

Energy and Public Lands in the West

By the largest margin to date, Westerners want their Member of Congress to place more emphasis on protecting public lands versus allowing more energy production on those lands. Voters back this up with their consistent support for a range of specific policies to keep higher royalty rates and other fees in place, while they also express deep opposition to allowing more energy development on national public lands.

By the largest margin ever, Westerners say Congress should place more emphasis on protecting water, air, habitat and recreation over responsible energy development on national public lands. Westerners want Congress to focus on “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” (72 percent) versus “ensuring we produce more domestic energy by maximizing the amount of national public lands available for responsible oil and gas drilling and mining” (24 percent).

	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>	<u>2025</u>
Protect water, air, habitat and recreation	65%	67%	69%	67%	68%	70%	72%
Energy development	24%	25%	27%	28%	26%	26%	24%

Prioritizing conservation over maximizing energy production receives majority support across the political spectrum:

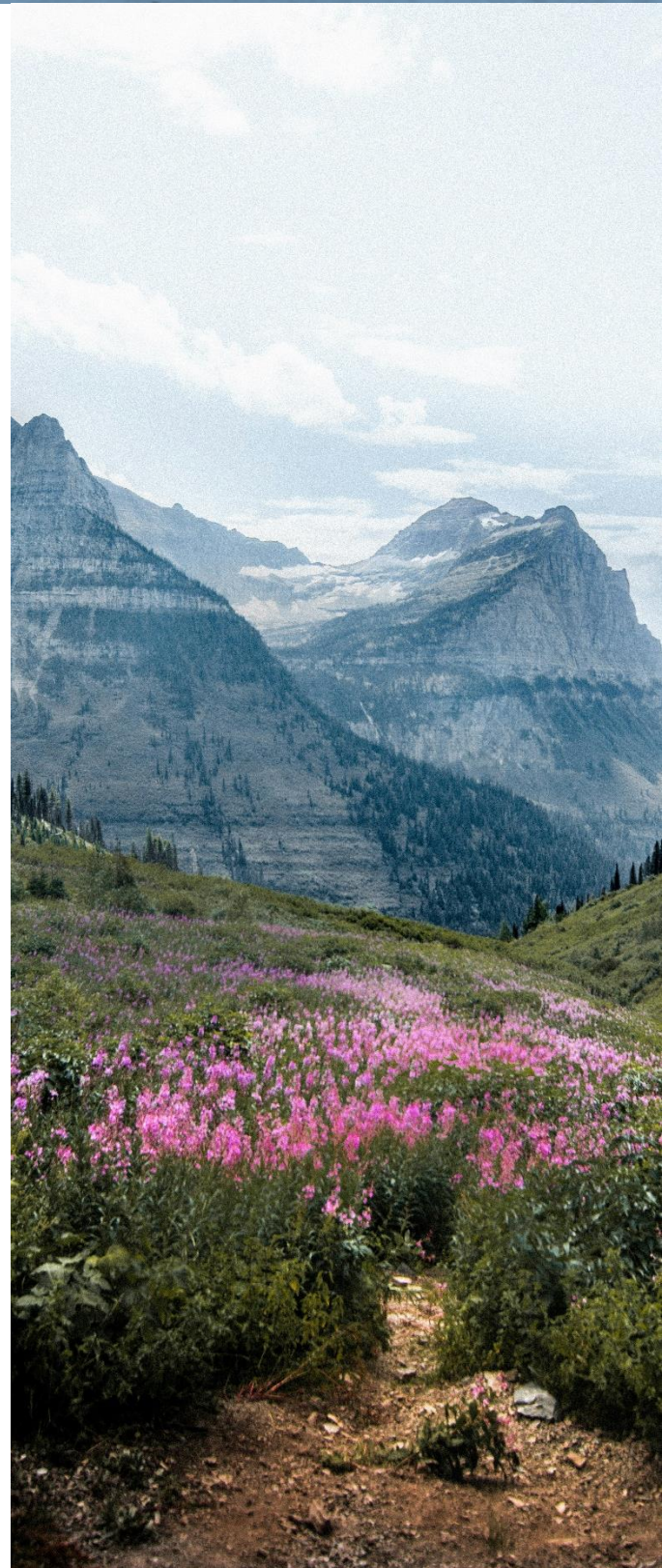
- 54 percent of Republicans,
- 76 percent of independents; and,
- 91 percent of Democrats prioritize conservation.

The below are some of the strongest sub-groups to say their Member of Congress should prioritize conservation over domestic energy production on national public lands:

- 90 percent of Native Americans,
- 85 percent of Generation Z; and,
- 78 percent of women.

Additionally, majorities favor Congress place greater emphasis on conservation over responsible energy development in every type of community, including in rural areas (66 percent).

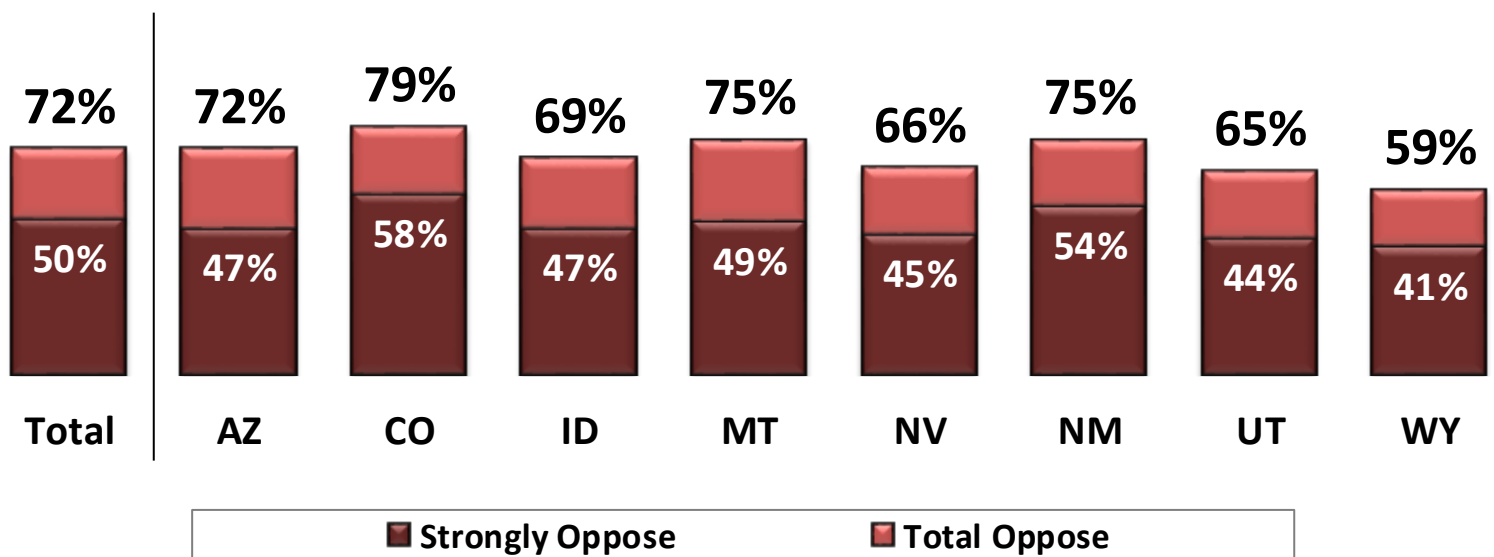
Voters are evenly split on whether they support “placing conservation of public lands near rivers and streams and the conservation of public lands with threatened wildlife on par with oil and gas drilling on national public lands.” However, a strong majority (80 percent) of those who said they oppose putting conservation on par with oil and gas drilling explain that they do so because they believe conservation should be a “higher priority than oil and gas drilling.”



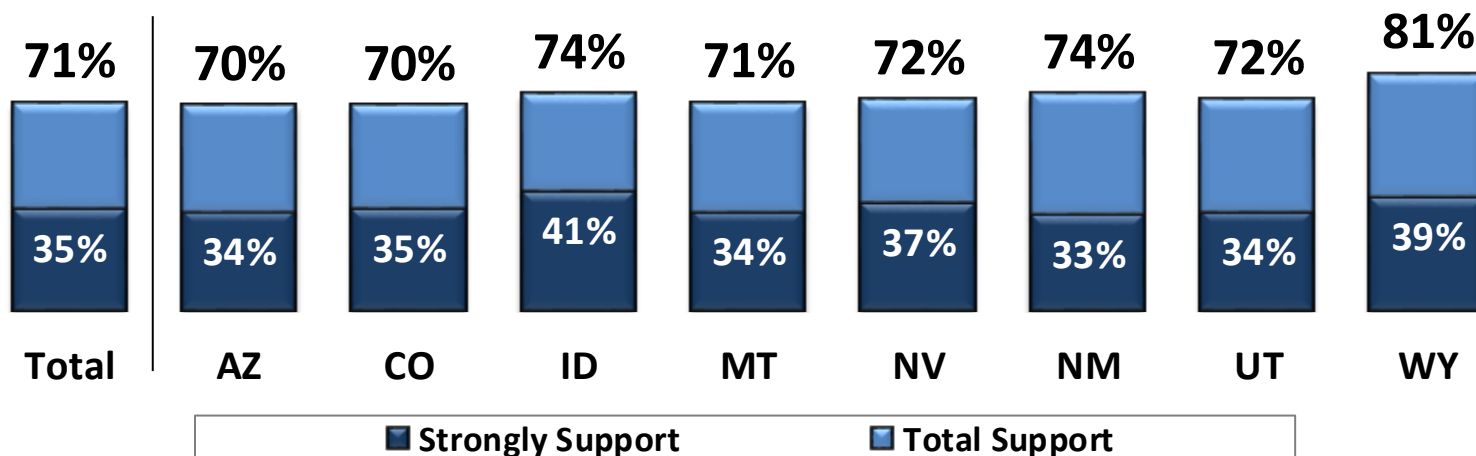
Western voters are solidly opposed to lifting public land protections in favor of more energy development. More than seven-in-ten voters (72 percent) oppose “removing protections on some areas of existing national public lands, particularly national monuments, to allow for more drilling, mining, and other development.” Rejection is both deep and broad, with majorities across every major sub-group (i.e., gender, age, party, education, race, and ethnicity) expressing opposition. Half (50 percent) register “strong” opposition to allowing more energy development on national monuments and similar areas.

Specific proposals to expand open more areas of national public lands to energy development also register opposition in those affected states. In Colorado, opening up the Thompson Divide and in New Mexico allowing energy development on public lands near the Chaco Culture National Historical Park are opposed by overwhelming majorities in their respective states (67 percent in Colorado and 70 percent in New Mexico) expressing opposition.

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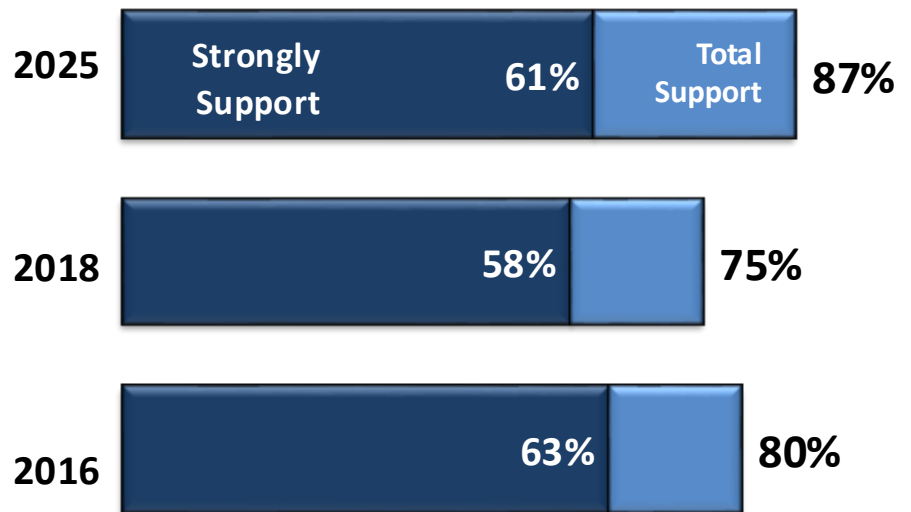
Seven-in-ten Westerners support only allowing oil and gas companies the right to drill in areas of public land where there is high likelihood to actually produce oil and gas. Indeed, 70 percent or more voters across every state support this proposal and the highest level of support comes from the energy-intensive state of Wyoming (81 percent support), as seen below. Support for limiting energy development to high potential areas is highest among Republicans (81 percent), followed by Independents (70 percent) and Democrats (62 percent) in the West.



Western voters offer almost unanimous agreement that oil and gas companies should be required to pay for all the clean-up and land restoration costs after drilling is finished. Support for this proposal is staggering (92 percent) and consistent with previous years (90 percent support in 2024 and, and 91 percent in 2023 and 2022). This year, 89 percent or more voters in each state support requiring companies pay for clean-up and restoration, with 71 percent or more saying they “strongly” support the clean-up requirements. Overwhelming support for this proposal transcends gender, age, party lines, community type, and ethnic background.

Similarly, Westerners think oil and gas producers should continue to be required to use updated equipment and technology to prevent methane gas leaks. In an all-time high, nearly nine-in-ten Westerners (87 percent) support “continuing to require oil and gas producers who operate on national public lands to use updated equipment and technology to prevent leaks of methane gas during the extraction process and reduce the need to burn off excess natural gas into the air.” This is a 12-point increase from when the question was last asked in 2018. Party affiliation makes virtually no difference in how voters feel about this, with 86 percent of Republicans, 89 percent of independents, and 88 percent of Democrats expressing support.

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The vast majority of Western voters say oil companies should pay increased or current royalty rates for producing oil and gas on national public lands. Nearly half of Western voters (49 percent) say royalty rates oil companies that produce oil and gas on public lands should be increased while more than a third (35 percent) say they should be kept the same. Only 12 percent advocate for decreasing the royalty rate. This trend is consistent across all eight states in the region and across party lines.