

September 19, 2006

RAGING AMBIVALENCE?

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following was provided to The Outdoor Wire by the American Sportfishing Association (ASA) the trade association for the sportfishing industry. With National Hunting and Fishing Day rapidly approaching, we thought you might like to know that a majority of Americans still support legal hunting and fishing. National Hunting and Fishing Day was officially established in 1972 to "celebrate sportsmen and their role in fostering conservation and the scientific management of natural resources and wildlife."

This year those celebrating National Hunting and Fishing Day will also be able to celebrate at least a decade of public support for their activities, according to a nationwide poll conducted by Responsive Management of Harrisonburg, Virginia. The poll found that support for hunting and fishing has remained strong over the past decade with approximately every 3 out of 4 Americans approving of legal hunting and more than 9 out of 10 approving of recreational fishing.

"We have been seeing public support for hunting increase in several states over the past decade where we had data but this is the first nationwide study where we could verify that public support has increased over the past decade. In 1995, 73 percent of Americans approved of hunting while in 2006, 78 percent approved of hunting. Support for fishing nationwide, as well as in numerous states where we have conducted studies, remains very high," says Mark Damian Duda, executive director of Responsive Management. Although approval of fishing has decreased slightly, dropping only 1.7 percentage points from 95 percent in 1995 to 93.3 percent in 2006, most Americans approve of recreational fishing.

The results of this survey reflect the opinions of randomly selected U.S. adult residents based on a scientific telephone survey of 813 Americans conducted from August 31 to September 9, 2006. The sampling error is 3.44 percentage points.

The poll was conducted as part of two larger projects—a book being written on sportsmen's issues by Duda, Marty Jones, and Andrea Criscione of Responsive Management that was commissioned by the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation and a study on the future of hunting and the shooting sports under a grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

As Americans become more knowledgeable about the role of hunting in wildlife management as well as how much money hunting and fishing contributes to fish and wildlife conservation efforts, coupled with a visible increase in deer in urban areas and the need to actively manage their populations, Responsive Management's research shows that the public continues to approve of hunting.

Officials in the hunting and fishing industries are encouraged by the public support, citing the important role that sportsmen play in a number of areas, including conservation and the economy. Steve Williams, current president of the Wildlife Management Institute and former director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, noted, "Sportsmen are essential to wildlife protection and management. Game management programs, which are funded by sportsmen's dollars, have brought back numerous wildlife species from unhealthy

population levels, such as wild turkey, wood ducks, white-tailed deer, beaver, pronghorn antelope, and Canada geese to name a few. In addition, sportsmen's dollars have purchased and managed millions of acres of fish and wildlife habitat benefiting all fish and wildlife species and the public who enjoy them."

Matt Hogan, executive vice president of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, pointed out, "Public support for hunting and fishing is crucial for conservation efforts. State fish and wildlife agencies have been and continue to be funded in large part by the contributions of sportsmen and women through license sales and excise tax payments on hunting and fishing equipment. To put it simply, without hunters and anglers, state fish and wildlife agencies would not be able to do their job conserving and managing wildlife for all Americans to enjoy."

Gordon Robertson, vice president of the American Sport Fishing Association, commented, "Hunting and fishing have major economic impacts on the U.S. economy. According to the National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, sportsmen and women spend more than seventy billion dollars on hunting and fishing each year. Spreading that out across other sectors of the economy, sportfishing alone annually contributes \$116 billion to the U.S. economy. It's gratifying to know that the American public supports these activities with such a strong cultural heritage."

Responsive Management is a Virginia-based public opinion polling and survey research firm specializing in natural resources, fisheries, wildlife, outdoor recreation, and environmental issues and has been assessing public attitudes on these issues for 18 years. Surveys are conducted with scientific rigor according to the standards of the Council of American Survey Research Organizations. For more information, please visit the firm's Web site: www.responsivemanagement.com.

Poll Data:

Do you approve or disapprove of legal hunting? (2006)

45.4% Strongly approve
32.2% Moderately approve (77.6% Approve)
4.9% Neither approve nor disapprove;
1.2% Don't know
8.0% Strongly disapprove
8.3% Moderately disapprove (Total: 16.3% Disapprove)

Do you approve or disapprove of recreational fishing? (2006)

68.5% Strongly approve
24.8% Moderately approve (93.3% Approve)
1.5% Neither approve nor disapprove
2.0% Strongly disapprove
3.2% Moderately disapprove (5.2% Disapprove)

Do you approve or disapprove of legal hunting? (1995)

40% Strongly approve
33% Moderately approve (73% Approve)
5% Neither approve nor disapprove / Don't know

11% Strongly disapprove

11% Moderately disapprove (22% Disapprove)

Do you approve or disapprove of legal fishing? (1995)

65% Strongly approve and 30% Moderately approve (95% Approve)

2% Neither approve nor disapprove / Don't know

1% Strongly disapprove and 2% Moderately disapprove (3% Disapprove)