



THE
MELLMAN
Group RESEARCH
BASED
STRATEGY

MEMORANDUM

To: The Sierra Club
From: The Mellman Group, Inc.
Date: June 19, 2002
Subject: National Survey Results

This analysis summarizes the findings of a national survey of 1000 likely voters who were interviewed by telephone May 31-June 4, 2002. The margin of error for this survey is +/-3.1% at the 95% level of confidence. Tracking data is from a national survey of 800 likely voters who were interviewed by telephone April 18-22, 2001. The margin of error for this survey is +/-3.5% at the 95% level of confidence. The margin of error is higher for subgroups.

SUMMARY

Voters express genuine concern about environmental issues, particularly air pollution and shifting the burden of clean-up off polluters and on to taxpayers. This concern stems from commitment to at least two core values – protecting the health of their families, and the importance of passing on the legacy of a healthy environment to future generations. Moreover, their concern about the environment translates into action: voters say they are most likely to vote, recycle, and purchase fuel efficient appliances and cars to protect the environment.

Our poll also reveals that the environment is President Bush's Achilles heel. Despite improvement in his overall job ratings following September 11th, evaluations of his job performance on environmental issues remains extremely negative. Moreover, Americans continue to believe that Bush's actions on the environment are dictated by special interests, and voters are much more likely to trust environmental organizations on these issues than they are to trust the President or Congress.

Voters Value Protecting Their Families' Health And Safety, Protecting National Security, And Passing On A Legacy Of A Healthy Environment

We asked voters to weigh the relative importance of a series of values, including "protecting your family's health and safety," "protecting our national security," and "passing on a healthy environmental legacy for future generations," among others.

By a wide margin (Grand Adjusted Mean, 0.65), voters said that protecting their family's health and safety was the value most important to them. While protecting our national security placed second in this exercise (Grand Adjusted Mean, 0.41), it is important to note that voters valued "passing on a healthy environmental legacy" only slightly less (GAM, 0.37).¹ Voters' commitment to the environment arises from both a commitment to health and a clear sense of responsibility for passing on this legacy.

¹ The "Grand Adjusted Mean" score measures the relative appeal of these values. The higher the score, the larger more appealing it is to voters.

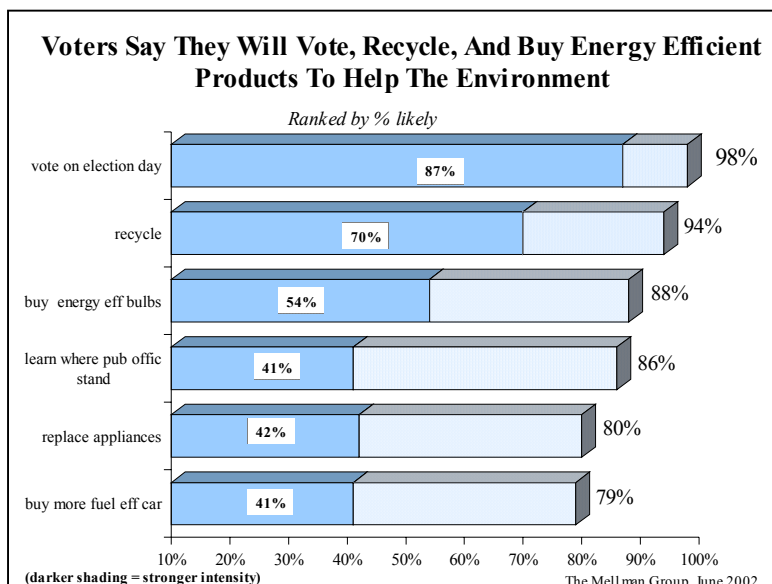
Voters Express Genuine Concern About Environmental Issues, Particularly Air Pollution And Shifting The Burden Of Clean-Up Off Polluters And On To Taxpayers

Americans evince particular concern about the quality of our environment today. Only 44% rate the quality of air positively, whereas 54% rate it negatively. Moreover, only 18% believe the quality of air is improving, while 39% believe that air quality has gotten worse. Majorities of voters in the Northeast (62% negative, 32% positive), the South (56% negative, 43% positive) and the West (52% negative, 46% positive) rate the quality of air positively, while in the Midwest voters are nearly evenly divided, with 48% rating it negatively and 50% rating it positively. Across region, voters are much more likely to believe that the quality of air is getting worse than they are to believe it is getting better.

We also explored what voters believe are the most important reasons to take action to protect the environment. Interestingly, the largest percentage of voters believe that making polluters, not taxpayers pay the cost of environmental cleanup is one of the most important reasons to be active in protecting the environment (42% one of the most, 87% at least very important).

Concern about shifting the burden from polluters to taxpayers crosses party lines. Eighty-seven percent (87%) of Republicans say that it is an important reason to take action to protect the environment, and an equal number of independents (87%) and Democrats (87%) say the same.

Equally important to voters as a reason to take action to protect the environment is leaving our kids a legacy of a clean and healthy environment (87% at least very important, 41% one of the most important reasons). As in the values questions discussed above, voters believe that protecting our environmental heritage is an important reason to protect the environment. And they speak of the environment in moral terms as well. Eighty-six percent (86%) of voters say that “We have a moral responsibility to take care of the earth and our environment” is at least a very important reason to protect the environment, with 35% saying that it is one of the most important reasons.



To Protect The Environment, Voters Are Most Likely to Vote, Recycle, And Purchase Fuel Efficient Appliances And Cars

Provided with a list of potential activities to protect the environment, voters are most likely to vote on election day, recycle, and act to reduce their energy consumption.

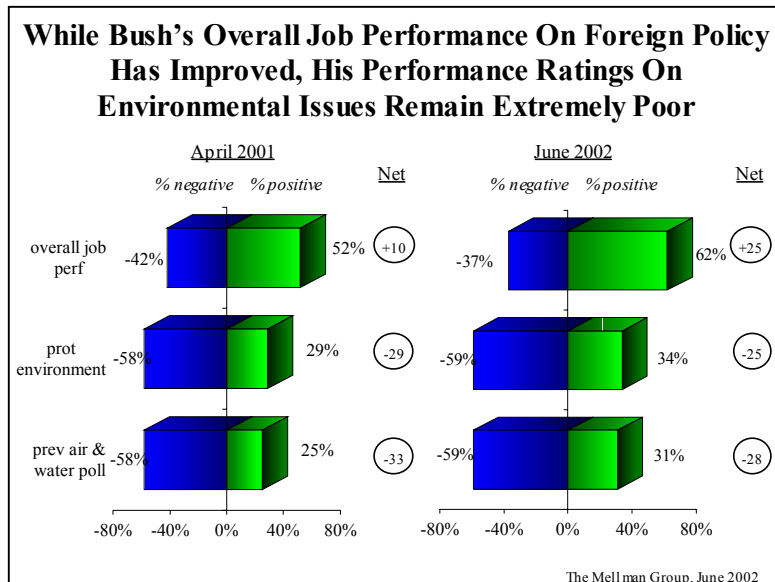
As we might expect, nearly all voters (98% total likely, 87% very likely) say they would vote on election day to

protect the environment. Voters also express a near universal willingness to recycle to help the environment (94% likely, 70% very likely).

Voters also express an interest in purchasing energy efficient products to help the environment. Eighty-eight percent say they are likely to purchase energy efficient light bulbs (54% very likely), 80% say they are likely to replace their old appliances with energy efficient new ones (42% very likely), and 79% say they would buy a more fuel efficient car (41% very likely).

The Environment Is President Bush's Achilles Heel

Despite the fact that President Bush's overall job performance rating improved dramatically after September 11th, evaluations of his performance on environmental issues remains extremely negative. Currently, 62% of likely voters give President Bush positive ratings for his overall performance in office, and 37% offer negative evaluations of his performance. These positive ratings are 15 points higher than in the Sierra Club poll of April 2001 (April 2001: 52% positive, 42% negative). While the President's performance rating remains high, it is substantially lower than it was at its zenith, in the immediate aftermath of September 11th.



However, it is clear that voters' improved perception of President Bush's performance generally has not in any way translated to increased confidence in his performance on the environment.

On environmental issues, Bush's ratings have barely moved, and remain starkly negative. Fifty-nine percent (59%) give the President negative ratings for his work on the environment, while just 34% rate him positively. When it comes to preventing air and water pollution, 59% give Bush a negative rating, compared to just 31% who give him positive ratings. These represent only a slight marginal improvement over 2001 (environment: 29% positive, 58% negative; air and water pollution: 25% positive, 58% negative). It is striking that the President continues to have abysmal job ratings on environmental issues, despite a much-improved overall job performance rating.

Moreover, Bush's poor ratings on environmental issues cut across party lines. Democrats and independents give him extremely poor ratings for preventing air and water pollution (16% positive, 74% negative among Democrats, 31% positive, 60% negative among independents). Even among Republicans, a bare plurality (47%) give him positive ratings, while a robust 43% of Republicans give him negative ratings.

Americans Continue To Believe That Bush's Actions On The Environment Are Dictated By Special Interests

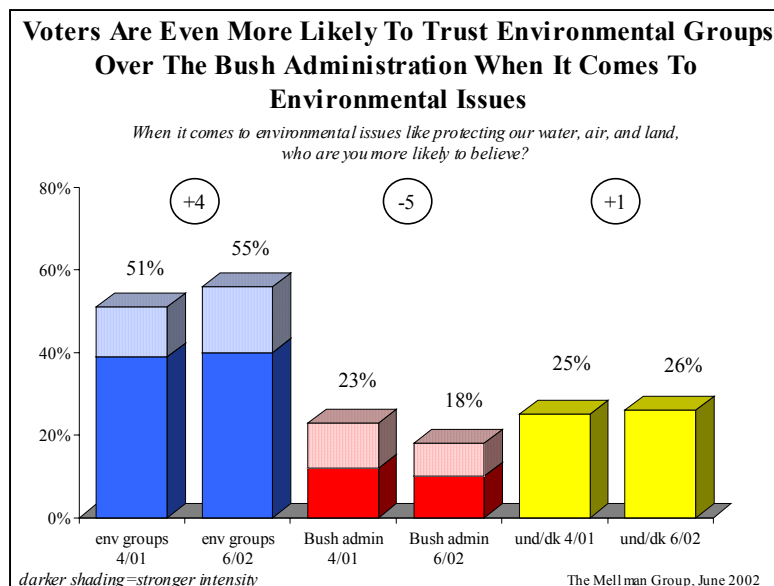
Voters believe President Bush cares more about protecting special interest contributors than he does about protecting our air, land, and water. Fifty-three percent (53%) of voters say he cares more about special interests, with 37% saying they feel that way strongly. Just 32% say that is more concerned about our air, land and water (22% strongly).

A vast majority of Democrats (80%) believe that Bush cares more about special interests than about protecting the environment. Additionally, a majority (56%) of independents feel the same way, with just 23% of independents saying that the President cares more about protecting air, land and water. More than a quarter of Republicans (26%) say that President Bush cares more about protecting special interests.

Environmental Organizations Are Much More Credible Than The President Or Congress

Americans do not believe that Bush is credible on environmental issues. Asked whether they believe the Bush Administration or environmental groups on these issues, 55% of voters say they believe environmental groups, and just 18% say they believe the Bush Administration. Indeed, *even fewer* voters say they trust this administration on environmental issues than in April, 2001, down from 23%. And more voters say they trust environmental groups (up from 51%).

This credibility gap on environmental issues exists even among Republicans. Democrats (76% trust environmental groups, 7% trust Bush) and independents (57% trust environmental groups, 13% trust Bush) distrust the Bush Administration. But even Republicans are evenly divided, with just 34% of Republicans saying they believe this Administration, while 33% trust environmental groups to a greater extent than the President. A majority of *Republicans* are thus unwilling to say they trust the Administration on environmental issues.



Voters are even more likely to trust environmental groups than Congress on environmental issues. Asked whether they believe Congress or environmental groups on these issues, 57% of voters say they believe environmental groups, and just 14% say they believe Congress.