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### **Voters favor regulation of hydraulic fracturing Survey finds widespread support in Colorado's 3<sup>rd</sup> Congressional District**

Western Slope voters support increasing protections for water from pollution, according to a survey released today by the Western Colorado Congress (WCC), an alliance for community action, and the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC), a network of Western agriculture and conservation groups.

The survey of 504 registered voters in the 3<sup>rd</sup> District of Colorado found strong support for regulating hydraulic fracturing and for protecting all bodies of water from pollution under the Clean Water Act (CWA).

An overwhelming two-thirds of the voters in the district favor the *Fracturing Responsibility and Awareness of Chemicals Act* (FRAC Act), while only 22% of voters oppose it. Hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, is a process that injects water, sand and chemicals into oil and gas wells to release the oil and gas trapped inside.

The bill would amend the *Safe Drinking Water Act* (SDWA) to repeal an exemption given to the oil and gas industry from regulation of fracking fluids. The bill would also require disclosure of chemicals used in the fracking process. The oil and gas industry is the only industry exempted from complying with the SDWA.

Support for the FRAC Act was consistent throughout key voter groups in the district:

- 70% of the voters in the district's two more urban counties, Mesa and Pueblo, favor the FRAC Act, and 66% of the voters in the remaining more rural counties favor it.
- Majority support spans political persuasions – 80% Democrats, 79% Independents, and 51% Republicans.
- Significant majorities of men (66%) and women (69%) favor the FRAC Act.
- Young and old favor the act: age 18-39 – 67%, age 40-59 – 67%, and age 60+ – 68%.
- 63% of the households that work in farming or ranching favor the FRAC Act.
- 61% of the voters who fish or hunt favor the FRAC Act.
- 82% of the voters who consider themselves to be environmentalists or conservationists favor the act.

“Underground drinking water sources are precious for everyone, and rural residents are placed particularly at risk,” said Lisa Bracken, a WCC member and landowner from Garfield County who settled with EnCana after benzene was found bubbling to the surface of West Divide Creek. “We must safeguard groundwater from the risks that fracking may pose

relative to contamination of water resources with toxic chemicals that may threaten the public's health and safety.”

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is investigating complaints by residents near Pavillion, Wyo., of water contamination and health problems. Preliminary EPA tests have identified contaminants associated with oil and gas drilling in 11 of 39 drinking water wells in the area.

The survey also found that nearly two-thirds of the voters agree that the Clean Water Act should protect all bodies of water from pollution, while only one-fourth say the Clean Water Act should not apply to all bodies of water.

Other key findings on the Clean Water Act include the following:

- Two-thirds of the voters in the district's two more urban counties, Mesa and Pueblo, say the CWA should protect all bodies of water, and 62% of voters in the remaining more rural counties favor it.
- Support was strong among both men (63%) and women (64%).
- Young and old say the CWA should protect all bodies of water: age 18-39 – 66%, age 40-59 – 61%, and age 60+ – 65%.
- 58% of the household that work in farming or ranching agree.
- 61% of the voters who fish or hunt say the CWA should protect all bodies of water, and 76% of the voters who consider themselves to be environmentalists or conservationists agree.

“The Clean Water Act must protect all water sources to prevent mining, oil, and gas companies from dumping chemical pollutants into headwaters or areas with intermittent streams during spring run-off or heavy rainfall,” said Randy Fricke, Chair of the Grand Valley Citizens Alliance Water Committee from New Castle, Colo. “We must protect all water sources to ensure Coloradans have clean drinking water for our children and families.”

Congress is considering legislation to restore full protection of America's waters, including many wetlands and small streams, under the Clean Water Act (CWA). These wetlands and streams are important for drinking water, agriculture, flood control, pollution control, fishing and other outdoor recreation. The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee approved the act in June. The bill is awaiting consideration by the full Senate.

Congress enacted the Clean Water Act in 1972 to clean up and protect the country's water, including wetlands and headwater streams. Two recent U.S. Supreme Court cases, *Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County v. Army Corps of Engineers* in 2001 and *Rapanos v. United States* in 2006, are viewed as narrowing the scope of the act. In those cases, the court ruled that CWA applied only to “navigable” waters.

“Coloradans want to protect the rivers, lakes, aquifers, headwaters, and mountain streams of Colorado,” said Gretchen Nicholoff, WCC President. “Voters of the Third District strongly support the *Clean Water Restoration Act* and the *Fracturing Responsibility and*

*Awareness of Chemicals Act.* We urge Congressman Salazar, Senator Bennet and Senator Udall to stand up tall for clean water by supporting these bills.”

Harstad Strategic Research, a national public opinion research firm in Boulder, Colo., conducted the survey. A copy of the survey report is available at [www.worc.org](http://www.worc.org).

WORC is a network of grassroots organizations from seven states that include 10,000 members and 45 local community groups. WORC helps its member groups succeed by providing training and by coordinating regional issue campaigns. Members are farmers, ranchers, and consumers.

WCC is an alliance for community action empowering people to protect and enhance their quality of life in western Colorado.

Harstad Strategic Research is a research firm specializing in political polling, PR research, market research, and strategic consulting.

#### *Survey methodology*

Harstad Strategic Research conducted the survey July 28-30, 2009. The results of this survey are based upon 504 random telephone interviews among registered voters in Colorado’s 3rd Congressional District, using a voter list. The random sample of 504 has a worst-case 95% confidence interval of plus or minus 4.4% about any one reported percentage.

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