



OPINION
RESEARCH
& STRATEGY

MEMORANDUM

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Lori Weigel & Karoline McGrail / New Bridge Strategy
Dave Metz / FM3 Research
DATE: June 1, 2021
RE: Survey of Virginia Voters Shows Overwhelming, Consistent Support for Conservation Funding

A recent statewide survey of Virginia voters¹ conducted by the bipartisan research team of New Bridge Strategy (R) and FM3 Research (D) demonstrates overwhelming support for the General Assembly investing in conservation efforts to protect land, water and wildlife in the state. More than three-quarters of voters statewide and across party lines support dedicating \$300 million to protecting Virginia's waters, lands and wildlife. Similarly, the overwhelming majority would tell their Legislator to support such a dedication of funds. Despite a very different economy today, exactly the same proportion as in 2007 believe that conservation deserves funding even when the Assembly faces tough budget decisions.

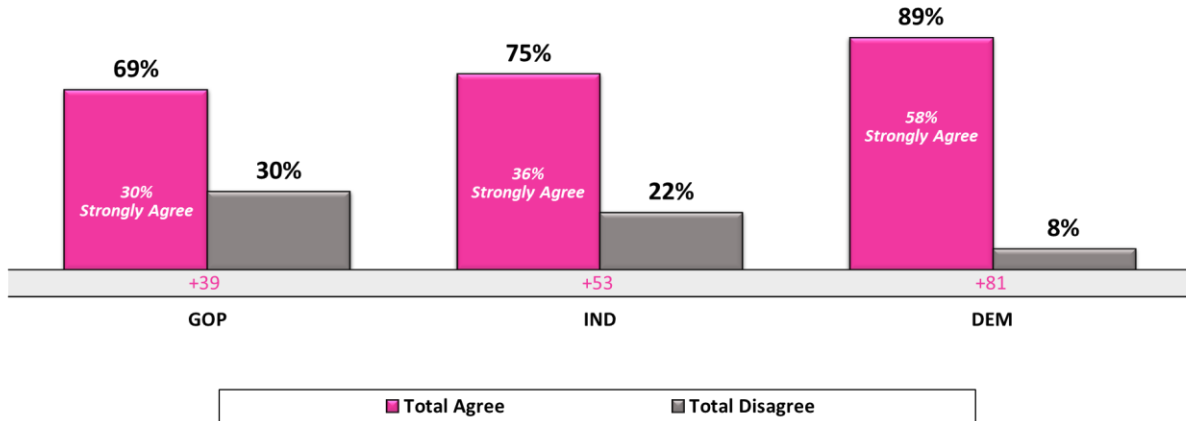
Specifically, the survey found that:

- **Nearly eight-in-ten Virginia voters support a proposal to dedicate \$300 million to conservation programs.** 77 percent of the state's electorate say the General Assembly should "dedicate \$300 million dollars each year to programs to protect Virginia's land, water and wildlife," and almost half (44%) strongly support the proposal. This support cuts across major demographic and geographic groups, including:
 - 80% of women and 73% of men;
 - 78% of voters under 45, 77% of voters 45-64, and 74% of voters ages 65 and older;
 - 87% of Democrats, 75% of independents and 67% of Republicans; and
 - Outside of the state's four largest media markets, 72% support the concept, with 77% support in Washington, DC, 74% in Richmond, 79% in Norfolk, and 80% in Roanoke.
- **A majority of voters also want to see their state legislator vote in favor of a state law dedicating \$300 million annually to conservation needs.** 71% of voters statewide want their state legislator to support this proposal. Again, support spans party affiliation, with 87% of Democrats, 64% of Independents, and 60% of Republicans saying they would want their legislator to support the proposal.

¹ **Methodology:** May 11-17, 2021, New Bridge Strategy and FM3 completed 700 interviews among registered voters throughout the state of Virginia. Interviews were conducted online as well as on landlines and cell phones. The credibility interval (analogous to margin of error) for the full sample is +/-3.7 percent; margins of sampling error for subgroups within the sample will be larger. Some percentages may sum to more than 100 percent due to rounding.

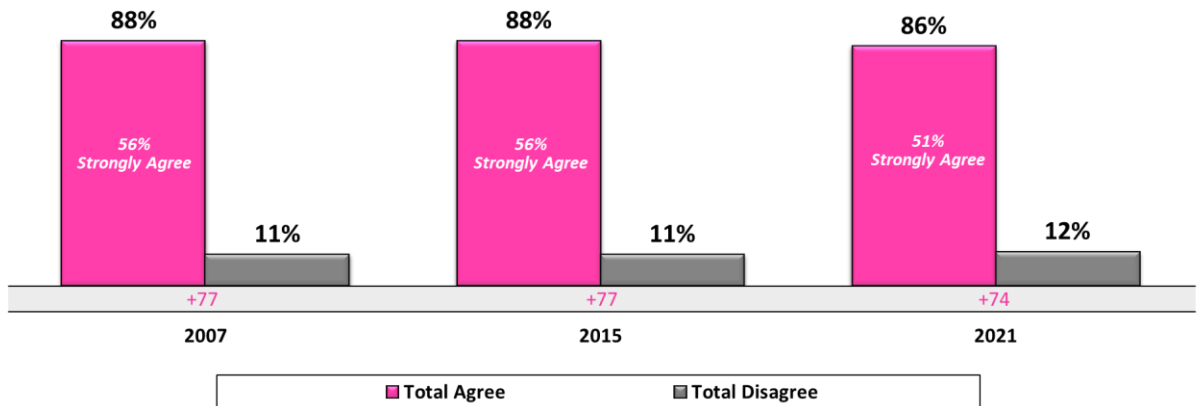
- **More than seven-in-ten Virginians say they are willing to pay additional taxes each year to bolster Virginia’s conservation efforts.** Voters were asked what is the most they would be willing to pay in additional taxes each year in order to protect Virginia’s land, water and wildlife. 71 percent say they would be willing to pay additional taxes. Approximately one-in-four (26 percent of voters) are willing to pay \$42 or more, another 24% are willing to pay \$20 or \$31, and 21% are willing to pay \$5 or less.
- **As in the past, more than three-quarters of Virginians see the importance of investing in clean water and conservation.** In 2007, 2015, and 2021 voters were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: “Even when the state budget is tight, investing in clean water and the conservation of Virginia’s natural areas and parks should be a top priority.” Since 2007, a very consistent 78% of statewide voters agree, as well as majorities of Democrats, Independents, and Republicans. A majority of voters agree with this statement regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, region or other key demographic sub-groups.

Even when the state budget is tight, investing in clean water and the conservation of Virginia’s natural areas and parks should be a top priority.



- **Virginians also continue to connect the economy and conservation.** Even as the U.S. economy has shifted since 2007, nearly all voters agree that conservation investments benefit the state economy, with over half saying they strongly agree.

Investing in clean water and the conservation of natural areas and parks is important to Virginia’s economy.



- **A strong majority say it is extremely or very important to dedicate funds to protect sources of drinking water and water quality.** We provided respondents with a list of projects that these funds could be used for and asked if each item was extremely, very, somewhat, or not important to them. Water concerns top the list overall and across party lines, media markets, and geography types. The table below illustrates the funding projects for which 70% or more voters deem to be extremely/very important to them personally.

Project	Total Agree	Total Important
Protecting sources of drinking water**	85%	96%
Protecting water quality in local streams and rivers*	84%	98%
Conserving forests*	76%	95%
Conserving working farms*	76%	94%
Conserving beaches and shoreline along the Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic Ocean*	76%	93%
Protecting water quality in the Chesapeake Bay**	75%	93%
Conserving habitat for disappearing pollinators like bees and butterflies*	74%	93%
Protecting and encouraging local food production**	73%	94%
Conserving natural areas*	72%	94%
Preserving historic sites*	71%	95%
Protecting fish and wildlife habitat**	71%	94%
Providing parks and natural areas for all Virginia residents including lower-income residents and people of color*	67%	89%

*Sample A, N=350 **Sample B, N=350

In summary, Virginia voters overwhelmingly support a proposal to increase funding for land, water and wildlife conservation by \$300 million. In tracking key questions from past surveys, we see that support for conservation funding has remained overwhelming despite the very different economic and budget circumstances today. Support is evident throughout the state and with key sub-groups.

TNC/TPL Virginia Statewide Survey

Interview Schedule

New Bridge Strategy/FM3

May 11-17, 2021

Project #: 21024

N=700 Registered Voters

Margin of Error: $\pm 3.7\%$



In this document...

- *An asterisk (*) in a response category means that less than 0.5% of respondents chose that response category and a dash (-) represents no response.*
 - *^ Denotes rounding. Due to rounding, some figures may be higher or lower by less than one-half of one percent.*
 - *Sample A is comprised of N=350 respondents and Sample B is comprised of N=350 respondents*
 - *“Asked” is the percentage of respondents that are asked a question because they meet a criteria based on a response to a previous question, meaning not all respondents received that question.*
 - *“All” is the percentage of the total sample, that is N=700 registered voters.*
 - *Trend data is from the following surveys:*
 - *A telephone survey of N=600 registered voters conducted October 5-8, 2015 by McLaughlin & Associates and Hart Research*
 - *A telephone survey of N=600 registered voters conducted September 29-October 2, 2007 by FM3 and Public Opinion Strategies*
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ONLINE: Below is/ **PHONE:** I'm going to read you a list of issues. Please indicate how serious a problem you think each one is in your area. After I read each one, please **ONLINE:** indicate/ **PHONE:** tell me if you think it is an extremely serious problem, a very serious problem, a somewhat serious problem, or not a serious problem in your area.

RANKED BY % TOTAL SERIOUS

	TOTAL SER	EXTR/ VERY SER	Extr Ser	Very Ser	Smwt Ser	Not A Ser	DK/Ref (DNR/NOT ONLINE)
16. Economic impacts of COVID-19 (ASKED OF SAMPLE B, N=350)	88%	67%	39%	28%	21%	10%	2%
9. The economy and unemployment (ASKED OF SAMPLE A, N=350)	2007 76%	44%	21%	23%	32%	21%	4%
	2021 86%	62%	32%	30%	24%	11%	2%
20. Pollution of the Chesapeake Bay (ASKED OF SAMPLE B, N=350)	82%	53%^	25%	29%	28%	14%	4%
15. Poorly-planned growth and development (ASKED OF SAMPLE B, N=350)	2007 79%	49%	18%	31%	30%	18%	4%
	2021 82%^	51%	22%	29%	32%	17%	*
7. Pollution of rivers, lakes and streams (ASKED OF SAMPLE A, N=350)	2007 83%	53%	23%	30%	30%	16%	2%
	2021 81%	49%^	23%	25%	33%	17%	1%
5. A lack of affordable housing	2007 81%	54%	24%	30%	27%	17%	2%
	2021 78%^	49%^	25%	25%	29%	20%	2%
10. Loss of farmland to development (ASKED OF SAMPLE A, N=350)	2007 79%	50%	24%	26%	29%	16%	5%
	2021 78%^	47%	18%	29%	30%	20%	2%
8. Loss of wildlife habitat (ASKED OF SAMPLE A, N=350)	2007 74%	48%	23%	25%	26%	20%	6%
	2021 78%	44%	20%	24%	34%	20%	2%

Continued...

	TOTAL SER	EXTR/ VERY SER	Extr Ser	Very Ser	Smwt Ser	Not A Ser	DK/Ref (DNR/NOT ONLINE)
11. Loss of natural areas (ASKED OF SAMPLE A, N=350)							
2007	77%	51%	24%	27%	26%	18%	6%
2021	76%	46%	19%	27%	30%	22%	1%
6. A lack of high-quality, affordable childcare available for working parents							
	75%^	47%^	24%	22%	28%	19%	6%
14. Loss of open space (ASKED OF SAMPLE B, N=350)							
2007	70%	47%	16%	31%	23%	27%	5%
2021	73%	38%	17%	21%	35%	24%	3%
19. Loss of wetlands (ASKED OF SAMPLE B, N=350)							
	71%	41%	21%	20%	30%	27%	3%
17. Insufficient funding for the conservation of natural resources (ASKED OF SAMPLE B, N=350)							
2007	61%	39%	15%	24%	22%	22%	16%
2021	71%	38%	17%	21%	33%	25%	5%
13. Racism (ASKED OF SAMPLE A, N=350)							
	65%	45%	28%	17%	20%	34%	1%
4. Climate change							
	63%^	43%	28%	15%	19%	36%	1%
18. Drinking water quality (ASKED OF SAMPLE B, N=350)							
2007	63%	39%	12%	27%	24%	35%	2%
2021	59%	35%	20%	15%	24%	40%	1%
12. Flooding (ASKED OF SAMPLE A, N=350)							
	56%^	23%	7%	16%	34%	43%	1%

Thinking about you for a moment...

21. Obviously 2020 was an unusual year, so assuming that the pandemic is under control this year, do you plan to visit state or national parks, national forests, or other public lands – **(ROTATE :1-2)** more often, less often or about the same amount in the year ahead?

47% More often
7% Less often
45% About the same amount

2% UNSURE/REFUSED **(DNR/NOT ONLINE)**

Moving on...

22. There could be a proposal in the General Assembly to dedicate \$300 million dollars each year to programs to protect Virginia's land, water and wildlife. Does that sound like something you would support or oppose?

(ON PHONES IF SUPPORT/OPPOSE ASK: Is that strongly SUPPORT/ OPPOSE or just somewhat?)

44% Strongly support
32% Somewhat support
12% Somewhat oppose
8% Strongly oppose
3% Don't Know/Refused **(DNR/DO NOT ASK ONLINE)**

77%^ TOTAL SUPPORT

20% TOTAL OPPOSE

23. Would you want your state legislator to vote in favor of or vote against a state law dedicating \$300 million annually to programs to protect Virginia's land, water and wildlife?

(ON PHONES IF YES/NO, ASK:) "Is that definitely or probably yes/no?"

40% Definitely yes, in favor
32% Probably yes, in favor
15% Probably no, against
9% Definitely no, against
4% Don't Know/Refused **(DNR/DO NOT ASK ONLINE)**

71%^ TOTAL YES

25%^ TOTAL NO

ONLINE: Below are some ways these funds could be used. Recognizing that there may not be enough funding for all such projects, please indicate how important it would be to you that these funds would be dedicated to that purpose. Is it... **(ROTATE TOP TO BOTTOM, BOTTOM TO TOP)** extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not important ... to you? **(RANDOMIZE)**

PHONES: I am going to read you some ways these funds could be used. Recognizing that there may not be enough funding for all such projects, please tell me how important it would be to you that these funds would be dedicated to that purpose. Is it... **(ROTATE TOP TO BOTTOM, BOTTOM TO TOP)** extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not important ... to you? **(RANDOMIZE)**

(PHONE ONLY FOR THE FIRST TWO OR THREE) The first/next one is...

RANKED BY % TOTAL IMPORTANT

	TOTAL IMP	EXTR/VER IMP	Extr Imp	Very Imp	Smwt Imp	Not Imp	DK/Ref (DNR/NOT ONLINE)
33. Protecting water quality in local streams and rivers (ASKED OF SAMPLE A, N=350)	98%^	84%	53%	31%	13%	2%	--
35. Protecting sources of drinking water (ASKED OF SAMPLE B, N=350)	96%	85%	48%	37%	11%	4%	1%
24. Conserving forests (ASKED OF SAMPLE A, N=350)	95%	76%	40%	36%	19%	5%	*
32. Preserving historic sites (ASKED OF SAMPLE A, N=350)	95%	71%	34%	37%	24%	5%	--
25. Conserving working farms (ASKED OF SAMPLE A, N=350)	94%	76%	35%	41%	18%	6%	--
37. Protecting and encouraging local food production (ASKED OF SAMPLE B, N=350)	94%	73%	33%	40%	21%	5%	1%
28. Conserving natural areas (ASKED OF SAMPLE A, N=350)	94%	72%	34%	38%	22%	6%	--
45. Protecting fish and wildlife habitat (ASKED OF SAMPLE B, N=350)	94%	71%	35%	36%	23%	5%	1%

Continued...

	TOTAL IMP	EXTR/ VER IMP	Extr Imp	Very Imp	Smwt Imp	Not Imp	DK/Ref (DNR/NOT ONLINE)
26. Conserving beaches and shoreline along the Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic Ocean (ASKED OF SAMPLE A, N=350)	93%[^]	76%	41%	35%	18%	5%	1%
44. Protecting water quality in the Chesapeake Bay (ASKED OF SAMPLE B, N=350)	93%	75%	39%	36%	18%	4%	3%
27. Conserving habitat for disappearing pollinators like bees and butterflies (ASKED OF SAMPLE A, N=350)	93%[^]	74%[^]	46%	29%	19%	6%	1%
30. Conserving lands for outdoor recreation, such as hiking, camping or fishing (ASKED OF SAMPLE A, N=350)	93%	65%	31%	34%	28%	7%	--
29. Providing more opportunities for children to explore and learn about nature (ASKED OF SAMPLE A, N=350)	92%	66%	34%	32%	26%	8%	*
36. Conserving lands for outdoor recreation, such as camping, birding, and wildlife watching (ASKED OF SAMPLE B, N=350)	91%[^]	57%	22%	35%	33%	9%	1%
34. Providing parks and natural areas for all Virginia residents including lower-income residents and people of color (ASKED OF SAMPLE A, N=350)	89%[^]	67%	40%	27%	21%	11%	1%
39. Improving and expanding state parks (ASKED OF SAMPLE B, N=350)	87%[^]	48%	15%	33%	38%	12%	1%
43. Preserving historic battlefields (ASKED OF SAMPLE B, N=350)	83%	50%	23%	27%	33%	16%	1%
38. Creating more trails for hiking, biking and recreation (ASKED OF SAMPLE B, N=350)	82%[^]	42%	16%	26%	39%	17%	1%
31. Creating a statewide trail network (ASKED OF SAMPLE A, N=350)	77%	39%	19%	20%	38%	22%	1%

Continued...

	TOTAL IMP	EXTR/ VER IMP	Extr Imp	Very Imp	Smwt Imp	Not Imp	DK/Ref (DNR/NOT ONLINE)
40. Ensuring that all Virginians have a safe park within walking distance (ASKED OF SAMPLE B, N=350)	76%	42%	16%	26%	34%	23%	1%
42. Providing more opportunities for fishing and hunting (ASKED OF SAMPLE B, N=350)	76%	39%	16%	23%	37%	23%	1%
41. Conserving lands most vulnerable to a changing climate (ASKED OF SAMPLE B, N=350)	75%	49%	26%	23%	26%	23%	3%

46. Let's say that new funds were needed for these programs. What is the MOST you would be willing to pay in additional taxes each year in order to protect Virginia's land, water and wildlife?
(PHONE: READ LIST IN ORDER; ONLINE ROTATE TOP TO BOTTOM, BOTTOM TO TOP)

- 26% Nothing **(DO NOT READ BUT SHOW ONLINE)**
- 7% Less than 5 dollars **(DO NOT READ BUT SHOW ONLINE)**
- 14% 5 dollars
- 19% 20 dollars
- 5% 31 dollars
- 8% 42 dollars
- 18% More than 42 dollars **(DO NOT READ BUT SHOW ONLINE)**
- 3% UNSURE/REFUSED **(DO NOT READ/DO NOT SHOW ONLINE)**

ONLINE: Taking a step back for a moment – below are some statements you could hear. For each one, please indicate whether you (**ROTATE TOP TO BOTTOM, BOTTOM TO TOP**) strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with that statement. (**ROTATE**)

PHONES: Taking a step back for a moment – I am going to read you some statements you could hear. For each one, please tell me whether you (**ROTATE TOP TO BOTTOM, BOTTOM TO TOP**) strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with that statement. (**ROTATE**)

	TOTAL AGR	TOTAL DISAG	Str Agree	Smwt Agree	Smwt Disag	Str Disag	DK/Ref (DNR/NOT ONLINE)
47. Investing in clean water and the conservation of natural areas and parks is important to Virginia’s economy.							
2007	88%	11%	56%	32%	7%	4%	1%
2021	86%	12%^	51%	35%	8%	5%	2%
48. Even when the state budget is tight, investing in clean water and the conservation of Virginia’s natural areas and parks should be a top priority.							
2007	78%	20%	44%	34%	13%	7%	2%
2021	78%	20%	42%	36%	11%	9%	2%

Thinking about you –

D10. Which of the following types of outdoor recreation, if any, do you participate in regularly?
(RANDOMIZE :1-9)(ACCEPT MULTIPLE RESPONSES)

- 67% Hiking, running or walking
 - 40% Picnicking
 - 34% Camping
 - 32% Bird watching or viewing wildlife
 - 31% Boating, rafting, kayaking
 - 30% Hunting or fishing
 - 17% Mountain or trail biking
 - 11% Riding an off-road vehicle
 - 5% Sports **(DNR/DO NOT SHOW ONLINE)**

 - 1% Other **(DNR/SHOW ONLINE)(SPECIFY)**
 - 9% None of these **(DNR/SHOW ONLINE)**
 - 1% UNSURE/REFUSED **(DNR/ DO NOT SHOW ONLINE)**

 - 90% TOTAL YES**
-

And for statistical purposes only...

D1. In what year were you born?

22%	18 - 34
21%	35 - 44
17%	45 - 54
19%	55 - 64
21%	65 AND ABOVE
--	REFUSED

D2. GENDER (BY OBSERVATION ON PHONES)

ONLINE: Please record your gender.

46%	MALE
54%	FEMALE
--	NON-BINARY/OTHER

D4. How would you describe the area where you currently live?

20%	A city
46%	A suburban area
12%	A small town
21%	A rural area
1%	Don't Know/Not Sure (DNR/NOT ONLINE)
*	Refused (DNR/NOT ONLINE)

D5. And what was the last level of education you completed? (DO NOT READ CATEGORIES)

20%	Graduated High School or Less
3%	Technical or Vocational School
21%	Some College
35%	Graduated College
21%	Graduate/Professional School
*	REFUSED (DNR/NOT ONLINE)

44%	TOTAL <COLLEGE
56%	TOTAL COLLEGE+

D6. In politics today, do you consider yourself a... **(ROTATE)**

a Republican,
a Democrat,
or an Independent?

(IF SOMETHING ELSE, ASK:) Do you think of yourself as closer to...**(ROTATE)** the Republican or to the Democratic party?

28% Republican
9% Lean to Republicans

22% Independent/Something Else

6% Lean to Democrats
34% Democrat

* DON'T KNOW **(DNR/NOT ONLINE)**
1% REFUSED **(DNR/NOT ONLINE)**

37% TOTAL REPUBLICAN
40% TOTAL DEMOCRAT

D7. Generally speaking, do you consider yourself to be **(ROTATE TOP TO BOTTOM, BOTTOM TO TOP)**

conservative,
moderate
...or...
liberal on most issues?

36% Conservative
44% Moderate
19% Liberal
1% DON'T KNOW **(DNR/NOT ONLINE)**
* REFUSED **(DNR/NOT ONLINE)**

D8. Do you have children under the age of 18 that you are responsible for raising?

30% Yes
70% No
* Refused (**DNR/ DO NOT SHOW ONLINE**)

D9. What is your main ethnic or racial heritage? (**READ CHOICES**)

20% African American or Black
70% White
4% Hispanic American or Latino
4% Native American
1% Other/Combination (**SPECIFY**)(**DNR/SHOW ONLINE**)

1% REFUSED (**DNR/NOT ONLINE**)
