



MEMORANDUM

TO: Interested Parties

FROM: Lori Weigel & Kathryn Hahne / New Bridge Strategy

DATE: April 30, 2026

RE: New Research Demonstrates Overwhelming Colorado Voter Support for Clarifying Laws Related to Floating on Rivers While Protecting Landowners from Liability

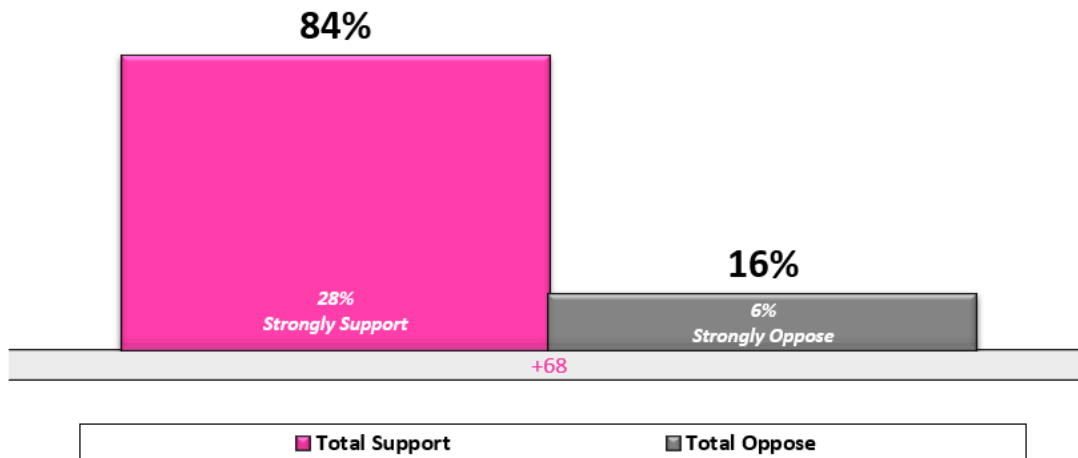
A recent statewide survey of Colorado voters¹ conducted by New Bridge Strategy demonstrates overwhelming support for clarifying current Colorado law to ensure safe and lawful passage on the state's rivers, including the ability to float, scout, and portage around obstacles only when needed to safely move downstream while ensuring limits on landowners' liability. Support is broad-based and widespread, extending across all key demographic sub-groups, including partisan affiliation and region of the state. Voters' support remains strong for the policy even after hearing points of view on both sides of the issue. The specific key findings include:

- **An overwhelming majority of Colorado voters support clarifying current law to ensure recreational use of rivers, while protecting private landowners along such rivers.** Fully 84 percent support a proposal which clarifies existing law and says that...

"People can kayak, raft, paddleboard or otherwise float on rivers if they start and finish on public land or have permission from private landowners. It also allows brief, necessary contact with stream and riverbanks or bottoms for safety—like going around obstacles—but not activities like wading, anchoring or fishing there, and it protects landowners from being sued for a floater getting hurt on their land, unless the landowner acts recklessly. The proposal does not change who owns the riverbeds, create new water rights, affect water infrastructure, or limit the government's ability to regulate waterways for safety or environmental reasons."

In fact, more than one-in-four (28 percent) strongly support such a proposal. In contrast, just 16 percent oppose it.

¹ New Bridge Strategy conducted a survey among N=411 registered voters throughout Colorado from April 23-27, 2026. Interviews were conducted online and were distributed proportionally throughout the state. Quotas were set for key demographic sub-groups, such as gender and age. The confidence interval (online equivalent of margin of error) is $\pm 5.5\%$ for the overall sample. It will vary for sub-groups.



The solid support for clarifying current Colorado law in this manner is evident across all major subgroups, including:

- 86% of men and 82% of women;
 - 85% of Republicans, 81% of unaffiliated/independents, and 88% of Democrats;
 - 85% of White voters and 78% of voters of color;
 - 84% of voters in the Denver Metro area, and 83% of voters in the rest of the state;
 - 84% of voters in cities, 83% of voters in suburbs, 89% of voters in small towns, and 82% of voters in rural areas; and
 - 85% of voters who participate in outdoor recreation and 76% of voters who do not.
- **When we allow voters to tell us in their own words why they offer up significant support for this policy, they say that they view it as both protecting landowners from liability while still allowing people to use rivers and creeks in the state.** Second to this, they also see it as promoting outdoor recreation, allowing people to continue outdoor traditions with their families and supporting the recreation economy.
 - **In fact, nearly all voters say visitors and outdoor recreation on Colorado’s rivers and streams, such as rafting, kayaking, canoeing, floating, or boating is important to the state’s economy.** More than nine-in-ten voters (92 percent) characterize water recreation as at least somewhat important (24 percent say it is extremely important, 34 percent very important and 33 percent somewhat important). This is particularly true among Coloradans who live somewhere other than the Front Range (66 percent extremely or very important). In fact, one-in-four Coloradans say that they regularly participate in a floating related activity such as kayaking, canoeing, or tubing (25 percent).
 - **Every element of the proposal is embraced by Colorado voters.** We tested three core elements to this proposal and each one generates strong support as seen here:
 - River bottoms and banks can be private property even though the water in the river is legally public. The proposal allows brief, necessary contact with riverbanks or bottoms for safety—like going around obstacles. (82 percent support)
 - The proposal allows people to float on rivers, but does not allow people to wade in rivers,

anchor their boats, cross property to put their boats in or out, or stand in rivers or along banks to fish or for any other purpose if that area of the river is private property. (83 percent support)

- The proposal protects private landowners by limiting people from suing a landowner if they are hurt or negatively affected while floating by their property or come into contact with the river bottom or banks while navigating around hazards unless the landowner acts recklessly. (88 percent support)
- **Moreover, support remains solid after voters hear competing viewpoints about this issue.** Four-in-five voters (80 percent) say that they agree more with a rationale from supporters over one from opponents of the policy (20 percent):

Supporters of clarifying Colorado law regarding recreation on rivers and creeks say that Colorado is one of the only Western states where one landowner can effectively block access to an entire river, even though rivers are a shared natural resource. Clearer laws would make things safer, reduce conflicts, protect outdoor jobs, and set fair rules so both landowners and people using the river know their rights and responsibilities. **80%**

Opponents of clarifying Colorado law regarding recreation on rivers and creeks say that Colorado's current system is flexible and allows for cooperation. This proposal will lead to lawsuits from upset landowners and could lead to state government having to pay landowners. Keeping the law the same encourages landowners to take care of their land, protects property values and maintains existing river access agreements. **20%**

It is worth noting that majorities of every single sub-group examined say that they agree more with the statement in support of this policy. Two-thirds of Republicans (69 percent), three-quarters of unaffiliated/independent voters (77 percent) and 93 percent of Democrats side with the statement in support of the policy over the opposition statement.

- **Finally, a majority of Colorado say they would have a more favorable view of their state legislator if he or she supports this proposal to clarify existing law regarding rivers and creeks.** Fifty-two percent say if their state legislator voted in favor of this proposal, they would have a more favorable impression of him or her, while 34 percent say it would not make a difference in their view. Just 14 percent would feel less favorably toward their state legislator. This sentiment is evident across partisan lines with 53 percent of Republicans, 62 percent of Democrats and 46 percent of unaffiliated/independent voters saying they would feel more positively.