



THE COLORADO COLLEGE
STATE OF THE ROCKIES PROJECT

Conservation in the West Poll

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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 [here](#) on the Colorado College website.

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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.