

Big Wakes or Big Fish?

Determining public opinion for future recommendations of Marion County Park & Lake

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Introduction

Marion County Park and Lake is on the National Register of Historic Places but does **not** have a lake management plan, nor a mission statement. A lake management plan should include interpretation, recreational activities, lake pollution, boating rules, etc. There is conflict between boaters and fishermen, between homeowners and people who come from out of town to lake. To begin the efforts to codify a plan, a public survey was needed to determine the public's opinions on the lake's purpose and goals. However, this is only a preliminary process for public participation, and the survey used was not a scientific method. This information can be incorporated for further development of the lake's management plan in the future.

Importance of Public Participation

To effectively manage a public entity, knowing the public's preference is important and surveys are one of the best ways to gather opinions and data. The way the public participation process is carried out is a crucial key in its success. Some challenges with involving the public include (Perkins, 2011):

- Cost
- Difficulty of analysis
- Participants being misled or getting their hopes up
- Finding people that have time and energy to participate
- Scale and timeframe of survey must also be considered to obtain accurate information

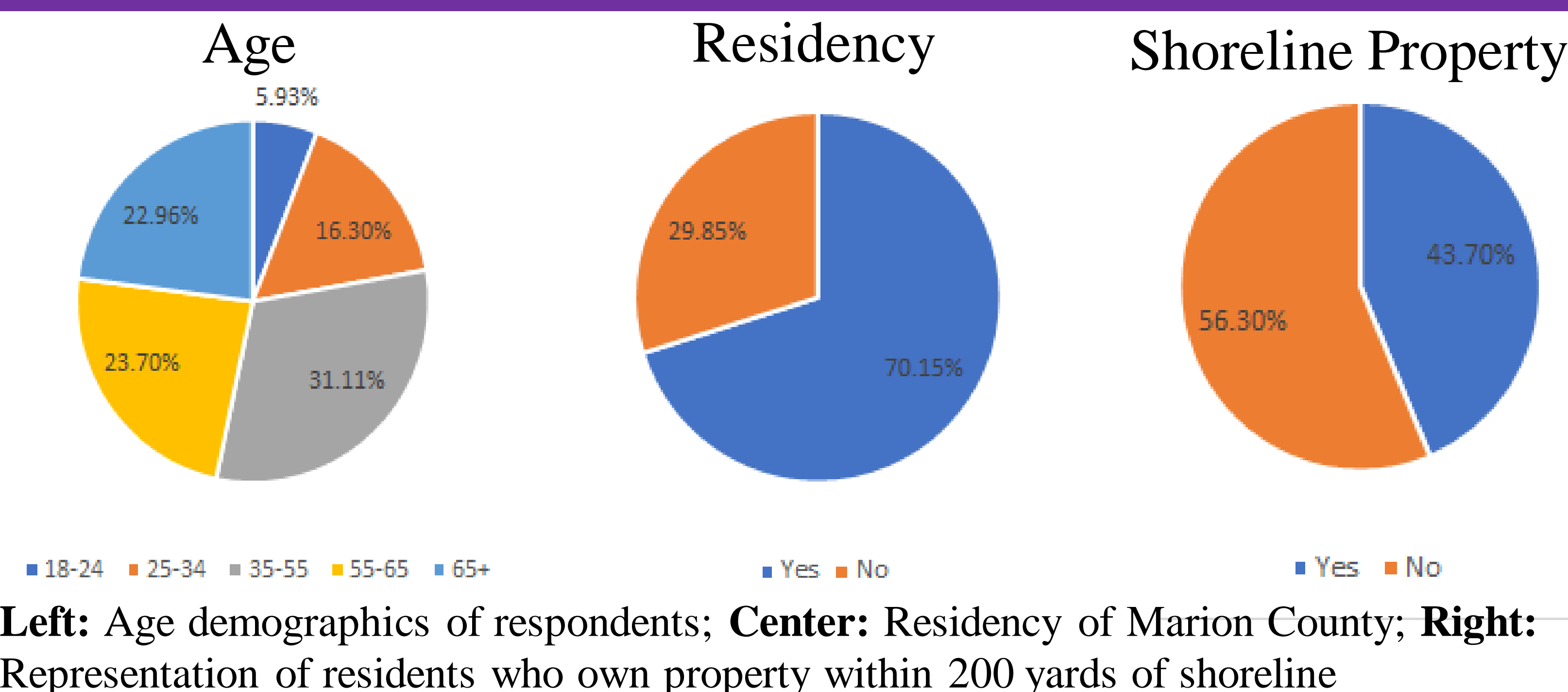
Methods

- Survey was composed in K-State Qualtrics and shared by the park superintendent through the Marion County Park and Lake's Facebook page of approximately 1700 Facebook followers
- The link was shared around 5:00 pm on April 2, 2019 and closed two weeks after.
- Preliminary questions about demographics were asked: **age, residency, property ownership**
- Survey questions, asked on a spectrum (1 to 6) of fifteen various recreational activities: **frequency, value, and quality**
- At the end of the survey, subjects were asked to provide a mission statement for the park, which were reviewed by the researchers

References

Perkins, P. E. (. (2011). Public participation in watershed management: International practice for inclusiveness. *Physics and Chemistry of the Earth*, 36(5), 204-212.
doi:10.1016/j.pce.2010.02.004

Results



The top 5 most Valued and Frequent Activities

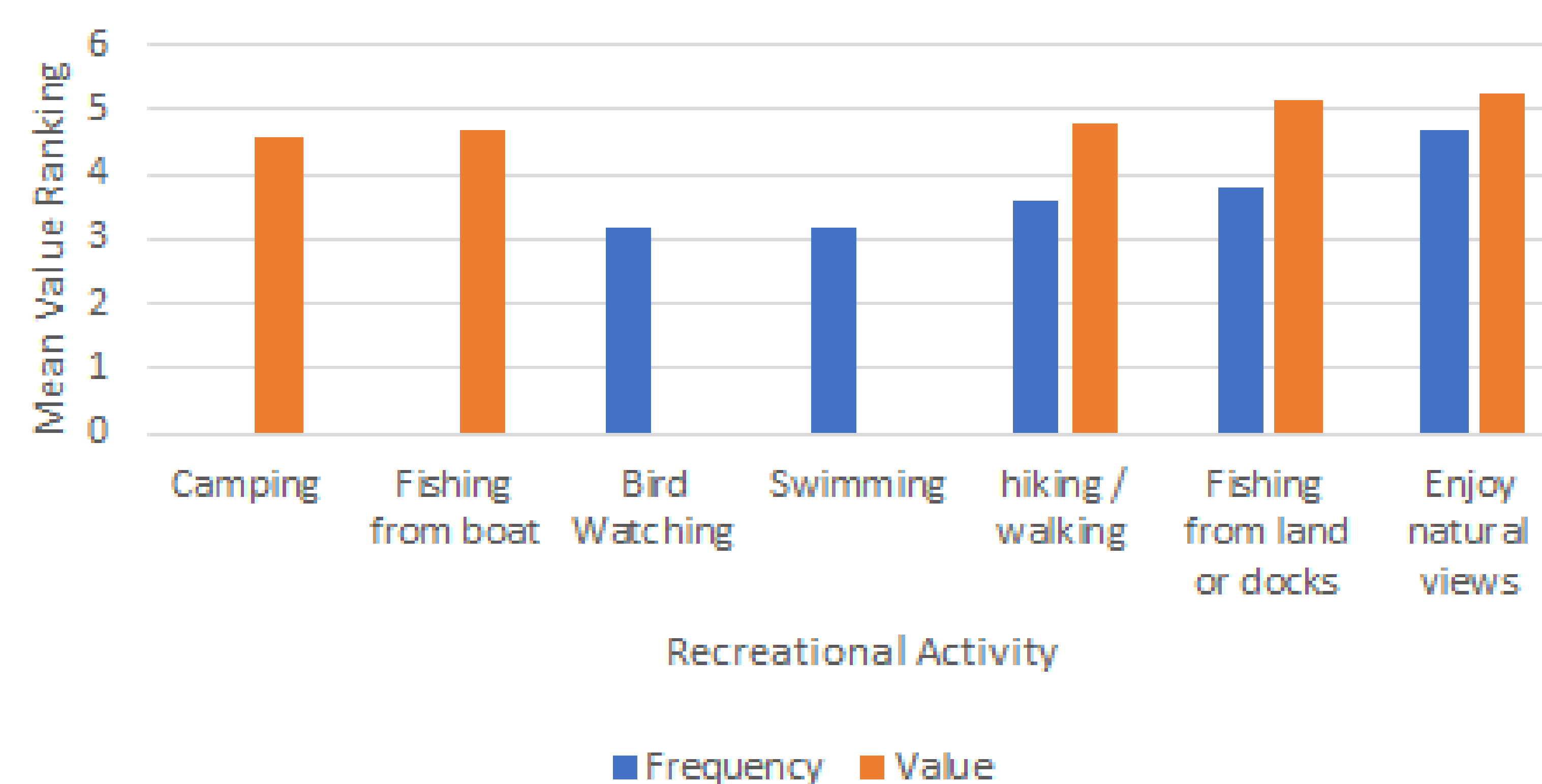


Figure 1. The mean values of the most participated and most valued recreational activities with “5” corresponding to 10-20 times/year and very valuable.

- Most frequent: 'enjoying natural views' with 50.38% of respondents choosing 'greater than 20 times per year' and over 84% voting very valuable to extremely valuable
- The activities engaged in the least frequently are remote control aviation, disc golf, and other water sports at mean values of 1.12, 1.35, and 2.22, respectively. These were also the three least valued activities.

The Top 5 most Satisfied Recreational Activities

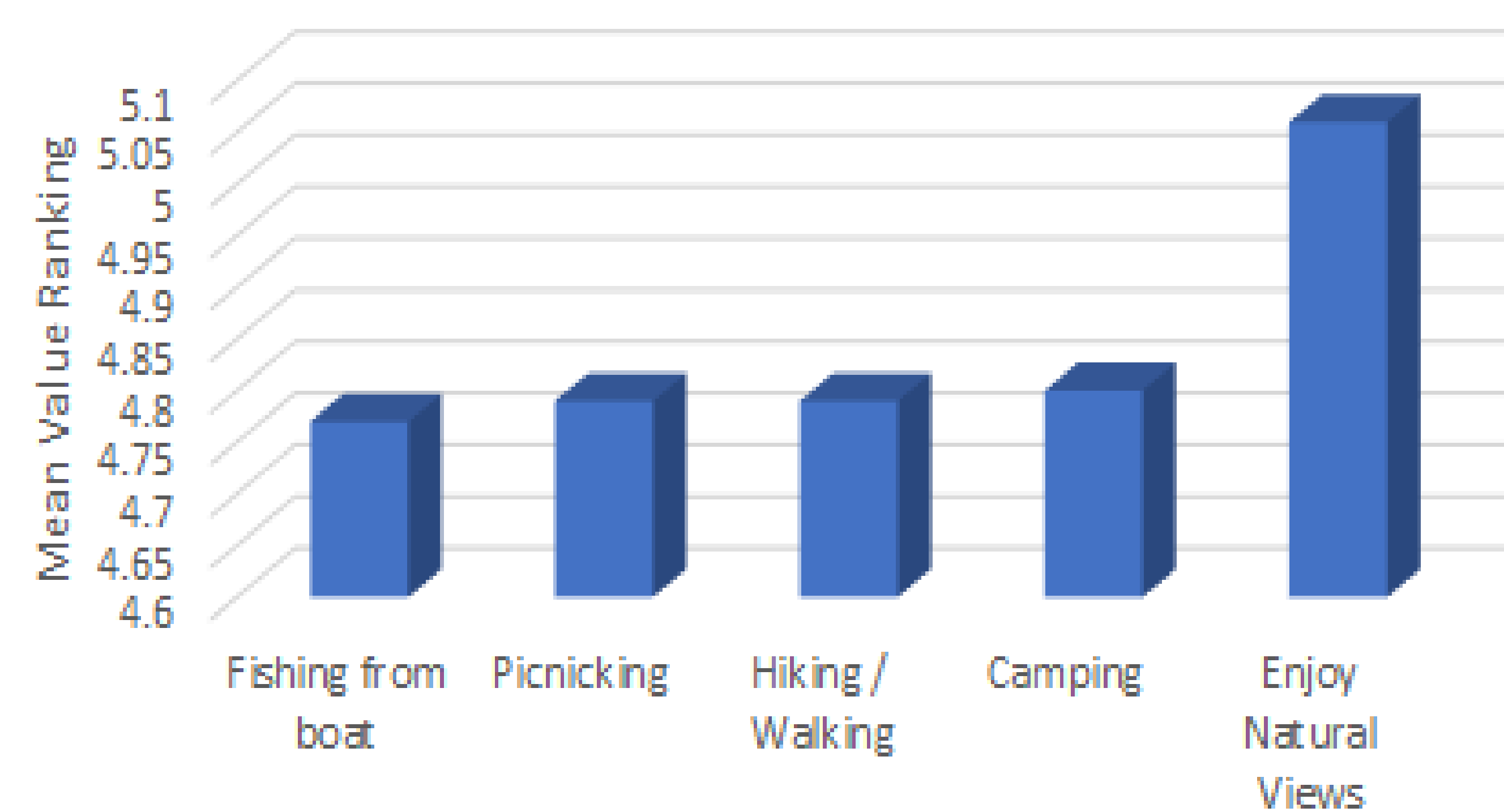


Figure 3. The mean rankings for the top five most satisfied activities with a ranking of "5" meaning 'very satisfied'.

Discussion

Rank order Comparison of the most Frequent Activities

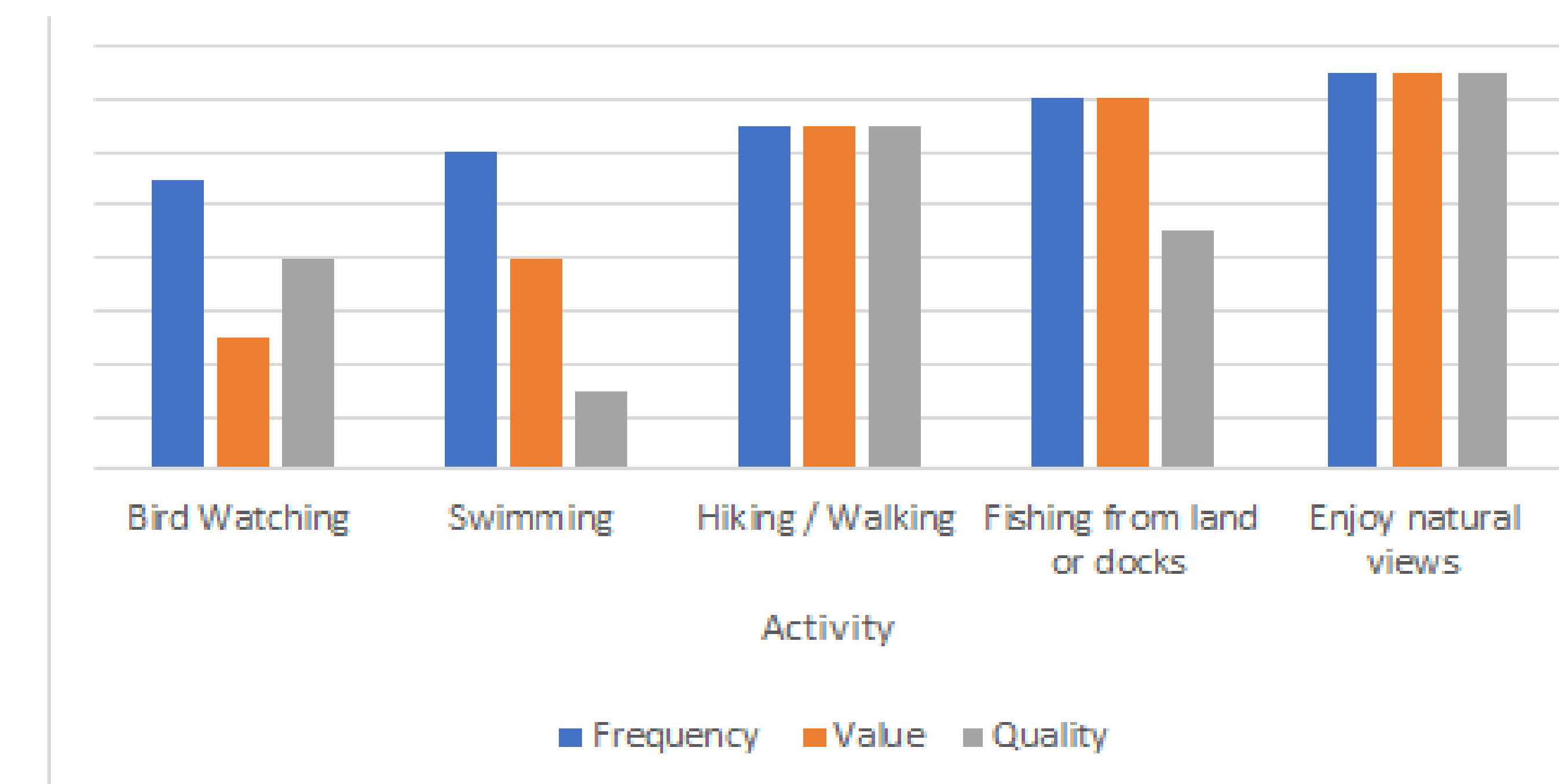


Figure 4. The relationship between the five most participated in activities compared to their value and satisfaction of each.

There was a total of 135 respondents. Frequency and value are directly related for most activities, meaning that the respondents highly value the activities they participate in the most. When placing the mean value rankings from 1-15, with 1 being the highest, frequency and value have seven activities that match exactly. The quality, however, differs slightly. The most interesting activity being swimming, as it placed 4/15 for frequency, yet 13/15 for quality.

Mission Statement Recommendation

There were many promising mission statements from respondents. Three idea statements stood out, as their inclusion of the highly participated and valued activities were mentioned. In no particular order, the statements chosen are as followed. The mission of Marion County Park and Lake is to:

1. "Provide a healthy, welcoming habitat for plant, animal and human life as we share this beautiful place."
2. "Commit to healthy use of nature, protecting for the future uses and promoting education and preservation while providing opportunities for all."
3. "Provide outdoor recreational opportunities in natural and park environments to the citizens and visitors to Marion County."

Based on synthesis of the above:

“The mission of Marion County Park and Lake is to provide recreational opportunity in both natural and park environments while ensuring a healthy, welcoming habitat for plant, animal and human life.”