



PAYING TO PROTECT MINNESOTA'S WATERS

FEE

Daily pay-to-play

Minnesota is renowned for its beautiful lakes, but do residents place a high value on the state's water quality, habitat, and recreational aspects? And if so, would recreational water users in Minnesota be willing to pay a daily access fee that would be applied toward aquatic invasive species management at the lake that they use? Researchers at the Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center conducted in-person surveys at four Minnesota lakes in 2019 to find out.

Polling lakeside users

The surveys were conducted at the public water accesses of Minnewaska (1), Gull (2), Pokegama (3), and Koronis (4) Lakes in summer 2019 (Figure 1). The lakes were chosen by researchers for a number of reasons. Gull and Pokegama attract a number of out-of-town visitors, whereas Minnewaska and Koronis generally have a more local user base—researchers wanted to include both perspectives. Additionally, the lakes have varying levels of infestations—from Gull, which is heavily infested with zebra mussels, to Pokegama which did not have any aquatic invasive species infestations at the time of the survey. Surveys were conducted on both weekdays and weekends, and at a variety of times throughout the day.

Fig. 1



\$9

What we learned

The survey was completed by 994 people. Respondents affirmed that they highly value Minnesota's water purity, habitat, and recreational opportunities (Figure 2). Of the 994 people who completed the survey, roughly half were willing to pay a daily user fee that would be applied to aquatic invasive species management at the lake that they use. Of those willing to pay the daily user fee, the mean amount they were willing to pay was approximately \$9 per day. There was no significant difference in daily willingness to pay between any of the surveyed lakes. In 2021, a paper version of the survey will be sent to 2,000 households in Minnesota. Researchers are aiming to build upon the data collected lakeside and employ the mail survey as a means of ensuring the broadest participation of recreationists possible, stretching across geographic and socioeconomic barriers—wider feedback is needed from Minnesotans before a statewide attitude on the fee can be assessed.

Fig. 2

Valuing Minnesota Water Quality, Habitat, and Recreation

% of respondents who indicated the topic was very to extremely important

