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West River Voters Widely Support More Wilderness in South Dakota

Support Solid Among Sportsmen, Horseback Riders, ORV Riders, Rock Collectors, Democrats, Republicans and Independents

Pierre, SD – Over 70 percent of West River voters support more wilderness designation for South Dakota, according to a new poll by the Republican polling firm Moore Information. The survey found solid support among all political parties and across all age groups. When asked specifically about the proposal to designate parts of the Buffalo Gap National Grassland as wilderness, nearly six in ten voters expressed support for wilderness protection there.

“West River voters across the board clearly favor more wilderness in South Dakota,” said Bob Moore, who conducted the survey. “And the majority of these voters favor giving some areas of the Buffalo Gap National Grassland this ‘gold standard’ of protection. It is significant that this support can be found among a wide range of diverse interests, including hunters, rock collectors and off-road vehicle users.”

The poll found that wilderness designation on parts of the Buffalo Gap National Grassland is favored by nearly two-to-one, and is supported by 66 percent of rock collectors, 63 percent of horseback riders, 60 percent of hunters, 58 percent of snowmobilers, and 52 percent of off-road vehicle users. Support for wilderness protection in this area, which was recently proposed by Senator Tim Johnson, is backed by 61 percent of voters in Pennington County, versus 34 percent who oppose, and the majority of voters in Custer County (53 percent, versus 39 percent who oppose).

“Senator Johnson’s proposal to protect the first-ever national grasslands wilderness is a common sense conservation idea that protects the landscape and ranchers’ existing rights to graze,” said Chris Hesla of the South Dakota Wildlife Federation, which commissioned the poll. “It will ensure that generations of South Dakotans to come will be able to experience the land for hunting, hiking and camping that our ancestors did. This poll shows that there is much local support behind this initiative and that this is the right thing to do for our state.”

The survey of over 600 voters in the West River region of South Dakota was conducted January 8-10, 2010.

For further information on this survey, contact Bob Moore of Moore Information at (503) 221-3100.

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