



BIRD RIVER

Secondary Plan

Cottage Owners Survey Results

September, 2008



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BIRD RIVER COTTAGE OWNERS SURVEY

BIRD RIVER

“Guiding Use and Conservation of the Bird River” Cottage Owners Survey

The following report consolidates the findings of the Bird River Cottage Owners' Survey. This report presents an assessment of the recreational experience, perceptions of change, and views on development, Bird River boating use and quality of life objectives as identified by the Bird River cottage owners.

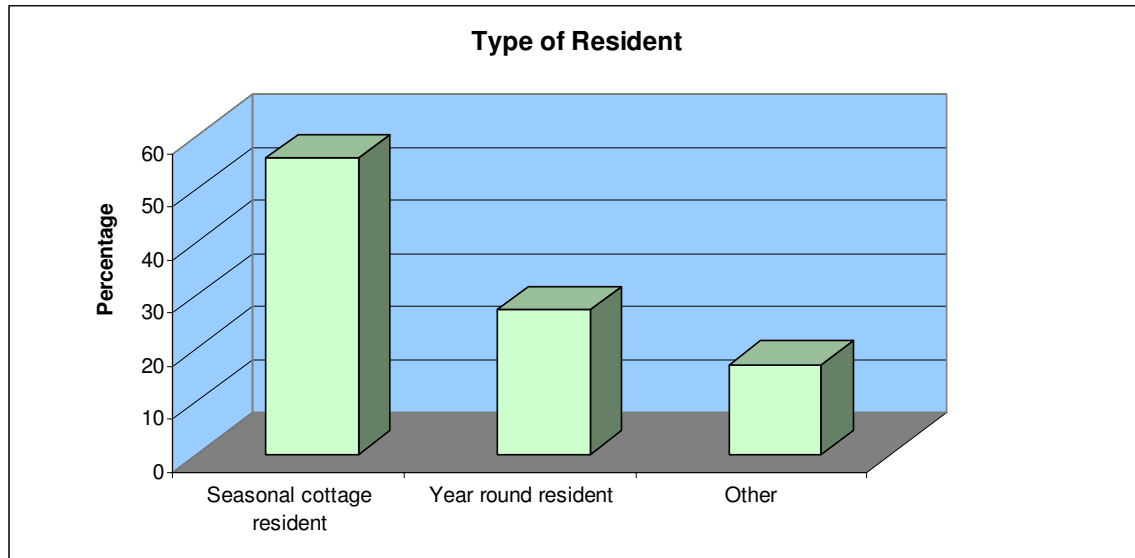
The Bird River cottage owners survey was mailed out on July 2nd, 2008 to three hundred eighty five (385) recipients. One hundred forty seven (147) cottage owners returned the survey, which resulted in an approximately thirty eight percent (38%) return rate. The survey consisted of sixteen (16) questions organized in two sections. The first section provided profile information on the respondent while the second section focused upon the recreation experience. The survey was designed to provide opportunities for both qualitative and quantitative responses.

A mail list containing both civic and mailing addresses for all cottage and property owners that fall within the study area was provided to Lombard North Group by the RM of Alexander. Each address was given a coded number for survey control and verification. Of the one hundred forty seven (147) survey respondents, one hundred thirty one (131) had civic addresses that were identified on the RM of Alexander civic address parcel map. Sixteen (16) had mailing addresses other than a local address. Of the one hundred thirty one (131) local civic addresses, one hundred four (104), or **79%**, were located along the Bird River. Twenty seven (27), or **21%**, were located off the River along Still Cove.

This survey is represents an assessment of recreation property owners feelings regarding the present use and expectations for the future of the recreation experience on the Bird River. The results shown in this report will be presented at a public meeting with the Bird River Cottage Owners' Association. The confirmation of these results and feedback at the public meeting will help inform the planning process about community priorities for the future of the Bird River recreation area.

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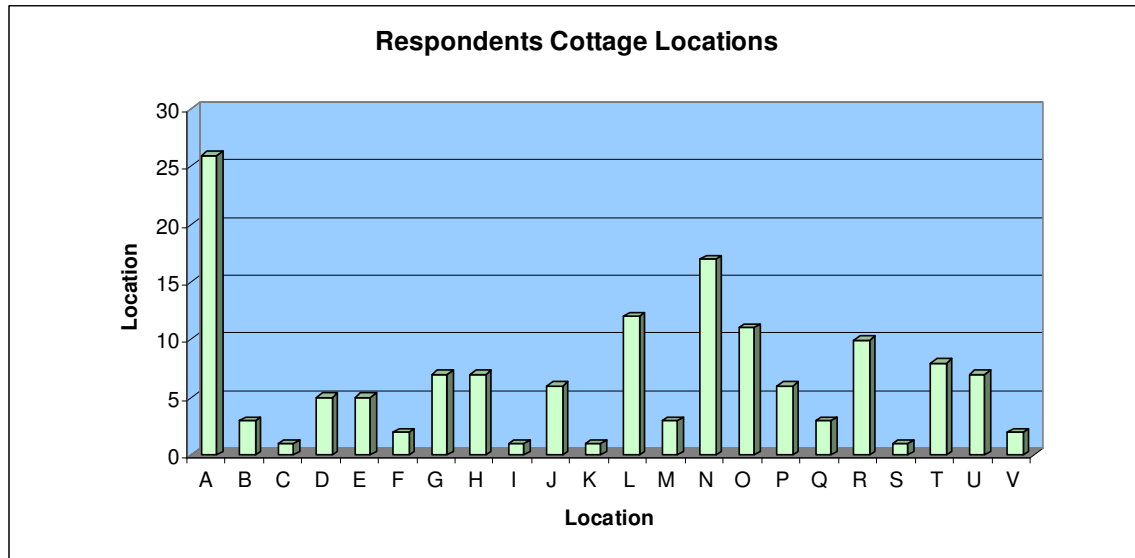
1. Nature of Cottage Residency



Of the one hundred forty seven (147) respondents, eighty two (82) respondents, or **55.8%**, indicated that they are “seasonal cottage residents”. Forty (40) of the respondents, or **27.2%**, stated they are “year-round residents” and twenty five (25) respondents, or **17.0%**, indentified themselves as “other” than these two categories. For example, the “other category” includes respondents who indicated that they are property owners who have not yet built their cottage. The average length of residency for all of the Bird River survey respondents was approximately **19 years**.

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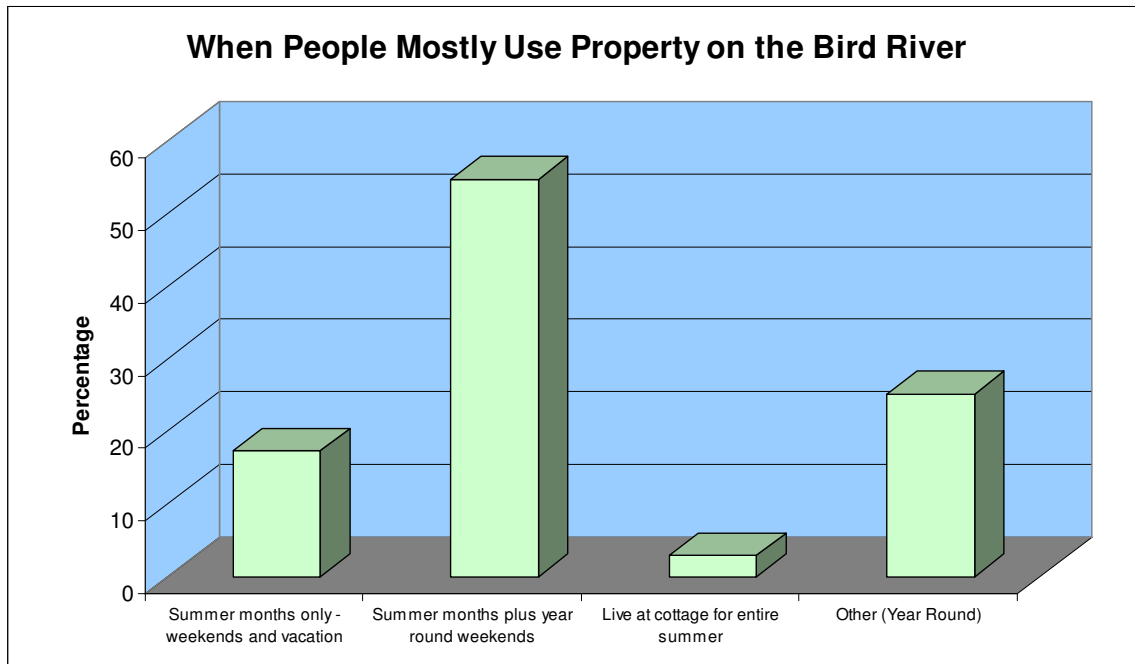
2. Location of Respondents' Cottages on the Bird River



One hundred forty four (144) respondents answered this question. The highest number of respondents, twenty six (26) or **18.1%**, identified location “A” as the location of their cottage. This location is near the mouth of the river where there is a high concentration of cottages. Locations “N” and “L” had the next highest concentration of cottage respondents, with seventeen (17), or **11.8%**, and twelve (12), or **8.3%**, respectively. Both locations “N” and “L” are located near the HWY 315 Bridge and represent fairly dense cottage locations. The remaining respondent cottage locations were fairly evenly dispersed along the river. Please see location map below which illustrates Bird River cottage locations corresponding to the letters in the graph above.

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3. When People most use their Property on the Bird River



Of the one hundred thirty nine (139) respondents that answered this question, seventy five (75), or **54.7%**, indicated that they use their property on the Bird River during “summer months plus year-round weekends”. Thirty five (35) respondents (**25.2%**) stated that they use their property on the Bird River year-round. Twenty four (24) of the respondents (**17.3%**) indicated that they use their property during the summer months, primarily only on weekends and vacations. Four (4) of the respondents (**2.9%**) stated that they live at their cottage for the entire summer. By combining both the percentage totals of the respondents that use their property on summer months plus year-round weekends and those that use their property year-round, a large percentage (**80.0%**) of the respondents use the Bird River during both the summer and winter months.

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4. Characteristics or Attributes that Contribute most to the Recreation and Cottage Experience of the Bird River

Survey participants were asked to list the three most important characteristics or attributes of the Bird River that contribute most to the quality of their recreation and cottage experience. The responses are categorized into three subheadings – “Recreational Characteristics”, “Environmental Characteristics” and “Social Characteristics”. A majority of the respondents indicated that they enjoy the abundant wildlife, the nature, beauty, serenity and peacefulness of the Bird River. Other respondents indicated that they enjoy taking part in recreation activities along the Bird River while some respondents indicated that they enjoy the time spent with family and neighbors.

Recreational Characteristics

- 1. The Bird River provides enjoyable boating experiences in all water conditions.*
- 2. The calm water provides a great place for leisure canoeing and kayaking.*
- 3. Winter recreational activities, such as snowmobiling and cross-country skiing add to the recreational enjoyment of the Bird River.*
- 4. The Bird River is a great place for many water sports, including swimming, recreational boating, pontoon boating, water skiing, fishing and walking along trails.*

Environmental Characteristics

- 1. The Bird River has an abundance of wildlife, beautiful scenery (waterfalls and large spruce trees) and plenty of trees that provide excellent wind shelter.*
- 2. The untouched shorelines, natural habitats, fresh air and abundant flora and fauna contribute to the enjoyment of the natural environment of the Bird River.*
- 3. Within the Bird River, people are able to reside in a forest setting, have access to the water and backwoods trails and enjoy clean air and water.*
- 4. The quietness of the water, particularly during the week, when summer boat traffic and winter snowmobile are much less and noise levels are minimal.*

Social Characteristics

- 1. The Bird River offers a friendly atmosphere, a place to relax with friends and family and seclusion from the City of Winnipeg.*
- 2. Both Winnipeg and Lac du Bonnet are located in close proximity to the Bird River and provide various services and amenities.*

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5. Changes or Problems that Negatively Impact the Current Recreation and Cottage Experience of the Bird River

Survey participants were asked to list the three most important characteristics or problems of the Bird River that have had a negative impact on the current quality of their recreation and cottage experience. The responses are categorized into three subheadings – “Boat Traffic/Development Issues”, “Environmental Issues” and “Mitigation of Negative Impact”. A majority of the respondents indicated that the Bird River has severe traffic congestion issues that create safety issues. Some respondents expressed concern over the water quality in the Bird River and the amount of shoreline erosion that has taken place over the years, while other respondents indicated that there is no negative impact on their current recreation and cottage experience.

Boat Traffic/Development Issues

1. *There are too many boats using the limited navigable water available on the Bird River, especially on weekends. The consequences include:*
 - a) *Noise – from fast moving watercraft with large engines and from pontoon boats that anchor by the falls at the end of river.*
 - b) *Congestion – It is difficult for skiers, tubers and swimmers to share parts of the river on weekends. It can be difficult for boats to pass safely in some areas along the river.*
 - c) *Safety – The number of high speed boats and personal watercraft has increased over the years making it dangerous for all types of recreation users on the Bird River.*
2. *The Bird River has become overdeveloped and has reached its carrying capacity. Any additional development would overstretch an already over capacitated area.*

Environmental Characteristics

1. *The numbers of personal water craft (Sea-doo's) and wakeboard boats have increased in recent years. These boats travel at fast speeds producing large waves and in combination with clear cutting of vegetation along the shoreline has contributed to shoreline erosion and riverbank instability in parts of the Bird River. ATV use has also increased on subdivision roads producing large amounts of dust and destroying natural habitats and personal property.*
2. *Application of lawn fertilizers and poor (or no) regulation for the handling of septic waste have contributed to increased algae growth and poorer water quality.*
3. *Natural habitats, including a variety of bird species and fish stocks have been depleted in recent years.*

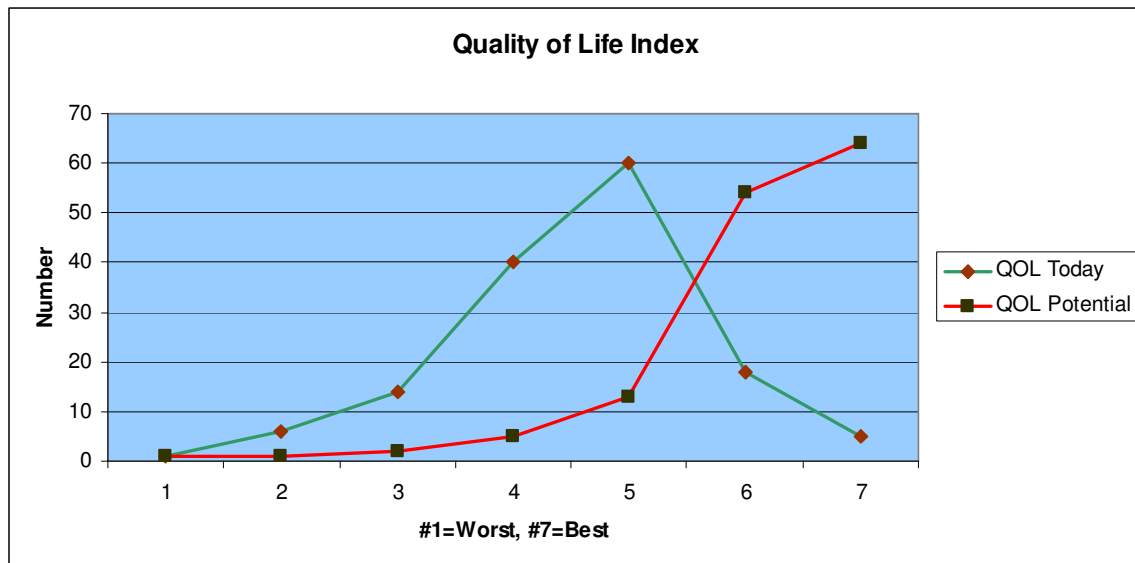
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Mitigation/Negative Impacts

1. *There is no negative impact. There are fewer boats along the river compared to 20-30 years ago due to the dramatic increase in fuel prices. The wildlife has started to come back because fewer boats use the river during the week and on weekends.*
2. *Traffic flows have slowed since the conversion of the trailer park at the bridge. Activities have slowed and most cottage owners have shown a true respect for their neighbors and the environment.*

6. Quality of Life Recreation Rankings of the Bird River

The following graph consolidates the rankings given by respondents to the current quality of the recreation experience on the Bird River given the challenges and changes which have negatively impacted people's use and enjoyment of the river. This is identified by the line Quality of Life (QOL) Today. The second line identified by the line Quality of Life (QOL) Potential on the following graph charts the cumulative rankings of respondents on how they would view the quality of the recreation experience on the Bird River, assuming the community was able to resolve the problems identified as negatively impacting the River's recreation experience.



Quality of Life Today

Bird River cottage owners were asked to consider the Bird River's attributes and problems and rate their current recreation and cottage experience with #1 being the worst place possible and #7 being the best place possible. The responses were primarily clustered around the ranking of #4 and #5. A ranking of #4 was identified by **27.8%** of the respondents and indicates a neutral feeling toward the current recreation experience. A ranking of #5 was selected by

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41.7% of the responses and represents a positive tendency in the ranking of the current Bird River recreation experience. Combined, these responses account for approximately **69.5%** of the responses. This high percentage of responses in the upper-mid range of the scale indicates that a majority of the cottagers are somewhat satisfied with the current quality of the recreation experience. Although expressing concern over negative impacts of increasing use and possible continuation of the current direction in river use conflicts. It would appear most residents have adjusted to the changes which have taken place and still value the recreation experience provided. Tolerance for any continued increase in use pressures however may be very low and would likely risk decreasing the current perception of quality of life ranking given today by Bird River respondents.

Quality of Life Potential

Bird River respondents were also asked to re-rank the recreation experience on the Bird River assuming the community was able to resolve the problems identified as negatively impacting the Bird River's recreation experience. It is quite apparent in the chart shown above that people's perceptions of what their recreation experience could be dramatically improved by addressing the boat traffic and development; environmental and social issues identified in Section 6 . Resolving these issues is expected to have the impact of shifting the quality of the recreation experience dramatically toward highly positive rankings levels of #6 - #7. In terms of Potential QOL rankings assuming negative impacts were resolved, **38.6%** of the respondents selected level #6 and **45.7%** of the respondents selected level #7. Combined these responses represented a very positive shift in the quality of the recreation experience of **84.3%** of all respondents. The larger percentage of respondents agreed by addressing these issues the Bird River recreation area could among the best recreation resort places available.

7. Actions Proposed to Resolve Negative Impacts on Recreation Experience

Survey participants were asked to list two or three actions the community might be able to take to resolve negative impacts upon the Bird River's recreation experience. The responses are categorized into three subheadings – "Boat Traffic/Development Issues", "Environmental Issues" and "Social Issues" A majority of the respondents suggested future development within the Bird River area should be restricted. Some respondents expressed concern over the water quality in the Bird River and the amount of shoreline erosion that has taken place over the years, while other respondents felt that alternative recreation venues should be provided so as to alleviate the amount of boat traffic along the river.

Boat Traffic/Development Issues

1. *No additional development should take place in the Bird River, including not permitting back lot development.*

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- 2. The speed, engine horsepower size and type (in particular wakeboard boats and PVC's) need to be restricted and enforced through signage and policing as a means to reduce boat traffic along the river.*
- 3. A greater police presence (particularly on weekends) and signage are needed along the river to increase awareness and monitor boat littering and impaired driving.*

Environmental Issues

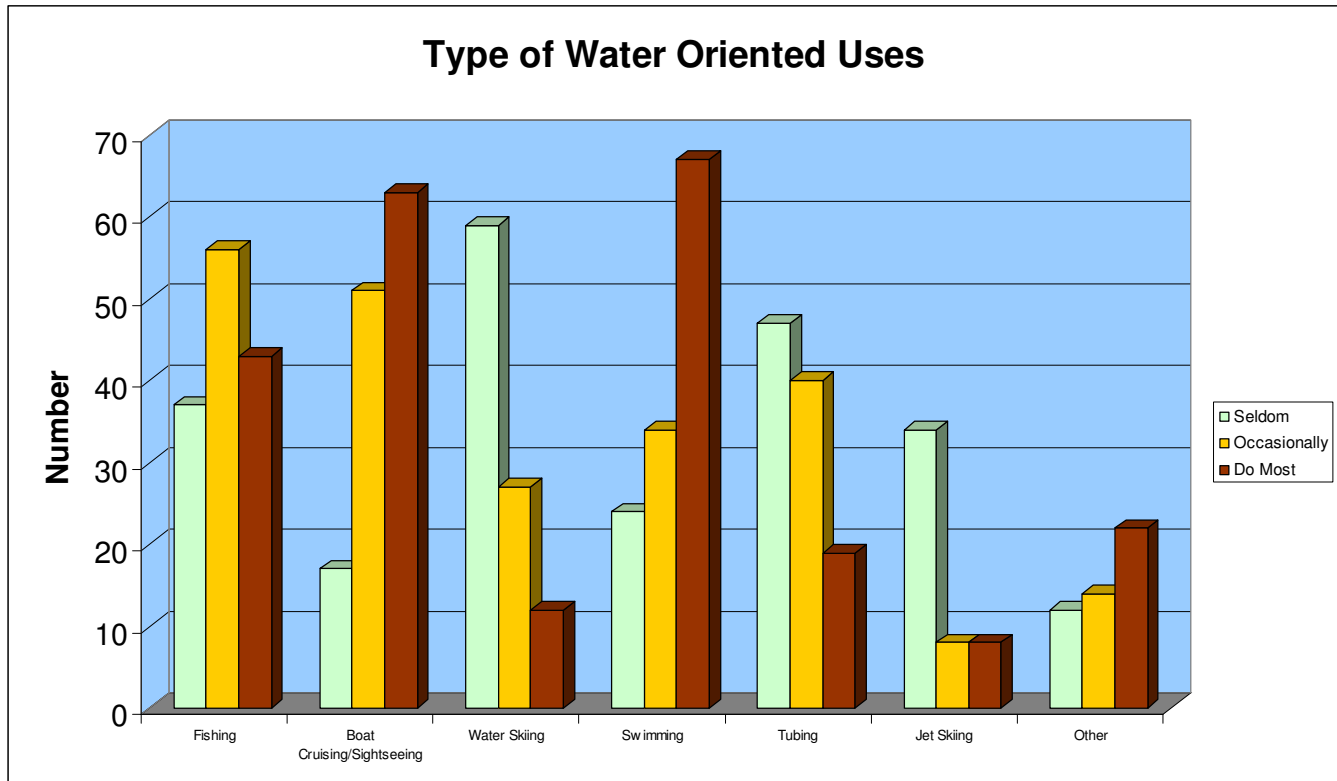
- 1. Government regulation and monitoring of septic handling should take place on all properties along the Bird River.*
- 2. Water quality tests should be conducted annually at various locations along the river and the results should be made public. The source of water pollution should be isolated and corrected.*
- 3. Education programs should be introduced to make residents aware of the harmful environmental effects of lawn fertilizers and household detergents. A "no phosphate" policy would improve the water quality for the immediate and surrounding water bodies.*

Social Issues

- 1. If provided, alternative forms of recreation to that of boating would greatly reduce the current amount of boating traffic along the Bird River. Examples, such as a public beach, a rest area with picnic tables and fire pits, a tennis court, baseball diamond, soccer field, a play ground and marked/groomed trails would provide residents with more opportunities to take part in alternative forms of recreation.*
- 2. A designated community area with various events would help to build a sense of community. Better communication tools/technologies should be used to inform residents of local issues and events.*
- 3. There needs to be improved planning coordination between the RM and the Provincial Government. The zoning by-law needs to be reviewed and enforced. Design guidelines should be used for any new or expanding docks and/or cottages.*

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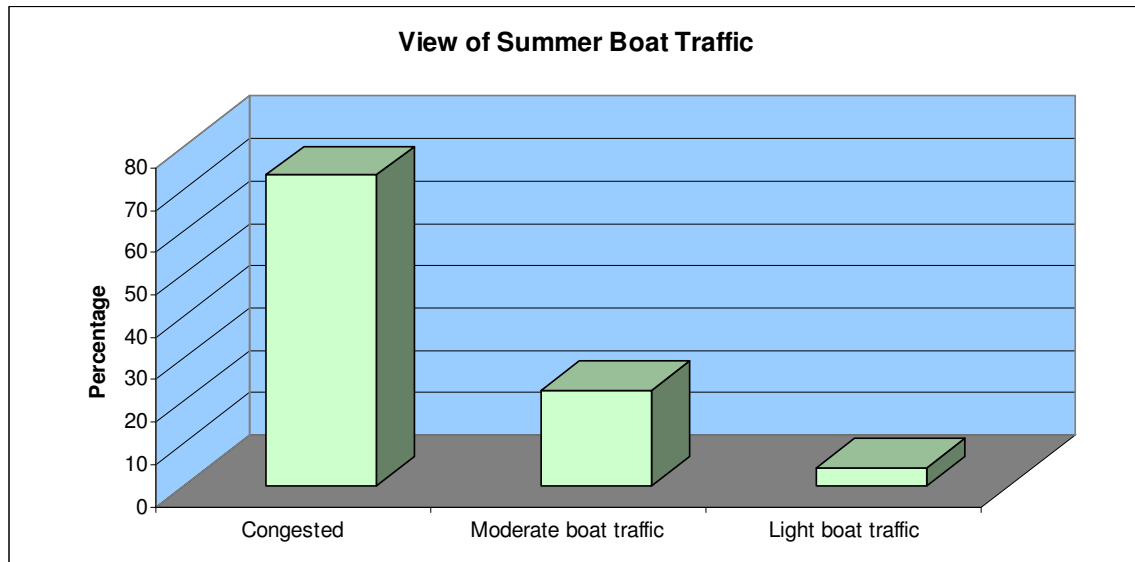
8. Type of Boating or Water Oriented Uses of the Bird River



Bird River cottage owners take part in a variety of water oriented-activities. Sixty three (63), or **48.1%**, of the one hundred thirty one (131) respondents stated they take part in boating/cruising indicated that they do this activity “most”. Sixty seven (67), or **53.6%**, of the one hundred twenty five (125) respondents that stated they take part in swimming, do this activity “most”. Fifty nine (59), or **60.2%**, of the 98 respondents that stated they take part in water skiing, indicated they do this activity “seldom”. Several respondents, fifty six (56), or **41.2%**, of the one hundred thirty six (136) respondents that stated that they partake in fishing, do so “occasionally”, and fifty one (51), or **38.9%**, of the one hundred thirty one (131) respondents who partake in boat cruising, do this activity “occasionally”. Evidently, the most frequent water-oriented activities that occur on the Bird River are those of boating/fishing (combined) and swimming. It may be possible that these, the two common activities, by nature, when undertaken in confined areas may potentially conflict with one another.

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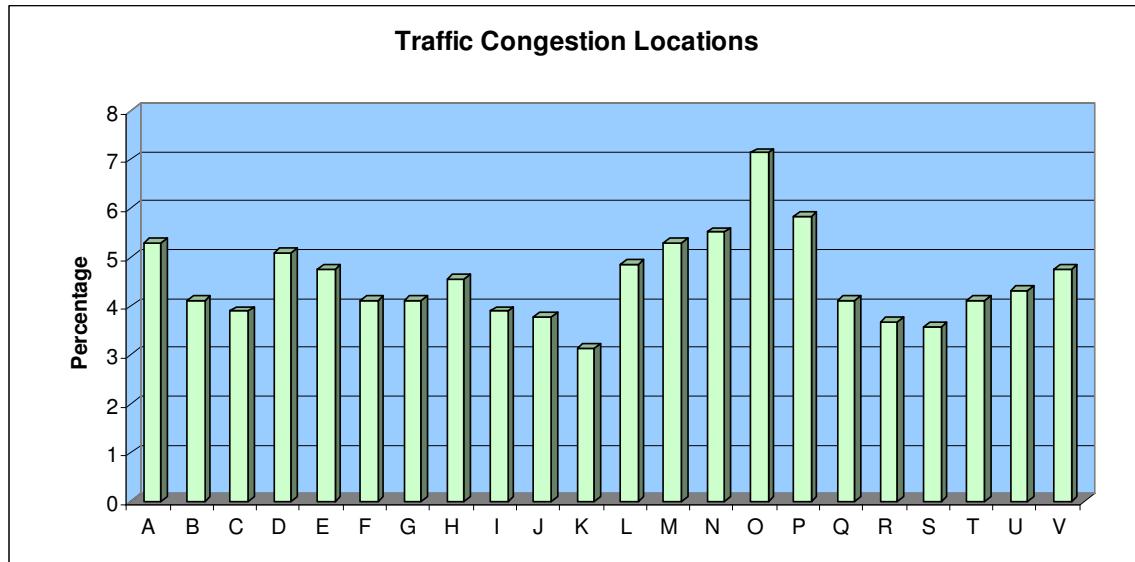
9. Perception of Boat Traffic along the Bird River during Peak Times on Weekends and Holidays?



Of the one hundred forty two (142) respondents that answered this question, one hundred four (104), or **73.2%**, feel that boat traffic along the Bird River is “congested” during peak times on weekends and holidays. Thirty two (32) respondents (**22.5%**) feel that boat traffic along the Bird River is “moderate” during these peak times and six (6) respondents (**4.2%**) feel that the boat traffic along the Bird River during peak times on weekends and holidays is “light”. The statistical results from this question show that a large majority of respondents feel that during peak times on weekends and holidays, boat traffic along the Bird River is “congested”.

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10. Most Congested Boating Locations Along the Bird River



Using the letter locations illustrated on a reference map, respondents identified the locations on the map that they felt had the most boating traffic or congestion. Some respondents indicated all locations “A-V”, while others were specific and identified one or two locations. As the chart above shows, there is quite a range of responses. Although no locations along the River were identified as free of congestion, three areas of highest boat traffic congestion can be identified from these results. There is one higher-than-average cluster that includes locations “L-P”. This area is located in and around the HWY #315 bridge. The second area that was noted as having a high amount boating traffic or congestion is location “A”. This area is at the mouth of the river and several respondents indicated that a higher than average density of boats is viewed at this location because of boat traffic moving in and out of Lac du Bonnet onto the Bird River. Location “D” was also noted as having a high amount of boating traffic or congestion. This area is located at the first bend of the river, close to the mouth. This area was identified as being very narrow and dangerous when more than two boats pass each other. It seems from the wide spectrum of responses received most respondents equated boat congestion on the Bird River in part in association with the location of their cottage property.

11. Description of the Boating Problems on the Bird River

Survey participants were asked to describe the boating problems that occur at the locations they identified on the map as congested. The responses are categorized into three subheadings – “Boat Traffic/Safety Issues”, “Environmental Issues” and “Social Issues”. A majority of the respondents indicated that traffic volumes along the Bird River at peak times on weekends **are over-congested and can be dangerous**. Some respondents expressed concern over the amount of garbage left on the water that washes up on shore and shoreline erosion from large, rapid wave action, while other respondents felt that the river needs more of a police presence to address the amount of impaired drivers that travel along the river.

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Boat Traffic/Safety Issues

- 1. Boats enter the Bird River from outside locations when the lake is rough increasing the amount of traffic on the river and make it unsafe for others using the river for recreation purposes, especially during times of heavy waterskiing, tubing and/or wakeboarding.*
- 2. The speed, lack of courtesy and lack of proper boating procedures make it extremely dangerous for swimmers and small watercraft such as paddleboats, canoeists, kayakers and fishing boats.*
- 3. All areas of the river can be problematic at peak times. Some respondents indicated that It is so crowded at times that they have to wait for traffic to clear before boating along the river, while others stated that they are now avoiding boating altogether at peak times because traffic congestion is too dangerous. The noise level during these peak times is excessive.*
- 4. Narrow parts of the river, especially under the bridge are dangerous when jet skis and large boats move extremely fast and make turns pulling tubers, water skiers or wake boarders.*
- 5. Floating docks that are placed far out from the shoreline into to middle of the river, particularly in the narrow portions, pose a greater risk for swimmers by placing them in closer proximity to boat traffic during peak traffic volumes.*

Environmental Issues

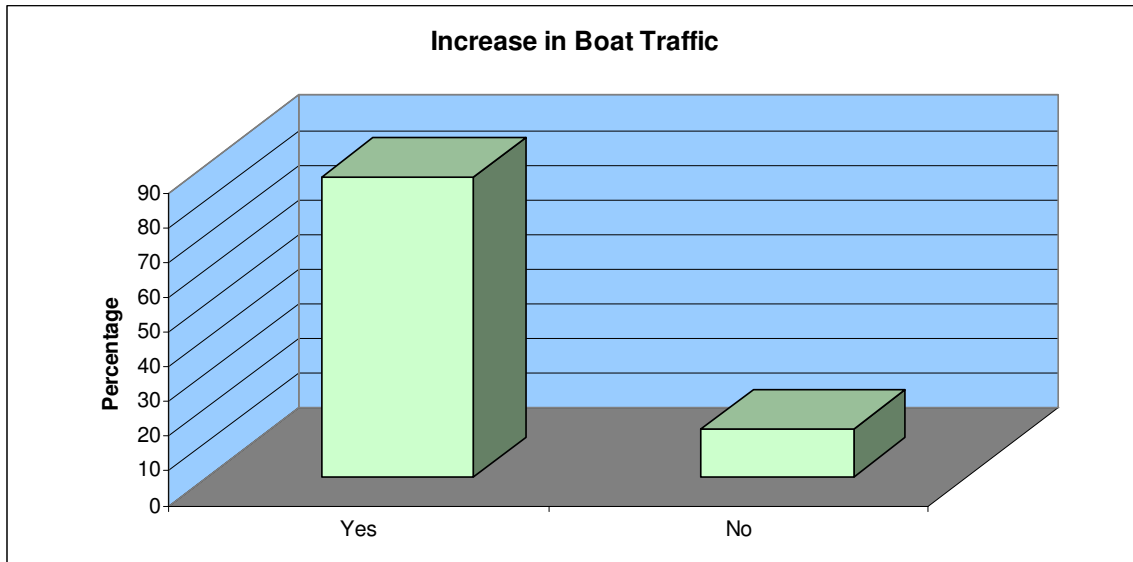
- 1. A number of large boats producing large wakes are damaging the shoreline. Some areas are showing extensive signs of erosion, with several feet of riverbank being lost annually due to shoreline erosion.*
- 2. The fish population has decreased in recent years and the amount of algae blooms have increased during the summer months reducing the quality of the water in the Bird River.*

Social Issues

- 1. Safety rules for the waterway should be distributed to all boat owners within the Bird River, Lac du Bonnet, Lee River and Winnipeg River areas.*
- 2. There is a need for a police presence on the Bird River. Drinking and boating is far too prevalent on the Bird River and the actions of several boaters show lack of regard for boating safety.*

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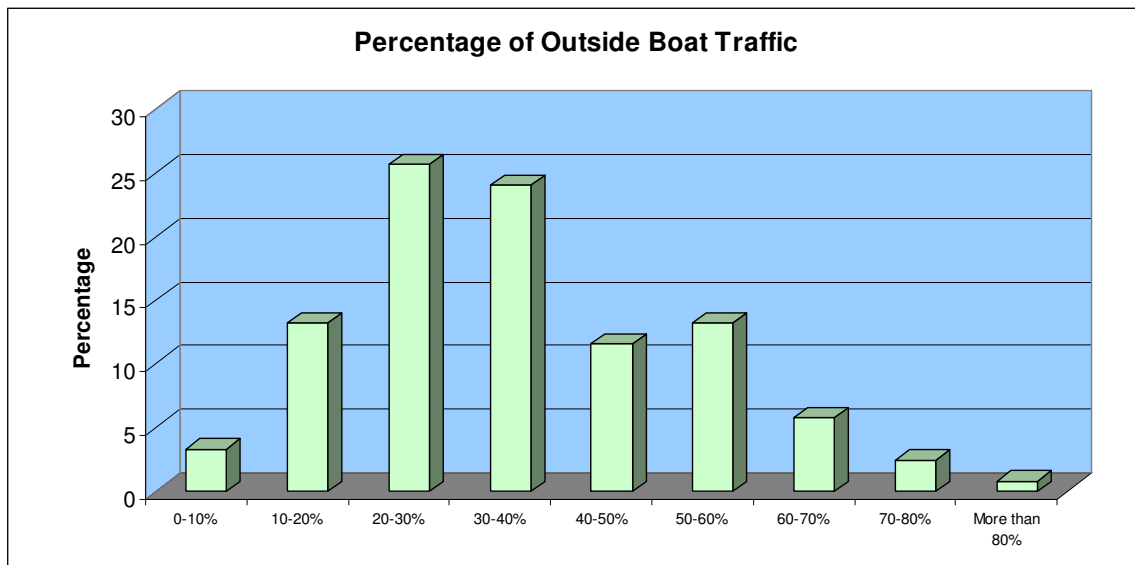
12. Boat Traffic Impact by Development Outside the Bird River



Overwhelmingly, one hundred twenty one (121), or **86.4%**, of the one hundred forty (140) respondents that answered this question agreed that the amount of boat traffic on the Bird River has increased as a consequence of cottage and recreation development from outside the Bird River. The remaining nineteen (19) respondents (**13.6%**) disagreed and some felt that increased boating traffic has been a result of increased development within, rather than outside, of the Bird River recreation area.

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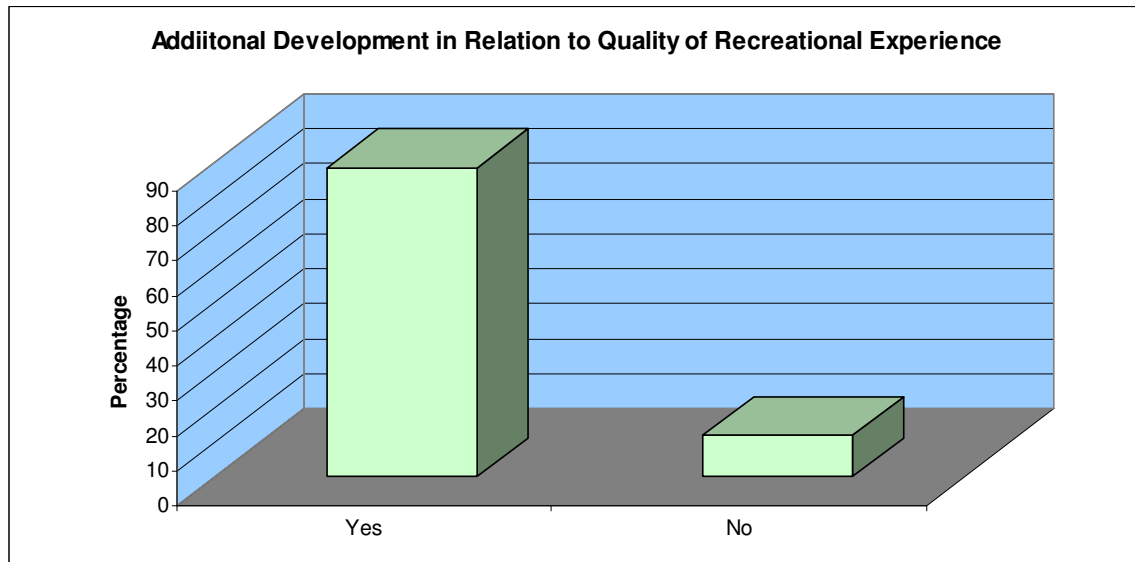
13. Percent of Weekend Boating Traffic on the Bird River Originating from Cottages or Lodges Outside the Bird River



Respondents that indicated development outside the Bird River contributes to boat traffic on the river were asked to estimate how much boating traffic on the Bird River originates from cottages or lodges outside the Bird River on a typical summer weekend. A wide range of responses were given to this question. The highest noted response falls within the 20-30% range, accounting for thirty one (31) of the one hundred twenty one (121) surveys which responded this question or **(25.6%)** of the respondents. The second highest response is within the 30-40% range, accounting for thirty (30) of the one hundred twenty one (121) respondents **(24.0%)**. When combined, these two responses account for approximately **49.6%** of the responses that fall within the 20-40% range. Collectively approximately **30%** of all respondents felt that in excess 40% to more than 80% of the weekend boat traffic originated from outside the Bird River area.

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14. Impact Upon Quality of the Bird River Recreation Experience by Approval of Additional Seasonal Resort Subdivisions



Of the one hundred thirty five (135) respondents that answered this question, one hundred twenty (120), or **88.2%**, agreed that given current connectivity and Bird River waterway use by outside recreation properties that the quality of recreational experience on the Bird River will be negatively impacted by Parks Branch and adjoining municipality approval of additional seasonal resort subdivisions on connected waterways. Sixteen (16) of the one hundred thirty five 135 respondents (**11.8%**) disagreed and felt that the quality of their recreational experience would not be negatively impacted by additional seasonal resort development.

Suggestions from Cottage Owners:

The RM of Alexander and Winnipeg River Planning District will need to engage the other jurisdictions in the development of a complementary seasonal resort strategy that takes a more regional view of development within connected waterways. Survey respondents were asked to suggest initiatives to be considered that will protect the current recreation experience and resolve outstanding use problems in the Bird River / Lac du Bonnet recreation area. The responses are categorized below into four subheadings:

- "Boat Traffic/Development Issues",
- "Environmental Issues",
- "Social Issues" and
- "Mitigation of Issues".

A majority of the respondents indicated additional cottage development should not be approved noting demands placed on the Bird River are already in excess of its "acceptable" recreation carrying capacity. On this same theme other respondents expressed concern over the declining

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water quality and increase in shoreline erosion due to excessive use. Respondents felt that similar studies like the Bird River Study should be conducted in nearby jurisdictions to identify problems and concerns. Several respondents felt that if fuel prices continue to increase, the amount of boat traffic along the Bird River may decrease in the next few years

Boat Traffic/Development Issues

- 1. Further cottage development on the Bird River, Bird Lake, Lac du Bonnet and Lee River should be prohibited. It's very difficult to control boat use, but development on or around the area, which directly contributes to the amount of boat traffic, can be controlled.*
- 2. The standards related to development (especially density standards) need to be set in by-laws, through policies, and enforced.*
- 3. There needs to be a limitation on the amount of lots sold as it is quite evident that any additional development would negatively impact the environment. The data outlined in this study strongly suggests that the Bird River area is already overdeveloped.*
- 4. Heavy boat traffic should be kept on to Lac du Bonnet and the Winnipeg River by considering placing a restriction on motor sizes and type of watercraft on the Bird River. Directional buoys, police presence, posted rules, speed control and "no wake zones" were suggested as means to reduce the amount of traffic congestion.*

Environmental Issues

- 1. Holding tanks and sewer discharge from waterfront cottage lots need to be monitored closely. Outhouse site selection and compliance with the regulations of wastewater disposal are imperative to ensure proper water quality for the Bird River.*
- 2. The RM of Alexander should consider providing cost sharing initiatives to stabilize the riverbanks of properties with excessive shoreline erosion.*
- 3. The RM of Alexander should consider imposing a by-law that bans the use of phosphate soap. This would help to improve the water quality and reduce the algae blooms in the Bird River.*

Social Issues

- 1. Before approval of any additional development, the public must be notified. Approval of site developments should include the input of all residents within the Bird River, not just immediately surrounding and impacted properties.*
- 2. One respondent indicated that they were not sure a solution is possible and are actually seeking property away from the Bird River because the traffic congestion has become an overbearing issue.*

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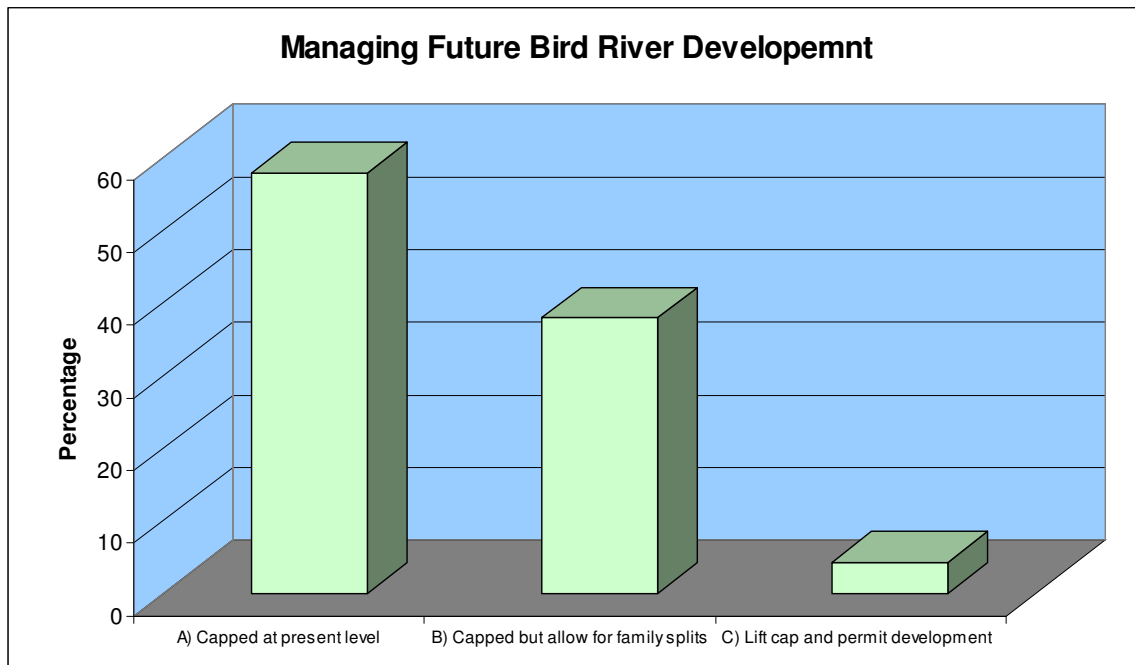
3. *Similar studies should be conducted in nearby jurisdictions to identify their local problems and concerns. The RM of Alexander needs to seriously take into account this and previous studies to address the current problems.*
4. *Education is essential. People need to be aware of the dangers of speeding in a boat in a small congested space.*

Mitigation of Issues

1. *With the continual increase in gas prices, there may be a reduction in boat use and congestion of boat traffic on the Bird River in the near future.*
2. *One respondent noted that since 1991, when they purchased their property, the boat traffic has decreased considerably and they are quite comfortable with the quality of peace they are now enjoying.*

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15. Managing Future Bird River Development:



Respondents were asked how future development in the Bird River should be managed. Of the one hundred forty (140) respondents that answered this question, eighty one (81), or **58.0%**, felt that development should be capped at present levels and no further expansion of trailer parks, camps/lodges, or cottage lot development be permitted on the Bird River. Many felt that adding additional cottages would only increase the volumes of boating traffic and cause more environmental degradation to the remaining natural areas.

Fifty three (53) of the respondents (**37.9%**) felt that development should be capped at present levels, subject to providing the opportunity for current long time owners of large parcels with vacant shoreline to split a lot for a son or daughter. Several of the respondents that chose this response indicated that this would be suitable, provided that splitting a lot for son or daughter was regulated with a caveat so as to ensure that the lot was not immediately sold to a non-immediate family member for a profit.

Only six (6) out of 140 respondents (**4.3%**) felt that the cap on development should be lifted and additional cottage lot development on the Bird River be permitted, subject to complying with provincial environmental standards.

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Cottage Owners Suggestions – Managing Bird River Development

Survey respondents were asked to provide their suggestions on how future Bird River development should be managed. The responses are categorized into three subheadings reflective of the development approaches and a fourth category for environmental remediation:

- “Capped at Present Level”,
- “Capped, but Allow for Family Splits”,
- “Lift the Cap and Permit Development”
- “Environmental Issues”

A majority of the respondents indicated that number of people/boats/cottage lots exceeds the carrying capacity of the river and that no further development should be permitted. There was sensitivity also displayed toward succession needs of long term property owners with large parcels of land and shorelines on the Bird River. Almost 40% of the respondents would be prepared to consider family splits of portions of these lands to immediate family members if properly regulated and restrictions are placed on the resale of the lot. Few respondents felt that the cap on development in the Bird River should be lifted provided the provincial environmental standards are upheld. A number of respondents expressed the importance of improving water quality and taking measures to prevent additional deterioration.

Following are representative comments received from respondents.

Capped at Present Level

1. *The Bird River is already over-congested and the river is dangerously overcrowded. Additional development will lead to an increase in boat traffic thus creating more safety, noise and environmental issues.*
2. *All the previous and current studies have shown that additional development for the Bird River would further stretch the already over-stretched carrying capacity of the Bird River and jeopardize the quality of the area.*

Capped at Present Level but Allow for Family Splits

1. *Family lot splits should be allowed for the sons and/or daughters of long time residents exclusively, provided a restriction is place on the resale of the lot. Family lot splits would have a minimal impact on the carrying capacity of the river.*
2. *Long time owners should be defined as anyone who has owned their lot continuously and without interruption for 25 years or more. In the event a long time owner is given permission to split a lot, it should be located on the portion of the property away from the waterfront.*

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Lift the Cap and Permit Development

1. *Congestion on the Bird River is rarely a problem. Limiting cottage development is not the answer to resolving boat congestion issues, as many of the boats come from other areas.*
2. *New cottage development has enhanced the area by replacing congested trailer size lots with those that are properly sized for a cottage or permanent resident. This allows for more of the shoreline to be managed by the residents. It also will allow for a larger community of permanent residents which will attract additional infrastructure to the area.*

Environmental Issues

1. *The water quality in the area has declined in recent years. The current level of development is having a negative effect on the water quality of the Bird River. Algae blooms have increased due to an increase in phosphorus levels, hydrocarbons have increased as result of the high number outboard motors, and the increase in fecal coliform levels needs to be addressed. Before any further development takes place, current problems need to be addressed with a sustainable solution or there will be severe negative impacts on the quality of the lake/river ecosystem.*
2. *Residents of the Bird River should do their utmost to preserve the quality of the water so as to ensure the sustainability of the area for future generations. It should be a priority for the RM of Alexander to mandate that all residents either have or install leak-proof sewage tanks and not be exempt to this requirement by a "grandfather" clause.*
3. *Wildlife in the area is being threatened and forced farther away from its natural habitats by the increased number of cottages. The noise, pollution and irresponsible use of recreational vehicles will increase with more cottages.*
4. *The shoreline erosion along the Bird River is clearly visible and any investment into shoreline plantings, natural grasses, and sand is destroyed annually from the heavy wave action of large, fast moving boats.*

BIRD RIVER COTTAGE OWNERS SURVEY

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND NEXT STEPS

The Bird River Cottage Owners Survey represents a window into how residents view issues, priorities and value the benefits associated with pursuing specific planning directions within the study area.

The principal challenge for a Bird River Plan is to determine the limits of acceptable change or in other words ‘how much resource or social impact is too much’? Given the substantial demand for public use of the river and the river’s attraction as a recreation area it is expected over time as changes occur in the River’s condition and people’s perception of the recreation experience will be impacted. Thus the question what are the limits of acceptable change?

Based upon technical “use criteria” adopted for waterway carrying capacity in other jurisdictions (none have been adopted by Manitoba) the Bird River has exceeded its carrying capacity many times over. This survey endeavours to identify the **‘limits of acceptable change in the Bird River Recreation experience’** as viewed by its residents.

It is evident from this survey, development and use of the Bird River **has reached the limits of acceptable change and there appears to be very little tolerance for added use.** Over 88% of the respondents indicated that their recreational experience will be negatively impacted by any additional development on the Bird River and/or on connected waterways of adjoining municipalities. Over 73% of the respondents stated that boat traffic along the Bird River is “congested” during peak times on weekends and holidays. Close to 96% of the respondents felt that development in the Bird River should be capped at present levels including within this total 38% who would consider a one time exception for family splits allocated to long time residents with large parcels of land along the Bird River.

Similar results emerged for the 27 respondents that fall outside of the study area. Over 96% of these respondents indicated that their recreational experience will be negatively impacted by any additional development on the Bird River and/or on connected waterways of adjoining municipalities. Over 80% of these respondents stated that boat traffic along the Bird River is “congested” during peak times on weekends and holidays. Slightly more than 92% of these respondents felt that development in the Bird River should be capped at present levels with 39% of this total in favor of considering an exception for one time family splits for long time residents with large parcels. Although these respondents are not immediately located on the Bird River, their recreational experience, attitudes and views towards the acceptable change in development and use of the Bird River correlate with the responses from cottage owners that are located along the River.

Respondents expressed concern over negative impacts of increasing development along the Bird River and within connected waterways upon the Bird River. Respondent ranking of the **“Current” Quality of Life (QOL) index**, indicate two things:

1. people presently value their current Bird River recreation experience; and

BIRD RIVER COTTAGE OWNERS SURVEY

2. have adjusted to the changes in the use of the river which have taken place over the years notwithstanding that it has exceeded substantially carrying capacity standards adopted in other jurisdictions.

The Bird River's "**Potential**" **Quality of Life (QOL) index** represents people's perceptions of what quality of their recreation experience might be assuming recommendations for resolving current problems were successfully implemented. Initiatives proposed by respondents to manage future Bird River development include.

- limit boat traffic and contain future resort recreation development within the Bird River and connected waterways;
- seek input and develop with provincial and adjoining local governments a regional recreational carrying capacity for the connected waterways including the Bird, Lee Rivers and Lac du Bonnet.
- encourage private and public environmental stewardship practices such as using environmental friendly products; reducing boating speed on the river; refrain from clearing shoreline vegetation; improving private and public waste disposal systems; and
- develop non-water oriented recreation facilities and opportunities to relieve boating pressures and use conflicts on the Bird River.

Survey respondents perception of acceptable change clearly demonstrate implementation of these initiatives creates a dramatic positive shift in how people value the Bird River recreation experience.

The results of Bird River Use and Conservation Survey will be reviewed at a public open house meeting with the Bird River cottage owners on September 6th, 2008. There are three objectives for the open house:

1. To seek feedback from area cottagers and property owners on survey results,
2. To identify the Community's planning priorities for the Bird River; and
3. To consider suggestions which may help focus discussion of a Sustainable Recreational Strategy for the region.

THANK YOU

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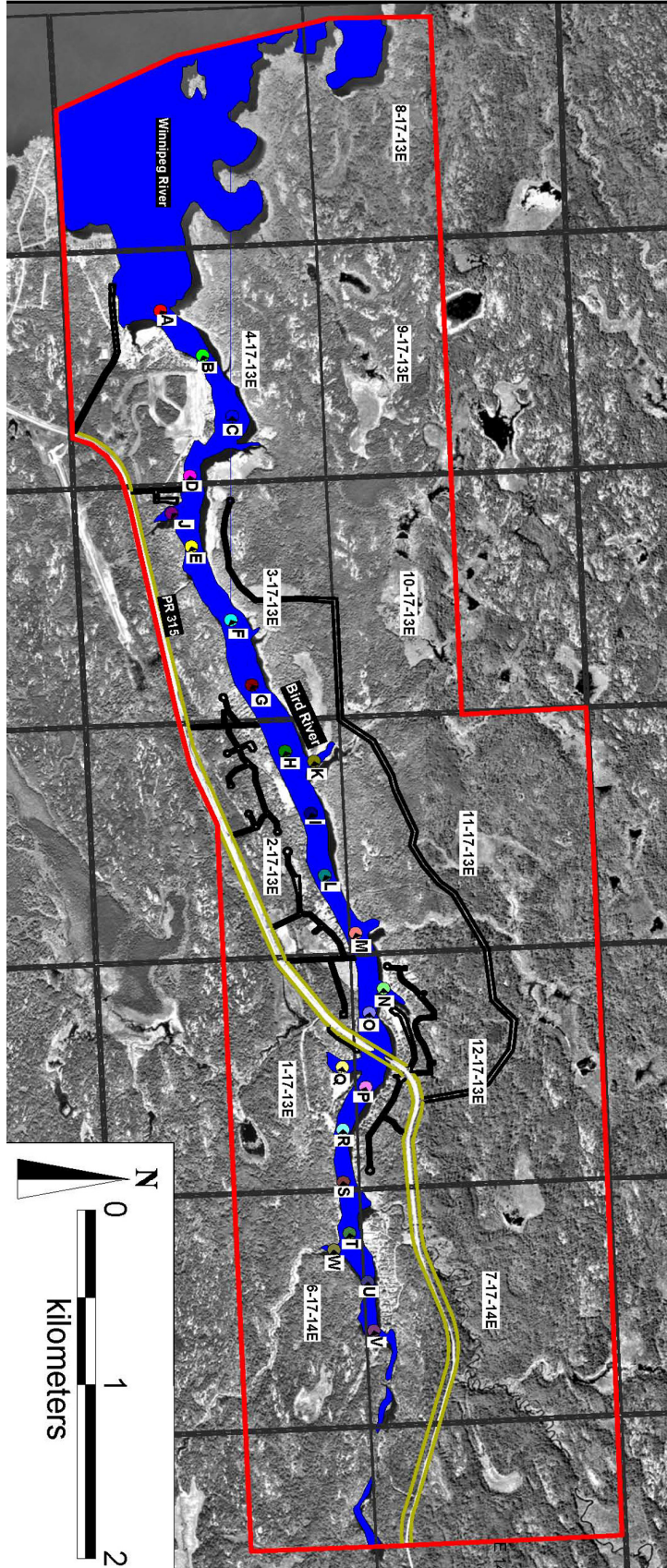
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September 2, 2008

BIRD RIVER COTTAGE OWNERS SURVEY

BIRD RIVER COTTAGE OWNERS SURVEY

REFERENCE MAP



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