

## Crown of the Continent and Greater Yellowstone Initiative

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### **UM 2022 PUBLIC LANDS SURVEY RESULTS**

*Growth on Voters' Minds and Demand for Conservation Remains High*

(MISSOULA) - A University of Montana survey shows a majority of Big Sky voters are concerned by the current pace of growth, and this dynamic is reinforcing bipartisan demands to protect Montana's wildlife and open spaces.

The [2022 Voter Survey on Public Lands](#) was commissioned by the University's Crown of the Continent and Greater Yellowstone Initiative (COCGYI). The biannual survey has tracked opinions of likely voters in Montana since 2014 and seeks to understand how residents think about public land and natural resource issues.

According to this year's survey, Montana voters are feeling some negative impacts as the state's population climbs. Fifty-seven percent of voters say the current pace of growth is too fast, and only 7% say their quality of life has improved in five years. Housing affordability is a top concern, with 92% of residents calling it a serious problem, while 85% say that the loss of ranches and open spaces to new development is a serious problem as well.

Last week, the Montana Governor's Office [announced the economy grew](#) at its fastest rate in more than 40 years. UM initiative director Rick Graetz said Montana decision-makers need to consider some of the voter anxiety that comes alongside this rapid growth.

"Growth is important for Montana's economy, but decision-makers should also consider some of the anxiety we are seeing over its pace and impact on the land," said Graetz. "This survey shows Montanans clearly want to keep our state livable, affordable and continue efforts to protect open lands and wildlife."

The survey was conducted by Republican pollster Lori Weigel of New Bridge Strategy and Democratic pollster Dave Metz of Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3). The bipartisan team of pollsters said long-held conservation values are being reinforced as voters witness more impacts of growth.

"Montanans have always self-identified as conservationists, but now they are experiencing a risk they haven't seen before in the form of growth and development," said Dave Metz, president of FM3. "The data shows this is contributing to remarkable consensus, in both rural and urban areas, around proposals to protect the state's water, wildlife and land."

**Bipartisan consensus for wildlife corridors and enhanced conservation funding**

According to the survey, protecting wildlife migration corridors is a popular bipartisan priority. Eighty seven percent of Montana voters support constructing more wildlife crossing structures, 86% support providing incentives to landowners to conserve private lands, and 81% support managing larger blocks of public lands as wildlife habitat.

The survey also finds very strong bipartisan support for continuing to direct tax revenue from the sale of recreational marijuana toward conservation programs administered by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. Eighty-two percent of voters say the state Legislature should continue using recreational marijuana taxes to support wildlife conservation, create public access and maintain state parks and trails.

### **Continued support for public land protection**

As in past years, the 2022 survey finds cross-party support for several citizen-initiated efforts to protect public lands. These proposals require Congressional approval and include:

- More voters than ever, 83%, support the Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Act to expand protections on public lands adjacent to the Bob Marshall Wilderness.
- 77% of voters support a proposal to protect a Wilderness Study Area in the Gallatin Range near Yellowstone National Park.
- 71% of voters support the Lincoln Prosperity Proposal to increase protections on national forest lands, boost recreation opportunities and promote forest restoration near the town of Lincoln.

This year's survey also finds strong support for some national strategies aiming to protect public and private lands. For instance, 78% of voters support the president's ability to protect existing public lands as national monuments, and 66% of voters support the America the Beautiful Initiative, a national policy that seeks to conserve 30% of America's land and 30% of its oceans by the year 2030.

Finally, when it comes to management of public lands, 79% of voters say it's important for Native American tribes to have a stronger role in decisions that impact public lands when they are sacred or historically important to tribes.

A summary of the results and the full survey is available for download at [2022 Voter Survey](#). The 2022 Public Lands Survey polled 500 voters by phone and online April 4-10, with a margin of error of +/- 4.38%.

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