



TO: Interested Parties
 FROM: Andrew Baumann and Nicole Jaconetty, Global Strategy Group
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 RE: **NEW POLL:** Virginia Voters Concerned about Flooding, Support Action to Address It

A new survey of likely 2021 Virginia voters conducted by Global Strategy Group shows that there is broad, statewide, and bipartisan support for taking action to protect the state from future flooding. Voters not only overwhelmingly want the next governor to act to protect Virginia’s communities from flooding and support a Master Plan to achieve that end, but they also strongly support spending state money to provide funding for the Community Preparedness Flood Fund to meet the Commonwealth’s long-term flood preparedness needs. The following memo contains key findings from the survey conducted for EDF Action between April 20 and April 26, 2021 among 600 likely 2021 voters in Virginia, plus an oversample of 300 voters in the coastal region for a total of 421 coastal interviews.¹

KEY FINDINGS

Both inland and coastal voters and voters across partisan lines see addressing flood risk as an important priority for lawmakers in Richmond. While voters see big issues like improving the economy, improving education, and dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic as the biggest priorities for lawmakers in Richmond to focus on, more than two-thirds also rate addressing the risk of flooding in Virginia’s coastal communities as an important issue, with majorities of every party and over two-thirds of both coastal and inland Virginians in agreement.

IMPORTANCE OF FLOODING ISSUES						
	% One of the top priorities/An important priority					
	Likely Voters	Dem	Ind	GOP	Coastal	Inland
Addressing the risk of flooding in Virginia’s coastal communities	68	82	71	51	70	67

By more than two-to-one, voters believe that flooding is already having a serious impact on Virginia, and a plurality believe that it will directly impact their family in the next 10 years. By a 62% to 30% margin, Virginians agree that flooding, heavy rainfall, and rising sea levels are already having a serious impact on Virginia. Further, a 40% plurality of Virginians believe their own family will be directly impacted by flooding in the next decade, including nearly half of coastal Virginians.

How soon do you think rising sea levels or flooding will directly impact you and your family?						
	Likely Voters	Dem	Ind	GOP	Coastal	Inland
% 10 years or less	40	57	34	24	47	38
% More than 10 years	34	29	40	37	35	34
Total Will Have Impact	74	86	74	61	82	72

¹ Coastal Virginians are defined as being registered to vote in the following counties and independent cities: Accomack County, City of Chesapeake, Gloucester County, City of Hampton, Isle of Wight County, James City County, Lancaster County, Mathews County, Middlesex County, City of Newport News, City of Norfolk, Northampton County, Northumberland County, City of Poquoson, City of Portsmouth, City of Smithfield, City of Suffolk, Surry County, City of Virginia Beach, City of Williamsburg, and York County.

Virginians believe it is important to have a regularly updated flooding plan and want to see their next governor take action to protect communities from the risk of flooding. Huge majorities of Democrats and independents, along with a very solid majority of Republicans agree that the Commonwealth should have a plan to deal with flood risk, along with strong majorities of both coastal and inland voters. And over three-quarters of voters statewide are looking to the next governor to address the problem.

STATEMENTS ABOUT FLOODING										
	% Agree	% Disagree	% DK	NET Agree						
				LVs	Dem	Ind	GOP	Coastal	Inland	
It is important for the Commonwealth to have a plan to deal with the risk of flooding that is updated regularly to keep up with the latest science.	81	16	3	+65	+91	+52	+42	+75	+63	
I want to see the next governor take action to protect Virginia's communities from the risk of flooding.	77	20	3	+57	+85	+69	+22	+65	+56	

Both coastal and inland voters believe that it is important to address the risk of flooding to protect Virginia's economy, coastal communities, wetlands, and habitats. When it comes to the threat from flooding, there is little disagreement between coastal and inland voters, with strong majorities of both believing flooding is a serious threat to important state priorities, and about 70% of each saying that protecting the state's economy, coastal communities is an important reason to take action now to address the risk of flooding.

FLOODING THREATS				
	% Serious threat		% Important reason to address flooding	
	Coastal	Inland	Coastal	Inland
Virginia's economy	63	62	70	73
Virginia's coastal cities and communities	72	76	69	72
Virginia's wetlands, marshes, and coastal ecosystems	68	66	69	71
Virginia's wildlife and fish habitats	62	66	70	71
Virginia's beaches and tourism industry	64	69	56	61

Voters have little awareness of any progress being made to combat flooding and have almost no knowledge of the state's Master Plan. Just barely over a third of Virginia voters believe that the state has made either a lot or some progress on projects aimed at reducing the risk of flooding with almost no difference on this attitude based on partisanship or geography. Meanwhile, four-in-five say they have heard only a little or nothing at all about the state's Master Plan to protect the state from flooding. This lack of awareness about the state's plans to combat flooding provides an opportunity for the next governor to capture significant credit on an issue that voters care about by taking action and educating voters on the state's progress.

How much progress has been made on projects in Virginia aimed at reducing the risk of flooding?

	Likely Voters	Dem	Ind	GOP	Coastal	Inland
% A lot/some	36	38	39	33	36	36
% A little/hardly any	50	47	42	57	51	50

MASTER PLAN AWARENESS

As you may have heard, the Commonwealth of Virginia is developing a Master Plan to protect and restore Virginia's coastal areas and make them more resilient to rising sea levels and flooding. Before taking this survey, how much had you heard about this plan?

	Likely Voters	Dem	Ind	GOP	Coastal	Inland
% A lot/some	18	19	19	18	22	17
% A little/nothing	80	79	79	82	75	81

Voters across the state strongly support using state money to fund the Community Preparedness Flood Fund, with inland voters more supportive than their coastal counterparts. Two-thirds of Virginia voters support funding the Flood Fund, including majorities of Democrats, independents, and Republicans. And while both inland and coastal voters are strongly supportive, inland voters are actually 5 points more supportive than coastal voters.

COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS FLOOD FUND FUNDING SUPPORT

While there is a primary revenue source for the Virginia Community Preparedness Flood Fund, it is not enough to meet all of the Commonwealth's long-term flood preparedness needs. Given that, do you support or oppose investing Commonwealth money to fund the projects identified as necessary by the new Master Plan?

	Likely Voters	Dem	Ind	GOP	Coastal	Inland
% Support	66	84	50	54	62	67
% Oppose	23	9	25	37	27	22
NET Support	+43	+75	+25	+17	+35	+45

ABOUT THIS RESEARCH

Global Strategy Group conducted a multi-channel survey via telephone and online panel of 600 Virginia likely 2021 voters plus an oversample of 300 coastal voters, to achieve a total of 421 coast interviews, from April 20 and April 26, 2021. The margin of error at the 95% confidence level for statewide likely voters is +/- 4.0% and 4.8% for coastal voters. Care was taken to ensure the demographic composition of the sample matched Virginia's voter population across a variety of demographic variables including race, gender, age, education, and region.