

Strong Public Support For Conservation





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#usvt25957

Vermont is the most rural state in the nation

Eight out of ten Vermonters live in rural areas or small cities

US average is three out of ten

The Vermont way of life, as defined by over 400 Vermonters in a 2005 study, was a “measured pace of life” with a strong sense of community, honesty, and trust among neighbors flowing from Vermont’s rural agricultural heritage

Farms provide Vermonters and tourists with a source of fresh local food and attractive pastoral landscapes

38% of Vermont’s population is urban, the lowest in the nation. U.S. average is 79%

Vermont Council on Rural Development

Bolduc, V, and Kessel H. 2008. *Vermont in transition: A summary of social, economic and environmental trends*



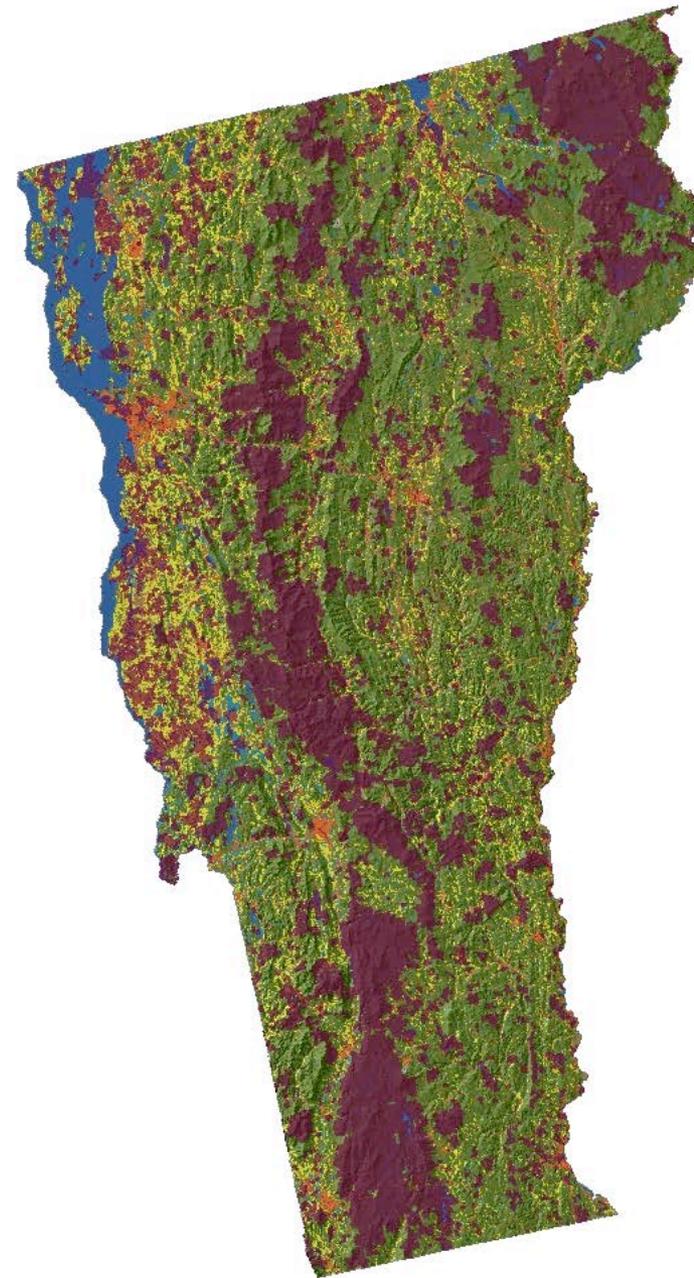
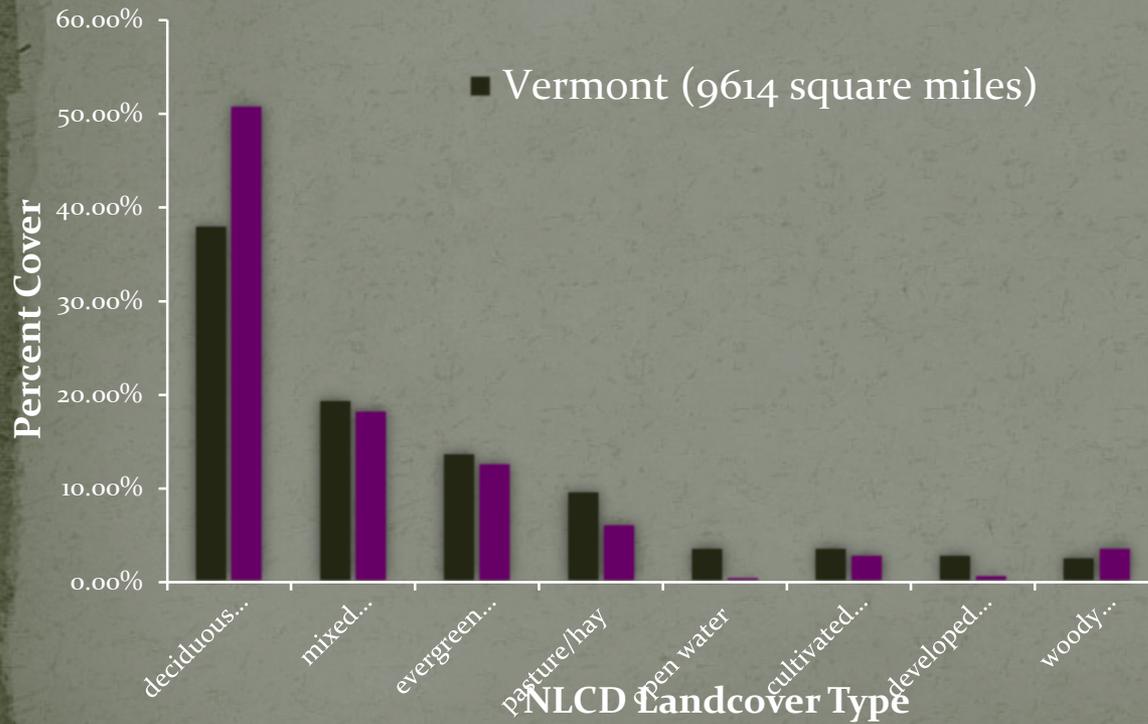
Profile of Conserved Lands

Vermont's emphasis on natural resource conservation is backed by strong planning and regulatory bodies in the government, volunteer, and nonprofit sectors.

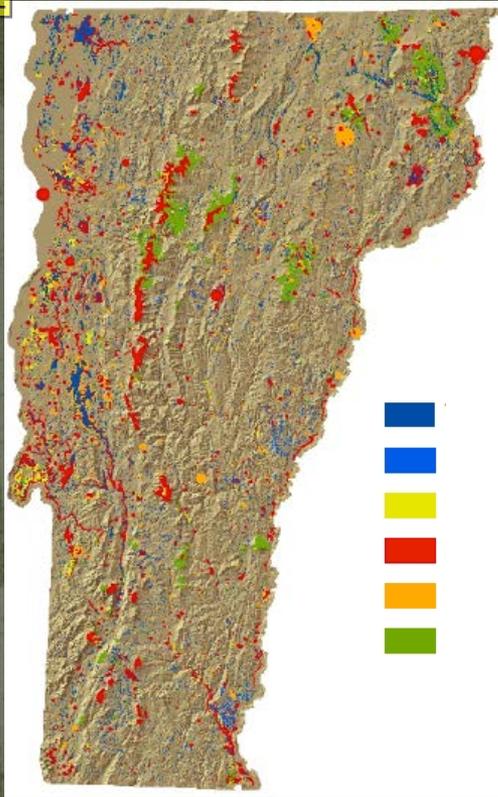
Planning occurs on a federal, state, and town level.

There is also a private emphasis on protecting land, supported by organizations such as the Vermont Land Trust and conservation easements.

Approx. 2200 square miles conserved
Roughly 23% of the state
under some form of conservation
status



Conservation of BioFinder Components



- Wetlands**
- Vernal Pools
- Rare Natural Communities
- Rare Species
- Uncommon Species
- Uncommon Natural Areas

PERCENT OF TOTAL TIER AREA IN VT

BioFinder Tier	Conserved	Gap 1	Gap 2	Gap 3	Gap 4	Gap 39
Uncommon Natural Communities	81.5%	20.5%	13.7%	42.8%	3.4%	1.1%
Vernal Pools	35.0%	4.3%	0.5%	20.0%	4.7%	5.5%
Uncommon Species	33.8%	7.8%	2.7%	17.0%	1.7%	4.6%
Rare Species	44.1%	12.1%	8.5%	15.9%	4.9%	2.7%
Surface Waters and Riparian Areas	17.4%	1.3%	1.7%	8.0%	1.6%	4.9%
Wetlands**	32.3%	3.1%	5.4%	15.4%	2.3%	6.1%
Rare Natural Communities	51.5%	7.6%	12.6%	18.7%	2.5%	10.1%



Direct Benefits

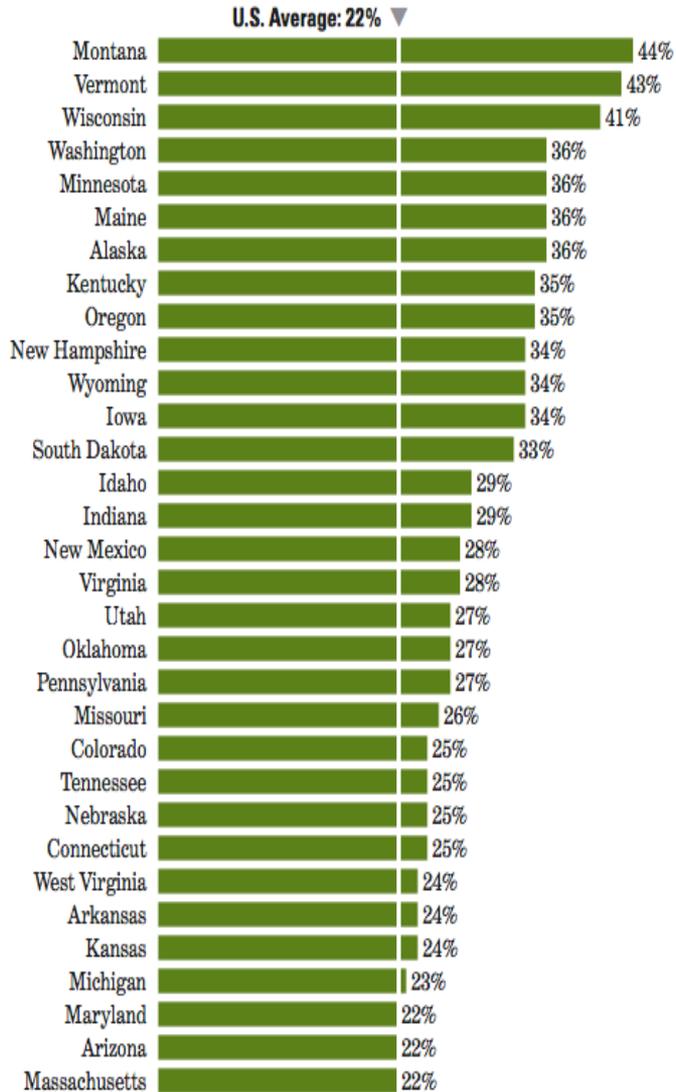
Fishing, Hunting, Wildlife Watching, Tourism, Ecosystem Services

Quantifiable and high for Vermont



Birding

Chart 8. Birding Participation Rates by State Residents: 2001
(Population 16 years of age and older)



Participation rates by state residents

46 Million Birders

\$32 Billion in Retail Sales

\$85 Billion in Overall Economic Output

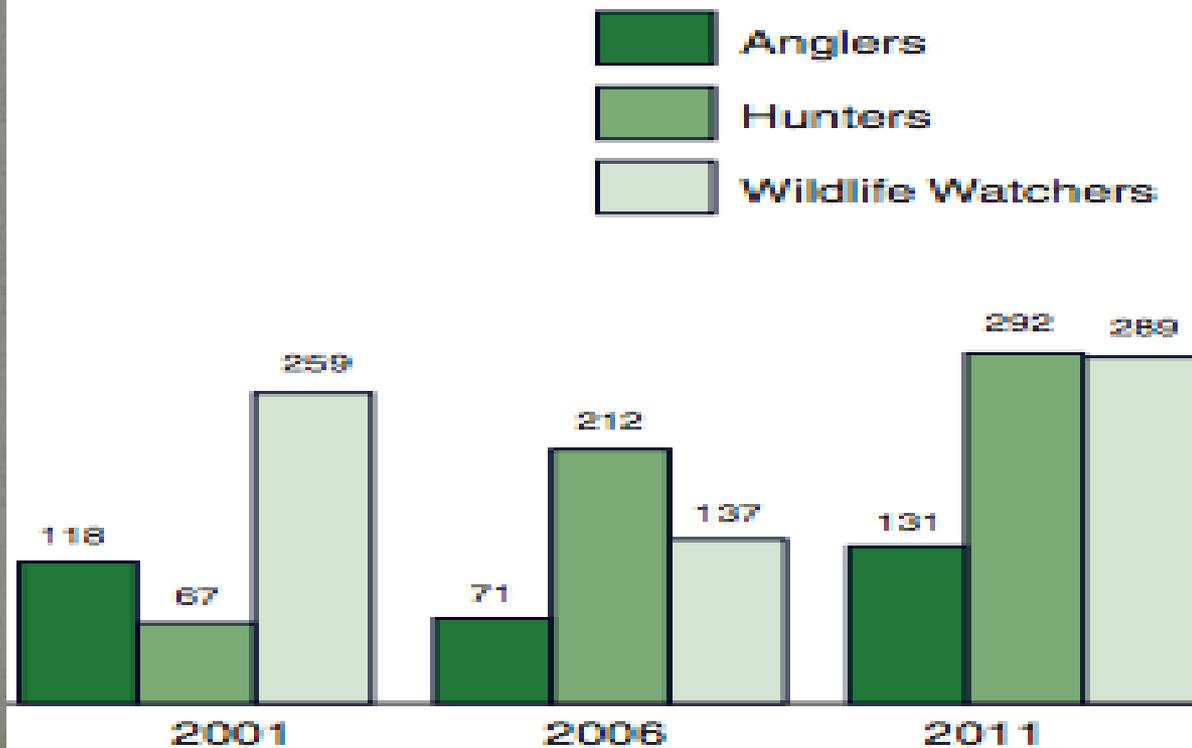
\$13 Billion in State and Federal Income Taxes

863,406 Jobs Created

Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife Watching (VT)

Vermont residents and out-of-state visitors spend about \$685 million a year on hunting, fishing, and wildlife watching

**Total Expenditures by
Participants in Vermont**
(In millions of 2011 dollars)





Expenditures for wildlife watching alone are comparable to all spectator sports, amusement parks and arcades, casinos, bowling allies, and skiing facilities combined.

Just as cities compete for stadiums and factories, communities should vie for parks and charismatic fauna

Sports teams come and sports teams go

But there are no free agents in wildlife--animals and plants have permanent contracts with their ecosystems

Return of Conservation Investment

What are the benefits of protection?



\$38 billion in public and private money is invested in natural resource conservation nationwide each year

Results in \$93 billion in federal, state and local tax revenues, as well as wages and salaries associated with thousands of jobs supported by these investments

National Fish & Wildlife Foundation
2013

Vermont

- \$168.5 million/year for natural resources conservation
- Results in 1207 jobs
- \$92 million in salaries and wages
- \$105 million contribution to GDP
- Tax revenues
 - State and local: \$4 million
 - Federal: \$18 million

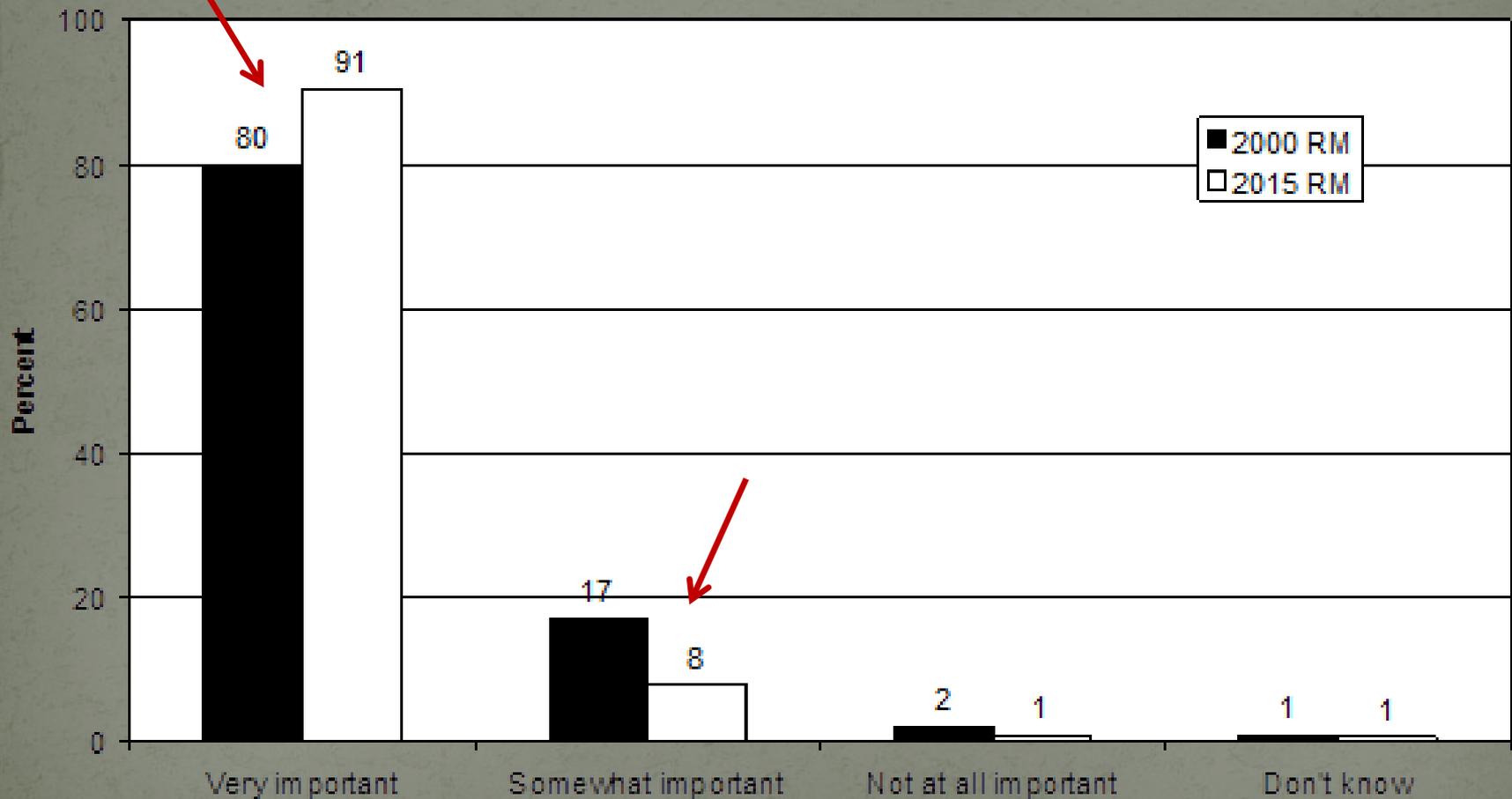


Better Than We Think

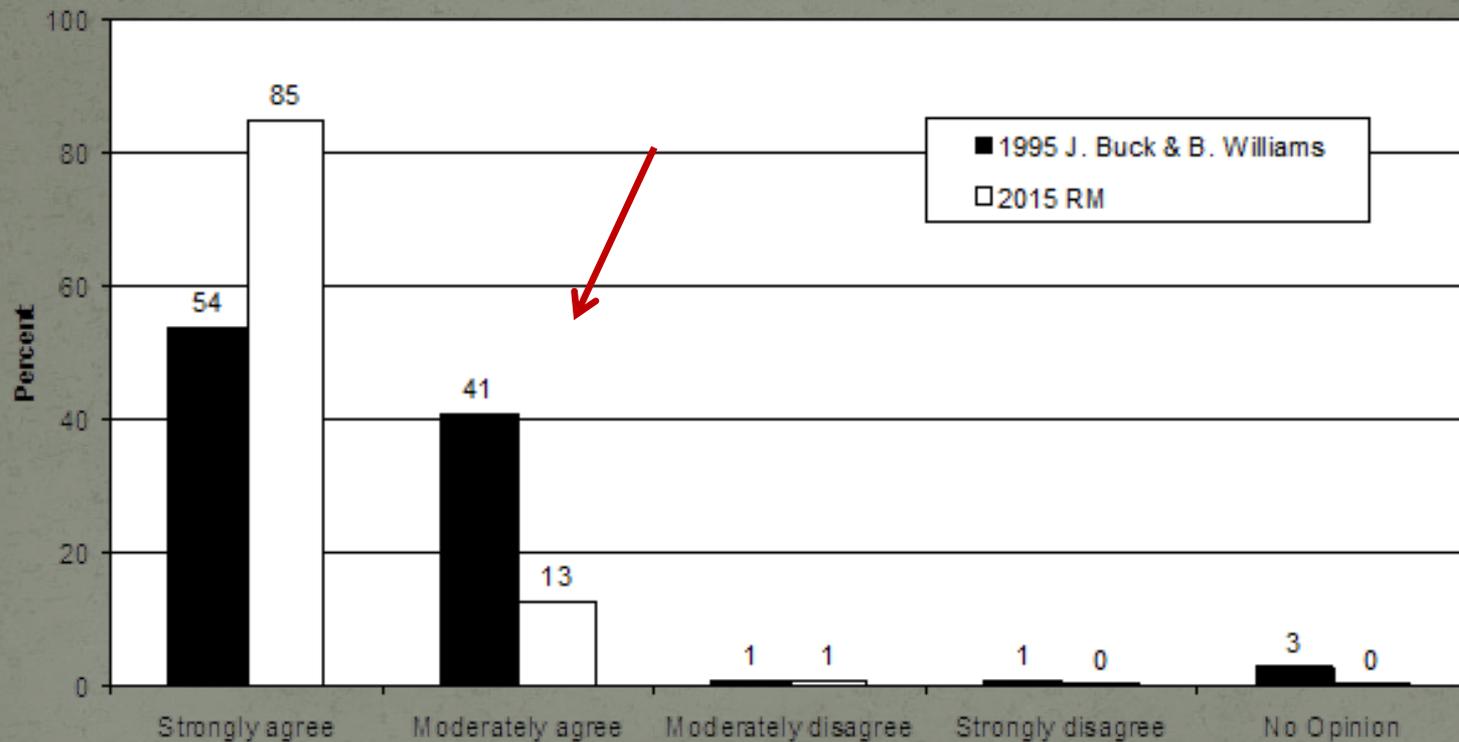
Results from the 2015 Public Survey



**Q17. How important is it to you that people have the opportunity in Vermont to participate in wildlife-related outdoor recreation, such as hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing?
(Vermont residents.)**

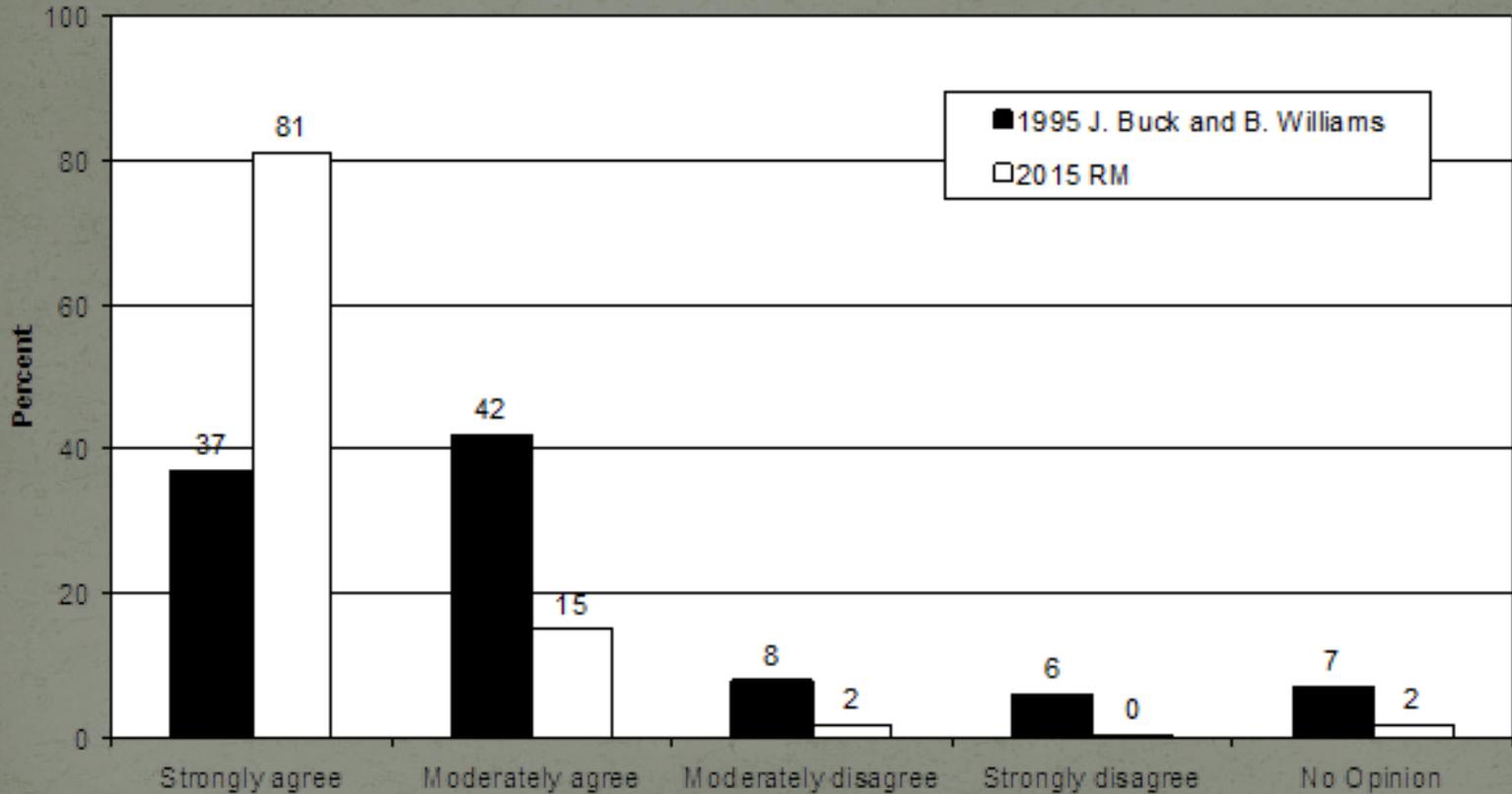


Q37. Knowing that Vermont's native fish and wildlife populations are healthy and surviving well is very important to me even if I don't get to see them. (Vermont residents.)

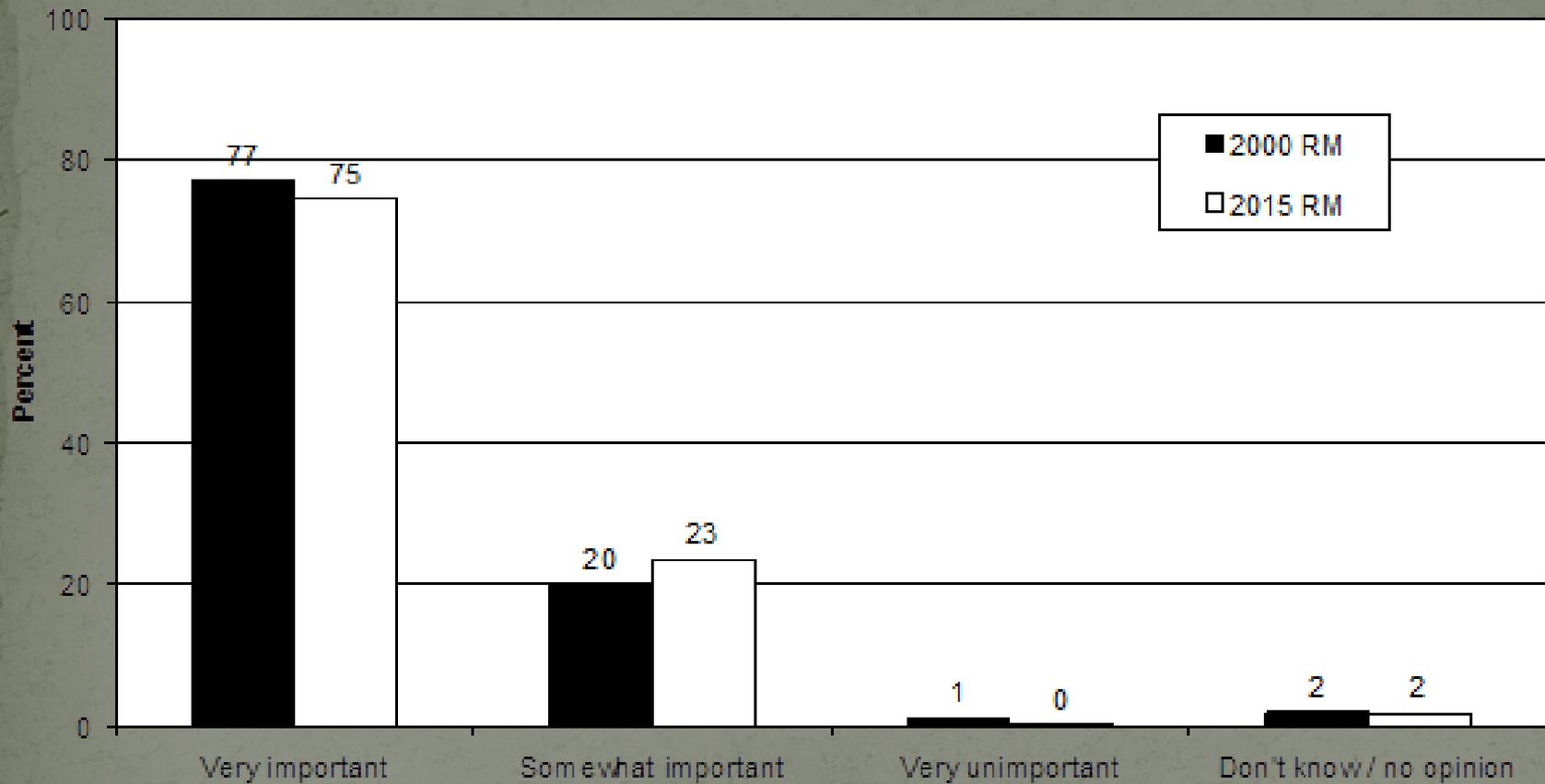


Wow!

**Q36. Threatened and endangered species must be protected.
(Vermont residents.)**



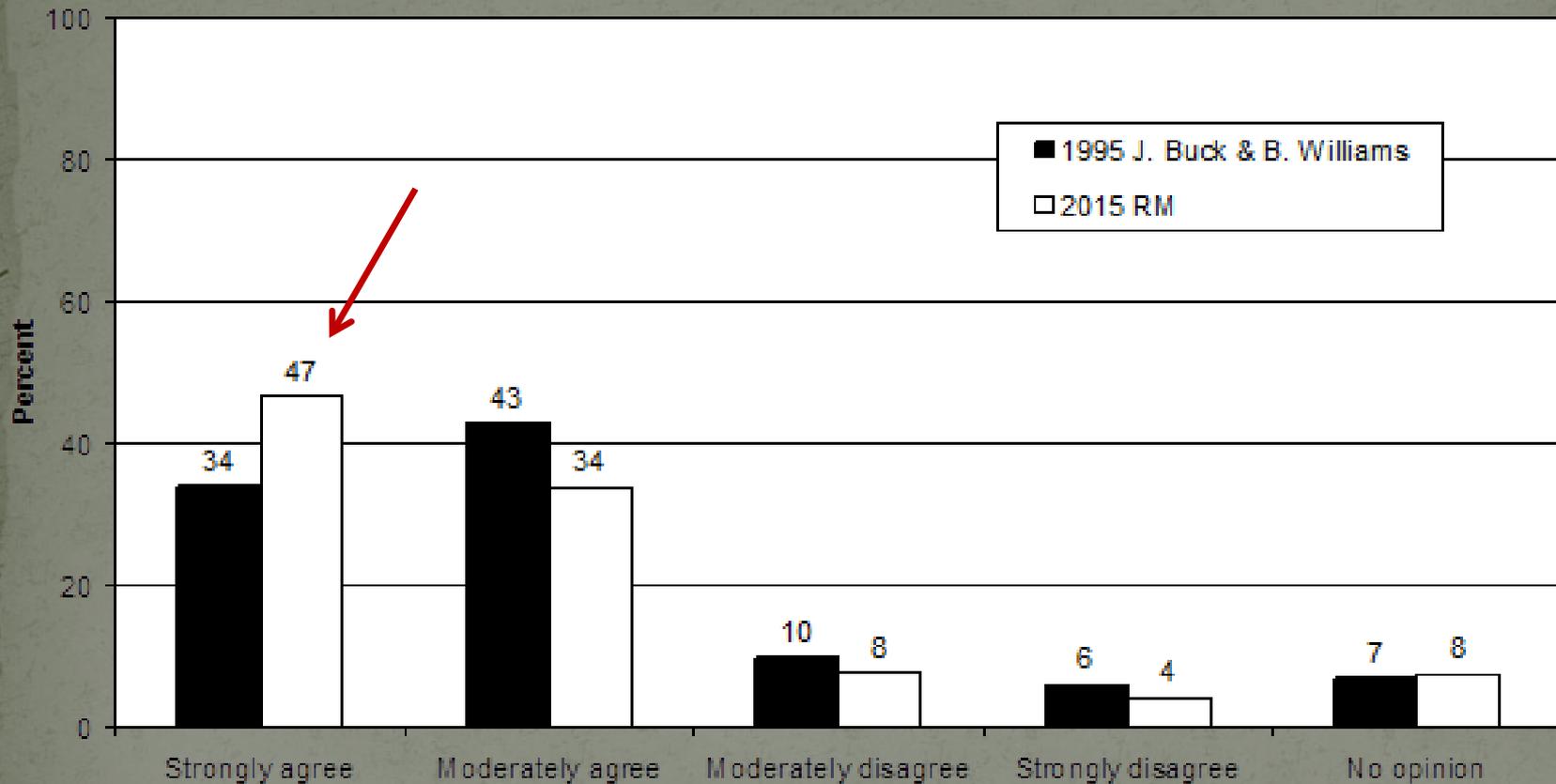
**Q48. How important is it to you that ecologically important habitats and lands in Vermont are being protected and preserved?
(Vermont residents.)**



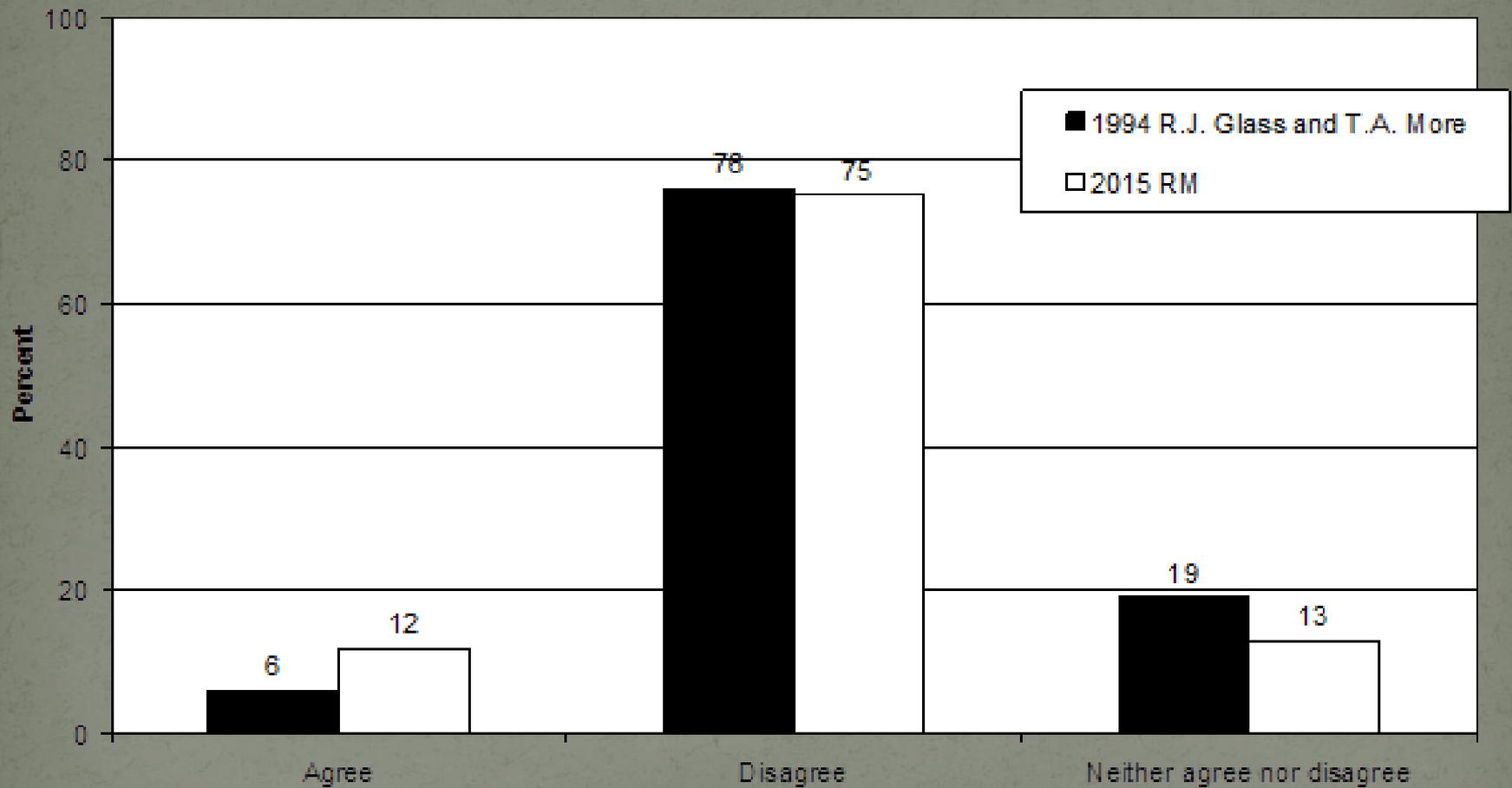
Conservation Vs. Development



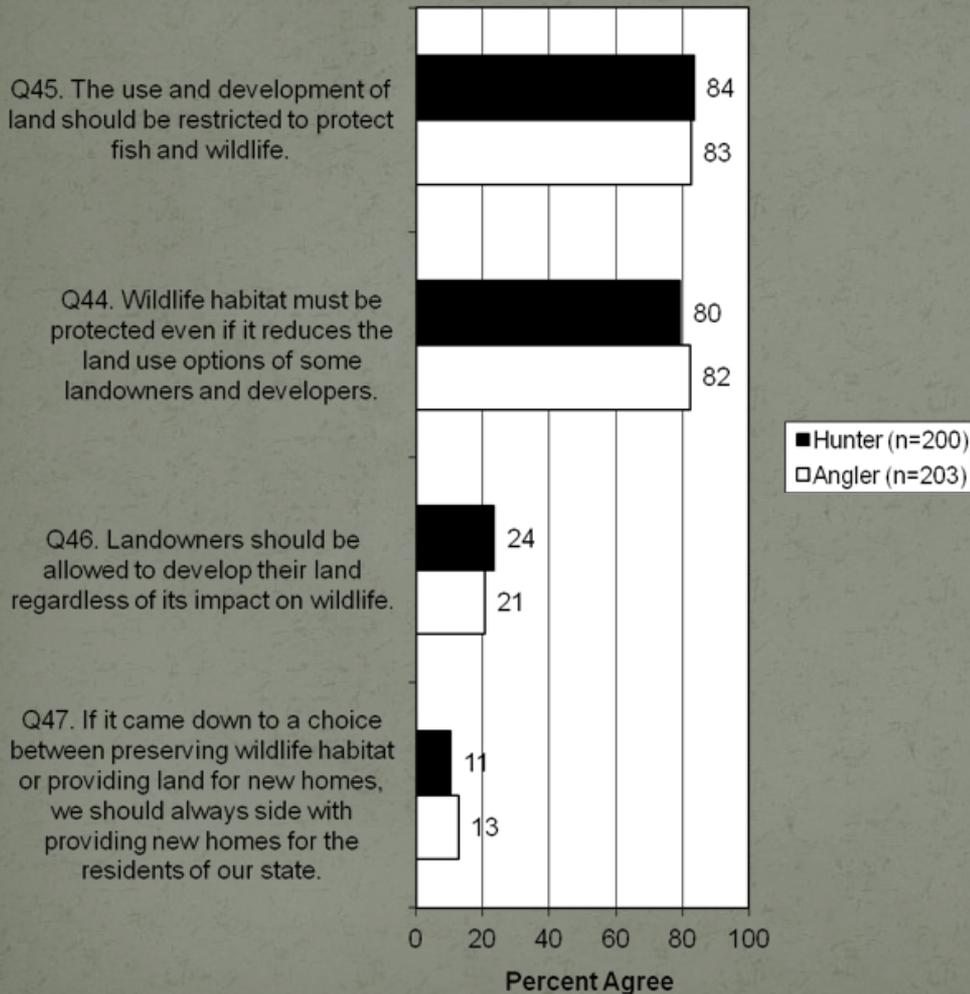
Q44. Wildlife habitat must be protected even if it reduces the land use options of some landowners and developers. (Vermont residents.)



**Q34. Economic development is more important than wildlife.
(Vermont residents.)**

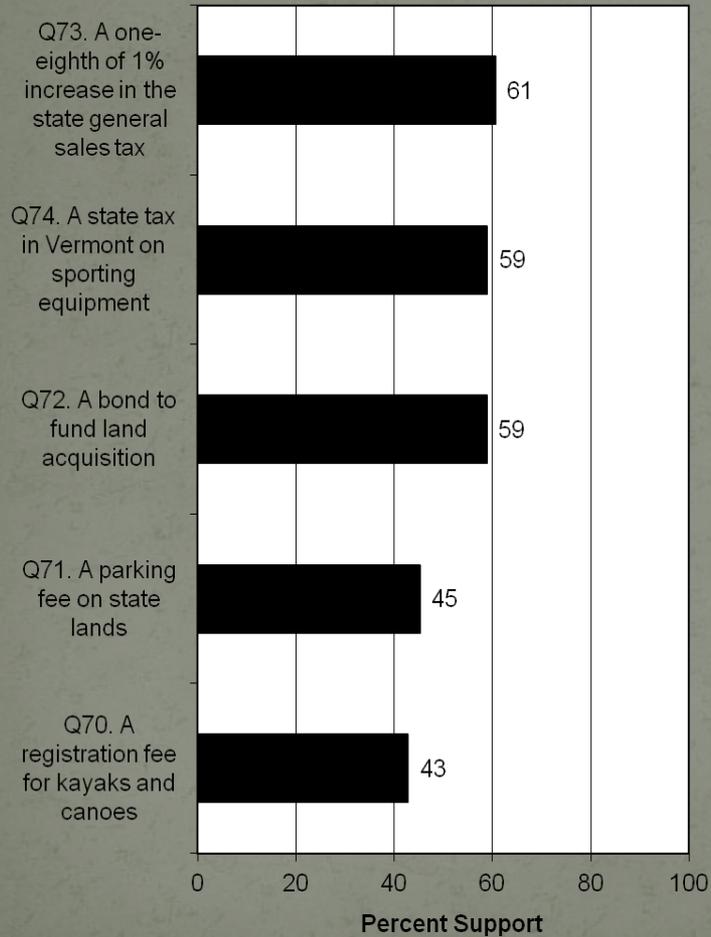


Q44-47: Percent of residents who strongly or moderately agree with the following:



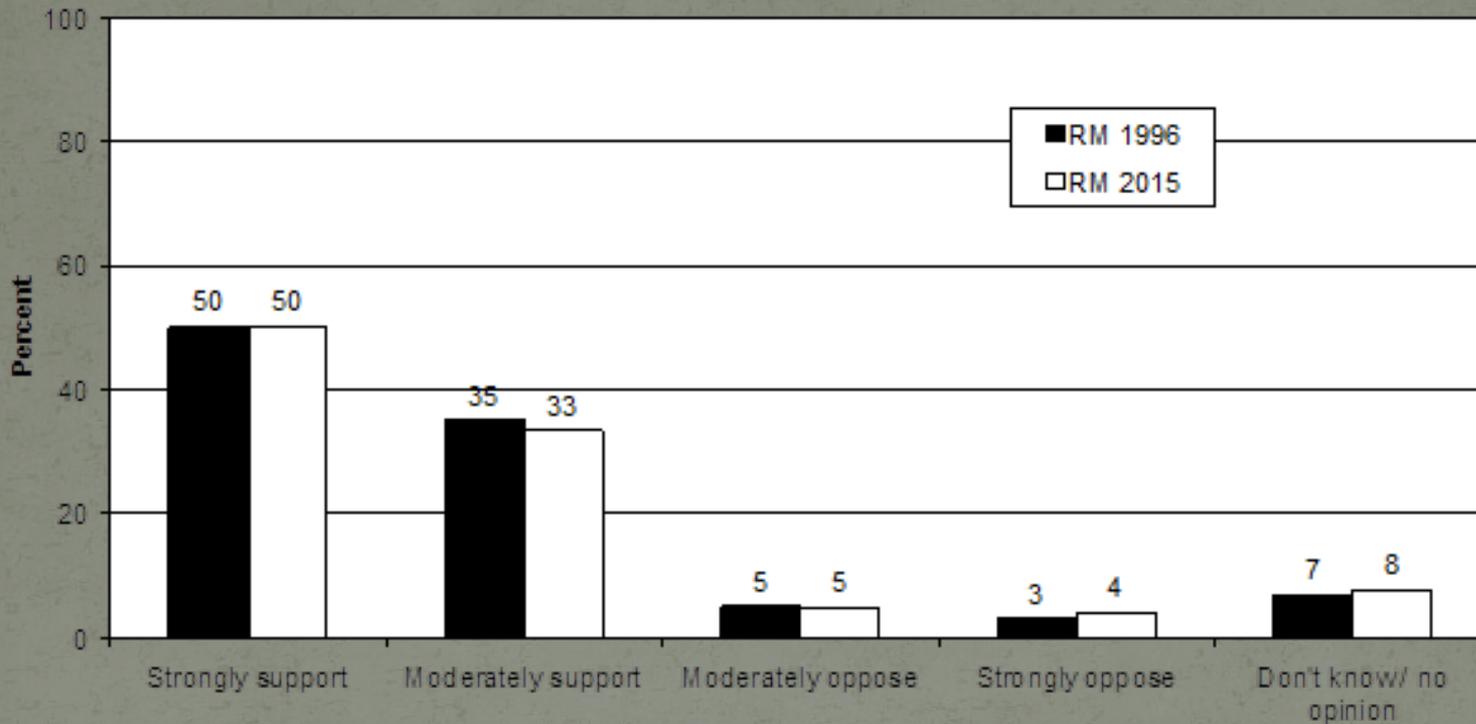
“Vermont residents are different than other places around the country”
 Mark Duda, Responsive Management

Q70-74: Percent of residents who strongly or moderately support each of the following to provide funding for a land conservation initiative:



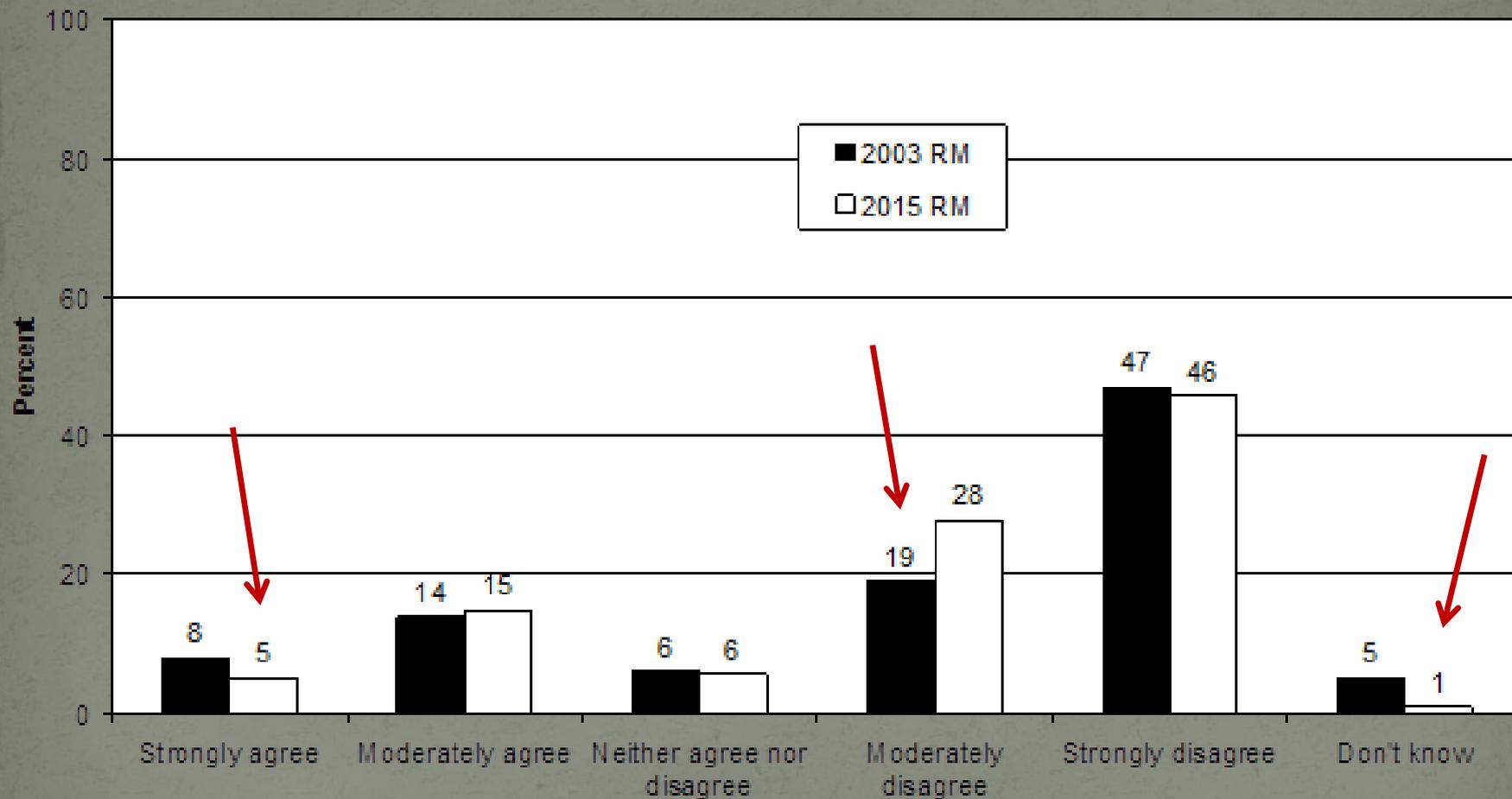
“Given that government is generally so negatively viewed by the public today, the responses to this survey are even more impressive” Mark Duda, Responsive Management

Q49. Do you support or oppose the Department protecting important wildlife habitat by purchasing land? (Vermont residents.)



Hunters: 57% strongly support/ 28% moderately support
Anglers: 51% strongly support/36% moderately support

Q46. Landowners should be allowed to develop their land regardless of its impact on wildlife. (Vermont residents.)



What does this all mean for public lands and building a sustainable land conservation program?



What is PILOT?

- Payment In Lieu Of Taxes
- Replaces lost municipal tax revenue

PILOT Formula

- Title 32 Chapter 123 Section 3708
 - 1% of the Fair Market Value (FMV) as determined by Property Valuation & Review (PVR)

Or

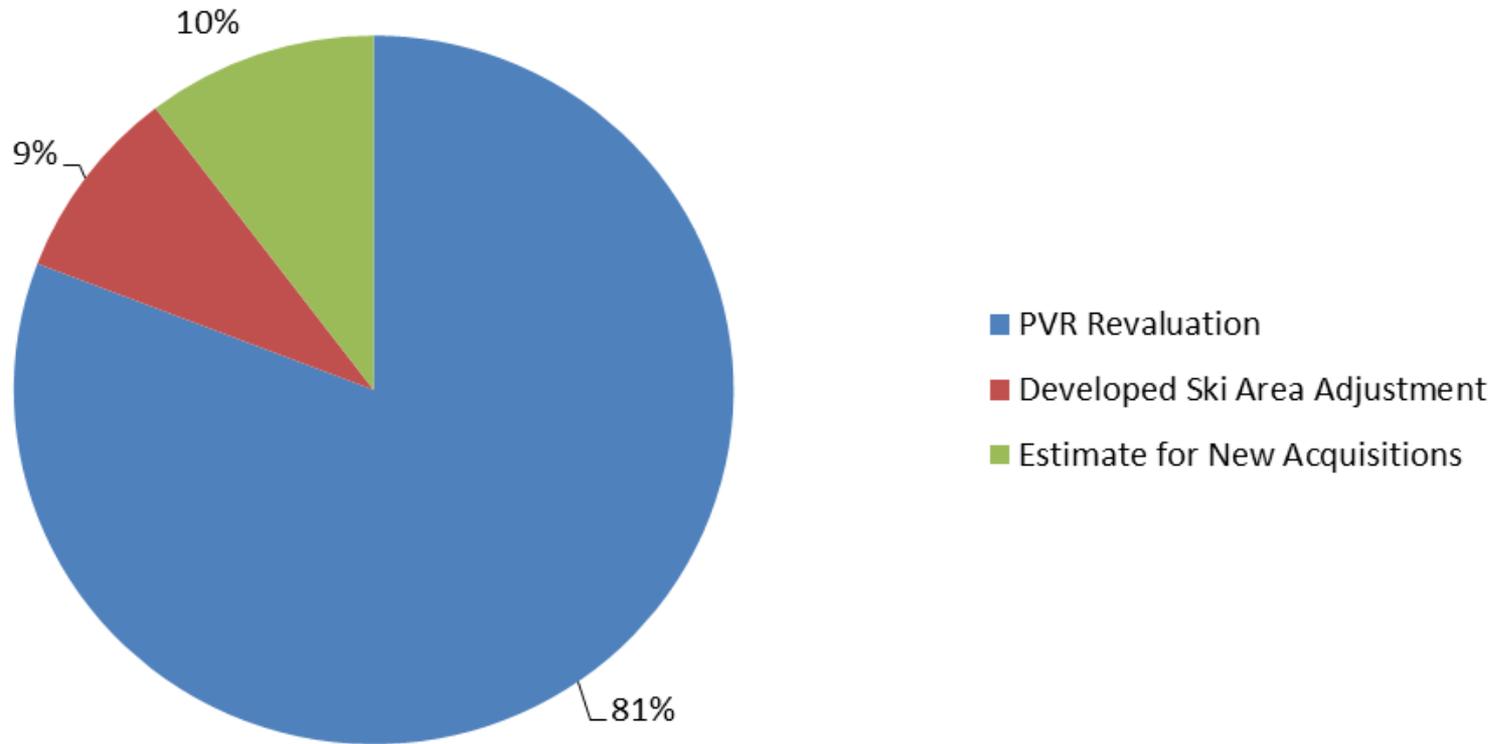
- 1% of Current Use Value (CUV)
- Holds harmless to 1980 (Groton & Montpelier)

2014 PILOT Study

- 2014 PVR revaluation
- FY 2014 PILOT \$2,153,733
- FY 2015 PILOT \$2,851,821

- Increase of nearly \$700,000 or 32%

Why the increase?



Key Focus

- The significant increase in funding need as a result of the new FMV, with most of the increase experienced in a concentration of towns.
- Realization that the policy foundation for CU valuations on certain parcels did not exist or was not clear, and that two towns are still paid based on grandfathered amounts from 1980.
- Acknowledgement that the 1% or \$1.00 rate while within the range of all municipal tax rates is significantly above the median rate of \$0.46 or mean of \$0.49.

Option A

- Eliminate CUV
- Payments made on 0.5% of FMV
- Change in payment phased in over 3 years

FY15 current total payments \$ 2,240,226

FY16 including 1/3 of the change \$ 2,183,692

FY17 including 2/3 of the change \$ 2,127,158

FY18 est. cost at full implementation \$ 2,070,455

Option B

- Eliminate CUV
- Payments made on municipal tax rate
- Change in payment phased in over 3 years

FY15 current total payments \$ 2,240,226

FY16 including 1/3 of the change \$ 2,133,033

FY17 including 2/3 of the change \$ 2,043,618

FY18 est. cost at full implementation \$ 1,956,494

Option C

- Change PVR valuation methodology
- Align PILOT with taxes paid in private ownership

Key Current Use Value Finding

- The working group recommends that the valuation basis be consistent for all State-owned ANR parcels; i.e., all should be valued at CU or all be valued at FMV. There does not appear to be a compelling policy reason for the use of the two valuation methods.

Current Legislation

- Adopted Option A
- Required a new study
 - How to phase in Option A
 - Are there better options?

Option A

- Same as legislation
- Most affected towns receive an additional payment during phase in

Option D

- All properties are valued at old model FMV
- PILOT for new parcels is based on last private municipal taxes paid
- Inflation built in, 2% annual increase, tied to CPI, or average grand list inflation
- No more valuation increase from PVR

Other Take Aways

- Payment formulations should be consistent (ie. FMV vs CUV)
- 5% annual growth may be unsustainable
- More transparency
- PILOT is an important source on municipal revenue
- PILOT should reimburse towns at a rate near to private ownership
- Public land has many benefits other than PILOT

Questions?