



Apple River Sociological Survey Results

Summer 2001

DRAFT

November 2001

*Polk County Land and Water Resources Department
215 Main Street
PO Box 460
Balsam Lake, WI 54853*

Survey Goals and Objectives

This survey was designed to assess landowner objectives, concerns and ideas as well as to forecast future change-of-ownership trends.

Summary of Results

In summer 2001, the Polk County Land and Water Resources Department sent out 1,958 sociological landowner surveys to property owners within the Apple River corridor (see attached map) as part of a River Protection Grant from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR). Four hundred four (404) surveys were returned (21%). Among the issues covered by the survey were biological data, perceptions about river health, and perceptions about most important threats to the quality of the river.

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2. Apple River Property Owner Survey, 2001
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Acknowledgements

This survey would not have been possible without the cooperation of the Wisconsin DNR and their River Protection Program.

Special thanks to Rebecca Fredrickson and Laurie Sabata who were instrumental in putting this report together.

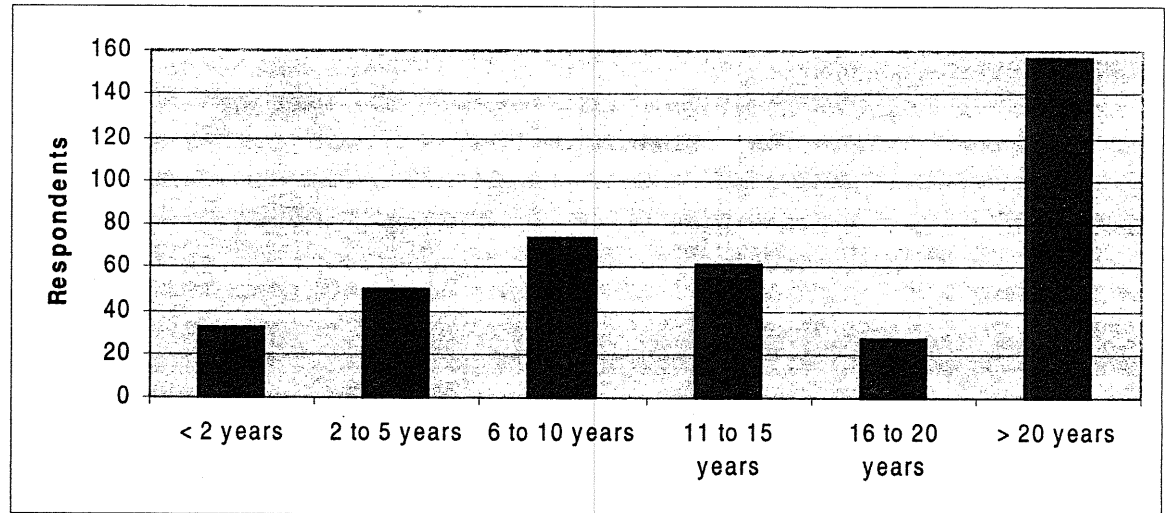
Biographic Data

Although 157 respondents (39%) have owned their property for more than twenty years, 156 respondents (39%) have owned their property for less than ten years. This survey does not specify whether the newer property owners bought existing homes or built new homes on previously undeveloped lots.

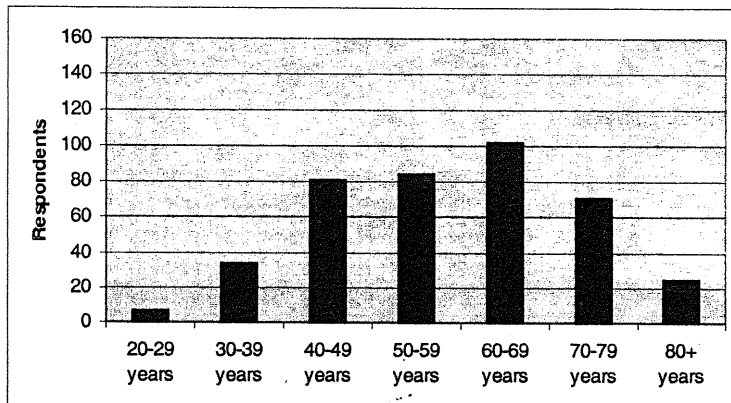
This survey was distributed in an attempt to focus on shoreline property owners. One hundred eighty-one (181) of the 404 respondents indicated that they own riverfront property.

About half the landowners who responded (198) are 60 or older. The other half (206) is between 20 and 59 years old. Similarly just over half work full-time (56%) and slightly less are year-round or seasonally retired (43%).

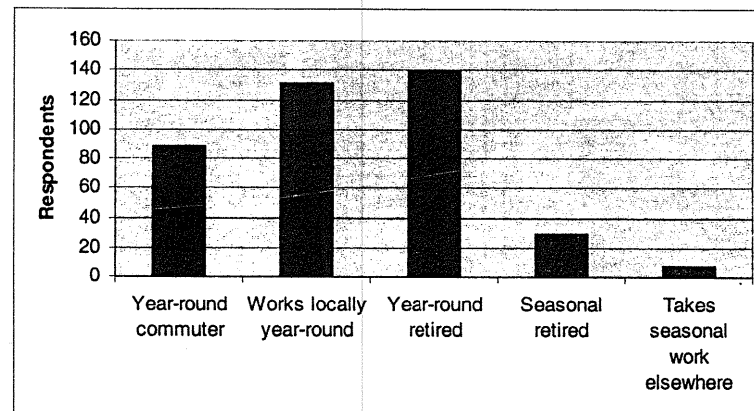
How many years have you owned property on or near the river?



What is the age of the head of household?



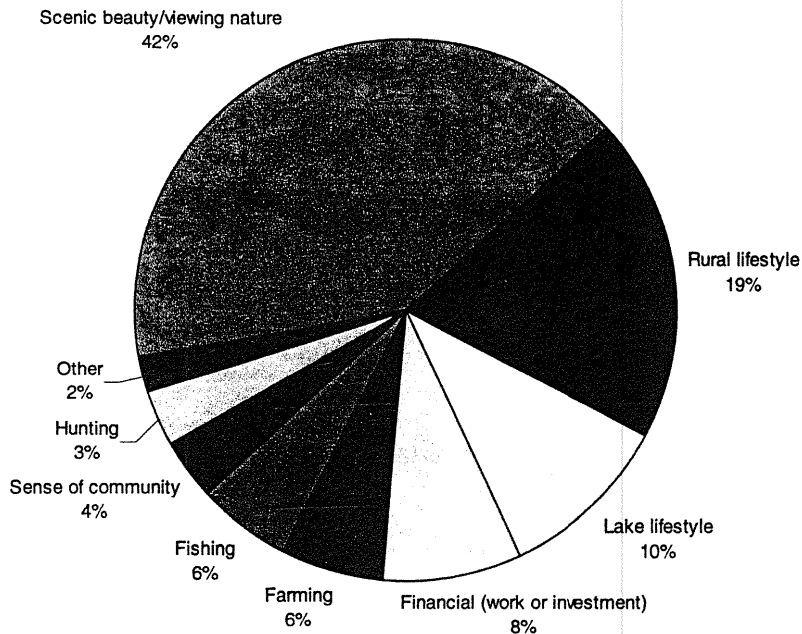
What is the employment status of the primary wage earner of the household?



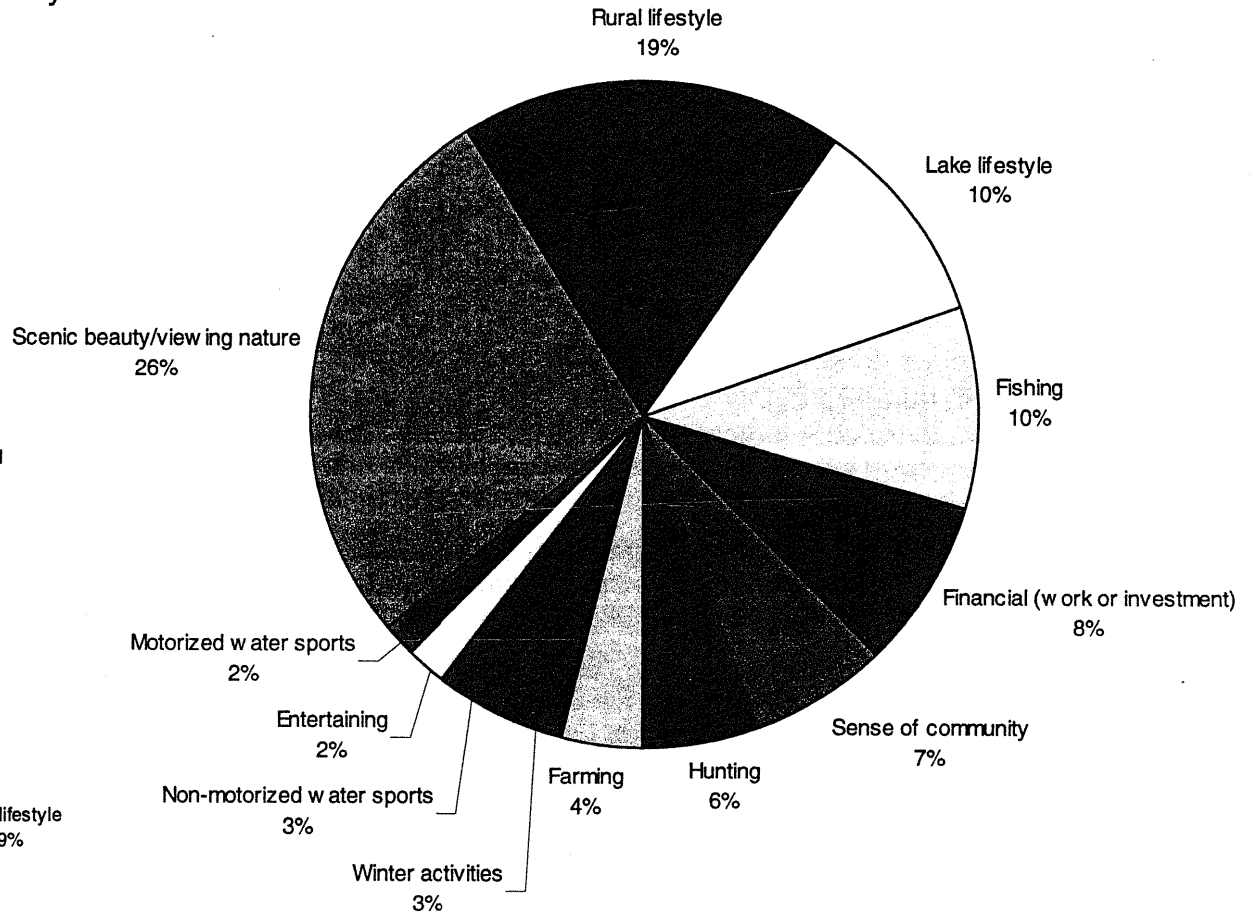
Property Owner Viewpoints

Property owners on or near the river indicated being attracted to the area for the aesthetics offered by rustic and natural surroundings.

What are the most important reasons that you own property on or near the Apple River?
(Top-ranked reason*)



What are the most important reasons that you own property on or near the Apple River?
(Totals*)

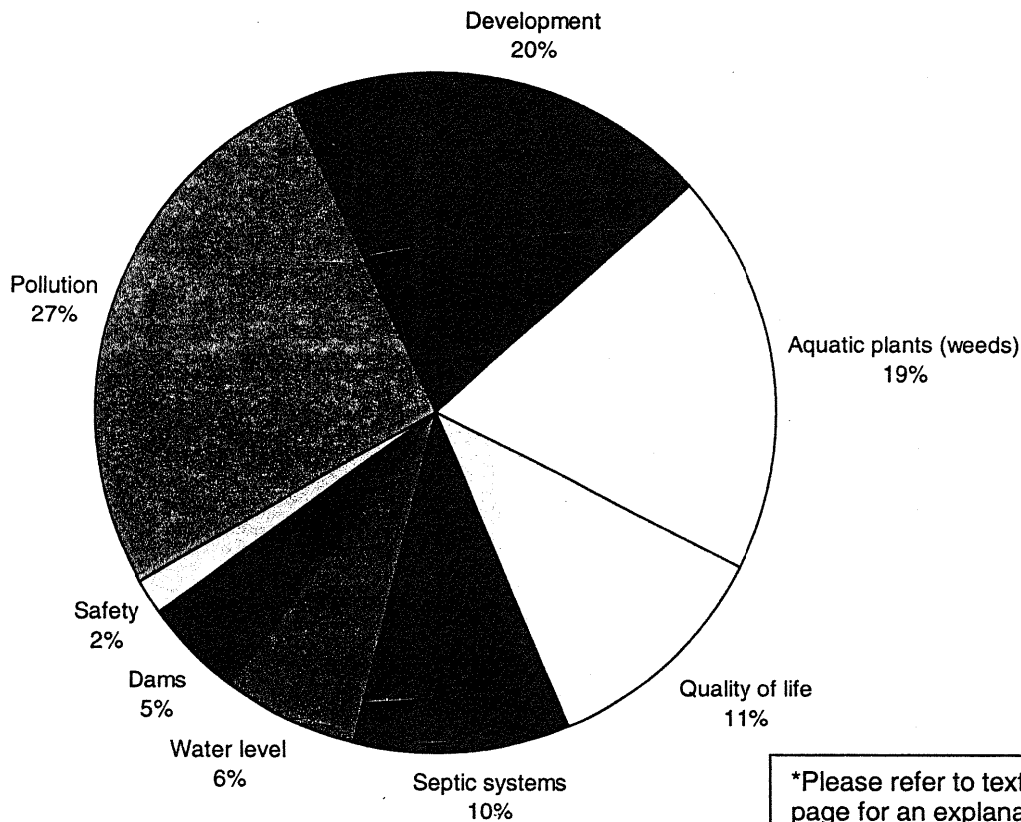


*Respondents ranked their top three reasons for owning property on or near the river. The pie chart denoted *Top-ranked reason* is a total of all the issues ranked as the foremost reason. The pie chart denoted *Totals* is simply the total number of times a particular reason was chosen by respondents as either their first-ranked, second-ranked, or third-ranked reason.

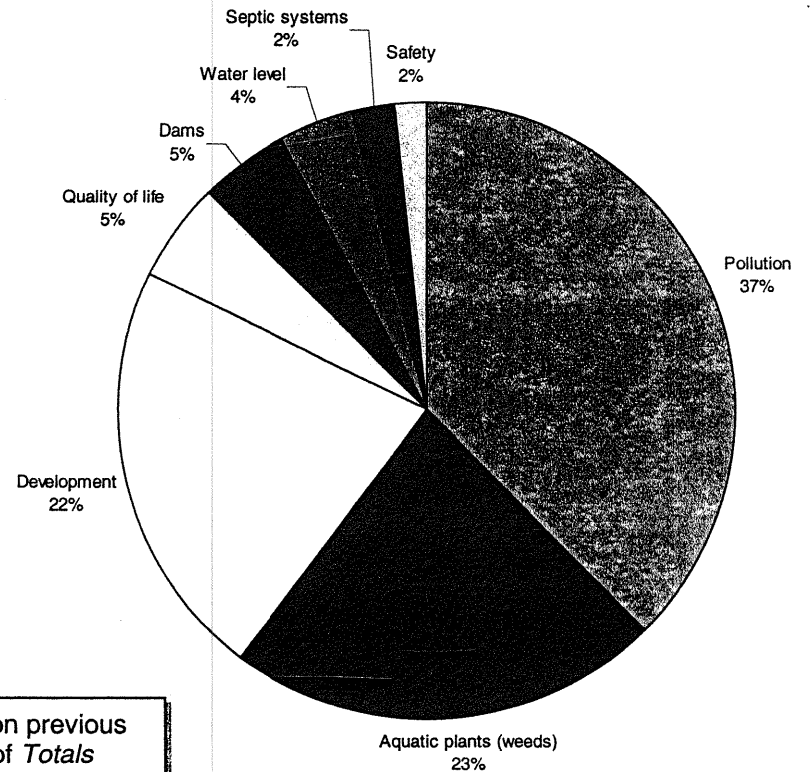
Perceived Threats to the River

Respondents cited pollution, development, and aquatic plants as their foremost concerns regarding the quality of the Apple River. Nearly every respondent making general comments stated “green water” and algae growth cause problems along some stretches of the river. As a rule the majority of respondents indicated the water quality has degraded in their tenure on/near the river. A strong majority indicated the water quality appeared average or below average. (Note: Quality of life issues as described in the survey include noise, property values, and taxes.)

**What do you feel threatens the quality of the Apple River?
(Totals*)**



**What do you feel threatens the quality of the Apple River?
(Top-ranked reason*)**



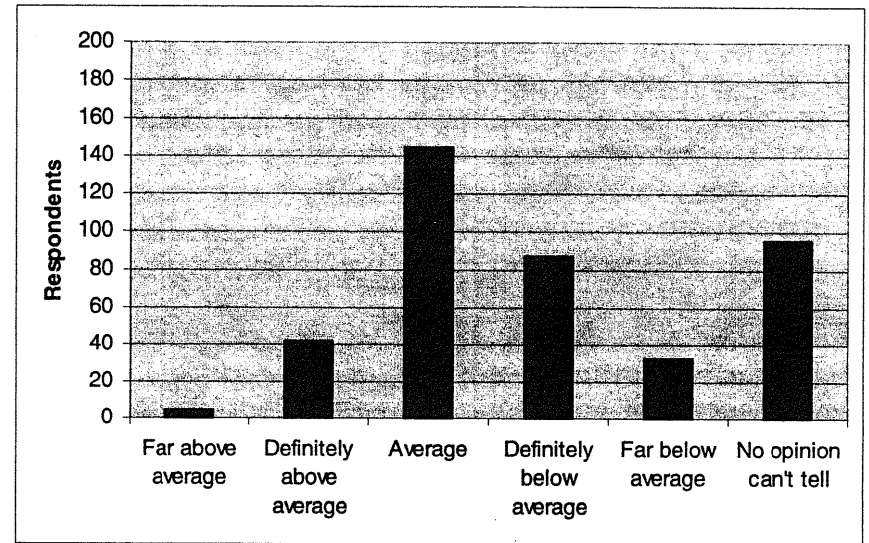
*Please refer to textbox on previous page for an explanation of Totals and Top-ranked reason.

Quality of the River as a Natural Resource

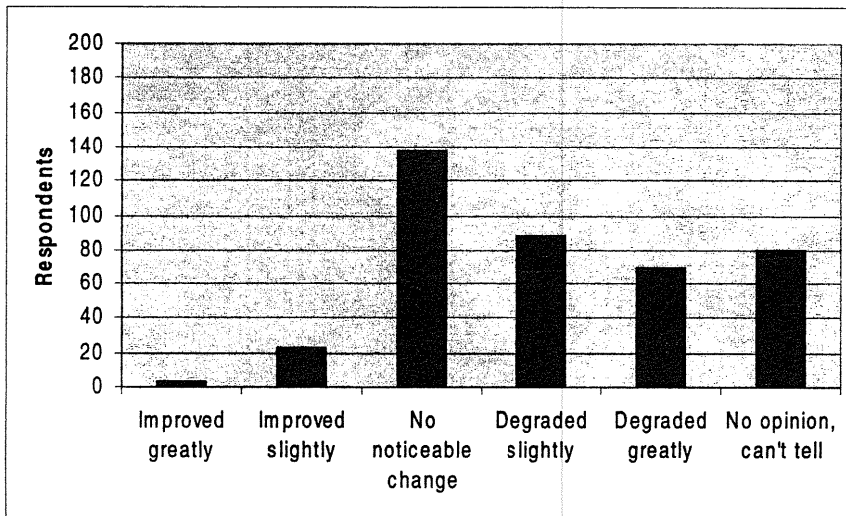
Generally, respondents indicated that the water quality of the Apple River is average or below average. Furthermore, a majority of respondents feel the water quality has degraded since their tenure on/near the river. Location along the length of the river might be a key factor in determining the response to such questions but that information was not requested in this survey for privacy reasons.

There are many respondents who had no opinion regarding these questions. Education and outreach in these areas may help people to better recognize indicators of natural resource health.

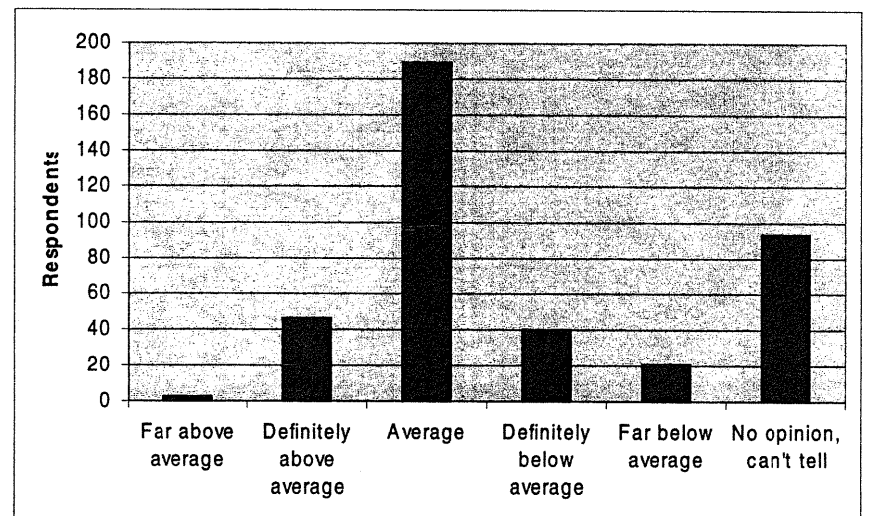
How would you describe the current water quality of the Apple River?



How would you describe the change in water quality since you have lived on/near the river?



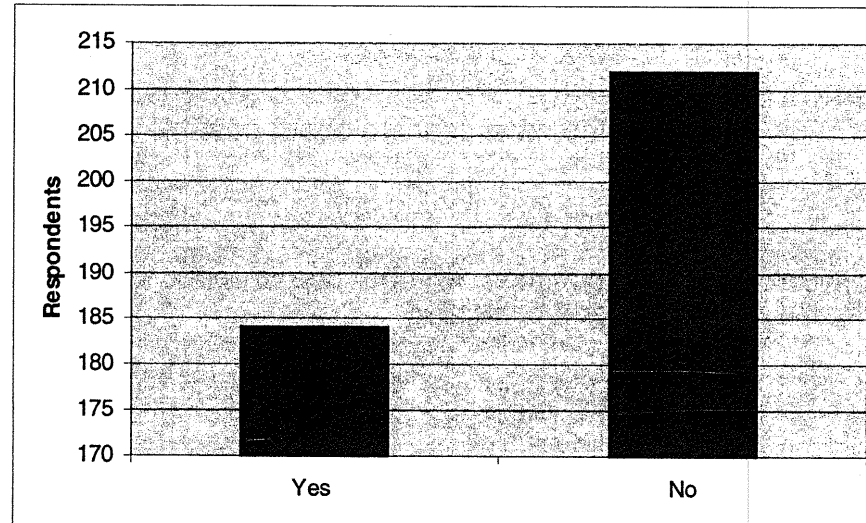
How would you describe the quality of the shoreline of the Apple River?



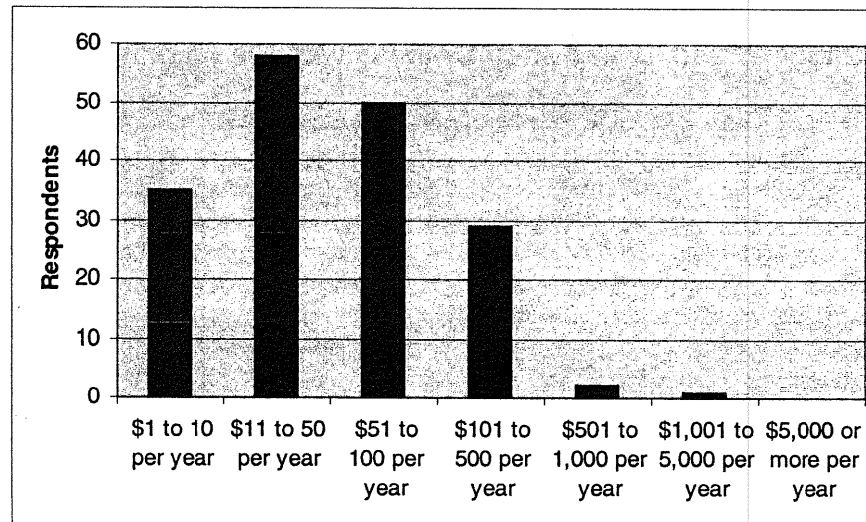
Willingness to Provide Financial Support

More than half the respondents said they are not willing to contribute financially to maintain or improve the condition of the river. Many cited the taxes they currently pay should be sufficient. Other respondents said they might consider financial contributions depending on the amount and what the money would be used for.

Would you be willing to provide financial support to maintain or improve the quality of the Apple River and its associated land resources?



If you answered yes [to the above], how much would you be willing to contribute each year?



Summary of Written Comments from Survey Respondents

The survey offered respondents opportunities to elaborate on their responses and thoughts about the Apple River. A brief summary of those responses is as follows:

Because the Country Dam was drawn down during the same period of time as the survey was distributed, dam issues were on the minds of property owners. Some property owners above the dam said they are considering selling their property because there is “practically no water in the river.”

Some suggested Polk County take over the Country Dam, while others said it is an eyesore and an accident waiting to happen. Some residents on White Ash Lake expressed the most concern about possible effects of removing the dam.

Algae and “green water” are major concerns, as is poor fishing due to perceived degradation in the water quality.

According to some property owners sources of pollution, whether due to septic systems or run-off from farms and other properties, needs to be determined, corrected, and controlled,

Some criticism about canoers and tubers along the river was offered, as were safety concerns about the County Road H Bridge.

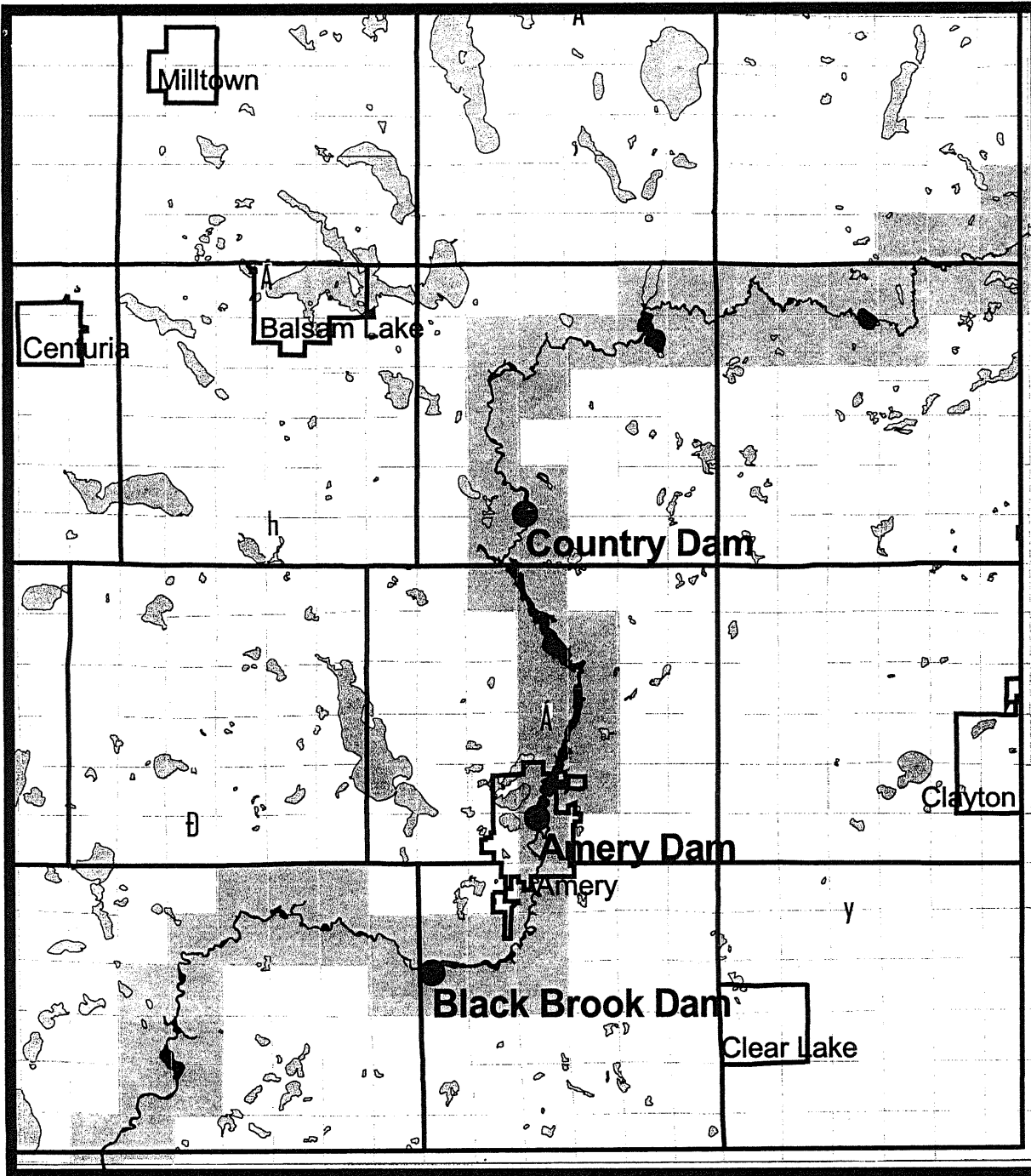
Many respondents want more regulation on building permits and development including fewer variances. “It seems variances are granted in direct proportion to the owners’ bank account and/or occupation,” wrote a respondent.

Several comments called for a widespread, united effort by those who live on or near the river and those who use the river.




Appendix I.

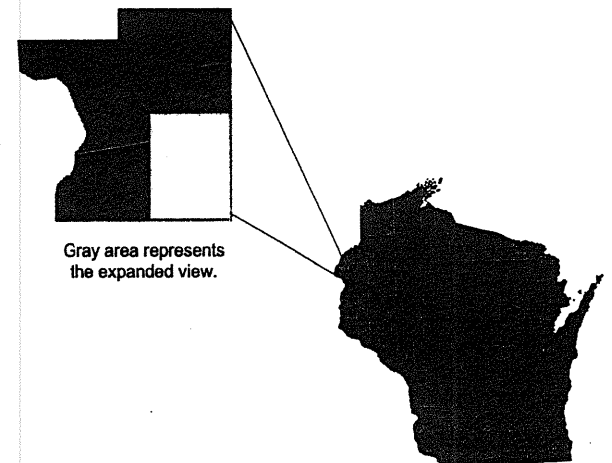
Map of survey area

Apple River Corridor



Legend

-  Townships
-  Sections
-  Survey Distribution Area



Appendix 2.

**Apple River Property
Owner Survey, 2001**

Apple River -- Property Owner Survey, 2001

The following survey is a component of the Apple River Association Planning Grant. Your responses are very important and will help guide the future management of the Apple River and its watershed.

What is the Apple River Watershed? The white area on the map below is the Apple River Watershed. A watershed is an area of land that drains to a certain point on the landscape. All rain and snowmelt that originates within the watershed drains to the Apple River. Therefore, even some activities that occur on the land have a direct effect on the water quality of the river.



The Apple River Planning Grant is currently being undertaken by the Polk County Land & Water Resources Department and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources in cooperation with local residents.

Apple River -- Property Owner Survey, 2001

Surveys should be returned by September 15, 2001 to:

LWRD
215 Main Street, #460
Balsam Lake, WI 54810

1. **How many years have you owned property on or near (within 1½ miles) the river?**
 - <2 years
 - 2-5 years
 - 6-10 years
 - 11-15 years
 - 16-20 years
 - >20 years

2. **Do you own shoreline property on the Apple River?**
 - Yes
 - No

3. **What is the age of the head of the household?**
 - 20-29
 - 30-39
 - 40-49
 - 50-59
 - 60-69
 - 70-79
 - 80+

4. **What is the employment status of the primary wage earner of the household?**
 - Year-round commuter
 - Works locally year-round
 - Year-round retired
 - Seasonal retired
 - Takes seasonal work elsewhere

5. **How many days in an average year is your property occupied?**
 - 0-14 days per year
 - 15-28 days per year
 - 29-60 days per year
 - 61-160 days per year
 - 161-240 days per year
 - 241-365 days per year

6. On an average day that your property is occupied, how many people occupy the property?

- 1-2 people
- 2-4 people
- 4-6 people
- 6-8 people
- 8 or more people

7. What are the most important reasons that you own property on or near the Apple River?
(List your top three reasons in order of importance with 1st being most important.)

1st _____
2nd _____
3rd _____

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| A) Scenic beauty / viewing nature | E) Sense of community | I) Farming |
| B) Financial (work or investment) | F) Rural Lifestyle | J) Fishing |
| C) Non-motorized water sports | G) Lake Lifestyle | K) Hunting |
| D) Motorized water sports | H) Entertaining | L) Winter activities |

8. What do you feel threatens the quality of the Apple River?

(List your top three reasons in order of importance with 1st being most important.)

1st _____
2nd _____
3rd _____

- A) **Pollution** (septic systems; erosion; agriculture; other chemical inputs)
- B) **Development** (population density; loss of wildlife habitat)
- C) **Septic systems** (including municipal waste treatment)
- D) **Dams** (whether you are for or against dams on the river)
- E) **Quality of life** (noise; property values; taxes)
- F) **Safety** (boat traffic; no wake zones)
- G) **Water level** (flooding; instability)
- H) **Aquatic plants** ("weeds")

9. Is your property...

- Mostly agricultural
- Mostly mowed turf
- An even mix of turf and trees
- Mostly trees, shrubs, or meadow (wild and un-mowed)
- Mostly rooftops, driveways, patios, and hard surfaces

10. Since you have lived on or near the river, how would you describe the change in water quality?

- Improved greatly
- Improved slightly
- No noticeable change
- Degraded slightly
- Degraded greatly
- No opinion, can't tell

11. How would you describe the current water quality of the Apple River?

- Far above average
- Definitely above average
- Average
- Definitely below average
- Far below average
- No opinion, can't tell

12. How would you describe the quality of the shoreline of the Apple River?

- Far above average
- Definitely above average
- Average
- Definitely below average
- Far below average
- No opinion, can't tell

13. Would you be willing to provide financial support to maintain or improve the quality of the Apple River and its associated land resources?

_____ Yes
_____ No

14. If you answered yes to question 13, how much would you be willing to contribute each year?

- \$1-10 per year
- \$11-50 per year
- \$51-100 per year
- \$101-500 per year
- \$501-1,000 per year
- \$1,001-5,000 per year
- \$5,000 or more per year

15. What do you like most about the Apple River?

16. What do you like least about the Apple River?

17. Please list any additional comments you have regarding the Apple River and its surrounding land resources. (Attach another sheet of paper if necessary.)

Appendix 3.

Complete tally of survey results