

Small Business Owners Favor Regulations to Protect Clean Water

RESULTS FROM A SCIENTIFIC NATIONAL PHONE POLL OF SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS

July 2014

Top Finding:

80% of small business owners favor federal rules for clean water to protect upstream headwaters as proposed in the Environmental Protection Agency's new Waters of the U.S. rule.

Poll report produced by:



AMERICAN
SUSTAINABLE
BUSINESS
COUNCIL

Summary

Recent pollutant spills in the West Virginia's Elk River and the Dan River in North Carolina, as well as the ongoing drought in California, have brought the economic importance of water security to the forefront of policy discussions. The major policy debate on clean water currently focuses on clarifying that the proposed Waters of the U.S. rule from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) should apply to headwaters, streams and rivers that flow seasonally or after rain, and certain wetlands, all under the Clean Water Act. A new nationwide telephone poll of small business owners found strong support for the new EPA proposal among business owners of all political affiliations.

More broadly, the poll found that small business owners assign high importance to clean water for their own operations and believe that government regulations are needed to safeguard it.

The views of small business owners about government protections for clean water are significant because these business owners are essential employers in their communities and many are also producers of American-made goods.

For many business owners, a lack of clean water poses a real risk to their own operations, with two-thirds expressing concern that water pollution could hurt their business. More than seven in ten small business owners – including majorities of Democrats, Republicans and independents – believe clean water protections help spur economic growth, compared to only six percent who believe they are too burdensome.

Respondents to this statistically significant poll were predominately Republican, as are the majority of small business owners nationally. Among the owners surveyed, 43% self-identified as Republicans or independent-leaning Republicans, 28% as Democrats or independent-leaning Democrats, and 19% as independents. The nationwide live telephone survey of small business owners (with 2 to 99 employees) was conducted by Lake Research Partners, June 4-10, 2014.

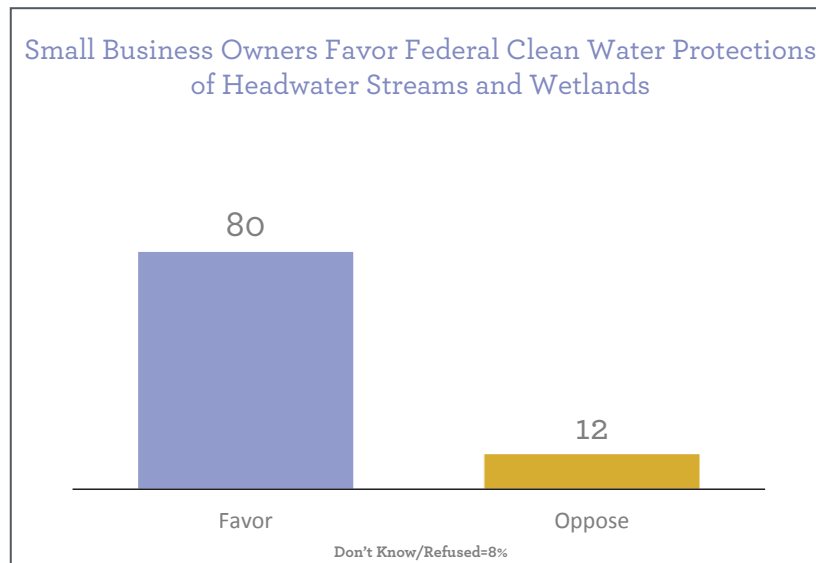
Key Findings

- 80% of small business owners favor federal rules to protect upstream headwaters and wetlands as proposed in the EPA's new Waters of the US rule.
- Support for clean water was broad and deep regardless of political affiliation. A plurality of small business owners are Republican, but in this case 78% of Republicans and 73% of independents, joined 91% of Democrats in supporting the clarifying of federal rules to apply to headland waters and wetlands.
- 71% of small business owners agree that clean water is necessary for jobs and a healthy economy.
- 67% are concerned that water pollution could hurt their business in the future.
- 62% agree that government regulation is needed to prevent water pollution.
- 61% believe that government safeguards for water are good for businesses and local communities. 60% believe that complying with clean water regulations is more economical than risking harm from neglecting safety practices.

Detailed Findings

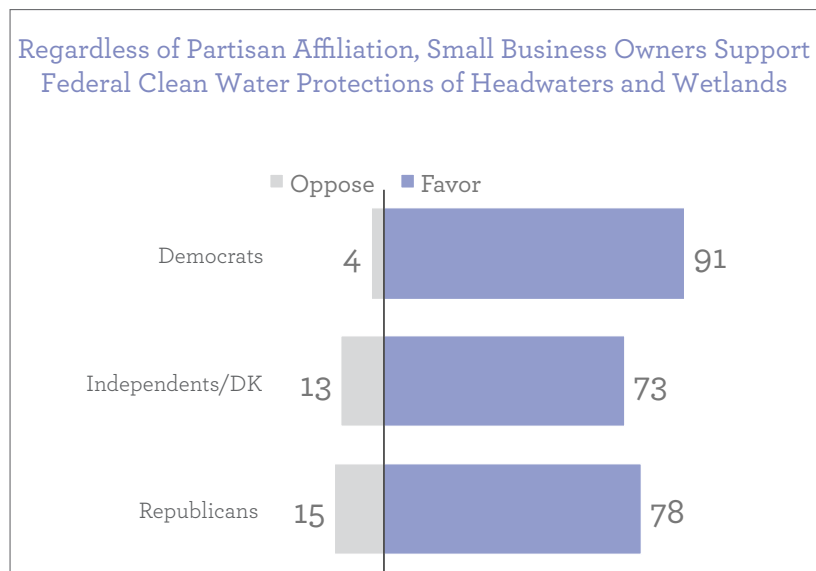
Small Business Owners Want Federal Protections to Include Headwater Streams and Wetlands

When told that a third of American waters, including those that flow into drinking water sources, are below quality standards due to upstream pollution, and that pollution-filtering, flood-preventing wetlands are also endangered, 80 percent of business owners said they agree federal rules protecting lakes and rivers should also protect headwater streams and wetlands. This question was designed to measure opinions about the intent of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed rule called Waters of the U.S.

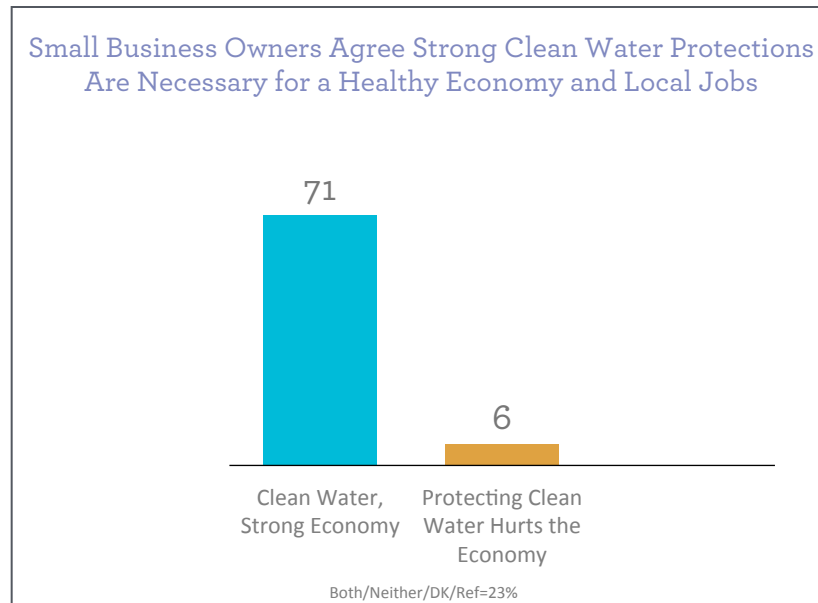


Small Business Owners of all Political Views Support Federal Protection of Headwater Streams and Wetlands

More than three-fourths of Republican small business owners – even more than independents – and almost all Democratic small business owners want federal clean water protections to cover headwater streams and wetlands as well as lakes and rivers.

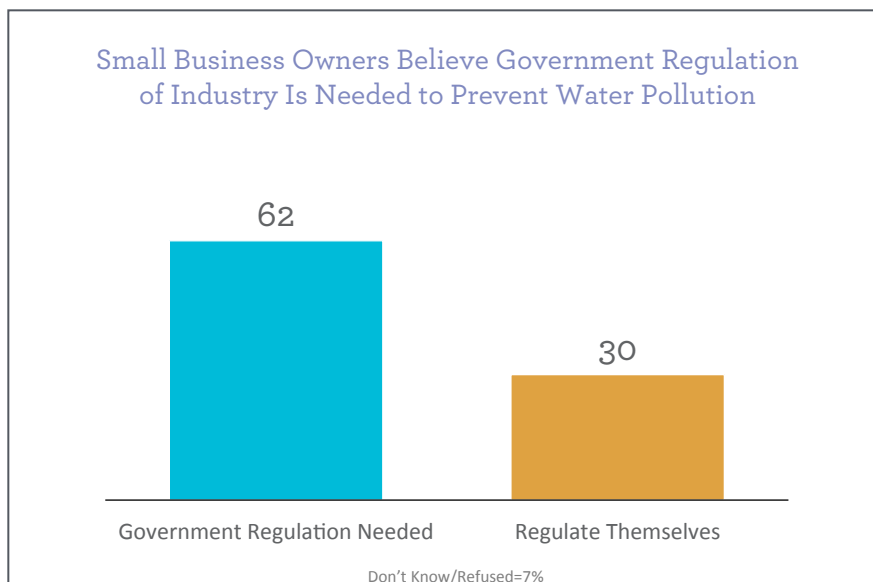


A Healthy Economy and Local Jobs Depend on Strong Regulations to Protect Clean Water



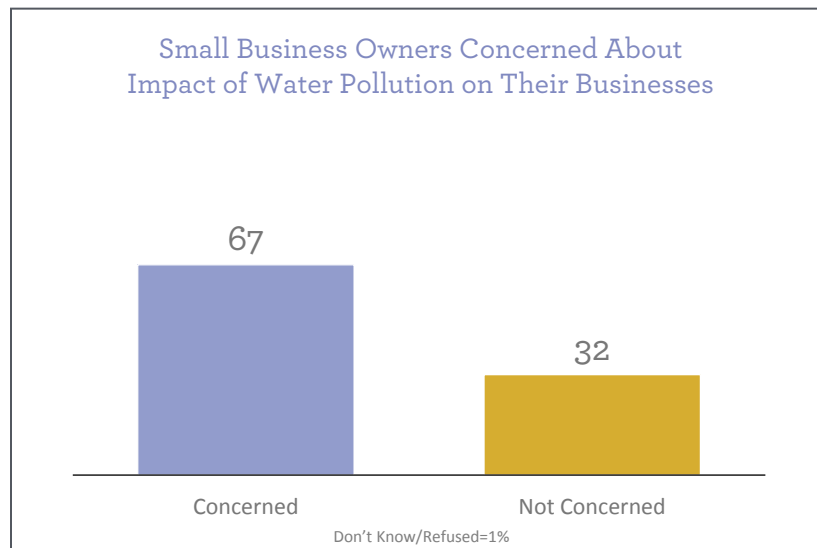
Government Regulation of Industry Is Necessary to Prevent Water Pollution

By a margin of more than 2 to 1, small business owners believe government regulation is needed to prevent water pollution. Fewer than a third of small business owners believe we should rely on industries to regulate themselves.



Small Business Owners Fear Effects of Water Pollution

When asked to think about the potential impact to their businesses from water pollution in the future, small business owners expressed concern by a margin of 2:1. Only one-third were not concerned.



Small Business Owners Get Specific about Government's Role in Protecting Water Supply

To ensure that all surveyed small business owners were responding to exactly the same arguments, they were read two arguments, pro and con, about the effect of the government's clean water regulations on businesses and the economy.

Pro-regulation: "Safeguards" Statement*

"Water contamination hurts businesses and the bottom line. Releases of chemicals into a local water supply can shut down all the businesses in a community, derailing operations and hurting businesses' reputations. Businesses that endanger local water supplies should be required to implement clean water safeguards and pay for cleanup costs, for the sake of all local businesses and community well-being."

Anti-regulation Statement

"Overregulation by government agencies hurts businesses by forcing them to make costly, unnecessary changes to their business practices or else pay steep fines. Clean water regulations will drown businesses in bureaucratic rules that do not take small businesses into account and will unacceptably hurt the bottom line."

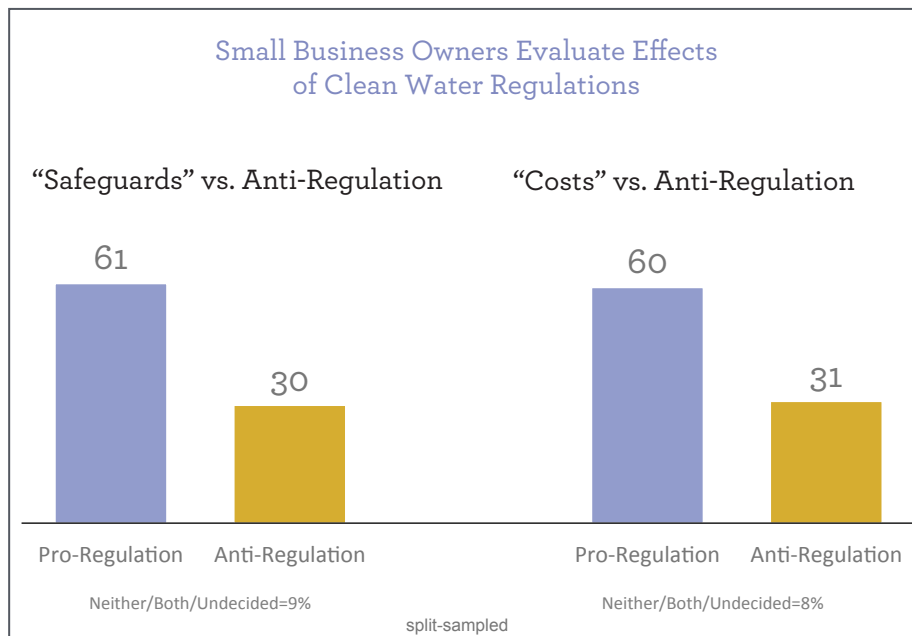
*Split sample

Pro-regulation: "Costs" Statement*

"It may seem that a business can save money by neglecting safety practices that prevent water contamination. But spills and other industrial accidents happen, costing the businesses involved millions in lost revenues and liability, and disrupting the lives of customers and employees. On the whole, it is more economical to comply with regulations that prevent water contamination than to risk a catastrophic loss."

NATIONAL POLL: Small Business Owners Favor Regulations to Protect Clean Water

When asked to consider equally weighted arguments both for and against regulation, clear majorities of small business owners supported clean water regulations.



Like the American public in general, small business owners place a high value on clean water. For their businesses and the economy overall, they see clean water as key to success and they strongly support government efforts to protect it.

Methodology

Results for this scientific poll are based on a nationwide live telephone survey of 555 owners of for-profit small businesses in the U.S. with 2 to 99 employees, conducted by Lake Research Partners, June 4-10, 2014. The data were weighted slightly by gender, region, party identification, ethnicity and business size to match the sample of small business owners to the national population of small business owners. The survey’s margin of error is +/-4.2%.

Toplines

1. Just to confirm, are you the owner of a “for-profit” business? (IF NO then terminate code 4; IF YES then continue.) And as owner do you handle the day-to-day business management and operations or not?

Yes	100%
No	0%

2. How many people are directly employed by your business, including yourself?

TERMINATE IF OVER 99 EMPLOYEES OR UNDER 2 EMPLOYEES

2-4 Employees	42
5-9 Employees	28
10-19 Employees	16
20-49 Employees	9
50-99 Employees	5

Now I’m going to read you some different environmental problems that some businesses are concerned about. For each one, speaking as a business owner, please tell me if you would be VERY concerned about the impact it could have on your business in the future, SOMEWHAT concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned about the impact it could have on your business in the future.

3. water pollution

Very concerned	42
Somewhat concerned	25
Not too concerned	17
Not at all concerned	15
Don’t Know/Refused	1

Concerned	67
Not concerned	32

And now thinking about these different issues, for each one, please tell me if you think we should rely on industries to regulate themselves, or if government regulation is needed.

4. preventing water pollution productivity and customer satisfaction.

Regulate themselves	30
Government regulation needed	62
Don't Know/Refused	7

Water for drinking and commercial use in the U.S. is generally of high quality, but there have been instances recently where pipelines have burst and other disasters have contaminated an entire region's water supply.

5. Please tell me which of the following statements comes closer to your own views.

ROTATE STATEMENTS

Strong clean water protections are necessary to maintain a healthy economy and create local jobs

OR

Clean water regulations are too burdensome and are hurting the economy and local jobs

Clean water, strong economy	71
Protecting clean water hurts the economy	6
(Both)	11
(Neither)	6
(Don't Know/Undecided)	6
(Refused)	0

6. SSA: Next, I'd like to read you two different statements about the role of the GOVERNMENT in ensuring the cleanliness and safety of the water supply. Of the two, please tell me which statement is closer to your own views.
ROTATE STATEMENTS

[Statement A: SAFEGUARDS] Water contamination hurts businesses and the bottom line. Releases of chemicals into a local water supply can shut down all the businesses in a community, derailing operations and hurting businesses' reputations. Businesses that endanger local water supplies should be required to implement clean water safeguards and pay for cleanup costs, for the sake of all local businesses and community well-being.

[Statement B: ANTI-REGULATION] Overregulation by government agencies hurts businesses by forcing them to make costly, unnecessary changes to their business practices or else pay steep fines. Clean water regulations will drown businesses in bureaucratic rules that do not take small businesses into account and will unacceptably hurt the bottom line.

[IF STATEMENT A OR B] Is that much closer or only somewhat closer to your view?

Pro-safeguards – much closer	35
Pro-safeguards – somewhat closer	26
Anti-regulation – somewhat closer	13
Anti-regulation – much closer	16
(Neither/Both/Undecided)	9
Pro-safeguards	61
Anti-regulation	30

7. SSB: Next, I'd like to read you two different statements about the role of the GOVERNMENT in ensuring the cleanliness and safety of the water supply. Of the two, please tell me which statement is closer to your own views.
ROTATE STATEMENTS

[Statement A: PRO-REGULATION/COSTS] It may seem that a business can save money by neglecting safety practices that prevent water contamination. But spills and other industrial accidents happen, costing the businesses involved millions in lost revenues and liability, and disrupting the lives of customers and employees. On the whole, it is more economical to comply with regulations that prevent water contamination than to risk a catastrophic loss.

[Statement B: ANTI-REGULATION] Overregulation by government agencies hurts businesses by forcing them to make costly, unnecessary changes to their business practices or else pay steep fines. Clean water regulations will drown businesses in bureaucratic rules that do not take small businesses into account and will unacceptably hurt the bottom line.

[IF STATEMENT A OR B] Is that much closer or only somewhat closer to your view?

Pro-regulation – much closer	34
Pro-regulation – somewhat closer	27
Anti-regulation – somewhat closer	14
Anti-regulation – much closer	18
(Neither/Both/Undecided)	8
Pro-regulation	60
Anti-regulation	31

8. One third of the nation’s waters do not now meet swimming and fishing water quality standards, due largely to upstream pollution in streams and wetlands. Would you favor or oppose ensuring that the federal rules that now protect our lakes and rivers also protect both the headwater streams that flow into our sources of drinking water, and the wetlands which filter pollution and prevent floods?

IF FAVOR/OPPOSE] And do you [favor/oppose] that proposal strongly or not so strongly?

Strongly Favor	45
Somewhat Favor	35
Somewhat Oppose	6
Strongly Oppose	6
(Don’t Know)	8
(Refused)	0
Favor	80
Oppose	12

Finally, I would like to ask you a few questions for statistical purposes only.

9. Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an independent, or something else?

[IF REPUBLICAN OR DEMOCRAT:] Do you consider yourself a strong (Republican/Democrat) or a not-so-strong (Republican/Democrat)?

[IF INDEPENDENT:] Would you say that you lean more toward the Republicans or more toward the Democrats?

Strong Republican	16
Not-so-strong Republican	13
Independent - lean Republican	15
Republican	43
Independent	19
Democratic	28
Strong Democrat	11
Not-so-strong Democrat	9
Independent - lean Democrat	9
(Other)	3
(DO NOT READ, BUT RECORD VOL: Libertarian)	3
(Don’t Know)	2

10. What is your age?

IF REFUSED: I am going to read you some categories. Stop me when we get to your category.

18-24 years	3
25-29	7
30-34	6
35-39	8
40-44	11
45-49	12
50-54	15
55-59	12
60-64	12
65-69	8
70-74	3
Over 75	1
Refused	0

11. Just to make sure we have a representative sample, could you please tell me whether you are from a Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish-speaking background?

[IF “NO”, ASK:] What is your race--white, black, Asian, or something else?

DO NOT READ

White/Caucasian	81
Black/African American	6
Latino/Hispanic	5
Asian/Pacific Islander	5
Native American	1
Other	1
Don't know/Refused	1

Gender

Men	67
Woman	33

Minority owned flag on file

Yes	24
No	76

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Region

New England	5
Mid-Atlantic	14
East North Central	15
West North Central	8
South Atlantic	19
East South Central	5
West South Central	11
Mountain	6
Pacific	16

Industry Code from File

Retail trade	16
Construction	15
Other services (except public administration)	13
Professional, scientific, and technical services	10
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	7
Real estate and rental and leasing	6
Health care and social assistance	5
Finance and insurance	5
Accommodation and food services	5
Manufacturing	5
Information	4
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	3
Wholesale trade	3
Educational services	2
Transportation and warehousing	2
Administrative and support and waste management and remediation services	1
Utilities	0
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	0
Management of companies and enterprises	0
Public Administration	0
Industries not classified	0
No NAICS Provided	0