



OPINION
RESEARCH
& STRATEGY

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Lori Weigel & Karoline McGrail/ New Bridge Strategy
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RE: Communicating about Natural Climate Solutions
DATE: August 2, 2024

The bipartisan research team of New Bridge Strategy (R) and FM3 Research (D) recently conducted a national survey¹ to assess U.S. voters' views of natural climate solutions. This is the third survey in as many years we have conducted. Based on this body of research, this memorandum provides some communication guidance for those speaking to voters and the public about natural climate solutions. Through this research, we found that:

- Providing examples of Natural Climate Solutions (NCS) is necessary to help establish what NCS is for voters who are largely not familiar with this term.
- There is no need to shy away from talking about funding for Natural Climate Solutions.
- Potential NCS actions that highlight their impact on water and wetlands, wildfire and forests, and working farms and ranches having improved management tend to rise to the top of voters' priorities and resonate across party lines.
- Taking care of natural areas for future generations and the outdoor traditions is a compelling rationale for Natural Climate Solutions.
- Messages related to the co-benefits that Natural Climate Solutions have for farms and ranches are impactful, as are those related to forests and wildfires.

More specifically, the survey found...

- ***Providing examples of Natural Climate Solutions (NCS) is necessary to help establish what NCS is for voters who are largely not familiar with this term.*** The following language is what we have tested in the past few surveys in order to better establish a baseline of understanding. The specific examples matter less than the fact that they cover a range of areas that voters care about such as water/wetlands, forests, agriculture, and conservation broadly.

¹ From June 10-19, 2024, NBS and FM3 completed interviews among N=1,000 registered voters throughout the United States. The sample included 195 additional interviews completed to reach 450 voters living in counties defined by the US Census as "mostly rural" or "completely rural" who also self-describe themselves as living in a rural area or a small town. Interviews were conducted online. Quotas were set for key demographic sub-groups, such as gender, age, ethnic background and region. The confidence interval is +3.53% for the overall sample. The interval will vary for sub-groups. Due to rounding, not all totals will sum to 100%.

“Natural Climate Solutions are actions that reduce emissions and increase carbon storage in forests, farms, grasslands and wetlands. Practices that could be included are actions like...

- *Encouraging farming techniques that retain carbon in the soil, such as planting cover crops;*
- *Conserving and replanting forests;*
- *Conserving and restoring coastal wetlands; and*
- *Reducing the loss of natural areas, planting trees, and providing parks in communities.*

Efforts to expand these practices could be supported by laws and public funding approved at the federal, state, and local levels.”

- ***Do not shy away from talking about funding Natural Climate Solutions.*** Overwhelming majorities across party lines not only support NCS in concept, but support continued Congressional backing for federal funding for NCS. It is worth noting that the survey did not ask voters to increase their own taxes or ask for a trade-off with other popular programs, but broadly they tend to see this as an important use of funds.
- ***As we have seen in other research, potential NCS actions that highlight their impact on water and wetlands, wildfire and forests, and working farms and ranches having improved management tends to rise to the top of voters’ priorities and resonate across party lines.*** We tested 13 elements that could be considered by Congress in future legislation, and the table below shows the top proposals that voters would support.

<i>Natural Climate Solutions Actions – % Total Support</i>	<i>Overall</i>	<i>GOP</i>	<i>IND</i>	<i>DEM</i>
Planting trees to restore areas impacted by wildfire	95%	94%	93%	97%
Restoring coastal wetlands to help reduce the risk of flooding to communities, provide wildlife habitat and help address climate change	92%	88%	94%	96%
Providing financial incentives and programs to conserve forests, agricultural lands, wildlife habitat, wetlands, and other natural areas through voluntary land conservation agreements with farmers, ranchers, forest owners, and other willing landowners	91%	86%	90%	97%
Providing assistance to farmers adopting practices that help address climate change and help farmland better withstand extreme weather like drought and flooding	90%	85%	90%	96%
Reduce the price that farmers pay for crop insurance in return for adopting sustainable farming practices	90%	88%	90%	93%
Providing technical assistance and education to farmers and forest owners so they can learn how to incorporate climate-smart practices on their land	90%	85%	92%	95%

There are three areas of messaging that tend to resonate most with Americans voters: **Future Generations, Farms, and Forests**. Highlighting the co-benefits of Natural Climate Solutions is impactful as well. Mentioning non-climate related benefits of natural climate solutions builds support across party lines and provides a compelling rationale for supporting these actions.

- ***Taking care of natural areas for future generations and the outdoor traditions is a compelling rationale for Natural Climate Solutions.*** We tested two variations of a message about protecting our natural lands that not only store carbon but have meaning for people. Both were equally powerful reasons to support NCS, with nearly nine-in-ten saying the message is convincing as a reason to support funding Natural Climate Solutions.

“One of our most important Natural Climate Solutions is protecting the forests, coastal wetlands, and grasslands we already have. These areas help store carbon, while also providing habitat for wildlife and opportunities for hunting, fishing, hiking, and other recreation activities.” (88 percent total convincing/49 percent very convincing)

“One of our most important Natural Climate Solutions is protecting the forests, coastal wetlands, and grasslands we already have. In addition to storing carbon, these are the places that make America beautiful, and we owe it to future generations to protect them.” (87 percent total convincing/48 percent very convincing)

- ***Messages related to the co-benefits that Natural Climate Solutions have for farms and ranches are impactful.*** Mentioning the non-climate related benefits of applying Natural Climate Solutions to farms and ranches is supported across party lines and provides a compelling rationale for support. The following two messages that mention the role of farming in the economy as well as our country’s food supply were well supported. These messages are especially resonant with those who have lived or worked on a farm, and for those who do not believe in climate change.

“Farmers and ranchers not only help feed America but contribute billions to our economy and employ nearly one-in-ten American workers. They are also an important part of the solution to preserving our climate, through sustainable practices that keep carbon in the soil and boost crop yields which benefits farmers financially.” (89 percent total convincing/49 percent very convincing)

“Farmers who voluntarily take actions to protect local food supplies and make their farms more sustainable should be rewarded for adopting these common-sense practices. Those actions will not only benefit food supplies, but help reduce emissions, improve soil health, and make farms better able to withstand flooding and drought.” (87 percent total convincing/47 percent very convincing)

- **Three messages in the top tier focus on forests and/or relate to wildfires.** A number of these messages are especially resonant with voters living in the Mountain Census region, with Hispanic voters and with independents.

“Forests cover 800 million acres of land in the United States and can play a key role in addressing climate change. Planting more trees, protecting the trees we already have, and managing our forests to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire can help put our forests to work in our efforts to address climate change.” (88 percent total convincing/51 percent very convincing)

“The best climate solutions are ones that incentivize economic growth without sacrificing a healthy, thriving environment. We can implement climate solutions like planting trees and managing wildfire without sacrificing economic growth and raising energy costs.” (86 percent total convincing/46 percent very convincing)

“Nature provides the simplest solution of all to climate change. For example, our forests can remove carbon pollution from the air naturally and at lower costs than other technological approaches. Natural climate solutions can cut or remove one-third of the world’s carbon emissions simply by protecting and restoring land and water resources.” (87 percent total convincing/45 percent very convincing)
