

# **Sustainable Funding for Conservation in Iowa**

## ***Results of a Statewide Public Opinion Survey***

**Survey Conducted:**  
November 27-30, 2006

220-2238

***Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates***  
*Opinion Research & Public Policy Analysis*

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Santa Monica, CA – Oakland, CA – Madison, WI – Mexico City

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## METHODOLOGY

From November 27<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup>, 2006, Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates (FMM&A) conducted a telephone survey of 800 adult Iowa residents. The margin of error for the entire sample is +/- 3.5 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. The margin of error for subgroups will be higher.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### KEY FINDINGS

- **Residents are generally pleased with conditions in Iowa.** By more than a two-to-one margin (64% to 24%), residents believe things in Iowa are moving in the right direction rather than off on the wrong track.
- **Environmental issues are not generally top-of-mind concerns.** Education, jobs and the economy, health care, and drug use are most commonly named the most serious problem facing the state. However, no one issue presents a dominant statewide concern, with education quality and funding (18%), the economy and jobs (18%), taxes (9%), health care/prescription drug costs (7%), and drug use (7%) all mentioned by less than one in five respondents.
- **Water quality issues – including agricultural run-off – emerge as the strongest environmental concerns when residents are asked to name the most serious environmental problem facing the state.** Fourteen percent of respondents volunteered water pollution and water quality as their strongest environmental concern, while three percent mentioned river, lake, or stream pollution, and two percent mentioned the water supply or water conservation. Farm pollution and fertilizer run-off (7%) and industrial pollution and runoff (2%) were also frequently mentioned.
- **Although environmental issues may not be at the forefront of residents' attention, when asked to evaluate the seriousness of specific issues facing Iowa, "pollution of rivers, lakes, and streams" is second only to "a lack of affordable health care."** Over half (55%) of residents consider "pollution of rivers, lakes, and streams" an "extremely" or "very" serious problem. This level of concern is statistically equal to concern about the price of gasoline, crime, gangs, and drugs, and the quality of public education, and higher than concern about the economy and unemployment, taxes, and a lack of affordable housing.
- **Iowans share a strong conservation ethic.** A nearly-unanimous 97 percent agree that "all Iowa residents have a personal responsibility to protect the state's natural resources."

Eighty-six percent (86%) agree that “the protection of Iowa’s fish and wildlife benefits all Iowa residents.”

- **Large proportions also agree conservation is good for the Iowa economy.** Nine in ten (90%) residents agree that “protecting the condition of land and water in Iowa is critical to keeping the state’s economy strong.”
- **Many Iowans are concerned about the loss of farmland.** Fully 51 percent call it an “extremely” or “very” serious problem. This is a stronger concern with those ages 50 or older generally. This high level of concern about the loss of farmland is not surprising in light of the finding that 95 percent of residents agree that “protecting and supporting working farms in Iowa is important for our state’s economy.” Two-thirds (65%) of residents “strongly agree” with this statement.
- **The State gets high marks for its performance on conservation issues.** Three-fourths or more approve of the job the state is doing in “providing clean waters for drinking and recreation” (74%), “conserving fish and wildlife” (79%), “providing outdoor recreational opportunities” (83%), and “maintaining state parks and forests” (85%). Just under seven in ten respondents approve of the state’s job in “helping landowners conserve soil, water, and natural areas” (69%) and “conserving wildlife habitat” (68%). Just under two-thirds approve of the state’s work in “conserving farmlands” (63%).
- **Positive views of the state’s conservation efforts coupled with strong conservation values lead 77 percent of Iowans to support dedicating additional public funding to programs “to protect Iowa’s land, water, and wildlife.”** This support is broad-based, including seven in ten or more respondents regardless of party affiliation, education, age, income, employment or farm economy dependence, gender, or geographic region.
- **At the same time, a significant proportion of Iowans are concerned about taxes.** Just over four in ten (43%) residents consider the amount they have to pay in taxes to be an “extremely” or “very” serious problem. And Iowans are divided in their evaluation of the State in “managing taxpayer dollars efficiently,” with 46 percent approving of the job the state is doing and 46 percent disapproving. Just 18 percent “strongly” approve of the state’s performance in this area.
- **Support for additional public funding to protect Iowa’s land, water, and wildlife declines when residents are asked to consider taxes or bond funding as the mechanism.** Just one-third (33%) support funding conservation programs by “dedicating a portion of existing state sales tax revenue by shifting funds from other state programs,” while 58 percent oppose it. An even lower 27 percent support “borrowing money through a state bond measure,” with 65 percent in opposition. Three out of four residents (75%) oppose “increasing the state sales tax” to generate this funding, while just 22 percent support the idea.

- **Broad majorities do support dedicating new lottery or casino revenue to conservation.** Eight in ten (80%) respondents support “dedicating a portion of new state lottery revenue” to generate additional conservation funding and 75 percent support “dedicating a portion of revenue from already-planned new Iowa casinos.”
- **Support for increasing the state sales tax rises when residents understand the limited scope of such a tax increase.** However, opposition continues to outweigh support overall and support continues to fall short of a majority. Approximately one-third of residents would support a one-half cent sales tax (32%), while 63 percent would oppose it – a two-to-one margin. Support rises incrementally to 36 percent, with 58 percent opposed, for a 1/4 cent sales tax increase and rises further to 41 percent, with 52 percent opposed, for a 1/8 cent sales tax increase.
- **At the same time, most Iowans are willing to pay at least some additional taxes to fund conservation programs.** A majority (56%) of Iowans are willing to pay \$10 a year in additional taxes, and a plurality (49%) are willing to pay \$25 a year in additional taxes. Just 40 percent would pay \$50 a year, and 32 percent would pay \$75 or \$100 a year.
- **Willingness to support additional taxes increases when residents hear that their contribution will be matched by the federal government on at least a 1:1 basis.** With this information, six in ten (60%) respondents said they would be “more willing” to pay additional taxes to protect land, water, and wildlife in Iowa.
- **Residents consider water quality to be the highest priority for additional conservation dollars.** Approximately eight in ten consider “protecting drinking water quality in rivers and streams” (82%) and “protecting sources of drinking water” (80%) to be “extremely” or “very” important uses of additional conservation funding. These two items top the list with nearly every demographic group analyzed. “Protecting Iowa’s soils,” (76% extremely or very important), “preserving natural areas” (71%), “managing and protecting endangered and threatened species” (66%), “preserving working farmland,” (64%) and “protecting fish and wildlife habitat” (63%) round out the top priorities for additional conservation funding.
- **Substantial majorities of Iowans agree with many of the key arguments for additional conservation funding:**
  - Nine out of ten (89%) respondents agree that “protecting Iowa’s rivers, lakes, and natural areas will improve our health by helping keep drinking water clean and pollution-free.” Over half (53%) “strongly agree” with this statement.
  - Eighty-six percent (86%) agree that “we need to do more to protect lakes, rivers, and natural areas that Iowans use for fishing, hunting, camping, wildlife viewing, and recreation. Forty-four percent (44%) “strongly agree”.

- Eight in ten (80%) agree that “we need to invest more in protecting Iowa’s valuable soils and family farms” (39% strongly).
  - Just over three in four (77%) agree that “protecting Iowa’s land, water, and wildlife will keep our economy strong by attracting high-quality employers and keeping our children in Iowa.”
- **However, majorities also agree with some key arguments against additional conservation funding.**
- Just under two in three respondents (63%) agree that “more spending on the environment will inevitably lead to more taxes, and Iowans are over-taxed already.”
  - Just over half (54%) agree that “we should not spend more money on the environment when we have more important needs like health care, schools, and public safety.”
- **After hearing more information, support for additional funding to protect Iowa’s land, water, and wildlife declines slightly.** Support for the concept of additional funding fell from 77 percent initially to 72 percent, with this decline coming out of the proportion who “strongly” supported the proposal (42% initially to 36% at the end of the survey). Opposition rose slightly, from 18 percent to 22 percent.
- **Three out of four (74%) Iowans support providing tax credits to private landowners who permanently set aside lands to prevent erosion and protect Iowa streams, lakes, and wildlife.** A slightly lower 58 percent support such tax credits for those landowners who allow public access to their land for non-motorized recreational activities.

The remainder of this report presents these and other results in more detail.

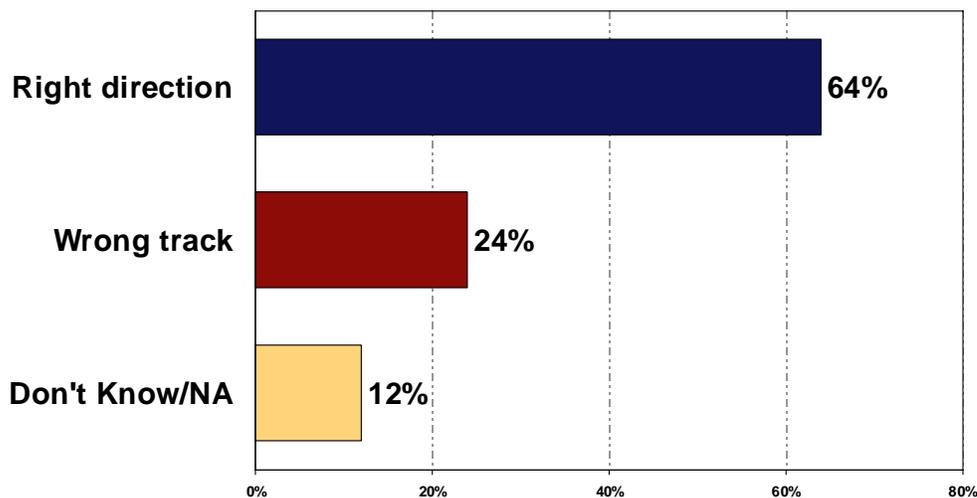
## DETAILED FINDINGS

### THE MOOD OF THE PUBLIC AND ISSUE CONCERNS

#### *Direction of the State*

Nearly two out of three Iowans believe things in the State of Iowa are headed in the right direction. As shown in **FIGURE 1**, 64 percent hold this view, while one-quarter (24%) feel things are “pretty seriously off on the wrong track.” Just over one in ten residents (12%) are uncertain.

**FIGURE 1: PERCEPTION OF IOWA’S DIRECTION**

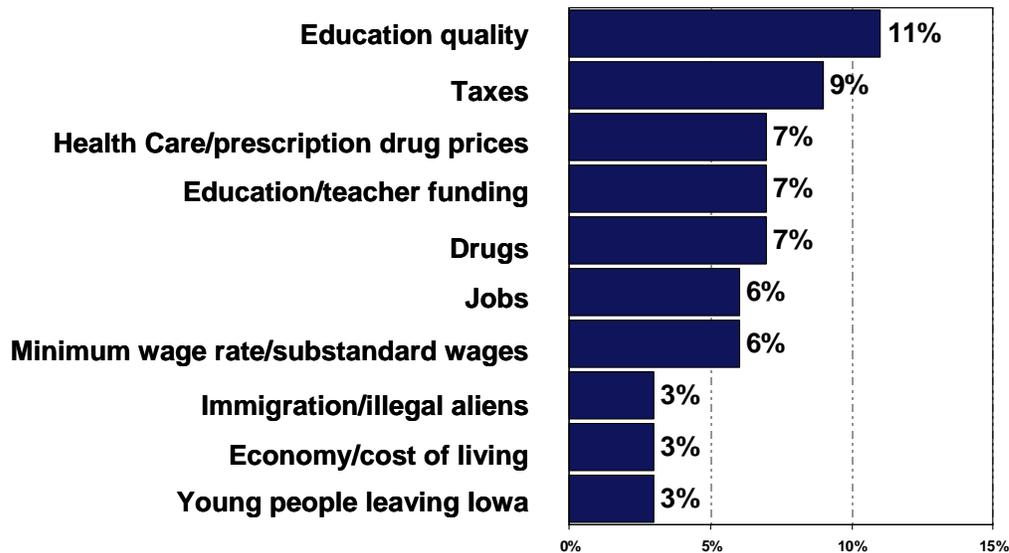


- Democrats have a more positive impression of the state’s direction than do Republicans or independents. While 73 percent of Democrats believe things in Iowa are headed in the right direction, a lower 64 percent of independents and 57 percent of Republicans feel this way. Those who are not registered to vote are also less positive (58%). Nearly one-third (32%) of Republicans believe things are pretty seriously off on the wrong track, compared to 23 percent of independents, 24 percent of those not registered, and 17 percent of Democrats.
- Those under age 40 are slightly more positive about the state’s direction (71% right direction to 19% wrong track) than are those 40 to 49 (56% to 33%) or older (62% to 24%).
- Those employed in agriculture are more negative (33% wrong track) than those in other fields (24%) and the unemployed (22%). Those who report that their household is “very” dependent on the farm economy are more negative in their view of how things are going in Iowa (31% wrong track) than are those “somewhat” dependent on the farm economy (14%) or “not dependent” on it (23%).

***Most Important Problems Facing Iowa***

Respondents were asked to volunteer, in their own words, what they consider to be the most serious problem facing Iowa today that they would like to see state government do something about. The results suggest that no single issue dominates residents’ concerns. As **FIGURE 2** shows, the largest proportion mention educational quality (11%) and education/teacher funding (7%). Therefore, nearly two in ten respondents express concern about education. Issues related to jobs and the economy are also frequently mentioned, including jobs specifically (6%), the minimum wage or substandard wages (6%), the economy or cost of living (3%), the loss of agriculture or farmland (2%), and business or industry development and retention (1%). Taken together, these items are mentioned by 18 percent of respondents. Taxes (9%), health care (7%), drugs (7%), illegal immigration (3%), and young people leaving Iowa (3%) round out the most-mentioned concerns.

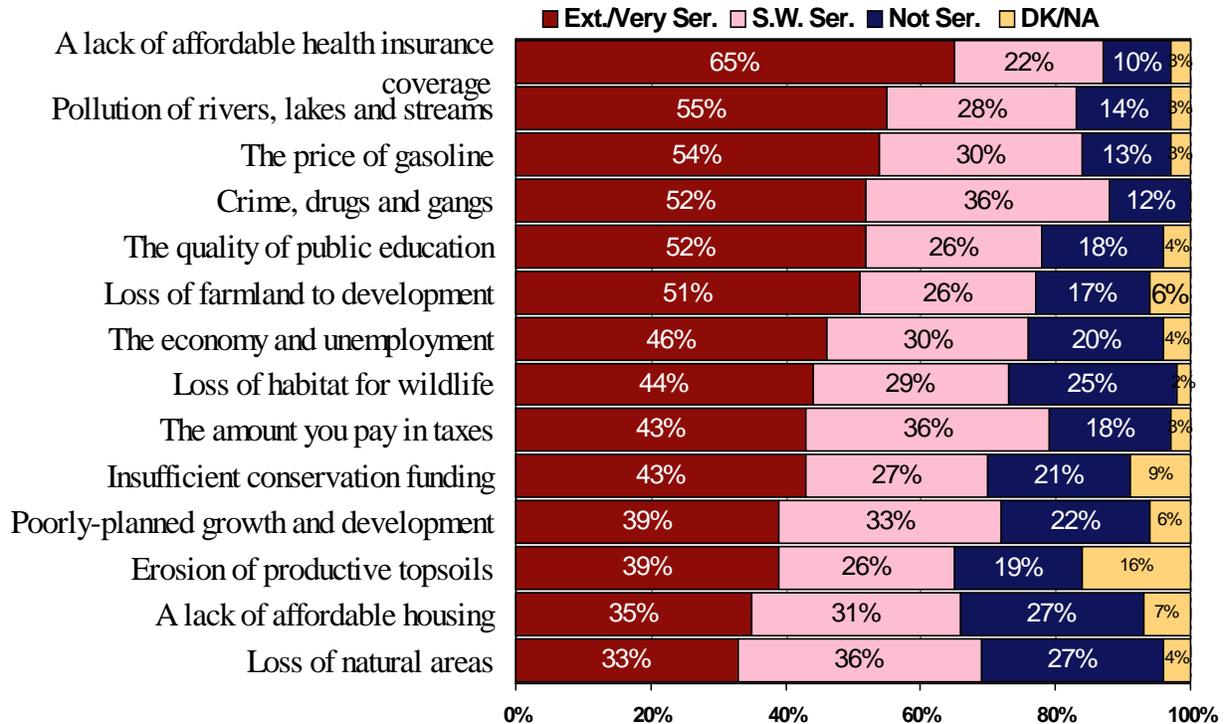
*(Open-end, Top responses only, Split sampled)*



**FIGURE 2: MOST SERIOUS PROBLEM FACING IOWA**

Respondents were also asked to rate how serious they consider a number of specific issues facing Iowa. Unlike the open-ended question, where respondents were asked to volunteer what they considered the most serious problems without being provided options, this question asked them to rate their concern about a list of issues read to them. Responses indicate that concern about “pollution of rivers, lakes, and streams” is a top concern, along with health insurance costs, the price of gasoline, crime, drugs, and gangs, education, the loss of farmland, and the economy and unemployment. Therefore, while concern about pollution of rivers, lakes, and streams may not be top of mind, it certainly is a strong concern for Iowans when they are prompted to consider it. **FIGURE 3** illustrates the results.

**FIGURE 3:  
RATING THE SERIOUSNESS OF ISSUES FACING IOWA**



The groups showing the strongest concern about “pollution of rivers, lakes, and streams” include:

- Those under age 30 (73% “extremely/very serious”)
- Those dependent on the farm economy (62%) rather than those who are not (51%)
- College-educated women (62%)
- Democrats (61%, in particular Democrats age 18 to 49 at 67%)
- Independents ages 18 to 49 (60%)

The groups showing the most concern about “loss of farmland” include:

- Those employed in the agricultural industry (67% extremely/very serious), and those who say their household income is “very” dependent on the farm economy (60%)
- Republican women (63%) and independent women (60%)
- Those 50 years of age or older (56%)
- Those earning less than \$80,000 a year in household income (55%)

The groups showing the strongest concern about “loss of habitat for wildlife” include:

- Those under 30 years of age (62% “extremely/very serious”)
- Those who are not registered to vote (61%)
- Independents age 18 to 49 (59%)
- Those earning under \$40,000 a year (52%)

The groups showing the strongest concern about “insufficient funding for the conservation of natural resources” include:

- Those under 30 (55% extremely/very serious)
- Independents (48%), in particular those under 50 (54%) and men (51%).

It should also be noted that Iowans express substantial concern about the amount they pay in taxes, with just over four in ten (43%) calling it an “extremely” or “very” serious problem. This issue is a stronger concern with those working in the agricultural field (67% “extremely/very serious”) than with other employed respondents (41%) or the unemployed (38%). It is also a stronger concern among those earning \$80,000 a year or more in household income (55%) than among those earning less (39%). The small group of respondents from the Sioux City area show more concern about taxes (61%) than do residents of other areas. Differences among other demographic groups are smaller.

## **ATTITUDES ON CONSERVATION ISSUES**

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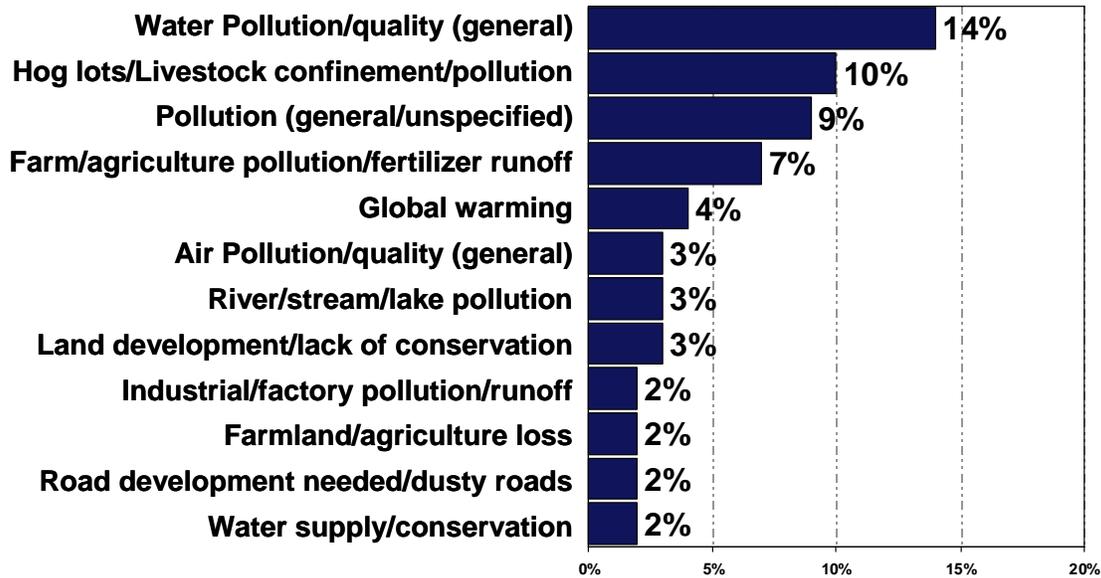
### ***Most Serious Environmental Issues***

Just two percent of respondents volunteered “environmental pollution” as their top concern in Iowa in the open-ended question asking what they consider the most serious problem facing the state. Another one percent mentioned the water supply. Taken together with the two percent who mentioned a loss of farmland, we see only about one in twenty Iowans volunteer issues related to the environment or conservation as the state’s most serious problem.

However, when asked specifically to volunteer what they consider the most important *environmental* problem facing Iowa today, water pollution emerges as Iowans’ top concern with 19 percent mentioning a related issue (including 14 percent stating a general concern about water pollution, three percent mentioning river, lake, and stream pollution, and two percent concerned about the water supply). Run-off related concerns were mentioned by nine percent, including farm pollution and fertilizer run-off (7%) and industrial pollution and run-off (2%). One in ten respondents stated that the biggest environmental concern is hog lots (10%), while nine percent mentioned pollution in general, and seven percent agricultural or farm pollution generally. **FIGURE 4** below shows the results.

**FIGURE 4:**  
**MOST IMPORTANT ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUE FACING IOWA**

*(Open-end, Top responses only, Split sampled)*

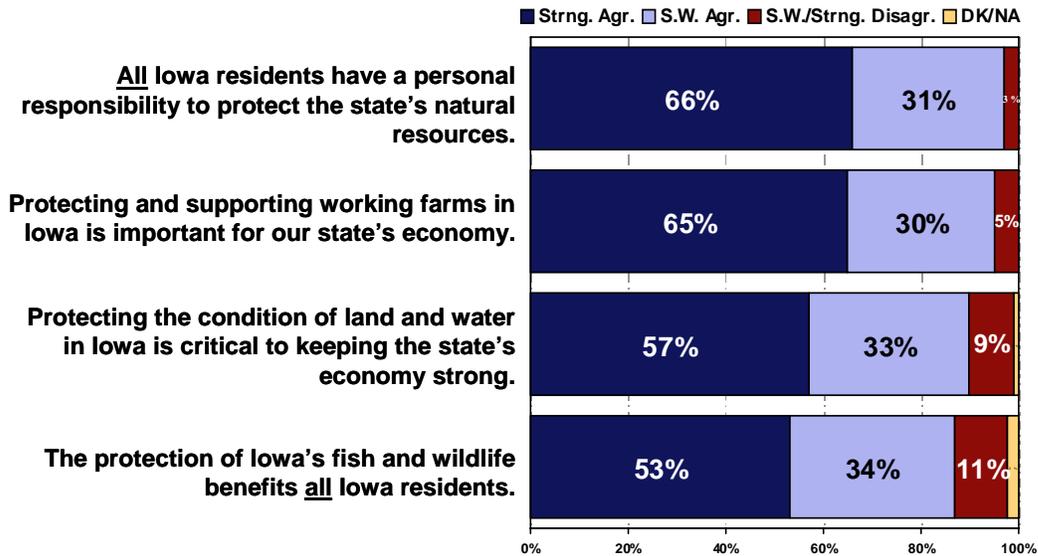


### *Conservation as a Value*

The results clearly show that conservation is a strongly-held value for Iowans. There is also a broad-based view that protection of natural resources is important for the economy. As shown in **FIGURE 5** on the following page shows, two-thirds of respondents “strongly” agree that “all Iowa residents have a personal responsibility to protect the state’s natural resources.” In all, 97 percent of respondents agree with this statement, making it nearly unanimous. Just a slightly lower 87 percent agree that “the protection of Iowa’s fish and wildlife benefits all Iowa residents” (with 53% “strongly” agreeing).

Iowans also see a strong connection between conservation and the economy. Nine in ten (90%) agree that “protecting the condition of land and water in Iowa is critical to keeping the state’s economy strong,” with 57 percent “strongly” agreeing. In a similar vein, 95 percent agree that “protecting and supporting working farms in Iowa is important for our state’s economy,” including sixty-five percent (65%) who “strongly” agree.

**FIGURE 5:  
AGREEMENT WITH CONSERVATION STATEMENTS**



Notable demographic differences in agreement with these statements include:

- The most affluent Iowans are less likely to “strongly agree” that “all Iowa residents have a personal responsibility to protect the state’s natural resources” than are those earning less than \$80,000 a year in household income (55% to 67%). They are also slightly less likely to “strongly agree” that “the protection of Iowa’s fish and wildlife benefits all Iowa residents” (46% to 55%).
- Those working in agriculture are more likely to “strongly agree” that “all Iowa residents have a personal responsibility to protect the state’s natural resources” (75%, compared to 61% among those working elsewhere) and that “protecting and supporting working farms in Iowa is important for our state’s economy” (71% to 66%).

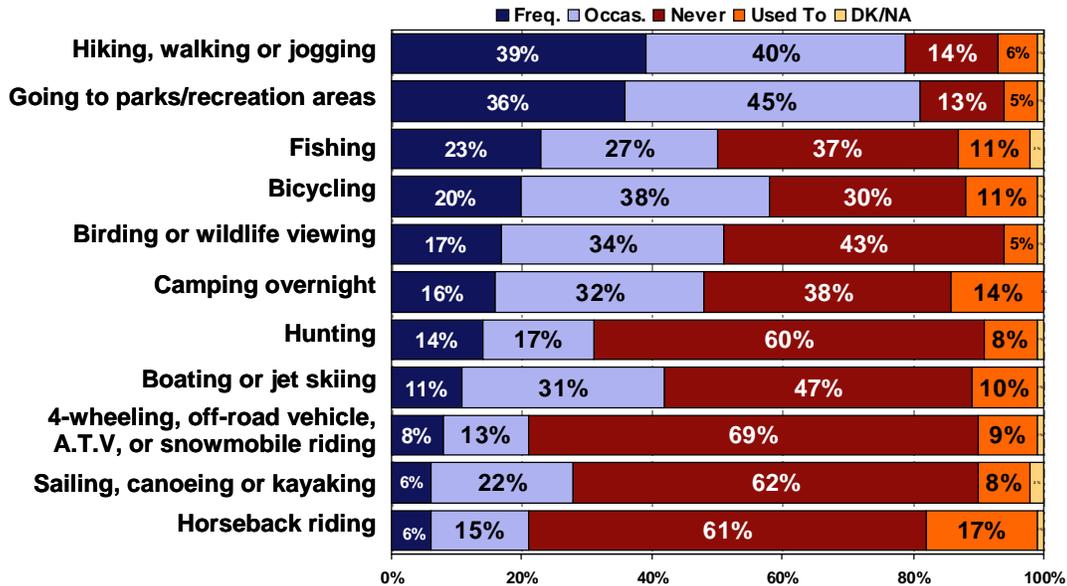
The opposite is true for the statements that “protecting the condition of land and water in Iowa is critical to keeping the state’s economy strong” (with which 62% of employed Iowans in non-agricultural fields “strongly agree,” compared to 37% of those employed in agriculture) and that “the protection of Iowa’s fish and wildlife benefits all Iowa residents” (58% to 49%).

***Participation in Recreational Activities***

The results show that approximately half of respondents at least occasionally go birding or wildlife viewing (51%), fishing (50%), or camping (48%). More than half frequently or occasionally bicycle (58%), hike, walk, or jog (79%), or go to parks and recreational areas

(81%). Sizeable numbers also partake in boating or jet skiing (42%), hunting (31%), and sailing, canoeing, or kayaking (28%). **FIGURE 6** illustrates these results.

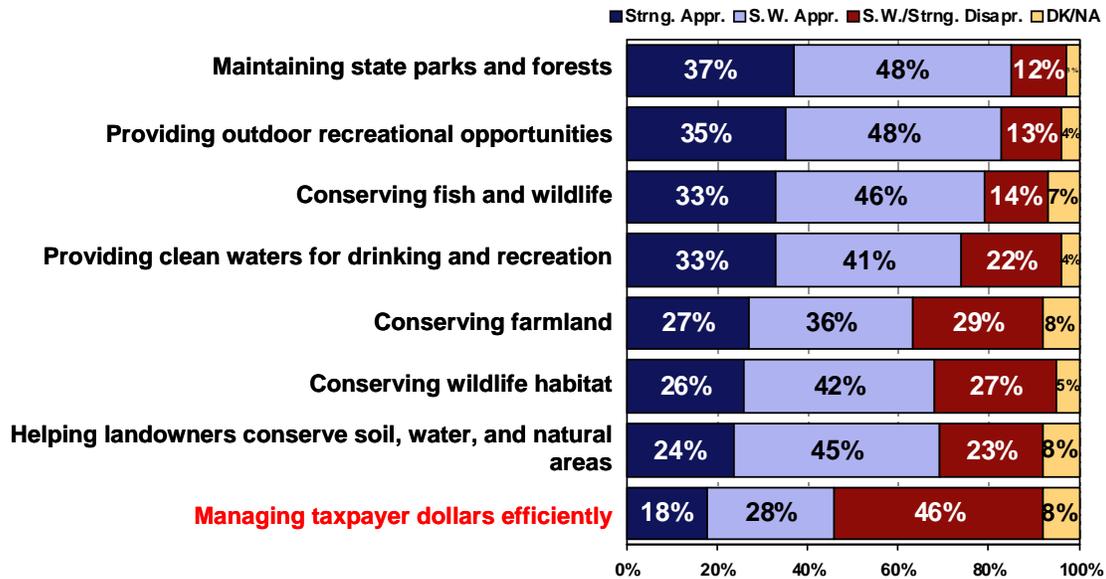
**FIGURE 6:**  
**PARTICIPATION IN RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES**



*Evaluations of the State’s Performance on Conservation Issues*

Iowans approve of the State’s performance on conservation issues. In fact, three-fourths or more approve of the job the State of Iowa is doing in “providing clean waters for drinking and recreation” (74%), “conserving fish and wildlife” (79%), “providing outdoor recreational opportunities” (83%), and “maintaining state parks and forests” (85%). Just under seven in ten respondents approve of the state’s job in “helping landowners conserve soil, water, and natural areas” (69%) and “conserving wildlife habitat” (68%). Just under two-thirds approve of the State’s work in “conserving farmlands” (63%). **FIGURE 7** on the following page highlights these results. Approval of the State’s performance in each of these areas tends to cut across demographic and geographic subgroups within the population.

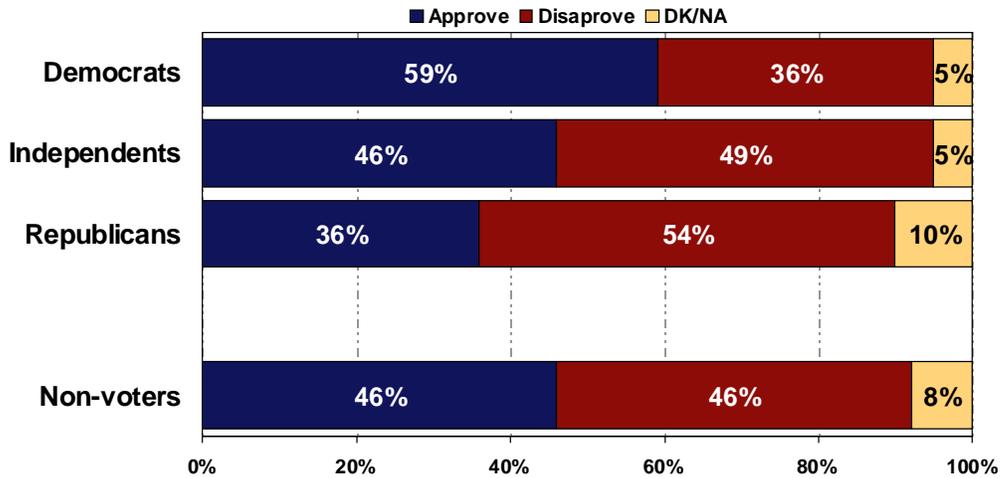
**FIGURE 7:  
APPROVAL/DISAPPROVAL OF STATE PERFORMANCE ON CONSERVATION ISSUES**



It should be noted that a much lower 46 percent approve of the job the state is doing in “managing taxpayer dollars efficiently.” In fact, residents are evenly divided on this issue, with 46 percent approving of the State’s performance and 46 percent disapproving. Just 18 percent “strongly approve” of the State’s work in managing taxes efficiently. This is yet another indicator that concern about taxes could influence efforts to raise additional funds for conservation needs.

The biggest demographic distinction in perceptions of the State’s financial management is a partisan one. Disapproval in this area is higher among Republicans (54%) and independents (49%) than among Democrats (36%) (see **FIGURE 8**). This is particularly true with Republicans ages 50 or older, among whom 62 percent disapprove, compared to 43 percent of younger Republicans. Post-graduate educated respondents are more likely to disapprove of the state’s managing of tax dollars (55% disapprove), as are those earning \$40,000 to \$80,000 (54%) or more (46%) a year versus those earning less (36%).

**FIGURE 8:**  
**APPROVAL/DISAPPROVAL ON MANAGEMENT OF TAXPAYER DOLLARS BY PARTY**



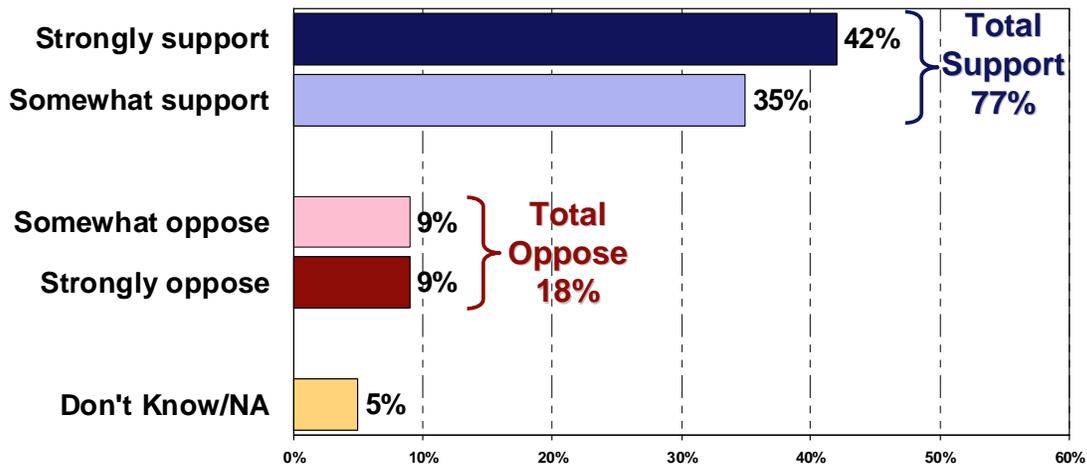
**SUPPORT FOR CONSERVATION FINANCE PROPOSALS**

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*Support for the Principle of Additional Public Funding for Conservation*

In principle, Iowans overwhelmingly support additional conservation funding. Seventy-seven percent either “strongly” (42%) or “somewhat” (35%) support dedicating additional public funding to programs to protect Iowa’s land, water, and wildlife. **FIGURE 9** illustrates the results.

**FIGURE 9:**  
**SUPPORT FOR DEDICATING ADDITIONAL PUBLIC FUNDING TO PROGRAMS TO PROTECT IOWA’S LAND, WATER, AND WILDLIFE**



This support is broad-based, including at least seven out of ten respondents regardless of party affiliation, education, age, income, employment or farm economy dependence, gender, Congressional district, media market, or region. Support is strongest overall with:

- Those under age 30 (87%)
- Democratic women (84%)
- Women ages 18 to 49 (83%)
- Independents generally (83%)
- Those earning less than \$40,000 a year in household income (83%)
- Those under age 50 (81%)
- Davenport media market residents (81%)
- Sioux City media market residents (81%)
- Non-college educated women (81%)

### ***Support for Specific Funding Mechanisms***

Despite their general support for additional public funding for protecting Iowa's land, water, and wildlife, many residents are hesitant to pay more out of their own pockets. Support for a variety of specific funding mechanisms tested in the survey was lukewarm:

- Just one-third (33%) support “dedicating a portion of existing state sales tax revenue by shifting funds from other state programs” to fund conservation programs, while 58 percent oppose it. This idea receives weak support from those who initially said they would support additional public funding for conservation, with 37 percent supporting this shift in funds and 53 percent opposing it.
- Less than three in ten (27%) support “borrowing money through a state bond measure,” with 65 percent in opposition. A bond measure is supported by just 32 percent of those who initially said they would support additional public funding for conservation.
- Three out of four residents (75%) oppose “increasing the state sales tax” to generate this funding, while just 21 percent support it. Just 24 percent of those who initially said they would support additional public funding for conservation back an increase in the sales tax.

At the same time, two potential funding mechanisms received broad support from Iowans surveyed:

- Eight in ten (80%) respondents support “dedicating a portion of new state lottery revenue” to generate this funding. This idea is supported by 85 percent of those who initially said they would support public funding, and even 57 percent of those who said they would not.

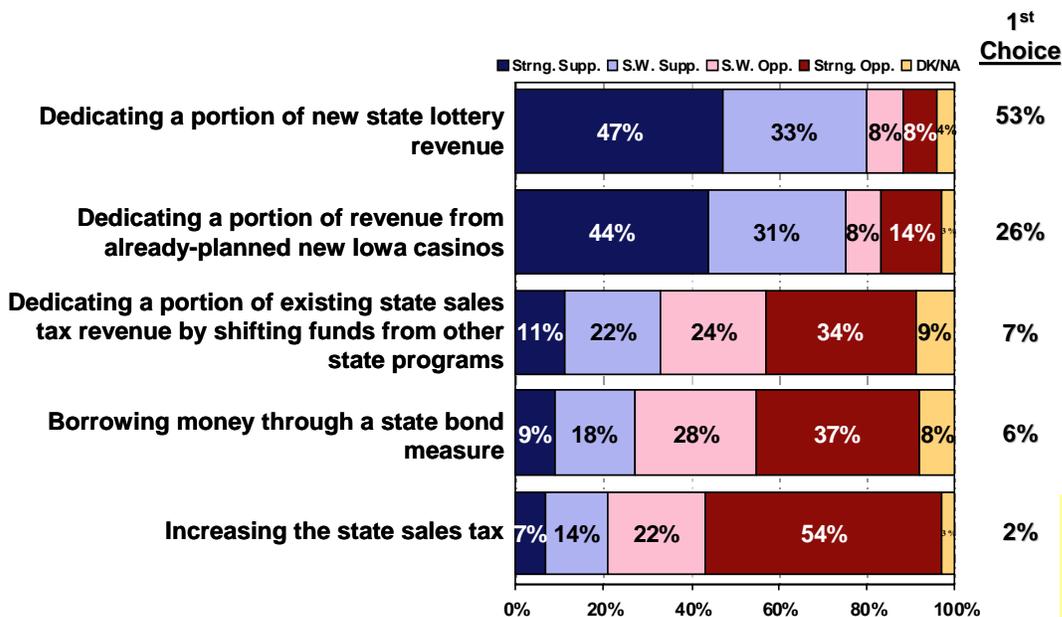
- Three out of four residents (75%) support funding conservation by “dedicating a portion of revenue from already-planned new Iowa casinos.” This idea is supported by 81 percent of those who initially said they would support public funding, and 54 percent of those who said they would not.

There is little variation in support for these specific funding mechanisms among demographic groups. Notable differences include the following:

- Republicans show slightly less support for all five proposals than do members of other political parties.
- Democrats under age 50 show some of the strongest support for all five proposals.
- Independents under age 50 show more support for using existing sales tax revenue (44%) than do other Iowans. They also show more support for borrowing through a bond measure (38%) than do others.
- Iowans age 18 to 49 show slightly more support for sale tax or bond measure proposals than do those older – although no more than 38 percent of those under 50 support any one of these tax/bond proposals.
- Respondents in the Sioux City media market show more support for using existing sales tax revenue (46%) than do those in other media markets.

Respondents were also asked to choose which of the five funding mechanisms they would prefer. The highest proportion, 53 percent, said they would be most likely to support “dedicating a portion of new state lottery revenue.” One-quarter (26%) said they would be most likely to support dedicating a portion of revenue from already-planned new Iowa casinos. No more than seven percent made any of the other options – all of which involved state sales taxes or bond revenues – their first choice. **FIGURE 10** illustrates these results.

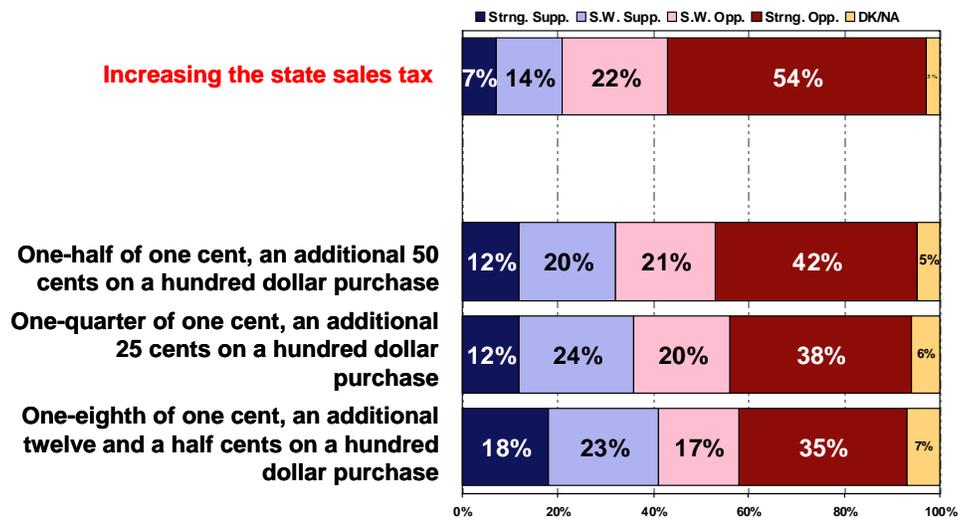
**FIGURE 10:**  
**SUPPORT FOR MECHANISMS TO GENERATE ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR**  
**LAND, WATER, AND WILDLIFE PROTECTION PROGRAMS**



*Fairbank,  
 Maslin,  
 Maullin &  
 Associates*

Survey respondents were also offered a list of more specific potential sales tax increases in an attempt to determine how dependent their support was on the rate of increase: either 1/2-cent, 1/4-cent, or 1/8-cent. Support rose as the amount of the proposed sales tax increase declined. However, opposition continued to outweigh support by double digits and support never broke 50 percent. Approximately one-third of residents would support a one-half cent sales tax increase (32%), while 63 percent would oppose it – a two-to-one margin. Support rises incrementally to 36 percent, with 58 percent opposed, for a 1/4-cent sales tax increase and rises further to 41 percent, with 52 percent opposed, for a 1/8 cent sales tax increase (see **FIGURE 11**). It should be noted that none of these specific rates of increase in the sales tax generated majority support from those who initially said they supported additional public funding for conservation.

**FIGURE 11:  
 SUPPORT/OPPOSITION FOR SPECIFIC SALES TAX PROPOSALS**

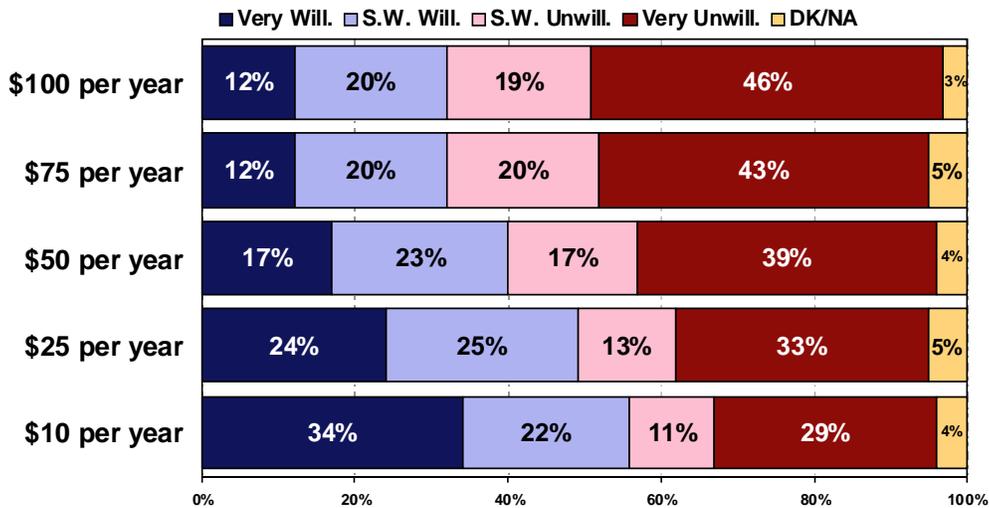


Those subgroups of the population whose support for a sales tax increase proved most sensitive to the tax rate included:

- Those under age 30 (whose support increased from 21% for a general sales tax increase to 55% for a 1/8-cent increase, a 34-point increase)
- Republican women (20% to 52%, +33 points)
- Republicans ages 18 to 49 (19% to 50%, +31 points)
- Those with household incomes of less than \$40,000 a year (18% to 49%, +31 points)
- Non-college educated men (19% to 46%, +27 points)
- Republicans (17% to 43%, +27)
- Democrats ages 18 to 49 (23% to 50%, +27 points)
- Those 30 to 39 (21% to 47%, +26 points)
- Iowans under age 50 (23% to 48%, +25 points)
- Those with a high school education or less (22% to 47%, +25 points)

While they opposed many of the specific tax increases described in the survey, Iowans did express general support for the idea of paying additional taxes to support increased funding for conservation. In fact, a 49-percent plurality of Iowans are willing to pay \$25 a year in additional taxes, and 56 percent are willing to pay \$10 per year. However, just 40 percent would pay \$50 a year, and 32 percent would pay \$75 or \$100 a year (see **FIGURE 12**).

**FIGURE 12:**  
**WILLINGNESS TO PAY ADDITIONAL TAXES FOR PROGRAMS TO PROTECT LAND, WATER, AND WILDLIFE IN IOWA**



- Even those who initially said they would support additional public funding for conservation do not show majority support for additional taxes until the amount drops to \$25 per year. At this level, 56 percent of those who back additional funding for conservation say they would be willing to pay \$25 more. Their willingness rises to 63 percent at the \$10 level.
- Iowans under age 50 are more willing than those older to pay each specified amount, with 65 percent willing to support a tax increase of \$10 a year and 57 percent a tax increase of \$25 a year. This compares to 47 percent and 41 percent support, respectively, from those older.
- The most affluent are among those least likely to be willing to pay more taxes. In fact, while 59 percent of those with household incomes of less than \$40,000 would be willing to pay \$10 more in taxes and 51 percent would be willing to pay \$25 more, just 44 percent and 46 percent, respectively, of the most affluent would be willing to do so.

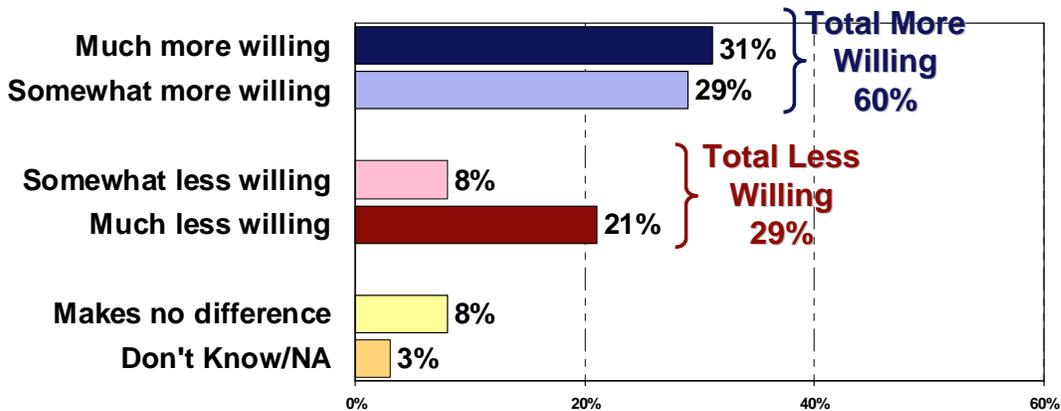
**FIGURE 13** illustrates willingness to pay an additional tax of \$25 a year to generate additional conservation funding among a variety of subgroups of the population. It shows that willingness to pay is greater among younger residents, those with children living at home, and the less affluent.

**FIGURE 13:**  
**WILLINGNESS TO PAY AN ADDITIONAL \$25 IN TAXES TO GENERATE CONSERVATION FUNDING**

| Demographic Group         | Total Willing | Total Unwilling |
|---------------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Total                     | 49%           | 46%             |
| <b>Gender</b>             |               |                 |
| Men                       | 48%           | 48%             |
| Women                     | 49%           | 45%             |
| <b>Kids at Home</b>       |               |                 |
| Yes                       | 54%           | 42%             |
| No                        | 46%           | 49%             |
| <b>Age</b>                |               |                 |
| 18-29                     | 61%           | 35%             |
| 30-39                     | 55%           | 39%             |
| 40-49                     | 56%           | 40%             |
| 50-64                     | 42%           | 54%             |
| 65+                       | 40%           | 55%             |
| <b>Gender by Age</b>      |               |                 |
| Men 18 to 49              | 58%           | 39%             |
| Men 50+                   | 38%           | 57%             |
| Women 18 to 49            | 56%           | 37%             |
| Women 50+                 | 43%           | 52%             |
| <b>Voter Registration</b> |               |                 |
| Democrats                 | 48%           | 48%             |
| Republicans               | 49%           | 45%             |
| Independents              | 51%           | 46%             |
| Not registered/Don't know | 44%           | 48%             |
| <b>Income</b>             |               |                 |
| Under \$40K               | 51%           | 44%             |
| \$40K to \$80K            | 56%           | 39%             |
| More than \$80K           | 46%           | 51%             |
| <b>Employment</b>         |               |                 |
| Agricultural              | 41%           | 54%             |
| Other Employed            | 51%           | 45%             |
| Not Employed              | 47%           | 49%             |
| <b>Type of Area</b>       |               |                 |
| Urban                     | 50%           | 44%             |
| Rural                     | 49%           | 47%             |
| Suburban                  | 44%           | 50%             |
| <b>Media Market</b>       |               |                 |
| Cedar Rapids              | 56%           | 40%             |
| Sioux City                | 48%           | 48%             |
| Davenport                 | 47%           | 48%             |
| Des Moines                | 44%           | 51%             |
| Other                     | 48%           | 47%             |

Support for paying additional taxes to support land, water, and wildlife in Iowa increases when respondents are told that every dollar Iowans paid for these purposes would be matched on at least a one-to-one basis with funding from the federal government. Having heard this, 60 percent said they would be more willing to support paying additional taxes, while 29 percent would be less willing and 11 percent said it would make no difference in their view or they are uncertain (see **FIGURE 14**).

**FIGURE 14:**  
**WILLINGNESS TO PAY ADDITIONAL TAXES IF MATCHED BY FEDERAL GOVERNMENT**  
*Suppose that you knew that every additional dollar Iowans paid in taxes specifically to protect land, water, and wildlife would be matched on at least a one-to-one basis with funding from the federal government. In that case, would you be more willing or less willing to pay additional taxes to protect land, water, and wildlife in Iowa?*

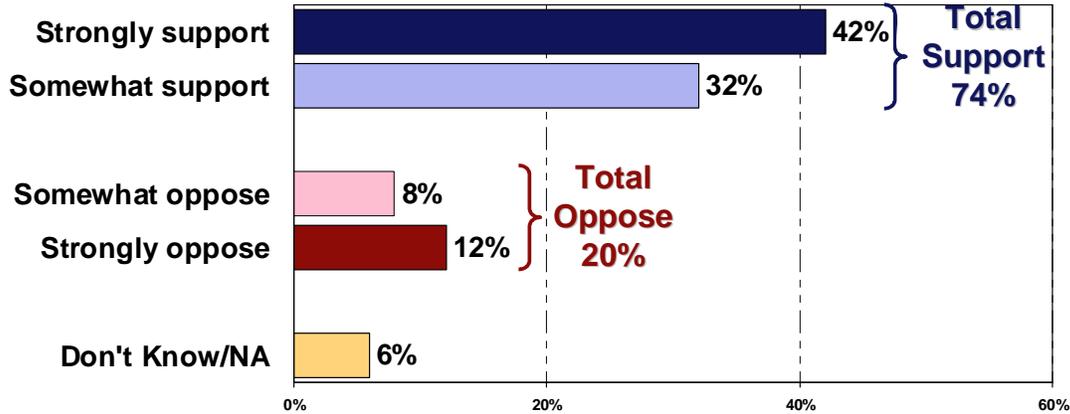


***Tax Credits***

Iowans strongly support a tax credit for landowners who set aside land for conservation. As illustrated in **FIGURE 15** on the following page, 74 percent support offering state tax credits to private landowners who permanently set aside lands to prevent erosion and protect Iowa streams, lakes, and wildlife. Just 20 percent oppose these tax credits. Support is far-reaching, including seven in ten or more respondents regardless of party, gender, congressional district, media market, type of employment, farm dependence, educational attainment, and are of residence. However, support for tax credits is somewhat lower among those 65 years of age or older (59%) than among those under age 50 (80%) or 50 to 64 years of age (74%).

**FIGURE 15:**  
**SUPPORT FOR TAX CREDIT FOR PRIVATE LANDOWNERS WHO SET ASIDE LANDS**

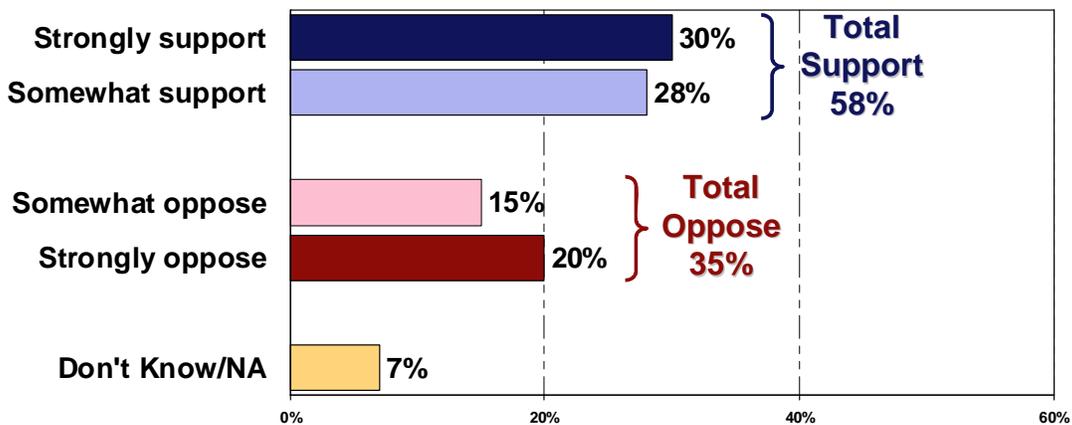
*Would you support or oppose offering state tax credits to private landowners who permanently set aside lands to prevent erosion and protect Iowa streams, lakes, and wildlife?*



Support for offering tax credits to private landowners who allow members of the public to access their land for non-motorized recreational activities is slightly lower. Just under six in ten Iowans (58%) support tax credits for this purpose, while 35 percent do not (see **FIGURE 16**).

**FIGURE 16:**  
**SUPPORT FOR TAX CREDIT FOR PRIVATE LANDOWNERS WHO ALLOW ACCESS TO THEIR LAND**

*And would you support or oppose offering state tax credits to private landowners who allow members of the public access to their land for non-motorized recreational activities?*



Support for tax credits for those who allow access to their land is stronger with those aged 18 to 49 (67%) and 50 to 64 (57%) than with those older (40%). It is also slightly stronger with college graduates (63%, in particular college-educated men at 72%) than with the non-college educated (55%); stronger with those earning \$40,000 or more (approximately 65%) than with those less affluent (53%); and stronger with men (64%) than women (53%).

***Conservation Priorities***

Water quality is clearly Iowans’ highest priority for conservation dollars (see **FIGURE 17**). Eighty-two percent (82%) of respondents consider “protecting drinking water quality in rivers and streams” to be an “extremely” or “very” important use of money if additional funding for conservation were available in Iowa. Forty-six percent (46%) consider this “extremely” important. Eight in ten (81%) say that “protecting sources of drinking water” is an “extremely” or “very” important, with nearly half (47%) calling it “extremely important.” These two items are considered “extremely” important by the highest proportion of nearly every demographic group analyzed. “Protecting drinking water” was called an “extremely” important use of funds by particularly high numbers of Democratic women (60%), Congressional District 3 residents (57%), those ages 50 to 64 (55%), and urban area residents (55%). “Protecting drinking water quality in rivers and streams” resonates most with farmers (71%).

**FIGURE 17:**  
**RATING THE IMPORTANCE OF POTENTIAL USES OF ADDITIONAL CONSERVATION FUNDING**

| Project   | TOTAL<br>EXT./<br>VERY | Ext.<br>Imp. | Very<br>Imp. | SW<br>Imp. | Not<br>Imp. |
|---|------------------------|--------------|--------------|------------|-------------|
| Protecting water quality in rivers and streams  | <b>82%</b>             | 46%          | 36%          | 15%        | 2%          |
| Protecting sources of drinking water  | <b>81%</b>             | 47%          | 33%          | 14%        | 4%          |
| Protecting Iowa’s soils   | <b>76%</b>             | 36%          | 40%          | 19%        | 4%          |
| Preserving natural areas  | <b>71%</b>             | 30%          | 41%          | 24%        | 3%          |
| Managing and protecting endangered and threatened species                               | <b>66%</b>             | 31%          | 35%          | 26%        | 8%          |
| Preserving working farmland   | <b>64%</b>             | 31%          | 33%          | 24%        | 7%          |
| Protecting fish and wildlife habitat  | <b>63%</b>             | 30%          | 33%          | 27%        | 6%          |
| Protecting forests  | <b>60%</b>             | 28%          | 33%          | 32%        | 6%          |
| Providing quality environmental and conservation education opportunities for the public | <b>58%</b>             | 22%          | 36%          | 34%        | 7%          |
| Repairing, improving and/or expanding state and county parks                            | <b>55%</b>             | 18%          | 36%          | 33%        | 10%         |
| Conserving and/or restoring prairies and grasslands                                     | <b>50%</b>             | 21%          | 29%          | 33%        | 14%         |

**FIGURE 17 (CONTINUED):**

| Project   | TOTAL<br>EXT./<br>VERY | Ext.<br>Imp. | Very<br>Imp. | SW<br>Imp. | Not<br>Imp. |
|---|------------------------|--------------|--------------|------------|-------------|
| Improving access for hunting and fishing  | 45%                    | 20%          | 26%          | 35%        | 19%         |
| Providing grants to local governments and non-profits to preserve natural areas | 45%                    | 19%          | 26%          | 43%        | 9%          |
| Improving and expanding trails for hiking, biking, walking and horseback riding | 43%                    | 17%          | 26%          | 39%        | 17%         |
| Adding new public lands for outdoor recreation, fishing, and hunting            | 41%                    | 14%          | 27%          | 34%        | 21%         |
| Improving and expanding off road vehicle trails                                 | 24%                    | 6%           | 18%          | 25%        | 46%         |

***Impact of Messages on Support for Conservation Funding***

Survey respondents were also offered a series of statements that might be made by supporters or opponents of dedicating additional funding to conservation, and were asked whether they agreed with each one. As shown in **FIGURE 18** on the following page, Iowans most strongly agree with statements focused on the importance of protecting water quality.

- Nine out of ten (89%) respondents agree that “protecting Iowa’s rivers, lakes, and natural areas will improve our health by helping keep drinking water clean and pollution-free.” Over half (53%) “strongly agree” with this statement.
- Eighty-six percent (86%) agree that “we need to do more to protect lakes, rivers, and natural areas that Iowans use for fishing, hunting, camping, wildlife viewing, and recreation.” Forty-four percent (44%) “strongly agree.”
- Eight in ten (80%) agree that “we need to invest more in protecting Iowa’s valuable soils and family farms (including 39% that “strongly agree”).
- Just over three in four (77%) agree that “protecting Iowa’s land, water, and wildlife will keep our economy strong by attracting high-quality employers and keeping our children in Iowa.”

While these results suggest that Iowa residents place a value on conservation and see a link between sustainable conservation funding, their quality of life and the economy, other results suggest that concerns about taxes and other important issues could undermine support for sustainable funding efforts.

- Just under two in three respondents (63%) agree that “more spending on the environment will inevitably lead to more taxes, and Iowans are over-taxed already.”

- Just over half (54%) agree that “we should not spend more money on the environment when we have more important needs like health care, schools, and public safety.”

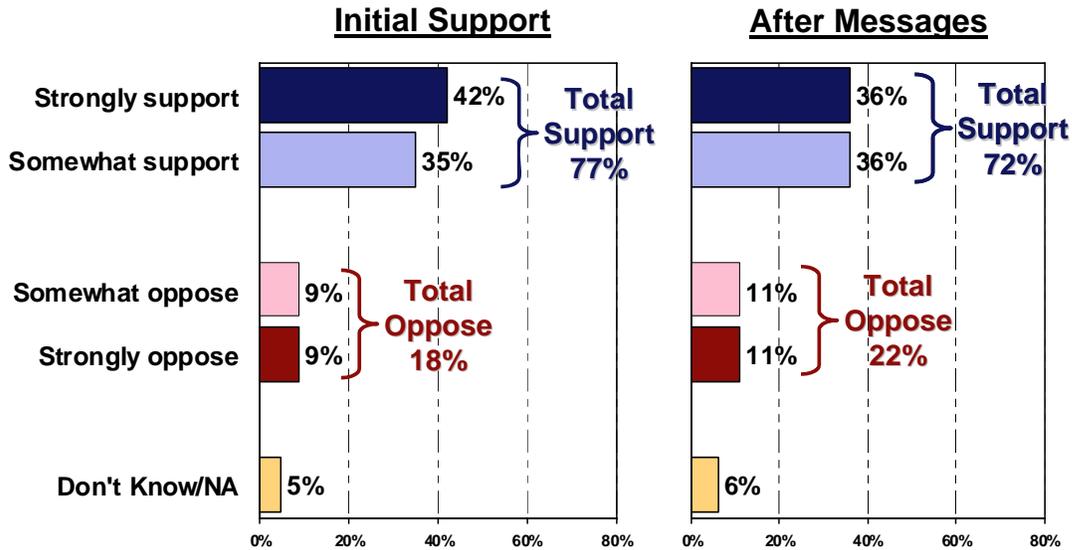
**FIGURE 18:**  
**AGREE/DISAGREE WITH STATEMENTS REGARDING ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR CONSERVATION**

| Statement  | TOTAL AGREE | Strongly Agree | Somewhat Agree | Somewhat Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|--|-------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Protecting Iowa’s rivers, lakes and natural areas will improve our health by helping keep drinking water clean and pollution-free.             | <b>89%</b>  | 53%            | 36%            | 6%                | 2%                |
| We need to do more to protect lakes, rivers and natural areas that Iowans use for fishing, hunting, camping, wildlife viewing, and recreation. | <b>86%</b>  | 44%            | 42%            | 8%                | 3%                |
| We need to invest more in protecting Iowa’s valuable soils and family farms.   | <b>80%</b>  | 39%            | 41%            | 12%               | 3%                |
| Protecting Iowa’s land, water and wildlife will keep our economy strong by attracting high-quality employers and keeping our children in Iowa. | <b>77%</b>  | 34%            | 43%            | 14%               | 6%                |
| More spending on the environment will inevitably lead to more taxes, and Iowans are over-taxed already.  | <b>63%</b>  | 28%            | 35%            | 23%               | 9%                |
| We should <u>not</u> spend more money on the environment when we have more important needs like health care, schools, and public safety.       | <b>54%</b>  | 21%            | 33%            | 28%               | 13%               |
| Iowa already has plenty of open space, and we do <u>not</u> need to spend more money protecting it.  | <b>37%</b>  | 13%            | 24%            | 31%               | 29%               |

These statements (and the other information included in the survey) had only a minimal impact on respondents’ support for the general principle of dedicating additional funding to conservation. At the beginning of the survey, 77 percent said they would support additional public funding for programs to protect Iowa’s land, water, and wildlife. At the end of the survey, the overall proportion supporting such funding fell slightly to 72 percent, with a drop in the proportion saying they would “strongly” support it from 42 percent to 36 percent. Opposition to the idea increased slightly, from 18 percent to 22 percent. This decline could reflect the strength of negative message statements that respondents, but it could also reflect the detailed discussion of funding mechanisms that came earlier. In either case, the results suggest that detailed

discussion of the mechanisms by which additional conservation funding might be attained leads to at least a modest decline in support for such funding. **FIGURE 19** illustrates these results.

**FIGURE 19:**  
**CHANGES IN SUPPORT FOR ADDITIONAL PUBLIC FUNDING FOR PROGRAMS TO PROTECT IOWA’S LAND, WATER, AND WILDLIFE**



## **CONCLUSIONS**

The following are some of the key conclusions that may be drawn from the survey research:

- Widely-shared conservation values provide a good base for working toward sustainable funding for natural resource protection in Iowa. Iowans believe protecting the natural environment is a shared responsibility, and important for the economy.
- Water quality in particular is a unifying concept. Iowans are highly concerned about pollution of lakes, rivers and streams, and place great importance on programs to protect water quality.
- Iowans have a basic willingness to pay for conservation of natural resources. More than two-thirds of residents support dedicating additional public funding to conservation, and most are willing to pay up to \$10 in additional taxes each year for the purpose.
- However, the only specific funding sources that receive majority support involve dedicating revenue from new gaming – either the lottery or new casinos. Most Iowans oppose a bond measure or sales tax increase, even at as low a rate as one-eighth of one cent.
- Iowans also offer broad majority support for the idea of conservation tax credits. Most Iowans support tax credits for property owners who allow non-motorized recreational access to their land, and an even larger proportion back tax credits for owners who set aside land to prevent erosion and protect lakes, streams and wildlife.