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Specializing in Survey Research on Natural Resource and Outdoor Recreation Issues

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Sportsmen's Attitudes on Oil and Gas Extraction Activities in the Rocky Mountain West

With the world economy in turmoil and growing concern about U.S. dependence on foreign sources of energy, there has been increased focus on development of new domestic sources of oil and gas in the United States. Energy resources extraction on federal public lands, especially activities managed by U.S. government agencies in sensitive wildlife and habitat areas of the American West, involves difficult questions regarding priorities and sometimes diametrically opposed goals.



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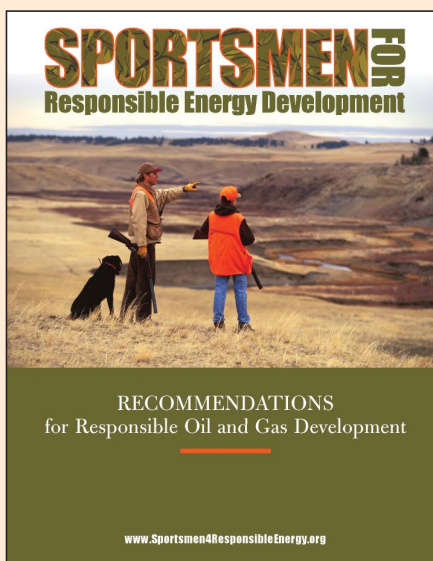
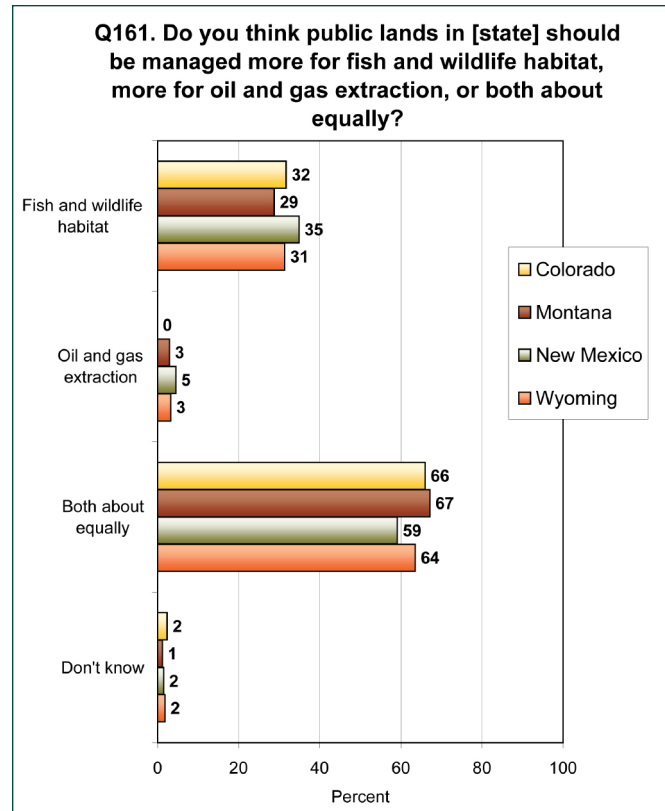
One group that is greatly affected by these issues is American sportsmen, many of whom participate in hunting and fishing on these public lands. To determine what sportsmen think about issues surrounding energy resource extraction activities on public lands, Responsive Management recently conducted a study for Sportsmen for Responsible Energy Development to determine hunters' and anglers' opinions on oil and gas extraction activities in the Rocky Mountain West, including the effect these activities would have on hunting and fishing participation.

Licensed hunters and anglers in the Rocky Mountain West states of Colorado, Montana, New Mexico, and Wyoming were surveyed by telephone and were asked questions in several subject areas, including where they hunted and fished, the quality of their hunting and fishing experiences, opinions on land use in general, opinions on regulation and methods of energy extraction, and willingness to take specific actions regarding extraction activities. Major findings of the survey included the following:

- Public land figures prominently in hunting activities among Rocky Mountain West sportsmen. From 49% (in Montana) to 79% (in New Mexico) of hunters hunt mostly on public land, and 16% (in New Mexico) to 36% (in Montana) hunt on both public and private land about equally. Only 5% (in New Mexico) to 15% (in Montana) hunt mostly on private land.
- Public land figures even more prominently in fishing than in hunting. In the four states surveyed, 76% (in Montana) to 85% (in Colorado, New Mexico, and Wyoming) of anglers fish mostly on public land, and 9% (in Colorado) to 12% (in Montana and Wyoming) fish on both public and private land about equally. Only 3% (in New Mexico) to 8% (in Montana) fish mostly on private land.
- From 59% (in New Mexico) to 67% (in Montana) of hunters and anglers think that public lands in their state should be managed with fish and wildlife habitat and oil and gas extraction being considered about equally. From 29% (in Montana) to 35% (in New Mexico) think that public lands should be managed more for fish and wildlife habitat. And 0% (in Montana) to 5% (in New Mexico) think that public lands should be managed more for oil and gas extraction.
- Large majorities of sportsmen in the four states agree that the federal government should take more steps to protect fish and wildlife on lands that have been leased for oil and gas extraction (from 71% to 78%).
- Large majorities agree that the federal government should take more steps to protect hunting and fishing opportunities on lands that have been leased for oil and gas extraction (from 67% to 83%).

- In all four states surveyed, hunters and anglers named increased poaching and loss of access among the top concerns they had regarding the impact of oil and gas extraction on lands where they hunt and fish.
- Hunters and anglers give high importance to being included in the decision-making process regarding oil and gas extraction activities on public lands: in each of the states surveyed, a majority of respondents (58% in New Mexico and Wyoming, 62% in Colorado, and 63% in Montana) rate that importance at a 9 or 10.
- The large majority of hunters and anglers in the states surveyed (from 80% in New Mexico to 88% in Montana) oppose the exclusion of sportsmen from the decision-making process regarding oil and gas extraction activities on public lands.
- Overwhelmingly, sportsmen do not want the oil and gas extraction industry to be exempted from regulations to protect rivers and streams - the majority of sportsmen in each state (from 76% to 84%) strongly or moderately oppose such exemptions.
- The large majority of sportsmen (74% to 83%) oppose exempting the oil and gas extraction industry from the requirement to conduct an analysis of the effects of extraction activities on fish and wildlife and hunting and fishing before leases are granted for extraction activities on public lands.
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The complete report, including explanations of the study's methodology and more detailed results and analysis, is available at http://www.responsivemanagement.com/download/reports/Sportsmen_Energy_Report.pdf (334KB PDF). A slide presentation of the results can be viewed at http://www.responsivemanagement.com/download/reports/Sportsmen_Energy_Presentation.pdf (1.67MB PDF).



Understanding the Issues

For more information on conserving wildlife and habitat while developing new energy resources on federal public lands, see *Recommendations for Responsible Oil and Gas Development*, published by Sportsmen for Responsible Energy Development. This report explains how energy resources are developed on public lands, offers several case studies, and discusses the issues from the American sportsman's point of view. The report is available at http://www.sportsmen4responsibleenergy.org/images/stories/S4RED_Recommendations_Final-3.pdf (1MB PDF).

Sportsmen for Responsible Energy Development is a coalition of more than 350 conservation organizations, businesses, and individuals, including Trout Unlimited, the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, and the National Wildlife Federation, working to balance energy development in the American West. For more information, visit their website at <http://www.sportsmen4responsibleenergy.org>.