



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Vermont Wilderness Poll was conducted by the University of Vermont's Center for Rural Studies under contract with the Vermont Wilderness Association. Data were collected in February, 2002. The purpose of the study was to identify residents' attitudes toward uses of public land in Vermont, the focus being upon wilderness. The poll included a statewide sample as well as a sample of residents who live in or near the Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF). Proximity to the GMNF had little impact on responses. Critical findings include:

- 89% of those sampled approved of the public ownership and management of land; less than 7% disapproved.
- 73% of respondents in the statewide sample agreed that "more wilderness areas should be established on the GMNF." (Slightly fewer, 69% of residents in or near the GMNF towns sample, agreed.)
- Almost 82% respondents agreed with the statement, "National Wildlife Refuges and state-owned lands in Vermont should be considered for wilderness designation."
- Other findings: Eight in ten respondents supported an expansion of wilderness land. Responses to a similar question indicated a preference for about 6% more state land into wilderness. Two thirds of respondents favored less vehicular access to the existing forest and support limiting infrastructure. Respondents were given a series of questions to rank on a ten point scale, 10 being highest. Protection of wildlife habitat, watersheds and natural processes ranked very high (9.3), with recreational opportunities (8.5), economic development based on tourism, recreation and enhanced life quality (5.2), opportunities for snowmobiles and ATVs (4) and for traditional development activities such as logging, grazing or mining (3.5) in descending order of support.

The poll was conducted by telephone, calling a statewide sample taken of registered voters randomly selected within participating households. This sample was selected of sufficient size to guarantee a 95% confidence interval and a 5% margin of error (472 completed interviews). A separate sample of registered voters in households in or adjacent to the GMNF towns was also taken, with a 95% confidence interval and a 10% margin of error (112 completed interviews). There were few differences between the results of the statewide and GMNF town samples. Demographic features of these samples approximated that of the general population Vermont accessible by phone in gender. Typical of household surveys in the state, age and educational level of participants was slightly higher than the average.

Related Studies

Responsive Management. 2000. Vermont residents' attitudes toward program priorities and alternative funding mechanisms for the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department. Harrisonburg, Virginia.

Manning, Robert, Minter, Ben, and William Valliere. 1996. Social values, environmental ethics, and national forest management: Study completion report submitted to the North Central Forest Experimentation Station. School of Natural Resources, University of Vermont.



2002 VERMONT WILDERNESS POLL

Summary Table of Answers to Questions 1 - 15

<i>Question</i>		<i>Primary Sample</i>	<i>GMNF Sample</i>	
1	I approve of the public ownership and management of land.	Agree	89.1%	88.1%
		Disagree	6.8%	6.3%
2	More wilderness areas should be established on the Green Mountain National Forest.	Agree	72.7%	68.8%
		Disagree	19.9%	18.8%
3	More areas on the Green Mountain National Forest should be made available for use by snowmobiles and all terrain vehicles.	Agree	27.3%	27.0%
		Disagree	63.1%	64.9%
4	Some existing wilderness areas on the Green Mountain National Forest should be reopened to logging.	Agree	27.3%	25.7%
		Disagree	60.4%	59.6%
5	Areas within the Green Mountain National Forest that are currently without roads should be off limits to future road-building and logging.	Agree	70.2%	69.7%
		Disagree	19.6%	20.2%
6	National Wildlife Refuges and state-owned lands in Vermont should be considered for wilderness designation.	Agree	81.7%	80.6%
		Disagree	12.4%	11.1%
<i>On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 not being important and 10 being extremely important, how important is it for the Green Mountain National Forest:</i>				
7	to provide opportunities for camping, hunting, hiking, and other non-motorized recreational activities.	Mean	8.5	8.1
8	to provide opportunities for riding snowmobiles and all-terrain vehicles.	Mean	3.9	3.7
9	to protect wildlife habitat, watersheds, and natural processes.	Mean	9.3	9.3
10	to provide opportunities for logging, grazing, or mining.	Mean	3.5	3.5
11	to provide for economic development based on tourism, recreation, and enhanced quality of life that attracts new businesses.	Mean	5.2	5.1
12	What percent of land in the state of Vermont do you think SHOULD be in wilderness areas? (currently 1%)	Mean	6.5	7.6
13	I would support the establishment of additional wilderness areas on the Green Mountain National Forest even if it required the removal or re-routing of snowmobile trails.	Agree	65.2%	68.2%
		Disagree	26.8%	26.4%
14	I would support establishment of additional wilderness areas on the Green Mountain National Forest if it required removal or rerouting of only secondary snowmobile trails and did not affect primary corridor trails.	Agree	68.0%	72.0%
		Disagree	23.0%	21.5%
15	I would support establishment of additional wilderness areas if it affected less than 1% of the total mileage of the state snowmobile trail network.	Agree	67.9%	70.9%
		Disagree	22.0%	22.3%