

To: Interested Parties
From: Global Strategy Group
Date: September 27, 2019
Re: LWCF Research Findings & Messaging Recommendations

In partnership with the Center for American Progress and the Center for Western Priorities, Global Strategy Group conducted an online discussion board among nationwide voters from June 25th to June 27th, 2019 and an online survey of 1,539 likely 2020 general election voters nationwide between July 25th and July 30th, 2019.

Key Findings:

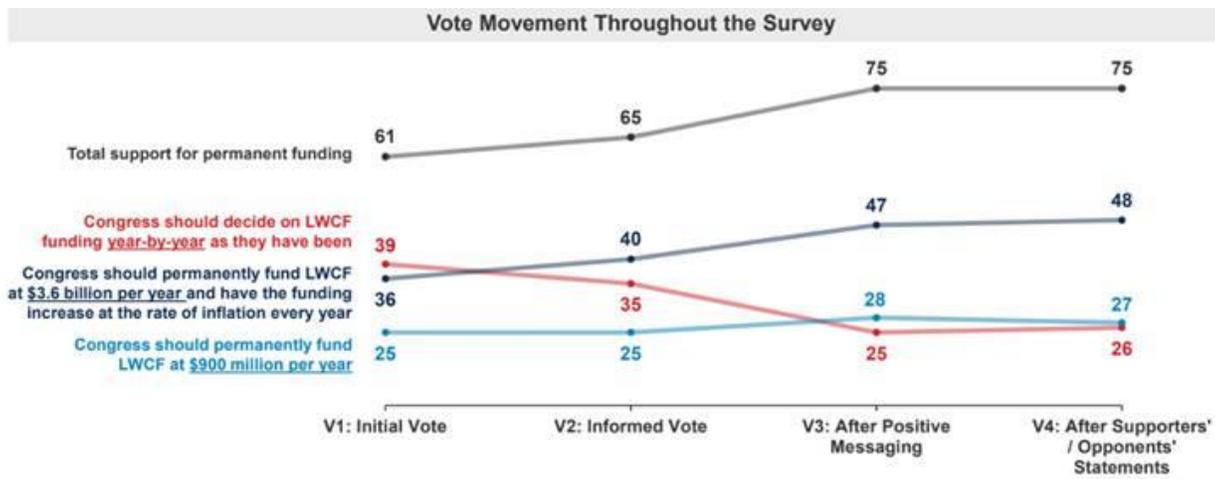
Voters are primed to support more ambitious efforts to protect our land, water, and wildlife. Nearly two thirds (65%) of likely 2020 election voters believe the federal government is not doing enough to protect our land, water, and wild spaces.



Voters believe the Land and Water Conservation Fund is important. After voters read a short description of the program, a full 91% of voters rate the program as important, including nearly half who rate it as “extremely important” (a 7 on a 1-to-7 scale). In a time of such partisan polarization, the agreement across parties is remarkable, with at least 88% of Democrats, independents, and Republicans rating the program as important.



Voters strongly support permanent funding of the program. We found that voters are not just supportive of permanent funding at \$900 million per year but are persuaded by arguments that LWCF should be permanently funded at a higher level. After hearing both positive messaging and opposition arguments, 75% support permanent funding (either at \$900 million or \$3.6 billion+ per year), including a near-majority thinking LWCF should be permanently funded at \$3.6 billion and indexed annually to inflation.



Voters are drawn to a simple, straightforward description of the program that explains the rationale for setting up LWCF and how it is funded:

Recommended language – introducing LWCF: The Land and Water Conservation Fund is based on a simple concept: we should take revenues from the depletion of one public resource – offshore oil and gas – and use them to pay for the conservation of another resource: our public lands, water, parks, and natural places. LWCF is not funded by taxpayers, but rather by royalties from energy companies that engage in offshore drilling. It uses the proceeds to protect our wild spaces, outdoor heritage, clean water, and access to outdoor recreation across the country.

Water and wild places are compelling messages. LWCF's role in protecting clean drinking water and watersheds consistently polled and tested as the best message across the board. After water, protecting our wild spaces and outdoor heritage is a solid message that resonated across the political spectrum and can also be used to boost support for LWCF:

Recommended language – water: We depend on our rivers, wetlands, and watersheds to provide clean, safe drinking water. LWCF plays a critical role in protecting our water – and thus the health of our children and families – by safeguarding our rivers, streams, lakes and watersheds.

Recommended language – wild places: America's wild places are disappearing quickly as cities, suburbs, and roads sprawl further and further out. In fact, we're losing a football field worth of natural area in the U.S. every 30 seconds. LWCF is America's most important program for preserving these wild spaces and protecting our nation's outdoor heritage for future generations to enjoy.

A message that calls out Congress for breaking their promise to Americans is among the most compelling arguments for permanently funding LWCF:

Recommended language – funding: LWCF was created as a promise to Americans to protect our land, water and wild places. But Congress has broken that promise by diverting more than half of the money owed to LWCF over the years – \$22 billion – from its intended purpose. It's time for Congress to stop diverting funds and fulfill its promise to the nation by permanently funding LWCF.

Voters reject opponents' arguments about funding LWCF, particularly if they are characterized as a creating a "false choice." When presented with opposition messaging (essentially: we can't manage the federal land we already have; we should not take on more) and a response from LWCF proponents, voters side with LWCF proponents by an overwhelming 77% to 23% margin and, more important, permanent funding is still the overwhelming choice of likely voters (75% support permanent funding/26% support the status quo):

Recommended language – responding to opponents:

- *Opponents of the Land and Water Conservation Fund are setting up a false choice between using our conservation dollars to protect our public lands from development and paying for overdue maintenance. Continuing important conservation efforts like the Land and Water Conservation Fund is critical to supporting the health of our public lands, national parks, and water supplies and will prevent more costly maintenance backlogs in the future.*
- *We shouldn't choose between conservation and maintenance – they are essentially two wheels of the same bicycle. Without both, the health of our land, water, and wild places will suffer.*
- *The Land and Water Conservation Fund is one of the few programs left that has bipartisan support, is paid for without taxpayer dollars, and delivers real benefits to every American. Congress should stop diverting funds for the program and fulfill its promise to the nation by permanently funding the Land and Water Conservation Fund.*