



OPINION  
RESEARCH  
& STRATEGY

**TO** Interested Parties

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FM3 Research

**RE:** Oregon Voter Views of State Investment in Wildfire Prevention

**DATE** March 11, 2021

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Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3) recently completed a survey<sup>1</sup> of Oregon voters assessing their opinions of potential State government actions to address wildfire risks and impacts. The study found that Oregon voters rank risk of wildfire as a key concern and are especially worried about impacts on human life and homes and place a high priority on state action to address more frequent and severe fires. **Majorities are willing to pay as much as \$50 per year to address wildfire risk – and a strong majority supports adding a fee to homeowners' insurance for these purposes.**

Key specific findings of the survey include:

- **Oregon voters are broadly concerned with wildfires and their impacts.** Nearly seven in ten (68%) are "extremely" or "very concerned" about the risk of wildfires – a level of concern essentially equivalent to the cost of healthcare (71%) and just behind homelessness (86%) and the economic impacts of the coronavirus (88%). As shown in Figure 1 on the next page, nearly three-quarters (74%) are "extremely" or "very concerned" about destruction of homes, and more than two-thirds are concerned about loss of life and harms to the health of Oregon forests and to wildlife habitat as a result of wildfires. Majorities are concerned about impacts on parks and natural areas, and harm to people who work outdoors as well.

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<sup>1</sup> **Methodology:** From Feb. 22-March 1, 2021, FM3 completed 845 interviews with randomly-selected, likely November 2022 voters in Oregon. Interviews were conducted online and via landlines and cell phones. The margin of sampling error for the full sample is  $\pm 3.4\%$  at the 95% confidence interval. Due to rounding, not all totals will sum to 100%.

**Figure 1: Voter Concern about Specific Impacts of Wildfires in the State**

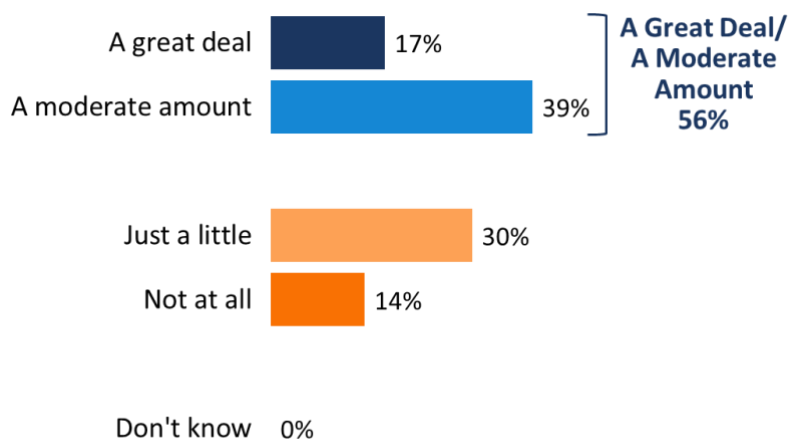
*The following are some of the impacts that wildfires may have on Oregon’s land, environment, economy, and people. Please tell me how concerned you personally are about that potential impact of wildfires in Oregon: extremely concerned, very concerned, somewhat concerned, or not concerned?*

Impact	% Extremely/Very Concerned
Destruction of homes	74%
Loss of life	68%
Harm to the health of Oregon forests	68%
Destruction of fish and wildlife habitat	67%
Loss of businesses and jobs	64%
Unhealthy levels of air pollution	61%
Destruction or loss of access to parks and recreational areas	53%
Harm to people who are required to work outdoors	53%

- Most Oregon voters say last year's wildfires had an impact on them personally.** As shown in Figure 2 below, 56% of Oregon voters felt there was "a great deal" or "moderate amount" of personal impact on them during the 2020 wildfire season. Lower-income and rural Oregonians were more likely than their counterparts to say that the fires had a large impact.

**Figure 2: Personal Impact of Last Year's Wildfires**

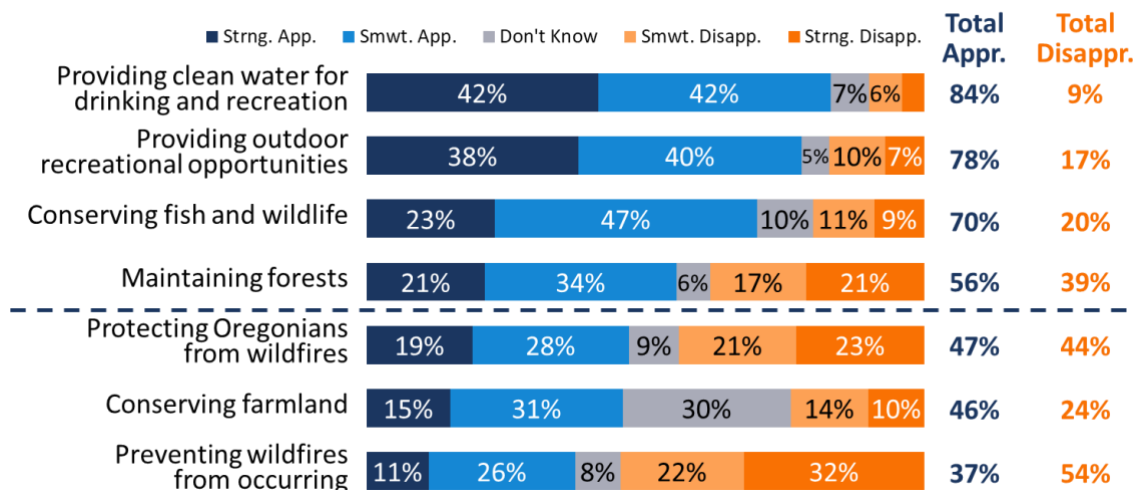
*How much would you say you were personally impacted by last year’s wildfires in Oregon?*



- Voters are split on State government’s work in protecting Oregonians from wildfires – and express dissatisfaction with its work to prevent fires.** As shown in Figure 3 below, 47% of voters approve of State government’s job protecting people from fires, while nearly as many disapprove (44%). At the same time, voters disapprove of the State’s wildfire prevention efforts by a 17-point margin.

**Figure 3: State of Oregon Approval Ratings**

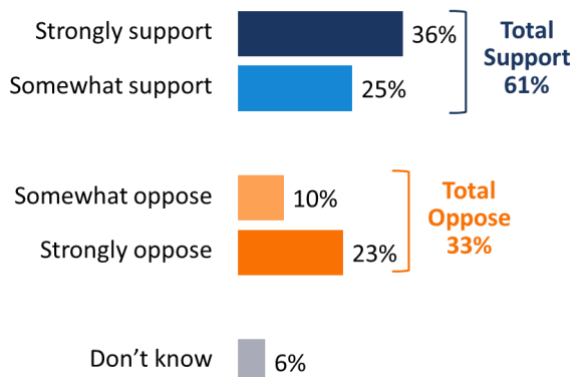
*Please tell me whether you generally approve or disapprove of the job Oregon State government is doing in the following areas.*



- Three in five Oregon voters support an annual fee on home insurance policies to fund expanded efforts to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires.** As shown in Figure 4 on the next page, there is nearly twice as much support for the proposal to add a \$10 annual fee to homeowner’s insurance (61%) as there is opposition (32%). Support for the idea cuts across major demographic and geographic groups, including:
  - 77% of Democrats and 67% of independents;
  - 71% of voters under 50 and 52% of those age 50 and over;
  - 67% of college-educated voters and 55% of those without a college degree;
  - 72% of voters who live in cities, 58% of those in suburbs, 64% of those in small towns and a 48% plurality of those in rural areas;
  - 60% of voters in the Medford media market, 66% in the Bend market, 59% in the Eugene market and 61% in the Portland market; and
  - 57% of homeowners and 74% of renters.

**Figure 4: Support for a Home Insurance Fee to Reduce Wildfire Risk**

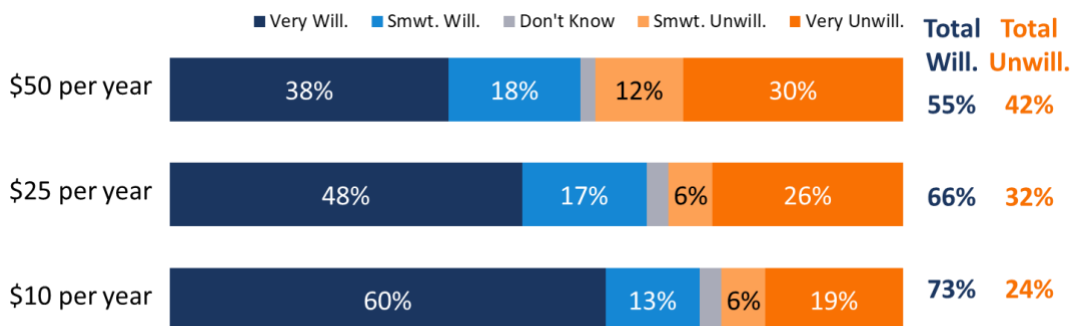
*Some people have proposed that the State of Oregon should expand efforts to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires to homes, lives, and water supplies, funded by a \$10 per year addition to home insurance policies. Does this sound like something you would support or oppose?*



- In fact, voters are willing to pay more than \$10 – with a majority open to as much as \$50 per year for wildfire prevention policies.** Fully 55% of Oregon voters said they would be willing to pay an additional \$50 per year; fully two-thirds (66%) are willing at \$25 per year – including 48% who are “very willing” at that price point. And when asked outside the context of home insurance policies, fully 73% are willing to pay \$10 per year (and 60% are “very willing” to do so).

**Figure 5: Willingness to Pay for Wildfire Prevention**

*In general, would you be willing to pay \_\_\_\_\_ in additional taxes or fees if it were dedicated to fund the kinds of wildfire prevention projects we have been discussing?*



- Support for the policy remains strong after pro and con arguments.** Voters were provided a series of statements from supporters and opponents of the policy, and support remained steadily over three in five voters, as detailed in Figure 6 on the next page. This data shows that in addition to being broad and strong, support for the policy is durable in the face of a public debate on the issue.

**Figure 6: Progression of Support for a Fee on Home Insurance After Messaging**

Opinion	% Support	% Oppose	% Undecided
Initial Opinion	61%	33%	6%
After Positive Messaging	68%	27%	5%
After Positive and Negative Messaging	66%	28%	5%

In sum, the survey results show that voters want action to address wildfire risks in the Oregon and are willing to help provide funding to make it happen. Oregon voters are highly concerned with wildfires and their impacts, and most report at least some impact on them personally. They are not satisfied with the State's current work preventing wildfires, and back expanded investment on the issue. **An overwhelming majority supports a fee on home insurance policies to support wildfire prevention efforts, and that support holds strong in the face of pro and con arguments.** In fact, Oregon voters are willing to make an even more significant investment to address wildfires – with a solid majority willing to pay as much as an additional \$50 per year.