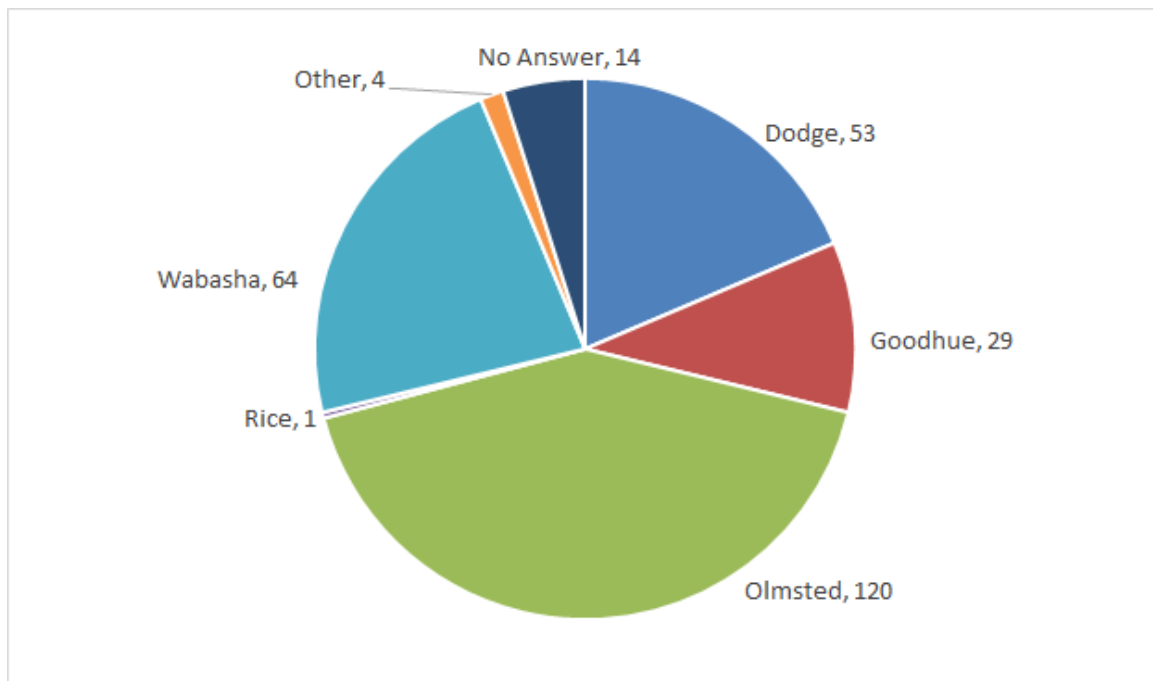


## Memorandum

**To:** Greater Zumbro Watershed Partnership Planning Work Group  
**From:** Greg Williams, PE, Barr Engineering Co.  
**Subject:** Results of the Greater Zumbro One Watershed, One Plan public engagement survey  
**Date:** October 15, 2019  
**Project:** 23551058.00  
**c:**

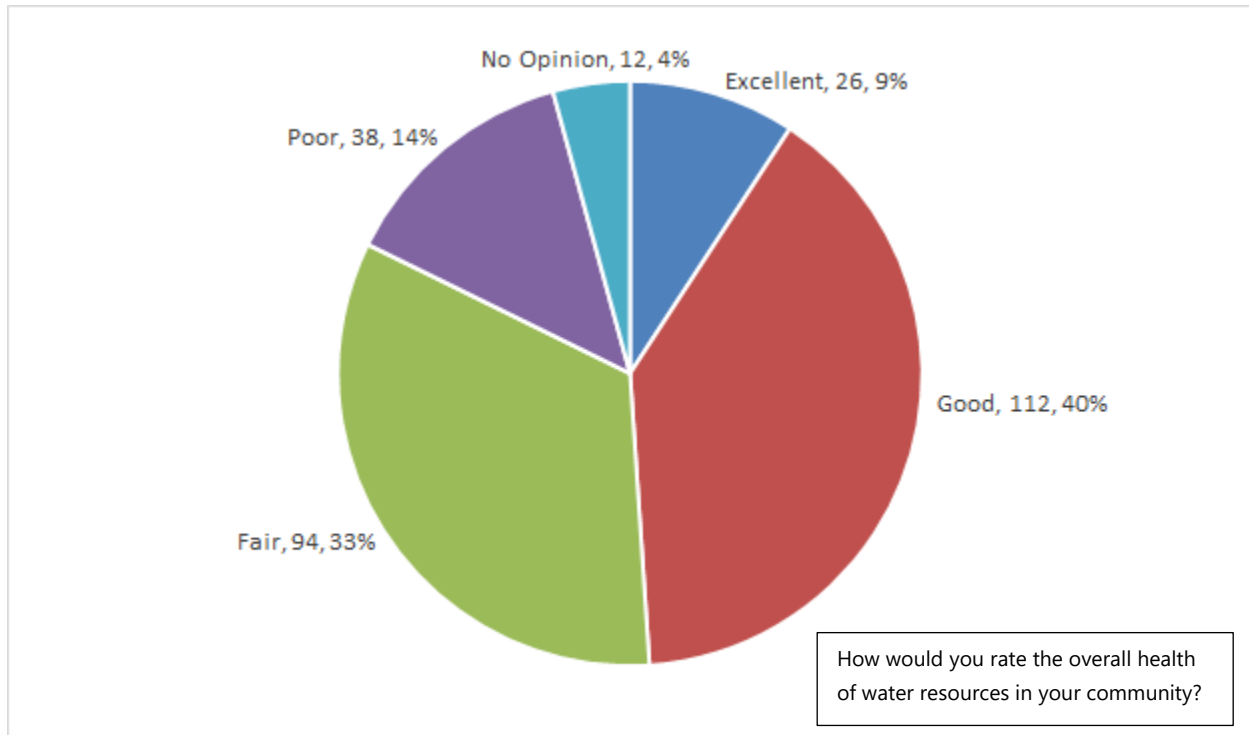
As part of an extensive stakeholder engagement effort, the Greater Zumbro Watershed Partnership Planning Work Group (PWG) developed a brief survey to characterize public opinions regarding natural resource management in the planning area. The survey was made available at the project public kickoff meeting hosted in Rochester on June 20, 2019, county fairs, online via the project webpage, and mailed to approximately 900 residents in the planning area. Through September 20, 2019 a total of 285 surveys had been completed. This memorandum summarizes the results of the surveys submitted through September 20, 2019.

### Question 1 – What is your County of residence?



Dodge, Goodhue, Olmsted, and Wabasha Counties are well represented within the survey responses. About 5% of respondents did not answer the question, and 4 respondents (1.4%) identified another county outside the planning area (i.e., Dakota, Houston, Mower, or Pepin, WI). Responses to question 1 suggest the survey responses are largely representative of planning area.

**Question 2 – How would you rate the overall health of water resources in your community?**



Approximately 50% of survey respondents consider the health of water resources in their communities as “good” or “excellent.” Only 38 respondents (14%) identified the health of water resources as poor. These results suggest that stakeholders may encourage the emphasis of protection strategies in the Plan implementation program.

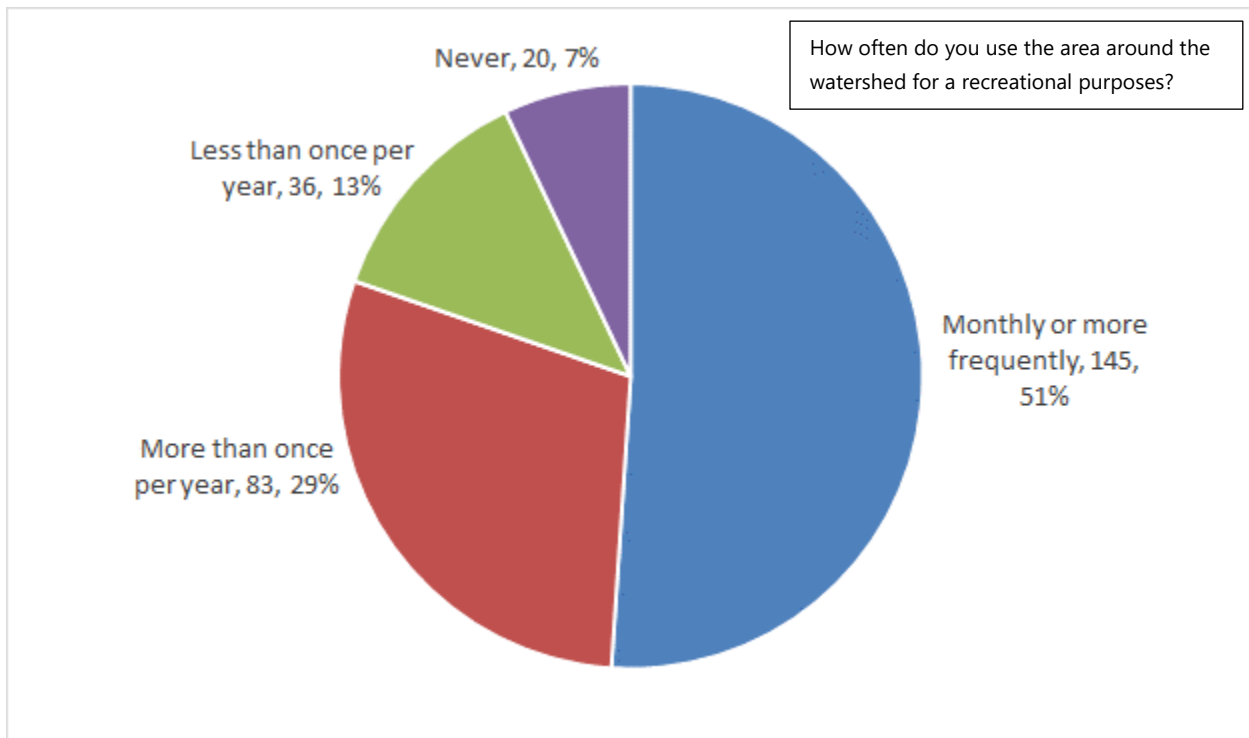
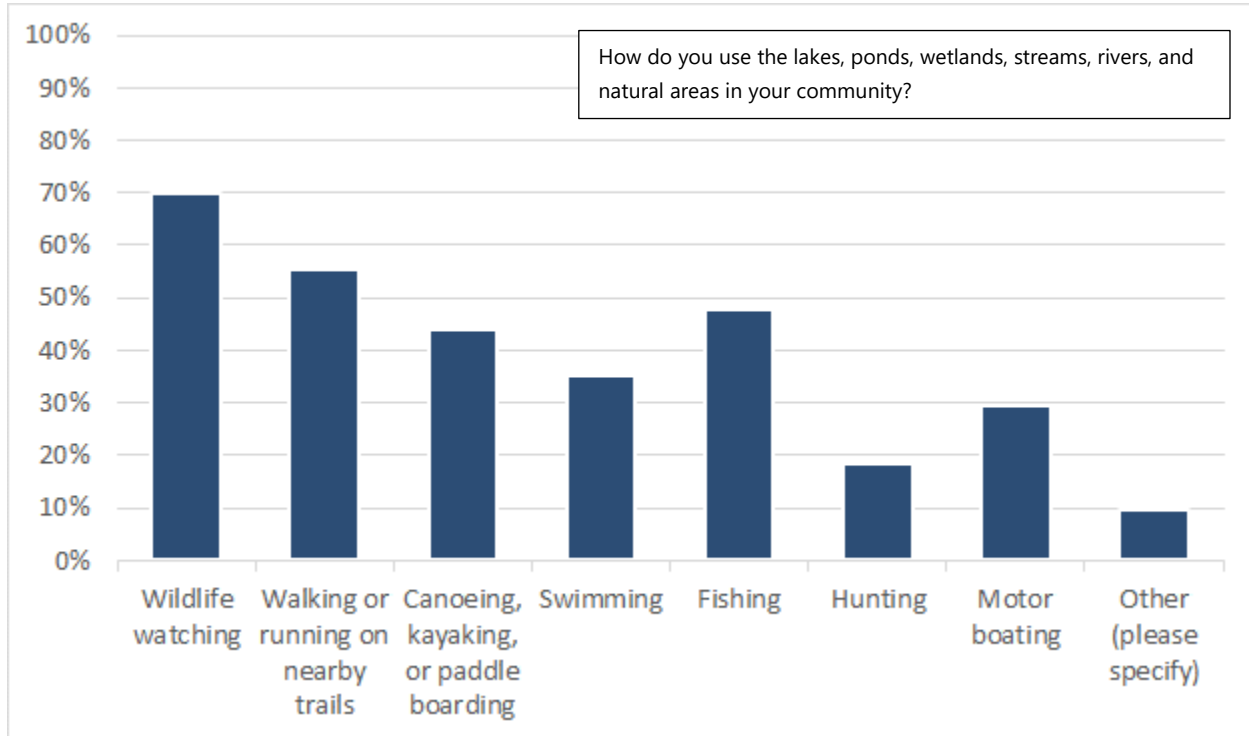
**Question 3 – How do you use the lakes, ponds, wetlands, streams, rivers, and natural areas in your community?**

**Question 4 – How often do you use the area around the Zumbro Watershed and/or Mississippi River Lake Pepin Watershed for a recreational purpose?**

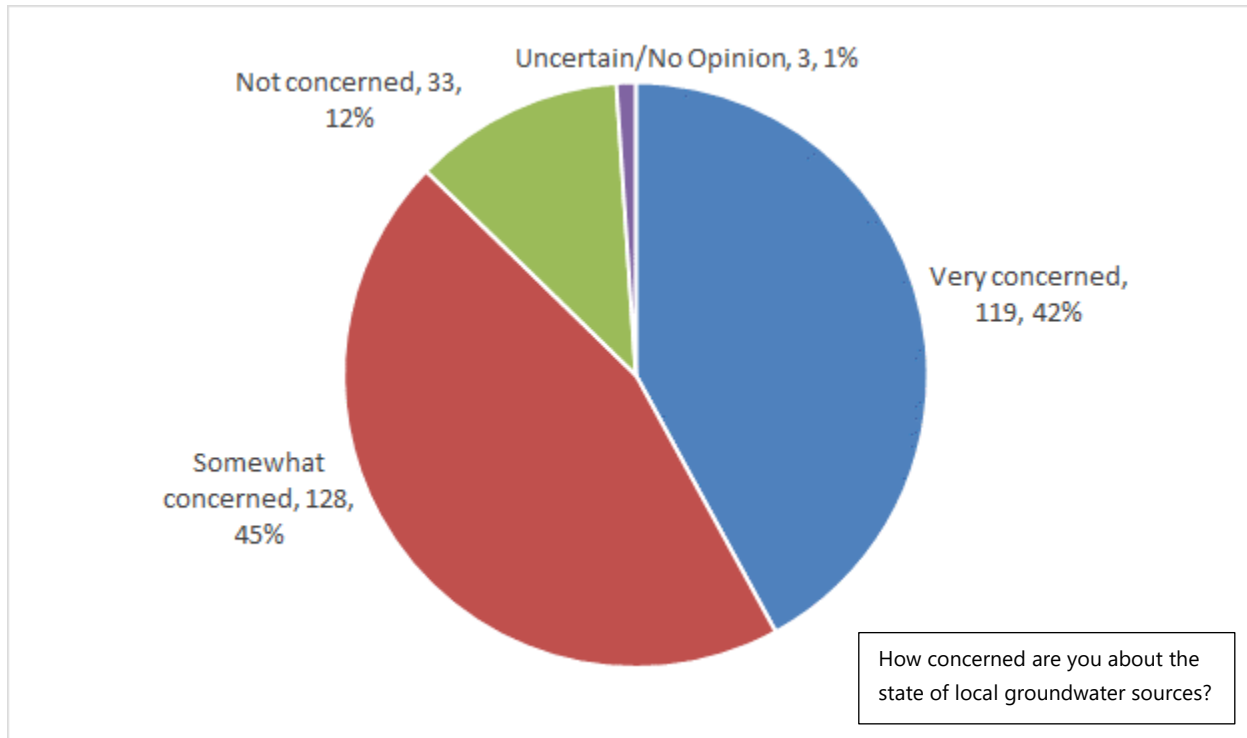
Questions 3 and 4 are related to public use of the water and natural resources within the planning area. Responses to question 3 indicate that residents use the water resources and natural areas in the planning area for a range of activities. Wildlife watching (70% of respondents) and nearby walking or running (55% of respondents) were the most popular. Over 30% of respondents use water resources for swimming. Other uses identified by respondents included:

- Biking
- Education
- Photography
- Snowmobiling

Responses to question 4 indicate frequent (monthly or greater) recreational use of resources in the planning area by approximately half of survey respondents. Few survey respondents (7%) indicated that they never use the watershed for recreation.



**Question 5 – Drinking water within the watershed comes from groundwater sources.  
How concerned are you about the state of local groundwater sources?**



Groundwater supplies drinking water for the entire planning area. Nearly 90% of survey respondents expressed concern over the state of drinking water in the watershed. Only three survey respondents (1%) indicated they are uncertain or have no opinion; however, information from the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) suggests that many residents lack water quality information for their wells. This suggests there may be gap in public awareness of groundwater quality issues.

**Question 6 – How Important are each of the following water issues to you?**

Question 6 asked respondents to select how important each of thirteen water and natural resource management issues are from the following choices:

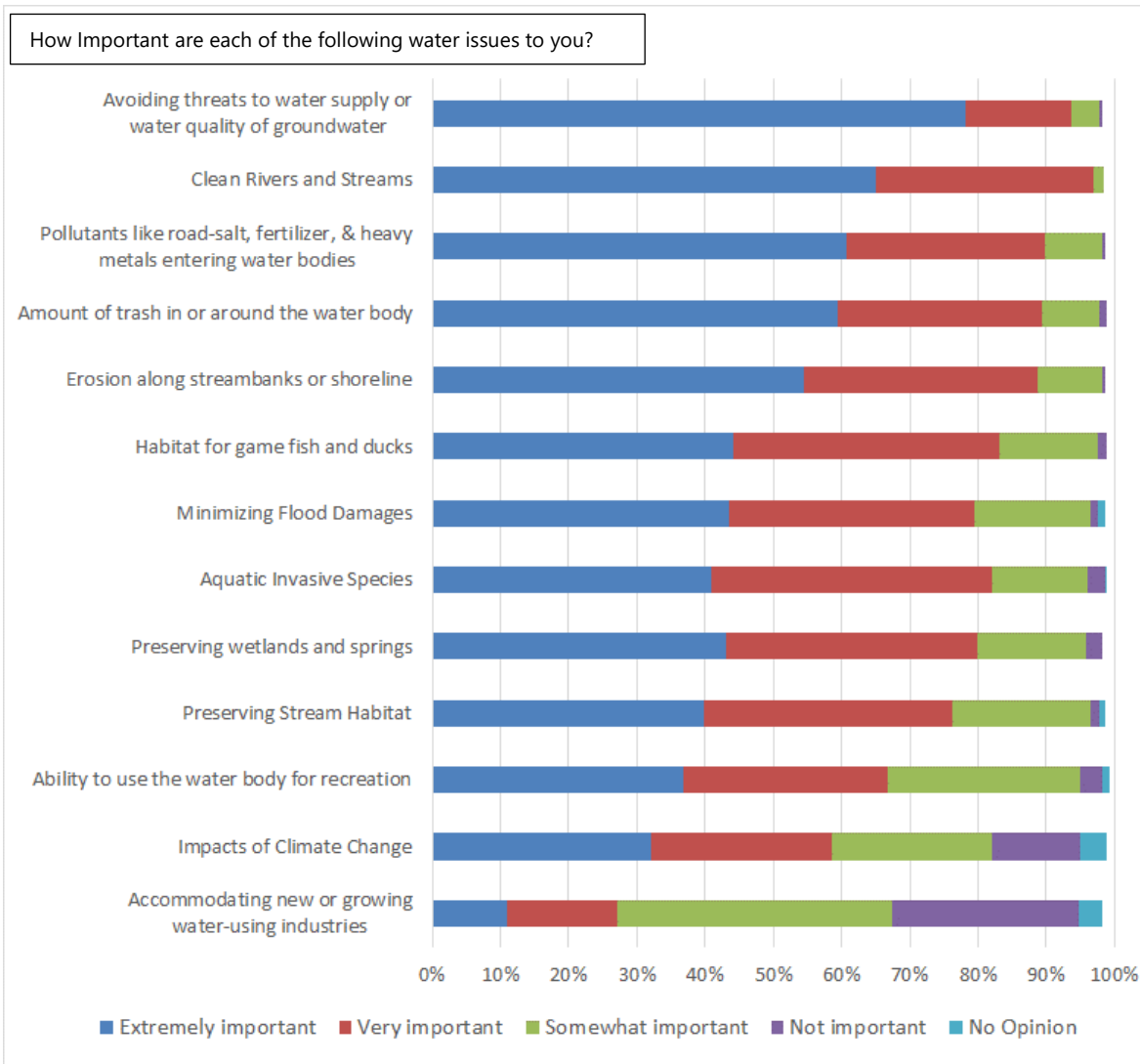
- Extremely important
- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not important
- No opinion

Survey responses suggest that residents consider *all* of the pre-identified watershed issues to be at least "somewhat important," although some register as more important than others (see responses to question 7). Of the thirteen pre-identified issues, only two were identified as "not important" by more than 10% of survey responses, including:

- Impacts of climate change (“not important” to 13% of survey respondents)
- Accommodating new or growing water-using industries (“not important” to 27% of survey respondents)

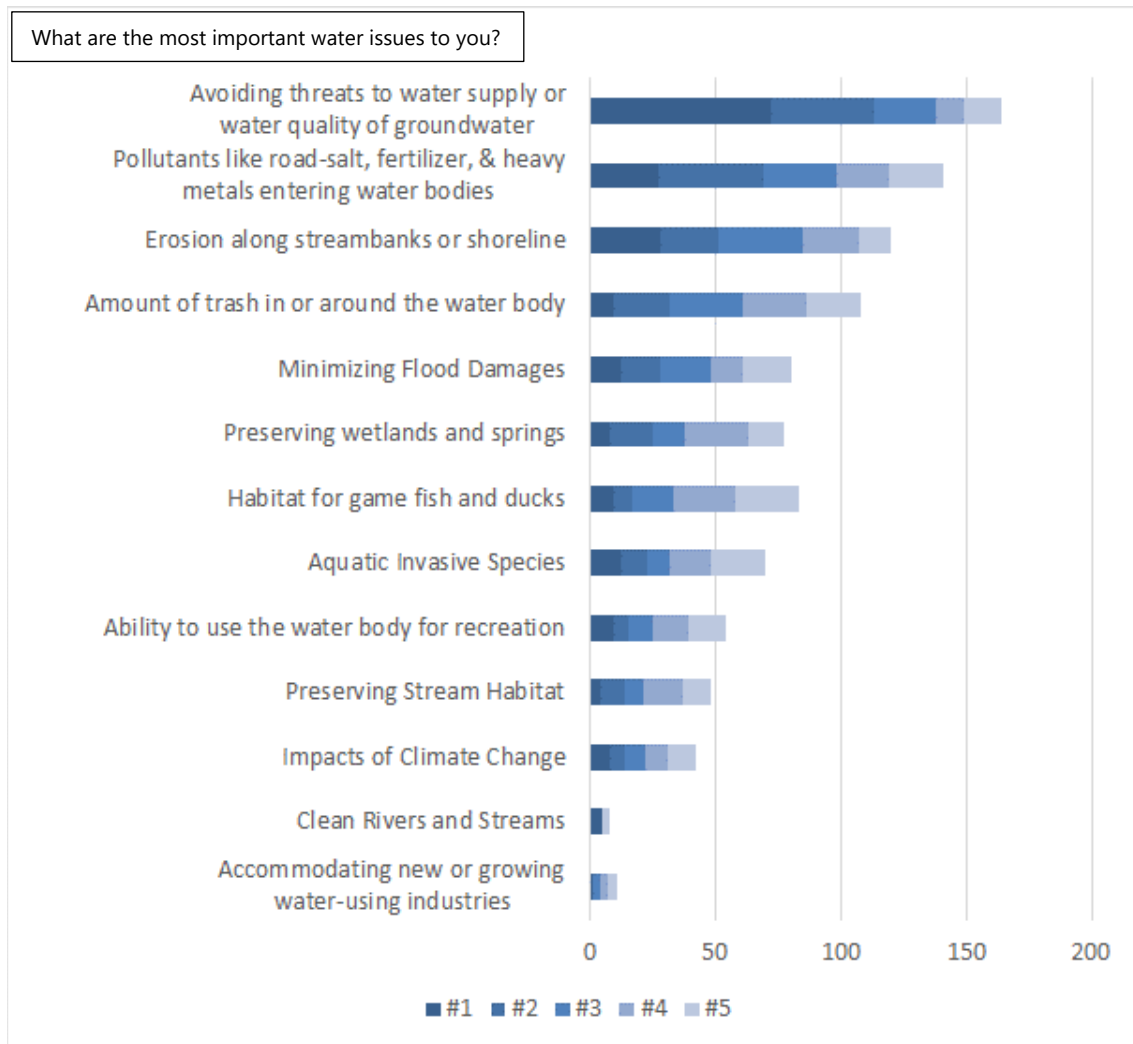
Thirteen survey respondents (5%) specified other issues as important in an open-ended response. All of the open-ended responses are related to, variations of, or specific examples of the pre-identified watershed issues identified in the question. Selected open-ended responses (paraphrased) include:

- Too much drain tile causing reducing soil capacity to hold water and causing flooding
- Controlling and reducing leakage/pollution from large contained animal feeding operations (CAFOs)
- Increasing access to new waters for recreation
- Public understanding of the benefits of regenerative soil management/soil health
- Animals pastured with/standing in water resources impacting water quality



### Question 7 – What are the most important water issues to you?

Question 7 asked survey respondents to identify their top 5 water issues from those listed in question 6 ranked in order of importance. Responses to question 7 corroborate the responses to question 6, with the exception that “clean rivers and streams” is a lower priority in the responses to question 7. This may be due to the vague nature of the issue (i.e., “clean” may be interpreted in many ways) and or the idea that “clean rivers and streams” may be an outcome of addressing other, more specific issues (e.g., pollutant loading, trash around waterbodies). “Avoiding threats to water supply or water quality of groundwater” was selected as the most important issue more than twice as frequently (72 times) as any other issue.



### Question 8 – Are there specific waterbodies or natural areas you are concerned about?

One hundred twenty five survey respondents (57% of those answering question 8) answered “Yes” to question 8. Specific waterbodies of concern referenced most frequently in the open-ended responses to question 8 include:

- Lake Zumbro (44 responses)
- Zumbro River (37 responses) including references to:
  - North Fork Zumbro River (5 responses)
  - North Branch Middle Fork Zumbro River (1 response)
  - Middle Fork Zumbro River (5 responses)
  - South Fork Zumbro River (4 responses)
- Mississippi River (11 responses)
- Lake Pepin (9 responses)
- Groundwater sources (5 response)
- Salem Creek (4 responses)
- Bear Creek (3 responses)
- Masten Creek (2 responses)
- Smaller tributaries (2 responses)
- Trout streams (2 responses)

Other specific waterbodies identified once among the open ended responses include: Cascade Creek, Dodge Center Creek, Foster-Arend Lake, Mayowood Lake, Silver Spring Creek.

## **Question 9 – General Comments/Suggestions**

Question 9 provided an opportunity for survey respondents to submit general comments and/or suggestions in an open-ended response. Fifty-seven survey respondents (20%) completed question 9. Responses to question 9 address a wide range of issues. Some common themes include:

- Emphasis on soil health practices to achieve direct (i.e., in-field) and downstream benefits (e.g., improved water quality, reduced flooding)
- Frequent flooding in the watershed (exacerbated by altered hydrology) leads to erosion, water quality, and public health issues
- The importance of groundwater quality and groundwater protection
- A desire for more public education and engagement regarding water quality issues
- The need for enforcement of existing standards and/or appropriate land use management to limit non-point source pollution (nutrients and sediment)

## **Conclusions**

The responses to the survey indicate strong public interest in the quality and management of water and natural resources in the planning area. Results identify several issues of importance, but generally identify groundwater quality, pollutant loading, erosion, and flooding as top priorities.