



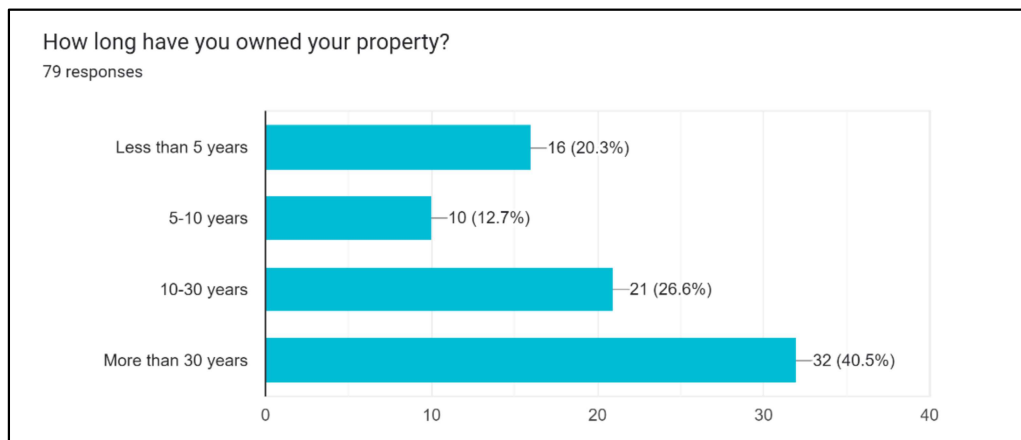
2024 RIVERWAY LANDOWNER SURVEY RESULTS

In June 2024, Middle St. Croix Watershed Management Organization (MSCWMO) worked with staff from the East Metro Water Resource Education Program (EMWREP) to conduct a mailed survey of 476 riverway landowners in Bayport, Lakeland, Lakeland Shores, Lake St. Croix Beach, St. Mary’s Point, and West Lakeland. The goal of the survey was to assess landowners’ experiences, ideas and opinions related to shoreline and bluffland issues and to identify opportunities for collaboration to reduce erosion, improve habitat for fish and wildlife, and protect/improve water quality.

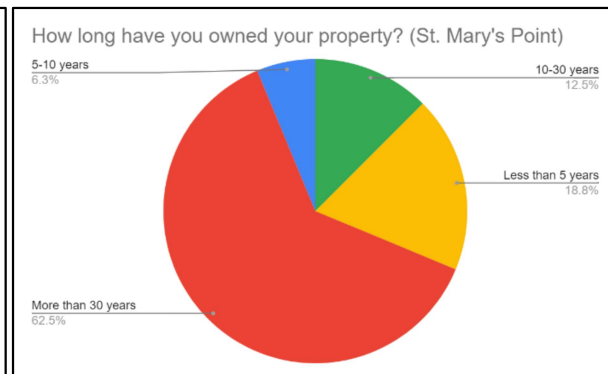
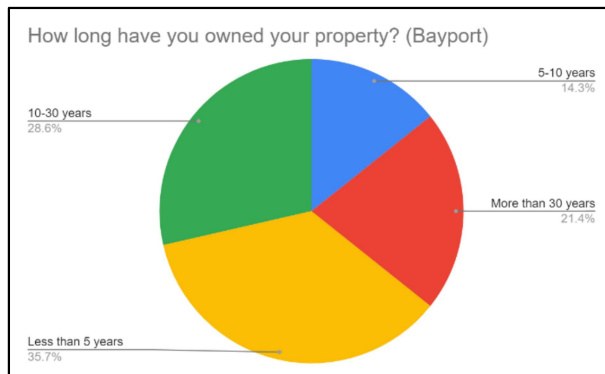
79 people completed the mailed survey (17% response rate). We received the highest percentage of responses from Lakeland Shores (29%) and St. Mary’s Point (27%).

LAND OWNERSHIP

In general, riverway landowners within the MSCWMO are long-term residents. Forty percent have owned their properties for more than 30 years and another 26% have owned their land for 10-30 years.

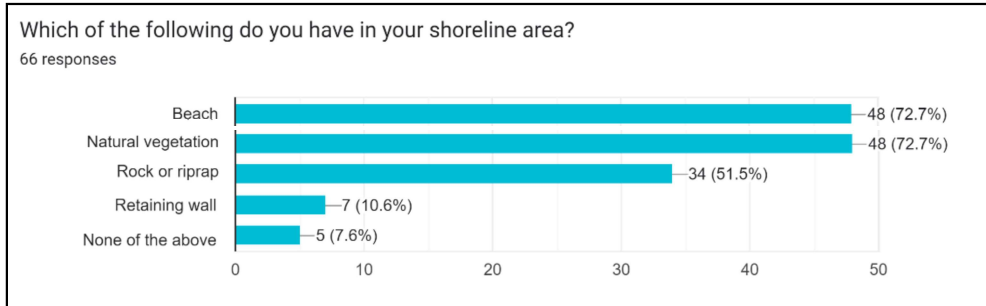


However, survey responses suggest that there has been more property turnover in Bayport than in other riverway communities. As an example, 36% of survey respondents from Bayport say they’ve owned their property for less than 5 years. In St. Mary’s Point, only 19% have owned their land for less than 5 years.

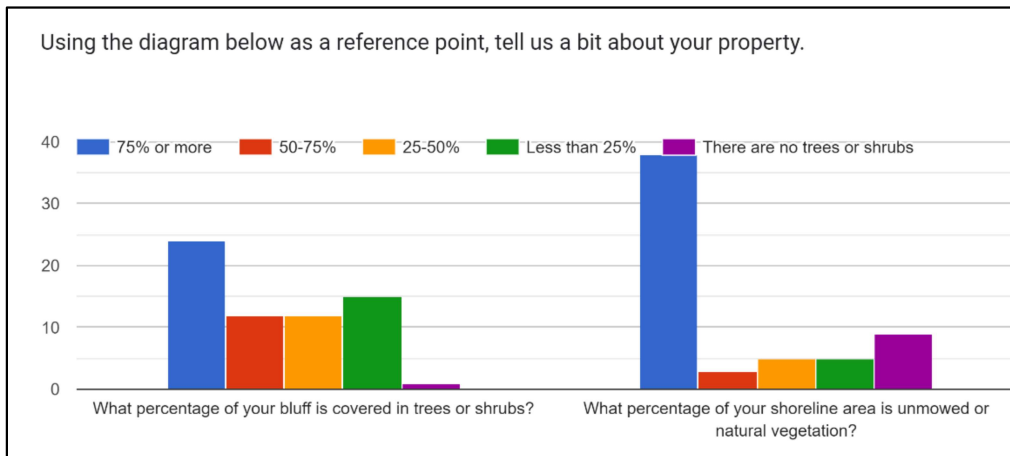


CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RIVERWAY PROPERTIES

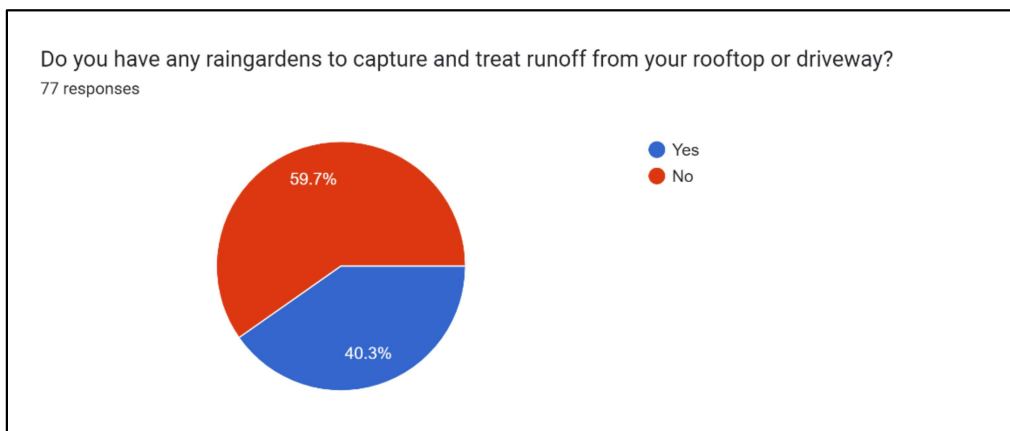
The majority of survey respondents (73%) have both beach and natural vegetation on their property. Half also report having rock or riprap. Seven people reported having one or more substandard structures.



Approximately half of survey respondents said their shoreline area is mostly covered in unmowed or natural vegetation. However, only a third of respondents say their bluff is mostly covered in trees or shrubs.

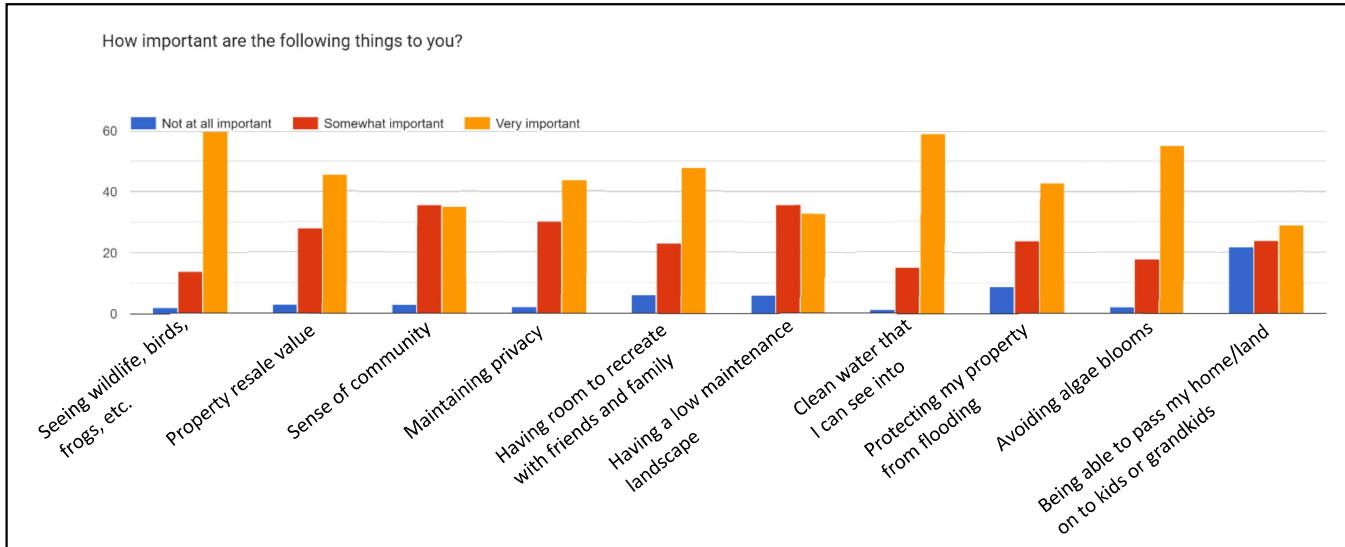


Forty percent of the respondents have raingardens to capture and treat runoff from their rooftops or driveways.

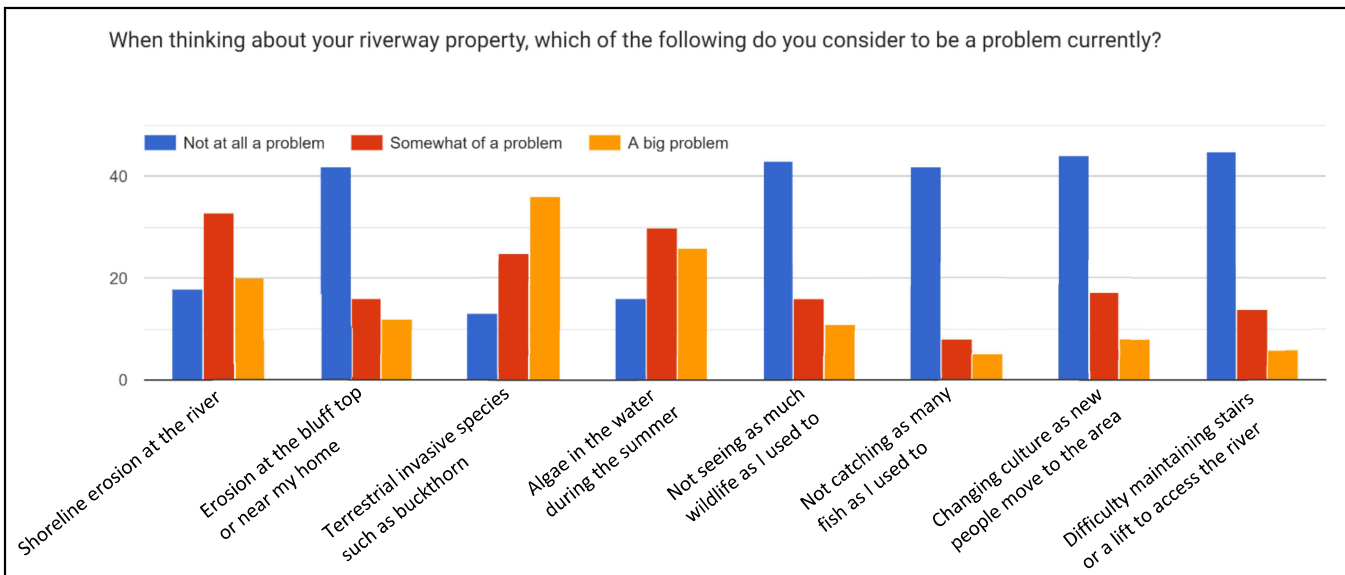


VALUES AND CONCERNS

Values: MSCWMO riverway landowners say they care about seeing wildlife, maintaining clean and clear water, and avoiding algae blooms. They are less interested in being able to pass their home or land on to their kid or grandkids.

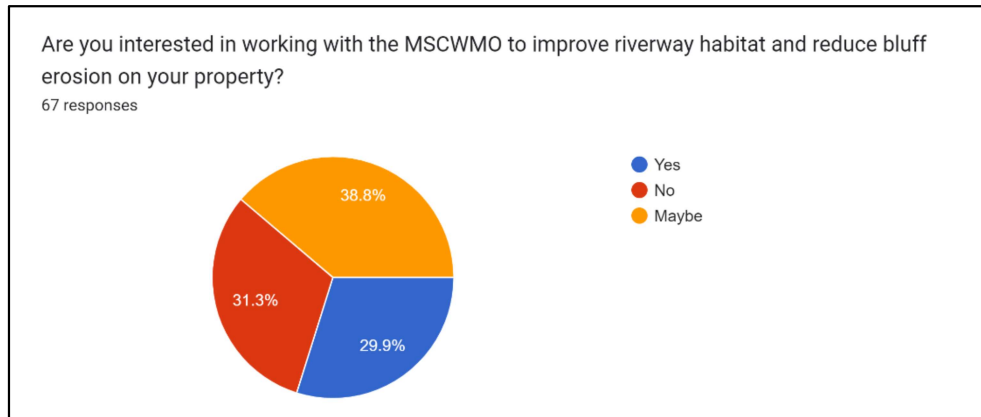


Concerns: Survey respondents say they are most concerned about terrestrial invasive species such as buckthorn. Algae blooms during the summer and shoreline erosion are also additional concerns.

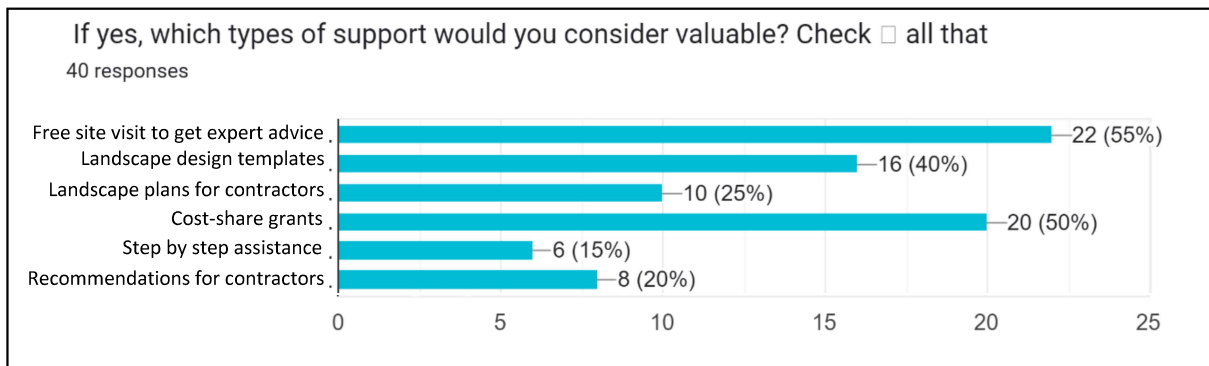


OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE COLLABORATION

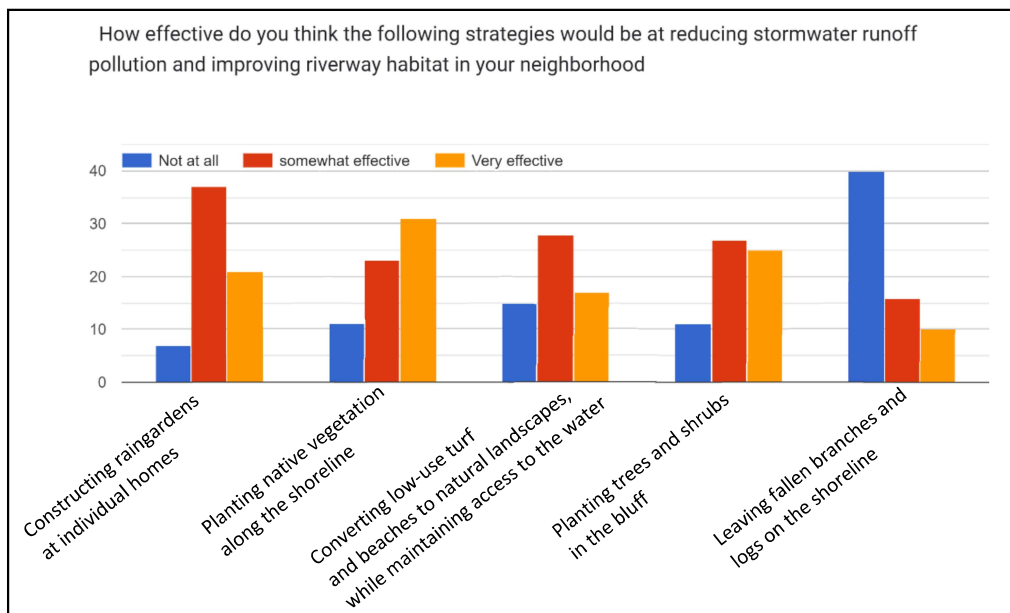
Nearly 70% of riverway landowners who responded to the survey say they are or might be interested in working with the MSCWMO to improve riverway habitat and reduce bluff erosion on their property.



Landowners say they are most interested in free site visits, cost-share grants, and landscape design templates that they can use on their own.



Of the possible strategies suggested for reducing stormwater runoff pollution and improving riverway habitat, landowners said that planting native vegetation along the shoreline, planting trees and shrubs on the bluff, and building raingardens would be most effective.



THEMES FROM OPEN-ENDED QUESTION RESPONSES

When prompted, survey respondents shared numerous questions, concerns, and suggestions in open-ended questions at the end of the survey. There were notable differences in how people from different communities responded to the open-ended questions.

- Bayport residents shared concerns about the number boats on the river, speed of the boats, and impact of wakes on trees and shorelines.
- Lakeland residents were most likely to talk about best management practices they have implemented on their properties and shared pride in actions they are taking to care for the riverway.
- In Lake St. Croix Beach, people are most concerned about buckthorn and erosion. Several also shared details about issues unique to their properties.
- A handful of people in all communities requested better enforcement of riverway rules for wakes and vegetation management.
- Several people thanked the MSCWMO for its work to protect the St. Croix Riverway.

A full list of open-ended survey responses can be found on pages 6 -10.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Survey responses suggest that St. Croix Riverway Landowners are generally supportive of the Middle St. Croix WMO and efforts to protect the riverway. Notably, nearly 70% of landowners say they are or might be interested in working with MSCWMO to improve riverway habitat and reduce bluff erosion.

Future outreach and educational messages should focus on actions that will promote clean water, reduce algae blooms, protect habitat for wildlife, and reduce erosion. It could also be beneficial to explore collaborative funding opportunities for buckthorn management, particularly in Lake St. Croix Beach.

Landowners say they are most interested in free site visits, cost-share grants, and landscape design templates that they can use on their own. As such, the MSCWMO should continue working in partnership with the Washington Conservation District to provide free site visits and should also pursue external grant funding to provide better cost-share assistance to interested landowners.

What else would you like for us to know about your riverway property?

40 responses

Bayport	To much boats, to many people, lower slow no wake speed, more high water, bigger boats = more destruction
Bayport	We are on Anderson point and boats cut the corner when traveling from stillwater bridge to railroad bridge coming to close to shoreline causing erosion.
Bayport	properties 1-7 (including mine) do not own river shoreline but, are on the interior of the point. We have river access via deeded 50 ft. property #20 but that is being contested by the owners of properties 14 & 15.
Bayport	Flooding garages is an issue by the Bayport Marina. Why can Stillwater sandbag but we can't.
Bayport	limited tax usage
Bayport	In the approx. 30 years i've lived here, I've lost 3' of elevation to erosion as well as several large trees where the roots became exposed and die. All to wakes created by boats caused soil erosion at 683' level or less.
Lakeland	we have a rain barrel
Lakeland	We are always open to learning how to improve our property to better the river.
Lakeland	Very natural setting- with gardens-shrubs- trees-very little grass we don't use chemicals at all.
Lakeland	What to plant to have wild flowers in place of grass that not mowing. How to rid thistle that comes up everywhere if not mowed.
Lakeland	Welcome to come take a look!
Lakeland	Keep up the good work!
Lakeland	We control runoff with raingarden and large area of native prairie. Our bluff has less erosion due to grasses and native flowers than when tree prevented under growth.
Lakeland	We respect our river and our property, and our neighbors. New comers don't seem to understand the good futune we have and that we need to be better stewards.
Lakeland shores	Want to maintain beach but prevent erosion
Lakeland shores	Small lot it would appear that we are one of very few that have not alot of trees on the river or bluff line.
Lake St. Croix Beach	The tree are beautiful- I see eagles daily. Some bluff work on buckthorn has been done. More needs to be done to get rid of invasive and more native plants, trees that have strong rooting systems be planted. They can replace plants, bushes and trees taken out.

Lake St. Croix Beach	Would like to see a set of steps put on the west side of berm between the two existing steps. So people don't get hurt trying to climb the berm.
Lake St. Croix Beach	We hired Natural Shore Tech to remove buckthorn and other invasive plants and replace them with pollinator firendly plants about 10 years ago so, our bluff is in good condition. Our roof was designed to direct rainwater away from the bluff.
Lake St. Croix Beach	My property is 1 block off the river with houses in between my land and the river.
Lake St. Croix Beach	level lot
Lake St. Croix Beach	Our property fronts on the river where it is a mile and a quarter wide and is vulnerable to wake and wind for erosion.
Lake St. Croix Beach	The river side of the berm from 19th - 13th needs to be cut shorter, it's full of big weeds, trees, etc. and looks awful.
Lake St. Croix Beach	This is a church. We would like to prevent erosion. Beyond that, our shoreline is too steep and is not in use.
Lake St. Croix Beach	My small home is 1/2 block from st. Croix. The neighbors 2 blocks away (South of 18th street) have been dealing with high water. Pumping water back into river. Any plans for better dam/dike in St. Croix beach?
Lake St. Croix Beach	Unhappy with maintenance of bluff and invasive species.
Lake St. Croix Beach	Whole bank is nothing but invasive buckthorn, that st. croix beach city park will not let me cut down.
Lake St. Croix Beach	the city of USCB owns the property. Their only concern is the revenue collected from the beach.
Lake St. Croix Beach	Please advise more homeowners and CITY LEADERS with education about how "TRU-GREEN" "CHEM-LAWN" and regular lawns with mowed grass are contributing to river pollution and algae blooms. How intense motorized boats damage the shoreline.
St. Marys Point	Fallen leaves and branches float in during a flood for us to clean up. We get everyone's logs, branches, etc. that float down and end up on our beach.
St. Marys Point	I'm not on the riverway. I'm 1 block up. My property is slightly elevated from river.
St. Marys Point	Our property doesn't have shoreline. We live across the street from the St. Mary's beach shared by other residents.
St. Marys Point	what tree and shrubs to plant
St. Marys Point	My river access at this point is 10' wide. My property divided into 3 parcels; 2 with lots of shoreline and my current piece as a meadow.

St. Marys Point	There needs to be more supervision of what is happening at the shoreline. The rich do what they want including taking out important vegetation, introducing sand and other species from different areas for flood control that doesn't work.
St. Marys Point	We are located 1 block off the river.
St. Marys Point	Information on well water and sewage treatment options for beach properties.
St. Marys Point	We don't technically have Riverfront property.
St. Marys Point	We have a beach and no bluff. We do flood.
West Lakeland	We love the view and the wildlife. The riverfront strip in front (river edge) of our property mistakenly did not transfer. The DNR has designated a campsite on that strip that shows on Google maps, but has no access except on the river. We have native prairie, a permeable driveway and a raingarden. We do not use pesticides on our property or fertilize our bee lawn. We do have a lot of buckthorn.
West Lakeland	The bluff is buckthorn and weeds that I try to remove but it is so costly. Wish there was a answer to this.

Do you have any recommendations for the Middle St. Croix Watershed Management Organization to consider including in its plan update?

29 responses

Bayport	1. More signage when there is no wake. 2. Consider speed limit to reduce erosion, especially for the speedboats, and improve safety.
Bayport	leave natural, encourage wildlife
Bayport	Allow homeowner to cut down trees for their view of the river.
Bayport	YES, what are you trying to accomplish? Seems to me your main focus is on erosion. The answer is simple. 1. No wake zone should be reduced from 683' to something reasonable- 680' or less. No need to have 8' of water above pool stage. Boats safely navigate in summer at 675' which is pool stage. 2. Total ban on no wake above stillwater bridge. Take a look at all islands that have disappeared an loss of trees from speed boats throwing big wakes in high water times. 3. Investigate corp of engineers policy on maintenance of water levels on all rivers that affect St. Croix. Inform the people of this. Every spring we have floods, draw down rivers in winter to minimize spanish flooding. Their respose is probably that is we don't have spring flooding. we have to maintain navigatable waters for commercial traffic. Look into the facts- How often do we spring flooding? Every year are barges traveling or pushing their tows in high water. Probably not- get the facts not from bridge owners and large boat owners. So the easiest way to stop erosion is reduce no wake rule to 678 m so 99% of your questions will be addressed.

Lakeland	1. Light pollution should be addressed and light trespassing. There are ordinances in the county not being enforced and there has been a significant increase in light pollution in the river valley in recent years. This includes the updated lighting on the 194 bridge, as well home owners increasing use of patio lights and other non-darksky firendly lights. Lighting affects wildlife and makes the river less scenic. Fireflies have significantly reduced in areas on our property where neighbors light trespasses. 2. Lawn chemicals use in the riverway should be prohibited.
Lakeland	Keep the Lakeland beach as natural as it can be it's home to waterfowl in the winter- 8 other natural year round. Eagles, otters, groundhog,deer,rabbits even saw a bear. Keep that area along the river a no wake zone to prevent erosion.
Lakeland	Thanks for helping keep our river and st. croix valley beautiful! Diane Perkins 1363 old toll bridge lakeland, mn
	Riverfront owners value the river probably more than non-owners. Your organization should set the "vision" for the river. Then, promote possibilities for riverfront landowners toward action of that vision. Excessive regulation does not create community. We all want a community that appreciates the river and motivated to do our part in it'd maintenance. Set the vision and present the oppertunities to achieve it!!!
Lakeland	More oversight with consequences for in fractions. Proactive information with benefits to homeowners for the future health of the river, such as property values for a clean or dirty river. Wildlife and idead how to support it so it will stick around.
Lakeland shores	Trim trees for view but leave trees to protect from erosion.
Lakeland shores	Better enforcment of the river roads by the MSCWMO and the DNR.
Lake St. Croix Beach	1. Poison- stump painting 2. weep pulling 3. mulch areound new plants.
Lake St. Croix Beach	Stillwater & other communties should never host wakeboard competitions. Boat wake regulations should be based on realistic distances. Boatwakes can travel to erode beaches. Figure out how to prevent erosion from boatwakes by regulation of boat speeds in vulnerable areas and other methods.
Lake St. Croix Beach	maintain vegetation on river side of berm.
Lake St. Croix Beach	Give residents a list of plants and flowers the DNR recommends for watershed gardens. An online, go to spot would be great, especially.
Lake St. Croix Beach	1. Floodwater& strong waves pull native planting into st. croix river. 2. Unstable sandy soil does not support trees. 3. Leaving fallen branches and logs are a tripping hazard.
Lake St. Croix Beach	Conduct in person evaluations in participating dependently assess riverway conditions. Support legislation at the state legislature to reinstate the DNR for riverway ordinance enforcement. Conduct annual trainings for cities on riverway ordinance enforcement.

Lake St. Croix Beach	Focus on reducing algal blooms by working with upstream contributors. No more trees on bluffline that doesn't fix anything. Remove invasive species on bluff and riverway. Remove debris on shoreline too.
Lake St. Croix Beach	Maintenance plan and budget to manage invasive species.
Lake St. Croix Beach	100% jungle. No view of river, yet this is a city park!
Lake St. Croix Beach	YES, SEIZE OWNERSHIP OF THE ONE MILE STRETCH OF THE SHORELINE/ BLUFF THAT LSCB OWNS NOW AND RETURNS CUSTODY OF THE LAND TO THE ACOE FOR MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE LIKE THE REST OF THE COMMUNITIES ALONG THE RIVERWAY.
Lake St. Croix Beach	1. Lower taxes to homeowners who have 75% trees on their bluff and shorelines. (could use DNR Conservation inventory for land information.) 2. Tax incentives to homeowners who protect nearby shoreline and bluff (like across the street)riverside views, who plant trees and maintain Natural/healthy bluff lines and shore areas. (pass legislation or implement this) 3. Free, limited permits to limit motorized water craft in designated scenic riverways. 4. Penalize residents and cities who destroy river bluffs shorelines with unsound practices.
St. Marys Point	A grant for a rain garden would be fantastic.
St. Marys Point	Keep in mind these are private properties and have been private for many years. Any new regulations need to respect the private property and use of the owners. Who already have interests in preserving the properties that exceed Grand Public.
St. Marys Point	Yes many people whose homes are on the water put herbicides and pesticides heavily on their lawns several times a summer. Also fertilizer. This is very harmful to the river and the well water.
St. Marys Point	coordination with DNR , army corp of engineers.
St. Marys Point	How do we control buck thorn without introducing chemicals into our river system? SOME with creeping charlies. More education is needed. Also salt used during winter. Happens everywhere. Needs to be more collaboration with the city on these issues. Plow more. use sand.
St. Marys Point	Restrictions (that are enforced!) on wakeboats-Not too close to shorelines.
St. Marys Point	Thank you for wanting to keep water clean and wildlife safe.
West Lakeland	It would be good to remove the campsite or make it clear that people cannot reach the site from land to avoid people attempting to cross private property.

For more information about this survey project, contact Angie Hong at angie.hong@mnwcd.org or 651-330-8220.