

## MEMORANDUM

**TO: EVERGLADES FOUNDATION**  
**FROM: DAVE SACKETT**  
**RE: KEY FINDINGS FROM A STATEWIDE SURVEY OF VOTER ATTITUDES  
IN FLORIDA**  
**DATE: JANUARY 14, 2012**

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The Tarrance Group is pleased to present the Everglades Foundation with the key findings from a survey of voter attitudes in Florida. These key findings are based on telephone interviews with N=607 “likely” registered voters throughout the state. Responses to this survey were gathered January 10-12, 2012 and the confidence interval associated with a sample of this type is  $\pm 4.1\%$ .

For analytical purposes, the data from this study has been compared to the data from a similar study conducted February 13-14, 2011 with a sample size of N=607 likely registered voters throughout the state of Florida.

### **Voters Overwhelmingly Support Governor Scott’s Everglades Funding Increase; Believe State Environmental Policies are *not* Strong Enough.**

- Almost two-thirds of Florida voters, sixty-two percent (62%) believe that the state’s current environmental policies are not strong enough and haven’t done a good job of protecting the environment. Only 28% of Florida voters believe that the state’s environmental policies have gone too far and hurt the state economically.
- There has been a slight increase in the level of importance that voters place on Everglades restoration over the past eleven months. There are now 69% of voters across the state who indicate that Everglades restoration is “very important” to them personally.
- There has been a significant increase in the view that funding for Everglades restoration should be increased. This view has risen by +13 points over the past eleven months, and sixty-four percent (64%) of Florida voters now believe that funding for Everglades restoration should be increased. Much of this growth has come among partisan Republicans, and there are now a plurality of Republican voters that believe funding for Everglades restoration should be increased.
- There is solid majority support for Governor Scott’s proposal to increase funding for Everglades restoration to \$40 million. Support for this proposal stands at 58%, with only 34% opposed and 8% unsure.

- Respondents were exposed to two different “competing” views on the impact that current environmental policies are having on the state of Florida and asked which view comes closest to their own. The specific arguments that respondents were exposed to are profiled below:

*Some people say/*

*Other people say that our environmental laws have gone too far and hurt our state’s ability to grow economically and create jobs.*

*Other people say/*

*Some people say that our environmental laws are not strong enough and haven’t done a good enough job of protecting our state’s lakes, rivers and streams from pollution.*

- Less than three in ten Florida voters, twenty-eight percent (28%), agree with the contention that environmental laws in Florida have gone too far and hurt the state’s ability to grow economically. Fully sixty-two percent (62%) of Florida voters believe that current environmental laws are not strong enough.
- The view that current environmental laws are not strong enough is fairly pervasive throughout the electorate. With the exception of voters in the Panhandle (who are evenly split) a majority of voters in every other region of the state indicate that they believe that current environmental laws are not strong enough. This view stands at approximately 65% among voters in both the Tampa and Orlando markets, and rises to 75% among voters in the Miami DMA.
- Fifty-nine percent (59%) of men believe that the current environmental laws are not strong enough, and this view rises to sixty-five percent (65%) among women voters. A solid majority of voters of all ages also indicate they believe that the current laws are not strong enough, and this view stands at fifty-six percent (56%) among seniors.

**Support Strong for Everglades Restoration in Every Region of State & Among Republicans, Democrats and Independents**

- Respondents were asked, using a ten-point scale, to indicate how important the issue of Everglades restoration is to them personally. The results are profiled below:

	<u>Feb. ‘11</u>	<u>Jan. ‘12</u>
Mean level of importance	7.13	7.35
Extremely important	26%	30%
Very important	39%	39%
Somewhat important	23%	21%
Not important	11%	9%

- As you can see from the chart above, there has been a slight increase in the importance that Florida voters place on Everglades restoration over the past 11 months. This increase has come in the portion of the electorate who indicates that this issue is “extremely important” to them, which now stands at thirty percent (30%.)
- The increase in level of importance has come largely among Republican voters in the state. The mean level of importance that Republican voters place on Everglades restoration has increased from a mean level of importance of 6.55 in 2011 to 7.16 at this time. There are now 26% of Republicans who indicate that Everglades restoration is extremely important to them and 36% who indicate it is very important to them.
- Seventy-five percent (75%) of Democrats now indicate that Everglades restoration is a very important issue to them, while sixty-seven percent (67%) of Independent voters and sixty-two percent (62%) of Republicans believe that Everglades restoration is very important to them.
- There are no longer significant differences in the level of importance that voters place on Everglades restoration based on demographics. The mean level of importance that voters place on this issue stands at better than 7.0 among voters in every region of the state, and is also higher than 7.0 among both men and women and voters of all ages (including seniors.)

**Protecting Floridians’ Water Supply Recognized as the Most Important Benefit of Everglades Restoration**

- Respondents were exposed to a list of seven (7) different “benefits” that come from restoring the Everglades and asked which is most important to them, and which is next most important to them. The results of this battery are profiled below:

	<u>Most Important</u>	<u>Next Most Important</u>	<u>Combined</u>
Fresh drinking water supply	43%	18%	61%
Protecting environment/open space	7%	12%	19%
Protecting endangered wildlife	7%	13%	20%
Providing flood control protection	4%	5%	9%
Saving jobs in tourism, boating, fishing	10%	15%	25%
Reducing levels of toxic pollutants	9%	16%	25%
Reducing frequency of algae blooms	5%	13%	18%

- There is a very clear belief, among Florida voters, that there is one overriding benefit of Everglades restoration – ensuring a fresh water drinking supply for six million Floridians.

This is the only one of the seven potential benefits that attracts a high amount of focus in terms of factors that matter.

- This is a unanimous view across the electorate, with 47% of Independent voters, 44% of Republicans, and 39% of Democrats indicating that this is the most important factor. None of the other factors attracts the attention of more than 13% of voters.

**Support Growing for Everglades Restoration Funding**

- Respondents were exposed to two different “competing” views on the issue of funding for Everglades restoration and asked which view comes closest to their own. The specific arguments that respondents were exposed to are profiled below:

*Some people say/*

*Other people say that funding for Everglades restoration should be increased because protecting the water supply is critical to the future economic success of the state*

*Other people say/*

*Some people say that funding for Everglades restoration must continue to be cut because the state is facing a massive budget crisis and cuts must be made to every program.*

- As you can see from the chart below, there has been a significant increase in the view that funding for Everglades restoration should be increased. The view that funding for Everglades restoration has increased by +13 points over the past eleven months, and the view that it should be cut has declined by an equal -13 points.

	<u>Feb. '11</u>	<u>Jan. '12</u>
Should be increased	51%	64%
Should be cut	41%	28%
Neither	4%	3%
Unsure	4%	4%

- The changing views of Republicans have been quite dramatic over the past eleven months. In February, 2011, only 36% of Republicans indicating that they believed that funding for Everglades restoration should be increased, and 57% indicated that they believed it should be cut. The view that funding for Everglades restoration has increased by +13 points among Republicans. A plurality of Republicans now believe that funding for Everglades restoration should be increased.