



## 2019 Wabamun Lake User Survey

### Summary Report

January 2020

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#### Introduction

In November of 2019, the Wabamun Watershed Management Council (WWMC) conducted a survey of lake users to determine how they use the lake and value the quality of their lake experience. The survey was not scientific but was a straw poll of contacted lake users who chose to take the survey. As such, it is an index of how some people use and value the lake. This report summarizes the results. The Final Report (<https://www.wwmc.ca/studies-reports>) includes this summary plus more detailed summaries of the data in the appendices.

#### Methods

The WWMC used the services of SurveyMonkey ([www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)) to collect and analyze the responses. We created seven questions we felt people could easily answer. We kept the survey short so people would not be discouraged to take or finish the survey because of its length. With the exception of Question 7, all the questions were multiple choice. In brief, the questions were as follows:

1. How do you use Wabamun Lake?
2. What sections of the lake do you use most?
3. About how many days do you spend on the lake in an average year?
4. How would you characterize the overall quality of the lake?
5. What quality issues do you see on the lake?
6. What are you willing to do to maintain or improve the quality of the lake?
7. Any other concerns?

We opened the survey on November 7 and closed it on November 30, 2019. The 215 members of the WWMC were invited to take the survey by email. Others were invited through our Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/groups/Wabamun](http://www.facebook.com/groups/Wabamun)) and Twitter ([www.twitter.com/WabamunWMC](http://www.twitter.com/WabamunWMC)). As well, people were encouraged to contact other lake users and invite them to participate.

#### Results—All Data

Two-hundred-sixty-two (262) people responded to the survey. Figure 1 illustrates how the responses were recorded over time. The most responses (99) were gathered on the day the survey was announced. Other response peaks (less than 20 each of November 14-15 and 21) occurred when members contacted groups of anglers and boaters.

Note: the following are result highlights. A summary of all the survey data is presented in Appendix 1 of the Final Report.

11/6/2019 - 11/29/2019

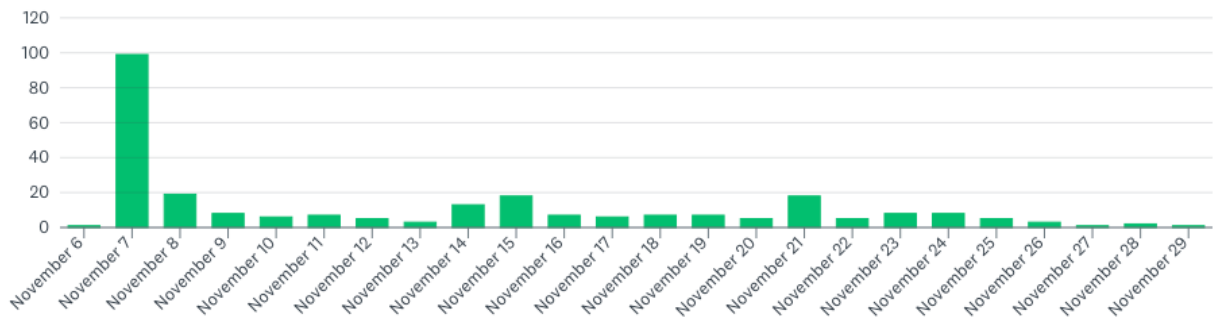


Figure 1 Distribution of responses over time. (All graphics courtesy of SurveyMonkey)

### Q1 Lake Use

Over 50% (132) of the respondents owned cottages on the lake and 19% (51) were permanent residents of the lake. Other highlights of lake use included: 75% of respondents boat on the lake, 58% swim, 58% fish, 46% watch wildlife and 30% hike near the lake.

Twenty (20) respondents added Other uses not listed in the question. These included “cross-country skiing, snow shoeing, skating,” “kayak & canoe,” “board sports (stand up paddling and windsurfing),” sailing club members, and “lake is meeting place for friends and family.” See Appendix 1 of the Final Report for a full list of Other responses.

### Q2 Most Used Lake Sections

Fifty-eight percent (58%) of respondents used the northwest section of the lake (Seba Beach to Fallis). 38% used the north central section (Fallis to Wabamun) and 29% used the southwest (Beaver Creek to Seba Beach). 20% used the northeast (Provincial Park to Kapasiwin), followed by 12% for south central (Sundance Power Plant to Beaver Creek) and 7% for the southeast (Paul First Nation).

### Q3 Days Spent at the Lake in an Average Year

Thirty-three percent (33%) of respondents spent from 30 to 100 days per year at the lake. 26% spent 100 to 365 days, 21% spent 10 to 30 days, 10% spent less than five days and 9% spent 5 to 10 days per year at the lake.

### Q4 Overall Quality of Wabamun Lake

46% of respondents characterized the overall quality of the lake as Very Good (very few issues), followed by 44% that felt the lake was Good (a few issues). Combined, 90% of the lake users surveyed felt the lake quality was Good or Very Good. This was followed by 6% who felt the lake was Poor in quality, 2% felt it was Excellent and 2% felt it was Awful.

### Q5 Issues Observed

The most identified quality issues were: 50% of respondents identified blue-green algae (cyanobacteria), 44%—too few authorized boat launches, 41%—boats/boating/personal watercraft (congestion, noise, safety), 24%—noise, 22%—lake water level and 21% identified development as an issue.

Forty-four (44) respondents listed Other issues. They included: “stunted and sick pike,” “CN rail noise,” “quality of trophy pike fishing has declined,” “great fishing,” fish “catch levels are high but small fish,” “late night fireworks,” “boating disturbance in sensitive area, e.g., creeks, nesting habitats,” invasive weeds on CN tracks, “erosion caused by high lake levels,” and “little if any enforcement.” See Appendix 1 of the Final Report for a full list of responses.

### Q6 Willingness to Maintain or Improve Lake Quality

A majority of respondents were willing to do their part to help the lake. Most (60+%) expressed willingness to minimize shoreline disturbance, avoid use of fertilizers, use phosphate-free soaps and detergents or work with neighbours and community associations to protect and improve lake quality.

## Q7 Other Concerns

A wide range of other concerns were expressed by 73 of the respondents. Some took the opportunity to explain their answers to previous questions. Others pointed out specific problems with government, fishing, the walleye introduction, fish management generally, enforcement, sewage and holding tanks, water quality, the number of piers, control of boat traffic, etc. Some praised the work of the WWMC, others felt the WWMC wasn't doing enough, and one criticized the WWMC's interference with development (i.e., Samco). All 73 responses are listed in Appendix 1 of the Full Report.

## Results—Individual Uses

Using SurveyMonkey's analysis tools we looked at how differing uses of the lake affected how people value their experiences. For example, do people who fish the lake have differing values from those who watch wildlife or swim in the lake?

Note: The following is a summary of the highlights of those uses with sufficient responses to justify analysis. More detailed summaries of the data are found in the respective appendices of the Final Report.

Although swimming, fishing, boating and watching wildlife each had sufficient responses, their data did not significantly deviate from that of all respondents.

### Permanent Residents (Appendix 2) and Cottage Owners (Appendix 3)

Fifty-one (51) of the respondents were permanent residents around the lake. Their responses, as a group, did not significantly deviate from those of total respondents except in the **number of days** spent at the lake, where as expected the vast majority (85%) spent 100 to 365 days. Similarly, the responses of the 132 (50%) cottage owners did not significantly change from those of all the respondents except in the number of days spent at the lake. 56% of them spent 30 to 100 days, followed by 23% who spent 100 to 365 days, and 18% who spent 10 to 30 days.

### Hiking (Appendix 4)

Seventy-eight (78) of the respondents identified hiking as a use of the lake. The only major deviation this group had from all respondents was that 33% of them spent 100 to 365 days at the lake as opposed to 26% of all respondents spending 100 to 365 days at the lake.

## Discussion

The results of the survey illustrate the variety of uses and concerns lake users have for Wabamun Lake. A majority of respondents owned property around the lake and, as such, are the most likely to express their concerns. If there is a failing of this survey it is that we did not get more people to take the survey who do not own property at the lake but come as either day-users or who camp or otherwise rent accommodation at the lake.

Boating was the most popular use of the lake (75%), with swimming (58%) and fishing (58%) tying for second place, and watching wildlife a close third (56%). Although people use Wabamun Lake differently, their concerns for the lake are similar. The recent blue-green algae bloom was at the top of many people's minds, followed by boating issues including too few authorized boat launches. The WWMC is well aware of these issues and is working to alleviate or mitigate them. The results of this survey help us get a sense of how deep these concerns are among lake users. They will help us set priorities and goals, including better communication with lake users.

## Thank You!

We thank all who participated. With regard to the comments about the work of the WWMC, we are pleased many recognize the work we have done. We also understand we cannot please all the people all the time. However, if you feel we are not adequately addressing issues, please let us know ([info@wwmc.ca](mailto:info@wwmc.ca)). The WWMC is a volunteer-run organization and can always use more help.

With regard to the complaint about the WWMC interfering with development, we do not apologize. It has been shown that uncontrolled development is a chief cause of the degradation of lake quality. We will always stand-up for the lake.