



Property Owner Survey 2025

Fact Sheet

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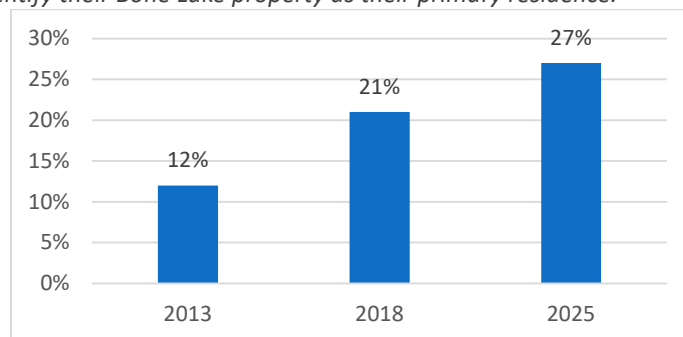
INTRODUCTION

In October 2025 a survey mailed to 556 property owners generated 151 responses for a return rate of 27%. Respondents returned their survey input via postal mail or online via SurveyMonkey. Similar surveys were mailed in 2013 and 2018. This summary provides highlights from the 2025 survey with comparisons to previous surveys when significant.

OWNERSHIP AND USE

The average number of years owned was 23 in 2025. This is the same as the 2013 and 2018 property owner surveys. 45% have owned on Bone Lake for 20 or more years. For most owners, their Bone Lake property is a secondary residence; however, since 2013 there has been a steady increase in owners who identify their Bone Lake property as their primary residence. For the nearly 27% who considered Bone Lake their primary residence in 2025, 30% leave for all or most of the winter season.

Figure 1: Owners who identify their Bone Lake property as their primary residence.



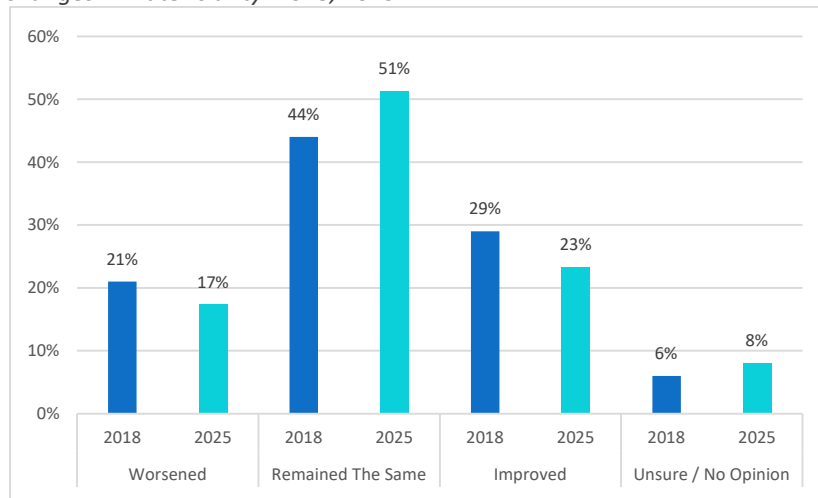
Over half of non-resident property owners use their property seasonally on weekends, vacations, and holidays. About 4% rent their property for others to use.

Over half of respondents listed the following recreational activities as ones they regularly enjoy: family time, enjoying the view, relaxing in a peaceful environment, boating with a pontoon, swimming, open-water fishing, observing wildlife, hiking/walking, socializing, and non-motorized boating like canoeing, kayaking, and paddleboarding. There has been an increase in owners who enjoy motorized boating from 86% in 2013 to 97% in 2025.

OBSERVATIONS

Owners were asked whether certain characteristics of Bone Lake have worsened, remained the same or improved. Not many respondents observed improvements in characteristics. Water clarity was observed as improving by 23% of respondents. This is lower than 2018 when 29% indicated water clarity had improved.

Figure 2: Observed changes in water clarity: 2018, 2025.



30% to 52% of respondents felt the following characteristics had worsened: noise level, boating safety, growth of invasive plants, conditions for non-motorized boating, bright shoreline lighting, quality of muskie fishing, and conditions for motorized boating.

The majority of respondents enjoy seeing loons on the lake followed by birds of prey and songbirds. Over half of respondents indicated geese were not at all enjoyable.

Although 29% of respondents find sandy shoreline most desirable to own, only 9% found it the most desirable to see when looking at the shoreline. Over a third of respondents indicated they prefer a mowed lawn or sandy beach at the shoreline. About one third of respondents thought managed native plantings was best to own and view at the shoreline.

CONCERNS

The most important outcome for a homeowner to install a practice to reduce runoff was improving water quality followed by improving fish habitat. 38% to 43% of respondents indicated the following incentives would be very to extremely important in influencing their decision to reduce waterfront runoff on their property: getting no-cost technical assistance to identify appropriate practices, receiving financial assistance to pay a portion of the costs, receiving how-to information about practices for water quality, and having a list of experienced, reputable vendors that could do the work.

The top concerns were:

- ❖ new invasive species enter the lake
- ❖ unsafe boat or personal watercraft use
- ❖ excessive invasive aquatic plant growth
- ❖ the geese population
- ❖ failing septic systems, and
- ❖ swimmers' itch.

New invasive species entering the lake was also of high concern in the 2013 and 2018 surveys. Over double the percentage of respondents in 2025 (64%) said unsafe use of boats or personal watercrafts was a high concern versus 25% in 2013 and 28% in 2018.

The survey included the question, "We would like to understand your views on climate change and its potential impact on Bone Lake and its watershed." Potential impacts of highest concern were increasing harmful algal blooms, decreasing oxygen levels, reduced cold-water habitat, and increased curly leaf pondweed growth. There were 25 respondents (17.0%) who indicated *they were not at all concerned about any* of the presented scenarios and 7 respondents (4.7%) indicated *they were extremely concerned about all* of the presented scenarios.

MANAGEMENT OF BONE LAKE

Most respondents indicated the District should continue all current activities and especially programs to deter new aquatic invasive species and incentives to upgrade non-conforming septic systems.

Over 60% of respondents indicated the District should consider implementing programs to increase education regarding boating regulations as well as increase boating regulation enforcement. Over 60% of respondents also indicated that the District should consider working with local towns and the DNR to pass a no-wake zone between the little island and the shoreline.

LAKE DISTRICT ANNUAL MEETING

About 48% of respondents have not attended an annual meeting in the past three years with most citing conflicts with the date and time as the reason that prevents them from attending. Over 90% responded that the annual meetings have met or somewhat met their expectations. Nearly one quarter of respondents were not aware of any of the types of actions that could be taken at annual meetings of the District.

COMMUNICATIONS

The most preferable ways for respondents to receive information from the District were the mailed newsletter (~84%), e-news via email (~60%), and the website (~41%).

VOLUNTEERING

More than 36% of respondents would consider volunteering to help the District similar to the 38% in 2013. Activities of most interest were picking up litter around the lake, projects to improved water clarity, projects to protect natural scenery/beauty, and activities to protect wildlife. For respondents who would consider volunteering or were unsure about volunteering, nearly 76% thought they could spend one hour or more a month doing volunteer work for the lake that interested them.

Reasons that prevent volunteering were other commitments, being away from Bone Lake for part of the year, and a lack of time. Respondents commented that better communication of opportunities, being asked, finding the right opportunity, and connecting socially with others might motivate them to volunteer.

Several activities warranted the consideration of monetary incentives like harvesting curly leaf pondweed, inspecting septic systems for grant eligibility, maintaining equipment, projects that improve water clarity, and encouraging the use of boat cleaning equipment at the landings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ Leverage long-term ownership on Bone Lake in communications and requests: social opportunities with stronger bonds, family focus, generational wealth, stewardship for future generations, pride in the community, calming sights and sounds of water, active lifestyle, property values, protecting ecosystems.
- ❖ Implement things that will protect loon populations on the lake as well as the natural environment.
- ❖ Even after decades of promoting shoreline best practices, considerable work needs to be done to change perceptions of what constitutes a desirable shoreline that positively promotes a healthy lake.
- ❖ Resources should be devoted to preventing invasive species from entering Bone Lake.
- ❖ Implement programs to increase boating safety and improve the conditions for boating, including non-motorized crafts.
- ❖ Swimmers' itch and the geese population are related items of top concern. Look for ways to manage these conditions.
- ❖ The question on climate change provoked emotionally charged responses. Alternatives should be explored to produce thoughtful discussion. For instance, is there agreement that property owners are experiencing more frequent extreme weather events? Is there agreement that extreme weather events can impact the lake (water level, worsened erosion, high velocity runoff)?
- ❖ The District would benefit from a program that develops future leaders for Bone Lake as well as an educational program on its governance.
- ❖ Continue producing a mailed newsletter.
- ❖ Look at creating an electronic mailing list that includes better than 90% of property owners.
- ❖ Volunteer opportunities need to be well-defined, documented, and communicated. Personal invitations should be considered as a recruiting method. Increasing social opportunities might help improve the pool of potential volunteers.

REFERENCES

The complete [2025 Property Owners Survey](#) is available on the Bone Lake Management District website as well as survey results from [2018](#) and [2013](#). www.bonelakewi.com