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Wisconsin Survey:

Wisconsin Sportsmen Overwhelmingly Support State Conservation Programs, Willing to Pay to Protect State Wildlife, Natural Resources

Wisconsin hunters and anglers oppose Administration positions on key federal conservation policies including wetlands protections and mercury emissions reductions

MADISON, WI – Wisconsin hunters and anglers overwhelmingly support state wildlife management and conservation programs, want to protect such programs from budget cuts, and are even willing to pay more in hunting and fishing fees to do so, according to a poll released today by the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation (WWF).

The poll found that among Wisconsin hunters and anglers:

- 79 percent support having the Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources appointed by the Natural Resources Board;
- 71 percent oppose proposed cutbacks in the Wisconsin Stewardship Fund, a program by which the state acquires state fishery and wildlife areas, state parks and forests to conserve state natural resources; and,
- 57 percent would favor an increase in hunting and fishing license fees, if the additional revenues would be dedicated to protecting state conservation programs from budget cuts.

The poll also found that Wisconsin sportsmen overwhelmingly support conservation policies at the national level. Among hunters and anglers in the state:

- 73 percent say that natural wetlands should not be filled or drained, even if developers replace them with manmade wetlands;
- 72 percent say that power plants should be required to remove mercury pollution in a decade;
- 70 percent say the best way to address America’s energy needs is through expanding renewables (45 percent) and conserving more (25 percent);

“This poll shows that conservation is a high priority for Wisconsin hunters and anglers,” says George Meyer, director of WWF. “Sportsmen want policies that conserve and protect natural resources, and they are willing to support these policies on the state level

by paying more in hunting and license fees and by advocating for stronger federal policies on the national level.”

Eighty-three percent of Wisconsin hunters and anglers say wildlife and conservation issues are important in deciding who to vote for president. Among Wisconsin hunters and anglers, 59 percent voted for President Bush in 2000.

“Wisconsin hunters and anglers give the current administration credit and blame where it is due,” says Meyer. “They do support some of the administration’s policies. But on key administration policies that affect conservation nationwide, a majority of hunters and anglers oppose the administration’s position. This opposition is centered around the issues of wetlands protection, reducing mercury emissions from power plants and oil and gas development on prime wildlife habitat on public lands.”

The poll found that among Wisconsin hunters and anglers:

- 81 percent favor the Bush Administration policy that expanded the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program that helps private landowners restore fish and wildlife habitat on their property;
- 75 percent favor the Bush Administration policy that more than doubled funding for the Forest Legacy Program, a partnership among the Forest Service, states, and land trusts that protects and ensures public access to forest areas threatened by development;
- 65 percent favor the Bush Administration policy that provided full funding for Florida Everglades restoration, the largest conservation restoration effort in the nation’s history;
- 67 percent oppose the Bush Administration policy that proposed giving coal-fired power plants flexibility to meet a national goal to reduce mercury pollution even though that may result in higher mercury pollution in many communities;
- 65 percent oppose the Bush Administration policy that endorsed exemptions to the Clean Water Act and Safe Drinking Water Act for the oil and gas industry in an effort to expedite oil and gas development on public lands, including prime wildlife, hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation areas;
- 64 percent oppose the Bush Administration policy that issued new Clean Water Act guidelines that will eliminate protections for up to 20 million acres of wetlands.

The views of Wisconsin sportsmen mirror those of sportsmen across the nation when compared to a national study of hunters and anglers released today by the National Wildlife Federation (NWF).

“Our poll shows that hunters and anglers feel the administration is listening to the wrong people – the oil and gas industry and developers – in formulating conservation policy.” says Marc Smith of the NWF’s Great Lake’s office. “It should instead be listening to scientists, conservation groups and to hunters and anglers. These findings are a call to action to the administration to change these policies.”

When asked whose opinion counts the most with the Bush Administration on conservation, hunting and fishing issues, 49 percent of hunters and anglers named the oil and gas industry as having the most influence.

When asked whose opinion should count most with the Bush Administration on conservation, hunting and fishing issues, 86 percent responded scientists, conservation groups and hunter and anglers.

“Hunters and anglers have been the backbone of the monumentally successful effort to conserve natural resources and restore wildlife in the United States,” says Meyer. “Sportsmen want to protect the waters in which we fish and the lands on which we hunt, and we’re here today to emphasize the need for state and federal policies that serve the best interests of all Americans and assure a legacy of wildlife and wild places for generations to come.”

The poll was conducted by Bellwether Research and Consulting, an Alexandria, Virginia-based polling firm, from June 10-June 20, 2004. The poll sampled 303 Wisconsin hunters and anglers, all registered voters.

The Wisconsin poll has a sampling error of plus-or-minus 5.7 percent at a 95 percent confidence level.

For more information about the poll, including the national and state-based results and methodology statements, visit www.nwf.org/news.

The Wisconsin Wildlife Federation is the state’s largest conservation group made up of 86 hunting, fishing and trapping groups. The Federation is dedicated to conservation education and the advancement of sound state and federal conservation policies.

Protecting wildlife through education and action since 1936, the [National Wildlife Federation](http://www.nwf.org) is America’s conservation organization creating solutions that balance the needs of people and wildlife now and for future generations.

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