

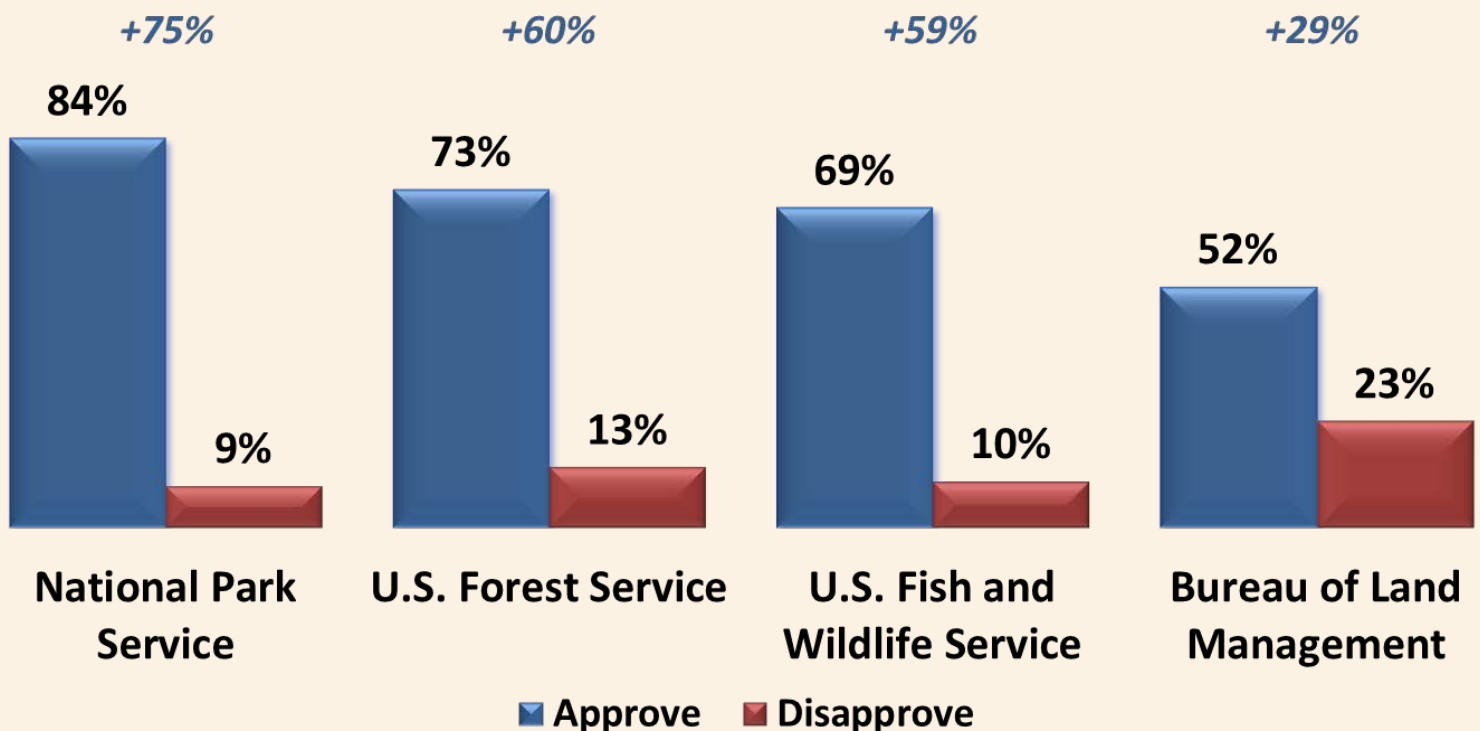
Governance of Conservation

In an era of disdain for the federal government and many public institutions, the strong regard for public agencies related to conservation is striking. Voters in this region also shy away from candidates who would reduce funding for these entities.

Federal agencies which oversee the management of public lands and conservation receive high marks from Western voters.

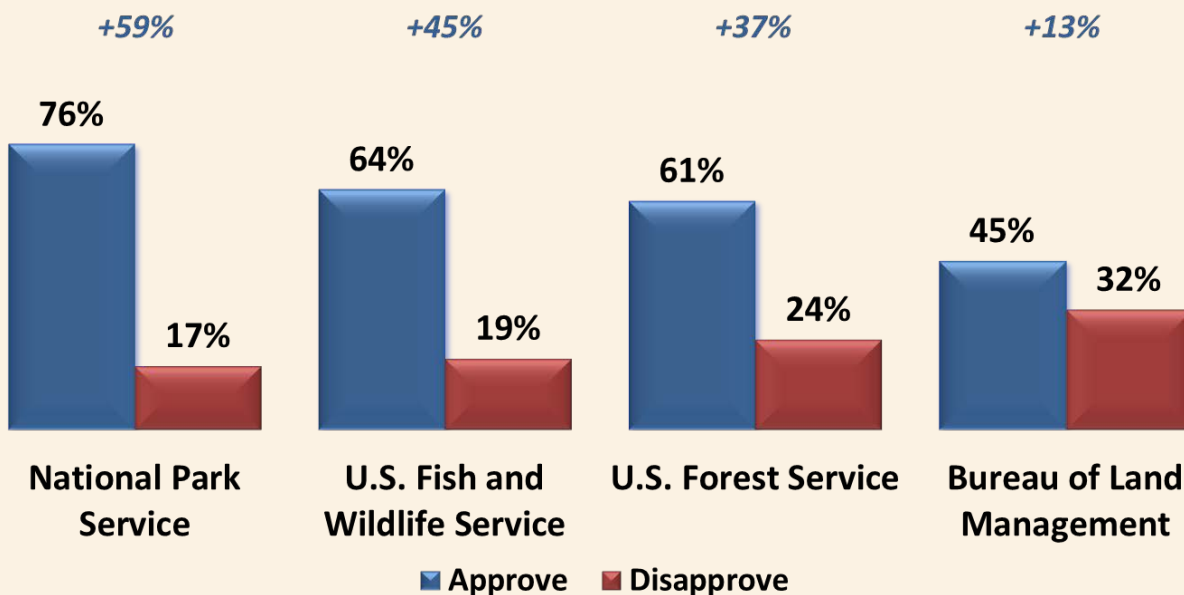
Voters in every state in this region register overwhelming approval for a number of public agencies, with the most positive regard for the job the National Park Service is doing, as more than four-in-five approve and a near majority (44%) strongly approve. Fewer than one-in-ten (9%) disapprove. Strong majorities also approve of the job the U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife service are doing, while the Bureau of Land Management is significantly less well known and is more divisive.

Federal Agency Approval Ratings



Sportsmen, those who identify as conservationists, those who visit public lands, and Latino voters tend to be most positive in their assessment of all of these public agencies. There is also strong approval for these agencies among voters across the partisan spectrum, including among Tea Party supporters.

Federal Agency Approval Ratings Among Tea Party Supporters



Voters perceive funding for public lands as providing a big return on their investment, and therefore reject cuts in funding and candidates who advocate for such cuts.

More than four-in-five voters agree that “funding for national parks, national forests, and other public lands should not be cut, as it provides a big return for a small investment,” with a majority of 57% strongly agreeing with this view.

Funding for national parks, national forests and other public lands should not be cut, as it provides a big return for a small investment.

Agree
83%

Disagree
13%

Two-thirds of Western voters say they would be less likely to vote for a candidate who supported reductions in funding for government agencies which deal with public lands, like the U.S. Forest Service. The intensity of this negative is at a level where we would also consider this to be “effective” as a position against that candidate (37% say they would be much less likely to vote for a candidate who supports a reduction in funding).

<i>Much Less Likely</i>	
Latinos	44%
Moderates	42%
Sportsmen	40%
Small Town/Rural	38%
Independents	37%
Seniors	35%

As the graph depicts, a number of key “swing” voter groups in these states are particularly opposed to backing a candidate who votes to reduce funding for the U.S. Forest Service and similar agencies which oversee public lands.

Conversely, Westerners are twice as likely to look upon an increase in funding for these agencies as a positive (58% more likely to vote for that candidate, 22% much more likely), rather than a negative (21% less likely, 7% much less likely).

Voters are also much more likely to vote for a candidate who supports enhancing protections for public lands.

Nearly seven-in-ten voters (69%) are more likely to support a candidate who is in favor of enhancing protections for some public lands like national forests, while 13% say they would be less likely. Support for a candidate who holds this position crosses party lines, and is also strong with key subgroups such as younger women (71% more likely), moderates (74%), suburban women (75%) and Latinos (64%).