



Community & Stakeholder Survey

Results Report

Prepared for the CLSS Board of Directors
In Advance of the Strategic Planning Session
April 2026

n = 125 Respondents

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Executive Summary

The Columbia Lake Stewardship Society conducted a comprehensive community and stakeholder survey between March 12 and April 12, 2026, receiving 125 responses from residents, property owners, and recreational users in the Columbia Lake area. This report presents a question-by-question analysis of the results to support the Board's upcoming strategic planning session. What follows is a summary of the principal findings.

The respondent base is deeply rooted in the community. Ninety-one percent are residents, split nearly evenly between full-time (47%) and part-time (44%), and 82% have been associated with the area for over a decade. Two-thirds are nearby non-lakefront residents, and nearly half identify as recreational users. Awareness of CLSS is near-universal at 98%, providing an exceptional foundation for any initiatives the Board chooses to pursue.

Lake health is viewed holistically by the community: 81% selected "all of the above" when asked about priorities, encompassing water quality and quantity, invasive species, shoreline habitat, and aquatic health. Invasive species is the single most alarming environmental threat, with 62% rating it "very concerned." The most widely observed environmental change, reported in roughly half of all open-ended responses, is a significant and accelerating increase in aquatic vegetation.

Across multiple survey questions—observed changes, recreational conflicts, hopes, and concerns—the growing presence of wake boats emerged as the most prominent single issue in the entire survey. Respondents consistently cited concerns about shoreline erosion, disturbance of the shallow lake bottom, wildlife disruption, noise, and safety conflicts with non-motorized users. This theme appeared unprompted in the majority of open-ended responses. With 83% of respondents participating in non-motorized lake activities compared to 22% in wake sports, the affected user base for inaction is substantially larger than the user base that would be affected by new restrictions.

The community favours a protective but balanced approach to management. A slim majority (51%) would prefer the lake not be actively promoted. Forty-eight percent support enforced regulations as the management model, and 57% prioritize enforcement of existing rules over creating new ones. A notable minority, however, cautioned against over-regulation and urged collaborative dialogue between conservation and recreation interests. The most common five-year hope is that the lake remains in its current state—quiet, clean, and healthy—while the most common concern is that increasing motorized traffic and environmental pressures could push it toward the kind of overuse seen at other regional lakes.

The CLSS email newsletter is the community's primary information channel (79% current reach, 81% preferred), and educational events and lake tours represent the most attractive pathway for deeper engagement (26%). While 46% are not currently interested in direct support, the strong awareness and trust levels suggest that well-designed, low-barrier programs could convert passive supporters into active participants over the strategic plan period.

Methodology

The Columbia Lake Stewardship Society Community and Stakeholder Survey was designed to gather input from the broad community of residents, property owners, recreational users, and other stakeholders connected to Columbia Lake and its surrounding area, spanning the corridor from Fairmont to Canal Flats.

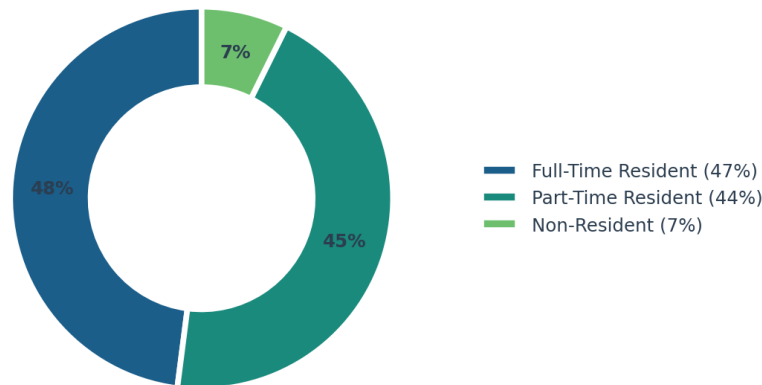
The survey comprised 27 questions covering respondent demographics, water supply and quality, lake health priorities, environmental concerns, recreational use patterns, management and protection preferences, five-year hopes and concerns, perceptions of CLSS, and communication preferences. Questions used a mix of single-select, multi-select (select all that apply), Likert-scale (three-point concern rating), and open-ended response formats. The survey was open for one month, from March 12, 2026 through April 12, 2026, and was distributed through CLSS's established communication channels, including the email newsletter, website, social media, and word of mouth within the local community.

A total of 125 completed responses were received. Open-ended questions received varying response rates, ranging from 43 to 113 responses per question, indicating strong engagement particularly on topics related to observed environmental changes and the five-year outlook. For multi-select questions, percentages reflect the share of all 125 respondents who selected each option and will therefore sum to more than 100%. For the three-point concern scale, respondents rated each threat independently, so totals per threat may not equal exactly 125 due to occasional non-responses. Open-ended responses were analyzed thematically, and the most frequently recurring themes are reported in narrative form throughout this report.

It is important to note that this is a convenience sample of engaged community members and may not be fully representative of all stakeholders in the area. The results should be understood as reflecting the views of those who are sufficiently connected to CLSS and the community to have received and completed the survey. Nonetheless, the sample size of 125 and the depth of engagement across open-ended questions provide a strong foundation for informing the Board's strategic discussions.

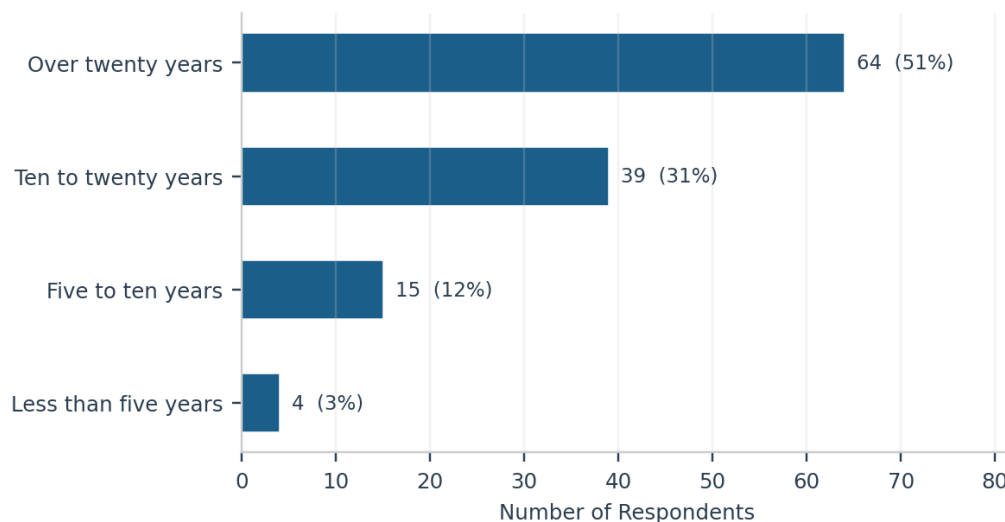
Section 1: Respondent Demographics

Question 1: Are you a resident in the vicinity of Columbia Lake? (Fairmont to Canal Flats and areas in between)



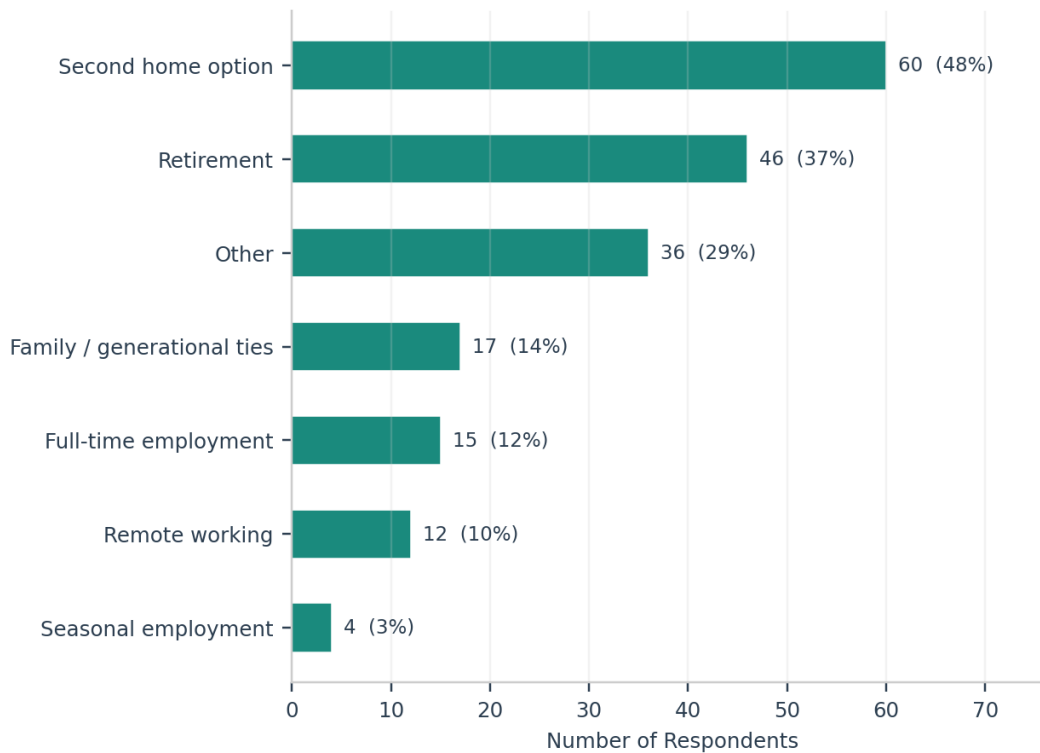
The vast majority of respondents are residents in the vicinity of Columbia Lake, with the split between full-time residents (47%, n=59) and part-time residents (44%, n=55) nearly even. Only nine respondents (7%) identified as non-residents. This distribution indicates that the survey primarily captures the perspectives of people with direct, ongoing stakes in the lake's health and management, and that the seasonal homeowner community is represented in proportion comparable to the year-round population.

Question 2: How long have you resided in or been associated with the Columbia Lake area?



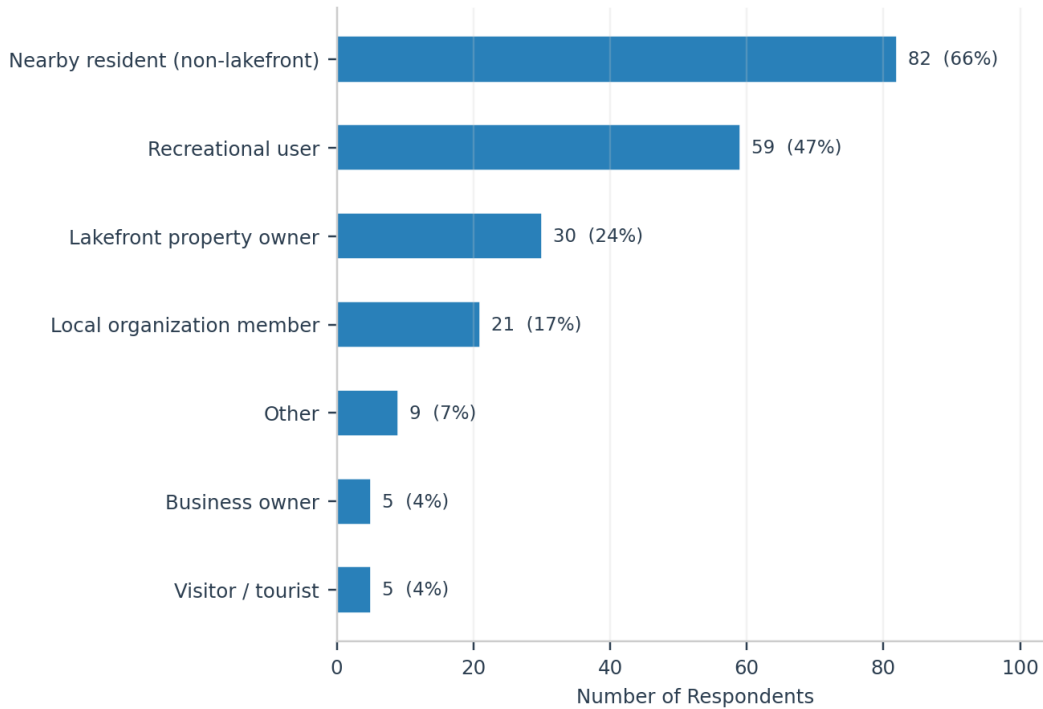
The respondent base has deep, long-standing ties to the area. Over half (51%, n=64) have been associated with Columbia Lake for more than twenty years, and another 31% (n=39) for ten to twenty years. Combined, 82% of respondents have a decade or more of history with the area. Only 3% (n=4) have been in the area for fewer than five years. This depth of experience means that when respondents describe changes they have observed over time—as many do later in the survey—they are drawing on extensive firsthand knowledge.

Question 3: What drew you to residing in this area? Select all that apply.



The two leading motivations for choosing the Columbia Lake area are having a second home (48%, n=60) and retirement (37%, n=46), consistent with the area's character as a destination valued for quality of life and access to nature. Family and generational ties (14%), full-time employment (12%), and remote working capacity (10%) represent smaller but significant segments. The substantial "Other" category (29%) captured a range of personal motivations, with many respondents citing the area's natural beauty, tranquility, and outdoor recreation opportunities as primary draws.

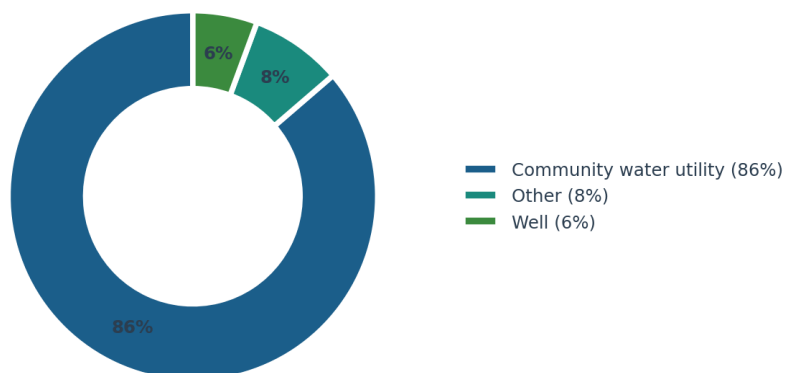
Question 4: Which of the following best describes your connection to Columbia Lake? Select all that apply.



Two-thirds of respondents (66%, n=82) are nearby residents who do not own lakefront property, making this the dominant stakeholder group in the survey. Nearly half (47%, n=59) identify as recreational users, and 24% (n=30) are lakefront property owners. A notable 17% (n=21) belong to a local organization or association. The relatively small representation of business owners (4%) and visitors or tourists (4%) suggests the survey primarily reflects the residential and recreational community rather than the tourism or commercial sector. This composition is worth bearing in mind when interpreting results on topics where property ownership or commercial interests may differentiate perspectives.

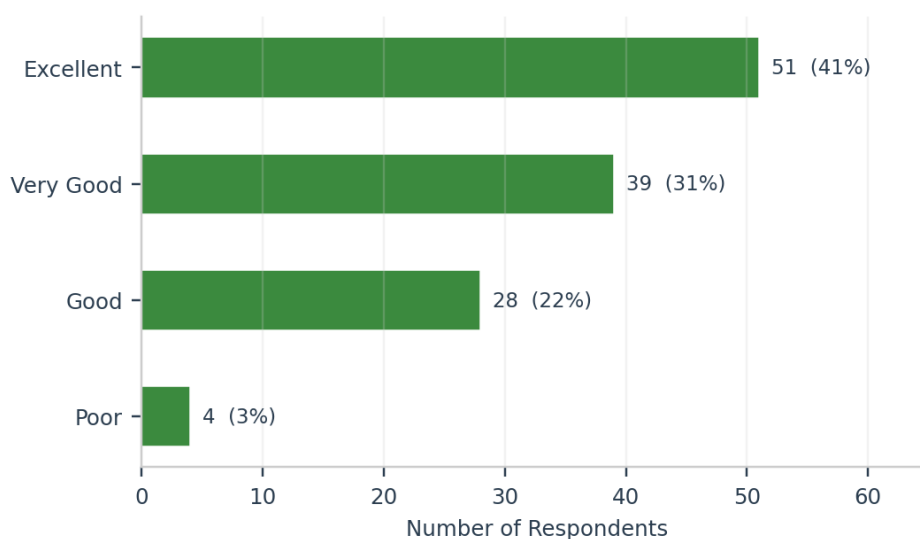
Section 2: Water Supply and Quality

Question 5: *What is your source of household water? (not drinking water)*



The overwhelming majority of respondents (86%, n=107) rely on a community water utility for their household water supply. Well water serves a small minority (6%, n=7), with 8% (n=10) reporting other sources. The near-universal reliance on community water infrastructure underscores the direct connection between watershed health and the everyday lives of area residents. Any deterioration in the lake or its tributaries has the potential to affect the water that flows into homes throughout the community.

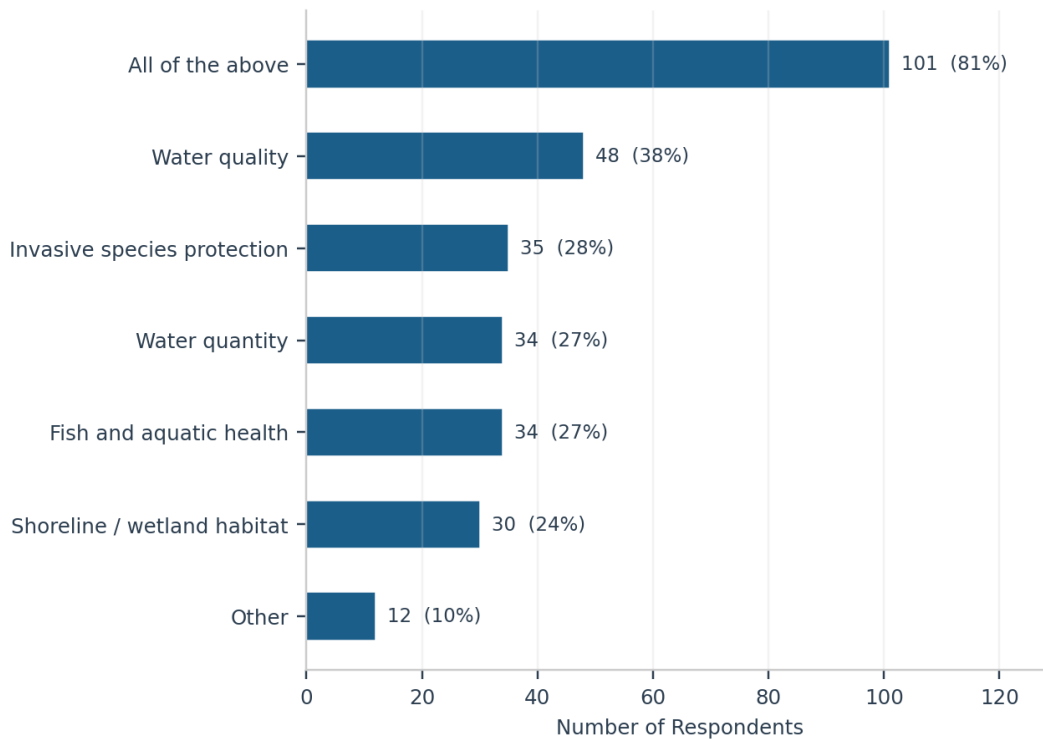
Question 6: *How would you rate the quality of your drinking water?*



Drinking water quality perceptions are strongly positive. Over 70% of respondents rate their water as Excellent (41%, n=51) or Very Good (31%, n=39), with an additional 22% (n=28) rating it as Good. Only four respondents (3%) rate their drinking water as Poor. While this is an encouraging baseline, the community's broader environmental concerns—particularly around water pollution from runoff and the growing presence of aquatic vegetation—suggest an awareness that current quality should not be taken for granted and that upstream stewardship is essential to maintaining it.

Section 3: Lake Health and Environmental Concerns

Question 7: Which of these are most important to you about the health of the lake? Select all that apply.



The community views lake health holistically. An overwhelming 81% of respondents (n=101) selected “All of the above,” indicating that water quality, water quantity, invasive species protection, shoreline and wetland habitat, and fish and aquatic health are all seen as interconnected priorities rather than competing ones. Among those who selected individual items, water quality (38%), invasive species protection (28%), fish and aquatic health (27%), and water quantity (27%) were closely grouped, with shoreline and wetland habitat protection (24%) close behind. This breadth of concern supports a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach to lake stewardship in the strategic plan rather than a narrow focus on any single issue.

Question 8: Have you noticed any changes to Columbia Lake or its surrounding area over time? Please describe what you have seen.

This open-ended question received 99 responses, a 79% response rate that reflects the community’s deep investment in the state of the lake. The responses paint a consistent and concerning picture of gradual environmental change, with several themes appearing across a broad cross-section of respondents.

The single most frequently cited change is a significant increase in aquatic vegetation, described variously as weeds, milfoil, and plant growth. Roughly half of all respondents who answered this question mentioned this issue, with many noting that weed beds have expanded dramatically in both area and density over recent years, making swimming and navigation increasingly difficult in parts of the lake. This observation is consistent across respondents of all tenure lengths, but long-term residents in particular emphasized that the rate of change has accelerated.

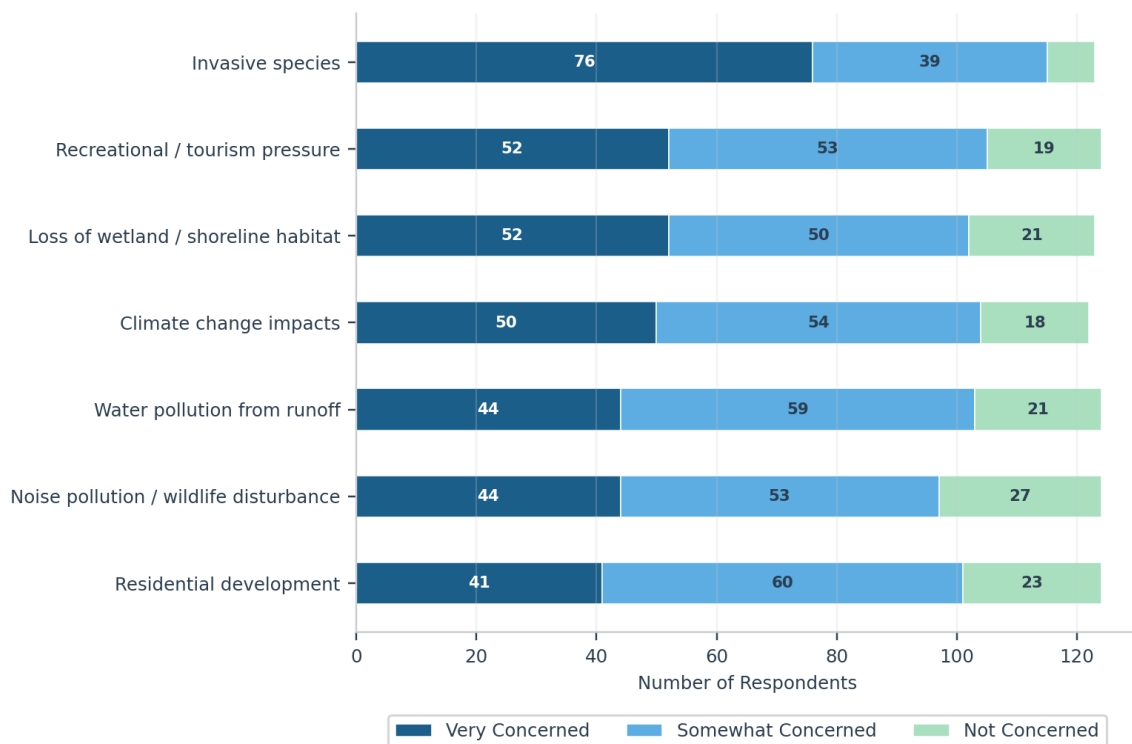
The second most prominent observation is the growing presence of larger and more powerful motorboats on the lake, with wake boats drawing particular attention. Respondents described increased turbidity from boats disturbing the shallow lake bottom, more erosion along shorelines, and a general sense that boat traffic has intensified in

volume and impact. Closely related, many respondents noted lower water levels, particularly in recent years, and warmer water temperatures during summer months—conditions they connected to increased fish kills and shifts in aquatic plant behaviour.

The appearance of non-native species, especially bass, was widely noted and often linked to declining populations of native fish. Several respondents also reported reduced bird populations, diminished waterfowl nesting activity, and fewer wildlife sightings overall. Finally, a recurring theme was the proliferation of unauthorized docks, buoys, and shoreline modifications—physical changes that respondents view as both an aesthetic concern and a symptom of insufficient enforcement.

Question 9: How concerned are you about each of the following threats to Columbia Lake?

Respondents rated their concern for seven threats on a three-point scale from “Not concerned at all” to “Very concerned.”

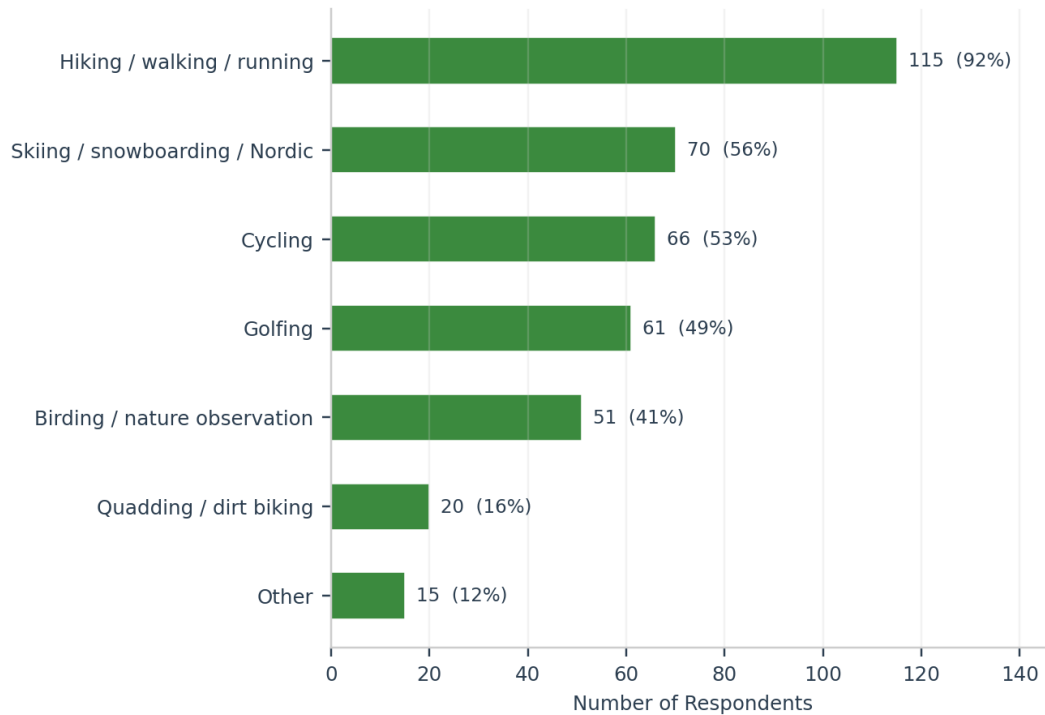


Invasive species stands out as the highest-priority threat, with 62% of respondents (n=76) rating it “very concerned” and only 7% unconcerned. This aligns powerfully with the observed changes described in the previous question, where non-native fish and expanding aquatic vegetation were among the most commonly reported phenomena. Recreational and tourism pressure and loss of wetland and shoreline habitat are tied as the second-highest concern, each with 42% very concerned, followed closely by climate change impacts at 41%. Water pollution from runoff and noise pollution each register at 35% very concerned, while residential development—though still significant—is the least acute concern at 33%.

A critical observation is that no threat category received a majority “not concerned” rating. For every single threat listed, the combined “very” and “somewhat concerned” responses exceed 75%, indicating a community that is broadly and consistently alert to environmental pressures on the lake.

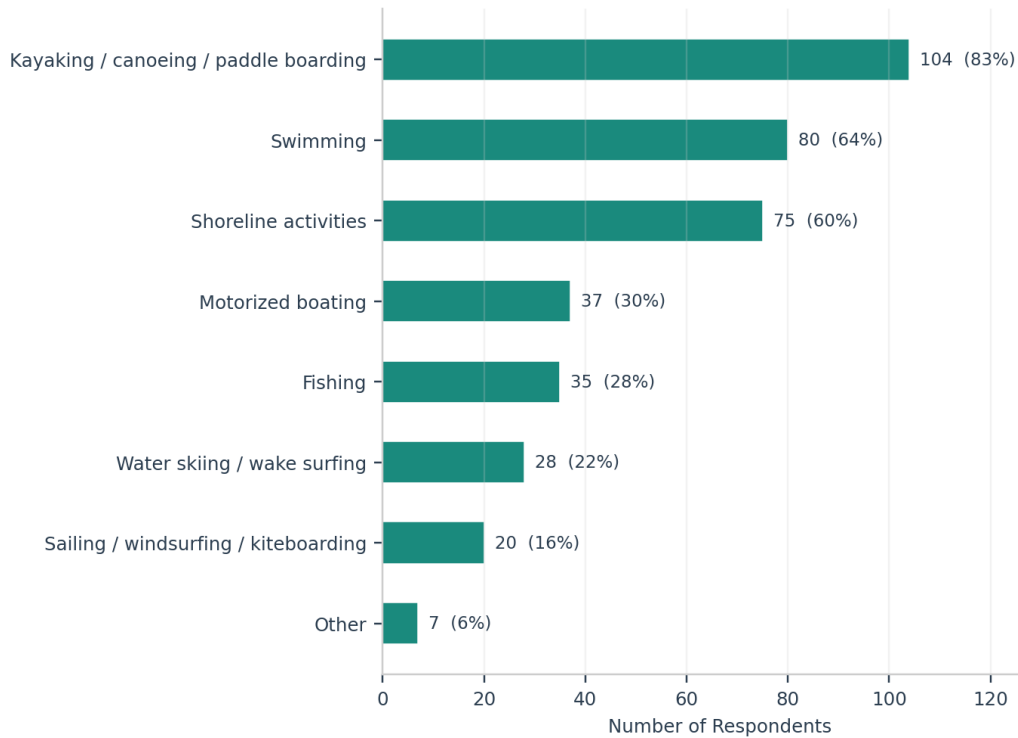
Section 4: Recreational Use

Question 10: *What is your preferred recreational activity in the area, other than on the lake? Select all that apply.*



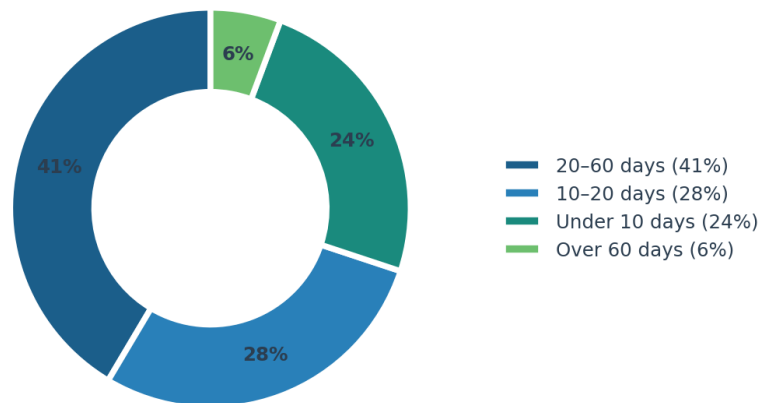
Hiking, walking, and running is the clear leader in land-based recreation, selected by an extraordinary 92% of respondents (n=115). This speaks to the area's fundamental appeal as a nature-oriented, active-lifestyle destination. Winter sports including skiing, snowboarding, Nordic skiing, and snowshoeing (56%), cycling (53%), golfing (49%), and birding or nature observation (41%) form a strong secondary tier that underscores the year-round recreational value of the area. Motorized off-road activities such as quadding and dirt biking are the least popular land-based activity at 16%, consistent with the community's overall preference for quieter, nature-focused pursuits.

Question 11: What is your preferred recreational activity on the lake? Select all that apply.



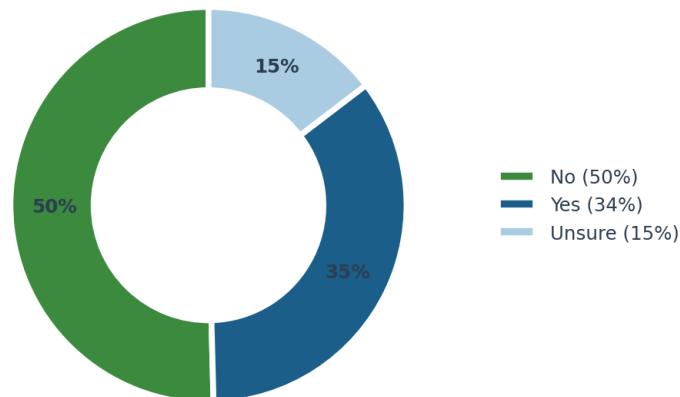
Non-motorized water activities dominate lake-based recreation. Kayaking, canoeing, and paddle boarding leads at 83% (n=104), making it the most widely practiced lake activity in the survey. Swimming (64%) and shoreline activities such as walking and relaxing (60%) round out the top three. Motorized activities—boating (30%), fishing (28%), and water skiing or wake surfing (22%)—represent a significant minority but are substantially less prevalent than non-motorized use. This usage pattern is important strategic context: the recreational user base that would be affected by unmanaged growth in motorized watercraft activity is considerably larger than the motorized user base itself.

Question 12: How many days per year do you spend on the water?



The largest group of respondents (41%, n=51) spends twenty to sixty days per year on the water, indicating regular, meaningful engagement with the lake throughout the season. An additional 28% (n=35) spend ten to twenty days, and 24% (n=30) spend fewer than ten. Only 6% (n=7) spend more than sixty days annually. Combined, 69% of respondents spend at least ten days per year on the water, reinforcing that the lake is a core part of community life and not merely a scenic backdrop.

Question 13: *Have you noticed any conflicts between different types of recreational users on or around the lake? If so, please describe.*

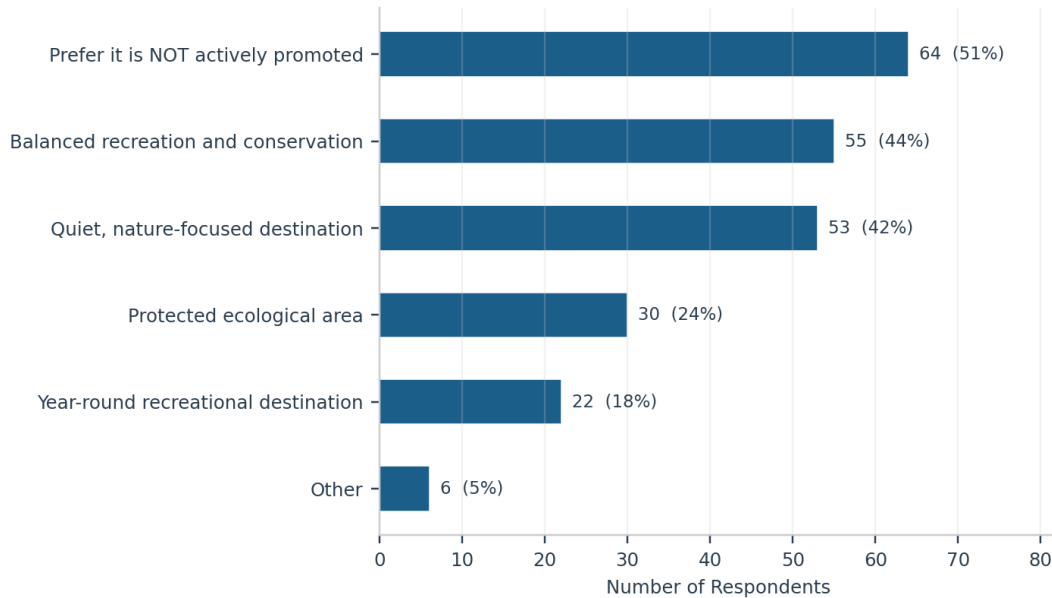


About one-third of respondents (34%, n=43) have directly observed recreational conflicts on or around the lake, while half (50%) have not and 15% are unsure. The 44 written descriptions provided paint a strikingly consistent picture of the nature of these conflicts.

The dominant conflict is between wake boats and non-motorized lake users. Respondents described wake boats creating large, dangerous wakes that threaten kayakers, canoeists, paddle boarders, and swimmers, often while operating too close to shore or in shallow areas where their hulls disturb the lake bottom. The noise associated with wake sports was a recurring complaint, both from engine noise and from amplified music that many respondents described as disruptive to residents and wildlife alike. Several respondents also described problems at the Canal Flats boat launch, including aggressive behaviour, lack of basic loading and unloading etiquette, and confrontational attitudes from out-of-town visitors, particularly on long weekends. A smaller number of responses addressed unauthorized shoreline use, including conflicts around illegal docks and encroachment on riparian areas. Taken together, these descriptions reinforce the pattern observed throughout the survey: the intersection of motorized watercraft—and wake boats in particular—with the lake’s shallow ecology and predominantly non-motorized user base is the community’s most pressing friction point.

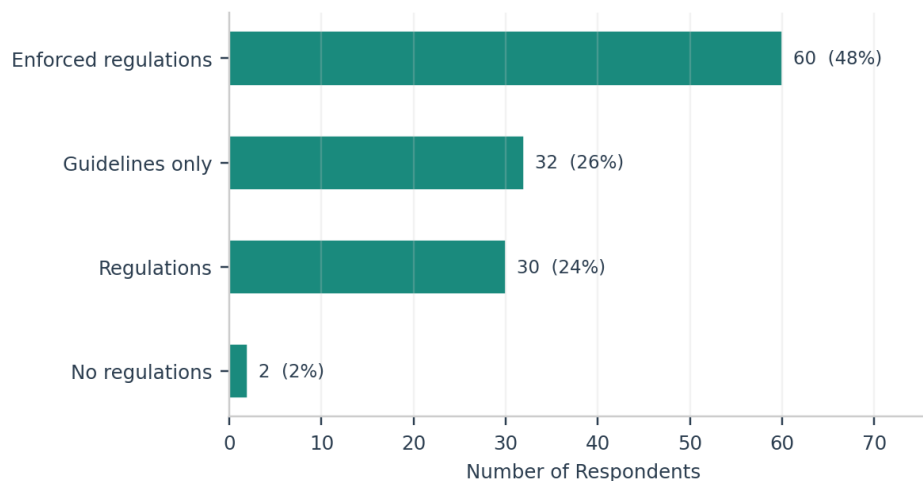
Section 5: Lake Management and Protection

Question 14: *How would you like Columbia Lake to be promoted or described to the public? Select all that apply.*



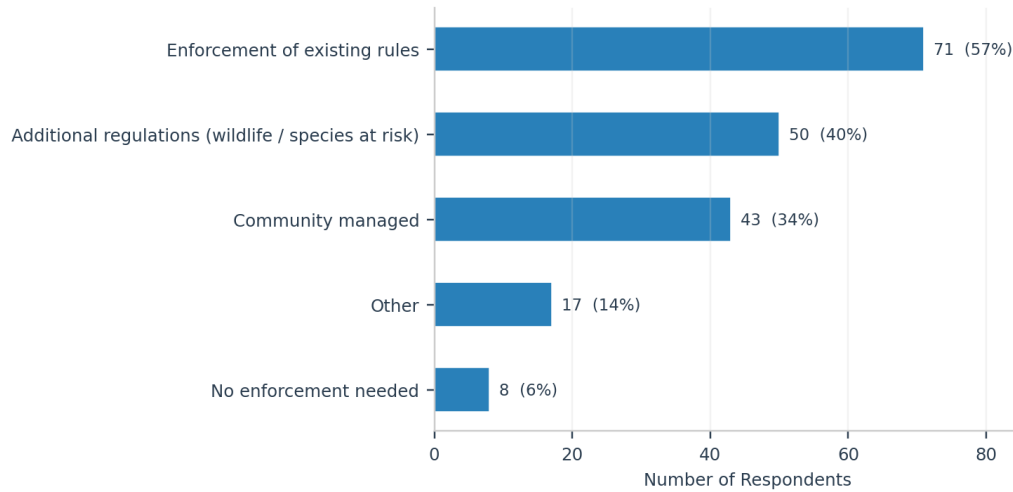
The single most selected option—chosen by 51% of respondents (n=64)—is that the lake should not be actively promoted at all. This reflects a strong protective instinct within the community and a desire to preserve the lake’s character as a relatively undiscovered, quiet destination. Among those who support some form of public description, a balanced recreation and conservation area (44%) and a quiet, nature-focused destination (42%) are strongly preferred over a protected ecological area (24%) or a year-round recreational destination (18%). The message to the Board is clear: the community’s identity for Columbia Lake leans decisively toward conservation-oriented framing, and any promotional efforts should be calibrated to avoid attracting the kind of high-volume recreational pressure that respondents associate with other regional lakes.

Question 15: *How would you like to see the lake managed?*



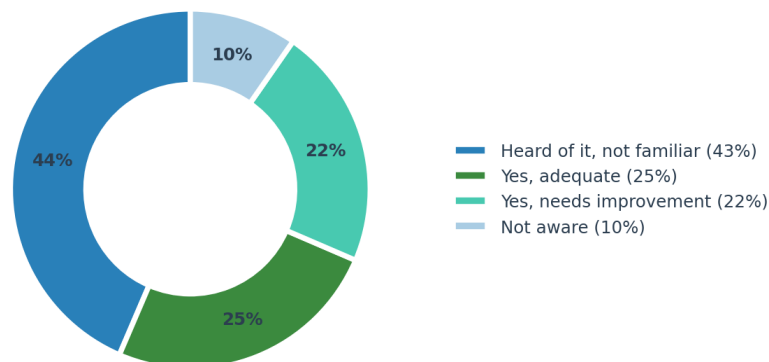
The community clearly favours a regulatory approach to lake management. Nearly half of respondents (48%, n=60) support enforced regulations—the strongest single response by a significant margin. Guidelines only (26%, n=32) and regulations without specified enforcement mechanisms (24%, n=30) represent more moderate positions. Virtually no one (2%, n=2) favours no regulations whatsoever. This distribution sends a clear signal: the community expects rules to be both in place and actively enforced, not merely aspirational.

Question 16: *How would you like Columbia Lake to be protected? Select all that apply.*



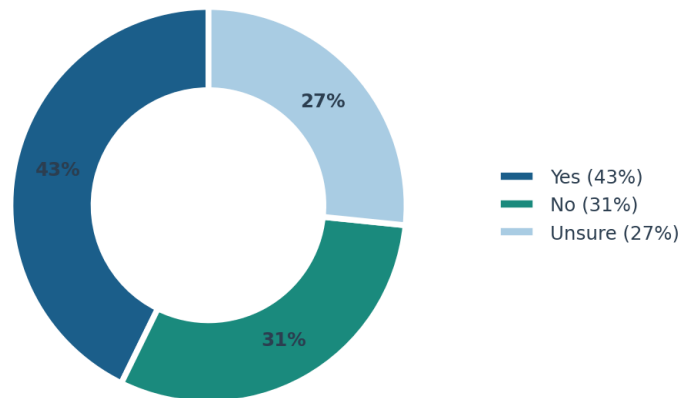
Enforcement of existing rules is the top protection priority at 57% (n=71), suggesting the community believes the current regulatory framework is broadly adequate but insufficiently enforced. Forty percent (n=50) support additional regulations specifically to protect wildlife and species at risk, while 34% (n=43) favour community-managed approaches. Only 6% (n=8) feel no enforcement is needed at all. The preference for enforcement over new regulation is a nuance worth highlighting for the Board: the community's primary call to action is about compliance and accountability within the existing framework rather than wholesale creation of new rules. This suggests that advocacy for better enforcement may be both more effective and more politically achievable than pursuing new regulatory instruments.

Question 17: *Are you aware of the Columbia Lake Management Plan? If yes, do you feel it adequately addresses the lake's needs?*



Awareness of the Columbia Lake Management Plan is widespread but shallow. The largest segment (43%, n=54) has heard of the plan but is not familiar with its details. A quarter (25%, n=31) are aware and feel it is adequate, while 22% (n=27) are aware but believe it needs improvement. Only 10% (n=12) are completely unaware. The combination of high superficial awareness with low familiarity suggests an opportunity for CLSS to strengthen communication about what the plan contains, how it is being implemented, and where the community can provide input on its evolution.

Question 18: *Would you like CLSS to study the possible impacts of climate change on Columbia Lake and the surrounding area?*



Forty-three percent of respondents (n=53) support a CLSS-led climate change impact study, making it the largest single response category. However, the combined “no” (31%, n=38) and “unsure” (27%, n=33) responses total 57%, indicating this is not a clear community mandate. The sizeable “unsure” segment may reflect uncertainty about cost, scope, or organizational capacity rather than outright opposition. The Board may wish to consider whether integrating climate considerations into existing monitoring programs—rather than launching a standalone study—would attract broader support while still addressing the underlying concern.

Section 6: Five-Year Outlook

Question 19: Looking ahead five years, what is your biggest hope for Columbia Lake?

This question received 113 responses, a 90% response rate that reflects the community's deep emotional investment in the lake's future. The responses reveal a community that is broadly aligned in what it values, even as specific priorities vary.

Preservation of the lake's current character. The single most common aspiration, expressed in countless variations, is that the lake simply remains as it is. Respondents used words like "pristine," "quiet," and "undiscovered" to describe what they value. One wrote simply, "that it remains somewhat undiscovered," while another hoped the lake would stay "a quiet lake with protection of shore habitat and wildlife." A long-time resident captured the prevailing sentiment: "I hope it is as clean and no more developed than it is now."

Wake boat restrictions or bans. The second most prominent theme, with many respondents framing this as the single highest-impact action. Proposals ranged from outright bans—"no wake boating; the science has proven this sport specifically damages the lake system"—to more moderate calls for "horsepower limits and no towing regulations." One respondent hoped for "very specific boating rules for our lake: mandatory boat inspections, engine restrictions." Another hoped that "wake boats are banned entirely" and that "sail boats and motorized boats are able to co-exist."

Water quality, weed control, and ecological health. Maintaining water quality, controlling aquatic vegetation, and protecting wildlife habitat were woven throughout the responses. Several respondents connected these to the Dutch Creek issue, with one hoping "that Dutch Creek's contribution to the health of the Lake is recognized and the flowpath of the Creek is restored." Others focused on the lake's biodiversity: "For the lake to remain healthy with fish, birds, beaver, turtles and all the other current aquatic species that help balance the ecosystem."

Better enforcement. A number of respondents focused their hopes on compliance rather than new rules. One hoped for "enforcement of regulations around moorage, docks and buoys," while another envisioned "a management committee representing all stakeholders" that "is influential in governing lake affairs."

Balance and continued access. A meaningful subset of respondents explicitly hoped for balance. One wrote, "that it's used by non-motorized watercraft or at minimum, no wakeboarding," while another hoped simply that "it is a balanced place for recreational boaters and lake health management." One respondent offered a note of realism: "I don't have much hope. Government has no funds or interest in limiting recreation." Others urged that the lake "remains accessible, but largely in its current state—possibly with some limits on motorized watercraft usage."

Question 20: Looking ahead five years, what is your biggest concern for Columbia Lake?

This question received 111 responses, and the concerns expressed closely mirror the hopes in reverse.

Increasing motorized boat traffic. The dominant fear across the responses. Many drew explicit comparisons to Lake Windermere, with one respondent worrying that Columbia Lake could "become as busy as Windermere." Another expressed concern about "people using Columbia Lake instead of Windermere because of over crowding." Wake boats were singled out repeatedly: "wake boat damage," "large wakes disturbing wildlife and human-powered recreation, and chewing up the lake bottom." One respondent feared that "owners of the big boats band together and use their influence" to resist change.

Environmental degradation. Declining water quality, expanding weeds, and invasive species form an intertwined cluster of concerns. One respondent warned of "continued decline towards eutrophication and damage from invasive species." Another cited "shallow waters, increasing weeds, increase of motorized watercraft, lack of

ecological protection.” The connection between water quality and drinking water was also raised: “serious degradation of water quality would cost millions of dollars to mitigate in drinking water treatment systems.”

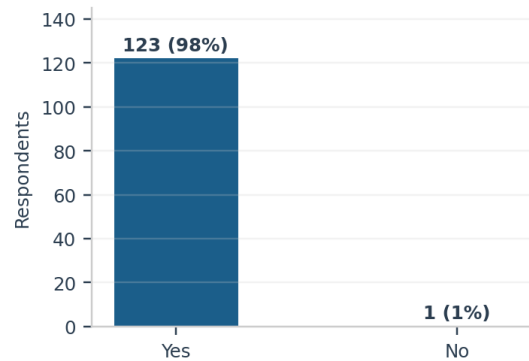
Lack of enforcement. Frustration that existing regulations go unenforced was a significant theme. One respondent worried “that regulations will not be enforced and the Columbia Lake management plan is ignored.” Another cited “pressure from illegal docks and moorings.” A third observed that “there will likely be little or no enforcement and lack of enforceable regulations.”

Community polarization. Several respondents flagged the risk of division. One worried about “community division based on competing priorities,” while another hoped to avoid a situation where “hard core environmentalists and hard core users” cannot “find a middle ground.” From the other direction, one respondent’s concern was “that either lake use becomes tilted to too much power boats like a Windermere, or too restricted by environmental concerns. A balance is needed.”

Climate and water levels. Declining water levels, rising temperatures, and the long-term impacts of climate change featured prominently. One respondent cited “low water levels and rising water temps from climate change that negatively impact aquatic life.” Several connected this concern to the Dutch Creek diversion and to broader watershed management gaps.

Section 7: Perceptions of CLSS

Question 21: Are you aware of the Columbia Lake Stewardship Society?



Awareness of CLSS is near-universal: 98% of respondents (n=123) know of the organization, with only a single respondent reporting otherwise. This is an exceptional level of brand recognition for a community organization and validates the effectiveness of CLSS’s communication and outreach over the years. It also means the Board can confidently assume high baseline awareness when designing new programs, campaigns, or engagement initiatives.

Question 22: In terms of the work CLSS does, what do you think they do well?

This question received 94 responses (75% response rate) and reveals a community that holds CLSS in high regard, particularly for its scientific and monitoring work. The themes that emerged are summarized below.

Water quality monitoring and scientific rigour. By far the most frequently praised activity, cited in the majority of responses. The community views lake monitoring as CLSS’s core contribution and the foundation of its credibility. As one respondent put it, CLSS provides a “credible source of science based information.” Another noted the value of “long term monitoring of lake with data,” while others praised the organization for “testing, reporting, mediating between the gov and stakeholders.” The summer student water sampling program was also specifically mentioned as a valued initiative.

Communication and public education. The email newsletter, website updates, and general public awareness efforts were the second most frequently cited strength. One respondent appreciated CLSS for “keeping us updated” and commended its “website work and information.” Others praised CLSS for its role in educating the public, with one noting that CLSS does well to “inform the public about lake concerns” and “protect sensitive areas.” A longer-term member wrote that CLSS has done “a wonderful job of balancing the enjoyment of the lake for all users.”

Hands-on stewardship programs. Specific activities such as organized weed pulls, the swallow monitoring initiative, and children’s education programs received positive mention. One respondent highlighted “weed pulling, keeping members informed” as key strengths, while another praised “water monitoring, interaction with public (children) etc., invasive weed pulling.”

Community engagement and advocacy. Several respondents recognized CLSS’s willingness to engage with the community and advocate for the lake’s interests. One described CLSS as a “great grass roots organization with reasonable goals that are usually achieved.” Another noted the value of CLSS’s efforts in “listening to stakeholders and regular monitoring programs, trying to keep on top of development approvals.” A particularly thoughtful response observed that this survey itself “demonstrates a willingness of the CLSS to hear perspectives of individual stakeholders without the filter of leaders of the respective communities.”

Question 23: *In terms of the work CLSS does, what do you think they could improve on?*

The 76 responses to this question offer constructive and sometimes pointed feedback that the Board should consider carefully as it shapes the strategic plan. Several distinct themes emerged.

Stronger advocacy for enforcement. The most frequently requested improvement is for CLSS to take a more assertive role in pressing for enforcement of existing regulations, particularly around unauthorized moorage, docks, and boat operation rules. One respondent urged CLSS to improve on “communication of adverse activities and possible enforcement actions,” while another called for CLSS to “work with authorities on enforcement.” Several others specifically asked CLSS to push for “follow up of illegal piers and buoys and roads leading down to the lake and then removal of same.” The sense across these responses is that CLSS has the credibility and knowledge base to be more forceful in this space.

More inclusive stakeholder engagement. A recurring thread urged CLSS to broaden its engagement beyond conservation-minded members to actively include motorized boaters, recreational users, and development interests. One respondent wrote bluntly that CLSS has a “very strong anti boat bias” and needs to “support positive boat use and team with Columbia Valley boat owner’s association.” Another asked for “region inclusivity” and questioned whether CLSS is engaging the broader community or only “lake folk polling for their issues.” A more moderate voice asked CLSS to “keep the change and regulation balanced for all recreational parties,” cautioning against “too much reliance on the minority of people that only want the lake for their recreational activities and do not want boating.”

Communication tone and data presentation. A notable cluster of responses cautioned CLSS against communication perceived as alarmist or one-sided. The most specific criticism cited an instance where CLSS communicated a lake depth of 2 metres when topographic surveys showed 2.9–3 metres, describing it as “alarmist reporting” and “a twisting of words to benefit one side.” Another respondent echoed the call for balance: “I don’t like hearing all doomsday—there needs to be a balance of what is happening that is good for the lake as well as areas that users can work on.” Others urged CLSS to “stick to technical work related to monitoring” and ensure that “information needs to be honest, accurate, and science based and not politicized.”

Organizational capacity and sustainability. Several respondents recognized that CLSS operates with limited resources and suggested improvements to its organizational foundation. One noted the need to “reduce dependence on volunteers and find ways to pay an employee,” while another suggested that “priority must be given to retaining volunteers which means employing them in tasks of interest.” Increasing the membership base, improving fundraising, and gaining broader support from local businesses and municipalities were also mentioned. One respondent proposed that CLSS should “merge with LWA and Columbia Wetlands” rather than maintaining three separate lake stewardship groups in the valley.

Weed management and invasive species. Several respondents wanted CLSS to take more visible, proactive action on aquatic vegetation, with one specifically asking for a “better understanding of the increase in aquatic weeds.” Others called for more emphasis on invasive species education and protection, including mandatory boat washing programs.

Question 24: *What would you like to see CLSS focus on in its next 5-year plan?*

This question received 76 responses and represents the most direct community input into the Board’s strategic planning. A thorough analysis of every response reveals seven distinct priority themes, presented below in order of frequency. Many responses touched on multiple themes, reflecting the interconnected nature of the challenges facing Columbia Lake.

Motorized watercraft management, particularly wake boats. This was the single most prominent theme, appearing in roughly one-third of all responses. Respondents ranged from those calling for outright bans—“new regulations

banning wake board boats” and “getting boats over 20hp and personal docks off the lake”—to those advocating for evidence-based restrictions. One respondent proposed that CLSS should “advocate for phasing in horsepower/towing restrictions” and commission an “aquatic life/substrate study.” Another suggested “a carrying capacity study like Windermere Lake did” to “measure what motorized boating is doing to the lake.” A third called for “a suite of best practices for pleasure boating that could be adapted into regulation.” Even respondents who support continued motorized access acknowledged the issue: one asked CLSS to focus on “health of the lake” alongside “management of large wake boats.”

Enforcement of existing rules and regulations. The second most common theme, with respondents consistently expressing frustration that current rules go unenforced. One respondent was direct: “Communication and enforcement of existing guidelines and regulations.” Another called for “implementation of [the] Columbia Lake management plan.” A particularly detailed response urged CLSS to focus on “enforced elimination of unregulated docks and mooring sites” alongside “limiting the numbers of all power boats over a determined horsepower.” Others called on CLSS to “lobby for increased government funding” and put “pressure on government to accept its responsibilities in protecting the environment.” One respondent captured the practical challenge: “Finding/building stable funding to enable employment continuity” is necessary before enforcement advocacy can be sustained.

Continued and expanded water quality monitoring. Multiple respondents identified this as the essential foundation of CLSS’s work and urged that it be maintained and expanded. Requests ranged from straightforward—“water monitoring” and “continued collection, analysis and reporting of lake health and use data”—to more specific asks such as investigating “how Dutch Creek is by-passing the lake and going into the river right away and how that will impact the lake in the long run.” One respondent framed this as CLSS’s unique contribution: “State the issues that CLSS believes are important and yearly state progress.”

Public education and community outreach. Education featured prominently, with respondents calling for efforts directed at a range of audiences. One urged “public education and continued research of lake preservation,” while another asked for “community outreach and education without judgement.” A particularly creative response proposed “informative signage about Columbia Lake at shore access points, in The Pioneer, and on other media, in-person events with guest biologists or guided nature walks.” Another suggested CLSS should “increase non-motorized recreational user groups to both educate and gain many friends of the lake—maybe a lake paddle or even hiking group.” The importance of reaching visitors and new residents, not just established community members, was noted by several respondents.

Aquatic vegetation and invasive species management. Weed control and invasive species were identified as urgent action areas. Several respondents were succinct—“weeds and wake boats”—while others were more detailed, calling for CLSS to “try to reduce the large power boats that stir up the bottom of the lake and cut the water plants that keep spreading everywhere.” One respondent urged “mandatory washing of all watercraft with proof” and asked CLSS to “raise awareness that this is one of the most important measures.” Another asked CLSS to focus on “ecology, how to address invasive species; plant as well as aquatic.”

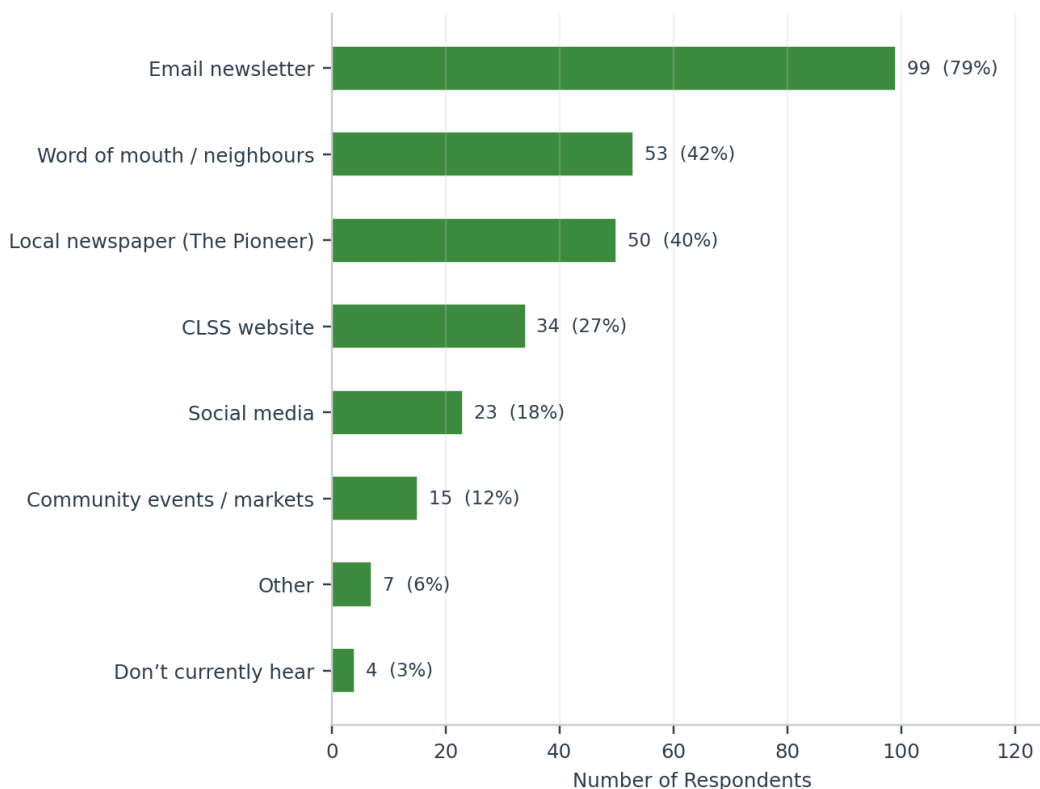
Balanced, inclusive stewardship. A meaningful subset of respondents explicitly urged CLSS to maintain balance in its approach. One asked for “a more balanced plan working with recreational users rather than against them,” while another urged CLSS to “continue striving for a balance between managing lake quality and health with the recreational uses and users of this lake,” noting that “both motorized and non motorized activities are a major attraction and draw for the Columbia Valley.” A third asked simply that CLSS focus on “positive and responsible lake use.” These voices represent an important counterweight in the data and suggest that the Board’s plan will be stronger if it demonstrates active engagement with all user groups.

Organizational sustainability and partnerships. Several respondents focused on CLSS’s organizational capacity. Suggestions included building stable funding for staff continuity, merging with other valley stewardship organizations to reduce duplication, strengthening relationships with First Nations on watershed planning,

increasing volunteer involvement, and broadening the board’s support base. One respondent offered a philosophical frame: “Wait. Patience. The plan will appear with the feedback from this survey and the afterthoughts of those who didn’t give feedback—when they see what has been collated.”

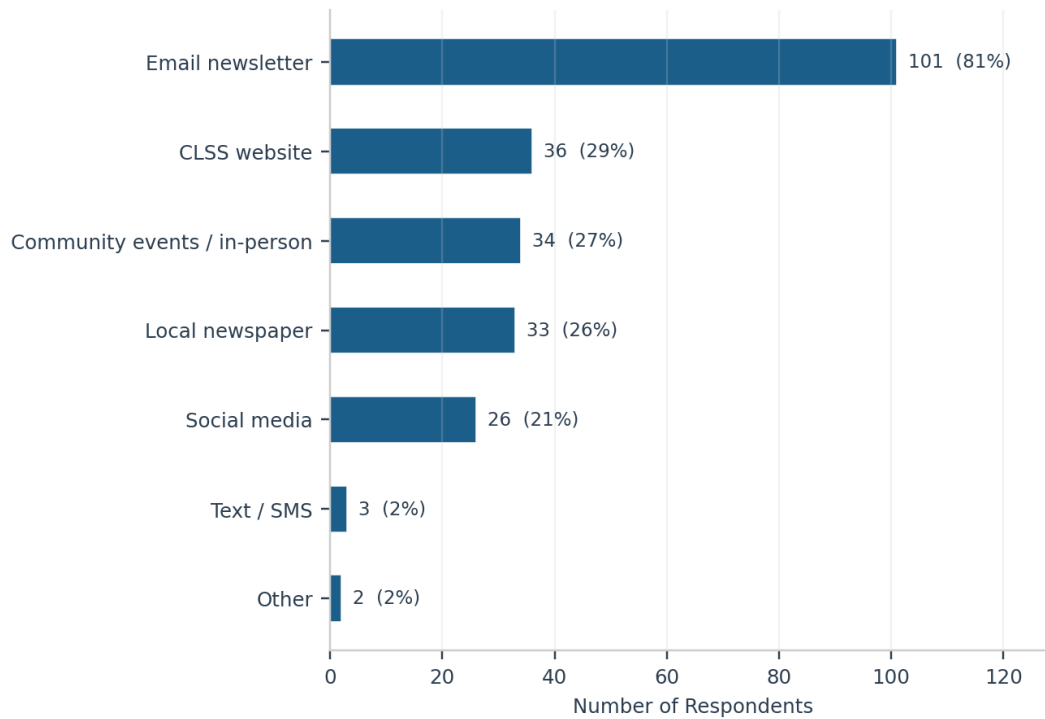
Section 8: Communication and Engagement

Question 25: *How do you currently hear about CLSS's work and activities? Select all that apply.*



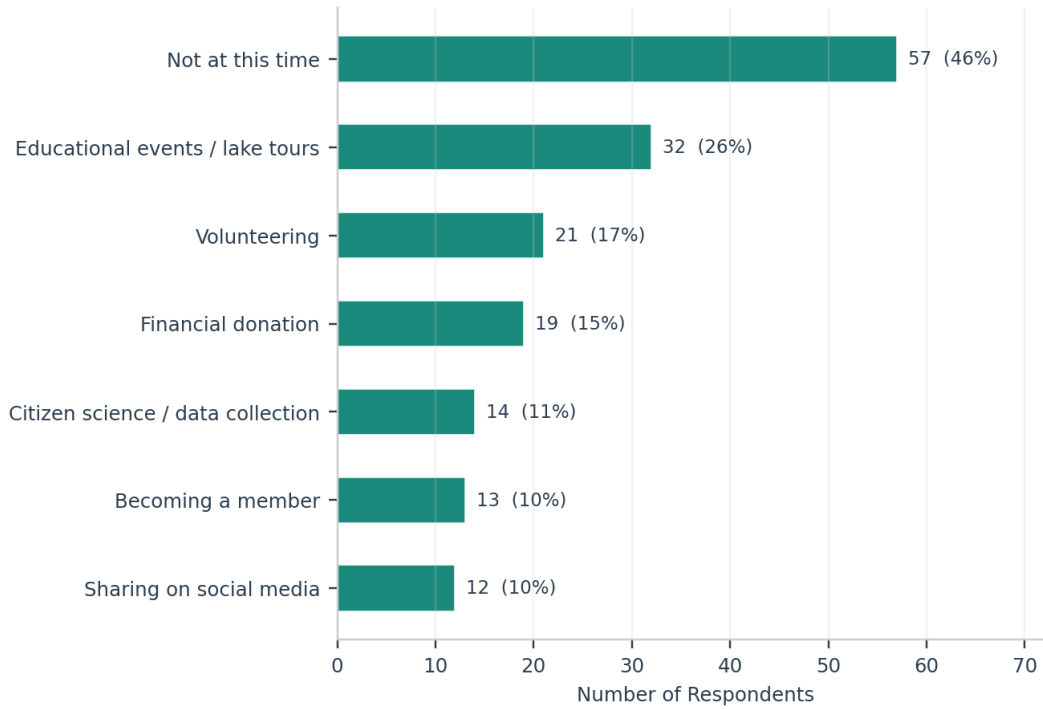
The CLSS email newsletter is the dominant information channel, reaching 79% of respondents (n=99). Word of mouth and neighbours (42%, n=53) and the local newspaper, The Pioneer (40%, n=50), serve as effective secondary channels with substantial reach. The CLSS website (27%, n=34) and social media (18%, n=23) have lower penetration, while community events and farmers' markets (12%, n=15) provide modest additional exposure. Remarkably, only 3% of respondents (n=4) say they do not currently hear about CLSS's work at all, a figure that speaks to the organization's exceptional communication reach within its stakeholder community.

Question 26: *How would you prefer to receive information from CLSS? Select all that apply.*



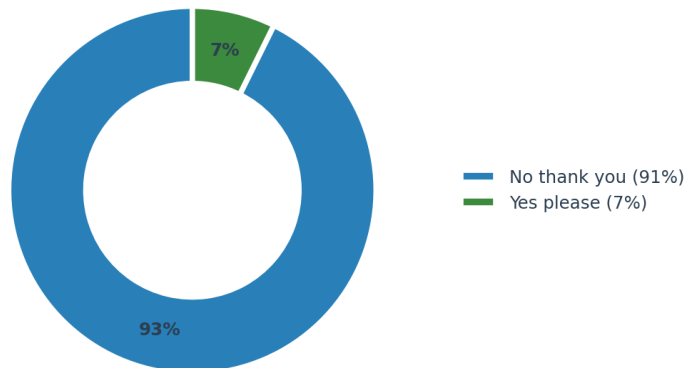
The email newsletter is confirmed as both the most used and most preferred channel at 81% (n=101), indicating strong satisfaction with the current approach. The CLSS website (29%), community events and in-person engagement (27%), the local newspaper (26%), and social media (21%) form a fairly even secondary tier of preferred channels. Text and SMS updates have minimal interest at 2%. The close alignment between current and preferred channels suggests CLSS's communication strategy is well-calibrated to its audience. The modest gap between current website usage (27%) and preferred (29%) suggests the website could play a slightly expanded role if content were enhanced or updated more frequently.

Question 27: *Would you be interested in supporting CLSS in any of the following ways? Select all that apply.*



The largest single group (46%, n=57) indicated they are not interested in supporting CLSS at this time. Among those open to engagement, attending educational events or lake tours is the most appealing option (26%, n=32), followed by volunteering for programs or events (17%, n=21), making a financial donation (15%, n=19), participating in citizen science or data collection (11%, n=14), becoming a member (10%, n=13), and sharing CLSS content on social media (10%, n=12). The strong interest in educational events and lake tours stands out as the lowest-barrier, highest-interest pathway for converting the large pool of aware but passive community members into more actively engaged supporters.

Question 28: *Would you like someone from CLSS to contact you to discuss anything else related to CLSS and/or Columbia Lake?*



Nine respondents (7%) requested follow-up contact from CLSS, while 91% (n=114) declined. While a small number, these individuals have self-identified as highly engaged stakeholders who are willing to invest additional time in dialogue with CLSS and may represent potential champions, advisors, or partners worth prioritizing for direct outreach during the strategic planning process.

Conclusions and Strategic Considerations

The following conclusions are drawn from the full body of survey data and are offered to support the Board's deliberations as it develops the next CLSS strategic plan. They are organized around the key decision areas the Board will likely address in the coming planning session.

1. The Motorized Watercraft Question

Wake boats and large motorized watercraft emerged as the single most prominent issue across the entire survey, appearing unprompted in responses about observed changes, recreational conflicts, environmental threats, five-year hopes, and five-year concerns. The community is not unanimously opposed to all motorized use, but there is a clear and strong signal that wake boats specifically warrant the Board's attention. The data supports considering what role CLSS can play in advocating for evidence-based management of motorized watercraft—whether through supporting enforcement of existing setback and speed rules, commissioning or citing research on wake boat impacts on shallow lakes, or facilitating community dialogue on potential restrictions. With 83% of respondents participating in non-motorized lake activities compared to 22% in wake sports, the affected user base for inaction is substantially larger than the affected user base for new restrictions.

2. Enforcement as the Priority Lever

The community has sent a consistent message across multiple questions: enforce what already exists before adding new rules. Fifty-seven percent prioritize enforcement of existing rules, 48% support enforced regulations as the management model, and many open-ended responses specifically cite frustration with non-compliance around moorage, docks, and boat operation. The strategic plan should consider how CLSS can support or advocate for improved compliance—whether through partnerships with regulatory authorities, community education campaigns, signage, or voluntary compliance programs. This approach has the advantage of being broadly supported across both conservation and recreation constituencies, making it a unifying rather than divisive strategic priority.

3. Aquatic Vegetation and Invasive Species

The increase in aquatic weeds is the most widely observed environmental change in the survey, and invasive species is the highest-rated threat at 62% very concerned. These are interconnected issues with direct implications for water quality, recreational enjoyment, and long-term ecological health. The Board should evaluate whether the current monitoring and intervention approach is commensurate with the scale of community concern and the pace of observed change. This may be an area where additional resources, partnerships with research institutions, or expanded citizen science programs could meaningfully advance CLSS's stewardship mission.

4. Communication: Strengths to Protect, Gaps to Close

The email newsletter is performing exceptionally well as the primary communication channel and should be maintained and invested in as a strategic asset. However, the feedback about communication tone deserves the Board's attention. While a minority view, the perception that CLSS communications can be alarmist risks alienating moderate stakeholders whose support may be critical for building the broad consensus needed to advance enforcement and management priorities. The Board may wish to consider editorial guidelines that prioritize fact-based, balanced reporting while still communicating urgency where the evidence warrants it. The CLSS website and social media represent underutilized secondary channels that could extend reach, particularly among newer or younger community members.

5. Building a Deeper Engagement Pipeline

Despite near-universal awareness of CLSS, 46% of respondents are not currently interested in direct support. This gap between awareness and active engagement is not unusual for community organizations, but it represents an

opportunity the strategic plan could address. Educational events and lake tours, which attracted 26% interest, represent the most promising entry point—low-commitment, high-interest activities that can serve as the first step in a pipeline toward deeper involvement. Citizen science programs (11% interest) offer another pathway that combines engagement with CLSS’s scientific monitoring mission. The Board should consider whether a tiered engagement model—moving people from awareness to attendance to participation to membership—could systematically grow the active supporter base over the plan period.

6. Navigating Competing Interests

While conservation-oriented sentiment predominates in the survey results, a meaningful minority of respondents expressed concern about over-regulation, exclusion of recreational users, and the risk of community polarization. These voices should not be dismissed as outliers. Several respondents explicitly warned against a dynamic in which one side of the debate dominates at the expense of constructive dialogue. The Board’s strategic plan will carry more weight and durability if it is built on a posture of evidence-based, inclusive stewardship—one that actively seeks input from motorized users and development interests rather than working around them. The survey data supports assertive action on enforcement and wake boat impacts specifically, but it also supports pursuing that action through engagement rather than confrontation.

7. Climate Change: Integrate Rather Than Isolate

While 43% support a standalone climate change study, the combined no and unsure majority of 57% suggests this is not a clear community mandate for a dedicated initiative. Rather than a standalone study that may consume limited organizational resources and activate divisive political framing, the Board might consider integrating climate considerations into CLSS’s existing monitoring and reporting programs. Communicating observed trends in water levels, temperatures, ice coverage, and seasonal patterns as part of regular lake health reporting allows CLSS to address climate impacts substantively while maintaining its credibility as a data-driven, non-partisan organization.

This report is respectfully submitted to the Board of Directors of the Columbia Lake Stewardship Society to inform the strategic planning session. The survey data reflects a community that is deeply invested in the health and character of Columbia Lake, broadly trusting of CLSS, and looking to the Board for thoughtful, balanced leadership in the years ahead.