



DATE: October 27, 2020

TO: New Jersey League of Conservation Voters

FROM: Ben Lazarus, TargetSmart

RE: Key findings from recent statewide poll

Our recent statewide poll of New Jersey voters on conservation and budgetary topics reveals widespread support for conservation priorities and a deep appreciation for open spaces. New Jerseyans view conservation as a budgetary priority, even during the pandemic.

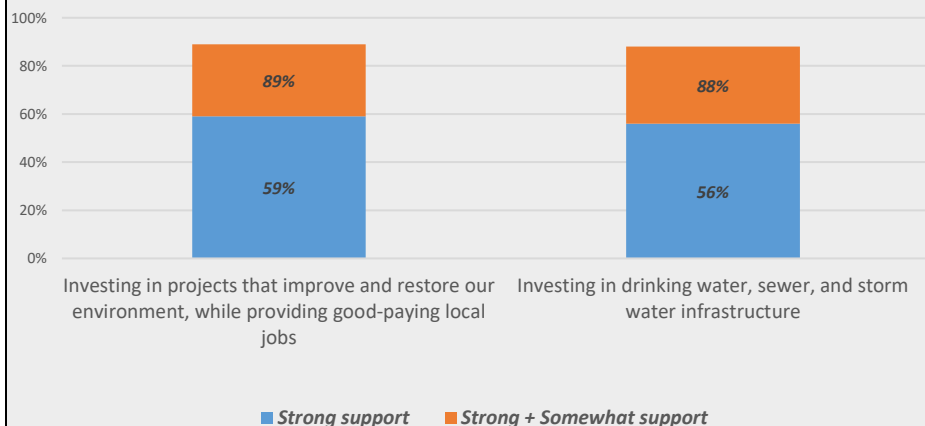
FIGURE 1

Due to the economic crisis the coronavirus pandemic has created, New Jersey is facing a multi-billion-dollar budget shortfall, necessitating state budget cuts. Would you prefer New Jersey state government cut other items in the budget or make large cuts to conservation and environmental protection priorities?

59% other items
13% conservation

First, New Jerseyans reject potential budget cuts to conservation and environmental projects and priorities. When informed the state is facing a multi-billion-dollar shortfall that will necessitate budget cuts, just 13 percent of New Jersey voters report preferring cuts to conservation and environmental protection priorities, and 59 percent say they prefer cuts to other items in the budget (see [FIGURE 1](#)).

Figure 2 - Next, I am going to describe some proposed priorities for state government to invest in as part of the economic recovery from the coronavirus crisis. Please tell me whether you support or oppose New Jersey making that investment...



Moreover, a broad majority of New Jersey voters agree that the state's coronavirus recovery should include investment in projects that improve and restore the environment while providing good-paying local jobs, as well as investments in drinking water, sewer, and storm water infrastructure (see [FIGURE 2](#)).

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, we find that New Jersey voters overwhelmingly (90 percent) say that open spaces, parks, and outdoor recreation are either very important (61 percent) or somewhat important (29 percent) to them (see [FIGURE 3](#)).

FIGURE 4

Do you agree or disagree that due to social distancing guidelines and the closures of some indoor public spaces, the coronavirus pandemic has made open spaces, parks, and outdoor recreation even more important than ever?

61% strongly agree
24% somewhat agree
7% somewhat disagree
3% strongly disagree

Most New Jersey voters

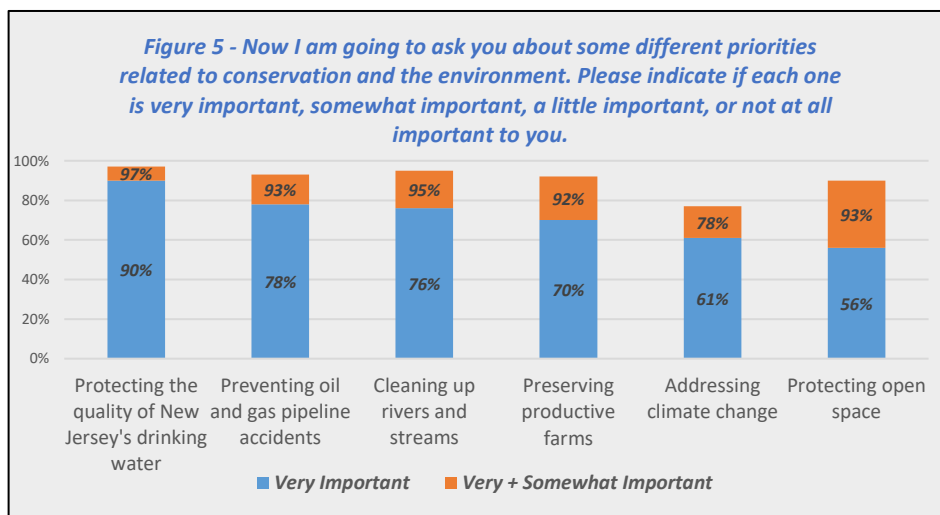
say that the pandemic has increased the value of the outdoors to them: 85% agree that due to social distancing guidelines and the closures of some indoor public spaces, the coronavirus pandemic has made open spaces, parks, and outdoor recreation even more important than ever. A broad majority (61 percent) *strongly* agree, while just 10 percent of voters across the state disagree (see [FIGURE 4](#)).

FIGURE 3

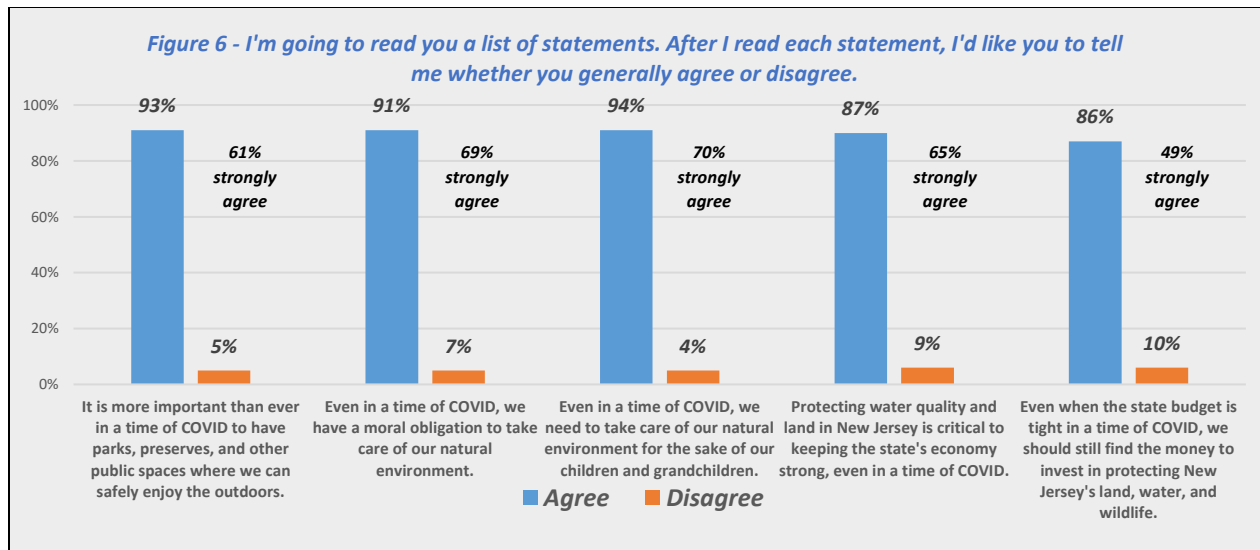
Would you say open spaces, parks, and outdoor recreation are very important, somewhat important, a little important, or not at all important to you?

61% very important
29% somewhat important
6% a little important
3% not at all important

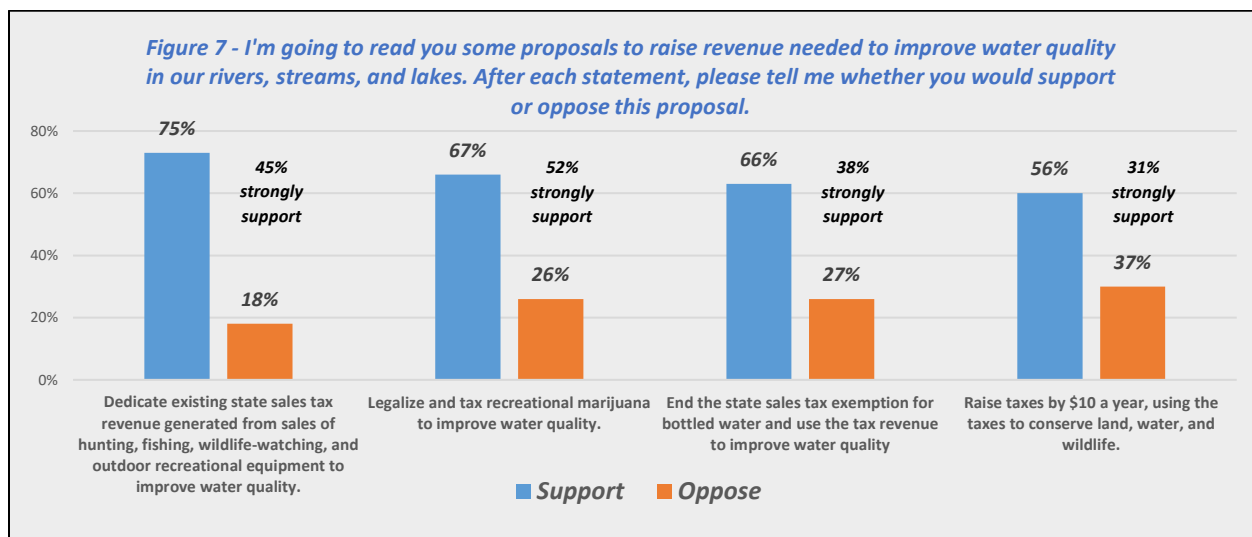
New Jersey voters support several specific conservation and environmental priorities. As shown below (see [FIGURE 5](#)), there is near unanimity behind the importance of protecting the quality of the state's drinking water, preserving productive farms, preventing pipeline accidents, cleaning up rivers and streams, and protecting open space. Despite some partisan polarization around climate change, we find that more than 3-in-4 New Jersey voters (78 percent) indicate that addressing climate change is important to them.



This poll also shows broad public agreement on a number of general perspectives on environmental stewardship among New Jersey voters. Nearly all voters agree that even during the COVID-19 pandemic, we have a moral obligation to take care of our natural environment (91 percent agree) and need to take care of our natural environment for the sake of our children and grandchildren (94 percent agree). Most voters agree that even when the state budget is tight in a time of COVID, we should still find the money to invest in protecting New Jersey's land, water and wildlife (86 percent agree), that protecting water quality and land in New Jersey is critical to keeping the state's economy strong, even in a time of COVID (87 percent agree), and that it is more important than ever in a time of COVID to have parks, preserves, and other public spaces where we can safely enjoy the outdoors (93 percent agree) (see [FIGURE 6](#)). Notably, there is substantial intensity behind these attitudes, as broad majorities report *strongly* agreeing with each statement.



Several revenue solutions for funding water quality and key conservation priorities are generally popular with New Jersey voters. We measure broad majority support for ending the state sales tax exemption for bottled water, dedicating existing state sales tax revenue generated from sales of hunting, fishing, wildlife-watching, and outdoor recreational equipment to improve water quality, legalizing and taxing recreational marijuana to improve water quality; and raising taxes by \$10 a year, using the funds to conserve land, water, and wildlife (see [FIGURE 7](#)).



Survey Methodology

- Survey of likely 2020 general election voters in New Jersey conducted October 1-12, 2020.
- Sample size of 1,040, weighted to effective sample size 600, including statewide representative sample and oversamples of the Delaware River Watershed and targeted swing legislative districts.
- Multi-mode design including live telephone calls to landlines and cell phones and data collected on voter file matched online panels.
- Margin of error of +/- 4.0%. The margin of error for subgroups is larger and varies. Percentage totals may not add up precisely due to rounding.