



# DECISION RESEARCH

CALIFORNIA ■ WASHINGTON D.C.

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Interested Parties

**From:** Bob Meadow  
Mark Mehringer

**Date:** April 16, 2004

**Subject:** Endangered Species Act Polling Results

We have completed our research and we wanted to provide you with a brief statement of our key findings and their implications. These findings are based on 1006 completed interviews with a random sample of registered voters nationwide. Interviews were conducted February 12-18, 2004. Sampling error is +/- 3.1%.

### **Summary Conclusions:**

There is broad and enduring support for the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Voters will clearly not support significant changes to the Act, as they support its purpose and believe that it has been a success. Despite believing that, in general, government and government regulation are too intrusive, voters support expanded efforts to promote species protections. They believe it is better to err on the side of caution and recognize that the ESA provides a safety net for wildlife, plants, and fish that are on the brink of extinction. Voters further believe strongly that extinction is forever and people must preserve species for future generations.

### **Key Survey Findings:**

- Nearly all voters (90%) recognize as important that the Endangered Species Act provides a safety net for wildlife, plants, and fish that are on the brink of extinction.
- Understanding the importance of habitat protection, fully 95% of voters agree that one of the most effective ways to protect species is to protect the places they live.
- Most voters are aware of the ESA, and fully 86% of voters nationwide support the Endangered Species Act. Even as 69% of voters agree that government is too intrusive in their daily lives, concerns about species protections trump this anti-government view.
- Fully 90% of voters are responsive to the view that they owe it to their children and grandchildren both to be good stewards of the environment and to avoid causing species to go extinct, as people must leave behind a legacy of protecting species and the special places they call home so that future generations, too, can see animals in the wild.

- Voters view species protection as so important that they are nearly unanimous in their agreement that when the science is uncertain, it is better to err on the side of caution, because once a species goes extinct, it is gone forever. They are also very moved by the view that people have a duty to prevent the extinction of species because once they are gone, we cannot bring them back.
- Specifically, voters express broad support for providing financial incentives to private property owners who conserve habitat for endangered or threatened species.

**Conclusion:**

While voters believe that the federal government and government regulation are too intrusive in daily life, rather than supporting a roll back in the Endangered Species Act they favor expending additional resources on species and critical habitat protections. They believe strongly that allowing species to go extinct is simply not acceptable, and we owe it to our children and grandchildren to be good stewards of the environment and to avoid causing species to go extinct, so that they too can see animals in the wild. **Any perception that there is a ground swell of support for weakening the Endangered Species Act is clearly a misperception. Voters are strongly supportive of species protections in general and the ESA specifically, including and especially with regard to protecting critical habitat.**

**POSITION ON THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT**

