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National Poll- Carbon Footprints? Environmentally Conscious Americans Not Measuring Up

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National Poll- Carbon Footprints? Environmentally Conscious Americans Not Measuring Up

News Story: January 17, 2013

Ø Carbon Calculators Not Well Understood

Ø Americans Say Quality of Life Not Impacted by Conservation Measures

Ø Majorities See Global Warming As Both Natural Cycling and Human Caused

Ø Strong Majorities Convinced Global Warming Is Real

Ø Many See Climate Change Messages As Confusing and Conflicting

FAIRFIELD, CT – A new national poll by the Sacred Heart University Polling Institute found just 7.1% of all 800 respondents have attempted to measure their own personal or household carbon footprint. Of this group, 88.1% suggested the information was very (47.5%) or somewhat (40.7%) helpful in understanding how their own lifestyle impacted the environment.

Overall, 31.8% of all Americans surveyed suggested they were aware of the term “carbon calculator.” However, of this group, 43.3% indicated they understood how it works. A larger percent, 65.0%, said they were aware of the term “carbon footprint” with 69.6% suggesting they understood the term.

Nearly two-thirds of all Americans, 61.9%, indicated they believed that global warming was due to a combination of human activity as well as natural cycling. Others believed global warming was entirely due to human activity or entirely due to natural cycling – 20.1% and 12.6% respectively.

A strong majority of Americans interviewed, 80.1%, said they were completely or mostly convinced that global warming was occurring today. Some, 17.5%, suggested they were not so convinced or not at all convinced.

“The survey provides evidence that the population at large is accepting that global warming is an environmental threat. Just over 80% of the respondents report being ‘completely convinced’ or ‘mostly convinced’ that global warming is occurring now while over two-thirds of the respondents worry about the environmental consequences. This view could also be endorsed by over three-quarters of the respondents supporting the EPA’s decision to regulate carbon emissions,” stated Enda McGovern, Ph.D., associate professor of Marketing at Sacred Heart University’s John F. Welch College of Business.

Nearly all respondents, 94.0%, said they were very or somewhat willing to change their own lifestyle to reduce the impact of climate change. And, 95.1% believed there were things they could be doing to use energy more wisely.

Just 5.6% saw an associated decline in their quality of life as they reduced energy consumption. The majority, 69.3%, did not see any impact on their quality of life and 20.3% suggested they saw an associated increase in their quality of life when they reduced consumption.

Over two-thirds of Americans, 68.6%, expressed a willingness to pay higher prices for “Green” energy sources or items like electric cars to reduce the effect of global warming.

Many Americans interviewed saw messages on climate change and global warming confusing (46.6%) as well as conflicting (49.8%). Just over half, 50.6%, believed there are too many groups communicating global warming and climate change issues to the public. However, most (78.9%) agreed that messages about global warming and climate change are believable.

According to Dr. McGovern, “In order to take the corrective action necessary to reduce the effects of global warming, the public needs to accept their role in regard to the lifestyle choices

they make on a daily basis. This survey provides evidence that this is clearly occurring.”

How the Poll Was Conducted

The Sacred Heart University Polling Institute completed 800 surveys nationally. All telephone interviews were conducted between May 27 and June 9, 2009. One survey instrument was used to elicit information from all respondents. Statistically, a sample of 800 completed telephone interviews represents a margin for error of +/-3.5% at a 95% confidence level.