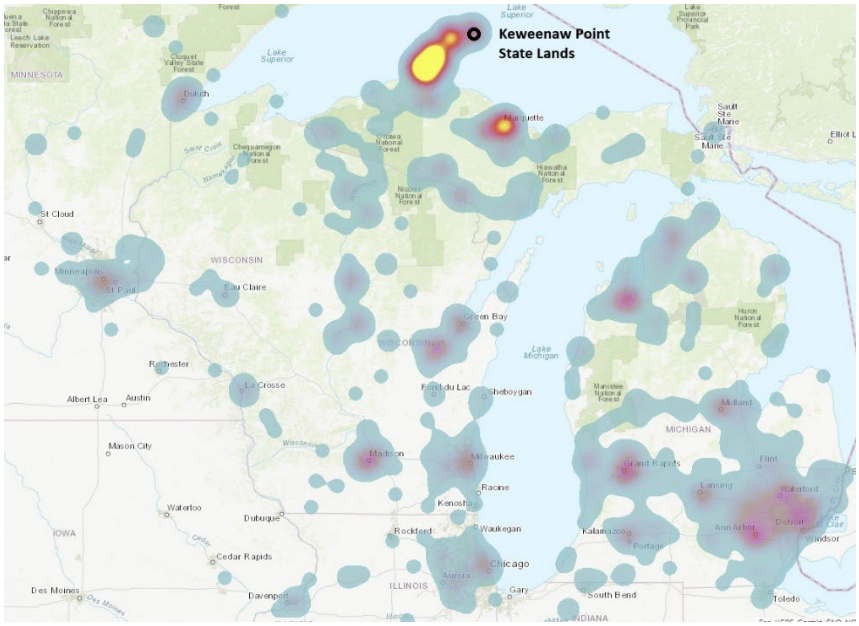
Keweenaw Point State Lands
General Management Plan

Summary of Public Input Survey

The planning team conducted an online survey to gather input from those who use the state lands. This approach provides a convenient way for those who have access to the internet to provide feedback, though it is not designed to be statistically representative of Keweenaw Point state lands users or uses, as respondents self-select. The online survey provides valuable information about what certain individuals or groups (those who are likely to receive DNR communication about the survey and are motivated to comment) hope to see in the property's future management.

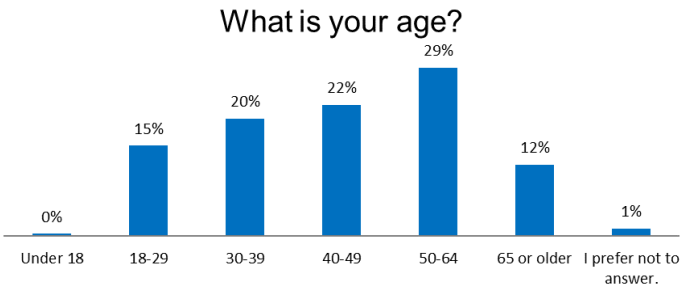


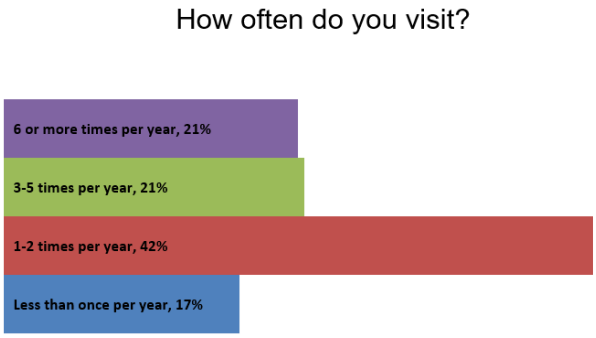
Map depicting the zip code of survey respondents' primary residence. Brighter colors represent a greater concentration of respondents. A small number of respondents are located beyond the map extents. The majority of respondents were from the Keweenaw Peninsula.

The survey was advertised to a diverse range of people through various means. The survey press release was sent to subscribers of Michigan's Trails or Statewide DNR News (press releases) who answered "Region 1: Alger/ Delta/ Schoolcraft/ Luce/ Mackinac/ Chippewa" or "Region 2: Keweenaw/ Houghton/ Ontonagon/ Baraga/ Marquette/ Gogebic/ Iron/ Dickinson/ Menominee" to "Which areas of the state would you like to receive regional information from?" (32,068 recipients). In addition, the survey invitation was sent to 11,981 individuals who had registered to camp at Fort Wilkins Historic State Park. It was also sent to stakeholders identified by the planning team.

Responses were collected from October 15, 2024, through November 24, 2024. During the collection period, 1,752 people submitted responses to the survey. Of those respondents, 1,654 (94%) have visited the Keweenaw Point state lands and went on to answer the remainder of the questions in the survey. Of those that did not visit the property, the top reasons for not visiting were that they intend to but have just not visited yet for various reasons, they don't have an off-road or high-clearance vehicle to access the lands, or they didn't know about the lands. They were also asked what improvements or changes to the lands would make them more likely to visit in the future. Responses included expanded trail systems for hiking and mountain biking, backcountry and rustic camping opportunities, and others. There were some respondents wanting expanded access, especially for passenger vehicles, while others wanted to keep the limited access as a way to preserve the lands.

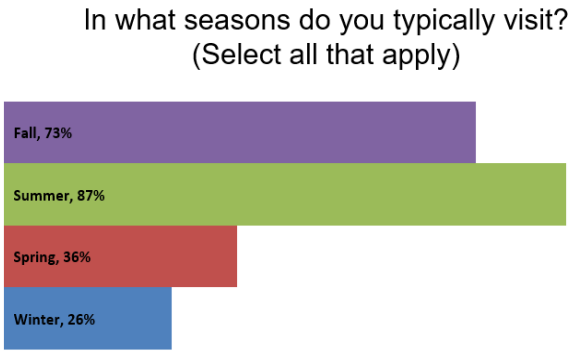
In most online surveys for DNR general management plans, the two age groups with the highest response rates are between 50 and 64, and 65 and older. Respondents for Keweenaw Point state lands skewed slightly younger than that average, with the greatest number of respondents in the 50-64 age group (30%), and the second most responses coming from the 40-49 age group (22%). Most responses reported their race/ethnicity as white/Caucasian (89%), and 9% responded "prefer not to answer". Sixty-one percent (61%) of respondents were from Michigan, with a high number in the Keweenaw Peninsula. Twenty-four percent (24%) reported out of state zip codes, and fifteen percent (15%) did not supply a zip code.





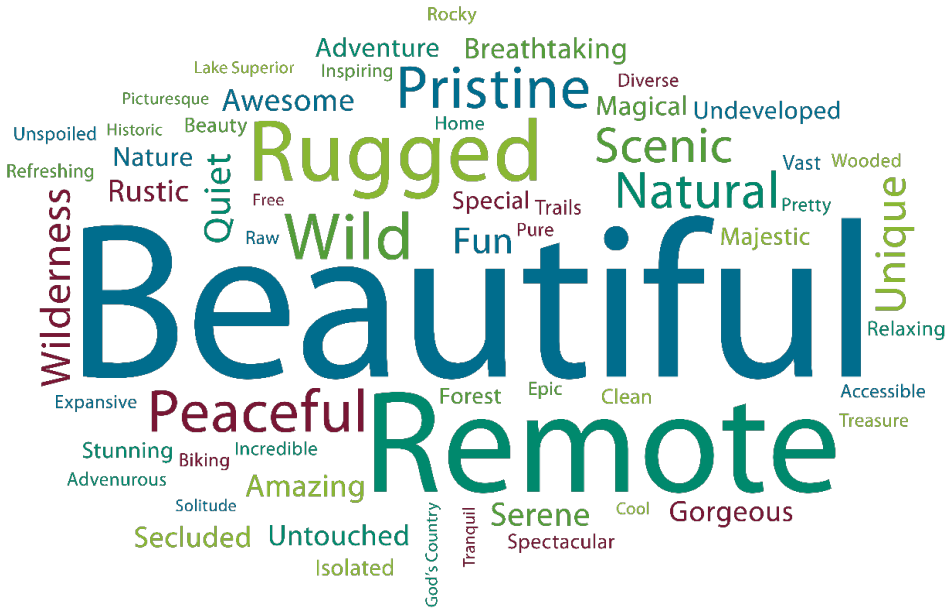
Your Visit

Due to its remoteness, the Keweenaw Point state lands are a destination for many people located throughout the Upper Midwest as well as a place frequented by locals for enjoyment of nature. The majority of respondents visit the lands one or two times per year (42%), but many people visit the lands more often, with twenty-one percent (21%) of respondents visiting the lands three to five times a year, while another twenty-one percent visit the lands 6 or more times a year. Survey respondents were most likely to visit in the summer season (87%), with fall also being a popular time of year at seventy-three percent (73%). The property is less visited in the winter and spring months, with twenty-six percent (26%) and thirty-six percent (36%) of respondents visiting during these times, respectively. Twenty percent of respondents visit year-round.



On the night prior to their most recent visit, many respondents stayed at a campground, either at Fort Wilkins Historic State Park, or elsewhere (30%). Staying at a hotel, motel, or rental cabin was also a popular option at twenty percent (20%), while many others stayed in their own principal home (29%).

Respondents were asked what three words they would use to describe the lands to someone who had never visited. The top ten most common words were beautiful, remote, rugged, wild, peaceful, pristine, natural, scenic, unique, and wilderness. The word cloud below shows the top 60 most frequently mentioned words, with the increasing size of the word indicating a more frequent response.



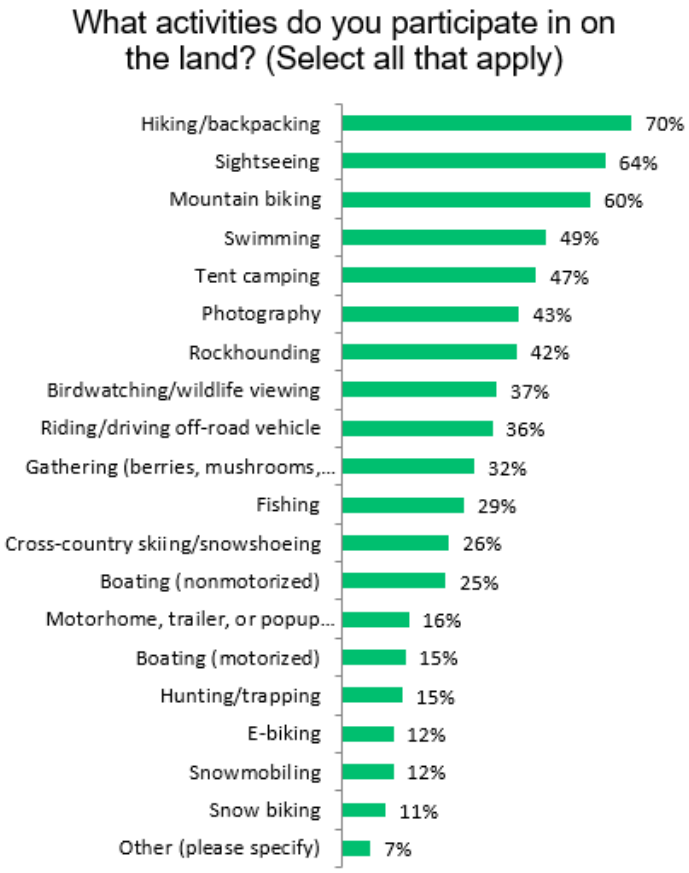
Respondents were asked to rank how important various factors are in their decision to visit the Keweenaw Point state lands on a scale from very important (5) to not at all important (1), with the weighted average calculated accordingly. Respondents valued access to Lake Superior and visiting a remote, rugged, secluded area the highest, with values of 4.71 and 4.55, respectively. The lowest ranked factor was access to historic sites, at 3.41.

Factor	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not very important	Not at all important	Weighted Average
Visiting a remote, rugged, secluded area	66%	26%	7%	2%	0.2%	4.55
Historic sites	20%	27%	33%	17%	3.9%	3.41
Lake Superior shoreline	76%	19%	4%	1%	0.2%	4.71
Inland lakes and rivers	38%	40%	19%	3%	0.4%	4.11
Recreational activities	61%	21%	11%	4%	2.0%	4.35
Natural resources	53%	28%	14%	4%	1.3%	4.27
Geology	39%	33%	20%	7%	1.2%	4

The lands are very large and contain several scenic sites, and respondents were asked to specify which specific sites they have visited. The majority of respondents have visited High Rock Bay (83%), Horseshoe Harbor (76%), and the Rocket Range (65%), while only a few have visited Manitou Island (21%) and Hoar Lake (31%).

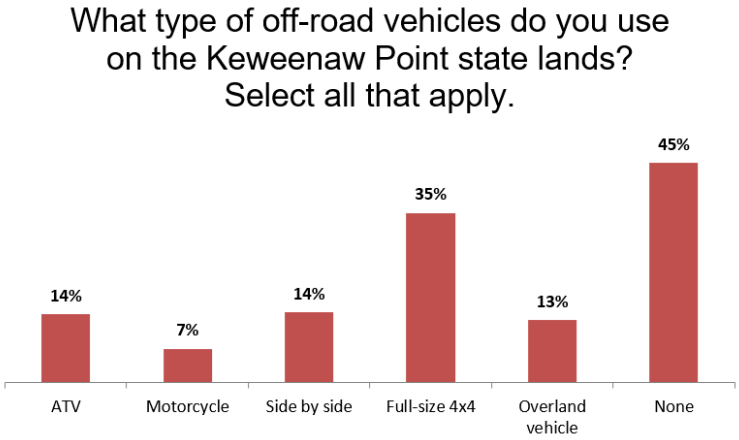
Scenic Site	Response
High Rock Bay	83%
Horseshoe Harbor	76%
Rocket Range	65%
Montreal Falls	62%
Keystone Bay	60%
Schlatter Lake	54%
Fish Cove	42%
Clark Mine	40%
Hoar Lake	31%
Manitou Island	21%

When asked to note all the activities participated in on the Keweenaw Point state lands, most survey respondents reported hiking/backpacking (70%), sightseeing (64%), and mountain biking (60%). Other popular activities were swimming, tent camping, photography, rockhounding, and birding/wildlife watching. E-biking, snowmobiling, and snow biking were among the least popular activities on the lands. Of the responses in the "Other" category, three mentioned equestrian use.



ORV Access

The lands are often accessed using off-road vehicles, with some areas of the park requiring off-road or high-clearance vehicles to access. While 45% of respondents use no off-road vehicle at all, those that did most commonly use a full-size 4x4 (35%). Side by sides (14%), ATVs (14%), and overland vehicles (13%) were also used.



Satisfaction and Future Changes

Respondents were asked to rank their satisfaction with various aspects of the lands on a scale from very satisfied (5) to very dissatisfied (1), with the weighted average calculated accordingly. Results across the aspects were quite similar, but the most highly rated option was respondents' overall experience in the lands (4.3). Ranked lowest in satisfaction was winter access to recreation (3.46). Availability of information and wayfinding, amount of access to the lands, and quality of access to the lands were all ranked in the middle, with values of 3.85.

Aspect	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Weighted Average
Information and wayfinding available	23%	46%	26%	5%	0.5%	3.85
Amount of access to the land	24%	47%	19%	8%	1.2%	3.85
Quality of access to the lands	25%	45%	22%	7%	1.4%	3.85
Winter access to recreation	12%	27%	55%	5%	0.4%	3.46
Overall experience	43%	46%	9%	2%	0.1%	4.3

When asked what they liked most about the lands, respondents frequently mentioned the secluded, remote, wilderness nature of the lands, describing the experience as serene and quiet. Access to the Lake Superior shoreline was also frequently mentioned, as was the existing mountain bike and hiking trail systems. Respondents enjoyed the large variety of recreational opportunities, including hunting and trapping, fishing, snowmobiling, swimming, among others. Five randomly selected responses follow:

What do you like most about the Keweenaw Point state lands?

- Miles of biking trails
- I like that the lands are remote and "off the beaten path" in addition to access to the Lake Superior shoreline.
- The peacefulness and quiet community. Not overly developed
- Keweenaw/Copper Harbor have some of the best mountain biking trails in the Midwest. Please continue to advocate for development of recreational trails AND protecting these natural forests, mountains and waterways!
- The raw, untamed beauty.

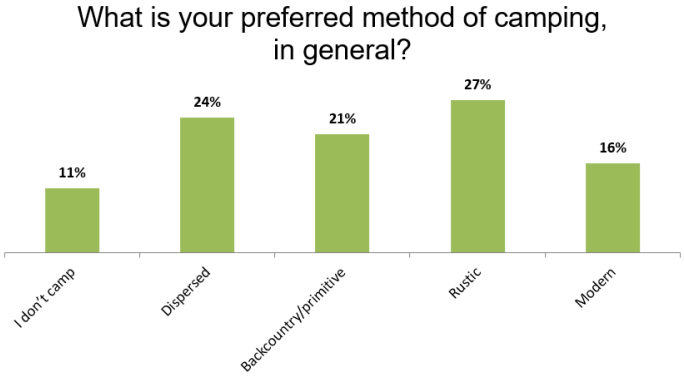
The majority of respondents (61%) specified that they had changes that they would like to see made to the lands. The expansion of trail systems, especially for mountain biking, was very frequently mentioned, along with expanded rustic and backcountry camping opportunities. Others wanted more regulation over the camping. More facilities, including wayfinding, information signage, and bathrooms were also mentioned. Respondents seemed to be split on access road improvements, with some wanting expanded/improved access roads to allow a more diverse community of people to access the lands, while others wanted to leave the roads as-is, or restrict motorized vehicle use in order to control overcrowding and to protect the land.

Respondents were asked to rank their opinion on potential management strategies for the lands on a scale from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1), with the weighted average calculated accordingly. The highest rated strategy was the desire to keep the lands the way they are and maintain the wild character (4.34), followed by the addition of rules and enforcement to protect the land (3.86). The least popular strategy was proposing better access and amenities throughout the lands (2.68), but support was fairly high for the addition of basic amenities such as parking areas and vault toilets (3.4).

Potential Management Strategy	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Weighted Average
Keep the lands the way they are and maintain the wild character.	54%	30%	12%	4%	0.4%	4.34
The lands need basic amenities such as parking areas and vault toilets.	17%	39%	21%	12%	11%	3.4
The lands need rules and enforcement to protect the land.	33%	38%	18%	7%	5%	3.86
The lands need some more developed areas but most of the land should remain wild.	21%	27%	20%	20%	13%	3.23
There should be better access and amenities throughout the area.	6%	18%	31%	26%	19%	2.68

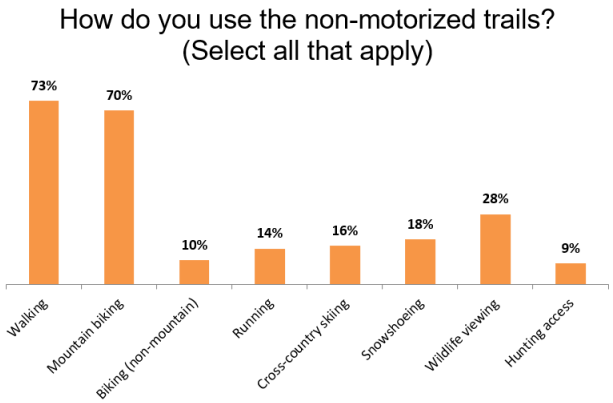
Camping

Respondents were asked what their preferred method of camping was, in general, and the most popular response was rustic camping at twenty-seven percent (27%). This was followed by dispersed camping and backcountry/primitive camping, with twenty-four percent (24%) and twenty-one percent (21%) of respondents choosing these options, respectively. Sixteen percent (16%) of respondents preferred modern camping, while eleven percent (11%) specified that they don't camp.



Non-Motorized Trails

Over three quarters of respondents (83%) have used the non-motorized trails at the Keweenaw Point state lands. Respondents were asked to rank their satisfaction with the trails on a scale from very satisfied (5) to very dissatisfied (1), with the weighted average calculated at 4.33. The greatest number of respondents were either very satisfied (46%) or satisfied (43%).



The most common uses on the trails are walking and mountain biking, with seventy-three percent (73%) and seventy percent (70%) of respondents using the trails for these purposes, respectively. Other trail uses are not as popular but still receive regular use, such as wildlife viewing (28%), snowshoeing (18%),

cross-country skiing (16%) and running (14%). The least common use for the trails that was listed in the survey was hunting access, at nine percent (9%).

When asked to describe what they like the most about the trails, there were a variety of responses. Several respondents mentioned the variety of natural terrain features along the trails that keep them interesting and challenging without being overwhelming. Respondents also liked the rugged nature of the trails, sporting great views of the Lake Superior shoreline without interfering with the landscape character. They liked how well-maintained and marked the trails were, providing an easy and simple user experience. Five randomly selected responses follow:

What do you like most about the trails?

- The Copper Harbor Trails are some of the best in the U.S. From the original Fat Tire Labor Day Race the trails represent the soul and flow of mountain biking.
- Flow, access to beautiful nature
- Cleared
- The mix of old school rugged and new school flow and the untouched nature all around
- Very fun, beautiful, maintained, fun features.

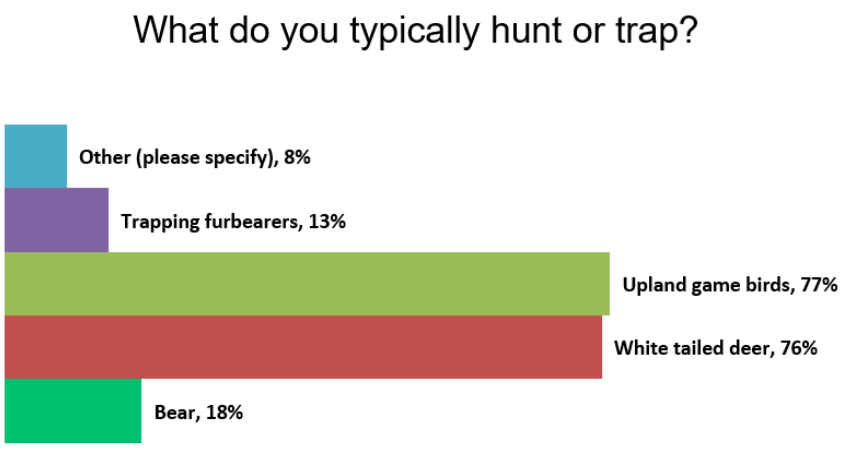
Respondents were also asked if there are any changes that would increase their satisfaction with the trail system in the Keweenaw Point state lands. Results were split, with fifty-two percent (52%) of respondents suggesting changes and the rest preferring to leave the trails as-is. Among the respondents wishing to make changes to the trails, a commonly suggested response was simply to expand the trail system and build more trails throughout the lands. Other ideas included varying the length and difficulty of trails, connecting to scenic points such as Montreal Falls, and adding educational and interpretive signage. Five randomly selected responses follow:

Are there any changes that would increase your satisfaction with the trails?

- Better access to vault toilets and maps
- More one way trails
- Less machine built trails and more hand built. Machine built trails take away from the remote experience.
- More trails and bikepacking accessible campsites.
- Being a hiker, more courtesy from mountain bikers

Hunting and Trapping

The majority of respondents (87%) noted that they do not use the Keweenaw Point state lands to hunt or trap, with the remaining thirteen percent (13%) doing some form of hunting or trapping. Of the respondents who do hunt and trap on the lands, the most commonly hunted game were listed as white-tailed deer (76%) and upland game birds (77%). Hunting bear and trapping furbearers were also sought after on the lands by eighteen percent (18%) and thirteen percent (13%) of respondents, respectively. Some respondents noted other game options that they hunt, mainly waterfowl and small game such as rabbits and squirrels.



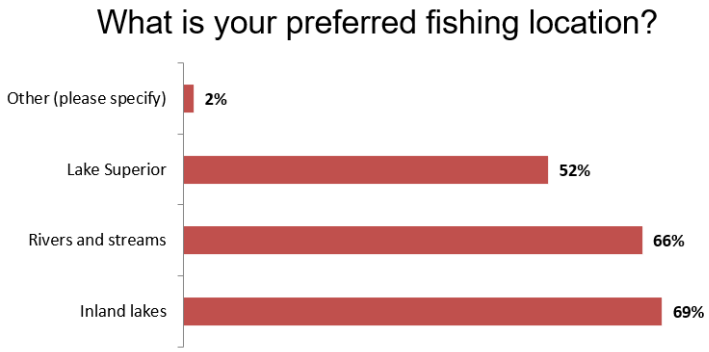
When respondents were asked about what comments they have about hunting or trapping at the lands, many respondents stressed the importance of keeping hunting open across the lands and allowing the continued use of vehicles on roads to aid the hunting process. Some respondents noted that the lands are quite busy with hunters, leading to small populations of huntable game. Five randomly selected responses follow:

What comments do you have about hunting or trapping at the lands?

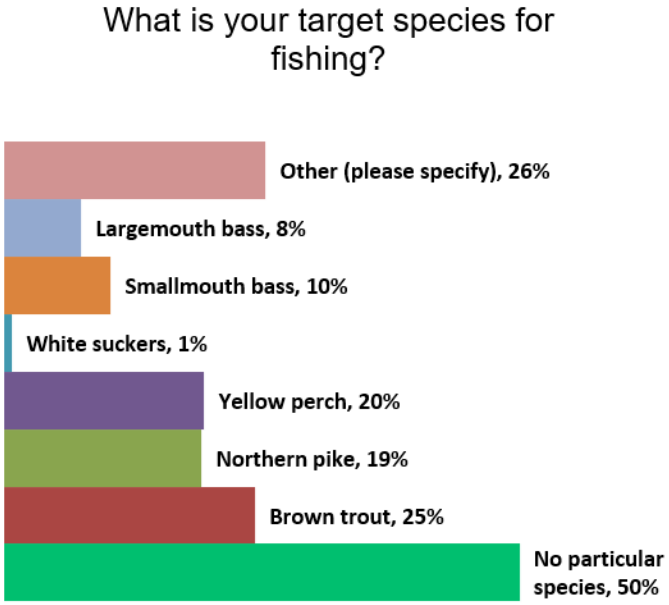
- I enjoy hunting up here as I never see other hunters and I see quite a few birds
- You can no longer hunt up there, too many people.
- Keep it all open
- It's important that the ability to do so be preserved. As these types of areas become more developed, it seems that hunting and trapping in them are always the first casualties of that development. This area represents a significant portion of the public land in the area, and any disruption to its use for those purposes will significantly reduce the ability of the public to participate in those activities.
- Hunting access is very important to me and many generations of outdoors-people who have hunted there.

Fishing

Around one quarter of respondents (26%) specified that they use the Keweenaw Point state lands for fishing access. People that do regularly fish but haven't visited the Keweenaw Point state lands were asked what type of environment and amenities they look for when fishing, with several respondents noting that access to parking and a boat launch is key in their decision making. Clean and accessible waterways in pristine natural settings were additionally mentioned as important draws.



Respondents were asked to rank how important solitude is when looking for a fishing location on a scale from very important (5) to very unimportant (1), with the weighted average calculated at 3.9. The greatest number of respondents thought that solitude was either important (39%) or very important (29%).



There are a wide variety of locations to fish in the vast Keweenaw Point state lands, and survey respondents were given the opportunity to specify their preferred ones. Inland lakes (69%) and rivers and streams (66%) were both highly mentioned. Lake Superior was also a popular fishing location, with fifty-two percent (52%) of respondents fishing there. In terms of how people access the water for fishing, most respondents fished from the shoreline (68%). A number of people do fish from motorized (35%) and non-motorized (39%) boats as well. The majority of respondents are not targeting a specific species (50%), preferring to fish for the experience. Of the anglers that are targeting specific species, brown trout (25%), yellow perch (20%), and

northern pike (19%) were common targets. Several respondents listed other species not on the list that they commonly fish for, with the most mentioned species being brook trout, walleye, salmon, and steelhead.

Comments left by anglers vary; many reported that the rustic nature of the lands makes it a great place to fish, especially in rivers and streams, but others discuss that the fish populations have decreased and stocking the lakes with trout and other species should be considered to improve the fisheries. Some comments stressed their desire to keep fishing open and accessible, but to generally keep the situation as-is as to not overburden the fisheries. Five randomly selected responses follow:

What comments do you have on fishing at the Keweenaw Point state lands?

- Remote/backcountry fishing locations are rare in this state. Let's keep these spots as they are.
- I don't like the new access to Montreal river
- It's destroyed, you go anywhere and if there's an area of shoreline that is accessible there usually several bike camps set up or someone dragged a camper to it and claim it as their own all summer
- Not many fish
- The stream fishing is magical and should remain that way to keep its wilderness character.

Other Thoughts

Finally, respondents could share any other comments they had about the lands and optionally submit a photograph of their experience. Over six hundred comments were submitted, many of which echoed statements made earlier in the survey, such as requesting more trails, especially for mountain biking, restricting the amount of ORV access, and overall keeping the wild and undeveloped feel of the lands. There were also many comments related to how much the respondents enjoy the lands, how fun and iconic the experience is, and about the spectacular scenery and nature of the Keweenaw Point state lands. Five randomly selected comments follow:

Please share any other thoughts you may have on the park.

- keep as much limited access primitive lands.
- Keeping it the same - no need for change.
- Really enjoy the limited access to High Rock Bay and Fish Cove.
- Limited motorized access will keep the experience what it is today. Motorized access should be for safety/extraction and limited sites to allow everyone to enjoy the lands but not extensive.
- improve access

Survey participants could leave a photo of their experience at the Keweenaw Point state lands, and over 200 photographs were submitted! These photographs will be used to bring the General Management Plan to life. The DNR appreciates everyone who took the time to participate in the survey.