

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Hart Research Associates
DATE: April 10, 2012
RE: Clean Water Protections Research Summary

From March 21 to 27, 2012, Hart Research Associates conducted a survey among a representative sample of 501 likely general election voters each in Colorado and Ohio. The survey was designed to assess voters' views on clean water protections. This memorandum summarizes the key findings.

1. There is extensive support in Colorado and Ohio for restoring clean water protections. Not only is this support more intense than the opposition, it is broadly shared across party lines.

- Three-quarters (75%) of all voters in Ohio and nearly seven in 10 (67%) voters in Colorado initially favor a proposal to restore clean water protections to many wetlands across the country, including smaller creeks, streams, and wetlands. When given a full description of the proposal, Ohioans' support increases to 83% favor (with only 11% opposed) and Coloradoans' support increases to 80% favor (with only 14% opposed). Support is strong, with 47% of Ohio voters and 42% of Colorado voters *strongly* favoring the proposal to expand clean water protections.
- Support is strong regardless of political affiliation. Democrats in Ohio and Colorado nearly unanimously (93% in Ohio and 94% in Colorado) favor the proposal, and roughly four in five independents in Ohio and Colorado (82% and 81%, respectively) support the proposal. Republican support is lower but still commands an overwhelming majority, with 70% of Republicans in Ohio and two-thirds (66%) of Republicans in Colorado supporting the proposal.

2. Supporting clean water protections is a clear political plus for both Congress and the President.

- Respondents were asked the following question: "If your Member of Congress supported this proposal to restore clean water protections to many smaller creeks, streams, and wetlands, how would it affect your feelings toward him/her?" Two-thirds (66%) of Ohioans say they would feel *more* favorable toward their Member of Congress and only 22% would feel *less* favorable (a net 44-point favorable margin). Coloradoans feel similar, with 66% of voters saying they would feel more favorable and 28% saying they would feel less favorable (a net 38-point favorable margin).
- 61% of independents in Ohio and 66% in Colorado would feel more favorable toward their Member of Congress if they supported this proposal to restore clean water protections (a net 38-point favorability in Ohio and 41-point favorability in Colorado). Roughly nine in 10 Democrats in each state would

feel more favorable toward their Member after learning they supported the proposal and two in five Republicans feel the same way.

- President Obama also receives substantial credit for his support of clean water protections, with 60% of Ohio voters and 58% of Colorado voters saying they would feel more favorable toward the President after learning that he supports the proposal, while 29% of Ohio voters and 34% of Colorado voters say they would feel less favorable. It should be noted that Republican voters make up the majority of those who say they would feel less favorable toward the President after learning that he supports the proposal.
- In particular, independents especially are favorable toward President Obama after learning that he supports the proposal to restore clean water protections to many waterways across the country. Ohio independents are net 17 points and Colorado independents are net 13 points more favorable toward the President after hearing of his support for the proposal.
- Key swing groups, including seniors, suburban women, and non-college-educated whites all feel more favorable toward the President by substantial margins.

3. Messages in support of the proposal to restore clean water protections are much stronger than opposition messages.

- Opposition messages against the CWA proposal have comparatively little traction with the public. Only about one in four voters in either state says that messages related to expansion of government powers or violation of homeowners' private property rights make them much less likely to support the proposal.
- By comparison, supporters' messages are much stronger overall. Protecting the safety of drinking water garners strong support in both states, with 48% of voters saying they would be *much* more likely to support the proposal: "Right now, the streams that provide drinking water for more than 117 million Americans are NOT adequately covered under the Clean Water Act. This proposal would help ensure that our drinking water is clean and safe."
- Other messages—focusing on protection of major waterways, economic benefits, quality-of-life issues, and flood prevention—also perform very well, with 35% to 41% of voters saying they would be much more likely to support the proposal.

4. After hearing both sides of the argument, support drops slightly but remains high.

- After voters are read messages in opposition and support of the proposal, seven in 10 voters in both Ohio and Colorado still show strong support in favor of the clean water proposal, resulting in a 13-point drop in support in Ohio and an 11-point drop in Colorado. The largest drop in support was among Republicans, and independents still favor the proposal by three to one in Colorado and by two to one in Ohio, as do more than 90% of Democrats.