

## **Poll: Chesapeake Bay Residents Do Not Trust Federal Regulation, Putting Local Farmers in Federal Regulatory Peril Is Biggest Concern**

**WASHINGTON, D.C., February 5, 2016** – Nearly three in four residents of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed say state and local government authority over water resources should trump federal authority. When health, safety and environmental regulations are needed, nearly half say they trust state and local governments, compared to only 28 percent who trust the federal government.

Those were two key findings of new Morning Consult polling conducted Jan. 21-22, of 1,042 registered voters who reside within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. The poll was sponsored by the American Farm Bureau Federation.

“Residents of the Chesapeake Bay region believe their local governments should have authority when it comes to protecting their water, and, understandably, they trust state and local authorities much more than they do the federal government,” said Ellen Steen, general counsel for AFBF.

The Morning Consult poll looked at voter opinion on a range of issues related to the Environmental Protection Agency’s regulatory “blueprint” for the Chesapeake Bay that sets strict federal limits across the region for local land uses such as farming, forestry and development. AFBF has asked the Supreme Court to review the EPA rule, which it believes to be unlawful. The case is [\*American Farm Bureau Federation v. EPA \(15-599\)\*](#).

According to the poll, 48 percent of respondents said that when health, safety and environmental regulations are needed, they trust state and local governments more than the federal government. Just 28 percent said they would trust the federal government more. When it comes to ensuring the quality of rivers, streams and creeks, 74 percent said that state and local communities should be primarily responsible and only 18 percent said the federal government should have the primary responsibility.

More than three in four respondents (77 percent) said local or state governments should be most responsible for regulating how people use land or produce food. Only 14 percent favored the federal government.

While six in 10 voters familiar with the EPA’s regulations initially expressed their support, after being informed of how the rules might affect them locally, that support plummeted to just 39 percent, with 45 percent of the voters opposing them.

“In these days when people place a high value on local food, 62 percent of the respondents said they were less likely to support the EPA’s Bay regulations because they would put a number of local farmers out of business due to restrictions and high regulatory costs,” Steen said. “That’s what this rule is all about; imposing federal restrictions that will make it impossible for many local farmers to continue to farm in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

“We all support better water quality in the Bay, but people living in the watershed care about local farmers, jobs and communities, too. There are better, more affordable and less intrusive

ways for states to take the lead and get this important job done that also save room in the watershed for the people producing local food.”

Results from the full survey have a margin of error of  $\pm 3$  percent. The interviews were conducted online and the data were weighted to approximate a target sample of registered voters based on age, race, gender and educational attainment.

Slides highlighting the poll are posted at: <http://www.fb.org/tmp/uploads/BayPollAFBF.pdf>.

**Which level of government do you think should be most responsible for ensuring safe and quality water for residents?**

