



**To:** Interested Parties  
**From:** RBI Strategies & Research  
**Re:** Summary of Findings

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## *Introduction*

RBI Strategies and Research conducted a survey in Colorado’s Second Congressional District on behalf of the Wilderness Workshop to gauge the following: 1) Levels of importance voters associate with keeping currently undeveloped public lands and rivers in Colorado in their natural state, 2) Levels of support for designating additional public lands as wilderness areas, and 3) Levels of support for the wilderness proposal known as the Hidden Gems proposal. An oversample was conducted of voters in Summit and Eagle counties in order to more accurately measure attitudes of those closest to the areas affected by the Hidden Gems proposal.

## *Summary of Findings*

**By a wide margin, voters indicate that they place high importance on preserving undeveloped public lands in Colorado.** In addition to a large majority indicating it was important to them that “public officials ensure that some of the remaining undeveloped public lands and rivers in Colorado be kept in their natural state,” voters demonstrated a high level of intensity in their opinion. Using a ten-point scale of importance, nearly three-quarters of voters gave a rating of 8 or higher with a mean score of 8.4. Voters in the Summit and Eagle county oversample also showed a high level of intensity in their opinion with a mean score of 8.1.

“On a different topic, using a ten point scale with ten being ‘very important’ and one being ‘not important at all,’ please tell me how important it is to you that public officials ensure that some of the remaining undeveloped public lands and rivers in Colorado be kept in their natural state?”

	MEAN	1 to 7	8 to 10	DK
BASE	8.4	25%	73%	2%
OVER	8.1	28%	69%	2%

- A majority of both partisan and unaffiliated voters gave a rating of 8 or higher.
- With large sections of the voters in Adams (75%), Boulder (74%) and Jefferson (81%) counties giving ratings of 8 or higher on the ten-point scale of importance, these counties placed the highest importance on preserving undeveloped land.

**When given more information about the details of wilderness designation, more than seven in ten voters say they would approve designating more public lands as wilderness.** Voters again showed a high level of intensity in this opinion with fully half of the electorate saying they would *strongly support* protecting additional public lands with a wilderness designation. District-wide, only 21 percent said they would oppose protecting more lands as wilderness while in Eagle and Summit counties, voters would support it by a margin of greater than 2:1.

“Now I would like to read you some background information on an issue. Roughly one-third of Colorado is federal public lands, managed by the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. Some of that public land is designated as wilderness areas, offering hiking, fishing, camping, livestock grazing, horseback riding, and hunting opportunities. However, some activities are not allowed in wilderness areas, such as mining, commercial logging, and oil and gas drilling, mountain biking, and motorized recreational uses such as jeeps, snowmobiles and dirt bikes. Given what you know or have heard, do you favor or oppose protecting some additional public lands as wilderness in Colorado?”

	<u>BASE</u>	<u>OVER</u>	
Strong favor	50%	46%	<b><u>TOTAL FAVOR: 72%   66%</u></b>
Somewhat favor	20	19	
Lean favor	2	1	
Lean oppose	1	1	<b><u>TOTAL OPPOSE: 21%   28%</u></b>
Somewhat oppose	11	9	
Strong oppose	9	18	
Undecided (VOL.)	4	5	
DK/NA/REFUSED	1	1	

**After hearing about the Hidden Gems proposal, nearly two-thirds say they would support.** A plurality of 41% said they would *strongly support* the proposal while only 11 percent said they would *strongly oppose*. Majorities of both registered Democrats (81%) and Unaffiliateds (63%) said they would support the proposal with Republicans split in their support and opposition. Support is higher among under-45 voters but remains at 60% or higher in all age groups. In Eagle and Summit counties, the counties most affected by the proposal, support is nearly 2:1 in favor of the proposal with a plurality saying they would *strongly favor*.

“As you may know, there has been a proposal, known as the Hidden Gems proposal, to designate wilderness areas in the White River National Forest including such areas as Castle Peak, Hoosier Ridge and Red Table Mountain. This proposal would allow for hiking, hunting, livestock grazing, fishing, horse-packing, and camping to continue in these areas, but it would prohibit mining, commercial logging, oil and gas drilling, new roads, mountain biking and motorized recreational uses such as jeeps, snowmobiles and dirt bikes. Given what you know or have heard, would you favor or oppose the Hidden Gems proposal?”

	<u>BASE</u>	<u>OVER</u>	
Strong favor	41%	34%	<b><u>TOTAL FAVOR: 65%   58%</u></b>
Somewhat favor	21	23	
Lean favor	3	1	
Lean oppose	1	1	<b><u>TOTAL OPPOSE: 24%   30%</u></b>
Somewhat oppose	12	8	
Strong oppose	11	21	
Undecided (VOL.)	8	9	
DK/NA/REFUSED	3	2	

- A plurality or majority of those who participate in hunting (48%), mountain biking (63%), fishing (62%) or off-roading (51%) support the Hidden Gems proposal. Snowmobilers were the only group where more opposed (48%) than supported (40%) the proposal.

## **Conclusions**

Colorado's 2nd Congressional District places a high priority on preserving the current state of undeveloped public lands. This was demonstrated separately on both a personal importance scale and an informed ballot question regarding assigning wilderness status to additional public lands. In both instances, support was high across political party, geography and age groups with even Republicans showing majority support. Further, voters indicated a high level of intensity in their support for protecting additional public lands. Voters gave a mean score of 8.4 on a 10-point personal importance scale and fully half of voters say they would "strongly" support protecting additional public lands.

The Hidden Gems proposal currently enjoys better than 2:1 support and the wide plurality say they would "strongly" support such a proposal. Less than a quarter oppose the proposal with very low levels of intensity in their opposition. With the electorate placing such a high importance on keeping undeveloped land in its natural state, it's not surprising that voters support the proposal by such a wide margin.

Over 60% of Democrats and Unaffiliateds favor the proposal and voters in Jefferson and Boulder counties favor it by better than a 3:1 margin. In Eagle and Summit counties, the areas which will be most affected by the proposal, support is also high with very low intensity of opposition.

## **Methodology**

RBI Strategies & Research conducted a telephone survey of 650 voters in Colorado's Second Congressional District who are likely to participate in the 2010 General Election. 500 interviews were conducted among a statistically valid random sample of likely voters in the district at-large. An additional 150 oversample interviews were conducted among a statistically valid random sample of likely voters in Summit and Eagle counties to increase the statistical validity of the data within that sub-sample. The margin of error for the district at-large and the oversample are  $\pm 4.4\%$  and  $\pm 6.6\%$  respectively at the 95% confidence level. Survey interviews were conducted from March 2 – March 4, 2010 by professional telemarketers using a statistically valid random sample drawn from a current list of registered voters.