

Marion County Park and Lake Survey

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Introduction

Marion County Park and Lake lacks a management plan, something that is needed by parks around the world. To help the park manager understand the needs of both the park and the people who visit, we have devised a survey that hopes to encapsulate those needs. By asking both visitors and residents through the MCPL Facebook Page, we are able to find information on policy, wildlife habits, human impacts/values, recreational use, as well as natural processes on the lake that either need to change, stay the same, or anything in between. After posting, we had **X** number of responses, and were able to conclude that the people of MCPL are quite different in both how they use the lake and their values towards the area itself.

Objectives

The purpose of the survey was to collect responses on the following topics:

- Who uses the MCPL (visitors/residents, age, group size)
- Activities occurring at MCPL
- How MCPL compares to other parks and lakes
- Park and lake amenities
- Knowledge of ecological processes
- Human impacts on the lake
- Potential user conflicts

Having a healthy lake involves managing:

- Wildlife habitat
- Human impacts
- Recreational use

To inform an effective lake management plan for the health of Marion County Park and Lake, a survey was taken among residents and visitors. This survey provides insights to how residents and visitors perceive and interact with these factors.

Methods

- The Survey was composed in K-State Qualtrics and shared by the park manager through the Marion County Park and Lake Facebook Page
- Modified by removing and adding questions to a survey developed by a previous NRES team.
- Target current environmental, recreational, and policy concerns. Survey questions consisted of closed-ended and open-ended questions..
- Preliminary questions about demographics were asked: **Residency, Property Ownership, Age**
- After two-weeks of being open on the Facebook page, 122 responses were recorded

Results

The people of the MCPL were asked about many different aspects of the area, from the environmental quality, recreational opportunities, and policy concerns of living or visiting the area.

Figure 1: MCPL residents and visitors share to what extent they agree that dead or fallen trees should be removed

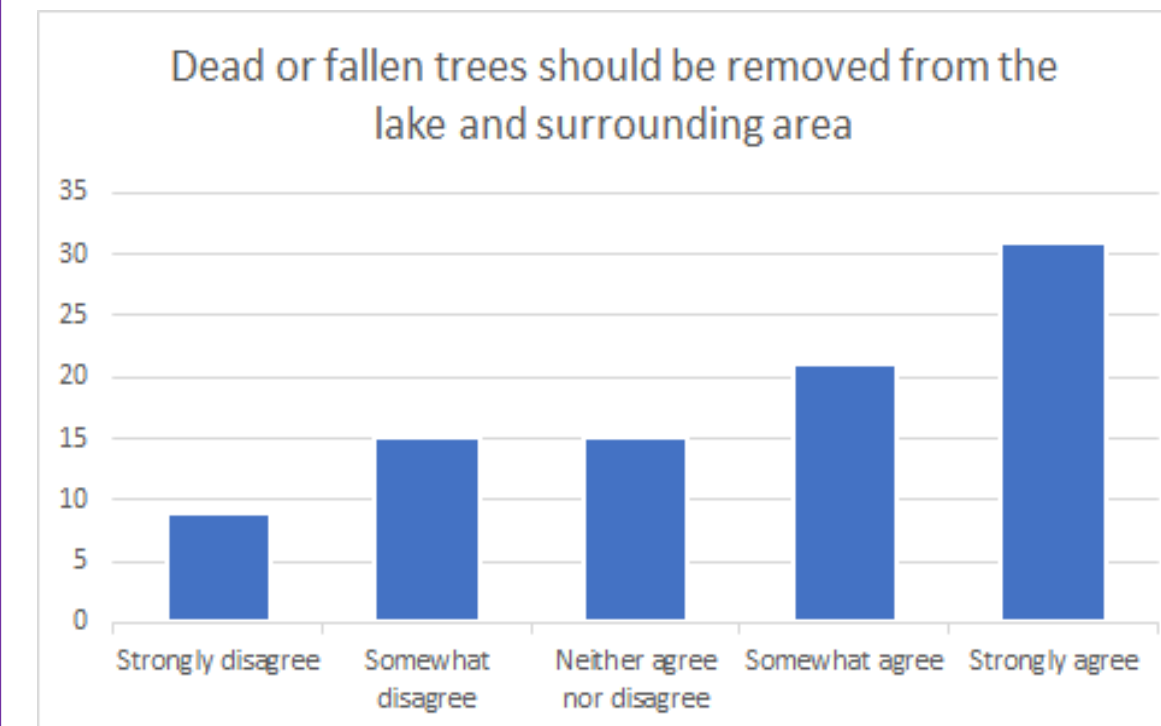


Figure 2: MCPL residents and visitors share to what extent they agree that algal blooms have affected their decision to participate in lake activities

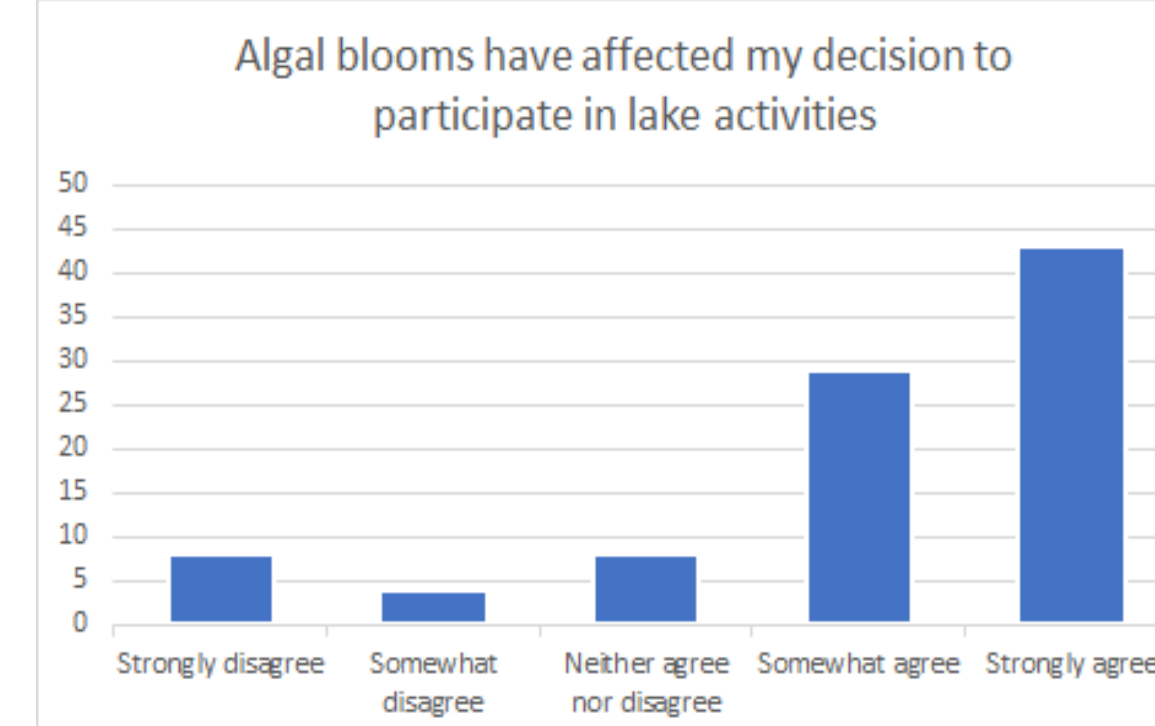


Figure 3: MCPL residents and visitors share to what extent they agree that migratory geese should be allowed to overwinter at the lake

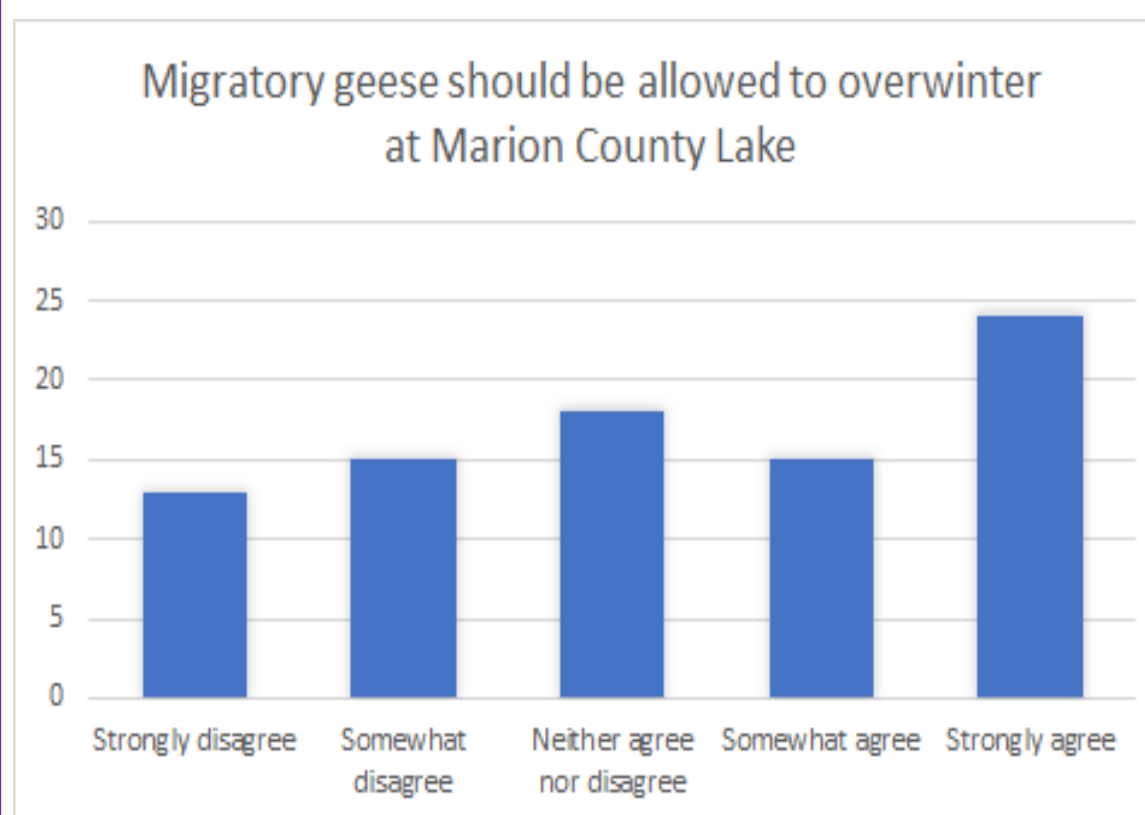


Figure 4: Quality of heated fishing docks according to MCPL residents and visitors

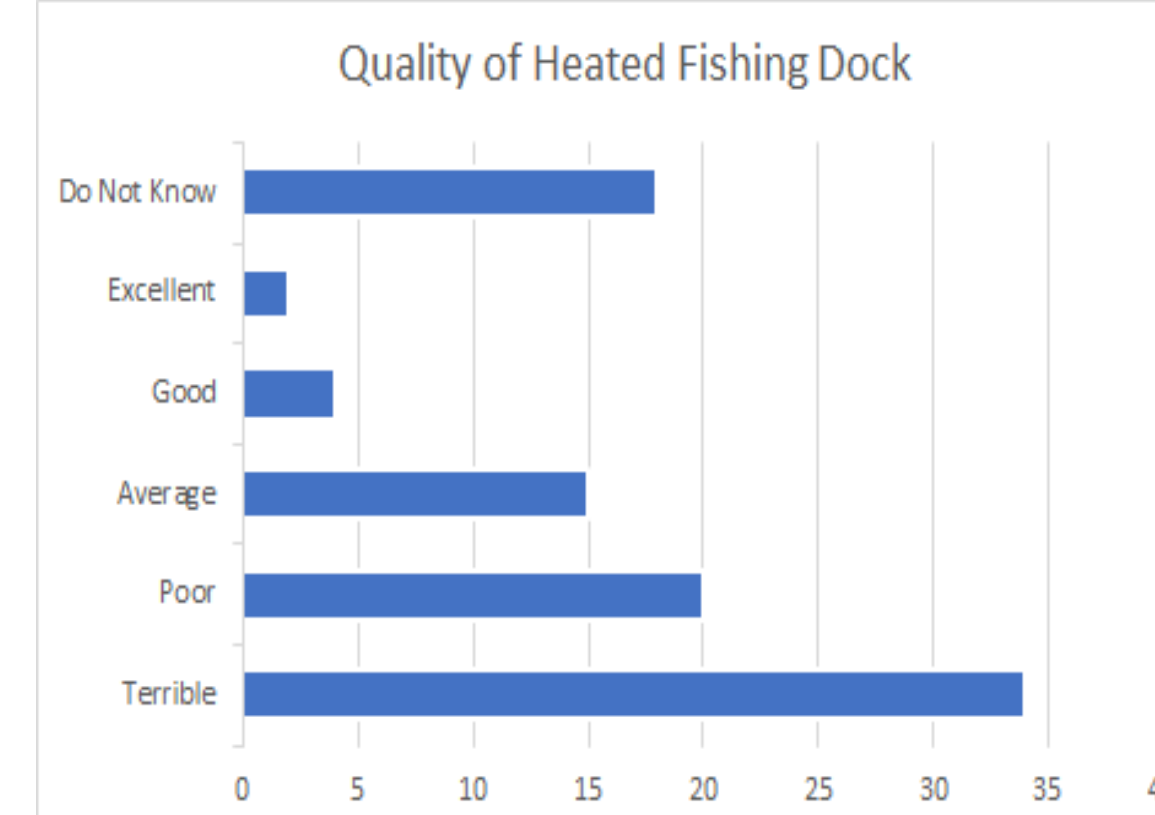


Figure 5: Quality of hiking trails according to MCPL residents and visitors

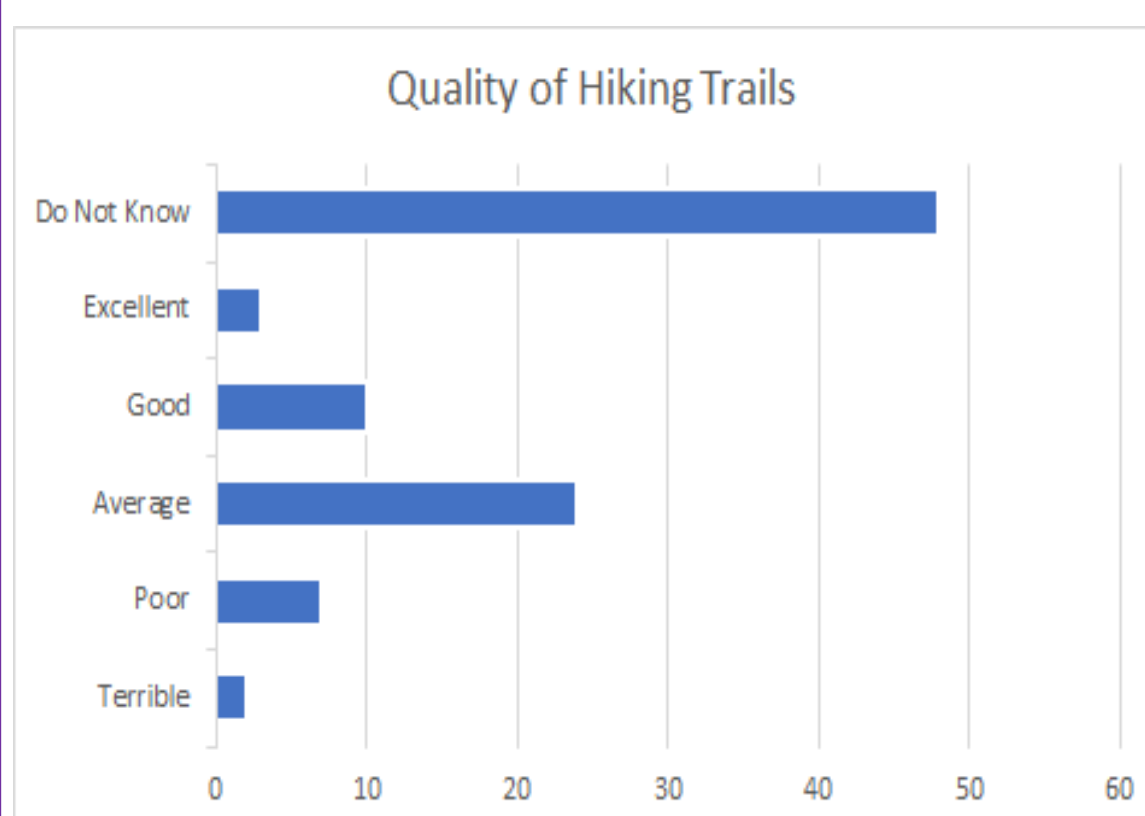
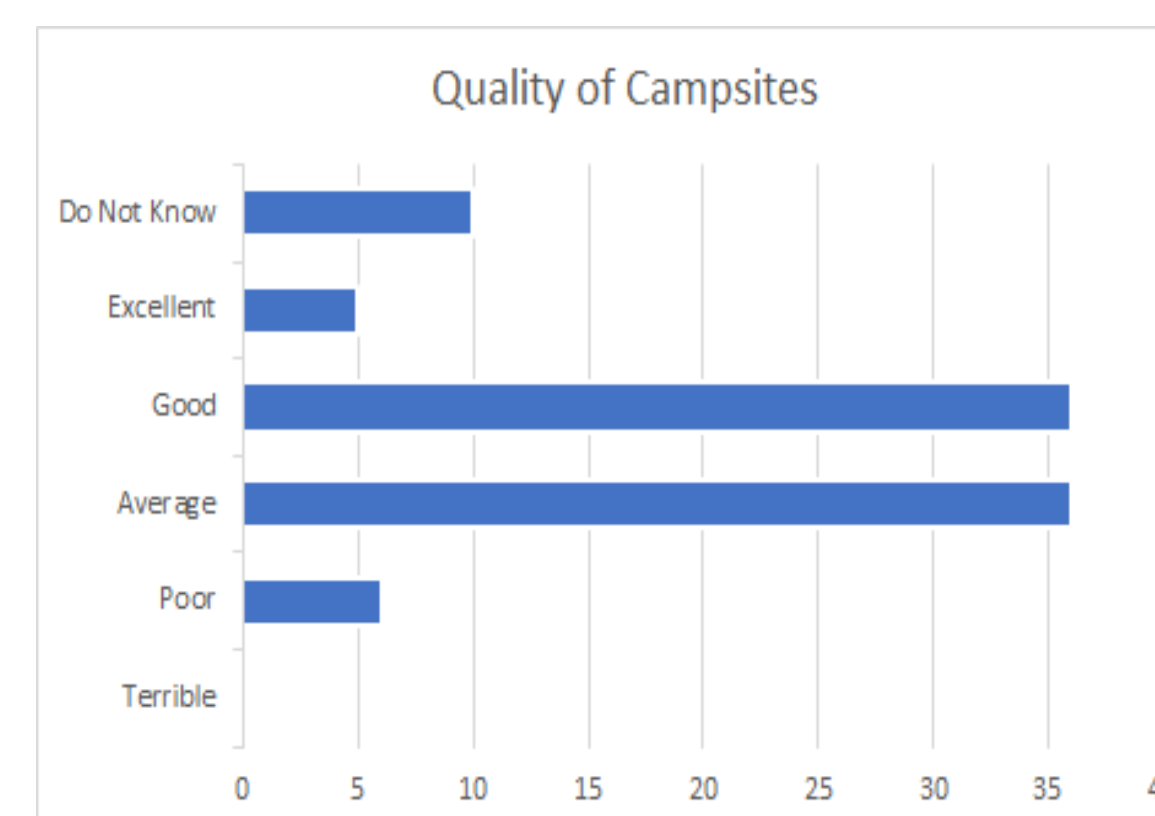


Figure 6: Quality of campsites according to MCPL residents and visitors



Closed-ended Survey Responses:

- Most agree that dead or fallen trees should be removed
- People strongly agree that algal blooms have affected their decision to participate in activities
- Answers are fairly mixed whether migratory geese should be allowed to overwinter at the lake
- While many are unsure of the conditions of the Heated Fishing Dock, those who use it argue that it is in dire need of repairs
- While hiking and walking are a highly important activity at MCPL, a large portion of respondents selected “Do not know” when asked about the quality of hiking/walking trails
- Finally, the residents and visitors agree that the campsites around the MCPL are between good and average quality

Results

Open-ended Survey Responses:

- Many MCPL residents expressed a desire to privatize their docks and stated that they would even be willing to pay an annual fee to do so.
- Residents and visitors emphasized trends in the closed-ended portion of the survey by expressing a concern for the effect of algal blooms on their fishing and swimming activities.
- Many survey respondents noted the need for education on these environmental impacts on the lake and how to mitigate their effects, especially for new lake residents.

Conclusions

Since residents strongly desire the opportunity to privatize their docks, we recommend they be given the opportunity to pay an annual fee to privatize their docks. These annual fees collected can be used to enhance fishing opportunities around the lake as fishing is a valued activity at the lake. Because the heated fishing dock is a highly important feature that is reported to be of low quality, using the money from private dock fees to install more public docks and improve the heated fishing dock would be ideal. Additionally, previous groups have found that geese significantly contribute to the growth of algal blooms at the lake. Given the respondents had strong concerns regarding water quality and no strong or consistent views on geese, we recommend getting rid of the geese, but educating residents and visitors as to how this benefits the lake. Lastly, the results of our survey indicate that there is a substantial demand for accessible information regarding lake regulations and activities. Thus, tools such as interpretive signage, a MCPL newsletter, and regular updating of the Park and Lake’s website are opportunities to educate visitors and residents on MCPL’s ecology and rules.

References/Acknowledgments

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Straskraba, M., & Tundisi, J. G. (1999). *Reservoir Water Quality Management* (Vol. 9). Kusatsu: International Lake Environment Committee Foundation.

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