

public perceptions of the
impacts, use, and future
of minnesota lakes

results of the 1998
minnesota lakes survey

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comments by survey respondents



MINNESOTA LAKES SURVEY

COMMENTS BY SURVEY RESPONDENTS

In the winter and spring of 1998, the University of Minnesota Sea Grant Program and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources conducted a statewide survey on resident's opinions about the value, use, and management of lakes. The results of that survey are published in "Public Perceptions of the Impacts, Use and Future of Minnesota Lakes," available from Sea Grant. In addition to the responses to specific questions, many written comments were added. These comments were not presented in the published report. The written comments are presented here as a supplement to the original report. They add insight into the feelings and opinions presented in that report. Opinions range from individual problems, to specific lake issues, to more general issues. Many comments relate to the need for either more or less management in several areas.

Since written comments were optional in the survey, those who chose to include comments (196 respondents) often had strong opinions. They may also reflect lake issues that cause the greatest concerns throughout Minnesota. Therefore, it is useful to examine the comments and consider them in future lake-related decisions.

The most frequently-mentioned issue regards the use of personal watercraft (PWC). Most opposed use of PWCs (38 opposed vs. 3 supporting) citing disruptions to peace and quiet and concerns over safety/reckless operation.

There were many comments about government regulation. Generally, three out of four people opposed government regulation of lakes. Concerns about large increases in property taxes were expressed. Several people complained about DNR management and some suggested how or where fishing should be improved.

Many people were concerned about over-development and commercialization of waterfront property. Calls for more public access and less private property were also made.

Water pollution was cited by several as a major concern. Home and farm chemical contaminants were identified as causing problems. Other concerns included municipal wastes and feedlot contamination, septic systems, mercury pollution from the atmosphere, and litter.

Several Minnesotans reiterated their love for the lakes and the values that they link to them. People also expressed concerns about lake resources as well as concerns about surrounding lands. Resource management issues were identified ranging from exotic species, to logging, to native plant removal.

On the following pages, the comments are grouped together in the general categories noted above. Not every comment is included. Items like, "I live on the lake," "Great survey," or "Close to work," were dropped from this summary. Comments were edited only for consistency and clarity. A complete list of all comments is available from Minnesota Sea Grant by calling 218-726-8106.

COMMENTS FROM THE 1998 MINNESOTA LAKES SURVEY

OTHER ACTIONS TO ADDRESS PROBLEMS AND OTHER COMMENTS

SUPPORT FOR PERSONAL WATERCRAFT AND MOTOR BOATS (PWCS)

1. Oppose banning PWCs.
2. Oppose Jet Ski time laws.
3. Motorboat and Personal Watercraft laws have gone too far.

OPPOSITION TO PERSONAL WATERCRAFT AND MOTOR BOATS (PWCS)

1. Support stricter regulations for ATV and Jet Skiing.
2. Oppose personal watercraft. Too much personal watercraft.
3. Support restriction on personal watercraft -Jet Skis.
4. Concerns on boat regulations and septs (Where there is not enough space on small lakes to handle speed boats with excessive speed. Boats should not go faster than needed to pull a skier.)
5. Somebody has to have the fortitude to shut down the personal watercrafts. The abuse of these units is unbelievable. Please restrict their use before it is too late!
6. Support NO Jet Skis.
7. Support strict Jet Ski regulations. Last summer we had problems fishing in some of the smaller lakes later in the summer due to Jet Skis digging up the weeds. I hate to see the numbers [of Jet Skis] go up and the size of them get bigger. I'm not totally against them, they look like fun.
8. Also the use of Jet Skis needs to be regulated and not controlled by \$ of the companies that make them.
9. Any lake of 100 acres or less - 5 hp motor, maximum. Strongly urge - 5 hp maximum for any body of water of 100 acres or less.
10. Support regulations on Jet Skis.
11. Hoot lake is a small lake [on] which a public access was recently built. Quality of the lake has worsened due to loud Jet Skis, too many boats with too large hp. It has become difficult to comfortably water ski because 3 boats on the lake waterskiing is all that it can hold and there are up to 10 on some nice summer days. I would like to see restrictions on motor size on our lake to non-residents.
12. Outlaw Jet Skis.
13. Support incentives to [adopt] 4-cycle and electric power motorcraft. 1. I am really disappointed in the irresponsible use of PWCs. They are out of control. Noise is the worst impact. Actions are the second [worst]. 2. The outboard industries needs to get away from 2-cycles. They are incredible polluters.
14. Keep personal watercraft away from public beach[es].
15. Have boat patrol [control] speed, Jet Skis [are a] hazard.

16. Since Jet Skis came on the lake our loon population has went down. Used to have 12-15 pair, last year 1 pair and no young. The wake from Jet Skis wash eggs away when they nest. Eagles have almost left to [sic]. When Jet Skis are on the lake you cannot fish. Our clarity is about 14 feet, when Jet Skis are on the lake clarity is only about 1 foot - to [sic] shallow - to [sic] small.
17. Support: Regulate seasons and times to use personal watercraft.
18. Support ban on Jet Skis on small lakes.
19. I feel some lakes shouldn't allow Jet Skis, waterskiing, or high speed boating. When I go to the lake, I don't want to hear [the] sound [of] engines or have to worry if some speedy vessel is going to hit me when I'm trying to fish. When the water's calm, I want it to remain that way.
20. Support Jet Ski noise control and limit their use. My opinions may change now that I own lake property and will have to personally deal with the issues.
21. Oppose Jet Skis and jet boats.
22. Much stricter regulations of Jet Skis.
23. Do away with Jet Skis!
24. Jet Ski control. Control Jet Skis.
25. Ban Jet Skis and other obnoxious inventions.
26. Support stricter regulations on personal watercraft and 2-cycle engine use.
27. More regulations on motor boats.
28. Ban personal watercraft on small lakes.
29. Support personal watercraft restrictions.
30. Support no Jet Skis (I saw them chasing mama and baby loons for kicks).
31. Personal watercraft are a serious problem and are negatively affecting my enjoyment of MN lakes. More specifically, the operators of these watercraft are rude and insensitive. If education efforts fail these watercraft should be banned.
32. Support ban on Jet Skis.
33. Personal watercraft - Hate them. Too many personal watercraft.
34. Control Jet Ski usage on lakes.
35. Support Jet Ski tighter restrictions.
36. 1. Stricter motor boating regulation and more enforcement, especially for Jet Skis and water skiers. 2. Should be more non-motorized lakes available.
37. A law for quieter muffler systems.
38. People that use our lakes with loud irritating devices such as Jet Skis and unmuffled boats should be severely restricted.

GENERAL SUPPORT FOR GOVERNMENT AND REGULATION

1. I think lakes and shoreline property should be regulated but not overly so. Current laws OK.
2. Stricter penalties for violators.
3. Spend some money in southern Minnesota.
4. In some areas regulations have gone too far but basically have struck about the right balance.
5. I am very happy with the increased awareness of people of their effect on the government. Things have improved so much and I think the younger generation will make things even better.

GENERAL OPPOSITION TO GOVERNMENT AND REGULATION

1. Please, not more government.
2. Government is too involved in people's lives right now! I do not support any further or increased regulation of any kind. I believe a majority of people are "environmentally aware" and do what they can to preserve nature on their own.
3. The lakes and parks of Minnesota have been taken for granted in this era of cost cutting by government. It is easy to understand why when you have a moron Governor who vacations in Wisconsin instead of Minnesota. All laws are only as good as the enforcement which go [sic] with it.
4. Less regulatory and more voluntary.
5. Less government.
6. No more regulations. Use incentives if you are going to do anything.
7. Oppose more government.
8. More flexibility and less government. Use this thinking: The greatest use for the greatest amount of people.
9. I am not a big user of MN lakes. But I am a strong believer in individual and property rights. I do not believe tax dollars should be used to reward state approved behavior nor punish landowners.
10. RE: Q 10b. I strongly support [allowing individuals more flexibility to make decisions about their own land].
11. Other than gross pollution of other private or public land or corporate development and pollution, I think private land owners should be able to do as they please with their own land.
12. On this lake they have been ridiculous as to tell us what colors we can and cannot paint our houses. Also on Vermilion they are building boat houses right down on the water but in our zoning ordinances we can't do that. I would like to know more about why Vermilion residents can do this.
13. Too much government, too much regulation, too expensive.
14. Rainy Lake is a beautiful lake and has been for many many years. Local people have used this lake and the beauty is still there. More restrictions are going to stop the free use of this lake. There are enough restrictions already.
15. I think the county has too strict requirements for wetlands and septic systems. (What's wrong with federal requirements?) Give the lakeshore owners some credit, I think the majority will police and take care of their own lake problems without so much involvement of government. The government already has too much control of public waters.

TAXES

1. Lower taxes on shoreline property.
2. Lake property taxes going sky high!
3. Taxes also have to be held down so families are not forced off the lakes by high property taxes.
4. My parents have owned a small modest cabin on Island Lake north of Duluth for 30

years. I feel very fortunate to have had this privilege of going to a cabin and swimming and fishing in the lake, and having family time together. My own children love to go there, but now because the lake has opened up to year round homes people are building large expensive homes and it is not a place to go to get away any more. Those who own cabins or would like to own one can no longer afford it because of the new tax base which goes up every year. I think year round homes on lake property should be limited or stopped.

5. The government has property taxed the lakeshore property to the point of [sic] a normal wage earner won't be able to live on lakes. I go to Canada!
6. Taxes for seasonal property valuations are skyrocketing every year. Many are not homesteaded, plus rate/classification is almost twice as high. People are being forced to sell due to high taxes.

COMMENTS ON THE MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

1. Better fish and wildlife management by DNR. I feel that hunting and fishing in Minnesota has went [sic] down hill steadily for the past 25 years because of mismanagement. You can't simply put more regulation on the sportsman without propagation of fish and wildlife stocking and habitat. That's the part that takes work. If it keeps going like it is you'll have a generation of people who just enjoy looking at the empty lakes. Then the DNR will have succeeded.
2. Keep the DNR away. Kick the DNR out of Minnesota! I fish Saganaga near Grand Marais for 1 week every year for the last 22 years and have watched how they went from a non pay permit to have to hire a lawyer to make sure you are not breaking the rules. The Saroma Club will kill the tourist industry if somebody don't [sic] stop them. Any more restrictions at Saganaga, BWCAW, I will sell my boat and take up golf.
3. I think the DNR has a bad attitude toward property owners. We are not the enemy. If the property owner pays the outrageous tax, in many cases without the right to vote, they should have more control over their property and less government interference. I am opposed to all tax and licensing increases and expect less service (interference) because of it.
4. It's too bad our lakes don't have more campgrounds, etc. We do more camping in Wisconsin and Michigan than in Minnesota because of the quality and availability in these other states. Our state parks are nothing compared to the other states.
5. Support greater cooperation between lake associations and DNR.
6. More enforcement of shoreland regs.
7. Seed wild rice for shoreline protection.
8. Stop treaty harvest, better DNR management. I worked for DNR, they have no common sense.

FISHING-RELATED COMMENTS

1. More fish stocking.
2. Overfishing and netting.
3. Beaver dams are preventing fish to enter [sic] lake from streams.
4. Get the fish population back. Been extremely poor since 1979.
5. No spearing on small lakes.

6. I'm in favor of more size restrictions on fish to increase the overall size. More education and promotion of catch and release should be done.
7. I feel because I was born and raised in Minnesota I do not have rights or have lost rights because of the Indian treaty rights to harvest whatever they want (I know there are limits but it is not fair)!
8. ...and as far as fishing goes, slot limits are great for the future of fishing and also the lakes the Indians are spearing and netting. Our DNR dollars should quit going into those lakes and when they fish them out we'll buy them back and restock! Re: Q 8 CD. Pan fish decreased, game [fish] increased.
9. I believe there are lampreys in the lake killing the northerns.
10. Catch and release all Muskellunge.
11. Support planting of game fish. Weeds and lily pads are a lot thicker and more abundant than 30-40 years ago. Trout were put in lake 2 different times, and sunfish took over. DNR gave up on lake and has done nothing to put fish such as walleyes in lake. Sunfish and crappies are too small to keep. Largemouth bass and northerns are larger than 30 years ago.
12. Two issues not reflected in your survey: 1. Beavers have had the biggest impact on our lake in the past 30 years; the water has risen and subsequently changed the shoreline. 2. Game fish (size and number) have dropped dramatically. Some say it "froze out" a while back. Whatever the cause, it needs restocking. Thank you!
13. Fishing has decreased because of so many fish houses in winter.

DEVELOPMENT, PLANNING, AND ZONING

1. Stop the house building and lawn run off.
2. Discourage high-density development such as townhouses. The other disturbing trend I see is the increase in high density development on our lakes. As property values soar, more townhouse type development is occurring which vastly increases the use of our lakes.
3. No more development.
4. 300 foot minimum frontage for all lakes.
5. Stop granting variances to rebuild on undersize lake lots.
6. More friendly planning and zoning.
7. Too many homes on the lakes. When you want to shorefish, there is no parking and if there is, you have to walk to [sic] far.
8. My parents have owned a small modest cabin on Island Lake north of Duluth for 30 years. I feel very fortunate to have had this privilege of going to a cabin and swimming and fishing in the lake, and having family time together. My own children love to go there, but now because the lake has opened up to year round homes people are building large expensive homes and it is not a place to go to get away any more.
9. We vacation and spend time in Michigan's U.P. For us, Minnesota lakes are too commercialized and are managed primarily in the interests of the resort and boating interests.
10. Question 4 ask over last ten years. I've changed lakes because Nett Lake was so overdeveloped. We lost our boat landing public access. Nett Lake is on the border of Carlton and Pine Counties.

11. Support: Regulate building setbacks, colors used, clearing of view of lake to or from buildings.
12. Support: Prohibit variance allowance on shoreline property.
13. No private ownership of shoreline anywhere.
14. Greatest technical problem I see is clumsy siting and landscaping of new construction around lake. Maybe something doable about setback, etc., compatible with fire safety.
15. No trailers.
16. More public access, parking.
17. More public access.
18. I noticed a failure to address the question of waterway access/shoreline access for the general public. In my opinion, this access ought to at least equal privately held shoreline. What good is a lake to which the only access is by a concrete "public access" ramp? Too often our heritage has been sold out from under us.

WATER POLLUTION

1. The lakes (Bush Lake by me but others also) are so polluted with pesticides from nearby homes, they certainly are not places for fishing, swimming, or even wildlife.
2. Caribou Lake has a high percent of caring and protective land owners/renters. However, mandatory septic systems is a concern in our area - do we need it?
3. Salt from Burnsville Center run-off is damaging. Lawn fertilizers from homes is [sic] damaging. Not enough shoreline trees, shrubs and grasses.
4. Municipal waste and lawn fertilizer.
5. Chemical runoff appears to be the major problem for Fairmont's lakes.
6. Get rid of all pesticides everywhere.
7. I believe more needs to be done to preserve our waters. So much has already been destroyed it would be ashamed [sic] not to have them in the future to share with our children.
8. We need to enforce littering [laws] more or have some type of clean-up crews. I'll volunteer.
9. Re Q 9aa: [Lake property] should be zoned for composting toilets. Re Q 10a: Support dry or composting toilets. Re Q 10: You haven't mentioned what is probably the most serious problem: mercury pollution from coal burning power plants. Something must be done about all the debris left behind by people ice fishing.
10. Assist property owner with shoreline development. Fish and wildlife have and will continue to be a great part of Minnesota resources. Better understanding is required by DNR officials, so they will support the honest lakeshore owner, who is trying to keep his or her property nice. Most landowners are trying to keep shoreline erosion down and limit pollution.
11. We are looking for a cabin in the Cass County/Longville area. The lakes are cleaner up there. We think the long drive will still be worth it.
12. Although there should be a balance between voluntary and enforced regulations to protect our water from pollution and degradation, most of the businesses and private sector people, when in a cash crunch, choose to disregard these problems because there is no money in it. A reward system should consider these facts.

13. I do lots of fishing and I think overall the water quality has improved since regulation of septic systems and control of farm runoff the last few years.
14. Biggest problem is lawn clippings blown into streets and rains wash clippings into sewer and then flow into Clear Lake. Also Clear Lake turns green in color by June 15th.
15. Ban agricultural chemicals.
16. Re Q 7ca: Fish contamination major problem because feed lot moved in. Re Q 9ah: Livestock manure from feed lot is [a] great impact.
17. Regulation, limitation of feedlots, runoff. Also feedlots are an increasing problem due to smell, runoff into lakes. People need to update septic systems, but why do so when the feedlot runoff is a much larger problem that the MPCA does not address or enforce so that runoff is not going into lakes - and feedlots are larger and larger, and closer than ever to lakes, with seemingly no control by state or county.

VALUES ABOUT MINNESOTA LAKES

1. Minnesota lakes are Minnesota's greatest assets. The sound of the loon at dusk and the view of the shoreline is Minnesota's heritage and should be protected as such!
2. The biggest problem I see with our lakes is the lack of respect people seem to show for them. I believe our lakes should be reserved for traditional uses such as fishing, enjoying the natural environment and quality family time.
3. Lakes are one of (if not) the most important resource(s) in Minnesota. They are a valuable part of our hunting and fishing heritage and we need to protect and improve them where possible. Our state is known throughout the country for its number and quality of lakes. Let's keep it that way.
4. Retired now but did love the lakes and woods. All nature important.
5. I owned a condo at Breezy Point for 24 years. We spent each entire summer there. I loved the lake! So, in spite of the fact that I have no contact with lakes now, I totally appreciate their beauty, peacefulness and the addition they make to our quality of life.
6. I wish I could have had a more informational input to your survey, but am disabled so cannot really take advantage of the lakes as I would like to. I do really enjoy seeing them and hope they can be preserved for many, many years.
7. I use Lake Superior much more but other lakes still important.
8. We live on Lake Superior and have no need to visit other lakes - but feel they are of critical importance. Thank you for your work in this area.
9. Due to my health I have not enjoyed area lakes in the past 3 years. I hope the future generations have as much enjoyment that I previously have enjoyed. Keep the pressure on. Keep monitoring lakes and forests. Loggers are leaving or burning a lot of wood they have cut and they should make and maintain their own roads to the wood cutting areas.
10. I own property on Lake Superior, however I go the Boundary Waters annually. I do not use one particular inland lake but take friends on day trips to hike, kayak, canoe or photo on or overlooking lakes in the Lutsen area; Caribou, Rice, Pike, Devil Track, etc. When going to the BWCAW I chose a different entry and route each time, entering from Gunflint Trail, Caribou Trail, or Ely. Therefor[e] I cannot comment on changes in the individual lakes' environment. The preservation of water quality and green space in all areas of the state, from wilderness, to rural, to urban, is very important to me in insuring a healthy planet for future generations as well as my own great pleasure now.

RESOURCE COMMENTS

1. Ref Q 7b: You shouldn't try to influence nature by what people want. It's not a smart idea.
2. It would be good to have hard facts on what [a]ffects the ecology. I don't think laws are the answer. It is important to tell people exactly what they are doing and let them make their own decision.
3. I know this is difficult to manage, but I believe we must manage our great water resources - what a treasure we have in Minnesota.
4. I am concerned about the deformed frogs found in Minnesota lakes and hope they will find out the cause so it will stop happening.
5. Re Q 8bb: But frogs, crayfish and clams have declined drastically. What is happening? Research on frog, crayfish and clam declines. This needs serious attention.
6. Ref Q 7cb: Crayfish are a major problem.
7. Keep the motorboats off the BWCAW.
8. People need to understand that everything we have in Minnesota we are just borrowing from our kids. People who want to lift restrictions in the BWCAW just don't understand that we are so temporary on this earth compared to what's there and you cannot put any price on it, it is priceless; and we all need to do what ever we can to keep nature the way it was hundreds of years ago for hundreds of years in the future.
9. Have designated lakes and rivers maximum 10 hp motors. I support a number of hunting and fishing groups such a Izaak Walton, etc. Also member of NRA. I'd like to see certain lakes and rivers designated as hunting and fishing areas. No four wheelers or ATV - No motors over 10 hp No electric sounding devices on these lakes and rivers. Open Boundary Waters to max 10 hp motors. Senior citizens should be able to use 10 hp or less in all Boundary Waters areas. Especially the handicapped. You'll find out some day being old is a handicap in the wilds.
10. The BWCAW should be back to the regs before they closed down portages and lakes to motors. Environmental groups and the Twin Cities should keep their noses out of it. We cater to them, not them people catering to us.
11. I really enjoy region 6 [Southeast Region] with its trails and cleaner rivers. The scenery is also nice.
12. Oppose logging. I know that making it easier to get to lakes back in the woods is good but they also get to [sic] much fishing pressure. I disagree with making old tote roads easier to travel. Should leave them alone. Look what they did to the trail going into Bone Lake.
13. The eutrophication process seems to be at a normal rate for Ely Lake over the 31 years I have lived on the lake. Weed growth has increased slightly. Clarity has varied through the years, but this past summer the lake was very clear. This lake is primarily a bass lake and fishing has remained good.
14. Clear cutting of timber along lakes is making the ecosystem to change. This is the main problem. Sewer systems along lakes is [sic] the second problem. No contaminants should be allowed to enter ground within 5000 ft of the water - else it goes to the water of the lakes.
15. Duck itch studies and how to control it naturally. We "own" in Wisconsin, but MN lakes are important to me in concept, even though I really don't use them now that we own WI property.

16. Re Q 10 l & 10 m - If management means hunting...I absolutely oppose; if it means conservation and protection then I support.
17. No fish farms in or near lake.
18. Oppose native plant removal.

EDUCATION

1. Provide information on current MN laws.
2. Education in all people.
3. I think we need a lot more education.

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