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## **Goucher Poll Asks Marylanders About State Park Use, Services**

**Baltimore** – The Goucher Poll asked Maryland residents for their perspectives regarding Maryland state parks. Marylanders were asked about park use, activities, goals, and how the Maryland Park Service could best inform them about parks.

### **Use and Visitation of Maryland State Parks**

The 71 percent of residents who said they had visited a Maryland state park at least once during the past year were asked to rate their overall experience on a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent). A large majority (76 percent) rate their experience at Maryland state parks at a 4 or 5.

Slightly more than half of Maryland residents indicate they are “very interested” in visiting a Maryland state park during the next year; 34 percent indicate they are “somewhat interested” in visiting a park. Fourteen percent of residents say they are “not at all interested” in visiting a Maryland state park during the upcoming year.

“We were happy once again to gauge resident perceptions toward state parks in our fall poll. Results suggest that Marylanders have a positive view of their state parks and look forward to spending time in them this coming year,” said Mileah Kromer, director of the Sarah T. Hughes Field Politics Center. “We hope the survey can assist the Maryland Park Service in planning future programming and services for all residents to enjoy.”

The poll, conducted September 28 to October 2, surveyed a dual-frame (landlines and cell phones) random sample of 708 Maryland residents and has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.7 percentage points. The sample is of all Maryland residents and does not restrict by registered or likely voters.

## **Park Activities**

Marylanders were asked to rate—on a scale of 1 (very unlikely) to 5 (very likely)—how likely they would be to participate in activities offered at the various parks across the state. The top three activities Marylanders stated they were most likely to participate were relaxing, visiting historic sites, and hiking/walking.

### Percent Likely to Participate (4 or 5)

- Relaxing—79 percent
- Visiting Historic Sites—68 percent
- Hiking or Walking—67 percent
- Picnicking—64 percent
- Swimming—40 percent
- Biking—36 percent
- Camping—32 percent
- Fishing—32 percent
- Canoeing or Kayaking—30 percent

## **Park Goals**

Marylanders were then asked to rate—on a scale of 1 (not important at all) to 5 (very important)—how important it is for the Maryland Park Service to achieve specific goals. Eighty percent or more deem it very important to preserve historic sites, connect children to nature, improve natural areas for wildlife, and conserve more land to protect natural resources.

### Percent Indicating Goal Is Important (4 or 5)

- Connect Children to Nature—86 percent
- Preserve Historic Sites—86 percent
- Improve Natural Areas for Wildlife—83 percent
- Conserve More Land to Protect Natural Resources—80 percent
- Improve Outdoor Recreation Opportunities—72 percent
- Provide More Environmental Educational Opportunities—71 percent

## **Getting Information About Maryland State Parks**

Twenty-four percent of residents indicate email would be the best way for the Maryland Park Service to get them information about state parks; another 19 percent said receiving mailers, fliers, or newsletters would be the best way. Fourteen percent would like to get information through TV advertisements, and 12 percent think social media—such as Facebook or Twitter—is the best way.



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### **About this Project**

In addition to its regular release of data that reflect the most pressing statewide issues, the Goucher Poll also works with community partners in the “Polling for the Public Good” series. Through partnerships with government and nonprofit entities, additional questions are included in the poll to shed light on issues that provide collective benefits to Marylanders.

In exchange for a series of questions on the Goucher Poll, the Maryland Park Service gave students a firsthand experience of working with a governmental agency and the opportunity to present their work to members of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. Under the guidance of the director of the Sarah T. Hughes Field Politics Center, Goucher undergraduate students helped design the survey instrument, analyze the data, and co-author the executive report.

This project exemplifies the Goucher College commitment to experiential learning and the integration of environmental issues into the academic curriculum. Goucher is thankful for this opportunity for student learning and to provide valuable information on public perceptions of Maryland state parks to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

### **About the Goucher Poll**

The Goucher Poll is conducted under the auspices of the Sarah T. Hughes Field Politics Center, which is housed in the Department of Political Science and International Relations at Goucher College. Directed by Mileah Kromer, the Goucher Poll conducts surveys on public policy, economic, and social issues in Maryland.

Goucher College supports the Goucher Poll as part of its mission to instill in its students a sense of community where discourse is valued and practiced. The Goucher Poll is fully funded by the Sarah T. Hughes Field Politics Center endowment and does not take additional funding from outside sources.

The Goucher Poll seeks to improve public discourse in the state by providing neutral and nonbiased information on citizen perceptions and opinions. The data collected by the Goucher Poll are used to support faculty and student research.

### **Survey Methodology**

To ensure all Maryland citizens are represented, the Goucher Poll is conducted using random digit dialing (RDD) of a county-level stratified random sample using landline and cellular telephone numbers. The sample of telephone numbers for the survey is obtained from Survey Sampling International, LLC (<http://www.surveysampling.com/>).

The survey was conducted Sunday, September 28, to Thursday, October 2. During this time, interviews were conducted 12-9 p.m. on Sunday and 5-9 p.m. Monday through Thursday. The Goucher Poll uses Voxco Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) software to administer its surveys. Interviews are conducted by a staff of professionally trained, paid, student interviewers.

Interviewers attempted to reach respondents with working phone numbers a maximum of five times. Only Maryland adults—residents aged 18 years or older—were eligible to participate. Interviews were not conducted with adults who were reached at business or work numbers. Fifty percent of the interviews were conducted on a cell phone, and 50 percent were conducted on a landline.

Interviews for this survey were completed with 708 Maryland citizens. For a sample size of 708, there is a 95 percent probability the survey results have a plus or minus 3.7 percentage point sampling error from the actual population distribution for any given survey question. Margins of error are higher for subsamples.

## Survey Question Design

The Goucher Poll provides the questions as worded and the order in which they are administered to respondents.

**BRACKETED ITEMS [ ]:** Items and statements in brackets are rotated to ensure respondents are not presented with a set order of response options, which maintains question construction integrity by avoiding respondent agreement based on question composition.

Example: [agree or disagree] or [disagree or agree]

**PROBE (p):** Some questions contain a “probe” maneuver to determine a respondent’s intensity of opinion/perspective. Probe techniques used in this questionnaire mainly consist of asking a respondent if his or her response is more intense than initially provided.

Example: Do you have a [favorable or unfavorable] opinion of President Obama?

**PROBE:** Would you say very favorable/unfavorable?

**OPEN-ENDED:** No response options are provided for an open-ended question, i.e. it is entirely up to the respondent to provide the response information. Any response options provided to the interviewer are not read to respondent; they are only used to help reduce interviewer error and time in coding the response.

**VOLUNTEER (v):** Volunteer responses means the interviewer did not offer that response option in the question as read to the interviewee. Interviewers are instructed not to offer “don’t know” or “refused” or “some other opinion” to the respondent, but the respondent is free to volunteer that information for the interviewer to record.

### Sample Demographics

	MD Population Parameter	Weighted Sample Estimate
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	.48	.49
Female	.52	.51
18 to 24 Years	.13	.13
25 to 34 Years	.18	.18
35 to 44 Years	.17	.16
45 to 54 Years	.20	.20
55 to 64 Years	.16	.17
65 Years and Older	.16	.16
White	.63	.59
Black	.29	.31
Other	.08	.10
Capitol	.36	.31
Central	.46	.52
Eastern	.08	.07
Southern	.06	.06
Western	.04	.04

*Population parameters are based on Census estimates as of July 2011.  
Sample is weighted by age, gender, and race.*

### **Distribution of Regions**

Capitol–Frederick, Montgomery, Prince George’s

Central–Anne Arundel, Baltimore City, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, Howard

Eastern–Caroline, Cecil, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne’s, Somerset, Talbot, Wicomico, Worcester

Southern–Calvert, Charles, St. Mary’s

Western–Allegany, Garrett, Washington

### **Other Sample Demographics**

Generally speaking, do you consider yourself to be a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or something else?

If a respondent indicates he or she is an Independent:

Because you indicated you were an Independent, do you typically lean toward the Republican or Democratic candidate during elections?

<b>Party Identification</b>	
Republican	.28
Democrat	.55
Independent	.09
Other	.05
Don’t Know/Refused (v)	.03

**Q: PARKINT**

Next, I'm going to ask you a few questions about Maryland state parks. Just to be sure we are taking about the same thing, when I say "state parks," I mean parks that are maintained and run by the state of Maryland.

**Q: VISIT1**

To begin, over the past year, about how many times have you visited a Maryland state park?

	OCT 13	OCT 14
Never	31.7	27.5
1 to 2 Times	24.5	29.1
3 to 5 Times	19.4	19.8
5 to 9 Times	8.2	8.6
10 or More Times	16.1	13.8
Don't Know (v)	0.0	1.1
Total=	100.0 665 +/-3.8	100.0 708 +/-3.7

**Q: VISIT1A**

Because you said you have visited a Maryland state park this past year, on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means "poor" and 5 means "excellent," how would you rate your overall experience?

	OCT 13	OCT 14
1 "Poor"	0.2	1.3
2	0.4	1.9
3	16.4	19.7
4	38.9	41.3
5 "Excellent"	42.8	34.7
Don't Know/Refused (v)	1.1	1.0
Total=	100.0 469 +/- 4.5	100.0 505 +/- 4.4

**Q: VISIT2**

Thinking ahead, how interested—very interested, somewhat interested, or not at all interested—are you in visiting a Maryland state park during the next year?

	OCT 13	OCT 14
Not at All Interested	13.0	14.4
Somewhat Interested	35.4	33.6
Very Interested	51.1	50.9
Don't Know/Refused (v)	0.5	1.1
Total=	100.0 665 +/-3.8	100.0 708 +/-3.7

**Q: ACT**

Next, I'm going to read you a list of activities that are offered at various state parks across Maryland. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means "extremely unlikely" and 5 means "extremely likely," how likely are you to participate in each activity if you were to visit a Maryland state park?

**Items Randomized**

	1	2	3	4	5	DK (v)
Relaxing	6.7	3.5	11.0	19.1	59.4	0.2
Hiking or Walking	12.8	5.9	13.8	23.7	43.6	0.2
Picnicking	10.3	6.2	19.8	21.4	42.1	0.2
Visiting Historic Sites	7.9	7.0	17.2	26.3	41.4	0.2
Swimming	33.0	13.1	13.8	16.6	23.2	0.4
Biking	31.5	12.6	19.3	14.0	22.4	0.3
Fishing	40.3	10.9	15.9	10.3	22.0	0.6
Camping	43.1	10.1	14.8	11.1	20.7	0.2
Canoeing or Kayaking	39.4	9.6	20.4	14.2	16.2	0.2

**Total=708, +/-3.7**

**Q: GOALS**

Next, on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means “not important at all” and 5 means “extremely important,” please tell me how important it is to you that state parks achieve each of the following goals.

**Items Randomized**

	1	2	3	4	5	DK (v)
Preserve Historic Sites	1.3	2.2	9.7	17.9	68.1	0.7
Connect Children to Nature	2.0	2.6	9.4	20.5	65.0	0.5
Improve Natural Areas for Wildlife	2.1	2.0	11.9	19.4	63.5	1.2
Conserve More Land to Protect Natural Resources	3.7	3.5	11.9	19.1	60.8	1.1
Improve Outdoor Recreation Opportunities	4.0	4.3	18.9	22.1	49.5	1.2
Provide More Environmental Educational Opportunities	4.9	6.6	16.7	24.3	46.8	0.7

**Total=708, +/-3.7**

**Q: PARKINFO**

In general, what would be the best way for the Maryland Park Service to get you information about state parks?

**[OPEN ENDED]**

	Percent
Email	23.8
Mailers/Fliers/Newsletters	18.7
TV Ads	14.1
Social Media/Facebook/Twitter	12.4
Maryland Park Service Websites	6.6
Ads on Other Websites	5.5
Newspaper Ads	5.4
Internet/Online (no specifics)	2.7
Radio Ads	0.8
Other	6.8
Don't Know (v)	2.8
Refused (v)	0.5
Total=	100.0 708 +/-3.7