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### **VOTERS SAY CLEAN ENVIRONMENT KEY TO JOBS IN NORTH CAROLINA** *Parks and Open Space Need Funding, Polluters Should Pay More*

(April 27, 2011 – Raleigh, NC) A strong majority of North Carolina voters says deep cuts in environmental protections proposed in a legislative budget would handicap the economy and harm the state's quality of life, according to a new [poll](#) from Public Policy Polling.

An overwhelming 83 percent of voters agreed that "protecting North Carolina's air and water is important to attracting good jobs to the state. A majority of voters, 54 percent, supported keeping the existing sales tax as a way to avoid the deepest cuts in parks and open space funding. About half the respondents, 48 percent, said they would support raising permit fees on polluters to help balance the state budget.

The poll shows that even those voters who identify themselves as "conservative" disagree with proposals for sharp cuts in the state Department of Environment and Natural Resources. About three-quarters of conservative voters, and 84 percent of all responses, said the state should maintain its current level of drinking water protection, or do more.

The House is considering sweeping reforms in DENR, including cutbacks in regional staff. Environmental groups consider regional DENR staff critical for monitoring air and water pollution, issuing permits and enforcing rules that protect public health. Legislators also propose to cut land conservation by more than 95 percent and prevent the protection of threatened green spaces.

"Lawmakers are discussing proposals that are outside the state's mainstream values. Citizens have a great respect for clean air and water and natural resources, and they understand the direct connection to a healthy economy," said Jane Preyer, state director of Environmental Defense Fund.

"Voters don't perceive a choice between a strong economy and a clean environment," said Elizabeth Ouzts, state director of Environment North Carolina. "In fact, voters across the political and demographic spectrum believe the two go hand in hand."

"North Carolinians – and especially the young – place a high value on a clean, safe environment," said Molly Diggins, state director of the Sierra Club. "The House's proposed budget doesn't reflect the public's expectations."

Stephen Turley, a Mooresville resident, says the stakes are high when funding decisions affect protection for clean air and water.

"It will affect the entire economy of the state if you let your environment suffer," said Turley, who owns U.S. Home Designs. "North Carolina is a naturally beautiful state and it's something that takes years to undo, when damage has been done."

The poll of 753 registered voters was commissioned by seven environmental advocacy groups: Conservation Trust for North Carolina, Environment North Carolina, Environmental Defense Fund, North Carolina Conservation Network, North Carolina League of Conservation Voters, the North Carolina Chapter of the Sierra Club and Southern Environmental Law Center. The poll was conducted April 19-20 and has a margin of error of +/- 3.6%.

Read more at <http://www.publicpolicypolling.com/pdf/NCEnvironmentPoll411.pdf>.