

July 6, 2015

**To:** Interested Parties  
**From:** Ben Tulchin, Ben Krompak, and Kiel Brunner; Tulchin Research  
**Re:** **Poll Finds Overwhelming, Broad-Based Support for the Endangered Species Act Among Voters Nationwide**

Tulchin Research recently conducted a scientific survey among a representative sample of 600 registered voters across the United States on behalf of Defenders of Wildlife and Earthjustice in order to assess attitudes about the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Our research finds a broad-based national consensus on the Endangered Species Act, with nine in ten voters (90%) backing the law and with support extending across the country, across all demographic groups, and across the political spectrum.

Voters feel strongly that decisions about which species are protected under the Endangered Species Act should rest with biologists with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and *not* with members of Congress. Furthermore, voters reject the contention by critics of the Endangered Species Act that the law hurts our economy and believe we can protect wildlife and grow the economy at the same time. Additionally, voters have a clear message for members of Congress who have plans to weaken the law as nearly seven in ten voters (68%) say they are *more* likely to vote for a member of Congress who *supports* environmental safeguards such as the Endangered Species Act.

**Poll Finds National Consensus on the Endangered Species Act**

Asked whether they support or oppose the Endangered Species Act based on a basic description of the law, 90 percent of voters surveyed indicate they support it, including a majority (53%) who *strongly* support it, to just seven percent who oppose it.

*“As you may know, the Endangered Species Act is an environmental law established to protect all wildlife, plants, and fish that are in danger of extinction. Based on what you know, would you say that you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose the Endangered Species Act?”*

<i>Strongly Support</i>	<b>53%</b>
<i>Somewhat Support</i>	<b>37%</b>
<b>Total Support</b>	<b>90%</b>
<i>Somewhat Oppose</i>	<b>5%</b>
<i>Strongly Oppose</i>	<b>2%</b>
<b>Total Oppose</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>3%</b>

This overwhelming support for the Endangered Species Act extends across the country and across gender, age, and ethnic lines. Most notably, in today's highly polarized political environment, support for the Endangered Species Act also spans the political spectrum, with the

law being backed by overwhelming majorities of self-identified liberals (96% support), moderates (94%), and conservatives (82%).

<b><i>The Endangered Species Act Attracts Overwhelming, Broad-Based Support</i></b>		
<i>“As you may know, the Endangered Species Act is an environmental law established to protect all wildlife, plants, and fish that are in danger of extinction. Based on what you know, would you say that you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose the Endangered Species Act?”</i>		
	<b>Total Support</b>	<b>Total Oppose</b>
<b>All Voters</b>	<b>90%</b>	7%
<b>Women</b>	<b>91%</b>	5%
<b>Men</b>	<b>88%</b>	10%
<b>Ages 18-49</b>	<b>93%</b>	4%
<b>Ages 50+</b>	<b>87%</b>	11%
<b>White</b>	<b>90%</b>	9%
<b>African American</b>	<b>89%</b>	3%
<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>94%</b>	4%
<b>Northeast</b>	<b>92%</b>	5%
<b>Midwest</b>	<b>87%</b>	9%
<b>South</b>	<b>90%</b>	6%
<b>West</b>	<b>89%</b>	10%
<b>Mountain/Plains</b>	<b>91%</b>	7%
<b>Liberal</b>	<b>96%</b>	1%
<b>Moderate</b>	<b>94%</b>	5%
<b>Conservative</b>	<b>82%</b>	16%

### **Strong Majority Say Scientists – Not Congress – Should Make Decisions about Endangered Species Protection**

With some legislators currently seeking to strip specific individual species of Endangered Species Act protections, our poll asked voters whether they preferred such decisions be made by Congress or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologists. By a margin of nearly 4-to-1, voters choose a science-based approach (71%) over allowing Congress to decide which species should be protected (18%), while 11 percent are undecided.

<i>“Some members of Congress are proposing legislation that would deny protections for individual species under the Endangered Species Act. Please indicate which of the following statements you agree with more.”</i>	
<i>Decisions about which species should or should not be protected under the Endangered Species Act should be made by Congress.</i>	18%
<i>Decisions about which species should or should not be protected under the Endangered Species Act should be science-based and made by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologists.</i>	<b>71%</b>
<b>Don't Know</b>	11%

### **Voters Believe the Endangered Species Act is Necessary to Prevent Extinctions, Believe U.S. Can Protect Wildlife while Growing the Economy and Creating Jobs**

While critics of the Endangered Species Act contend that the law hurts the nation's economy, our poll finds voters soundly reject this argument and are confident the United States can protect wildlife while creating jobs. Less than a quarter of voters (24%) agree with critics who say that “the Endangered Species Act hurts our economy and destroys jobs,” while two-thirds of voters (66%) agree with Endangered Species Act supporters who say “it is necessary to prevent species from going extinct and that we can protect our natural heritage for future generations while growing our economy and creating jobs.”

### **Voters of all Persuasions More Likely to Support Members of Congress who Back Environmental Safeguards like the Endangered Species Act**

The poll finds that nearly seven in ten voters (68%) report they are *more* likely to vote for a member of Congress “who supports environmental safeguards such as the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Air Act, and the Clean Water Act,” while just 10 percent say they would be “less likely” to vote for that member. Notably, majorities of self-identified liberals (87%), moderates (71%), and conservatives (51%) say they are more likely to support a member of Congress who supports environmental protection.

### **Conclusion**

Our research finds a broad-based national consensus on the Endangered Species Act with 90 percent of voters nationwide supporting the law – including a majority who strongly support it – and with support extending across the country and across demographic and ideological lines. The poll finds wide agreement that the Endangered Species Act is necessary to prevent extinctions, that the nation can protect our natural heritage while growing our economy, and that specific decisions about species protection should be science-based and made by biologists rather than by politicians. Additionally, voters look favorably upon legislators who support environmental protection with large majorities of voters of all political persuasions saying they would be more likely to vote for a member of Congress who supports safeguards like the Endangered Species Act.

**Survey Methodology:** From June 25-29, 2015, Tulchin Research conducted a scientific survey online among a representative sample of 600 registered voters across the United States. The margin of error for this survey is +/- 4 percentage points.