

# Appendix X.

## Lake Puckaway User's Survey: 2001 Findings Report

In late April of 2001, the Lake Puckaway Protection and Rehabilitation District (LPPRD), in cooperation with Vierbicher Associates, Inc. and Real World Research, mailed and/or hand delivered 1,087 surveys to LPPRD members and other lake users; 293 (about 27%) were returned.

The survey results were used as measures of current public attitudes, perceptions, and preferences. They were not intended to be either definitive as in a vote or scientific in terms of what is possible to achieve on the lake. Rather, they were used as background information to the LPPRD Commissioners and others involved in the lake planning process.

### Respondent Profile

- 77.5% of respondents own property on Lake Puckaway.
- 22.5% claimed that the property was their primary residence.
- 53.6% of respondents were over the age of 55, while another 34.8% were between the ages of 41 and 55, totaling 88.4% of all responses.

### A. Findings of Fact

- The three most frequent uses of Lake Puckaway are fishing, motorized boating, and viewing nature.
- 93.5% of respondents either agree or strongly agree that reducing the carp population would substantially improve fishing on Lake Puckaway.
- The majority of respondents, 58.3%, feel that current water quality is fair and a similar majority of 52.8% feel that water quality conditions are staying about the same.
- The majority of respondents, 57%, feel that water levels are currently too inconsistent on the Lake with an additional 36.4% feeling that they are too low.
- Respondents ranked water management goals in the following order:

Water Management Goal	Valid Percent of Responses
Maintain acceptable water levels year round	77.5%
Protect the water quality	9.3%
Improve / promote fishing	5.2%
Improve / protect waterfowl habitat and hunting	4.2%
Enhance passive recreation / sports	1.7%
Reduce the loss of wetlands	1.0%
Reduce the impacts of shoreline developments	0.7%
Reduce use conflicts	0.3%

## **B. Findings of Observation**

- Responses are nearly evenly divided over the need for a fixed crest dam or more easily adjustable dam crest elevations.
- Responses indicate that it is unclear to most if the Princeton Dam restricts fish access into the Lake.
- A majority of respondents also feel that providing additional public access will not improve recreational opportunities on the Lake.
- Nearly three-fourths of all respondents feel that reducing the cormorant population would substantially improve fishing on Lake Puckaway.

Response analysis identified fishing (81.2%); motorized boating (65.9%); and viewing nature (42%) as the system's most popular uses.

As Lake Puckaway's primary users, anglers feel that there are not enough fish and too many rough fish in the Lake Puckaway system currently. While some feel that the current stock is in general too small, all agreed that the population's health is not an issue. Specifically understanding angler's attitudes toward potential management strategies that might improve fishing conditions could be used to provide direction to lake managers on which implementation tools they should look to utilize. According to Lake Puckaway anglers, lake managers should focus on 1) reducing the carp population, 2) reducing the cormorant population, and 3) promoting aquatic vegetation as the top three priorities for improving fishing conditions on Lake Puckaway.

Lake Puckaway's second largest user group, motorized boaters, feels that inconsistent water levels and water levels that are too low are the two biggest issues affecting boating and recreation on Lake Puckaway. Clearly lake levels and the management of lake levels are of primary concern to motorized boating lake users.

In general, it can be said that motorized boaters agree that conflicts can be reduced by establishing jet ski areas and hours. They disagree that conflicts can be reduced by establishing powerboat areas and hours, and they also disagree that recreational opportunities can be enhanced by providing added public access.

While directed towards water quality, two potential lake level management strategies were offered for consideration. Of the two options, Lake Puckaway motorized boaters feel that a fixed crest dam would be the most beneficial to the management of the system. According to Lake Puckaway motorized boaters, lake managers should focus on 1) creating a fixed crest dam level to improve water quality and implied stabilization of levels, 2) providing a mechanism to adjust water levels for improved water quality and implied more consistent water levels, and 3) establishing jet ski areas and hours as the top three priorities for improving boating conditions on Lake Puckaway.

Lake Puckaway's third largest user group, viewing nature, feel that inconsistent water levels and water levels that are too low are the two biggest issues affecting boating and recreation on Lake Puckaway. Clearly lake levels and the management of lake levels are of primary concern to nature viewing lake users.

Tabulations of how viewing nature users feel about the possible management strategies was conducted. In general, it can be said that nature viewers agree that there is a need to establish jet ski areas and hours. They agree at a lesser rate that there should also be areas and hours for motorized boats on the lake. A majority also feel that there is no need for additional public access on the lake system.

While nature viewers are more directed toward water quality, they also responded to two potential lake level management strategies. Of the two options, Lake Puckaway nature viewers feel that a fixed crest dam would be the most beneficial to the management of the system. According to Lake Puckaway nature viewers, lake managers should focus on 1) creating a fixed crest dam level to improve water quality and implied stabilization of levels, 2) reduce conflicts by establishing jet ski areas and hours, and 3) providing more consistent water levels by providing a mechanism to adjust water levels and improve water quality.

A collective comparison of Lake Puckaway's three major user groups identifies that all three groups would like lake management to focus on 1) maintaining acceptable water levels year round, 2) protecting water quality, and 3) improving and promoting fishing. These findings are consistent with respondents as a whole indicating increased validity to what the public would like to see for management priorities.