

September 28, 2015

To: Interested Parties

From: Ben Tulchin, Ben Krompak, and Kiel Brunner; Tulchin Research

Re: **Poll Finds Overwhelming Support for the Endangered Species Act Among Montana Voters**

Tulchin Research recently conducted a survey of 200 likely November 2016 voters in Montana on behalf of Defenders of Wildlife and Earthjustice to assess attitudes toward the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Our research finds a broad-based consensus on the ESA, with three-quarters of Montana voters (75%) supporting the law and with that support extending across the political spectrum. Montana voters feel strongly that decisions about which species are protected under the Endangered Species Act should rest with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologists and *not* with members of Congress. Furthermore, voters reject the contention by critics of the Endangered Species Act that the law hurts our economy and believe we can protect wildlife and grow the economy at the same time. Additionally, nearly two-thirds of Montana voters (63%) say they would be more likely to vote for a member of Congress who *supports* environmental safeguards such as the Endangered Species Act.

Poll Finds Broad Consensus on the Endangered Species Act

Asked whether they support or oppose the Endangered Species Act based on a basic description of the law, 75 percent of Montana voters surveyed indicated that they support it, including 45 percent who *strongly* support it.

<i>“As you may know, the Endangered Species Act is an environmental law established to protect all wildlife, plants, and fish that are in danger of extinction. Based on what you know, would you say that you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose the Endangered Species Act?”</i>	
<i>Strongly Support</i>	45%
<i>Somewhat Support</i>	30%
Total Support	75%
<i>Somewhat Oppose</i>	9%
<i>Strongly Oppose</i>	10%
Total Oppose	19%
<i>Don't know</i>	6%

In today’s highly polarized political environment, it is notable that support for the Endangered Species Act spans the political spectrum. The law is favored by 91 percent of self-identified liberals, 83 percent of moderates and 61 percent of conservatives.

[Strong Majority Say Scientists – Not Congress – Should Make Decisions about Endangered Species Protection](#)

With some legislators currently seeking to strip specific individual species of Endangered Species Act protections, our poll asked Montana voters whether they preferred such decisions be made by Congress or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologists. By a margin of 82 percent to 5 percent, voters prefer a science-based approach over allowing Congress to decide which species should be protected, while 13 percent are undecided.

<i>“Who do you think should determine which species should be protected under the Endangered Species Act:”</i>	
<i>Biologists at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service</i>	82%
<i>Congress</i>	5%
<i>Don’t know</i>	13%

As with overall support for the Endangered Species Act, these attitudes are shared by large majorities of liberals (98%), moderates (91%), and conservatives (67%).

[Montana Voters Believe the Endangered Species Act is Necessary to Prevent Extinctions, Believe U.S. Can Protect Wildlife While Growing the Economy and Creating Jobs](#)

While critics of the Endangered Species Act contend that the law hurts the nation’s economy, our poll finds Montana voters soundly reject this argument and are confident the United States can protect wildlife while creating jobs. Just 27 percent of voters agree with critics who say that “the Endangered Species Act hurts our economy and destroys jobs,” while two-thirds of voters (67%) agree with Endangered Species Act supporters who say “it is necessary to prevent species from going extinct and that we can protect our natural heritage for future generations while growing our economy and creating jobs.”

“Here are two statements about the Endangered Species Act. Please tell me which is closer to your opinion.”	
CRITICS of the Endangered Species Act say the law hurts our economy and destroys jobs	27%
SUPPORTERS of the law say that it is necessary to prevent imperiled plants and animals from going extinct and that we can protect our natural heritage for future generations while growing our economy and creating jobs.	67%
<i>Don't know</i>	6%

Voters of All Persuasions More Likely to Support Members of Congress Who Back Environmental Safeguards Like the Endangered Species Act

The poll finds that two-thirds of voters (63%) report they are *more* likely to vote for a member of Congress “who supports environmental safeguards such as the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Air Act, and the Clean Water Act,” while just 22 percent say they would be “less likely” to vote for that member. Notably, large majorities of liberals (87%) and moderates (70%) say they are more likely to support a member of Congress who supports environmental protection, as do a plurality of conservatives (44% more likely to 35% less likely).

“Would you be more or less likely to vote for a member of Congress who supports environmental safeguards such as the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Air Act, and the Clean Water Act?”	
More likely to support	63%
Less likely to support	22%
<i>Makes no difference</i>	5%
<i>Don't know</i>	10%

Conclusion

Our research finds a broad-based consensus on the Endangered Species Act with 75 percent of voters statewide supporting the law with support extending across ideological lines. The poll finds wide agreement that the Endangered Species Act is necessary to prevent extinctions, that the nation can protect our natural heritage while growing our economy, and that specific decisions about species protection should be science-based and made by biologists rather than by politicians. Additionally, voters look favorably upon legislators who support environmental protection with voters of all political persuasions saying they would be more likely to vote for a member of Congress who supports safeguards like the Endangered Species Act.

Survey Methodology: From September 8 - 13, 2015, Tulchin Research conducted a telephone survey of 200 likely November 2016 voters in Montana, using live professional callers and dialing both landlines and cell phones. The margin of error for this survey is +/- 6.9 percentage points.

Appendix: Regional Representation

The survey was conducted among a representative sample of likely November 2016 voters statewide.

Regions

East:

- **52% of respondents**

West:

- **48% of respondents**