of those who engage in outdoor recreation activities regularly plan to visit a national park, compared to just 35% of those who don’t recreate outdoors.

Despite the amount of time these Western voters and their families are spending outdoors, there is still a concern that children should be spending even more time outside. Across the six states, 83% say that “children not spending enough time outside “is a serious problem, with half (50%) saying it is an “extremely serious “or “very serious” problem. This concern is most prevalent in New Mexico (57% extremely/very serious) and Arizona (52% extremely/very serious).
All of this data underscores previous research findings in the region establishing Western voters’ strong ties to the land and nature. Those were particularly highlighted in their responses to an open-ended question asked in the 2011 survey. Voters were asked then what they liked most about living in the Western United States, other than the weather. Responses were dominated by comments about outdoor recreational activities, the scenery and beautiful geography, open spaces, and the easy access to the outdoors and wilderness.

“Other than the weather, what do you like most about living in the Western United States?”
Energy Development

Strong preference for renewable energy production still evident; Sizable majority wants some public lands permanently protected from energy development

As was evident in last year’s survey, Westerners vastly prefer that renewable energy be encouraged in their state, rather than traditional fossil fuels. Even with an additional option for nuclear energy included in this year’s survey, voters are quite consistent in their desire to see more emphasis placed on solar and wind production. Though the Wyoming electorate is more mixed in its views, everywhere else voters’ top two preferred energy sources are renewable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Solar Power</th>
<th>Wind Power</th>
<th>Natural Gas</th>
<th>Energy Efficiency Efforts</th>
<th>Oil</th>
<th>Nuclear</th>
<th>Coal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conversely, nuclear and coal are the two energy sources voters in every state most want to discourage the use of (51% would discourage use of coal and 49% the use of nuclear). But few would close the door on the use of natural gas at the same time (just 8%).

It is worth noting that concern about “dependence on foreign oil” remains significant (62% in the region say it is an extremely or very serious problem), albeit lower than a year ago when 74% said the same.

Most Westerners do not view regulation and oversight of oil and gas drilling as a serious problem in their state. While more tend to think “too much government regulation” is a very serious problem (36%) than say the same for “not enough oversight and monitoring” (24%), neither one inspires a sizable level of concern. Again, the survey provides a potential explanation: Westerners tend to believe that drilling is already highly regulated and monitored. A plurality of voters in every state says that “there is very careful oversight of oil and gas drilling by the federal government,” while the remainder are not really sure.

Likewise, energy production on public lands has flown under the radar of most Westerners. Only 34 percent of those interviewed know with certainty that oil and gas drilling is occurring on some public lands. Nearly twice as many think this is not true, and significant proportions in every state simply say they don’t know enough to say one way or the other.
While voters may not have a firm handle on all of the particulars, they do instinctively want some limits on drilling. Once informed that oil and gas drilling does take place on public lands, voters tend to call for a balanced approach to any energy development taking place in these areas. A majority of 56% says that environmentally sensitive public lands should be permanently protected from this type of activity.

- Some public lands should be drilled, while environmentally sensitive places should be permanently protected. 56%
- Oil and gas drilling on public lands should be strictly limited. 25%
- Public lands should generally be open to oil and gas drilling. 17%

- This desire to set aside some public lands holds true even in states in which there is a perception that oil and gas drilling is “booming” – Montana (where 67% say oil and gas is “booming’ in their state), Wyoming (66%) and Colorado (48%).

- Far fewer believe there is a boom in New Mexico (37%), Utah (36%) or Arizona (6%).
In order to assess how strong these views are, the survey also simulated some of the dialogue occurring on this issue in the public debate. When provided two viewpoints about increased drilling on public lands, more voters side with setting aside some types of areas and ensuring strong standards are in place before more drilling occurs on public lands over increased energy development in these areas. And this dynamic holds true even in traditional energy producing states like Colorado (62% set aside/stronger standards; 33% increase energy development), Montana (56% set aside/stronger standards; 36% increase energy development) and Wyoming (49% set aside/stronger standards; 43% increase energy development).

![More than 38 million acres of public lands - including land in six national parks - are currently leased by oil and gas companies, and oil production on public lands has been steadily climbing. Public lands that are drilled are often closed for other uses - like hunting or hiking - and the effects of contamination on the land can linger for generations. We need to ensure strong standards are in place and that drilling is not allowed in critical locations near recreation areas, water sources, and wildlife.](image)

![Bureaucratic red tape, burdensome federal regulations, and government policies that block access to federal lands have stood in the way of the West reaching its full energy and jobs potential and our country gaining energy independence. Energy production on public lands has declined, while increasing by double digits on private lands. We need to allow more public lands to be opened to responsible energy development.](image)

Taken as a whole, the survey points to a desire for a balanced approach to energy production – one that recognizes voters’ preference for renewable energy development and their desire to ensure some public lands are permanently protected, but also allows for responsible energy development in the West.
**LATINO VOTERS**

*Having flexed their political muscle in the 2012 election, this growing segment of the Western electorate voices strong pro-conservation views.*

On Spending Time in Nature:

- Latino voters in these western states report strong outdoor recreation engagement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hiking</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camping</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bird watching/ viewing wildlife</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain biking</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riding an off-road vehicle or snowmobile</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boating</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Despite their own activities, Latino voters worry that children do NOT spend enough time outdoors. Fully 86% say children not spending enough time outside is a serious problem, and 60% say it is an extremely or very serious problem. Far fewer white voters express this same level of concern (47% extremely or very serious problem).

Two-thirds (64%) of Latinos describe themselves as a conservationist, virtually the same proportion as the overall electorate.
### On Water:

- Even accounting for the fact that many of these Latino voters reside in the Southwest, they still are far more likely than their Anglo counterparts to regard water as a big problem in their state. For example, seven-in-ten Latinos regard the “low levels of water in the state's rivers” (70%) as a an extremely serious or very serious problem, compared to 57% of those who identify as white.

- Nearly half (48%) say “inadequate water supplies” is an extremely or very serious problem, with one-in-three saying it is an extremely serious or very serious problem (74% at least somewhat serious problem).

- Similarly, 81% register concern about pollution of rivers, lakes and streams (saying it is a serious problem).

- More than two-thirds (68%) of Latino voters agree that the increasing number of extreme weather events, such as wildfires and droughts, is the result of climate change – fully 10 points higher than among white voters.

### On Public Lands:

- Latinos voters are avid supporters of public lands, with 79% believing public lands in the state support the economy, provide recreation opportunities and enhance quality of life, rather than being a fiscal burden and preventing creation of jobs in traditional industries (17%) – that's a 62 point margin.

- They are nearly unanimous that public lands are an essential part of the state’s economy (82% agree) and two-thirds agree that the presence of these lands help attract high quality employers and good jobs (66%).

- An overwhelming majority of Latinos oppose selling some federal public lands as a way to reduce the nation’s budget deficit (26% support / 70% oppose).
On Energy Development:

- Latinos would prioritize renewable energy sources and energy efficiency as the way to power their state. When asked for the two energy sources they want to see encouraged, they say their state should primarily encourage solar (64%) and wind (39%), followed by energy efficiency efforts (26%).

- Conversely, they would discourage the use of coal (54%) and nuclear (47%).

- A majority of Latinos say environmentally sensitive places on public lands should be permanently protected from drilling (52%), or prefer to limit drilling entirely on public lands (31%) rather than opening more areas to energy development (16%).

- When provided with a simulation of the debate on this issue, Latinos side with those advocating for stronger standards and protecting certain lands, rather than increasing energy development on public lands.

More than 38 million acres of public lands - including land in six national parks - are currently leased by oil and gas companies, and oil production on public lands has been steadily climbing. Public lands that are drilled are often closed for other uses - like hunting or hiking - and the effects of contamination on the land can linger for generations. We need to ensure strong standards are in place and that drilling is not allowed in critical locations near recreation areas, water sources, and wildlife.

Bureaucratic red tape, burdensome federal regulations, and government policies that block access to federal lands have stood in the way of the West reaching its full energy and jobs potential and our country gaining energy independence. Energy production on public lands has declined, while increasing by double digits on private lands. We need to allow more public lands to be opened to responsible energy development.
This year’s Conservation in the West survey once again demonstrates the strong public support for a number of pro-conservation policies. So why do some elected officials in the region have mixed records in voting on these policies?

Most Westerners describe themselves as “conservationist” (63% across the region) and the vast majority engages in outdoor recreation in their state. The outcome of conservation ballot measures in the Western United States has demonstrated that when voters are given an opportunity to support or oppose financing conservation in their community or state, they tend to do so. In fact, voters in four of the survey states (Montana, Utah, Arizona, and Colorado) passed measures benefitting protection of land and water in 2012.

And in fact, voters are inclined to take a positive view of a candidate who espouses pro-conservation positions. For example, when asked about a candidate who supports protecting public lands, a majority of voters say that position alone would give them a “more favorable” impression of that candidate. Moreover, voters are even more positively impressed with a pro-conservation GOP candidate than with a Democratic candidate.
This is particularly true among Independent voters (51% more favorable toward a GOP candidate; 45% toward a Democratic candidate who takes this position).

Moreover, this position is a resounding positive among the respective bases for each party’s candidate:

- 50% of Republicans say they would view a GOP candidate more favorably who supports protection of public lands (only 5% less favorably).
- 69% of Democrats say they would view a Democratic candidate more favorably who supports protection of public lands (only 3% less favorably).

Key swing voter sub-groups also tend to be favorably impressed by a candidate who espouses these views* including...

- 59% of suburban women
- 53% of self-described moderates
- 48% of voters under age 35
- 47% of Latino voters

So why aren’t more candidates espousing pro-conservation policies? A lack of focus and attention on the part of voters may in part explain the seeming disconnect.

Most Westerners acknowledge they are unaware of the record of their Member of Congress on protecting land, air and water.

* Combined Sample
The dynamic is fairly similar in every state …

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Arizona</th>
<th>Colorado</th>
<th>Montana</th>
<th>New Mexico</th>
<th>Utah</th>
<th>Wyoming</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Places a <strong>HIGHER</strong> priority</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on protecting land, air</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>and water than you do</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Places the <strong>SAME</strong> priority</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on protecting land, air</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>and water that you do</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Places a <strong>LOWER</strong> priority</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on protecting land, air</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>and water than you do</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not really sure of the</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>positions your Member of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress has taken</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

…and with voters across the political spectrum:

- **Republican** (36%)
  - Higher Priority: 7%
  - Lower Priority: 16%
  - Same Priority: 21%
  - Not Sure: 21%

- **Independent** (31%)
  - Higher Priority: 7%
  - Lower Priority: 24%
  - Same Priority: 11%
  - Not Sure: 55%

- **Democrat** (31%)
  - Higher Priority: 4%
  - Lower Priority: 25%
  - Same Priority: 17%
  - Not Sure: 53%
Taken as a whole, the data indicates that voters are not intimately aware with the positions their Representatives are taking on conservation issues. However, pro-conservation positions can be a striking positive for candidates who espouse them, particularly with key swing voter sub-groups.

Moreover, given the positions voters take throughout the survey, it stands to reason that voters could take a less favorable view of an elected official if they were to hear more about their Representative taking positions that are not in line with their own views on these issues. A Western electorate that better understands the positions its elected officials take on conservation issues is likely to reward those who take strong pro-conservation stands.
Positive attitudes toward public lands – and a strong desire to see them safeguarded – are consistent and wide-spread among the Western electorate. Voters demonstrate a personal connection to these places. For example, more than two-thirds in every state say that they plan to visit a national park in 2013.

Westerners tell us that public lands have immense benefits for their state – both for them personally and for the economy of their state. A majority of 52 percent perceive public lands to be a job creator in their state, and almost no one perceives those lands as holding their state back economically (just 7 percent believe having public lands costs jobs). Three-quarters (74%) believe our national parks, forests, monuments, and wildlife areas help to attract high quality employers and good jobs to their state. And, there is near unanimity - 91 percent agreeing - that public lands like national parks, forests, monuments and wildlife areas are an “essential part” of their state’s economy. This view is evident in every single state.

Agreement that Public Lands Essential to their State’s Economy
Any sense of public lands being a burden or problem in their state is rebuffed by the electorate consistently and strongly.

- When provided with two viewpoints about public lands, 79% side with a statement saying that public lands support their economy and enhance their overall quality of life, rather than being an economic and fiscal burden to their states.

- A small minority – 14 percent – say too much public land is a very serious problem in their state; while the vast majority reject this concern.

- 67% oppose proposals to sell off public lands, with a majority opposed in every state. In fact, 50% strongly oppose selling some public lands. Only 27% support selling some public lands.

### Opposition to Selling Public Lands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Oppose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**West**

- Public lands like national parks and national forests in your support our economy; provide opportunities to hunt, fish, and enjoy the outdoors; and enhance our overall quality of life. 79%

- Public lands like national parks and national forests in your state take land off the tax rolls, cost government to maintain them, and prevent opportunities for logging and oil and gas production that could provide jobs. 15%
Voters across the political spectrum and representing every single demographic group are more likely to oppose than support the sale of some public lands. Voters who participate in outdoor recreation activities, including off-road vehicle use, are most strongly opposed to the sale of public lands.

Voters also overwhelmingly reject arguments for the sale of public lands - instead agreeing that doing so would hurt their state’s economy and quality of life.

Those who oppose selling off public lands say that public lands are essential to the strength of our state’s economy. Public lands in your state generate billions of dollars from attracting tourists; hunters and anglers; high quality businesses, and skilled workers. Selling off these public lands to corporations for development will hurt our economy and quality of life.

Those who support selling off public lands in your state say government should not be in the business of owning and managing land. We can sell millions of acres of these publicly owned lands to private corporations and individuals, raising millions of dollars to bring more money to the government to fund vital services.
Sportsmen

Two-in-five Western voters are hunters or anglers. They value public lands; overwhelmingly oppose their sale; and want a balanced approach to energy development.

On Spending Time in Nature:

- Fully 39% of voters in the west say they are a hunter or angler. These voters are also more apt to take part in other outdoor recreation activities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Camping</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiking</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bird watching/viewing wildlife</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riding an off-road vehicle or snowmobile</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boating</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain biking</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Despite their own activities, Sportsmen worry that children do NOT spend enough time outdoors. Fully 85% say children not spending enough time outside is a serious problem, and 53% say it is an extremely or very serious problem – a higher proportion than among non-hunters or anglers (48% extremely or very serious problem).

- Three-quarters of sportsmen say loss of fish and wildlife habitat is a serious problem in their state.

More than six-in-ten sportsmen (63%) describe themselves as a conservationist.
On Water:

- Nearly six-in-ten regard the “low levels of water in the state’s rivers” (59%) as a very serious problem.

- Almost one-in-three (30%) say “inadequate water supplies” is a very serious problem, with three quarters saying it is at least somewhat a serious problem (72%).

- Similarly, 76% register concern about pollution of rivers, lakes and streams (at least somewhat serious problem).

- A majority (56%) of sportsmen agree that the increasing number of extreme weather events such as wildfires and droughts is the result of global warming.

On Energy Development:

- Sportsmen prioritize cleaner, renewable sources of energy as the way to power their state. When asked for the two energy sources they want to see encouraged, they say their state should primarily encourage solar (51%) and wind (43%), followed by natural gas (33%).

- Conversely, they would discourage the use of nuclear (44%) and coal (43%).

- A majority of sportsmen say environmentally sensitive places on public lands should be permanently protected from drilling (55%). Equal numbers prefer to limit drilling entirely on public lands (22%) or prefer opening more areas to energy development (22%).
On Public Lands:

- Sportsmen are avid supporters of public lands, with 77% believing public lands in the state support the economy, provide recreation opportunities and enhance quality of life, rather than being a fiscal burden and preventing creation of jobs in traditional industries (16%) – that’s a 61 point margin.

- They are nearly unanimous that public lands are an essential part of the state’s economy (94% agree) and seven-in-ten agree that the presence of these lands help attract high quality employers and good jobs (72%).

- An overwhelming majority of sportsmen oppose selling some federal public lands as a way to reduce the nation’s budget deficit (31% support / 64% oppose). When presented with two viewpoints about the issue, they are even more likely to side with opponents of selling public lands:

  Those who oppose selling off public lands say that public lands are essential to the strength of our state’s economy. Public lands in your state generate billions of dollars from attracting tourists; hunters and anglers; high quality businesses, and skilled workers. Selling off these public lands to corporations for development will hurt our economy and quality of life.

  Those who support selling off public lands in your state say government should not be in the business of owning and managing land. We can sell millions of acres of these publicly owned lands to private corporations and individuals, raising millions of dollars to bring more money to the government to fund vital services.
Water

Western voters are concerned about the low levels of water in their rivers, the low level of snowpack in the mountains, and, in certain states, a generally inadequate supply of water.

There is widespread concern about the low levels of water in rivers among voters in these Western States. Overall, 87% say that the low water level in rivers is a serious problem, with a significant majority (60%) saying it is an “extremely serious” or “very serious” problem. Worries about low levels of water in rivers are especially pronounced in New Mexico (83% extremely/very serious), Colorado (69%), and Arizona (59%). In fact, in what may be unprecedented concern about the state of rivers – voters in Colorado and Wyoming are more likely to say the state of rivers is a “very serious” problem than say the same for economic concerns (by 11 and 23 points, respectively). That said, throughout the region two-thirds or more say that low water levels in rivers are a problem.
Western voters are also worried about water levels at higher altitudes, especially in three states. When asked about the low level of snowpack in the mountains, more than three-fourths (77%) of voters say it is a problem, with 48% saying it is an “extremely serious” or “very serious” problem. Interestingly, there is a distinct split in the six states, with a majority in the easternmost states (Colorado, Wyoming, and New Mexico) seeing low snowpack as an “extremely” or “very serious” problem, and a majority in the westernmost states (Arizona, Utah, and Montana) far less concerned.
From a broader perspective, voters in these Western states also see inadequate water supplies overall as a problem. Fully 77% see it as a serious problem, with 46% saying it is an extremely serious or very serious problem – up six points in intensity from 2012. Concern over the state’s water supply is growing especially quickly in Colorado. One year ago, just one third (33%) of voters saw it as an extremely or very serious problem, but that number has grown to 51% in just the past year.

**Colorado Water Supply (Extremely/Very Serious Problem)**

Voters in the West point to climate change as contributing to these problems. They overwhelmingly agree that the increase in extreme weather events such as wildfires, droughts, and hurricanes is at least in part due to climate change. Sixty one-percent (61%) of voters say they agree that climate change is contributing to these ills in their state, while just 35% disagree. A majority in every single state agrees with a climate-caused explanation for extreme weather.

“The increasing number of extreme weather events like wildfires, droughts, and hurricanes is at least in part due to climate change.”

![Pie Chart: % Agree](image)

- Arizona: 59%
- Colorado: 63%
- Montana: 62%
- New Mexico: 67%
- Utah: 54%
- Wyoming: 56%
2012-13 State of the Rockies Project Focus
Water Friendly Futures for the Colorado River Basin

During our tenth year, the State of the Rockies Project efforts are once again focused on a single regional challenge: the future of water use in the Colorado River Basin, including our tradition of student-faculty collaborative research, and our Down the Colorado Expedition conducted by four recent alumni. We will culminate our efforts by unveiling the 2013 State of the Rockies Report Card at our Annual Conference April 8-9, 2013, which will include a lineup of experts speaking on the future of scientific investigation by the growing ranks of “citizen scientists,” as well as Colorado officials and business representatives speaking on the balancing of economic development in the Centennial State with the welfare of the state’s environment and local communities.

Find out more at: www.stateoftherockies.com
Conservation in the West Poll
THE COLORADO COLLEGE
STATE OF THE ROCKIES PROJECT

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.