

TO: League of Conservation Voters
FROM: Geoff Garin
DATE: May 18, 2015
RE: Voters Favor the Clean Water Rule by a Wide Margin

From May 4 to 7, 2015, Hart Research Associates conducted a survey among a representative national cross section of 800 registered voters to gauge the level of support for the Clean Water Rule proposed by the US Environmental Protection Agency and the US Army Corps of Engineers. The interviews were conducted by telephone, and respondents were reached on landlines, cell phones, and VOIP connections. The statistical margin of error associated with a sample of this size is ± 3.5 percentage points.

(1) Voters support the Clean Water Rule by an overwhelming margin after hearing a short description of it, and support for the rule crosses party lines.

Respondents were read the following description of the rule:

The Clean Water Rule proposed by the EPA and Army Corps of Engineers clarifies which waters are and are not protected under the Clean Water Act. Specifically, the rule would restore pollution protections that used to exist for streams and wetlands that feed into bigger lakes and rivers and ultimately end up in our drinking water supply.

Overall, 80% say they favor the rule, with half of voters saying they strongly favor it. Only 14% of voters say they oppose the rule.

Support for the rule cuts across party lines, with large majorities of Democrats, independents, and Republicans in favor.

	Total Support	Strong Support
	%	%
All voters	80	50
Democrats	94	65
Independents	75	49
Republicans	68	34

(2) Support for the Clean Water Rule is rooted in the priority that voters place on water pollution and the personal concern that many have about this issue. The potential impact that the rule would have on the nation's drinking water supply and on future generations are the considerations they deem most important in deciding the merits of the rule.

More than four in five (84%) voters say that water pollution is a very or fairly important priority, and three in five (61%) describe it as a very or fairly big concern for them personally. Large majorities across party lines feel that water pollution is a very or fairly important priority. Variations by party affiliation are more pronounced when it comes to water pollution being a personal concern than an important priority, but nearly half of Republicans say the issue of water pollution is a big concern for them personally.

Priority Placed on Water Pollution and Concern about It Personally

	<u>All</u> <u>Voters</u>	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Independents</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
	%	%	%	%
Water pollution is a very or fairly important priority	84	92	83	75
The issue of water pollution is a big concern for me personally	61	69	68	48

Respondents heard six considerations that might impact their thinking about the Clean Water Rule, and they were asked to choose the two that they think should be the most important in deciding whether it should be implemented. By a wide margin, they rank the impact on our drinking water supply (54%) and the impact on our children and grandchildren (52%) as their top considerations. Less important considerations include its impact on wildlife and natural habitats (26%), agriculture and farming (24%), jobs and the economy (15%), and landowners' property rights (15%).

(3) A large majority of voters think that the federal government should be doing *more* to protect the nation's waters from pollution.

More than three in five voters think that the federal government should be doing more to protect the drinking water supply (61%), lakes and rivers (62%), or streams and wetlands that feed into larger water sources (61%) from pollution. Democrats are among those most supportive of the federal government doing more to protect each of these water sources, with at least three in four who think the government should do more to protect each of the three sources. More than three in five independents are supportive of the government doing more to protect each one. Even among Republicans, more than two in five think the federal government should be doing more to protect each source.

(4) Voters express notably more trust in the EPA and US Army Corps of Engineers than in Congress to make the right decision on protecting the nation's smaller waterways. They have a low level of trust in Congress to take the right approach.

Fully 72% of voters trust the US Army Corps a lot or some to make the right decision on how best to protect our nation’s streams and wetlands from pollution, and nearly as many (62%) trust the EPA a lot or some. Just 25% of the electorate have the same level of trust in Congress in this area.

When specifically asked who they trust more to have the right approach to best protect our nation’s smaller waterways from pollution, voters are much more likely to trust the federal agencies. Whether it is the EPA and Army Corps vs. Congress or just the EPA vs. Congress, nearly four in five side with the government agencies.

Who to Trust More to Take the Right Approach to Protect Smaller Waterways from Pollution?	
	%
The EPA and US Army Corps of Engineers	78
<i>or</i>	
Congress	7
The EPA	77
<i>or</i>	
Congress	9

(5) By a wide margin, voters do not want Congress to block the Clean Water Rule, and a large majority say they would feel less favorable toward a senator who voted against the rule.

Nearly four in five (79%) voters would prefer that Congress allow the rule to move forward and closely monitor its implementation. A mere 12% of the electorate would like Congress to block implementation of the rule. Support for Congress allowing the rule to move forward cuts across party lines, with large majorities of Democrats, independents, and Republicans in support of allowing its implementation.

	Allow Rule to Go Forward	Block Rule and Prevent Implementation
	%	%
All voters	79	12
Democrats	94	3
Independents	78	12
Republicans	66	21

Additionally, 69% of voters say they would feel *less* favorable toward their US senator if he or she voted to block the rule’s implementation, including 38% who would feel much less favorable. Just 17% of voters say they would feel more favorable if their senator voted this way. Large majorities of Democrats (81%) and independents (71%) say they would feel less favorable toward their senator if he/she voted to block the rule, and a 55% majority of Republicans say they would feel this way.