

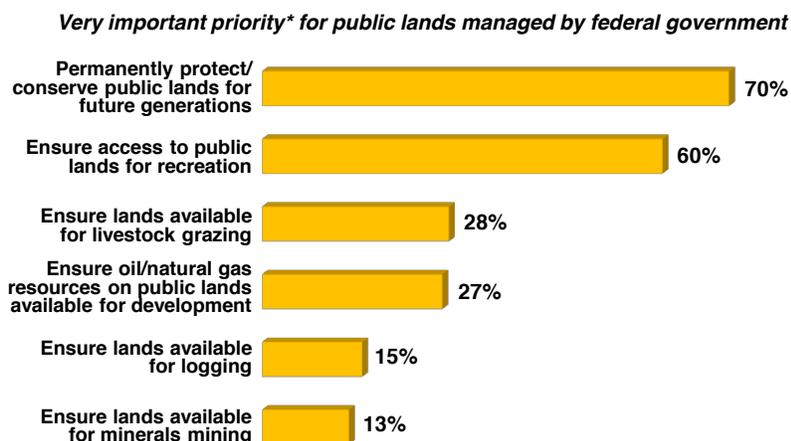
## MEMORANDUM

**TO: Center for American Progress**  
**FROM: Hart Research Associates**  
**DATE: December 2, 2013**  
**RE: Voters' Views on Balancing Conservation and Drilling on America's Public Lands**

On behalf of the Center for American Progress, Hart Research conducted a quantitative research study on public opinion about federal investments in public lands and preferred uses of public lands. The survey was conducted by telephone from October 31 to November 4, 2013, among 1,005 2012 presidential election voters nationwide, and it included both landline and cell phones. This survey builds on public lands research conducted earlier this year among news-attentive voters living in nine mountain west states.

**1) Two pillars define what is at stake for public lands for voters across the country: permanently protecting public lands for future generations and ensuring access to recreational activities. Far fewer voters place top priority on ensuring that oil and gas on public lands are available for development.**

**There are two standout priorities for public lands: access to recreational activities and permanent protection.**



\*Nine-10 ratings on zero-to-10 scale, 10 = extremely important priority

- Seven in 10 (70%) voters say that permanently protecting and conserving public lands for future generations is very important to them personally, and another 60% say that ensuring access to public lands for recreational activities such as hiking, biking, hunting, and fishing is personally important to them (as indicated by a rating of nine or 10 on a zero-to-10 scale). Permanently protecting public lands for future generations and ensuring access to recreational activities are the top two priorities for voters across the country, including in the Northeast (69% and 57% respectively), South (66% and 58%), Midwest (71% and 61%), and the West (74% and 65%).
- By comparison, fewer than half as many (27%) say the same about ensuring that oil and natural gas resources on public lands are available for drilling and development. It also is a lower priority among voters across party lines, including among Republicans (39%) who are substantially more likely to say that permanently protecting public lands (60%) and ensuring access to recreational activities (59%) is important to them personally.

### **2) While voters in the West are more knowledgeable about and experienced with public lands, there is widespread and consistent support across regions for the federal government to focus more on conserving and protecting public lands than on drilling.**

- Voters in the West are more likely to say they know a great deal or a fair amount about public lands and issues related to them (55%) than voters in the rest of the country, where roughly one in three says the same.
- Despite regional differences in knowledge, voters across the country are in agreement that the federal government should focus more on conserving and protecting public lands. By 36 points, more voters nationwide say the government should focus on conserving and protecting public lands for future generations (58%) than on opportunities for oil and natural gas drilling on public lands (22%). This is the overwhelming view in the Northeast (by 46 points), the Midwest (by 46 points), in the South (by 27 points), and in the West (by 28 points).

### **3) Voters' greatest concerns about federal management of drilling on public lands are environmental.**

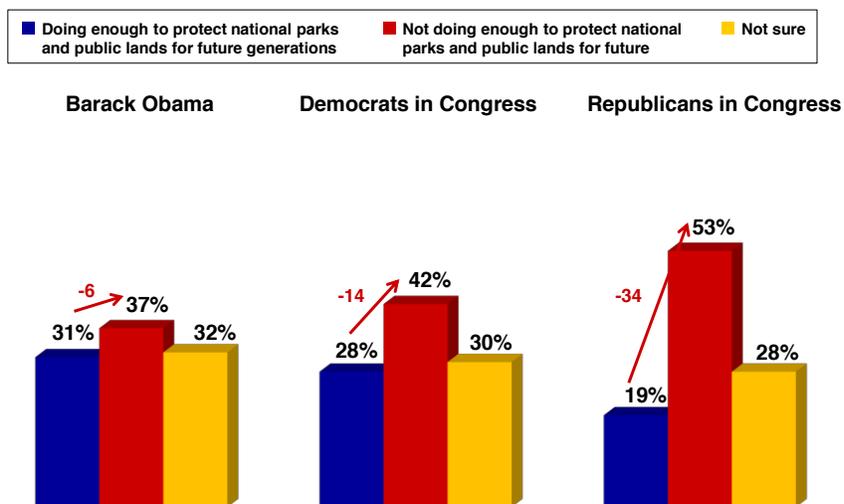
- Large majorities of voters have major concerns that the federal government allows drilling in areas that could create environmental hazards to neighboring communities (71%) or allows drilling in environmentally sensitive areas (63%).
- Concerns about environmental safety clearly outweigh complaints about bureaucratic red tape stalling energy development on public lands. Compared with environmental hazards to communities, far fewer voters have major concerns that the federal government puts too many environmental regulations on oil and gas drilling on public lands (44%). Even fewer have major concerns about the federal government being too slow in giving out permits to drill on public lands (36%).

- While it may not be surprising that Democrats and independents are more concerned about drilling's environmental impact on communities, it should be noted that Republicans share their worries. In fact, as many Republicans say they have major concerns about the federal government allowing drilling in areas that could create environmental hazards to neighboring communities (53%) as have major concerns about the government putting too many environmental regulations on oil and gas drilling on public lands (57%).

#### 4) Obama is more trusted on public lands than are Republicans in Congress but voters do not believe that either party is doing enough to protect national parks and public lands.

- A majority (53%) of voters say that Republicans in Congress are not doing enough to protect national parks and public lands for future generations, whereas only 19% (a 34-point difference) say that Republicans in Congress *are* doing enough. Although they do not evaluate Democrats in Congress as negatively on the issue of public lands, more voters believe Democrats are not doing enough (42%) than believe they are doing enough (28%, a 14-point difference) to protect national parks and public lands. President Obama receives the most favorable evaluations, with 31% saying he is doing enough and 37% saying is not doing enough (a six-point difference).

#### Voters don't believe either party, especially Republicans in Congress, is doing enough to protect national parks and public lands.



- Obama is more trusted (37%) to deal with issues involving national parks and other public lands than Republicans in Congress (29%). However, independents trust no one: 45% say they trust neither President Obama nor the Republicans in Congress to deal with national parks and public lands. Just one in four (24%) independents say they trust Republicans in Congress, and the same proportion trusts President Obama.