



News Release

CONTACTS:

Bob Stokes, Galveston Bay Foundation, 281.332.3381, bstokes@galvbay.org
Sean Crowley, Environmental Defense Fund, 202.572.3331, scrowley@edf.org
David J. Ringer, National Audubon Society, 601.642.7058, dringer@audubon.org
Emily Guidry Schatzel, National Wildlife Federation, 225.253.9781, guidrye@nwf.org
Matt Tinning, Ocean Conservancy, 202.286.6498, mtinning@oceanconservancy.org
Daphne Davis Moore, Walton Family Foundation, 479.464.1578, dmoore@wffmail.com

Gulf Region Voters Far More Likely to Vote for Legislators Who Support Gulf Restoration Funding

Poll is timely day after Mabus report recommends BP fines be dedicated to Gulf restoration fund

(Washington, DC—September 29) Nearly three out of four voters (72%) in Gulf region states (Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas) say they'd be more likely to vote for federal legislators if they support funding to restore the environmental health of the Gulf, according to a new poll released today. The poll was funded by the Walton Family Foundation on behalf of a coalition of environmental, business, fishing, and anti-poverty groups dedicated to restoring the Gulf Coast.

Specifically, in Texas, over four of five voters (84%) believe that the state's economy is very or somewhat reliant upon the environmental health of the Gulf region. Almost eight in ten voters in Texas (79%) believe that restoring the health of the Gulf Region is an extremely high priority. And seven of ten voters in Texas (70%) say they are more likely to vote for leaders who support new investments in environmental restoration.

The poll is timely because yesterday a working group named by President Obama to create a long-term Gulf recovery plan—headed by Navy Secretary and former Mississippi Gov. Ray Mabus—recommended that a "significant amount" of the penalties collected from BP for this summer's oil spill should be dedicated to repairing the region's ecological, economic, public health and psychological damage. While the U.S. House of Representatives has passed an oil spill response bill that directs funding to Gulf Coast restoration, the Senate, even with the elections fast approaching, has yet to act on oil spill response legislation.

The poll by Democratic polling firm Lake Research Partners and GOP polling firm Bellwether Research and Consulting found that—regardless of political affiliation—voters across the Gulf region have a deep commitment to restoration and see it as key to the economic health of the region. In fact, majorities of Independents (67%), Democrats (82%) and Republicans (67%) said they are more likely to support federal legislators who will make new investments in restoration.



"This new polling confirms what common sense already told us. Voters overwhelmingly believe restoring the Gulf environment will also strengthen the region's economy, and make it more resilient when facing future storms or manmade disasters," said Scott Burns, director of the Walton Family Foundation's Environment and Conservation Program. "This is a clear message that restoration in the Gulf region is a high priority."

Across the Gulf region, more than two out of three voters (68%) recognize that degradation of the Gulf Coast as a result of man-made activities had occurred even before the recent oil spill, and more than three out of four voters (77%) believe it is important for the federal government to take steps to restore the health of the Gulf region, making this a strong voting issue in the upcoming elections.

"This poll shows Gulf Coast senators that restoring the environmental health of the Gulf's wetlands, marine and coastal areas is both good public policy and good politics," said [Paul Harrison](#), senior director for the Mississippi River at the [Environmental Defense Fund](#). "Gulf Coast voters recognize that it is critical to their economic future, especially for the region's huge fishing and tourism industries."

"There is widespread acknowledgement in Texas that we are intrinsically tied to our coast and it is important to continue to invest in the health of the Gulf and our local bays and estuaries," said Bob Stokes, President of the [Galveston Bay Foundation](#). "Our economies and our culture are very much tied to a healthy coast."

"The people of the Gulf want and deserve a comprehensive plan that creates new job opportunities as part of environmental restoration," said Minor Sinclair, Oxfam America's U.S. Regional Director. "The Federal Government needs to invest in the Gulf, for the good of the people who live there and for the nation as a whole."

Additional key findings of the survey include:

- More than three out of five voters (62%) in Gulf Coast states say they are less likely to vote for federal legislators who do not support funding Gulf restoration
- Nearly nine out of 10 poll respondents (87%) across the five Gulf states agree that the environmental health of the Gulf Coast region affects their state's economy very much or somewhat.
- Nearly eight out of 10 poll respondents (78%) favor creation of a separate fund for the Gulf region and the Mississippi River Delta that includes penalty payments from BP for violating the Clean Water Act and the Oil Pollution Act.

The full polling information is available at the Walton Foundation website:
<http://www.waltonfamilyfoundation.org/gulf-region-poll-results/>

The telephone survey of 2,061 voters from all five Gulf region states (Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas) was conducted between September 7 and September 13, 2010. The polling margin of error is +/-2.2%.

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About the Walton Family Foundation

The Walton Family Foundation's environmental giving focuses on achieving lasting conservation in some of the world's most important ocean and river systems. Desired outcomes are designed to benefit both people and wildlife by aligning economic and conservation interests. Accordingly, the Foundation invests in projects that create new economic incentives for sustainability and biodiversity protection, and in projects utilizing other conservation tools where needed.

The Walton Family Foundation supports projects and organizations that are making a positive difference for individuals, communities and the environment in the areas in which we concentrate our efforts. During 2009, the Foundation invested more than \$378 million in charitable initiatives, including those within our core Focus Areas: Systemic K-12 Education Reform; Freshwater and Marine Conservation; Quality of Life Initiatives in our Home Region. For more information, visit www.waltonfamilyfoundation.org.

About the coalition

A coalition of environmental, business, fishing, and anti-poverty groups dedicated to restoring the Gulf Coast has formed to jointly present this poll. The groups include: The Walton Family Foundation; Oxfam; Alabama Coastal Foundation; America's WETLAND Foundation; Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana; Environmental Defense Fund; The Fishermen's Alliance; Florida Wildlife Federation; Franklin County Seafood Dealers Association; Galveston Bay Foundation; Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholder's Alliance; The Gulf Restoration Network; Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation; Mississippi Fish and Wildlife Foundation; Mobile Baykeeper; National Audubon Society; National Wildlife Federation; The Nature Conservancy; The Ocean Conservancy; Organized Fishermen of Florida; Reef Relief; Save our Gulf; and Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership.