**How old are Minnesota cabin owners? The answer might surprise you**

By [Dave Orrick / St. Paul Pioneer Press](http://www.duluthnewstribune.com/users/dave-orrick-st-paul-pioneer-press-0) on Feb 25, 2017 at 6:55 p.m.

ST. PAUL — Minnesota lake home and cabin owners — that oh-so-MN demographic — are getting older. And not any richer.

And their health care costs are rising.

Which might prove troublesome for the cherished natural resources — namely our lakes — that lakefront property owners are at the forefront of protecting.

Those are among the findings of a study released Friday by Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates, an environmental-advocacy group that often focuses on issues relevant to lake property owners associations.

The group called the findings a "disturbing trend" because of the uncertainty it could create over the future of both seasonal property ownership and environmental stewardship.

"Simultaneously as owners and the state both struggle to protect the healthy lakes in Minnesota while working to restore the 40 percent of waters that are degraded, very hard decisions are coming in the short term," said Jeff Forester, the group's executive director. "Minnesota is about to experience the largest intergenerational transfer of shoreline property in our history. Yet, the next generation will no doubt be stressed to pay for the medical bills and maintain the properties that will come into their ownership in the next decade."

The group surveyed some 300 Minnesotans between August and September, paralleling surveys conducted in 2005 and 1999. Those surveyed included property owners who use their cabins only seasonally and those who use lake homes as their primary residence.

Here are some of the findings:

**Average age**

The average age of lake home and cabin property owners is 68. That's up from 62 years old in 2005 and 58 in 1999.

**Average income**

The average household income of lake home and cabin property owners is $58,000. That's pretty much unchanged since the previous two surveys.

**Walleye group needed**

The survey also touched on other issues affecting cabin owners. For example, 69 percent said there should be an organization to protect walleye fishing in Minnesota. However, according to the results: "58 percent of the lake home and cabin owners interviewed would not support an organization of walleye, crappie and panfish. Property owners want to know about the cost and the structure of the organization."

**Broadband wanted**

Sixty-four percent of cabin and lake property owners said they would be interested in more state investment in high-speed broadband internet service to Greater Minnesota. Many also said they currently have problems with cellphone and internet coverage and would welcome lower-cost coverage.

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