

# **Alaska Statewide Public Opinion Poll**

## **League of Conservation Voters Education Fund**



## INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

This project was conducted in January 2000. Five hundred and one registered voter respondents in Alaska were surveyed. Calling numbers were selected at random from a database of supervoter households, defined as being those households in the State of Alaska containing at least one voter who had voted in at least three of the last four statewide elections. Respondents were further screened to ensure that they are at least very likely to vote in the General Election in November 2000.

A sample size of 501 yields frequency responses that are subject to a maximum margin of error of  $\pm 4.38\%$  at 95% confidence. In other words we can be 95% sure that our results differ from their true population proportions by no more than  $\pm 4.38\%$  on either side.

Surveys were fielded by telephone from our centralized facility in Anchorage. Efforts were made throughout this project to maximize the response rate for the survey. These techniques included repeated callbacks, calling at various times of the day and evening, and on weekdays and weekends.

Collected data has been data entered, verified, checked for accuracy, coded and processed using SPSS, a standard statistical package for survey research. The elements of this report include the questionnaire in its final form, collated with the frequency results for each question, and a crosstabulation section that breaks the sample down into core demographic groups.

Any questions concerning the contents of this report should be directed to the Project Director, Ivan Moore, at 278-4600.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## **Introduction**

The general findings of this survey are as follows:

- Protecting the environment, pursuing clean air and water, and seeking a healthy environment are all important to the great majority of registered voters in Alaska.
- Preserving our quality of life, and ensuring the ability of our children and grandchildren to enjoy wildlife and wilderness in Alaska, are themes that show great support.
- Clean air, clean water, and air and water pollution are the environmental concerns volunteered most often by respondents. This survey shows that Alaskans strongly support clean air and water. Concern for clean air and water ranks competitively with other key issues such as education, health care, crime and drugs, and taxes.
- Viewing and protecting Alaska's wildlife and wilderness is supported widely.
- Regulating noise polluters enjoys popular support. Respondents strongly favor setting aside areas exclusively for non-motorized recreational uses, and also strongly agree that Jet Ski use should be regulated.
- Regulating toxic chemicals and pesticides is supported. Respondents favor requiring pesticide companies to pay a small fee to cover the cost of pesticide regulation. Spills of oil, fuel, hazardous chemicals and toxins are the single largest environmental concern volunteered by respondents.

# RESULTS

## CLEAN AIR AND WATER

This survey shows that Alaskans strongly support clean air and water. Concern for clean air and water ranks competitively with other key issues such as education, health care, crime and drugs, and taxes.

### **Concern for issues:**

Respondents were asked to score a list of ten issues in terms of how concerned they are about each issue. A 0 to 10 scale was used, where a 10 is extremely concerned and a 0 is not at all concerned. We see the following mean ranking for the issues:

Education	7.775
Crime and drugs	7.349
Health care	6.854
<b>Clean air and water</b>	<b>6.799</b>
Taxes	6.789
<b>The environment</b>	<b>6.510</b>
Medicare and Social Security	6.291
Sprawl and overdevelopment	4.848
Global warming	4.077

We see that “Clean air and water,” at a mean just under 6.8, ranks higher than “the environment” at just over 6.5. A highest concern score of 9 or 10 was given to “Clean air and water by 30.5% of respondents, compared to 24.2% for “The environment.”

### **Open-ended responses:**

Respondents were asked what conservation or environmental issues concern them the most. The top five responses were:

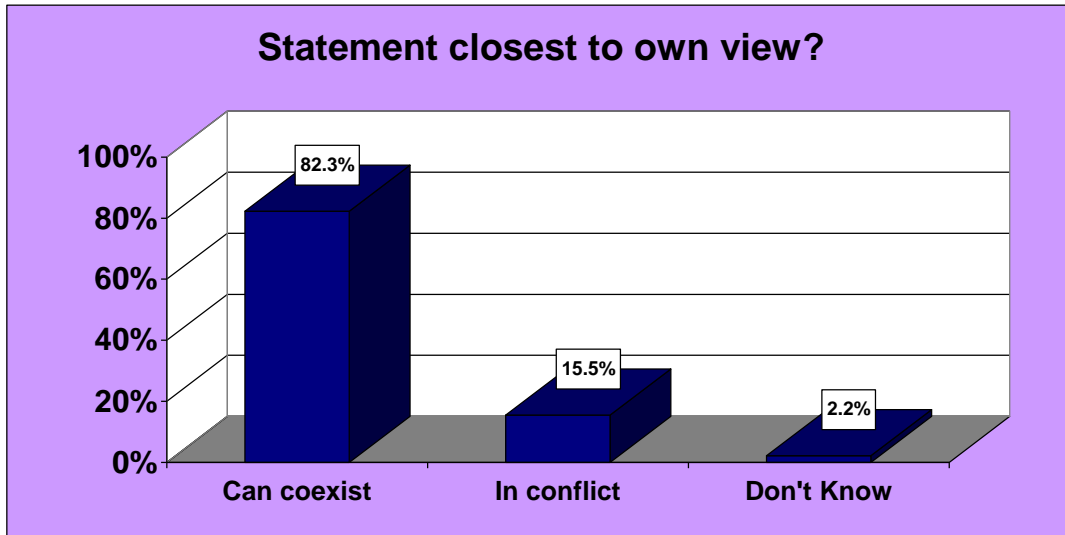
Oil/Fuel/Hazardous chemical/Toxin spills	7.5%
<b>Water quality/pollution</b>	<b>7.3%</b>
Subsistence	6.3%
<b>Air quality/pollution</b>	<b>5.8%</b>
Fishing and hunting/Fish and game	4.4%

We see general support for other issues, including banning discharges from cruise ships and finding alternative sources of energy. Support for these issues shows that keeping Alaska’s air and water clean is a very important concern for Alaska voters.

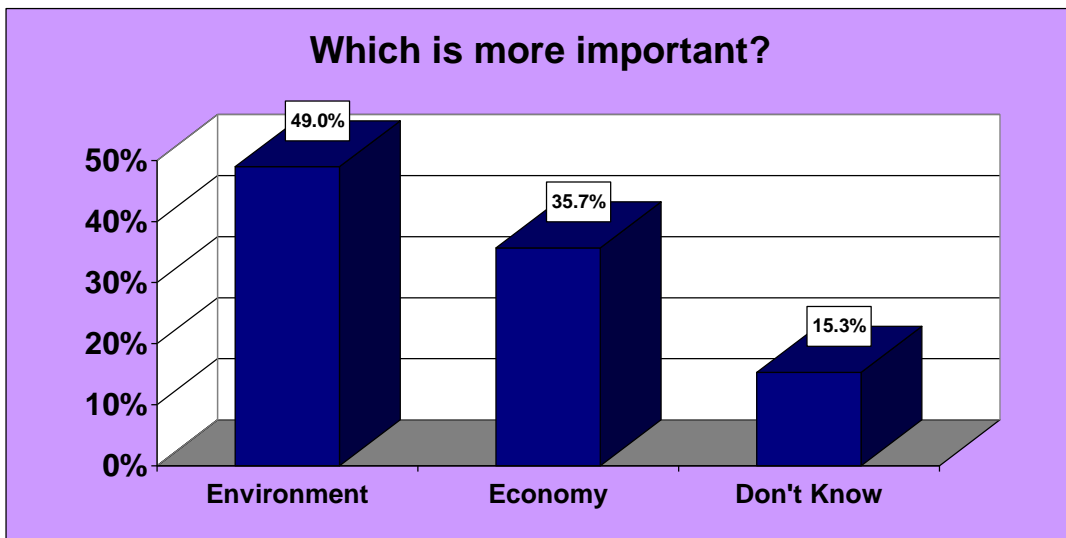
## ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY:

This survey shows that Alaskans are overwhelmingly of the opinion that a clean environment and a strong economy can coexist. Respondents were asked which of the following two statements comes closest to their view.

We can have a clean environment and a strong economy at the same time without having to choose one over the other  
or... Sometimes a clean environment and a strong economy are in conflict and we must choose one over the other



Of the 15.5% who were of the opinion that environment and economy were inevitably in conflict, we asked which was more important.



These results show that over 80% of Alaska registered voters believe that a clean environment and a strong economy are not incompatible, and of those who said we must choose, the majority chose the environment. It is notable to consider that only 5.4% of

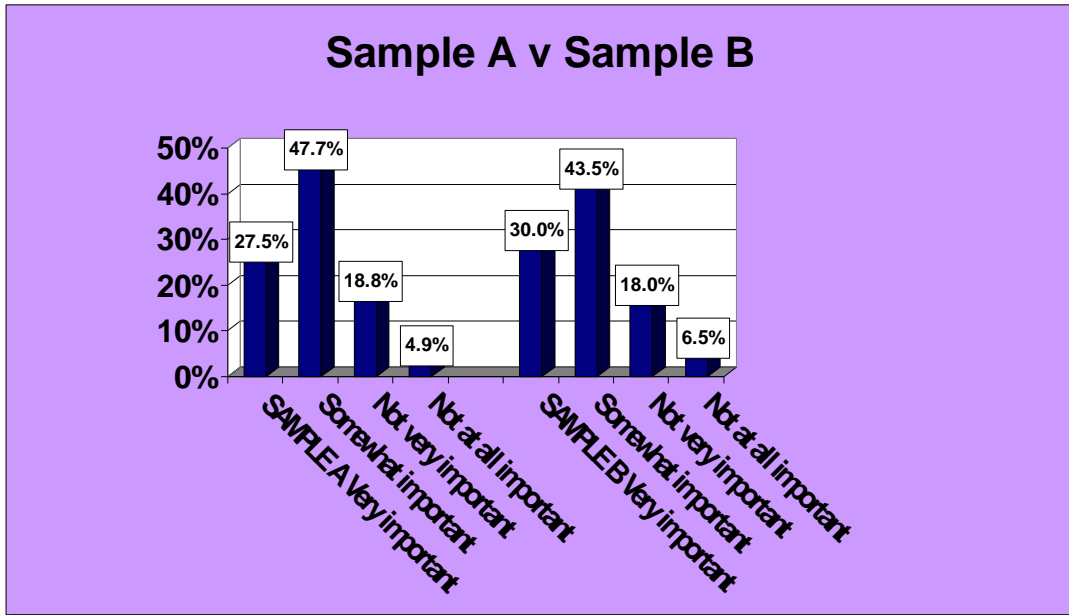
the Alaska voting population, or nearly 1 in 20 individuals, believe that the two are incompatible and that the economy should take precedence over the environment.

## IMPORTANCE OF THE ENVIRONMENT IN VOTING:

In a split sample pair of questions, respondents were asked, in two different ways, how important the environment is when they vote.

Sample A respondents were asked how important conservation or environmental issues were to them when they vote.

Sample B respondents were asked how important issues concerning clean water, clean air and open space were to them when they vote.



The mean scores for these two samples are almost identical, 2.011 for Sample A and 2.010 for Sample B, where a very important is a 1 and a not at all important is a 4, so the overall difference is minimal.

Clean air and water garners slightly more strong responses in the “very important” category.

In both samples, about 75% of respondents said that these issues are either very important or somewhat important to them in deciding how to vote.

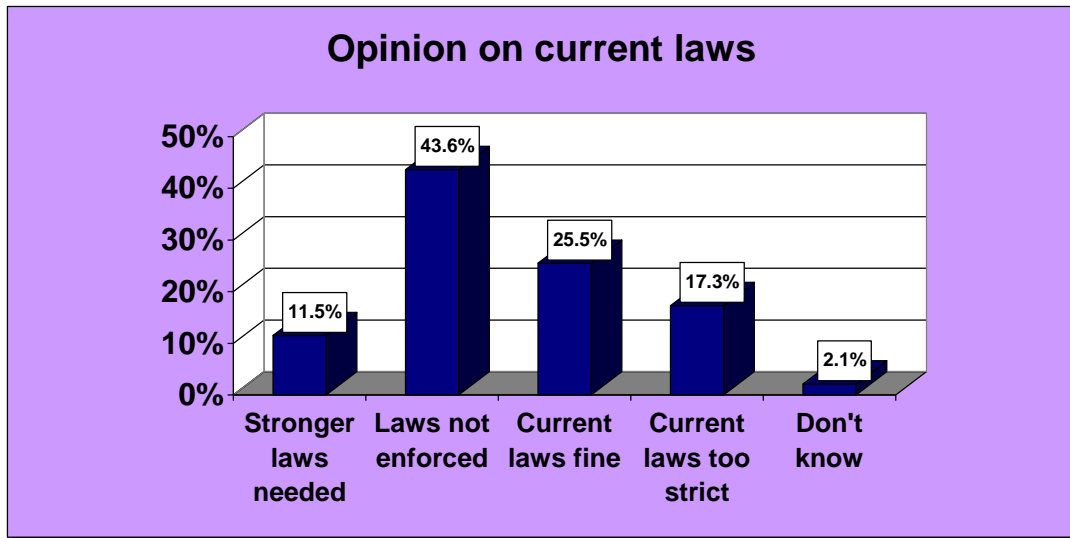
## OPINIONS ON ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS:

How do respondents feel about current environmental laws in the State of Alaska? The following question was asked:

“Now let me read you four statements about the environment and please tell me which comes closest to your own view:

- The laws protecting the environment are not strong enough and stronger laws should be enacted
- The current laws are tough enough but they are not enforced, existing laws should be strictly enforced
- The current laws and enforcement of those laws are fine and should be left alone
- The current laws protecting the environment and enforcement of those laws are too strict and need to be relaxed.”

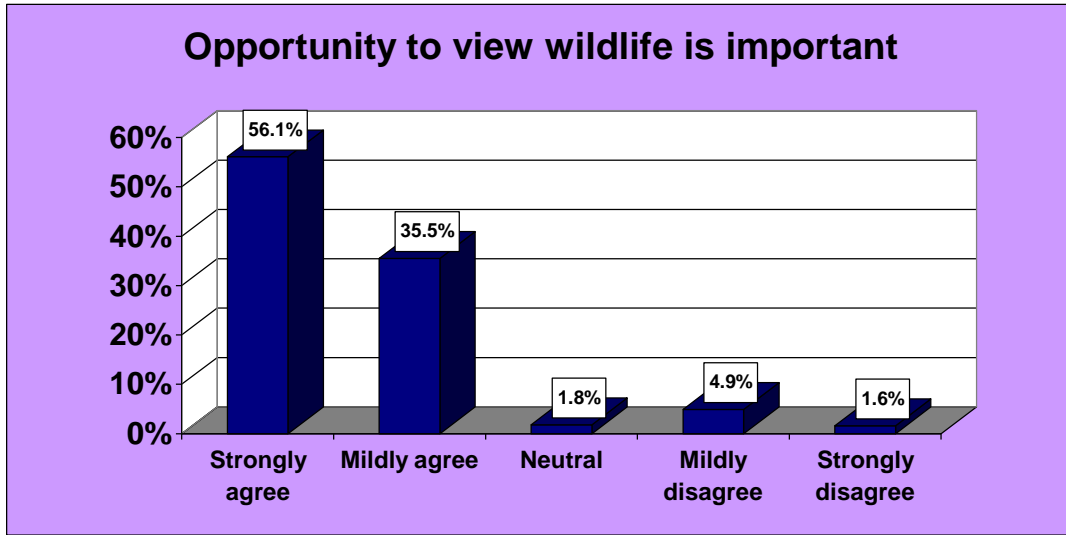
Results were as follows:



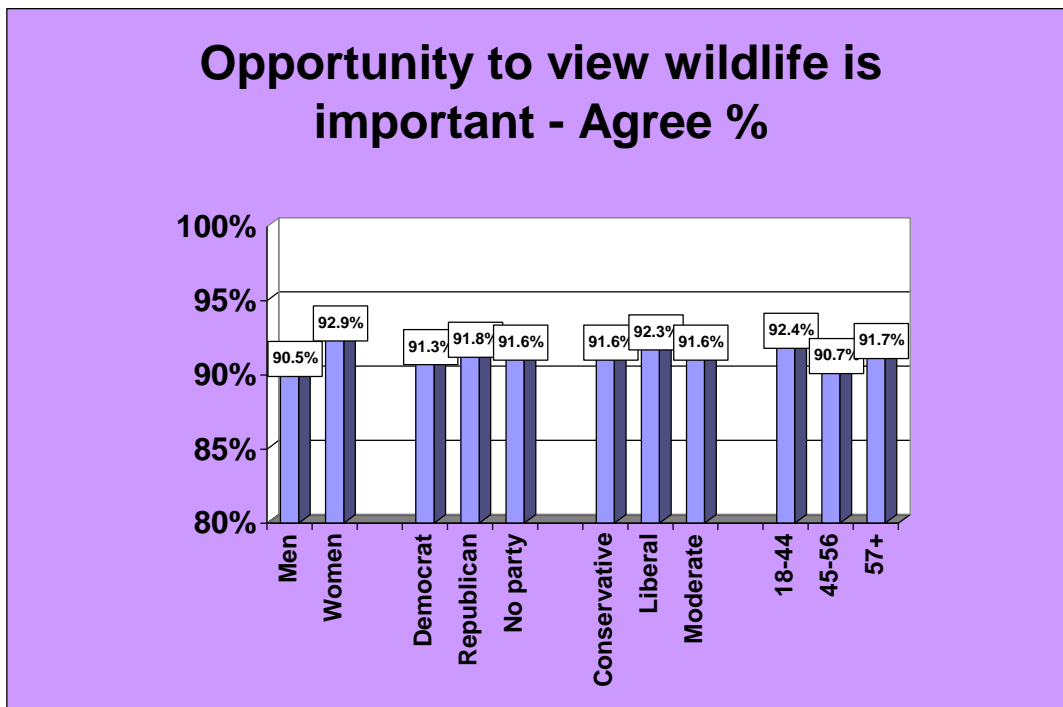
The majority of respondents, 55.1%, feel that there needs to be some improvement with regards environmental laws, either that they need to be stronger, 11.5%, or that they are fine but are not enforced, 43.6%. Only 17.3% of respondents believe that current laws are too strict.

## IS VIEWING WILDLIFE IMPORTANT?:

Respondents were asked whether they strongly agree, mildly agree, mildly disagree or strongly disagree with the statement: “The opportunity to view wildlife is important to visitors and residents in my community.” Results were as follows:

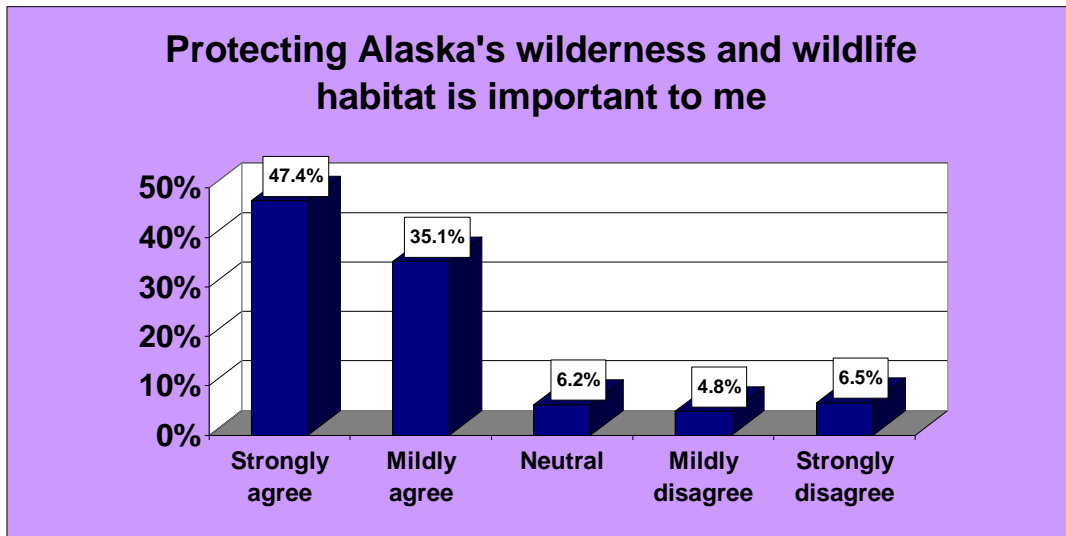


91.6% of respondents agreed with this statement. This level of agreement cuts across all demographic and political boundaries, as follows:



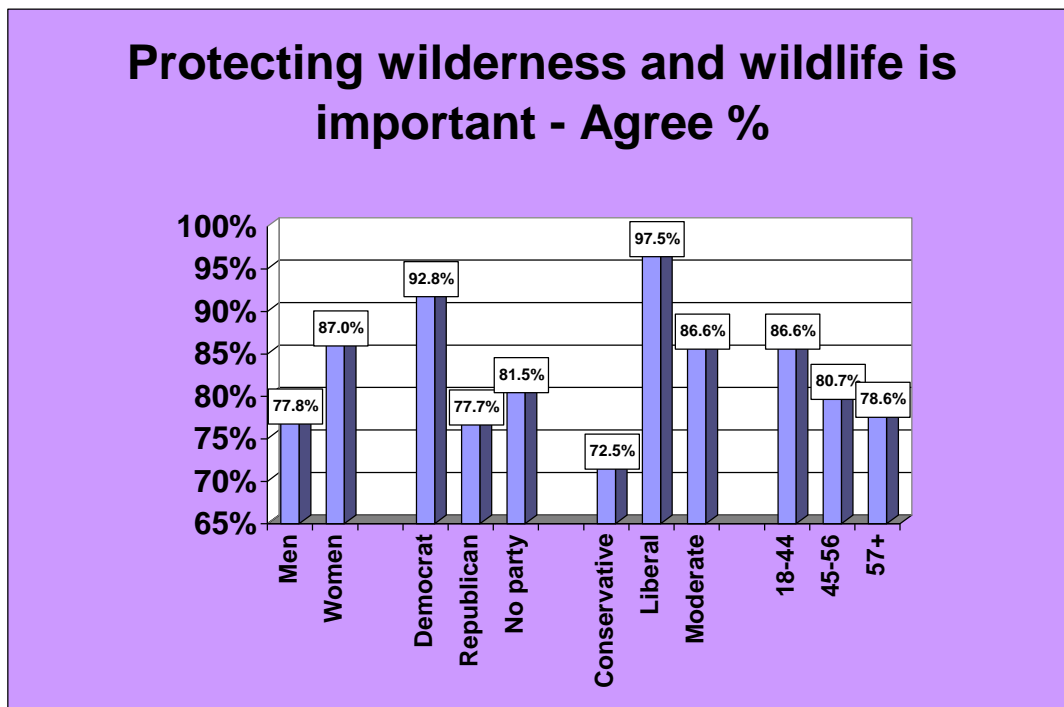
## IS PROTECTING WILDERNESS AND WILDLIFE IMPORTANT?:

Respondents were also asked whether they strongly agree, mildly agree, mildly disagree or strongly disagree with the statement: “Protecting Alaska’s remaining wilderness and wildlife habitat areas is important to me.” Results to this statement were as follows:



A strong majority of respondents -- 82.5% -- agrees that Alaska's remaining wilderness and wildlife habitat areas are important to them.

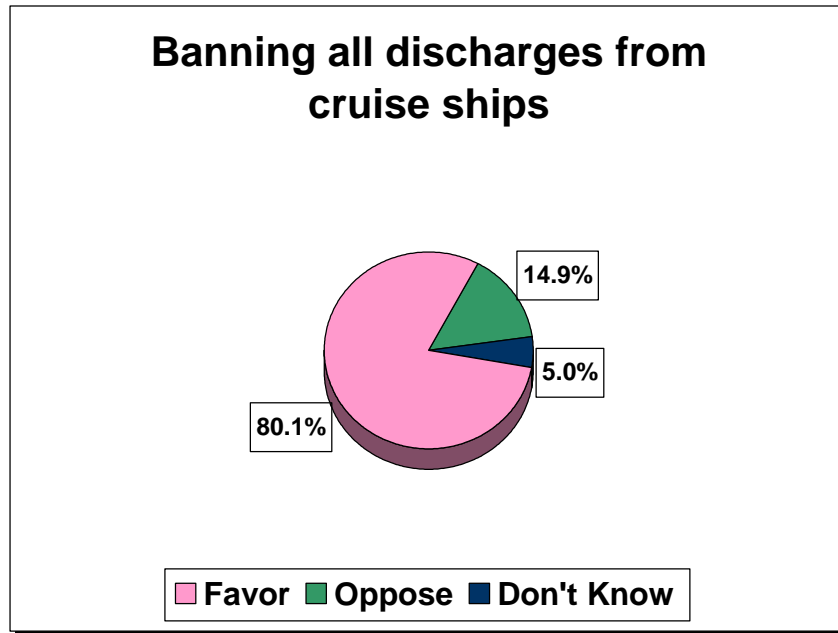
This level of agreement is maintained across all demographic and political indicators:



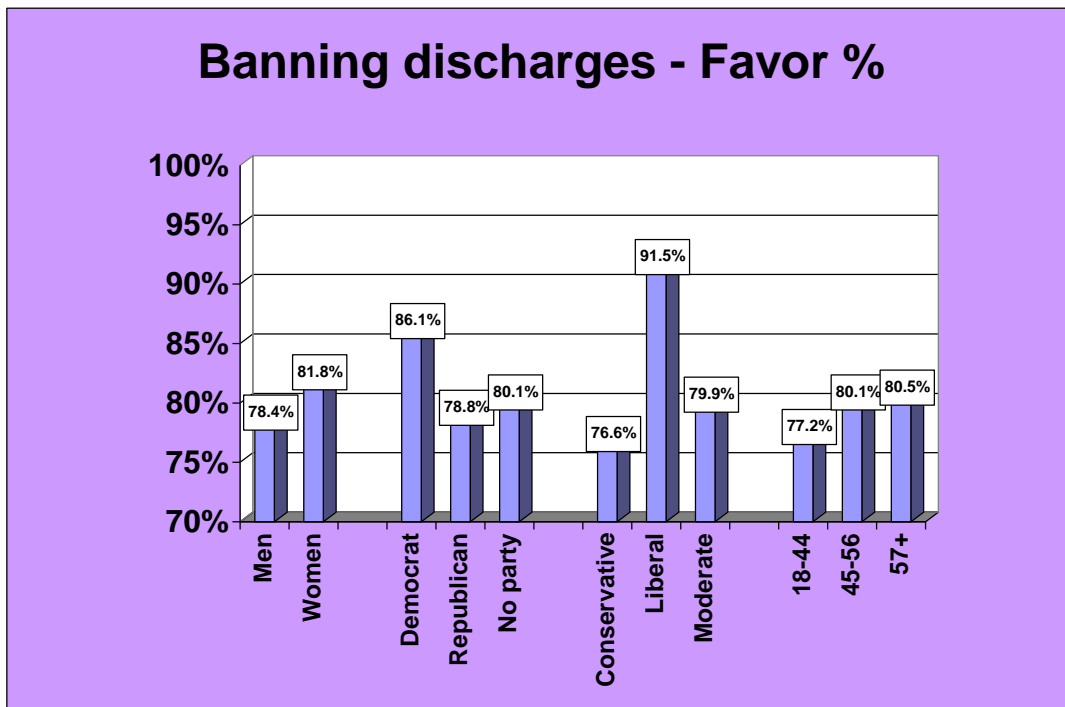
No demographic group is at less than 70% support for this result. There is strong agreement with this statement across the board.

## Cruiseship discharges:

Respondents were asked if they favor or oppose “banning all discharges from cruise ships in Alaska’s coastal waters.”



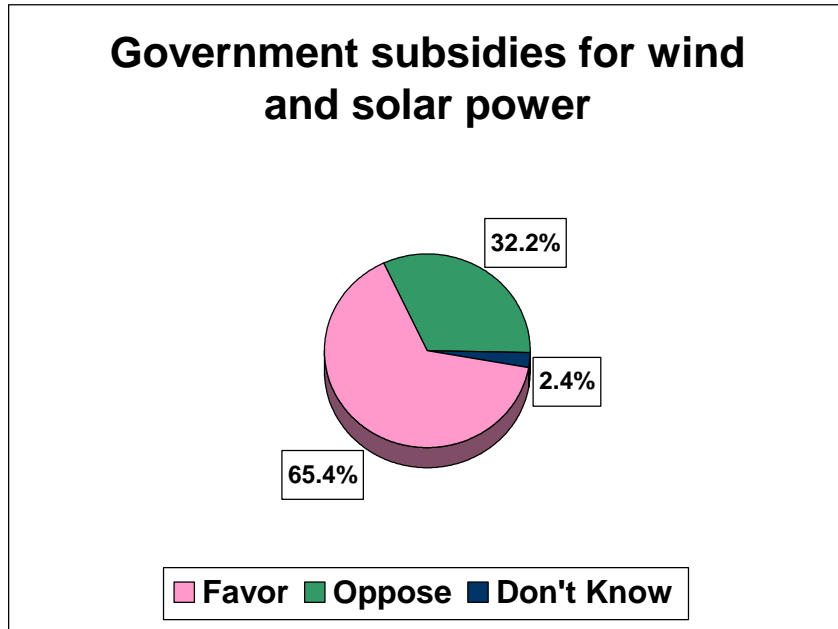
Demographic and political percentage breakdowns for those who favor banning cruise ship discharges:



There is more than 75% support for banning all cruise ship discharges across all political and demographic groups.

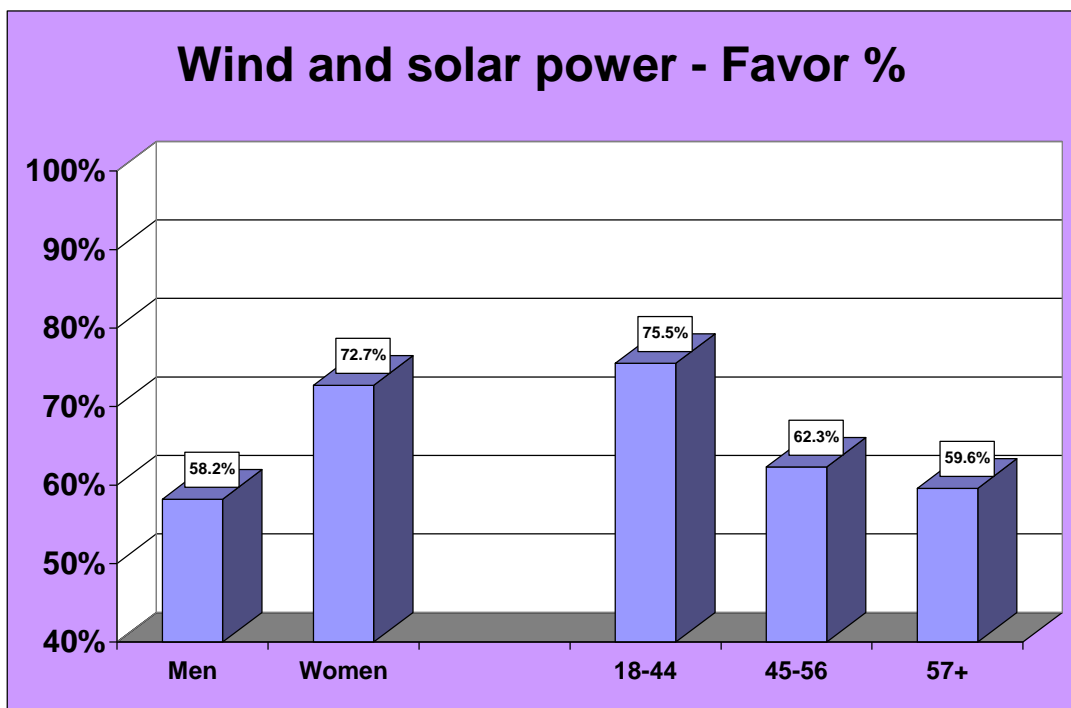
## Wind and solar power:

Respondents were asked if they favor or oppose "government subsidies to encourage the development of renewable energy sources such as wind and solar power." Results were as follows:



There is a 2:1 favor to oppose ratio among respondents in support of government subsidies to develop renewable energy sources.

Among gender and age groups:



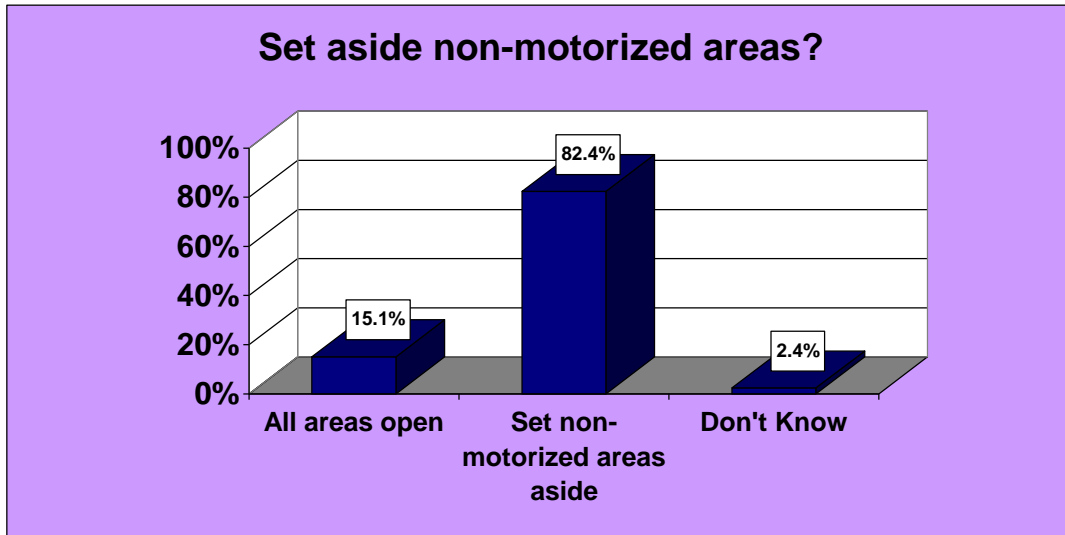
These results display typical demographic and political patterns on environmental issues:

- Support for environmental issues is typically stronger among women than among men
- And usually, support for environmental issues is stronger among younger respondents than among older ones

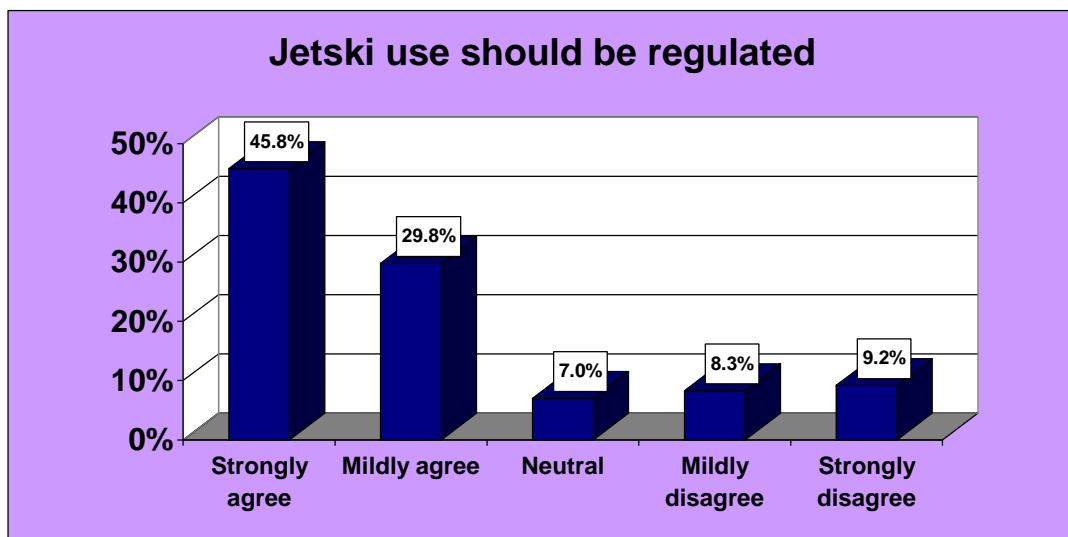
## NOISE POLLUTION:

Two results show very popular support for measures to control noise pollution.

First, respondents were asked the following question: “Should all areas in our state parks be open to motorized uses such as snowmachines and helicopters, or should some areas be set aside for quiet non-motorized sports such as skiing and hiking?”



Second, respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with “Jet-ski use should be regulated on Alaska’s lakes, rivers and ocean bays to minimize noise and impacts on wildlife and other outdoor recreation users.”

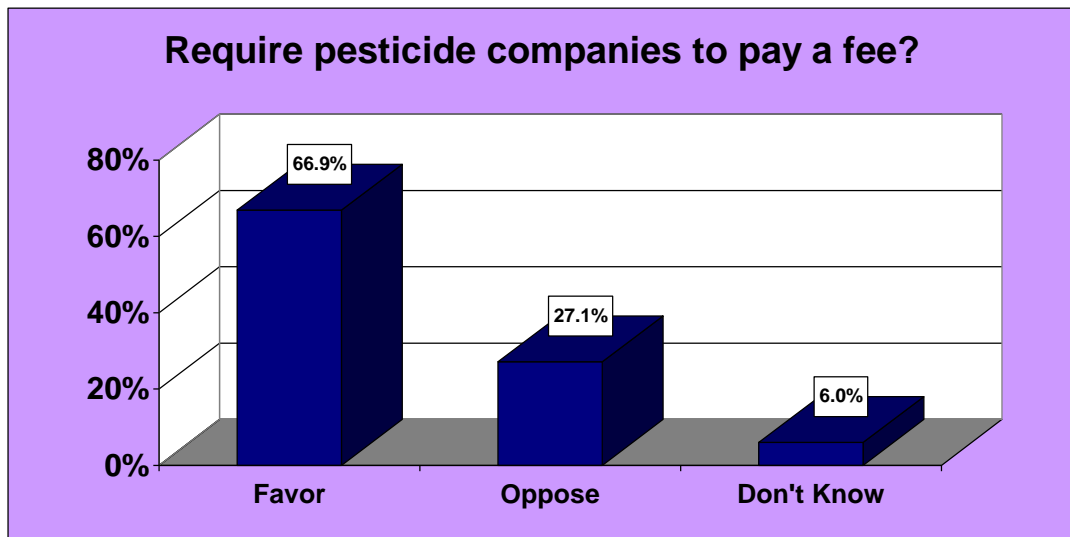


## TOXICS:

Concern about toxic issues is prominent in several results.

First, 7.5% of respondents, in response to the open-ended question about the conservation or environmental issue that concerns them most, responded “Oil/Fuel/Hazardous chemical/Toxin spills,” the largest single response.

Second, the issue of pesticide reporting has solid support. Asked whether they favor or oppose “requiring commercial pesticide companies to pay a small fee to cover the cost of tracking pesticide use in Alaska,” respondents respond as follows:



## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Alaska voters have a great affinity and respect for the environment. A healthy environment and healthy wildlife habitats are core issues in the evaluation of our quality of life.
- Alaskans place great importance on economic issues, but are solidly of the opinion that environment and economy can live together. Alaskans value clean air, clean water, opportunities for quiet recreation, and economic development that is in harmony with the environment.
- Respondents also show a significant leaning towards political candidates that support environmental issues. If these candidates support the platform stated above, “Clean air, clean water, opportunities for quiet recreation, and economic development that is in harmony with the environment,” they can win and win comfortably.