

## **Who are Lake Home and Cabin Owners?**

### **Results of 2016 MLR Member Survey**

By Jeff Forester, Executive Director, MN Lakes & Rivers Advocates

Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates (MLR) is a membership organization. Unlike other non-profits MLR seeks no grants or foundation dollars for fear of mission drift. We exist solely to represent the values and issues of those who want Minnesota's lake and river heritage to continue for future generations. Our work is funded entirely by voluntary membership contributions.

For this reason it is critical that we know our members well. In early 2016 MLR put out a SurveyMonkey to our members. In Minnesota lake homes and cabins are largely heirlooms, not assets. Thirty four percent of lake home and cabin owners have had their place for 25 years or more. Twenty three percent have had their place in the family for over fifty years, and 2% for more than 100 years. This is a real focus on heritage, on a history of multiple generations enjoying time together and building memories on Minnesota's beautiful lakes and rivers. MLR members have a profound connection to place that they have inherited from parents, grandparents and even great grandparents.

These lake and river lovers make up a huge constituency. Based on respondents' answers, an estimated 135,000 Minnesota families are members of a Lake Association. If all the Lake and River associations were ever organized under an umbrella organization, they would be the largest conservation group in the state, and certainly would be able to move the needle on protecting water quality and make sure that the heritage they value is available for another 100 years.

Lake Association members are anglers. Lake Associations spend tens of thousands annually to stock walleye, and hundreds of thousands to protect aquatic habitat for fish. Sixty three percent of respondents bought a fishing license last year.

But more remarkable, when asked how many fishing licenses were sold to visitors to their lake home or cabin, seventy three percent responded that two or more fishing licenses were sold to visitors. Eighteen percent responded that more than five fishing licenses were sold as a result of visitors coming to "the lake." It is also very clear what these anglers are seeking. Seventy four percent of respondents listed Walleye, Minnesota's state fish, as the primary species they pursue. Crappie were the next popular, with twenty percent listing them as their preferred quarry.

While Survey Monkey lacks scientific significance, some broad themes do emerge. It is a picture that aligns with my family experience and that of many I know - multiple generations of family members and friends enjoying time together "up at the lake." Grandparents connect with grandchildren and build intergenerational memories. And sometimes, if the weather looks about right, they go walleye fishing.

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