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Media Relations

July 16, 2013

Carsey Institute: Granite Staters Support Increased Use of Renewable Energy, Value Environment's Impact on Quality of Life

DURHAM, N.H. – By a two-to-one margin, New Hampshire residents believe there should be a higher priority put on increasing the use of renewable energy instead of increased drilling for oil. Large majorities also say an ecosystem that offers clean water, scenic values, and outdoor recreation is very important to their quality of life, according to new survey research from the Carsey Institute at the University of New Hampshire.

“The ‘New Hampshire Advantage’ is an expression that sometimes refers to the Granite State’s lack of income and sales taxes. But, for many people, the state’s advantages also include clean air, clean water, abundant natural resources, and a plethora of recreational activities,” the researchers said.

The new research is presented in the Carsey Institute policy brief “Granite Staters Weigh in on Renewable Energy vs. Drilling: Environmental Quality of Life Ranks High Across Party Lines.” The research was conducted by Lawrence Hamilton, professor of sociology at UNH and a senior fellow at the Carsey Institute, and Cameron Wake, research associate professor with the UNH Institute for Earth, Oceans, and Space.

The researchers found:

- Two-thirds of New Hampshire residents surveyed think that, for the future of this country, increasing renewable energy should be a higher priority than the exploration and drilling of oil.
- Large majorities of Democrats and independents, and a sizable minority of Republicans, favor renewable energy development.
- Almost everyone -- 98 percent -- agrees that clean water is very important to their quality of life. Scenic values of forest and farmlands rank second (66 percent), followed by outdoor recreation and forests for wood products (both 63 percent).
- Only one-third of respondents realize that, despite current threats, the total area of forests in New Hampshire is greater now than it was 100 years ago. Awareness of this forest history is higher in less developed regions of the state.
- Nine in 10 New Hampshire residents believe that climate change is happening now. Fifty-four percent agree with the scientific consensus that current changes are caused mainly by human activities, whereas 36 percent believe they are caused mainly by natural forces.

“These survey results show a combination of strong public interest but limited knowledge about larger processes behind environmental conditions. Such environmental processes are topics of active scientific research, and the findings from that research have recognized the importance for local, state, and national planning,” the researchers said.

The data used in this research was provided by the Granite State Poll, conducted by the UNH Survey Center. The research was conducted in partnership with a new five-year project on ecosystem and society under the New Hampshire Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR). It was also supported by the National Science Foundation and the UNH Sustainability Institute.

The complete Carsey Institute report about this research is available at <http://www.carseyinstitute.unh.edu/publication/789>.

The Carsey Institute conducts policy research on vulnerable children, youth, and families and on sustainable community development. The institute gives policy makers and practitioners the timely, independent resources they need to effect change in their communities. For more information about the Carsey Institute, go to www.carseyinstitute.unh.edu.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 12,200 undergraduate and 2,300 graduate students.

GRAPHICS

Which should be higher priority, increased exploration and drilling for oil or increased use of renewable energy?

http://www.unh.edu/news/img/carsey/HamiltonandWake_Fig1.jpg

Should drilling or renewable energy be a higher priority, by respondent's political party.

http://www.unh.edu/news/img/carsey/HamiltonandWake_Fig2.jpg

-30-

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