

Millennials in the West

This mega-generation may share the Western affinity to the outdoors held by many of their elders, but they also have the political might to dictate an agenda to their leaders that reflects their strongly-held environmental ethic in a way few have done before. According to population projections released by the U.S. Census Bureau late last year, Millennials will eclipse Baby Boomers in 2015 – watch out Western leaders.

The politically important voters age 18-32 – along with other voters in the West – have a clear agenda for the next Congress.

Fully 85% support future presidents maintaining the prerogative under the Antiquities Act to establish national monuments as other presidents have – five points higher than the electorate overall. Another three-quarters support continued funding of the Land and Water Conservation fund through oil and gas fees, matching support of the electorate as a whole.

Congressional Actions Ranked By Support

	Support	Oppose
Future Presidents continuing to protect existing public lands as national monuments	85%	6%
Continue taxpayer support for solar and wind energy production	78%	10%
Continue to use some of the money from fees charged to oil and gas companies that drill offshore for conservation of natural areas and clean water, and to ensure access to outdoor recreation	75%	8%
Sell significant holdings of public lands like national forests to reduce the budget deficit	23%	60%

Millennials stand out for their strong enthusiasm toward renewable energy and embrace of policies which support it.

As seen in the previous chart, millennials are one of the most enthusiastic voter sub-groups about continuing taxpayer support for renewable energy, such as wind and solar (78% support, compared to 69% among voters in the region overall). Moreover, they believe that renewable energy will be playing an important role in their state’s future economy. Fully seven-in-ten forecast that renewable energy, such as wind and solar, will be one of the most important or very important to their state’s economy over the next ten years – 13 points higher than the electorate overall. These young voters are more pessimistic than their elders about the role mining will play (31%, six points lower), but essentially the same in their views of a number of other industries like oil and gas development or technology.

<i>Economic Importance Ranked By One of Most/Very</i>	<i>Most/Very Important</i>	<i>Total Important</i>
Health care	78%	95%
Technology	74%	98%
Wind, solar and renewable energy	70%	93%
Farming and ranching	62%	93%
Tourism and outdoor recreation	56%	93%
Oil and gas development	50%	84%
Mining	31%	77%
Marijuana	27%	62%
Breweries, vineyards and distilleries	26%	68%

Younger respondents are more optimistic about the future role of breweries/distilleries than older voters (26% one of most/very important), and in Colorado, the same is true regarding marijuana (27% see it as one of the most/very important industries, compared to 19% of Colorado voters overall).



Millennials list the healthy, outdoor lifestyle and the clean air, clean water and environment as significant factors for deciding to live in the West.

Voters age 18-32 living in the West point to the healthy, outdoor lifestyle as the most significant factor that attracted them to and is keeping them in this region of the country. These young voters starting out in life place the cost of living on par with environmental factors, such as clean air and clean water, and the ability to live near public lands like national parks and forests.



Reasons for Living in the West Ranked By Significant Factor	Significant Factor	Total Factor
Clean air, clean water and environment	59%	84%
Healthy, outdoor lifestyle	57%	91%
Cost of living	57%	86%
Ability to live near, recreate on and enjoy public lands like national parks and forests	52%	82%
Economic opportunities	45%	80%
Quality of public schools	36%	63%
Quality of health care and hospitals	30%	67%
Amount of taxes	29%	63%
Level of traffic congestion	26%	66%
Opportunities to open my own business	23%	47%
Hunting and fishing opportunities	20%	44%

Millennials report being avid users of public lands, but are concerned that the younger generation is not spending enough time in nature.

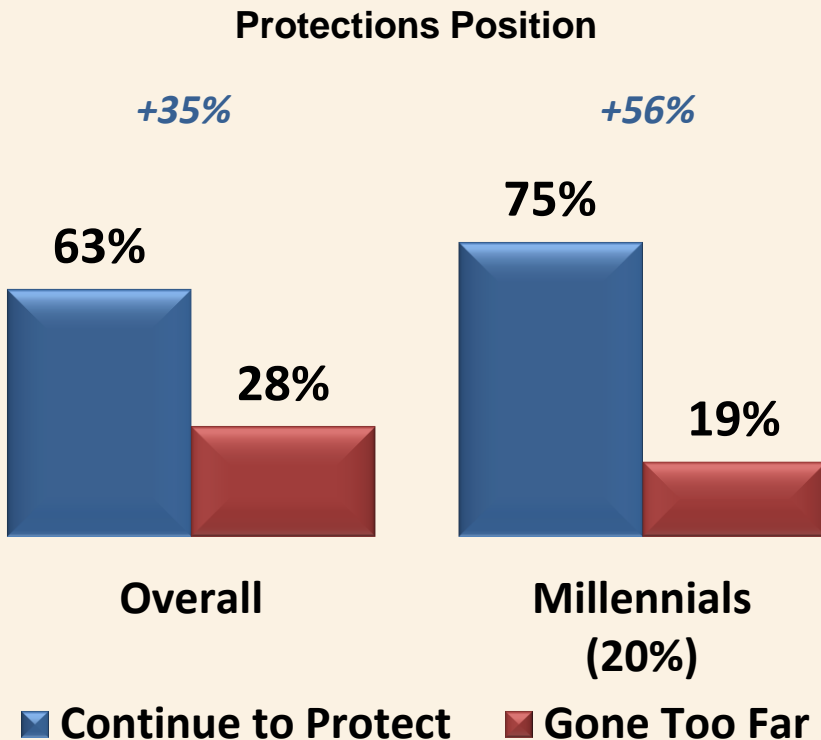
Virtually all millennials in the West say they have visited public lands managed by the U.S. government (98%). A significant majority (62%) have visited these public lands six or more times in the last year, and close to half (45%) say they have visited ten or more times.

Despite their frequent visits to these places, they clear worry about children growing up today not spending enough time outdoors, with four-in-five (79%) viewing it as a problem, and fully 44% placing it in the category of an extremely or very serious problem.

Millennials' clear passion for spending time outdoors may play a role in their desire to protect public lands and natural areas. For example:

- 85% say protecting and conserving natural areas for future generations is a very important priority when it comes to public lands;
- 79% support BLM placing further protections on sage-grouse habitat, compared to just 14% who oppose it;
- Two-thirds (68%) feel it is very important that rangers have the resources they need to take care of federally managed public lands; and
- They feel strongly that U.S.-managed public lands belong more to the American people as a whole (70%), rather than being places that belong more to residents of that state (23%).

When given a choice, millennials are far more likely to take the view that we ought to continue to protect natural areas and wildlife habitat from poorly planned development and industrial activities that can pollute our air and water (75%) than that we have gone too far imposing unnecessary restrictions on land use that holds back our economy and cost us jobs (19%). That is significantly more lop-sided view than among the electorate as a whole.



Water issues top the list of concerns for millennials.

The problems millennials are most likely to say are extremely or very serious all involve the availability and quality of the water supply in the West. Topping the list is the low levels of water in the rivers in the region, with 55% saying this is an extremely or very serious problem. Just behind is the pollution of rivers, lakes and streams, at 50% extremely/very serious, and the inadequate water supplies (49% extremely/very serious).

