



TO: The Nature Conservancy

FROM: Lori Weigel, Public Opinion Strategies
Dave Metz, Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates

RE: American Voters View Conservation as a Smart Investment with Many Benefits; Reject Disproportionate Cuts to Conservation Programs and Back Investments in LWCF

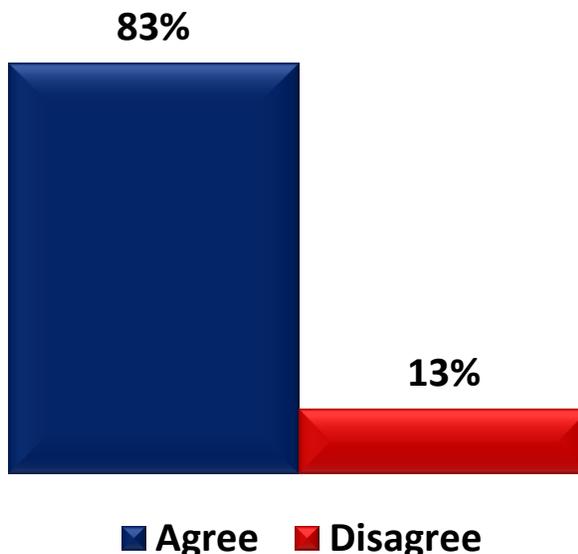
DATE: September 30, 2013

A recent national survey of voters¹ conducted by the bipartisan research team of Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (D) and Public Opinion Strategies (R) at the height of the latest budget debates in Congress indicates that overwhelming majorities of American voters reject cutting funding to conservation, seeing it instead as one area of the federal budget where they see a tangible return and get “their money’s worth.” More than seven-in-ten (72 percent) of the national electorate says that even with federal budget problems, funding for conservation should *not* be cut.

American voters’ broad support for conservation generally extends to specific policy decisions, such as funding the Land and Water Conservation Fund. All of these views – including support for LWCF – extend across party lines, across the nation, and with all key demographic sub-groups. Specifically, the survey found that:

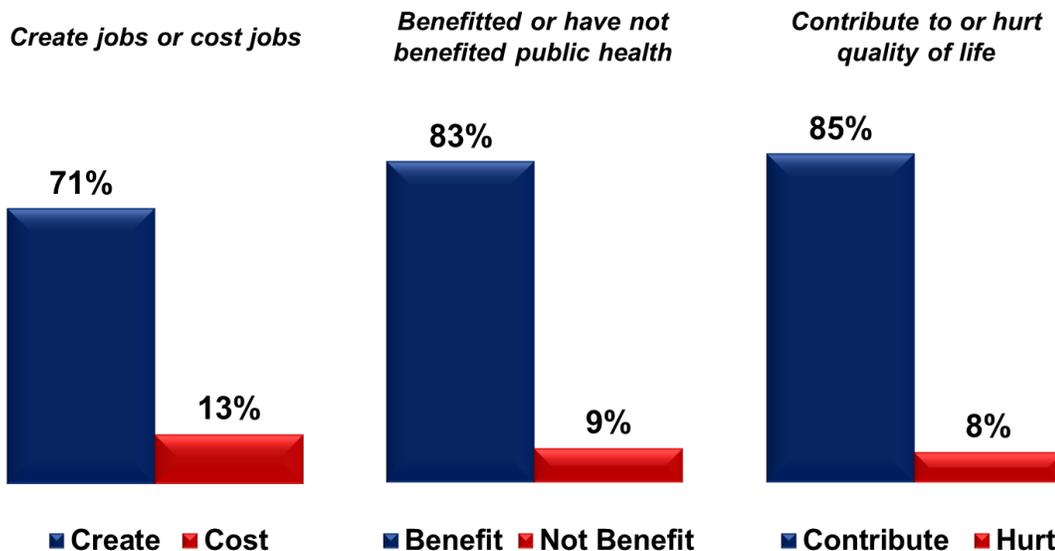
- **At the height of major budget debates in Congress, more than seven-in-ten hold the view that even with budget problems for land, air and water should not be cut.** Fully 72 percent of the national electorate – including over two thirds of Republicans (68 percent), Independents (67 percent) and Democrats (79 percent) – agrees with the view that *“even with federal budget problems, funding to safeguard land, air, and water should not be cut.”*
- **Eight-in-ten U.S. voters say that we get “our money’s worth” from investments in conservation.** Fully 83 percent agree that *“the public receives its money’s worth when we invest in protecting water, land, air and wildlife.”* A majority (51 percent) strongly agrees with this view. This view is also widely shared across party lines, as 79 percent of Republicans and Independents indicate agreement, along with 93 percent of Democrats.

¹ **Methodology:** From September 23-26, 2013, FM3 and POS completed 700 telephone interviews with registered voters nationally who are likely to cast ballots in the 2012 election. Interviews were conducted on landlines and cell phones. The margin of sampling error for the full sample is +/-3.7 percent; margins of sampling error for subgroups within the sample will be larger. Some percentages may sum to more than 100 percent due to rounding.



- Underlying some of this support is a sense that there are many benefits of conservation – for the economy, health and quality of life. Voters overwhelmingly believe that conservation programs are beneficial in these three areas:²

Impact of Programs to Protect and Clean up Water, Land and Wildlife



² “And do you think that programs to protect and clean up water, land and wildlife ... (READ IN RANDOM ORDER:)”
 “Create jobs or cost jobs?”
 “Have benefitted or have not benefitted public health?”
 “Contribute to or hurt quality of life?”

- **In fact, the overwhelming majority of American voters reject the notion that protecting our environment is at odds with a strong economy.** Voters do not view strengthening the economy as being in conflict with conservation. As shown in the next graph, nearly three-quarters of voters (73%) believe we can protect land and water and have a strong economy at the same time, while only 19 percent believe that those concerns are even “sometimes” in conflict³.

Relationship Between the Environment and the Economy

We can protect land and water and have a strong economy with good jobs for Americans at the same time, without having to choose one over the other.

73%

Sometimes protections for land and water and a strong economy are in conflict and we must choose one over the other.

19%

This is consistent with the views of voters from the beginning of the country’s economic recession (In 2009, voters held these same views by a 76% to 19% margin), and holds true among virtually all demographic sub-groups. The view that conservation and a strong economy are compatible is also predominant among the middle of the electorate which is undecided or not definitive in their vote decision for President, as 84 percent of these “swing” voters sides with the idea that we should not have to choose the economy over the environment.

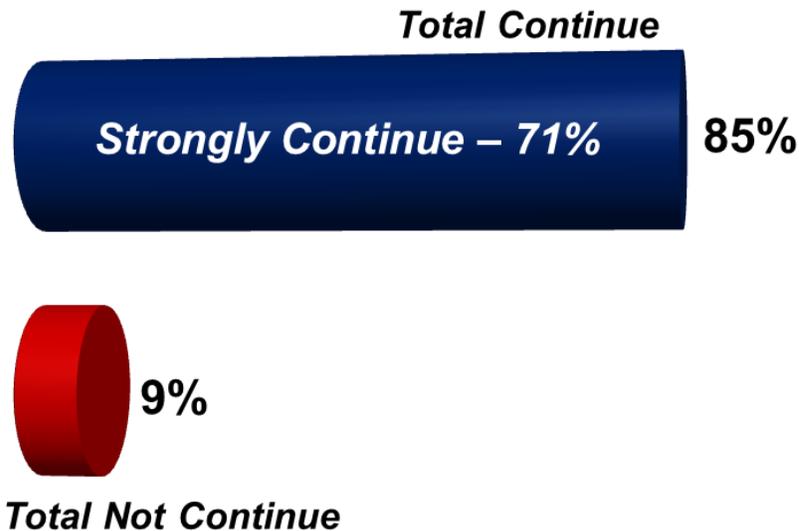
³ “Which of the following comes closer to your opinion: (READ IN ROTATED ORDER)”

“We can protect land and water and have a strong economy with good jobs for Americans at the same time, without having to choose one over the other;” OR

“Sometimes protections for land and water and a strong economy are in conflict and we must choose one over the other.”

- **Voters' broad support for conservation generally extends to specific policy decisions, such as funding the Land and Water Conservation Fund.** More than four-in-five American voters (85 percent) would prefer that the nation continues to invest in LWCF.⁴ Only nine percent of the electorate would prefer to have those funds available for different purposes, as shown below.

**Support for Some of the fees from Off-shore Drilling Continuing to be Used
for Land and Water Conservation Fund**

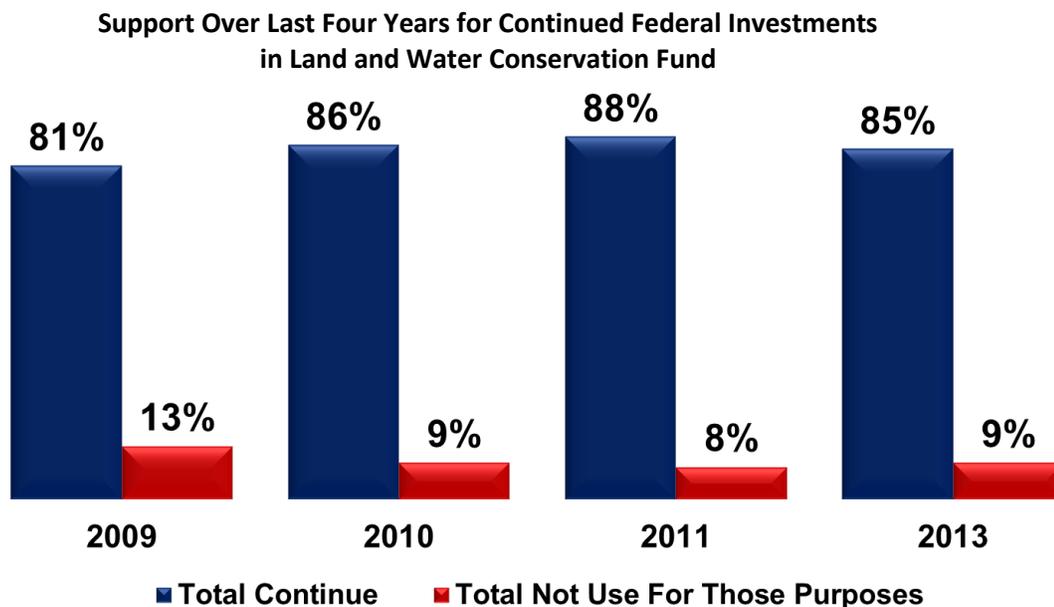


The desire to have continued federal investments in the Land and Water Conservation Fund is evident across all major segments of the electorate, including:

- ✓ 93% of Democrats, 84% of independents, and 78% of Republicans;
- ✓ 90% of moderates, 78% of conservatives, and 92% of liberals;
- ✓ 84% of men and 85% of women;
- ✓ 88% of Latinos, 84% of whites, and 90% of African Americans;
- ✓ 85% of urban and suburban voters, and 81% of rural residents; and
- ✓ At least 78% of voters in each region of the country.

⁴ "The Land and Water Conservation Fund is a federal program that was established in 1965 to help preserve, develop and ensure access to natural and outdoor recreation resources for the benefit of all Americans. This fund supports our parks, recreation and open spaces, and protects our forests, rivers, lakes and wildlife habitat. The primary source of income to the fund is fees paid by oil and gas companies drilling offshore in waters owned by the American people. Do you think that some of the money from fees charged to oil and gas companies that drill offshore should: continue to be used to conserve natural areas and clean water, and to ensure access to outdoor recreation, OR would you not use it for those purposes?"

- **Despite continued budget debates, voters remain steadfast in their support for LWCF funding.** As the following graph indicates, support on this question that we tracked from a previous national survey of voters remains statistically the same over the last few years, with just as solid and intense support as ever for continued federal investments in LWCF:



- **Nearly all voters think their Member of Congress should honor the commitment to fund conservation through LWCF.** There is no equivocation in the message being sent by the electorate regarding this program:

Would You Tell Your Member of Congress that...

The federal government should honor the original commitment to use a small portion of these oil and gas fee payments to conserve the nation's water, wildlife habitat, and parks, and provide access for outdoor recreation

85%

The federal government should continue to divert money from the Land and Water Conservation Fund for other government needs.

9%

Overall, it is clear during the continued federal budget debate that conservation is uniquely positioned as an issue – it has strong bipartisan support; voters perceive a return on their investment economically and in better public health and quality of life; and therefore they reject disproportionately cutting these programs. Moreover, they continue to express strong support for continued federal investments in the Land and Water Conservation Fund.