



TO: Bill Marlett
Oregon Natural Desert Association

FROM: Lisa Grove and Ben Patinkin
Grove Insight

RE: Recent Polling Show Strong Majority Support Wilderness Designation for
Badlands

DATE: May 13, 2004

A Strong Majority of Deschutes County Voters Favor the Creation of a Wilderness Area in the Badlands of Central Oregon

Central Oregonians approve of the proposal to give the Badlands a federal Wilderness designation. After explaining the proposal in a format that describes restrictions placed upon the land as a result of passage of a Wilderness designation, 57% of voters favor the proposal, while less than three in 10 (29%) were opposed. With a 28 percentage point favor margin this designation is clearly something Deschutes County residents want.

Now I'd like to get your reaction to a proposal regarding the Badlands area in Central Oregon. The proposal, if approved by Congress, would designate about 37,000 acres of federal land as a Wilderness area. The area is currently managed by the Bureau of Land Management or "BLM." Under this Wilderness designation, all motorized vehicles such as trucks, dirt bikes and all-terrain vehicles would not be allowed within the designated Wilderness area and 10 miles of existing, year-round motorized vehicle trails would be closed. Hiking, horse back riding and hunting would still be allowed. This arrangement is similar to other designated Wilderness areas in Central Oregon such as Three Sisters and Mill Creek. Do you favor or oppose designating this area as Wilderness, or aren't you sure?

Favor, strongly	48%	57%
Favor, not strongly	9%	
Oppose, not strongly	9%	
Oppose, strongly	20%	29%
Undecided	15%	

Views are more strongly held on the support side, with nearly half (48%) supporting the plan “strongly.” Indeed, strong support outpaces strong opposition by 28 points. Contrary to conventional wisdom, even Republicans are more inclined to support than oppose the designation. In fact, opposition to the wilderness designation has fallen in this county by six percentage points since the last poll on this subject in June, 2002. In 2002, Democrats and young women were the most likely to support a Wilderness designation and Republicans, men and those aged 40-49 were the most likely to be opposed. To be clear, opposition did not outpace support among any single subgroup in the 2002 survey.

Awareness of the Proposed Wilderness Designation Increases From 2002

Not only has the margin in support of the proposal increased, familiarity with issue has grown as well. Wilderness designation for the Badlands is an issue with which two-thirds (66%) of Deschutes County voters are familiar. This represents a twenty percentage point increase since 2002. Two years ago, less than half (46%) were aware of this issue.

Greg Walden Is a Popular Political Figure in Deschutes County

The Congressman receives enviable favorability ratings (51% favorable, 11% unfavorable). Like the electorate overall, Walden fans are more inclined to support this proposal than oppose it (51% favor, 33% oppose). Those with favorable views of the County Board of Commissioners also support the wilderness designation by a margin of 20 percentage points.