

Memorandum
To: Earthjustice
From: Christine Matthews, President
Date: January, 2007
Subject: Survey Results – attitudes of rural voters in Three Congressional Districts

Bellwether Research & Consulting conducted a total of 900 interviews among rural voters in three congressional districts: Illinois' 15th CD, Ohio's 18th CD, and Tennessee's 4th CD. Each of these districts has a substantial rural population.¹ A total of 300 randomly selected interviews were conducted in each district in mid-December and each survey has a $\pm 5.6\%$ margin of error.

The survey results were remarkably consistent between the districts. Rural voters indicate they worry a great deal about water pollution and don't believe the government has done enough to protect water quality and the environment.

These voters overwhelmingly favor having the Clean Water Act apply to all bodies of water and strongly support a candidate who would vote for this legislation. These rural voters reject the notion that applying the Clean Water Act to isolated wetlands or other non-navigable waterways would be onerous for property owners, businesses, or developers.

Depending on the district, between one-fifth and one-fourth of those interviewed own or work on a farm. The notion that farmers might view environmental regulations as excessive was absolutely not in evidence here. Half of the rural voters interviewed are also anglers – many of whom say they consume the fish they catch. As could be expected, they are even more concerned than voters overall about pollution in the lakes, rivers, and streams in which they are likely to fish.

- The majority (55%) of rural voters *in each district* agreed that **“government has not gone far enough with laws to protect the environment and keep our water free from pollution.”** Just over one-quarter thought environmental regulations had gone too far and had hurt businesses and landowners.

Farmers were as likely as their non-farming neighbors to agree with this statement.

Anglers were, overall, more likely than average to agree that government has not done enough to protect the environment and water from pollution.

¹ Rural voters in each congressional district were randomly selected from a universe of households defined as “rural” based on the Census Tract of that address. Census Tracts with a plurality of households defined as rural (as opposed to suburban or urban) were included in the sample universe. According to the 2008 Almanac of American Politics, 36% of the population in Illinois' 15th Congressional District is rural, 57% of the population in Ohio's 18th Congressional District is rural, and 68% of the population in Tennessee's 4th Congressional District is rural.

- Two-thirds of rural voters are **very concerned about pollution of drinking water**, and over a third say they, themselves, have concerns about drinking water straight from their tap.

Younger voters express more concern about their tap water than those over the age of 50.

- Over half of rural voters say they are **very concerned about pollution of lakes, rivers, and streams**.

- One in three is very concerned about protecting wetlands – a lower level of intensity than for the other measures, but still significant.

- **By more than a two-to-one margin, rural voters in these districts support Clean Water Act protection for all bodies of water.**

59%* (Some/other) people say that the original intent of the Clean Water Act was to protect all bodies of water from pollution, not just those defined as navigable, and that all streams, wetlands, waterways, and bodies of water should be protected from pollution that could contaminate drinking water, foul waters and wildlife habitat, and make rivers, lakes and streams unusable for fishing or swimming.

26%* (Other/some) people say that the Clean Water Act should not be expanded to apply to all bodies of water, such as isolated wetlands or other waterways not defined as “navigable” because it would amount to over-regulation by the federal government on private property owners, businesses or developers.

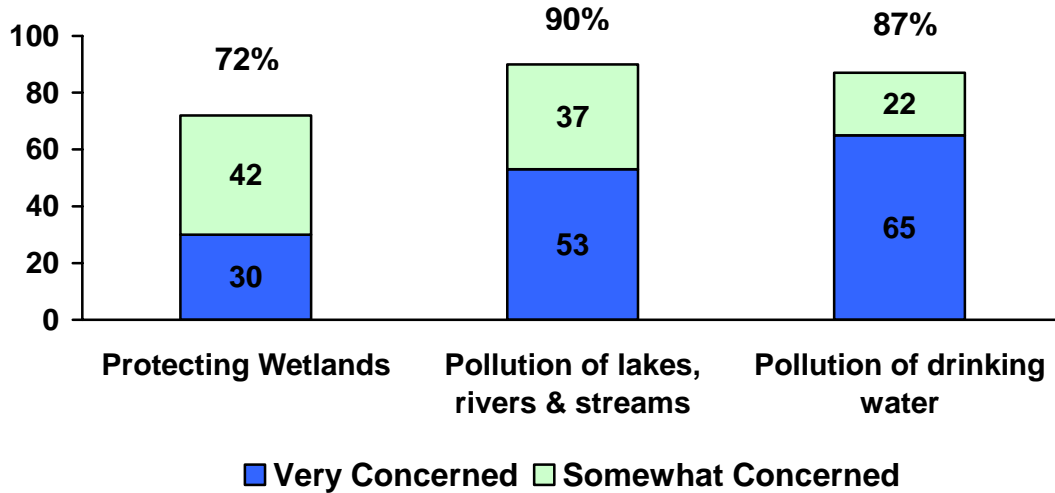
*[Averaged result: IL 15 (59%-26%); OH 18 (59%-28%); TN 4 (61%-24%)]

- Rural voters overwhelmingly say they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who voted to have the Clean Water Act protect all bodies of water from pollution.*

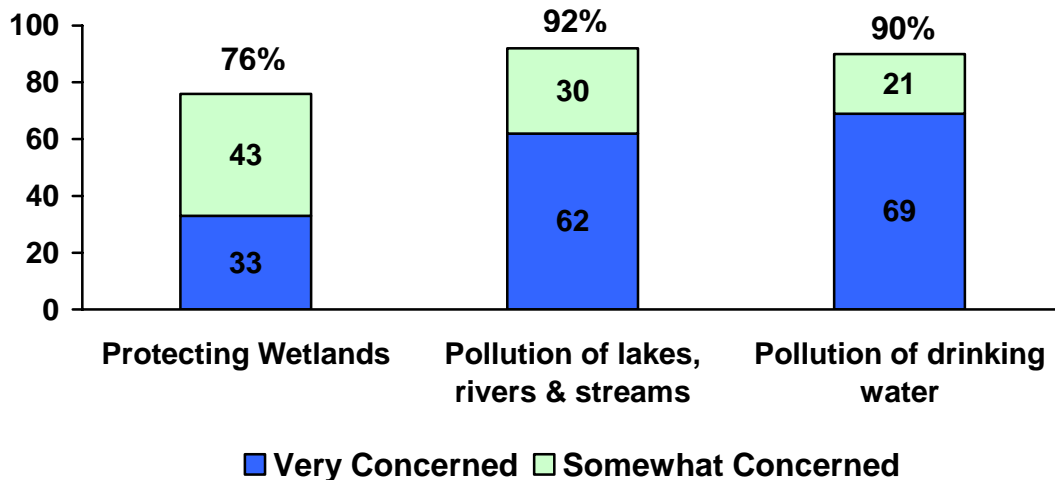
*[IL 15 (64% more likely, 35% much more); OH 18 (67% more likely, 41% much more ; TN 4 (73% more likely, 46% much more).

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In Ohio’s 18th Congressional District, rural voters express a great deal of concern about protecting the quality of their drinking water, and lakes, rivers, and streams from pollution. Many of these voters have personal reasons for their concern. Nearly half (46%) say they fish, and many of them consume the fish they eat. One-third say they are concerned about drinking water straight from their tap.

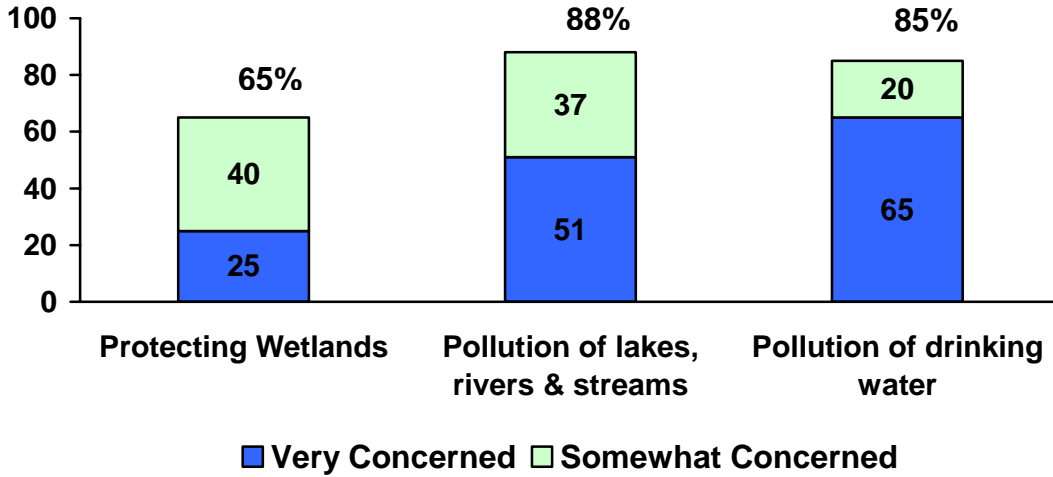


In Tennessee’s 4th Congressional District – the fourth most rural in the nation – voters are extremely concerned about protecting the quality of their drinking water and the lakes, rivers, and streams around them. More than half say they fish in these waters, and the vast majority of these anglers consume the fish they eat. Fully 39% say they are concerned about drinking water straight from their tap. Their views on protecting water from pollution are as pragmatic as they are philosophical.



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In Illinois' 15th Congressional District, rural voters express a great deal of concern about protecting the quality of their drinking water, and lakes, rivers, and streams from pollution. Nearly half (48%) say they fish, and many of them consume the fish they eat. Fully 37% say they are concerned about drinking water straight from their tap.



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