

*Public Opinion Research
& Strategy*



**PUBLIC OPINION
STRATEGIES**

TO: Interested Parties

FROM: Dave Metz
Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates

Lori Weigel
Public Opinion Strategies

RE: Key Findings from Recent National Voter Survey

DATE: July 13, 2011

The Democratic polling firm of Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3) and Republican polling firm of Public Opinion Strategies (POS) partnered to complete a national survey of voters to gauge their support for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).¹ **The results show near-unanimous voter support for continuing to dedicate a portion of the revenue from oil and gas drilling fees to the LWCF – support that cuts across party and demographic lines.** This level of support has held constant over the past several years, despite deep voter anxiety about the economy and federal budget. In addition, nearly nine out of ten voters oppose future diversions of funding that has been committed to the Fund – and 60 percent go so far as to say that money diverted in the past should be repaid over time.

Among the key specific findings of the survey are the following:

- **An overwhelming majority of voters supports continuing to deposit fees from oil and gas drilling in the Land and Water Conservation Fund.** Survey respondents were asked the following initial question about the LWCF, repeated from prior national surveys:

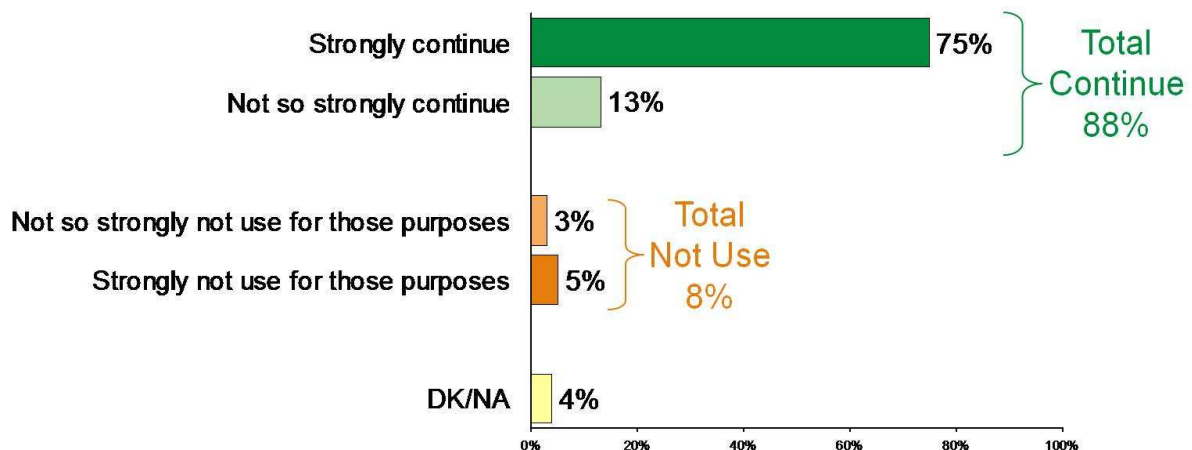
¹ **Methodology:** On July 10-12, 2011, FM3 and POS completed 800 telephone interviews with registered voters nationally who are likely to cast ballots in the 2012 election. Interviews were conducted on landlines and cell phones. The margin of sampling error for the full sample is +/-3.46%; margins of sampling error for subgroups within the sample will be larger. Some percentages may sum to more than 100% due to rounding.

“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?”

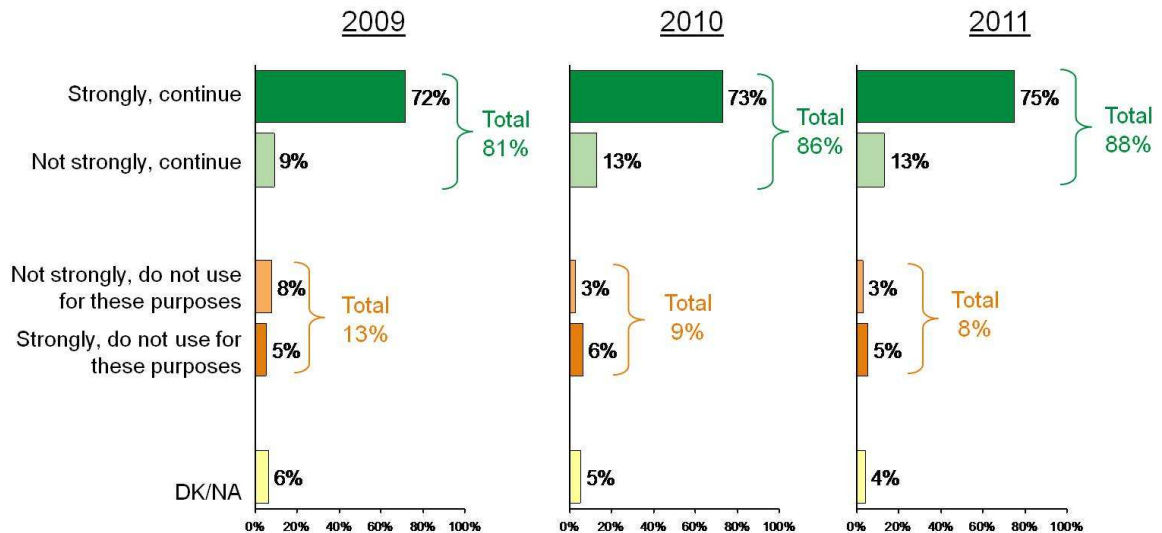
Given this language, nearly nine in ten voters indicated that they thought oil and gas fee revenue should continue to be used for the LWCF, as shown in **Figure 1**. As striking as the overall level of support for this funding is its intensity, with three-quarters of voters indicating “strong” support for the LWCF.

**FIGURE 1:
Support for Continuing Funding for the LWCF**



Support for LWCF has been very consistent over time. As detailed in **Figure 2**, it has been essentially unchanged since 2009 – both in terms of the breadth of overall support and its intensity. Given the numerous changes in the political and economic environment – including a continued weak economy and the Republican takeover of the House of Representatives in 2010 – support for LWCF has been remarkably durable.

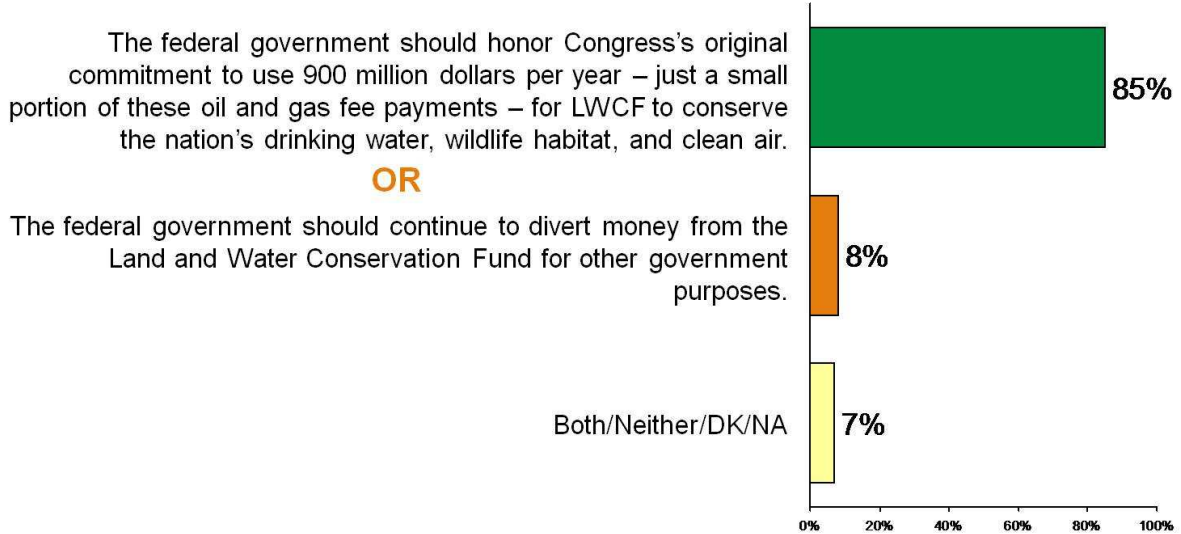
FIGURE 2:
Support for Continuing Funding for the LWCF, 2009 to 2011



Much of the consistency of this support builds from its demographic breadth. Voters from all major segments of the electorate support continuation of funding for LWCF, including:

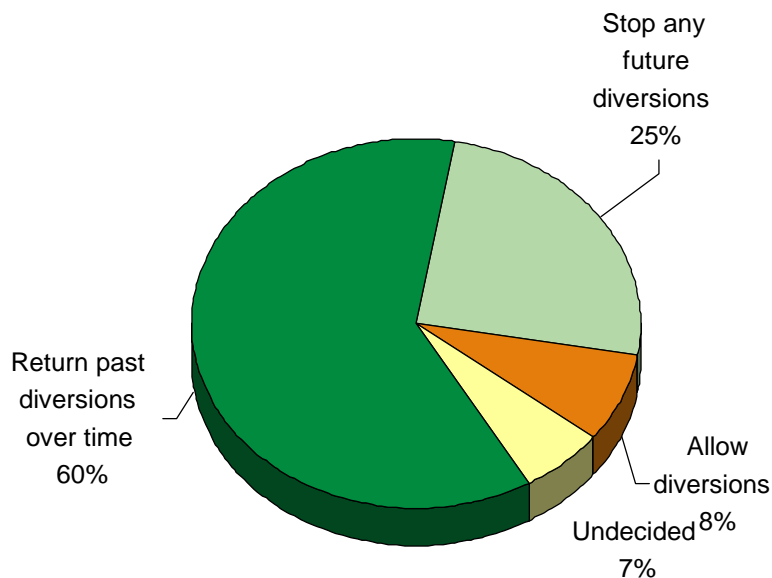
- ✓ 93% of Democrats, 87% of independents, and 83% of Republicans – as well as 81% of Tea Party voters;
 - ✓ 87% of men and 89% of women;
 - ✓ 95% of Latinos, 88% of whites, and 85% of African Americans;
 - ✓ 86% of voters with incomes under \$40,000, 92% of those with incomes between \$40,000 and \$80,000, and 88% of those with higher incomes;
 - ✓ 88% of voters under age 55 and 88% of voters age 55 and over; and
 - ✓ 91% of voters in the Northeast, 85% in the South, 90% in the Midwest and 87% in the West.
- **Nine in ten voters oppose any diversion of funding from the LWCF – and most of that number would like to see money from past diversions replaced.** As detailed in **Figure 3** on the following page, when offered a choice about future LWCF funding, most voters (85%) clearly oppose any future diversion of money from the Fund – a majority that again cuts across all segments of the electorate (and includes 85% of Republicans, 85% of Democrats and 87% of independents).

**FIGURE 3:
Position on Diversion of Funding From the LWCF**



Even more strikingly, when those voters who insisted that LWCF money not be diverted were asked whether they would like to see past diverted funds replaced over time, the vast majority (71%) said “yes.” Accordingly, it is possible to split the national electorate into four groups, as shown in **Figure 4**: 60% who want an end to diversions from the LWCF, and would like to see past diversions re-funded; an additional 25% who would simply like to end diversions from the LWCF; eight percent who would allow such diversions to continue; and seven percent are uncertain.

**FIGURE 4:
Support for Replacing Past Diversions From the LWCF**



Overall, these results show clear voter preferences for Congressional funding of the LWCF. Voters are near-unanimous in their desire to continue funding the LWCF, a sentiment that has held constant over time and is shared by most major subgroups within the electorate. In addition, voters clearly want an end to the Congressional practice of diverting LWCF money to other purposes; and in fact, a sizable portion go so far as to say that over time Congress should replace the money it has diverted from the fund over time. **American voters see the LWCF as a vital source of funding for land and water protection, and want to see it funded as promised.**