



## PRESS RELEASE

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### Virginians Want Commonwealth's Lands and Waterways Protected

***-- Survey Findings: 4 of 5 Virginians Say Natural Resources Should Be Top Funding Priority***

***-- Looking Ahead, Virginians Believe Natural Resources Should Be Included in Next General Obligation Bond Funding***

**RICHMOND, Va.** – A new statewide survey, conducted by the Wason Center for Public Policy at Christopher Newport University in collaboration with VIRGINIAforever, finds 81 percent of Virginians – or four out of five – believe that protecting Virginia's natural lands and parks, rivers and streams and the Chesapeake Bay should be a top funding priority for the Commonwealth. Led by Dr. Quentin Kidd, Vice Provost and Director of the CNU's Wason Center for Public Policy, the survey included 1,062 registered Virginian voters.

The survey also finds that 89 percent of respondents expressed that even in tight budget times, funding for restoring Virginia's rivers, streams and the Chesapeake Bay, and conserving forests and parkland should be safeguarded. Additionally, 72 percent of respondents indicated that restoring the Commonwealth's rivers, the Chesapeake Bay, and protecting its lands will help strengthen the Virginia economy.

"The General Assembly has limited revenue with which to fund countless public policy areas, and this year the budget is tighter than ever," said Bob Dunn, chairman of VIRGINIAforever. "The membership of VIRGINIAforever, a coalition that advocates for state funding for land conservation and water quality improvements, is extremely pleased to see that a vast majority of Virginians believe funding to protect our lands and parks, rivers and streams and the Bay is critical. This affirms why the VIRGINIAforever membership works so hard to ensure that our lawmakers uphold the constitutional obligation to protect the Commonwealth's natural resources."

The survey also assessed priorities for a General Obligation Bond, a way that the state can borrow money to finance public works projects. Eighty-two percent of respondents indicated that funding for protection of natural areas, forests, parks and clean water should be included in a General Obligation Bond, if considered by the General Assembly. In fact, funding for natural resources was shown to be a higher priority than funding for higher education facilities and for transportation maintenance and construction.

“The last time a General Obligation Bond was approved in Virginia was in 2002,” said Kidd. “Virginians are looking ahead for how dollars should be prioritized if the legislature considers one this year. In our survey, Virginians expressed that natural resources should be a priority for this funding.”

The survey took place from January 11 through January 23. Margin of error for the survey is +/- 3.0 percent at the 95 percent level of confidence. To view the full contents of the CNU survey, please visit <http://cnu.edu/cpp/>.

**About VIRGINIA*forever***

VIRGINIA*forever* is a unique, diverse coalition of businesses, environmental organizations and outdoor enthusiasts that advocates for state funding for water quality improvements and land conservation across the Commonwealth. We are the only statewide organization that has a primary focus on increasing funding for natural resources protection. For more information, please visit [www.virginiaforever.org](http://www.virginiaforever.org).

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