

Awareness and Satisfaction Survey Results

Minnesota Department of
Natural Resources



June, 2000

Produced by the DNR-Bureau of Information, Education and Licensing

Introduction

This report summarizes the results of a survey conducted during the months of February and March, 2000. This survey is a follow-up to similar surveys conducted in 1996, 1992, and 1988.

A random sample of 1000 Minnesota residents age 18+ was contacted. An alert letter was followed by a general mailing of the survey. A follow-up mailing of a second survey was made to non-respondents. Of the 1000 people in the sample, 37 surveys were returned as non-deliverable, leaving a potential sample size of 963. From this number 510 surveys were returned and filled out completely enough to be entered for analysis. This produced a response rate 54%. This compares closely to the results of the 1996 survey which had a response rate of 52%, and the 1992 survey which had a 54% response rate utilizing a similar sampling plan.

Summary of Results

Satisfaction with DNR services

***DNR activities that survey respondents were most satisfied with:**

- 1) The procedures required by the DNR to get a license or permit,
- 2) How well the DNR maintains its buildings and campgrounds,
- 3) How well the DNR manages state recreation trails,
- 4) How knowledgeable DNR employees are; Boating in Minnesota,
- 5) Fishing in Minnesota.

In 1996 the ranking was:

- 1) How well the DNR maintains its campgrounds,
- 2) How helpful DNR employees are,
- 3) The procedures required by the DNR to get a license or permit,
- 4) How knowledgeable DNR employees are,
- 5) How well the DNR manages state recreation trails.

***DNR activities that survey respondents were most dissatisfied with:**

- 1) How much the DNR is doing to reduce the amount of trash being dumped along lakeshores and rivers,
- 2) How much the DNR is doing to protect lakes and rivers from agricultural, animal and human wastes,
- 3) How effectively the DNR helps lakeshore owners in identifying where and when they can control aquatic vegetation adjacent to their property,
- 4) How well the DNR manages lakeshore development,
- 5) How well the DNR communicates about natural resources laws and regulations.

#See Table 1 in the Appendix for a complete listing. See Chart 2 for a display of the top ten.

Importance of DNR activities

***All DNR activities listed on the survey were rated “important” or “very important” by a minimum of 80% of those answering the question. This is slightly higher than the survey results from 1996. However, the top five stayed the same.**

*** The top five activities rated “very important” in ranked priority were:**

- 1) How much the DNR is doing to protect lakes and rivers from agricultural, animal and human waste,
- 2) How much the DNR is doing to reduce the amount of trash being dumped along lakeshores and rivers,
- 3) How the DNR educates people about firearm safety,
- 4) What the DNR is doing to prevent the spread of Eurasian water milfoil,
- 5) How well the DNR maintains the balance between use and preservation of natural resources.

See Table 2 in the Appendix for a complete list of responses.

See Chart 1 in the Appendix for a graphic display of the top ten.

Sources of Information

Major sources of information about DNR (top five):

- 1) Newspapers
- 2) Television
- 3) DNR publications
- 4) Radio
- 5) Special events (State Fair, county fairs, sports shows)

Major changes from last survey where people get information:

- 1) Special events is now among the top five sources of DNR information.
- 2) The DNR website was not available in 1996. Nearly 24% of the respondents list the website as a source of DNR information. At the same time there is no appreciable decline in other sources listed by respondents.

See Table 3 in the Appendix for complete listing

Agreement with selected statements

Those statements that survey respondents agree with most:

- 1) State-owned lands that are used for outdoor recreation or sustainable natural resource management should be kept in state ownership,
- 2) Certain wetlands other than lakes should be protected in Minnesota,
- 3) The DNR should prohibit the construction and use of permanent deer stands on all state-owned lands,
- 4) Everyone who operates motor boats should have an operator's license,
- 5) The lottery process, which is used to issue permits for hunting moose, bear, antlerless deer and turkey are administered fairly.

Those statements that survey respondents disagree most:

- 1) The DNR should establish more sites on public land for motorized off-road vehicle recreation,
- 2) Zoning and environmental restrictions on the use of private land should be lessened,
- 3) Recreation equipment should be taxed to help fund natural resource projects and activities,
- 4) The DNR should have a more active role in regulating urban development,
- 5) The DNR should give more authority to local governments such as counties, cities, and townships to manage and protect natural resources, and
- 6) More waters should be designated for catch and release fishing only.

See Table 4 in the Appendix for a complete listing. See Chart 3 for a list of the top ten.

Written comments

The last question on the survey provided an opportunity for respondents to provide a written comment:

If you could change one thing about the way the DNR manages natural resources, what would it be?

More than half of the respondents provided a comment. Those most frequently mentioned include:

- 1) Law and regulation enforcement- suggesting more conservation officers; stronger environmental laws, more severe penalties for 2nd time offenders.
- 2) Fishing - wanting, more stocking of lakes and setting slot restrictions to bring the fishing back. Mandating catch and release was mentioned frequently. Others want to reduce the limit on sunfish and crappies because many small lakes are over-fished.
- 3) Funding - comments were split between DNR gets enough money and should be less conscious of the 'all mighty dollar'; and the DNR needs more money to manage the department properly.

- 4) Hunting - a number of comments that duck hunting has become very poor to non-existent. Reasons given include season starts too late, need more wetlands and better management.
- 5) Providing information - suggestions that we communicate more, be seen more on television, get more information out to schools, increase website information, become more pro-active in environmental education.

A complete summary of the comments is located in the Appendix

Trends and Findings

- 1) The whole area of protecting lakes and rivers, surface water use, and shore land protection continues to be the number one environmental issue among survey respondents. Whether it is protecting lakes and rivers from waste, controlling milfoil, managing lakeshore development, or protecting wetlands, this general area has been of the most concern, and a source of some dissatisfaction.
- 2) The whole area of forests, forest management, and timber harvesting continues to be an environmental issue of major interest and concern.
- 3) One of the constants over the last 12 years, is the opinion that most people hold that DNR employees are knowledgeable and helpful. Both of these traits are considered to be important by the vast majority of those surveyed and respondents rated these very high over the period.
- 4) As to how people get information related to the DNR, there has been a dramatic decline over the last eight years in people getting information through citizen conservation or sporting organizations. This, despite the fact that reported participation by survey respondents has been essentially constant. At the same time there has been a dramatic increase in the reported use of DNR publications as a source of information about the DNR.
- 5) There is strong and growing satisfaction over the twelve years with the procedures required to get a license or permit from the DNR. This area is now the one of highest satisfaction among respondents.

Appendix

Table 1	Question	Response																			
		Very Satisfied				Satisfied				Neutral				Dissatisfied				Very Dissatisfied			
		'88	'92	'96	'00	'88	'92	'96	'00	'88	'92	'96	'00	'88	'92	'96	'00	'88	'92	'96	'00
Fishing in Minnesota	12	13	11	12	57	59	56	58	16	15	19	19	12	9	12	11	3	4	2	1	
Boating in Minnesota	-	-	-	10	-	-	-	61	-	-	-	22	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	1	
How well the DNR maintains the balance between use and preservation of natural resources	8	5	7	6	63	63	62	57	20	23	19	27	7	8	9	10	2	1	2	1	
What the DNR is doing to protect endangered species of plants and animals	13	13	8	8	65	66	57	59	16	15	25	23	4	6	8	8	2	0	1	2	
How effectively the DNR assists lakeshore owners in identifying where and when they can control aquatic vegetation	-	-	5	6	-	-	30	31	-	-	45	42	-	-	12	15	-	-	6	6	
How well the DNR manages forest lands	-	-	9	8	-	-	56	59	-	-	20	21	-	-	12	10	-	-	2	3	
How well the DNR manages state recreation trails	-	-	14	11	-	-	60	62	-	-	20	21	-	-	4	4	-	-	2	2	
The way the DNR maintains its buildings and campgrounds	17	15	14	13	58	61	63	61	21	21	17	21	3	2	4	4	1	1	1	1	
How well the DNR manages lakeshore development	7	5	4	4	46	48	41	41	28	28	34	35	15	15	17	14	4	4	4	6	
How well the DNR educates people about firearms	14	12	17	10	56	58	50	51	19	23	19	25	10	6	12	11	1	1	1	4	
How well the DNR educates people about boating safety	14	12	17	10	56	58	50	54	19	23	19	26	10	6	12	9	1	1	1	2	
How well the DNR manages non-game species (species not typically hunted/harvested, including some birds, butterflies, insects, reptiles and mammals)	-	-	7	5	-	-	47	43	-	-	41	42	-	-	4	8	-	-	2	2	
How much the DNR is doing to reduce the amount of trash being dumped along lakeshores and rivers	7	6	6	5	33	38	37	39	21	27	26	27	32	23	26	23	7	6	6	6	
How much the DNR is doing to protect lakes and rivers from agricultural, animal and human wastes	-	-	4	4	-	-	39	40	-	-	25	29	-	-	25	20	-	-	6	7	
How much the DNR is doing to protect property and forest land from wildfires	15	7	10	8	58	60	62	57	20	31	25	28	5	2	2	6	2	1	1	2	
What the DNR is doing to prevent the spread of Eurasian watermilfoil	-	8	13	12	-	43	53	55	-	27	21	20	-	16	11	10	-	6	3	3	
How well the DNR educates people about exotic species such as zebra mussels	-	4	9	9	-	41	52	57	-	37	26	23	-	15	12	10	-	3	1	1	
Hunting in Minnesota	10	11	13	13	53	57	52	50	20	21	25	27	14	8	9	8	3	3	1	3	
Environmental education materials or opportunities prepared by the DNR	-	-	-	7	-	-	-	52	-	-	-	34	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	1	
How well the DNR communicates natural resources laws and policies	-	4	7	6	-	49	49	44	-	29	27	32	-	14	12	13	-	4	4	5	
How well the DNR reforests harvested areas	-	9	9	5	-	48	47	49	-	29	33		-	12	10	9	-	2	2	2	
What the DNR is doing to promote the protection of old growth forests	-	4	5	5	-	41	43	43	-	37	35	37	-	12	12	11	-	6	5	4	
The way conservation officers enforce hunting laws	13	10	13	10	56	57	57	57	18	20	18	23	11	9	8	8	2	4	3	2	
The procedures required by the DNR to get a license or permit	10	8	13	13	57	61	63	63	24	23	16	16	7	7	5	5	2	0	3	3	
DNR employees - Are they knowledgeable	13	9	18	15	52	55	57	56	29	30	21	24	5	5	4	3	1	1	1	2	
DNR employees - Are they helpful	18	13	21	16	52	58	56	53	23	23	17	24	5	5	4	4	2	1	2	2	
DNR employees - Do they listen	-	-	-	13	-	-	-	49	-	-	-	28	-	-	-	7	-	-	-	3	

Question	Response											
	Very Important				Important				Not Important			
	'88	'92	'96	'00	'88	'92	'96	'00	'88	'92	'96	'00
Fishing in Minnesota	46	45	38	44	49	48	47	39	5	7	15	17
Boating in Minnesota	-	-	-	29	-	-	-	54	-	-	-	16
How well the DNR maintains the balance between use and preservation of natural resources	50	48	46	47	47	50	52	48	3	2	2	5
What the DNR is doing to protect endangered species of plants and animals	53	47	41	38	43	48	50	55	4	5	9	7
How effectively the DNR assists lakeshore owners in identifying where and when they can control aquatic vegetation	-	-	21	30	-	-	61	57	-	-	18	13
How well the DNR manages forest lands	-	-	43	39	-	-	53	56	-	-	4	6
How well the DNR manages state recreation trails	-	-	26	24	-	-	62	64	-	-	12	12
The way the DNR maintains its buildings and campgrounds	25	24	24	25	67	67	64	63	8	9	12	12
How well the DNR manages lakeshore development	36	35	33	35	59	59	58	57	5	6	9	8
How well the DNR educates people about firearms	49	43	59	54	48	53	39	41	3	4	3	5
How well the DNR educates people about boating safety	49	43	59	41	48	53	39	53	3	4	3	6
How well the DNR manages non-game species (species not typically hunted/harvested, including some birds, butterflies, insects, reptiles and mammals)	-	-	21	27	-	-	58	53	-	-	20	19
How much the DNR is doing to reduce the amount of trash being dumped along lakeshores and rivers	70	64	65	60	30	35	34	38	0	1	1	2
How much the DNR is doing to protect lakes and rivers from agricultural, animal and human wastes	-	-	65	63	-	-	34	35	-	-	1	2
How much the DNR is doing to protect property and forest land from wildfires	52	35	39	37	46	59	56	56	2	6	5	7
What the DNR is doing to prevent the spread of Eurasian watermilfoil	-	69	54	54	-	29	44	42	-	2	2	3
How well the DNR educates people about exotic species such as zebra mussels	-	30	38	42	-	55	52	51	-	15	10	7
Hunting in Minnesota	43	40	40	42	46	48	41	38	11	12	19	20
Environmental education materials or opportunities prepared by the DNR	-	-	-	20	-	-	-	70	-	-	-	11
How well the DNR communicates natural resources laws and policies	-	32	33	29	-	64	63	64	-	4	4	6
How well the DNR reforests harvested areas	-	49	44	37	-	48	53	58	-	3	3	5
What the DNR is doing to promote the protection of old growth forests	-	41	43	33	-	52	54	60	-	7	4	7
The way conservation officers enforce hunting laws	48	43	42	41	50	51	53	52	2	6	4	5
The procedures required by the DNR to get a license or permit	19	19	25	26	68	67	65	64	13	14	10	10
DNR employees - Are they knowledgeable	39	35	32	36	46	59	65	62	2	5	3	2
DNR employees - Are they helpful	34	26	32	36	63	70	66	61	3	4	2	2
DNR employees - Do they listen	-	-	-	38	-	-	-	60	-	-	-	2

Table 3				
	Percent reporting as a source			
Source	1988	1992	1996	2000
Newspaper articles	86	86	88	87
Minnesota Volunteer magazine	27	25	32	22
DNR publications (such as regulation handbooks, books, posters)	27	62	72	70
At the Minnesota State Fair	33	44	45	44
By calling DNR Central Office	16	20	23	20
By calling a DNR office other than Central Office	27	24	27	21
By calling a conservation officer			23	22
Special events such as sportshows, county fairs, etc.	58	50	60	60
Citizens groups such as conservation organizations or lake associations	53	39	36	36
Radio	65	69	68	64
Television	71	72	74	70
Billboards		46	36	37
State Parks		64	64	57
Environmental education workshops			12	8
Website				23

Table 4																				
		Responses to selected statements																		
Question	Strongly Agree				Agree				Neutral				Disagree				Strongly disagree			
	'88	'92	'96	'00	'88	'92	'96	'00	'88	'92	'96	'00	'88	'92	'96	'00	'88	'92	'96	'00
More waters should be designated for catch-and-release fishing only	14	11	12	17	25	27	33	28	36	35	32	30	19	21	18	20	8	6	5	9
Licenses and permits required by the DNR should be available at more locations throughout the state	9	7	5	10	36	36	26	32	45	47	47	41	8	9	19	16	2	1	3	2
DNR offices should be open to the public for more hours each day	3	3	4	7	19	20	19	22	60	61	61	53	17	16	14	18	1	1	2	1
Taxing recreation equipment to help support lake management, trails, parks and other recreation facilities	9	9	12	13	32	27	28	35	19	19	21	19	24	27	24	22	16	18	16	11
The DNR should provide more hiking and biking trails	-	-	12	10	-	-	30	30	-	-	40	40	-	-	15	14	-	-	3	6
The DNR should provide more water accesses and fishing piers	-	-	12	10	-	-	34	37	-	-	36	32	-	-	15	19	-	-	3	2
The lottery process, which is used to issue permits for hunting moose, bear, antlerless deer and turkey is administered fairly	9	10	14	10	49	52	53	52	26	24	24	27	9	9	6	7	7	5	4	5
The DNR should buy more land to protect our resources	18	19	19	20	32	32	31	34	30	24	26	25	14	17	16	15	6	7	9	7
The DNR manages enough land for public hunting	-	-	6	9	-	-	42	37	-	-	30	29	-	-	14	18	-	-	7	7
The DNR should manage forests to help meet consumer demand for forest products	-	8	12	9	-	42	34	36	-	24	26	29	-	17	20	18	-	9	9	8
The DNR provides adequate opportunities for public input into natural resources management issues.	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	39	-	-	-	35	-	-	-	18	-	-	-	5
The DNR should have a more active role in regulating urban development	-	-	-	10	-	-	-	32	-	-	-	24	-	-	-	22	-	-	-	11
The DNR should have a more active role in regulating rural development	-	-	-	11	-	-	-	37	-	-	-	24	-	-	-	18	-	-	-	10

Table 4 (continued)																				
		Responses to selected statements																		
Question	Strongly Agree				Agree				Neutral				Disagree				Strongly disagree			
	'88	'92	'96	'00	'88	'92	'96	'00	'88	'92	'96	'00	'88	'92	'96	'00	'88	'92	'96	'00
Everyone who operates motor boats should take a safety course	-	-	30	26	-	-	32	37	-	-	13	16	-	-	18	18	-	-	7	4
The DNR should establish more sites on public land for motorized off-road vehicle recreational use	-	-	9	7	-	-	22	25	-	-	26	24	-	-	25	24	-	-	18	19
The DNR should give more authority to local governments such as counties, cities and townships, to manage and protect natural resources	-	-	12	12	-	-	36	36	-	-	23	23	-	-	19	18	-	-	11	11
Trespass laws should be revised to prohibit entry onto private land without prior written permission	-	-	24	21	-	-	34	33	-	-	16	19	-	-	15	20	-	-	11	8
Zoning and environmental restrictions on the use of private land should be lessened	-	-	9	8	-	-	20	21	-	-	30	30	-	-	27	30	-	-	14	11
There are enough campsites available in state forests and parks	-	-	6	7	-	-	38	38	-	-	30	30	-	-	21	21	-	-	5	5
State-owned lands that are used for outdoor recreation and sustainable resource management should be kept in state ownership	-	-	-	23	-	-	-	58	-	-	-	13	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	2
Certain wetlands other than lakes should be protected in Minnesota	-	-	27	29	-	-	46	48	-	-	16	15	-	-	7	6	-	-	4	3
The DNR keeps citizens adequately informed about Minnesota's environmental health	-	-	7	7	-	-	41	38	-	-	31	33	-	-	18	18	-	-	3	4
The DNR should prohibit the construction and use of permanent deer stands on all state-owned lands	-	-	-	25	-	-	-	38	-	-	-	19	-	-	-	10	-	-	-	7

Question: If you could change one thing about the way the DNR manages natural resources, what would it be?

Enforcement/Laws - 26

The majority of these comments suggest we need more conservation officers, especially in the field. Stronger authority and punishments are suggested, more severe penalties for 2nd time offenders, more strict laws to protect our environment, (especially farmland runoff and wastewater dumping into our waterways). Others suggest we take the cop out of DNR - less gun intimidation, have fewer and less restrictive laws and regulations, fines are too high for basic infractions, remove laws that were passed many years ago that are still on the books.

Fishing - 26

The majority of these surveys want and support stocking of lakes and setting slot restrictions to bring the fishing back. Mandating catch and release program was mentioned frequently. Others want to reduce the limit on sunfish and crappies because many small lakes are over fished.

Money/Lotteries - 23

This group seems to be split - half think we get enough money and that we should be less conscious of the 'all mighty dollar' and do what is best for the wildlife and habitat, the rest say we need more money to manage the department properly. Suggestions: get more money from state lottery, legislators should pass the tax bill to give us more money, we need a larger budget with more conservationists and more support of state government. The negative side: Use tax money that is allotted more wisely, let the people who use resources pay for them, too much bureaucracy and power. We are too free with the dollars.

Hunting - 20

Duck and goose hunting - many complaints that duck hunting has become very poor to non-existent. Some reasons: season starts too late and ducks are already gone. Need more wetlands and better management of habitat.

Deer hunting - suggestions: open deer season to high power rifle in southern part of state; shoot deer in urban areas, give meat to low income people

Wolves - Get rid of them - wolves should be hunted/trapped.

Information - 20

Many suggestions that we communicate more, be seen, get more information out to schools, increase website information, become more pro-active in education of environmental health. Send out a direct mail newsletter to cover issues, and conduct more community information meetings with the public, more public service commercials on TV.

Licenses - 16

Over half of the surveys want us to lower the cost of hunting and fishing licenses - or at least quit raising the price of them; they want free licenses for seniors over age 70; out-of-state hunting is too expensive. Other suggestions: Minnesota DNR should have a license like Wisconsin that includes small game, deer and fishing all on one license per year; access to licenses and fee payment should be on-line.

Forestry - 12

Several surveys want us to stop the clear cutting and logging in state forests. Other suggestions: we should try to keep trees, brush and trash along the highways, streets and roads cleaned up; Eliminate single species reforestation on public lands; ban construction of tree stands in the state forests; and encourage a hemp industry in Minnesota.

Management/Commissioner's Office - 12

Suggestions: We are spreading ourselves out too thin; leave the fire, sewage, hog barns, etc., up to MPCA, Planning Zone, Sheriff Dept. Need more field staff! All politics out - we have too much authority; better management; commissioner should be elected, not appointed

Land/Private landowners - 10

Buy and preserve more land for future enjoyment, public hunting. Landowners should be able to hunt on own land without a license; landowners should have more say in how they manage their land. Manage the state's natural resources and public lands in a way to ensure a wilderness experience for future generations.

Boating - 10

Half of these comments suggest jet skis be outlawed or reduced on many lakes. Mixture of topics from the others involve: More public access along lake shores and rivers; Install signs at all public accesses in reference to milfoil and zebra mussels. One person would like to see waterskiing and wake boarding as equal benefactors of our lakes.

Lakes - 9

Various suggestions include restricting lakeshore development, get tougher on resort owners, protect water surface and underground, and manage lake levels and work towards water clarity.

Trails - 9

Mixture of suggestions: build more biking trails; eliminate ATVs from all public lands; remove snowmobile stud law, restrict the use of snowmobiles and bikes off areas unless authorized, enforce the cross country ski pass; more backpacking trails; don't pave Minn. River bottoms for road bikes.

Indians/Mille Lacs Lake - 7

Negative towards gill netting and treaty rights in general.

BWCA - 5

2 - Protect the BWCA - 3 - let it be logged

Rivers - 3

Clean the rivers!

Camping/State Parks - 3

Keep state parks open! Expand and improve camping.

Positive - 3

Keep up the good work (basically)

Miscellaneous

- Pay individuals to feed wildlife during severe winters
- Increase more protected wetlands with protected animal and plant habitats
- Plant some greens in the wild areas for the birds and animals to eat
- Get rid of crows as they eat pheasant eggs and little birds
- More lakes and forests being protected from new development
- More awareness of endangered species
- Make it more convenient to obtain a burning permit
- All outdoor recreation done in Wisconsin. Much more concerned about the Wisc. DNR.
- More emphasis on aquatic weed control
- More restrictions on how loggers leave the forests when they are done
- Let's give out an accurate wolf count