

Big Chetac Lakeshore Property Owner Survey Results –Part 2

As reported in last months' Birchwood News, the Lake Association is in the process of updating its' lake management plan for Big Chetac. To do that, a DNR approved survey was mailed out to all Chetac lakeshore property owners on March 10th. The survey was administered by a survey company out of Minnesota. The results are being used to determine the activities that should be pursued moving forward to further improve the water quality of the lake. The survey had several parts: Demographics about the respondents; water quality concerns; satisfaction with the Association activities to date; water quality activities they want to pursue moving forward; how to fund these activities; and, local governmental concern and support.

Last month we detailed the respondents' feelings on water quality and their overwhelming support for nine water quality initiatives. 92.5% reported being negatively impacted by lake water quality in some way and the initiatives they support include any DNR recommended or approved water quality improvement activity. This includes the continued use of herbicide treatments to control CLP and to reduce the level of phosphorous in the lake, and the use of an ALUM treatment to prevent the release of phosphorous from the lakes sediment. This really makes sense given it is the DNR's responsibility to protect and enhance our natural resources. This month we will cover funding mechanisms for water quality.

Survey Facts:

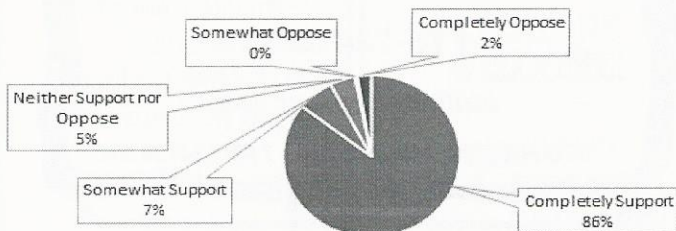
- Survey mailed to all 390 property owners (list supplied by Sawyer County).
- 244 people returned completed surveys, representing a 62.5% response rate.
- As a result of the outstanding response rate, the findings are considered statistically representative of the whole group.

Part 1: Big Chetac Lakeshore Owner Demographics (what do we know about them?):

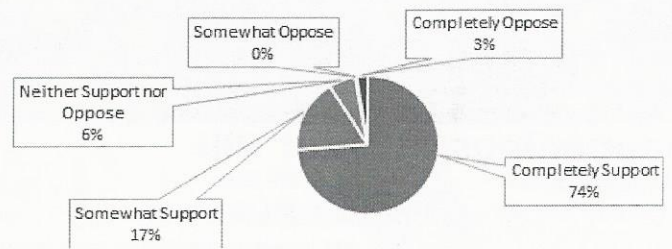
- Property Type they own and use: Primary Residence 20%, Seasonal Residence 20%, Less than Seasonal 46%, Business 3%, Undeveloped Land 2%, and Other 3%.
- Length of Ownership: Average of 19.74 years, with 34.57% owning their property over 20 years.
- Days they use their property each year: 45.19% over 100 days; 46.44% from 26 to 100 days; and, 8.37% less than 26 days each year.
- Number of people using property when in use: 48.55% 2 or less; 35.68% 3 to 5; 12.03% 6 to 10; and, 3.73% over 10.
- What activities they participate in on Big Chetac: #1 Fishing from a boat (93%); #2 Fishing from shore (86%); #3 Rest/Relaxation (83%); and, #4 Pontoon Boating (70%).
- What activities they participate in most often: #1 Fishing from a boat (73%); #2 Pontoon boating (58%); #3 Fishing from Shore (41%); and, #4 Rest/Relaxation(37%).

Part 2: Level of Support for specific funding mechanisms:

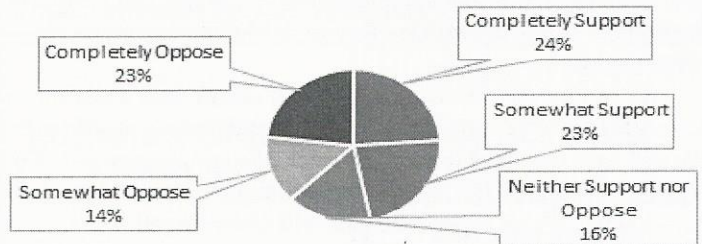
Support for Grant Funding



Support for Public Donations



Support for Lake District Formation



The above indicates extremely significant support for the continued use of grants and public donations to fund the water quality activities undertaken by the Lake Association. Based on the above, you should expect to see the use of grants and public donations built into the revised lake management plan.

However, there is mixed support for the formation of a lake district. The formation of a lake district would only happen if at least 50% of the property owners in the proposed district would sign a petition agreeing to its formation. As a follow up question regarding lake districts, respondents were asked how much they would be willing to contribute annually toward water quality initiatives, if all property owners were required to do so. 202 people responded to the question with 14% reporting \$0, with an overall average of \$190.74 for the entire group. That question is important because it is the property owners within the district who decide each year how much money to spend on water quality initiatives.

The original SEH Lake Management Plan report from 2010 recommended pursuing the formation of a lake district because they provide a guaranteed funding mechanism for large projects. One big advantage a lake district has over a lake association is its ability to take on debt to fund activities. This would allow a big project like an ALUM treatment to occur right away and be paid for over time. The Association did not pursue it in the original lake management plan they adopted as they did not have the resources needed to pursue water quality initiatives and the formation of a lake district too. So, while the formation of a lake district might be in the best interest of the community, even if included in the revised lake management plan, it would only be pursued if someone would step forward to spearhead the initiative. So while the revised lake management plan might include trying to form a lake district, there is no certainty that one would actually be pursued or what the outcome of the attempt might be.

A link to the full survey results can be found on bottom left of the Lake Association website home page at BCABLA.com. Look for Part 3 of this article in the August issue of the Birchwood News.

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