



MSGC FISH HABITAT PROTECTION PROJECT

Online Survey – Summer 2020

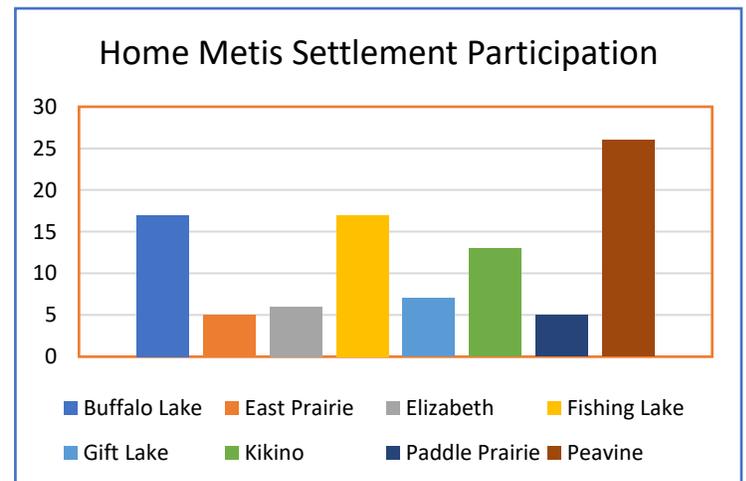
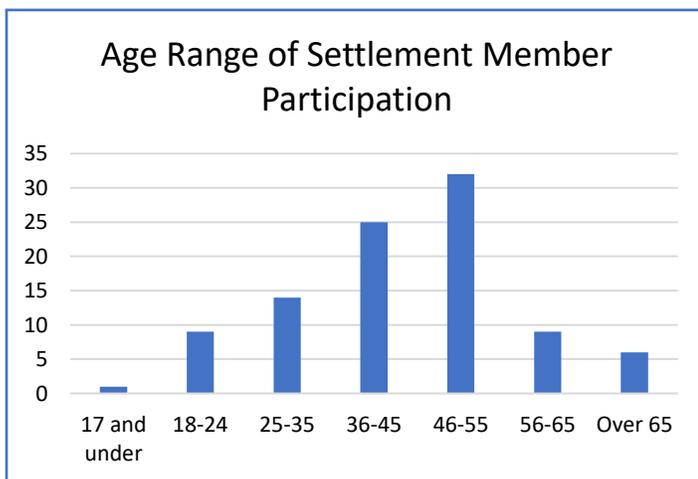
In July 2020, the Metis Settlements General Council (MSGC) conducted an online survey to gather community perspectives and input to inform the first year of the Fish Habitat Protection Project (FHPP). The focus of Year 1 of the FHPP is the development of two Community Action Plans – one for the four eastern Metis Settlements (Buffalo Lake, Kikino, Elizabeth, and Fishing Lake) and one for the four western Metis Settlements (Paddle Prairie, East Prairie, Gift Lake, and Peavine). The first year of the project is being supported by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' (DFO) Indigenous Habitat Protection Program.

The plans will identify priorities and activities for the testing, monitoring, and protection of key fish bearing waterbodies that are important to the Metis Settlements. In addition to working with community leadership and staff, the survey enabled MSGC staff to collect input directly from Settlement members. In order to guide the program, the survey focused on questions about community member interests, concerns, and observations regarding waterbodies, fish, and fish habitat in their territory.

SURVEY RESULTS

Who Participated in the Survey?

Survey respondents included members from all 8 Settlements, with the highest participation from Peavine. There were respondents from all age groups, with the majority being between the ages of 25 and 55 years old.



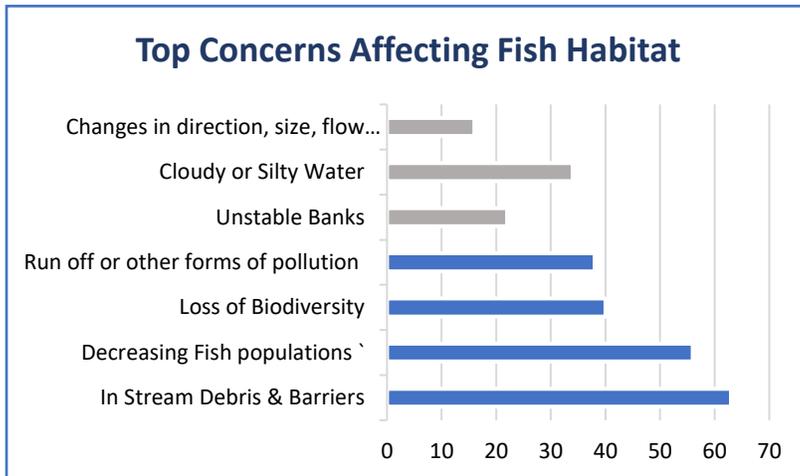
Increasing Elder & Youth Participation

Looking ahead, we can support increased Youth and Elder participation by providing alternative access to future surveys and online community activities, including by providing options to participate by telephone.



TOP CONCERNS AFFECTING FISH HABITAT

We asked: *From the list below, please pick your top 4 concerns effecting fish habitat on your Settlement:*



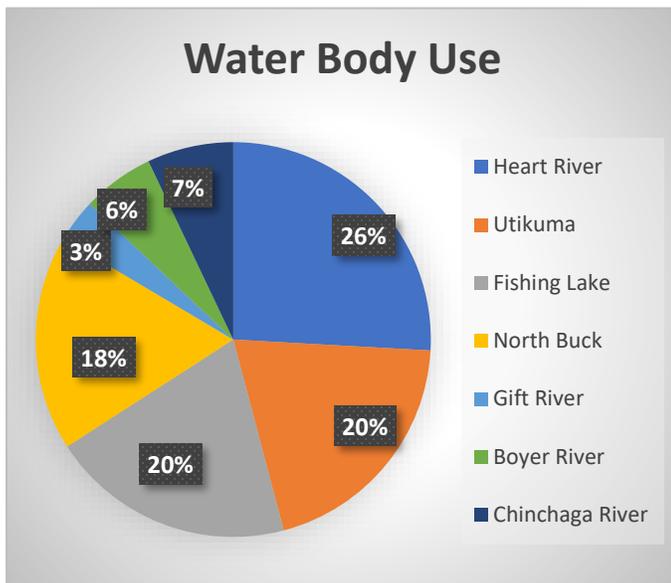
Additional concerns?

In addition to the concerns listed, respondents referenced pollution (mostly related to oil & gas), followed by boating, logging industry, and individuals leaving garbage. Additional concerns identified were overfishing from local and external sources, lack of accessibility via roads or boat ramps, and lack of bylaws or regulations that would help protect the fish habitat. The Steering Committee also raised issues of fishing nets and lines being left in lakes, bird overpopulation impacting fish supply, and excessive unregulated recreational activities. The Committee felt that

addressing all of the above would require policy from General Council and associated Settlement bylaws.

MEMBER USE OF THE LISTED WATER BODIES

We asked: *Do you use any of the water bodies below? If so, please select them from the list.*



Most frequent selections by membership

BLMS members -> North Buck Lake

FLMS members -> Fishing Lake

KMS members -> Long Lake

PPMS members chose Boyer River & Chinchaga River equally

GLMS members selected Gift lake most frequently with Utikuma lake as a close second

EPMS members-> East Prairie River

PMS members-> Heart River

EMS members did not select any of the listed water bodies.

Results for individual water bodies reflect the different number of respondents from each Settlement. For example, Heart River, mentioned the most of all water bodies, is reflective of the high number of respondents from Peavine rather than high overall usage across the different Settlements. In contrast, Utikuma and Long lake were broadly used by members from different Settlements. EMS members did not select any of the water bodies listed on the survey, which alerted MSGC project staff to engage further with EMS representatives to identify more relevant options. Lone Pine Lake was recommended as the lake for KMS since there was not a waterbody identified on the list that was representative of



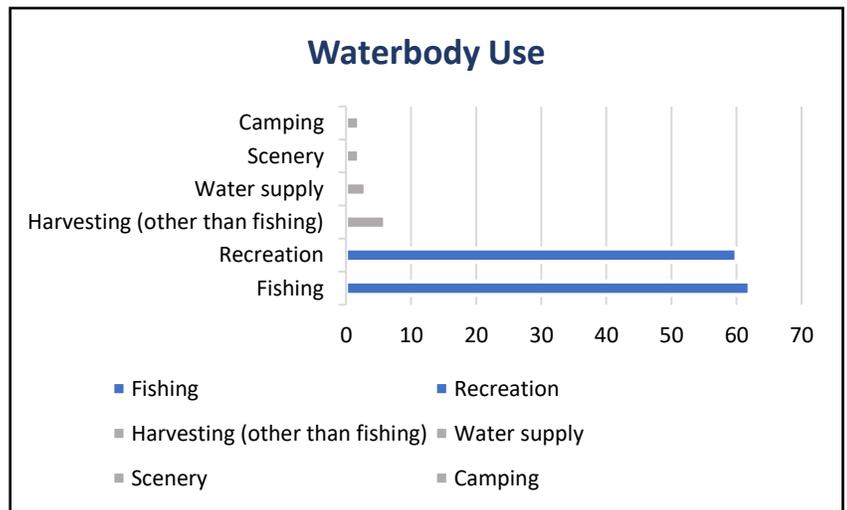
that community. Soars Lake was recommended to represent the EMS Community. Both were selected based on discussions with Consultation and Environmental monitors following survey. Keg River and Peace River were also recommended for assessment by PPMS representative during General Assembly discussion – further discussion with PPMS required.

FORMS OF USE

We asked: *What do you use them for (e.g. fishing, recreational boating,)?*

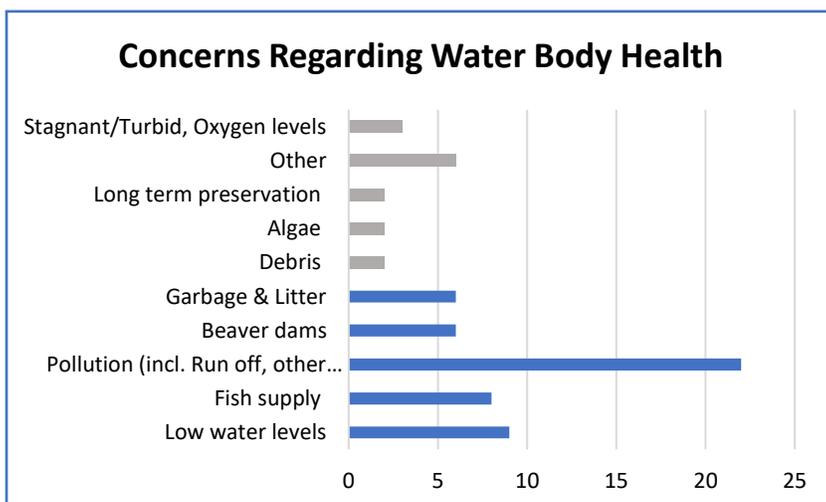
The vast majority of responses mentioned fishing and recreational activities (including kayaking, boating, canoeing, 'swimming', or wading) as ways that respondents use the water bodies. Other forms of harvesting were mentioned for a few of the water bodies. For example, respondents from BLMS noted that fishing at North Buck Lake was not very good, they did go to the areas to harvest berries and peppermint.

The Steering Committee added that other uses include hunting, trapping, gathering medicines, Metis traditional ways of sustainability.



CONCERNS REGARDING WATER BODY HEALTH

We asked: *Do you have any concerns with the health of these particular water bodies? If so, what are they?*



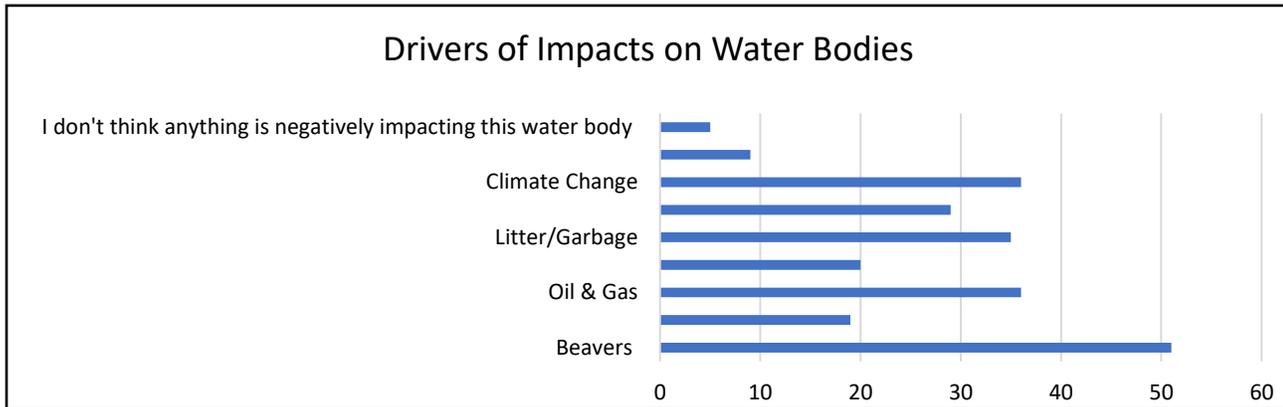
The top concerns by respondents was pollution, followed by low water levels, and then fish supply. A large number of respondents did not answer this question, possibly indicating that they did not have any concerns, or they did not find a waterbody they used regularly on the list.

The Steering Committee added that birds (cormorants and pelicans in particular) are another key concern, as are health issues within some of the Settlements that might be connected to water quality issues. The Committee noted it would be important to interview fishermen and other folks with traditional knowledge about water bodies.



DRIVERS OF IMPACTS ON WATER BODIES

We asked: *Which of the following do you think are the main causes of the issues you are concerned about?*



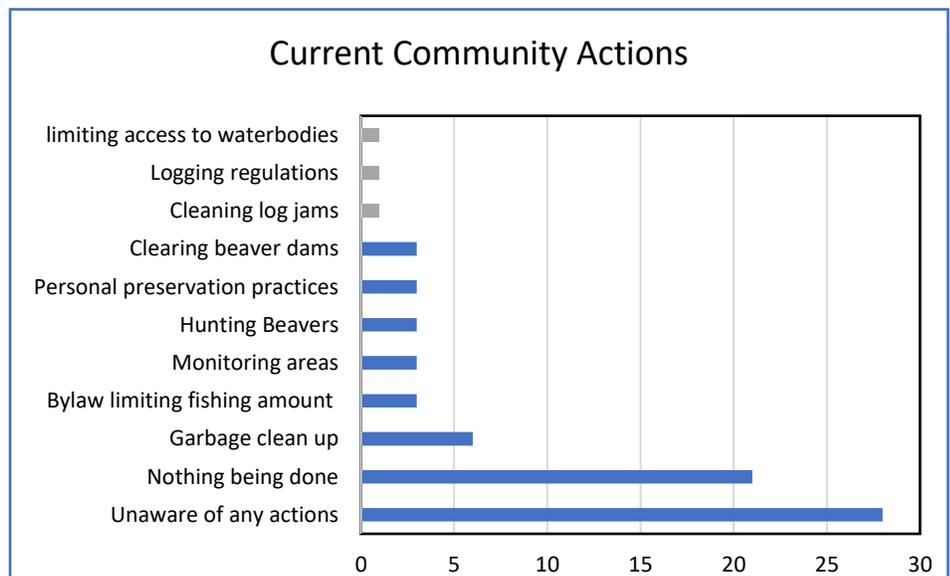
Overall, 7 out of 8 Settlements' top cause of concerns was beavers (63%), apart from EPMS whose top concern was oil & gas development.

The Steering Committee agreed with the results that beavers are a huge concern and many feel they are the biggest threat to fish populations because the water sheds into the lakes have been completely damned up and now there is so much flooding in non-flood plains but also not a lot of oxygen in the lakes that are there. They added that it was important to ask questions about the potential water body impacts of potable water treatment processes, fracking, and the chemicals used in well testing. The destruction of the waterways that are on the settlements are also a huge concern.

CURRENT COMMUNITY ACTION

We asked: *Are you or your community currently taking any actions to protect any of these water bodies? If yes what are they?*

Overall, the top responses to this question were "unaware of any actions" at 39%, and "nothing being done" at 26%. Less frequent responses included "Garbage clean up" and "bylaw limiting fishing amount, monitoring areas, hunting beavers, clearing beaver dams and personal preservation practices".





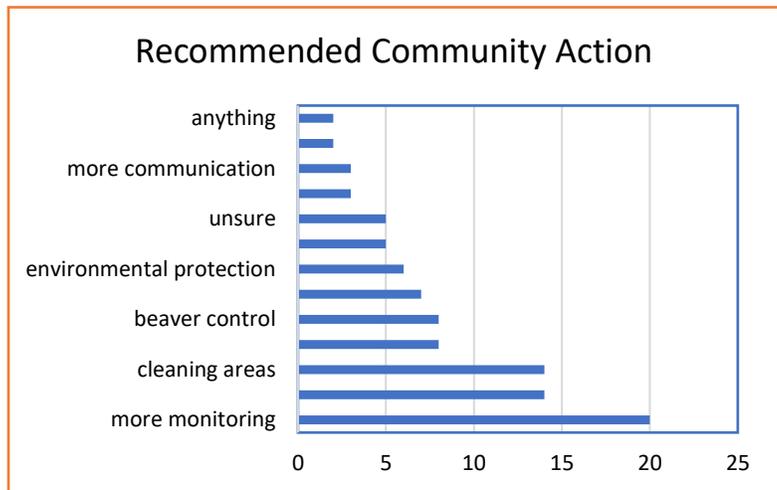
RECOMMENDED COMMUNITY ACTION

We asked: *What do you think your community could or should be doing to protect these water bodies?*

The top 4 suggested activities were:

- more monitoring
- more regulations (recreational, industrial, agricultural, fishing)
- cleaning areas
- clearing dams & beaver control

Environmental protection practices were also mentioned, and included suggestions to start a water protection commission, involvement in policy creation provincial and federally with wildlife management and monitoring practices and to start a water commission for the Settlements.



The Steering Committee suggested considering a beaver control (bounty) trapping program to cull beavers. They also emphasized that the Settlements should commit to working with external committees such as WPACS and LICA boards and make use of existing information resources. The group discussed the need for preventative and preservation measures, enforcement, and positive reinforcement, including:

- Monitoring should be continuous, more regular testing to maintain the baseline information
- Monitoring needs to be a full-time position within the Settlements
- Action plan should include regular monitoring on water bodies
- Commercial fishing needs to be watched and monitored (Slave Lake area)

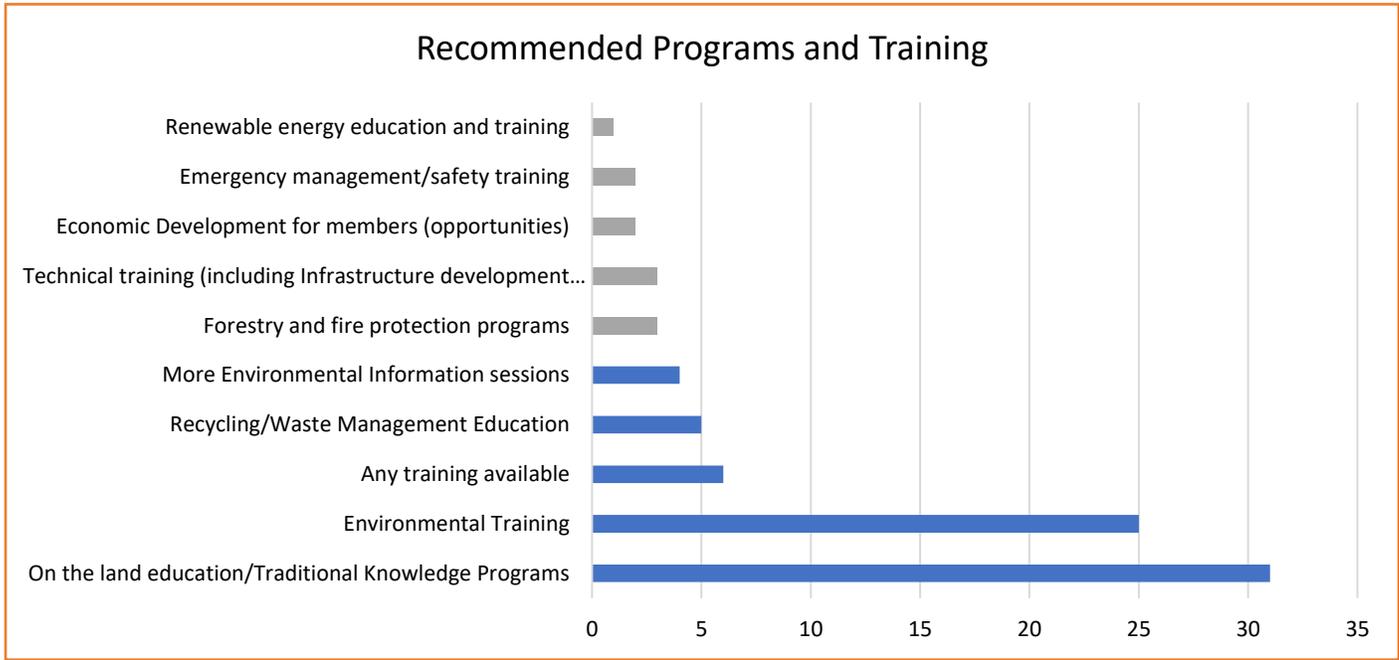
The Steering Committee stressed the importance of educating community members about fish and fish habitat, implement bylaws and policies, conducting community engagement to highlight community actions, and designating swimming areas in lakes to better manage human activities.





RECOMMENDED ACTIVITIES, PROGRAMS AND EDUCATION

We asked: *Are there any specific activities or programs you would like to see take place?*



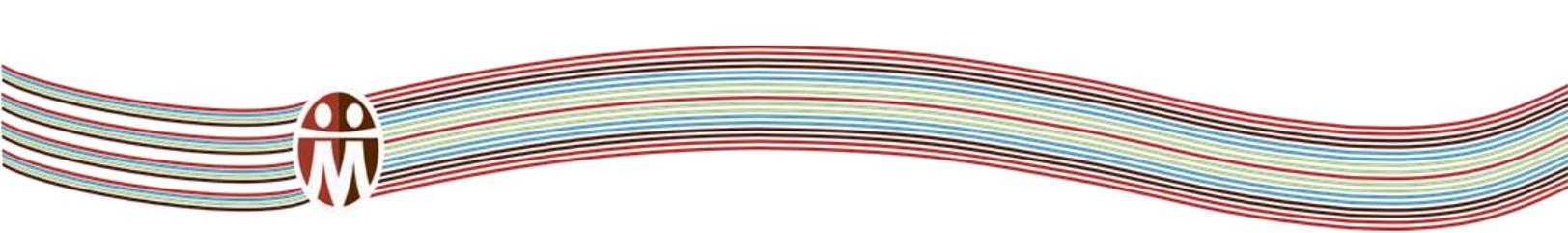
The top recommended programs were;

- On the land education/traditional knowledge programs (including Farming/homesteading, wildlife education & hunting programs, plants and traditional medicines training, kids' earth rangers)
- Environmental training (including monitoring, youth education and conservation/protection, restocking fish education and training)

Respondents brought up the importance of information sessions for keeping community members up to date on available programs and general activities within the Settlements. Given that not all community members have access to online activities, they also reach the individuals who are more likely to engage through face to face interactions and communications (Elders and youth) over all other forms of information sharing. Another priority for community members is traditional knowledge and/or on the land training with Elders and youth. At the same time, there was also interest in programs to educate members in the western science behind environmental training.



The Steering Committee added that youth technical programs, climate change programming in schools, focus on including elders in youth training to ensure the traditional knowledge is maintained with next generations.



CONCLUSION

The survey was a first step in collecting information to create relevant and effective Community Action Plans to protect the fish and fish habitats that matter to the Metis Settlements. The survey was an effective tool to allow community members to provide input into the first year of the Fish Habitat Protection Project and will shape the year 2 and 3 activities within the communities. Adapting to engage the communities online in the wake of the pandemic was an effective way to include Metis Settlement members and enable project continuity. Importantly, survey results identified that the initial list of proposed water bodies would not sufficiently represent the interests and uses of all 8 Settlements. These results created an opportunity for MSGC to engage further with the Settlements to identify more appropriate water bodies.