CENTER FOR WESTERN PRIORITIES | AUGUST 5, 2026

PUBLIC LANDS WIN ELECTIONS:

THE MOUNTAIN WEST POLLING GUIDE FOR THE 2026 MIDTERMS

As voters head to the polls across the Mountain West, one of the most prominent and bipartisan throughlines in 2026 is protecting America's public lands and natural resources. Broadly, we have already seen public lands serve as a salient and decisive issue across elections, central to the identity of voters across the states highlighted. This report highlights recent data from multiple polling firms that surveyed Mountain West voters.

TOPLINE TAKEAWAYS:

- For an overwhelming percentage of Mountain West voters, **public lands rate incredibly positively**, and are understood as **valuable to the economy**. Even in the context of other important issues like affordability, health care, and education, **86% of voters see issues involving public lands, waters, and wildlife as a motivating factor in supporting an elected public official** across Mountain West states.
- **Funding cuts, rollbacks of protections, and loss of natural areas rank as top concerns** for voters across states.
- Selling off public lands is a third rail for Mountain West voters; majorities as high as 85% in one state (Montana) **prefer to keep public lands in public hands**.
- When given a direct choice, **more than three voters to one favor protecting America's natural resources** and public lands rather than maximizing the land available for oil, gas drilling, and mining. **This preference for protecting public lands is consistent across party lines**, and concern over the impact of oil and gas drilling continues to steadily rise year over year.
- Across a variety of individual actions that give preferential treatment to oil, gas, and mining companies over national lands, over **70% of voters across Mountain West states opposed those actions**.
- Regardless of party, **Western voters demonstrate a clear preference and priority for renewable energy sources** over fossil fuels, a pattern that has only increased over the past 14 years.

Public Lands and Natural Resource Issues are Critical to Western Voters and Local Economies

How important are America's public lands such as national parks, forests, monuments, and wildlife refuges, to (*STATE)* and your community?

RABA Research Q4

	New Mexico	Montana	Idaho
Very Important	**76%**	**82%**	**76%**
Somewhat Important	19%	15%	21%
Somewhat Unimportant	3%	1%	2%
Very Unimportant	2%	2%	1%

When you think about national public lands in (*STATE)*, do you think that having public lands:

RABA Research Q5[1]

	New Mexico	Montana	Idaho
Helps our Economy	**76%**	**86%**	**82%**
Hurts our Economy	6%	3%	4%
Has No Impact	18%	11%	14%

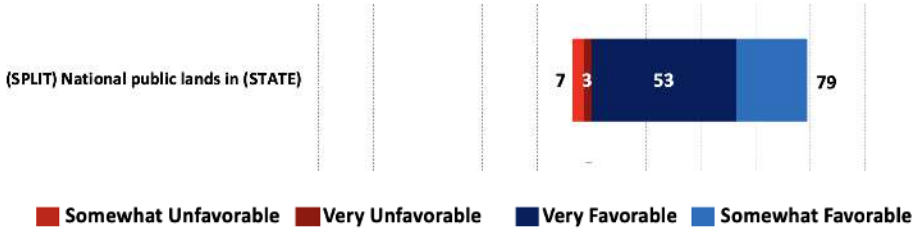
Compared to other issues like the economy, health care and education, how important are issues involving public lands, waters, and wildlife for you in deciding whether to support an elected public official?

2026 Colorado College Conservation in the West Q15

	Total	AZ	CO	ID	MT	NV	NM	UT	WY
Total Important	**86%**	**84%**	**89%**	**84%**	**84%**	**81%**	**88%**	**85%**	**87%**
Very Important	**36%**	34%	38%	35%	41%	35%	43%	28%	40%
Somewhat Important	**50%**	50%	51%	49%	43%	46%	45%	57%	47%
Not Too Important	**10%**	12%	6%	12%	13%	14%	7%	11%	9%
Not At All Important	**4%**	4%	4%	4%	3%	4%	5%	4%	3%

Based on what you already know, do you feel very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable toward national public lands in (*STATE)*?

GQR 2025 Public Lands Survey



Concerns are Rising about Cuts to Public Lands, Rollbacks of Protections, Impacts of Drilling

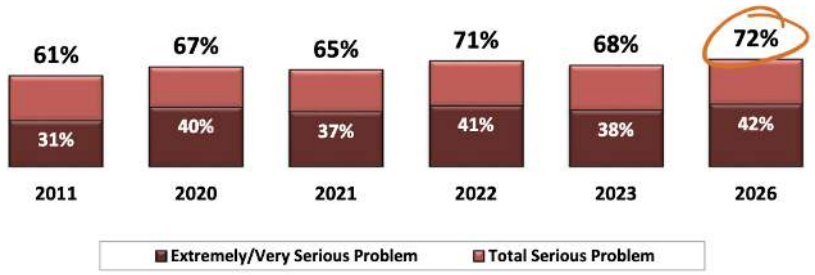
For each of the following issues please indicate if you think it is an extremely serious problem, a very serious problem, a somewhat serious problem, or not a problem in (*STATE):*

2026 Colorado College Conservation in the West Q6;Q9;Q11;Q12

Total Serious Problem	**Total**	**AZ**	**CO**	**ID**	**MT**	**NV**	**NM**	**UT**	**WY**
Q11. Rollbacks of laws that protect our land, water, and wildlife									
	85%	86%	87%	81%	85%	80%	85%	85%	72%
Q12. Funding cuts to management of national parks, forests and other public lands									
	85%	91%	89%	76%	79%	82%	88%	84%	75%
Q6. Loss of natural areas									
	86%	93%	87%	85%	79%	77%	82%	84%	72%
Q9. The impact of oil and gas drilling on our land, air and water									
	72%	73%	76%	62%	68%	71%	76%	72%	57%

Year-over-Year Highlight: Voter Concern Continues to Rise on Impacts of Oil and Gas Drilling on Land, Air, Water.

Colorado College Conservation in the West 2011-2026 Analysis



Clear Preference for Protection and Investment over Exploitation of America's Public Lands

Which one would you prefer your Member of Congress place more emphasis on in upcoming decisions regarding national public lands?

2026 Colorado College Conservation in the West Q27

	Total	AZ	CO	ID	MT	NV	NM	UT	WY
Ensuring we protect sources of clean water, our air quality and wildlife habitat while providing opportunities to visit and recreate on our national public lands	**76%**	78%	78%	76%	75%	75%	74%	75%	62%
Ensuring we produce more domestic energy by maximizing the amount of national public lands available for responsible oil and gas drilling and mining	**21%**	19%	19%	20%	23%	22%	23%	21%	35%

Partisan Breakdown: Voters Across Party Lines Prioritize Conservation Over Energy for Public Lands

2026 Colorado College Conservation in the West Q27

	Total	GOP	Independent	Democrat
Ensuring we protect sources of clean water, our air quality and wildlife habitat while providing opportunities to visit and recreate on our national public lands	**76%**	62%	81%	89%
Ensuring we produce more domestic energy by maximizing the amount of national public lands available for responsible oil and gas drilling and mining	**21%**	35%	16%	10%

74% support for providing robust federal funding to address overdue maintenance and repair needs across public lands. 6% oppose such investments.

Western Voters Reject Regulatory Rollbacks and Sell Offs

For each of the following actions that have or could be taken relating to our national public lands please indicate if you would support or oppose each one:

2026 Colorado College Conservation in the West Q29;Q31;Q33

	Total	AZ	CO	ID	MT	NV	NM	UT	WY
Q29. OPPOSE: Fast-tracking oil, gas and mining projects on national public lands by reducing environmental reviews and local public input									
	70%	69%	74%	72%	67%	60%	72%	73%	60%
Q31. OPPOSE: Requiring government agencies to allow oil and gas companies access to lands they can develop even if local communities raise concerns about impacts on wildlife, water or communities									
	74%	74%	76%	74%	79%	70%	71%	74%	65%
Q33. OPPOSE: Selling some national public lands to private companies for oil, gas and mining development									
	74%	74%	83%	75%	83%	63%	72%	67%	78%

Voters Strongly Oppose Attacks on Public Lands and Monument Designations

Last summer, politicians in Washington D.C. proposed a law to sell off nearly 3 million acres of national public land in Western states, including (*State*). Which statement best reflects your view on America's public lands:

RABA Research Q6

	New Mexico	Montana	Idaho
Our public lands should be protected and kept in public hands	79%	84%	80%
Our public land should be sold or transferred to states or private interests	9%	6%	8%
Don't Know/Unsure	12%	10%	13%

Do you think that existing national monument designations for some public lands protected over the last decade should be kept in place OR should they be removed?

2026 Colorado College Conservation in the West Q38

	Total	AZ	CO	ID	MT	NV	NM	UT	WY
Total Keep Protections In Place	91%	93%	91%	92%	89%	90%	92%	86%	89%

Westerners Prefer Expanding Renewable Energy to Meet Future Needs over Fossil Fuels and Coal

Which of the following do you think should be the highest priority for meeting America's energy needs:

2026 Colorado College Conservation in the West Q46

	Republicans	Independent	Democrats
Reducing our need for more coal, oil and gas by expanding our use of clean, renewable energy that can be generated in the US	51%	78%	93%
Drilling and mining for more coal, oil and gas wherever we can find it in the US	47%	21%	6%

Year-over-Year Highlight: Voters prioritize renewables more than in prior years.

Colorado College Conservation in the West 2012-2026 Analysis

	2012	2023	2026
Reducing our need for more coal, oil and gas by expanding our use of clean, renewable energy that can be generated in the US	65%	65%	73%
Drilling and mining for more coal, oil and gas wherever we can find it in the US	30%	31%	26%

Which of the two following sources of energy would you want to encourage the use of here in (STATE)?

The following table shows respondents' first and second choice combined. — 2026 Colorado College Conservation in the West Q45

	Solar Power	Wind Power	Natural Gas	Nuclear	Energy Efficiency Efforts	Oil	Coal
Total Combined Choice	**63%**	**40%**	**26%**	**26%**	**24%**	**9%**	**7%**
Party Analysis							
GOP	47%	24%	37%	33%	24%	16%	14%
Independent	66%	43%	23%	29%	24%	7%	4%
Democrats	80%	57%	16%	13%	26%	2%	1%
State Breakdown							
Arizona	73%	38%	21%	28%	26%	7%	5%
Colorado	65%	46%	25%	22%	22%	8%	6%
Idaho	49%	36%	33%	35%	29%	7%	5%
Montana	45%	42%	29%	24%	24%	10%	20%
Nevada	68%	40%	28%	19%	27%	10%	3%
New Mexico	63%	49%	26%	19%	23%	11%	6%
Utah	52%	32%	32%	34%	25%	9%	10%
Wyoming	25%	26%	37%	33%	16%	21%	36%

Public Lands Belong to ALL Americans, Not the Wealthy or Political Insiders

For each of the following statements about public lands, like national parks, national monuments, national forests, wildlife preserves, and other federally managed lands, please tell me whether you agree or disagree.

GQR 2025 Public Lands Survey

Percent Agree	Total	AZ	CO	MT	NV	NM	UT
Public lands are important to (*STATE's*) identity	73%	69%	79%	86%	62%	72%	74%
Public lands belong to every American	73%	72%	77%	83%	69%	65%	63%

Polls Cited

RABA Research | New Mexico Survey; Montana Survey; Idaho Survey. These surveys were conducted respectively from 1/20-21/26; 1/16-18/2026; and 1/16-18/2026. All surveys interviewed 500+ voters in their respective states. The margin of error for these responses is +/-4.4 percent.

Colorado College | 2026 Conservation in the West Poll. This survey was conducted via 3,419 telephone and online interviews with registered voters across eight states: AZ, CO, ID, MT, NM, NV, UT, WY from 1/2-18/2026. The effective margin of error +/-2.4 percent at the 95% confidence interval for the total sample and +/-4.9% for each state.

Center for Western Priorities 2025 Public Lands Survey. This survey was conducted among 2600 voters from AZ, CO, MT, NV, NM, UT from 2/17-3/2/25. The margin of error is +/-1.9 percent at the 95% confidence interval for the total sample and +/-4.4-4.9% for each state.

Trust for Public Lands nationwide survey conducted by YouGov, among 4,000 U.S. adults.