

SOCIAL NETWORKS OF LAKE MANAGEMENT
IN BECKER AND OTTER TAIL COUNTIES, MN: A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

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Management of lakes requires an understanding of both ecological and social concepts. As lakeshores continue to be developed, human lake communities need to be aware of the ecological relationships as well as the interested stakeholders that may play a role as management decisions are made. The focus of this study was to describe the role of communication as a social network of lake management stakeholders in Minnesota using a case study method. The objectives were to describe and characterize stakeholders associated with management of three lakes in west-central Minnesota and to assess the relative activities and roles of government and non-government organizations. Ties among stakeholders were demonstrated using social network analysis. Density, measures of centrality, and frequency were estimated to identify central actors. Density was higher for information exchange than for funding or materials exchange. Central actors identified across exchange networks generally included county organizations, state organizations, federal agencies, watershed districts, soil and water conservation districts, and coalitions of lake associations. Lake associations and lake improvement districts were not as centrally located as some of the other stakeholders. The incorporation of methods from several disciplines may assist lake communities and land managers with lake management decisions. Throughout the decades, increasing pressures on these scarce resources has led to an increase in the number of rules and regulations placed on lakeshore owners. As agencies with differing objectives and missions continue to implement regulations due to changing needs and as special interest groups lobby for or against standards, lake

communities need to be able to recognize the role they have in the management decision-making process. By recognizing the roles and positions of organizations within the network, conflict, collaboration, and changes in management needs, a better decision-making process can be achieved in lake management.