

# Poll: Most Nevadans favor more funds for environment

By Doug McMillan/Gazette-Journal

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Nearly eight out of 10 Nevadans surveyed in a statewide poll said the state should do more to protect the environment and preserve wildlife habitat.

The poll bodes well for a \$47.2 million bond election scheduled in 1990 to improve the state park system and buy water rights for Lahontan Valley wetlands, said Dave Livermore, Great Basin director for the Nature Conservancy, which commissioned the poll.

The conservancy, a national organization that acquires private property for open space and environmental protection, paid for the survey by Pulse Unlimited, a national polling firm.

Of 450 people questioned in a random telephone survey in April, 78 percent said the Legislature should do more to protect wildlife habitat, with 61 percent saying they felt strongly about such protections.

Asked if the state should buy water rights for wildlife habitat, 74 percent said yes, with 60 percent strongly agreeing.

The poll, which had a margin of error of 5 percent, was conducted while the 1989 Legislature was wrestling with SB189. Passed in the session's final hours, the bill will ask voters in November 1990 to approve money to expand Nevada's state park system and help save the shrinking Stillwater marshes and other dwindling Lahontan Valley wetlands.

The bond issue includes \$5 million to buy water rights for Lahontan Valley wetlands, which support 60 percent of the Pacific Flyway's migrating ducks and 30 percent of its migrating shorebirds.

The bond issue grew from \$36 million to \$47.2 million as lawmakers from Washoe and Clark counties jockeyed to add projects for their respective areas, but Livermore said he doesn't think it will be too big for voters to swallow.

The Nature Conservancy's poll shows "people are wildly enthusiastic about saving wildlife," he said.

He called SB189 the most significant conservation legislation Nevada has passed in the last 20 years.

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## Bond issue

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"There's been very strong support for preserving the wetlands and that's pretty much nationwide," said Sen. Virgil Getto, R-Fallon, who introduced SB189.

Just as important, Getto said, is that the measure would pump much-needed dollars into the state park system, which he feels the Legislature has sadly neglected.

The last bond measure for state parks passed more than a decade ago.

"It's been 12 years since we put any money into the state parks," Getto said. "I'm not running down the parks department, but you realize how poorly developed our parks are when you go to other states and see theirs. I think it's time Nevada did something for its state park system."

In the Nature Conservancy poll, 72 percent of those surveyed said the legislature should upgrade the state park system, including 55 percent who felt strongly about the issue.

Other findings included:

■ Nearly eight out of 10 people feel the state needs more laws to protect the environment, or more vigorous enforcement of existing laws, or both.

■ 59 percent said the Legislature is not doing enough to protect the environment; only 1.3 percent said it was doing enough.

■ 75 percent said they are as concerned about wildlife and natural resource issues as they are about social and economic needs.

■ 85 percent said they would be more likely to vote for a state or local candidate who strongly supports preserving the environment, including 66 percent who felt strongly about it.

■ 89 percent said saving threatened and endangered species should be a top priority of government and private groups.

■ An additional tax on gaming was the preferred method of financing wildlife and parks projects, by a margin of 66 percent to 23 percent. A bond issue was the second most favorite funding source, by a 55 percent to 26 percent margin.

"There is some indication that the larger a bond issue gets, the harder it will be to pass," Livermore said, "but if enough funding is spent on promoting it, this may not be a problem."

He said the Nature Conservancy will try to raise \$150,000 for a media campaign pushing for passage of the bond issue next year.