



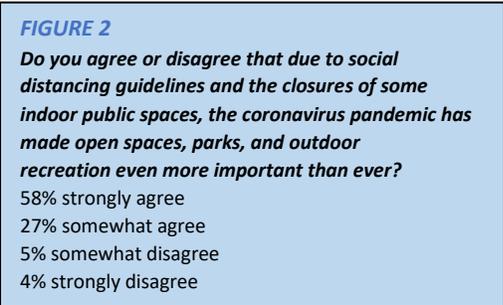
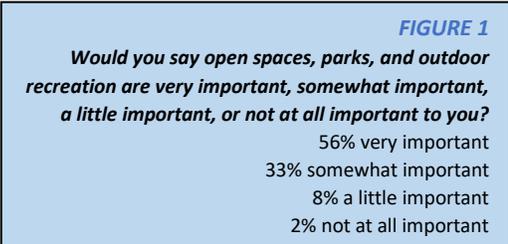
DATE: October 9, 2020

TO: Conservation Voters of Pennsylvania and Growing Greener Coalition

FROM: Ben Lazarus, TargetSmart

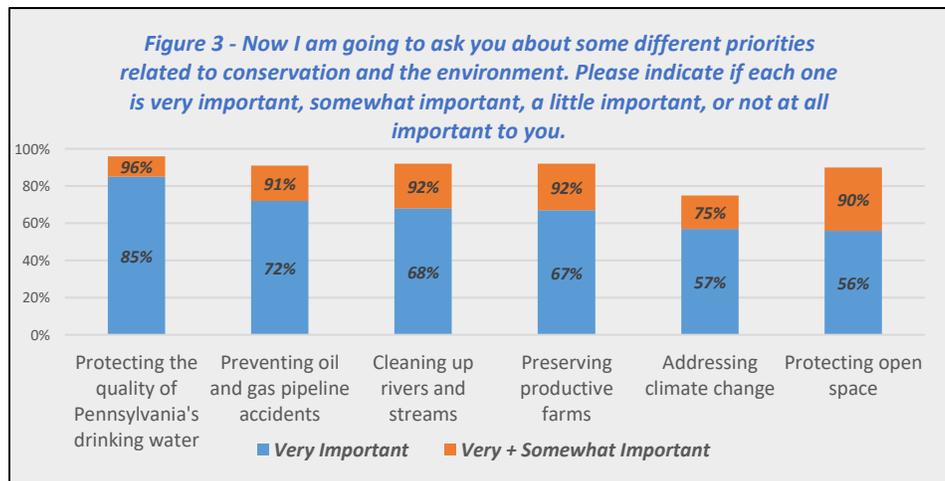
RE: Key findings from recent statewide poll

Our recent statewide poll of Pennsylvania voters on issues related to conservation and the state budget reveals several key trends in public opinion. First, as the COVID-19 pandemic continues, we find that Pennsylvania voters overwhelmingly (89 percent) say that open spaces, parks, and outdoor recreation are either very important (56 percent) or somewhat important (33 percent) to them (see [FIGURE 1](#)).



A similar proportion of Pennsylvania voters (84 percent) agree that due to social distancing guidelines and the closures of some indoor public spaces, the coronavirus pandemic has made open spaces, parks, and outdoor recreation even more important than ever; notably a broad majority (58 percent) *strongly* agree with this sentiment, while just 8 percent of voters across the state disagree (see [FIGURE 2](#)).

A number of specific priorities related to conservation and the environment are very important to Pennsylvania voters. As shown below (see [FIGURE 3](#)), there is near unanimity behind the importance of protecting the quality of the state’s drinking water, preserving productive farms, preventing pipeline accidents, cleaning up rivers and streams, and protecting open space. Though slightly more polarizing along partisan lines, we also find that 3-in-4 Pennsylvania voters indicate that addressing climate change is important to them.



Pennsylvania voters placing such a premium on open spaces, parks, and outdoor recreation leads them to reject funding cuts to key conservation priorities. When informed the state is facing a four-billion-dollar shortfall that will necessitate budget cuts, just 13 percent of Pennsylvania voters report preferring cuts to conservation and environmental protection priorities, as 62 percent report preferring cuts to other items in the budget (see **FIGURE 4**).

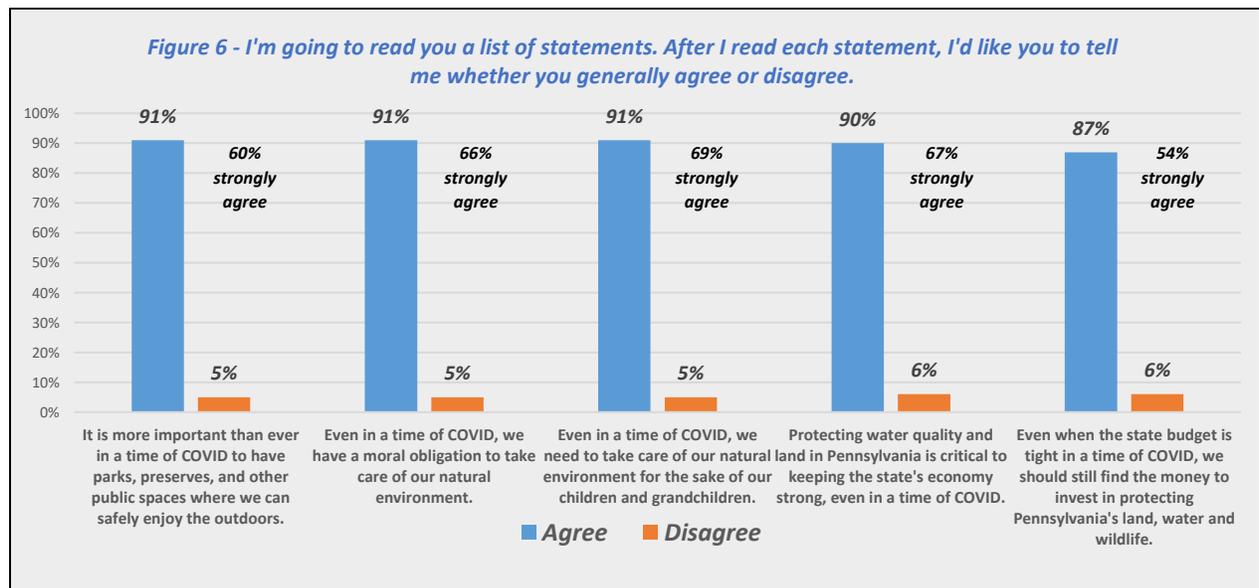
**FIGURE 4**  
*Due to the economic crisis the coronavirus pandemic has created, Pennsylvania is facing a four-billion-dollar budget shortfall, necessitating state budget cuts. Would you prefer Pennsylvania state government cut other items in the budget or make large cuts to conservation and environmental protection priorities?*  
 62% other items  
 13% conservation

**FIGURE 5**  
*Now I'm going to ask you about two different options being proposed for funding Pennsylvania's parks. Which of the following comes closest to your opinion, even if neither is exactly right?*  
 52% We should fund parks through a system that funds them in perpetuity  
 27% We should let legislators make decisions about parks and open space in each year's state budget  
 21% Both/neither/don't know

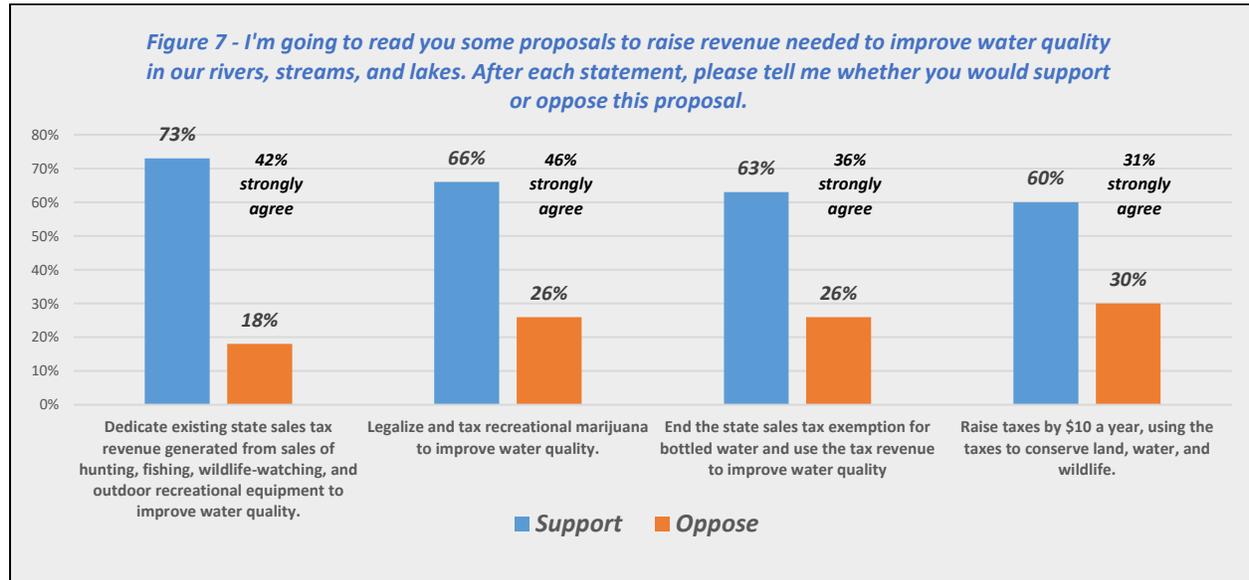
Moreover, a majority of Pennsylvania voters believe that the state should fund parks through a system that funds them in perpetuity, while only 1-in-4 think that legislators should be left to make decisions about parks and open space in each year's state budget (see **FIGURE 5**).

A number of nearly universally held attitudes about conservation underpin these opinions about conservation as a budget priority. Almost all voters agree that even in a time of COVID, we have a moral obligation to take care of

our natural environment (91 percent agree) and need to take care of our natural environment for the sake of our children and grandchildren (91 percent agree). Moreover, roughly 9-in-10 voters agree that even when the state budget is tight in a time of COVID, we should still find the money to invest in protecting Pennsylvania's land, water and wildlife (87 percent agree), that protecting water quality and land in Pennsylvania is critical to keeping the state's economy strong, even in a time of COVID (90 percent agree), and that it is more important than ever in a time of COVID to have parks, preserves, and other public spaces where we can safely enjoy the outdoors (91 percent agree) (see **FIGURE 6**). Notably, as highlighted below, there is substantial intensity behind these attitudes, as broad majorities report *strongly* agreeing with each sentiment.



Pennsylvania voters are also open to a number of revenue solutions for funding these key conservation priorities in the budget. These solutions include ending the state sales tax exemption for bottled water, dedicating existing state sales tax revenue generated from sales of hunting, fishing, wildlife-watching, and outdoor recreational equipment to improve water quality, legalizing and taxing recreational marijuana to improve water quality, and raising taxes by \$10 a year, using the funds to conserve land, water, and wildlife (see [FIGURE 7](#)).



### Survey Methodology

- Survey of likely 2020 general election voters in Pennsylvania conducted September 20-27, 2020.
- Sample size of 1,332, weighted to effective sample size 1,100, including statewide representative sample and oversample of the Delaware River Watershed.
- Multi-mode design including live telephone calls to landlines and cell phones and data collected on voter file matched online panels.
- Credibility interval +/- 3.0%. The credibility interval for subgroups is larger and varies. Percentage totals may not add up precisely due to rounding.