

**Fairbank,  
Maslin,  
Maullin &  
Associates**

*Opinion Research &  
Public Policy Analysis*

TO: Interested Parties

FROM: David Metz and Shakari Byerly  
Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates

RE: Key Findings From New Jersey Voter Survey

DATE: April 23, 2009

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Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates (FMM&A) recently completed a statewide voter survey in New Jersey to assess support for a potential \$600 million bond measure to be placed before voters in November 2009. **The results of the survey show strong voter support for the bond, and indicate that it has an excellent chance of winning approval.** Fully 59 percent of voters back the measure after hearing draft ballot language and support increases to 67 percent after voters hear more information, including the annual cost to the average household. The strong support for the measure is particularly noteworthy given the high level of concern about the economy evident in the survey data; New Jersey voters view the measure as an investment well worth making even in difficult economic times.

Among the key specific findings of the survey are the following:

- **A solid 59-percent majority of voters back the bond measure upon hearing the initial ballot question.** At the outset of the survey, respondents were read the following draft ballot question for a \$600 million bond measure:

*"Shall the Green Acres, Farmland, Blue Acres, and Historic Preservation Bond Act of 2009, which authorizes the State to issue bonds in the amount of \$600 million to provide moneys for:*

- (1) the acquisition and development of lands for recreation and conservation purposes,*
- (2) the preservation of farmland for agricultural or horticultural use and production,*
- (3) the acquisition, for recreation and conservation purposes, of properties that are prone to or have incurred flood or storm damage, and*
- (4) funding historic preservation projects;*

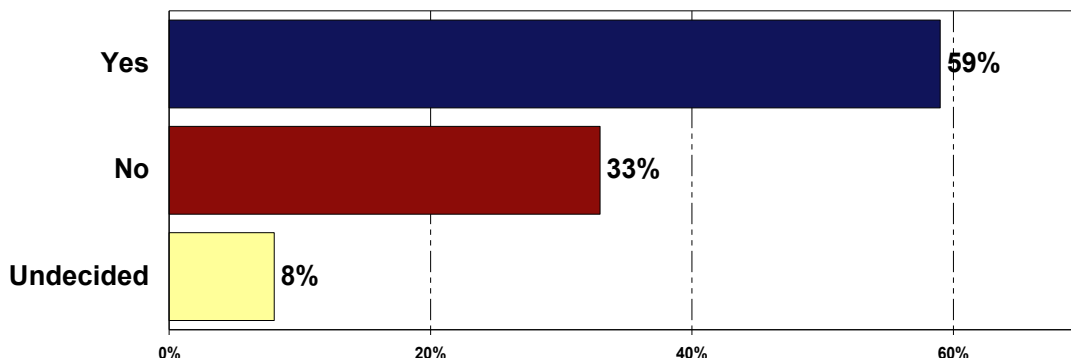
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and providing the ways and means to pay the interest on the debt and also to pay and discharge the principal thereof, be approved?"

As shown in **Figure 1** below, nearly three in five voters (59 percent) back the measure based on this ballot question, while one in three are opposed. Supporters outnumber opponents by a nearly two-to-one margin.

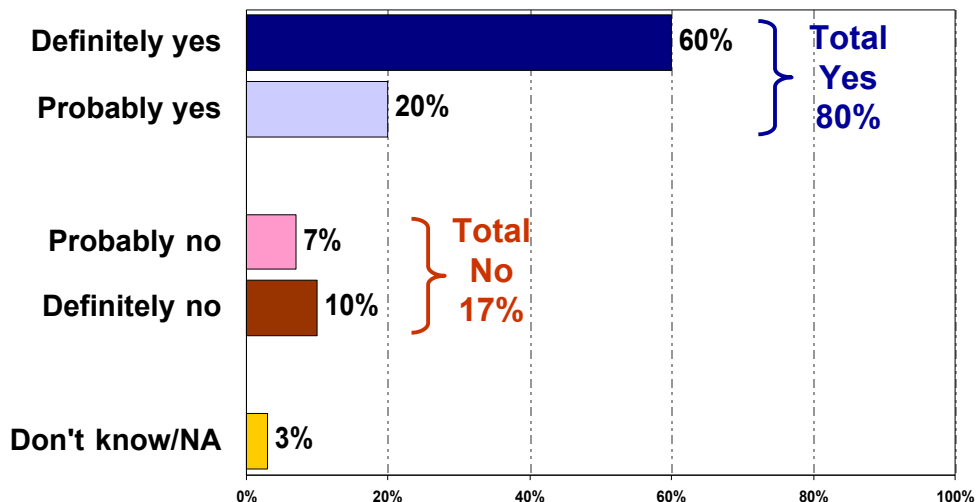
**FIGURE 1:  
Initial Support for a \$600 Million Conservation Bond Measure**



The measure draws support from most major subgroups of the New Jersey electorate, including:

- 61% of women and 57% of men;
  - 66% of Democrats, 56% of independents, and 52% of Republicans;
  - 60% of voters both under age 50 and age 50 and over;
  - 60% of voters with a college degree and 58% of those without one; and
  - 57% of whites and 67% of voters of color.
- **By a four-to-one margin, voters would like their state legislator to place the measure on the ballot.** Whatever their position on the measure, New Jersey voters would like the opportunity to vote on it. As shown in **Figure 2**, an overwhelming 80 percent majority of New Jersey voters call on their state legislator to place the measure before the state’s voters – including three in five who say that they “definitely” want their legislator to take such action.

**FIGURE 2:  
Voters’ View of Whether Their State Legislator Should Vote to Place the Measure on the Ballot**



- **Support for the measure is strong despite widespread concern about New Jersey’s economy.** The broad initial backing for the measure is particularly impressive given voters’ concern about the economy. When voters are asked to express their level of concern over the economy and unemployment, 89 percent rate it an “extremely” or “very” serious problem. Despite this economic climate, however, voters support increased investment in conservation.
- **Backing for the bond measure rests on strong positive perceptions of the conservation programs it would fund.** New Jersey voters have very positive perceptions of the Green Acres Program, rated favorably by 59 percent of those polled and unfavorably by just seven percent. Though they are less well known, voters also have positive views of the Farmland Preservation Program (49% favorable/5% unfavorable) and the New Jersey Historic Trust (39% favorable/5% unfavorable).
- **Support for the bond measure increases after voters receive more information, including its cost impact.** After hearing the initial ballot question, voters were given more information about what the funds would be used for and told that it would cost the average household \$16 per year. In light of this information, the overall percentage of voters in support of the measure actually increased from 59 percent to 67 percent. This indicates that voters view the cost of the bond as reasonable and affordable.
- **Voters’ highest priorities for spending from the measure are programs to improve water quality.** Survey respondents were asked to evaluate the importance of a variety of projects that might be funded by the bond measure, as detailed below in **Figure 3**. Respondents assigned the highest priority to programs to protect water quality – particularly drinking water. However, solid majorities also labeled the protection of farmland, habitat, and natural areas and the creation of green jobs as very important priorities.

**FIGURE 3:**  
**Rating the Importance of Projects to be Funded by the Bond Measure**  
*(Split Sampled; Proportion “Extremely” or “Very” Important)*

Project	% Extremely/ Very Impt.
Protecting sources of drinking water	76%
Protecting water quality in rivers, lakes and streams	74%
Preserving floodplain areas along rivers to protect water quality and alleviate costly flood damages	65%
Protecting fish and wildlife habitat	59%

**FIGURE 3:**  
**Rating the Importance of Projects to be Funded by the Bond Measure**  
*(Continued)*

Project	% Extremely/ Very Impt.
Protecting forests	<b>59%</b>
Preserving working farms	<b>57%</b>
Creating green jobs	<b>56%</b>
Preventing overdevelopment	<b>54%</b>
Preserving natural areas	<b>51%</b>

Taken together, the survey results are highly encouraging. Despite significant apprehension about the economy, a solid majority of voters support a \$600 million conservation bond for New Jersey. Solid levels of support for the measure rest upon a broadly shared value for New Jersey's natural resources and the highly favorable reputations of existing conservation and historic preservation initiatives.

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**Methodology:** From April 2-5, 2009, Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates conducted a telephone survey of 600 registered voters in New Jersey likely to cast ballots in the November 2009 election. The margin of error for the statewide sample is +/- 4.4 percentage points; margins of error for subgroups within the sample will be higher. Percentages may not add to 100% because of rounding.