



**AN ANALYSIS OF THE  
2018 ACCESS POINT WATER TRAIL USER SURVEY  
ON THE TRANS CANADA TRAIL LAKES SUPERIOR WATER TRAIL**

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## **SURVEY SUMMARY**

- The 2018 Lake Superior Watershed Conservancy (LSWC) Access Point Survey was conducted over 115 days in July and August. Fourteen (14) different access points were surveyed.
- In total 115 paper surveys were collected.
- Access point users overwhelmingly satisfied with amenities at the access point. 85% of respondents replied excellent or good to questions asking about the amenities at the access point.
- Access visitor 50-50 split of families and seniors stopping in at the access point
- A high proportion of regional visitors visited the access points
- Respondents to survey 75% Ontario 25% USA less .5 % other provinces
- Combination of land and water tourism packages encourage visitors to stay longer
- Need to promote access points majority not aware of amenities
- Camping is major accommodation provider
- Big Canoe experience was important with average price range \$20-50 – interest
- Water trail – most are not able to experience water and identified the need for information about outfitters and canoe/kayak rentals
- Cultural and Natural history important
- Almost no awareness of LSWT and LSWC.

## **BACKGROUND**

In July and August 2018 visitors to 14 access points were surveyed by a summer student hired by LSWC under a grant from the Canada Summer Jobs program to learn more about who is using the access points, their awareness of LSWC and water trail and what other amenities could add to their enjoyment of the Lake Superior shoreline.

A total of 115 responses to a 16-question Trail User Survey were obtained over 8 weeks.

Allen MacPherson, Professor Emeritus Trent University, volunteered his expertise and analyzed the data collected to identify future initiatives for LSWC involvement at the access points. Understanding who these trail users are, including their expectations, interests, and other key data, enables the LSWC and its partners to be better prepared to support and educate the public.

The survey identified some interesting responses. The Access Points draws a lot of travelers from all parts of Ontario, most visitors came to the area to experience nature and relax. Most visitors were not aware of the Access Points and their amenities they offer.

As more people head outdoors to enjoy public open space, the need to protect natural places has become paramount. It is hoped that LSWC will remain focused on their educational mandate and continue to bring together key constituencies, marshaling resources, and seizing opportunities to keep growing and improving the LSWC mandate especially when it comes to water way education about our history, culture and maintaining the ecological integrity of the water trail and adjacent shoreline lands.

There is still much more to know about users and this survey was just a start and overview. More detailed and focused survey questions needs to be prepared and completed in order to provide answers that will allow for effective decision making.

## **SURVEY PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY**

The survey was administered using a personal interception method. This method involves “intercepting” access point users and asking them to complete a survey. The student selected random access points, dates and times to do the survey. As users entered the access point and leaving their vehicle they were approached by the student and asked to participate in the survey. The survey form was completed either by the access point user or the student surveyor (questions would be read to the trail user like an interview).

Completed survey forms are collected by the student surveyor for data input into an excel program. The survey responses were compiled into a single spreadsheet for review and analysis. In total 115 access point surveys were completed over 6 weeks. Two-thirds of the sample was collected in July, with the remainder occurring in early August, 2018, with the majority of data collected throughout the week (not weekends). Out of 115 survey days only two days were rainy, rest were mostly sunny days. An advantage of doing a random survey allows to selected good weather days.

## **ACCESS POINT USERS RESPONSES**

### **Demographic Profile of Access Point Visitor**

1. How many people are traveling within your group?

**There were 38 youth, 44 young adults, 66 adults and 75 seniors for a total of 223 individuals. Group surveys were done with one individual (e.g. family). There was almost a 50-50 split between families and individuals with a larger number of senior couples.**

2. How many nights are you planning on staying in the area?

**38% or 44 identified they would be staying overnight in the area.**

3. Where is your permanent residence? (City, State/Province, Country)

**75% of those who were surveyed were from Ontario, followed by approximately 25% from USA**

### **Access Point Survey Questions and Results**

Question 4                      Which three features do you consider most important at Lake Superior Water Trail access points now or in the future?

**The top three responses to these questions were washrooms (103), garbage bins (67) and Information Kiosk (39)**

Question 5                    How available was information regarding water recreation on Lake Superior prior to your travel to this area?

**18% found it difficult or impossible to find information, followed by 65% who found information but was not easy and 17% who had no problem finding information.**

Question 5                    What kinds of experiences would you participate in along the Lake Superior Coast, if they were available?

**The top three responses in order were: Canoe/Kayak Rentals, Guided paddling and Self-Guided Paddling**

Question 7                    Were you planning on paddling on Lake Superior?

**53% identified they wanted to paddle on Lake Superior and 47% were not.**

Question 8                    If yes, are you participating in any of the following activities while paddling?

**The top three replies were camping, photography and hiking.**

Question 9                    What kind of accommodation are you planning to use in the area?

**Top three replies were campgrounds, wilderness camping and staying with friends.**

Question 10                    Would you participate in a guided Big Canoe Experience on the Lake Superior Water Trail if; (list of activities provided)

**96% of the respondents said yes they would, while 8 said no.**

Question 11                    If these Big Canoe tours were offered along the Lake Superior Water Trail, would you be interested in:

**51% would be interested in a half day tour, 33% a full day excursion and 26% a two-hour tour.**

Question 12                    What guided themes from the Big Canoe tour would be of interest to you?

**A cultural and history them was identified to be the number one interest (81 Responses) followed by Indigenous (60 responses) and the Ecology (59) replies.**

Question 13                    How much would you pay per person if all equipment, staff, and guided themes mentioned above were offered for a 2-hour tour?

**35 respondents said they would be willing to pay over \$50 per person for this experience; followed by 56 people paying between \$20-50; 11 individuals identified they would pay less \$20.**

Question 14                    What would make you decide to stay in the area longer?

**Packages that would include a variety of experiences was identified as the top item that would make them stay longer (55 respondents) followed by more outfitter rentals for canoes and kayaks (47) and a cultural experience (37).**

Question 15                    Were you aware of the Lake Superior Water Trail prior to this questionnaire?

**78 % were not aware of the LSWT**

Question 16                    Were you aware of the Lake Superior Watershed Conservancy prior to this questionnaire?

**78 % were not aware of the LSWC**

## Conclusions

As mentioned a more detailed and focused questions needs to be prepared as a follow up to this survey. However, the survey did provide some general opinion/assessment about the Access Points and potential experiences.

The access point visitor demographics attracted an even split between families and seniors stopping in at the access points. There appears to be a potential to develop a land water tourism package that can be promoted at these access points that could result in overnight stays. The major accommodation used is campgrounds or wilderness camping. Providing information at these access points about nearby campgrounds could extend their stay in the area tied to other water/land experiences.

The upgrades/amenities installed at these access points in 2017 were welcome additions as participates answered questions supporting the amenities already in place at the site.

The need to promote the access points is needed. It was by chance they stopped in at these access points. The RTO13 should include a section on their web site about the access points and its amenities. A map/brochure needs to be produced and available at tourism offices.

The Big Canoe excursion questions indicated a strong support for this type of experience. The average price range between \$20-50 was identified as a willingness to pay. This cost would depend on what the Big Canoe Adventure has to offer and length of time, most identified ½ day. A more focus survey about the Big Canoe needs to be done but primarily results indicates interest.

Water access was identified and the need for easy to find and rent canoes/kayaks. There appears to be an interest of those at the access point to get on the water. Easy access to canoe and kayak rentals nearby was identified. A separate portal on the web site for LSWC for Water Recreation should be created highlighting the access points and nearby outfitters/watercraft rentals.

There is a strong interest in cultural and natural history. Regular promotion of these activities at the access points would encourage local spending and possibility overnight stays.

The vast majority of visitors to the access points do not know anything about Lake Superior Watershed Conservancy or the Lake Superior Trans Canada Trail Waterway. An effort should be made to link LSWC to other like-minded websites, increase social media promotion and develop a giveaway map/brochure to increase awareness and encourage participation in such activities as the Big Canoe experience.

A map of the access points surveyed can be found in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 copies of the survey questionnaire and tally sheet