

## SCLA Comprehensive Lake Management Plan 2021 – Excerpt: Property Owner Survey of 2020

### Property Owner Survey

A sociological **survey was administered to all shoreland property owners** of the Spider Chain of Lakes (Sheldon, 2020). The survey was designed to assess the attitudes and cultural behaviors that promote and impede the SCLA's lake protection efforts. The survey was divided into the following blocks:

- **Survey Narrative.** Provided an explanation of the purpose of the survey.
- **Participant Residency.** Description of residency, tenure on the lake chain, and introduction to the lake chain.
- **SCLA Participation and Perspectives.** Rating satisfaction and importance of a number of SCLA activities. Self-assessment of participation and willingness to participate.
- **Participation and lake Use.** Data on preferred lake activities and inventory of motorized and non-motorized watercrafts.
- **Fishing and Fishery Management.** Interest in fishing, species preference, and attitudes about fishery management.
- **Attitudes about the lake.** Level of agreement related to physical characteristics of the lake, preferences about lake views, and concerns related to water quality.
- **Personal Views.** Open-ended responses to the following questions: (1) *List the three most important things to you about the Spider Chain.* (2) *List the three most important things that need to happen on the Spider Chain in the next 2 to 5 years.* (3) *Non-member survey only: According to our records, you are not currently a member of the Spider Chain of Lakes Association. If there is a specific reason for that decision, please share that with us.*

Survey notices, delivery and replies occurred from June 15, 2020 through July 21, 2020. Survey methods and results are explained in detail in the survey report (Sheldon, 2020). Survey results will be used to assist in identifying owner concerns and interests, willingness to participate in and support SCLA programs, motivations for behavior change, and characteristics of owners and their property. These will influence lake goals and objectives and help to select priorities for SCLA activities going forward.

### Survey Conclusions

**A typical Spider chain shoreland property owner.** Half of shoreland owners (50%) come to the lakes on summer weekends or weekends throughout the year. Almost nine out of ten shoreland owners (86%) have been on the Spider Chain for six or more years.

**SCLA.** About three-quarters of shoreland owners are SCLA members. SCLA members say that the *most important services and activities the SCLA provides are: controlling aquatic invasive species (96%), the Spider Lines newsletter (96%), the SCLA monthly updates (93%), and the SCLA website (91%).*

**Actions.** The majority of respondents say they are very willing to do, or are already doing environmental efforts such as removing lead-containing weights and lures, altering lawn practices and shoreline plantings to improve water quality, and changing how they use the lakes in order to protect them.

**Activities.** Most survey respondents own between one and three canoes or kayaks (95%) and between one and three motorboats (74%). The vast majority of owners own no sailboats (94%), no jet skis (92%), no ATV/UTVs (90%), and no snowmobiles (89%). The activities viewed as less important are: snowmobiling (36%), harvesting food (33%), ATV/UTV trails (27%), hunting or trapping (18%), and irrigation (14%). Eight of every ten owners (80%) are active anglers. They prefer fishing for largemouth bass, walleyes, and muskies.

**Attitudes about the Spider Chain.** There are very high levels of agreement on preserving and protecting an undeveloped quality on the lakes. The vast majority of owners prefer natural shorelines, peace and quiet, and the “Northwoods” and “wilderness” character of the area. Further, they realize that what they do affects the lakes and that their shoreland property values are directly linked to the quality of the lakes. The majority do not want to see lawns. The majority of shoreland owners want waterskiing hours to remain the same, neither reduced (76%) nor expanded (61%).

**Lake issues.** The most important lakes issues are: maintaining water quality; peace and quiet; retaining the wilderness setting; preserving the unspoiled, undeveloped shoreline; and controlling aquatic invasive species.

**Comprehensive lake Management Plan.** A Comprehensive Lake Management Plan for the Spider Chain of Lakes should consider the desires of most shoreland property owners to preserve the “Northwoods” and “wilderness” nature of the lake chain. Nearly all owners say they are concerned about preserving the water quality of the lakes, preventing and controlling aquatic invasive species, and maintaining a quality fishery. Spider Chain shoreland property owners have a strong environmental stewardship ethic and the Comprehensive Lake Management Plan should use this value as a primary guiding principle.

Excerpted from “*Spider Chain of Lakes Comprehensive Lake Management Plan 2021*”