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## Cook County Winter Trail-based Visitor Study

Glenn Kreag

Minnesota Sea Grant College Program

Donald McTavish

Bureau of Business and Economic Research



University of Minnesota Duluth



## contents

Summary .....	2
Background .....	3
Analysis of Resident Responses .....	4
Subgroup Analyses .....	8
Section A .....	9
Section B .....	13
Section C .....	16
Report Conclusion .....	20

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Glenn Kreag & Donald McTavish

**Marie Zhuikov**  
*Communications Coordinator*

**Sharon Moen**  
*Editor*

**Debbie Bowen**  
*Information Specialist*

**Nick Zlonis**  
*Graphic Designer*

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For additional copies, contact:

**Minnesota Sea Grant**  
2305 East 5th Street  
Duluth, MN 55812-1445

Phone: (218) 726-8106  
Fax: (218) 726-6556  
E-mail: [seagr@d.umn.edu](mailto:seagr@d.umn.edu)  
[www.seagrant.umn.edu](http://www.seagrant.umn.edu)

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## summary

Minnesota Sea Grant and the University of Minnesota Duluth Bureau of Business and Economic Research conducted the Cook County Winter Trail-based Visitor Study in the last quarter of 2002 (an atypical winter with little snow). Research assistants contacted a random sample of 162 households in Cook County, MN, by phone. A random adult in the home was asked a short set of questions about visitors who cross-country (x-c) ski and snowmobile in Cook County (65% cooperation). Additionally, 96 randomly-chosen Cook County hospitality businesses were interviewed using the same questions (53% cooperation).

The 51 business respondents and the residents, broken into two groups of 31 business owners or managers, and 74 non-business respondents, did not differ much in their perceptions of winter visitors. However, statistically significant differences in views are seen between respondents when grouped by their winter recreation participation (ski only, snowmobile only, both, and neither).

The following summarizes residents' perspectives:

- 65% of respondents were aware of problems that snowmobilers pose for residents; 63% listed a total of 195 snowmobile problems (e.g., noise, driving on private property, driving off trails, speeding/reckless driving).
- 7% of respondents were aware of problems that x-c skiers pose for residents; 6% listed a x-c ski problem (generally, conflicting trail use with snowmobiles and ATVs).
- Respondents perceive that visiting x-c skiers (88%) and snowmobilers (95%) have a significantly positive economic impact in Cook County. Economic, social and environmental costs are attributed to snowmobilers, but not skiers.
- 8% think visiting x-c skiers and 55% think visiting snowmobilers harm the environment.
- 93% felt visiting skiers were respectful of residents; 69% felt visiting snowmobilers are respectful.
- 81% felt that x-c ski visitors had a positive impact overall and 16% felt that x-c ski visitors had a mixed positive and negative impact.
- 36% felt that snowmobile visitors had a positive impact overall and 55% said that snowmobilers had a mixed positive and negative impact.
- 69% of respondents wanted an increase in skiers, 29% wanted no change, and 2% wanted to decrease the number of skiers.
- 42% of respondents wanted an increase in snowmobilers, 37% wanted no change, and 22% wanted to decrease the number of snowmobilers.
- 40% would pay an additional \$10 in property tax to provide improved trail facilities for skiers; 28% would do so for snowmobilers.
- About half of the residents have skied or used a snowmobile in the last two years. On average 1.8 people in the household own x-c skis and households own 1.2 snowmobiles.
- About 70% of residents ski or snowmobile in Cook County and 71% have skied or snowmobiled at least monthly during the snow season.

## background

The Cook County Winter Trail-based Visitor Study is the result of a survey of residents and a survey of hospitality businesses in Cook County, MN. The purpose was to examine issues, perceptions and attitudes toward cross-country (x-c) ski and snowmobile visitors based on their use of winter trails in the county. Although Cook County also has the state's largest downhill ski area (Lutsen Mountain), opinions about downhill ski visitors were NOT a focus of this study.

The final data set includes responses from 105 adults chosen at random from Cook County households which were also chosen at random (65% cooperation rate<sup>1</sup>) and 51 hospitality businesses taken randomly from a complete list of such businesses of record (53% cooperation rate). The University of Minnesota Duluth Bureau of Business and Economic Research in coordination the University of Minnesota Sea Grant Program developed the telephone interview instrument used to survey both residents and business respondents. The Minnesota Center for Survey Research at the University of Minnesota conducted the telephone interviews between October 23 and November 26, 2002.

It is important to note that respondents have permanent residence in Cook County and that the winters of 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 had little snow and thus poor trail conditions. The winter of 2000-2001 had approximately normal snowfall.

The survey asked respondents questions about their awareness of x-c skiers and snowmobilers, their impression of how these recreational activities impact the environment and economy, their interest in increasing or decreasing the activity, and their willingness to invest in facilities for each activity. Respondents were asked background questions about age, gender, and whether someone in their household engaged in one or both activities in the past two years. If the respondent was a manager or owner of a business, they were asked about the impact of each activity on their business.

This report provides results from the survey in two parts: *Analysis of Resident Responses* (an overall picture of opinions from throughout the county and from the perspective of individual biases), and *Subgroup Analyses* (comparisons of results divided into subgroups).

<sup>1</sup> Cooperation rate is the number of completed interviews divided by the number of potential interviews (i.e., contact was made with the selected person).

## analysis of resident responses

The 105 residents answering the survey generally perceived visitors who come to Cook County to x-c ski or snowmobile as economically important but they also expressed reservations about how these activities impact the area.

### Demographics

Comparing respondents' ages against the number of years they lived in Cook County shows that there has been significant emigration (Table 1, Charts 1-2). While over half of the respondents are 50 years or older (52%), only 13% have lived in the county for 50 years or more. The conclusion is that many people are transplants or, if natives, have lived elsewhere and returned to Cook County. The number of respondents was insufficient to analyze whether there were differences of opinion based on length of residency.

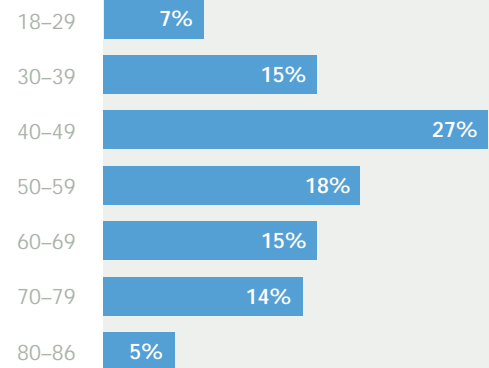
### Awareness and participation

Respondents are quite aware of visitors who are x-c skiing and snowmobiling (Table 1). Sixty-one percent report that they frequently notice x-c skiers and 72% frequently notice snowmobilers. Twenty-six percent of respondents say they occasionally notice x-c skiers while 22% occasionally notice snowmobilers. This awareness suggests that residents probably have opinions about the impacts of these visitors. In addition to being aware of visitor activities, a significant number of respondents participate in these activities. At least 48% of households own x-c skis and at least 34% own snowmobiles (Chart 3).

### Visitor volumes

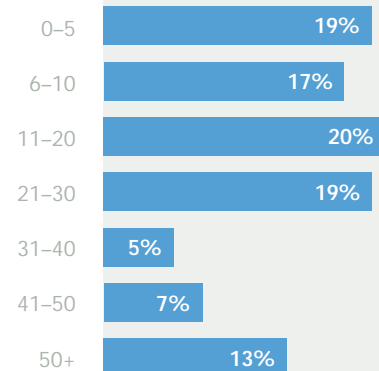
Respondents were asked if they would like the number of x-c skiers and snowmobilers to change. There is a large difference between support for x-c skiers and snowmobilers (Table 1). About 70% would like more x-c skiers, but only 42% want more snowmobilers. Conversely, virtually no one (2%) wants the number of x-c skiers to decrease but 22% of respondents would like fewer snowmobilers, indicating that residents perceive snowmobilers more negatively than x-c skiers.

#### 1 Age of Survey Respondents



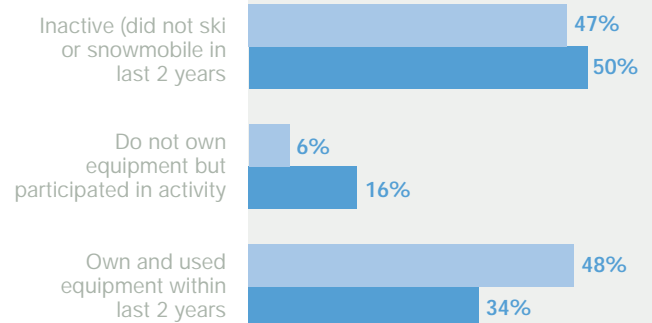
n=104

#### 2 Number of Years Lived in Cook County



n=104

#### 3 Resident X-C Skiing and Snowmobiling Activity



Resident x-c skiing activity

Resident snowmobiling activity

n=105

### Support for trail improvements

As a way to gauge the strength of support for encouraging these activities, respondents indicated their willingness to pay \$10 more in taxes to improve x-c ski trails or snowmobile trails. Forty percent of those surveyed were willing to pay more for x-c ski trails and only 28% indicated willingness to pay more for snowmobile trails. Note that these percentages of support are similar to the percentages of resident participants in each activity (Chart 3). The potential self-benefit of such a tax increase may explain such support.

### Impact of visitors

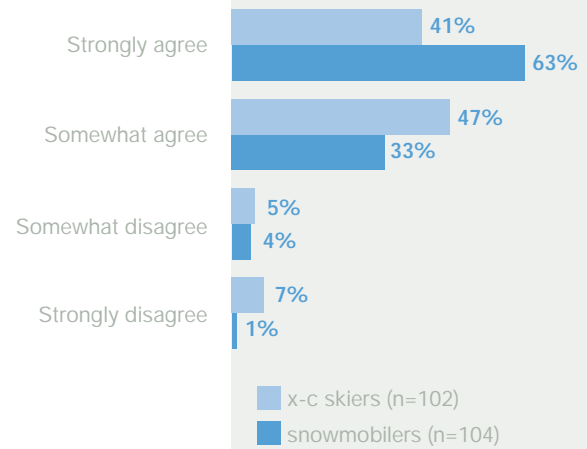
One of the goals of the survey was to learn about Cook County residents' opinions about the impacts (both positive and negative) of visitors who x-c ski and snowmobile. This includes a general characterization of economic, social, and environmental impacts that come from visitor participation in these activities. Generally, most respondents agree there are positive economic impacts from both x-c skiing and snowmobiling – 88% and 95%, respectively (Chart 4). Significantly more people “strongly agree” that snowmobilers have a positive impact (63%) than for x-c skiers (41%).

As for residents' opinion about whether x-c skiers or snowmobilers are respectful of Cook County residents, the differences are more dramatic (Chart 5). Ninety-three percent agree x-c skiers are respectful (including 65% who strongly agree) while 69% agree snowmobilers are respectful (but only 22% strongly agree).

Respondents were asked if x-c ski or snowmobile visitors have harmed the environment in Cook County (Chart 6). Eight percent agree that x-c skiers harm the environment, whereas a notable 55% agree that snowmobilers cause harm. Seventy-one percent strongly disagree that x-c skiers harm the environment.

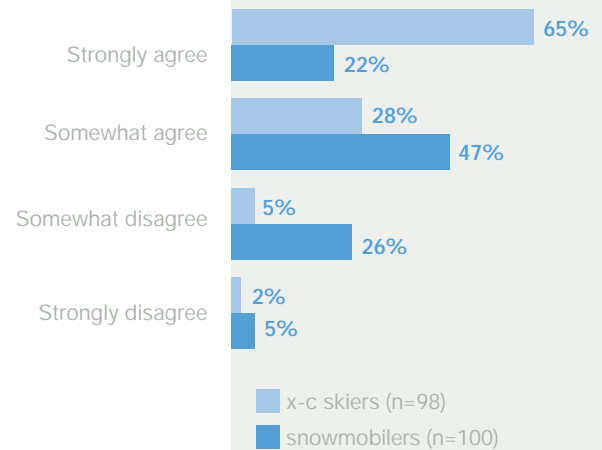
4

### Residents Respond: Economy Benefits from Winter Visitors



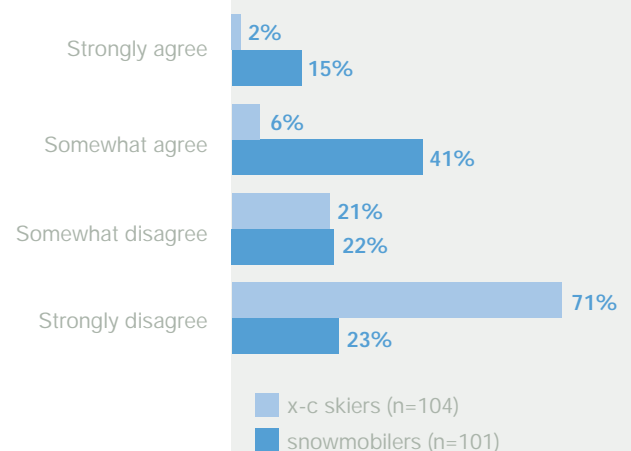
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### Residents Respond: Winter Visitors are Respectful of Residents



6

### Residents Respond: Winter Visitors Harm the Environment



### Problems caused by visitors

Problems caused by snowmobilers were identified by 65% of respondents while only 7% felt that x-c skiers cause problems. Here, both resident and business operator comments are included.

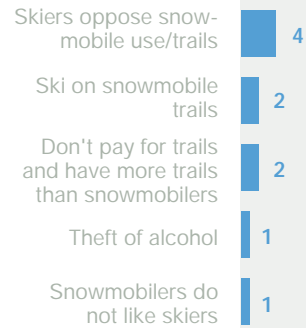
Respondents identified five types of problems caused by skiers, four of the five being related to snowmobile use or complaints that x-c skiers have more trails than snowmobilers (Chart 7). In contrast, respondents cited 26 types of problems caused by snowmobilers but only one of these problems relates to x-c skier interactions (using ski trails). Most frequently identified problems include noise, property or environmental damage, and dangerous or reckless behavior (Chart 8).

### Overall impact of visitors

Respondents were asked to assess the overall impact of x-c ski and snowmobile visitors. There are significant differences (Chart 9). Forty-three percent of respondents felt that x-c skiers have a “very positive” impact on the county with a total of 81% who say the overall impact of skiers is positive. An additional 16% say x-c skiers have both positive and negative impacts leaving only 3% who feel skiers have a negative impact. Residents feel less sure about snowmobilers, with only 16% giving them a “very positive” rating and an overall positive rating of 35%. A majority (55%) feels that snowmobilers bring both positive and negative impacts to the county while one out of ten residents feel the impact of snowmobilers is negative.

7

### Complaints Against Skiers



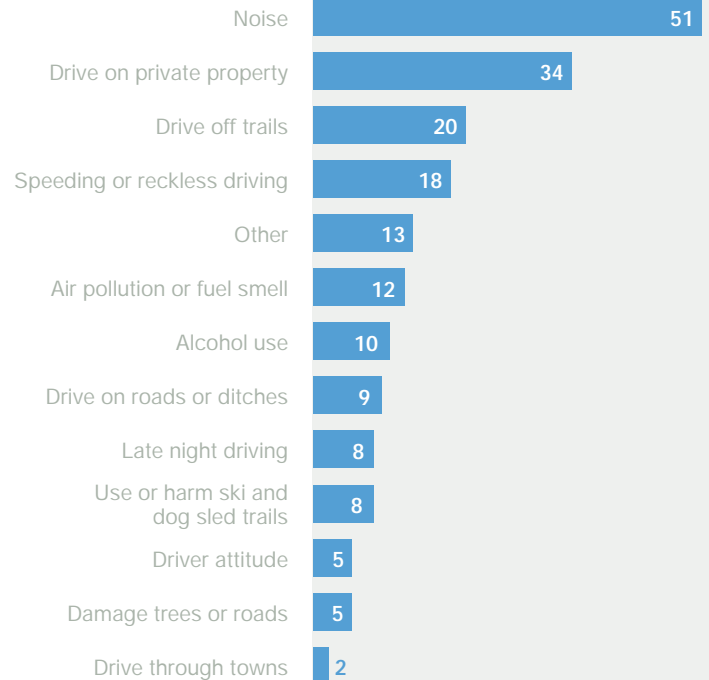
n=156

(Includes 7 comments from resident sample and 3 from hospitality business sample.)

Note: Multiple responses permitted.

8

### Complaints Against Snowmobilers



n=156

(Includes 68 comments from resident sample and 31 from hospitality business sample.)

Note: Multiple responses permitted.



## Conclusions

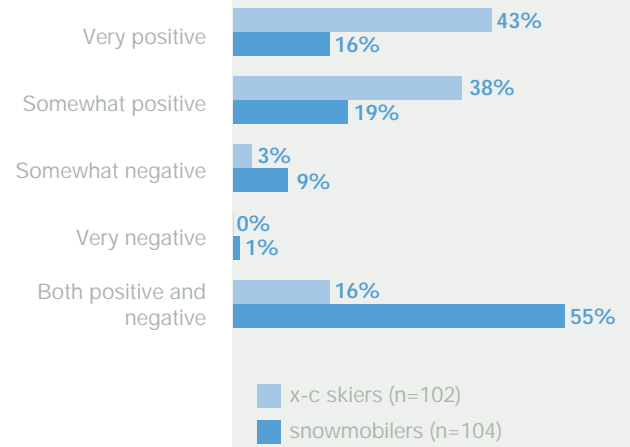
Residents view x-c skiers as generally having a positive impact in Cook County. Respondents feel x-c skiers provide a positive economic impact, although comparatively less than from snowmobiling. Residents feel x-c skiers have relatively minimal negative environmental or social impacts in the county.

Residents view snowmobilers as providing greater economic returns as compared to x-c skiers; however, respondents identified many snowmobiler-related environmental and social problems. It is not possible to determine from this study how the net impacts of these compare. Further research into these topics would be useful.

When developing more opportunities for winter trail activities, the values and opinions of residents should be incorporated in decision making. To understand the net impact of winter visitor activity to the county and its residents, a “triple bottom line” involving social and environmental impacts along with economic gains and losses must be considered. Further, understanding basic philosophical values about developing and promoting motor versus non-motor recreation could help orient the county toward the future most desired by residents.

9

## Residents Respond: Overall Impact of Winter Visitors



## subgroup analyses

Sorting resident respondents based on particular criteria (e.g., business affiliation, winter sport activities) shows that certain perceptions about snowmobile and x-c ski visitors might be influenced by these criteria. In [Section A](#), the survey responses were compared according to the resident sample (divided into people who manage or own a business and those that don't) and the 51 people responding on behalf of hospitality businesses. [Section B](#) defines the perceptions of the residents and hospitality samples with respect to activity type. [Section C](#) segregates residents into recreational groupings of skiers, combination skiers-snowmobilers, snowmobilers, and non-participants.

Sorting resident respondents based on particular criteria shows that certain perceptions about snowmobile and x-c ski visitors might be influenced by these criteria.

## section a. residents', business owner/managers' and hospitality businesses' responses

To reflect general perceptions about winter visitors to Cook County, [Table 1](#) provides results for the total resident sample. The table also compares non-business residents', business owner/manager residents' and hospitality business' responses to visiting x-c skiers and snowmobilers. To accomplish this, the 105 people in the resident sample were sorted into 74 non-business residents and 31 residents who owned or managed a Cook County business (48% owned or managed a tourist-related business). In the hospitality business (e.g., lodging and food service) sample, 86% indicated that a portion of their business was directed towards tourists.

In general, there are no statistically significant differences in the response of these three groups. The only exceptions are in the average age of respondents (non-business residents were about six years older than those in the hospitality business and about nine years older than business-resident respondents), and in how frequently they notice x-c skiers; business people were more likely to notice skiers: hospitality businesses, 80.4%, resident businesses, 77.4% compared with 53.4% for non-business residents. The lack of statistically significant differences suggests that the overall resident sample contains balanced responses. Note that the resident business and hospitality business samples were not combined because the hospitality business sample focused on a specialized subset of businesses and there was no basis for properly weighting combined responses.

### Demographics

Fifty-four percent of resident respondents were women. The average age of respondents is 52 years and, on average, they have lived 23 years in Cook County. Households own an average of 1.2 snowmobiles and 1.8 people per household own skis. About two-thirds of respondents lived in a community (Grand Marais, Grand Portage or others). Among those who lived in rural areas, 43% lived within a mile of Lake Superior.

### Awareness and participation

In general, Cook County residents frequently notice winter trail sports. About 72% of residents frequently notice snowmobiles and 61% frequently notice x-c skiers (the latter varies from business to non-business as noted above).

Two-thirds (65%) feel snowmobiles create problems for Cook County residents and business operators while 7% feel x-c skiers create problems. About 100 respondents cited 195 snowmobiler-related problems. The most often cited problems were noise (26%), driving over private property (17%) and driving off trails (10%). Nine percent noted speeding and reckless driving.

Checking for respondent bias based on participation in these activities, over half of the resident respondents snowmobiled and/or x-c skied within two years of the study. About 70% pursue their activity at least once per month during the winter. Most of this activity by Cook County residents occurs in Cook County (68% for snowmobiles and 71% for x-c skiers). Only 4% say they snowmobile exclusively outside Cook County and 5% x-c ski only outside Cook County. Approximately a quarter pursue the activity both inside and outside Cook County (28% for snowmobiling and 23% for x-c skiing). A comparison of responses based on participation biases is shown in [Table 3](#).

### Visitor volumes

A majority of respondents (69%) want to increase the number of skiers coming to Cook County, 29% want the number to remain unchanged and only 2% want the number to decrease. There is a preference for increasing skiers over snowmobilers. [Table 1](#) indicates that less than half (42%) want to increase the number of snowmobilers coming to Cook County, 37% want no change and 22% want a decrease in the number of snowmobilers.

### Support for trail improvements

About 40% of respondents would be willing to pay an added \$10 in property taxes to provide better facilities for x-c skiers while 28% would do so for snowmobile facilities.

Table 1: Comparison of Residents, Business Owners and Managers, and Hospitality Business Respondents

	Total Resident Sample		Resident Sample				Statistical Comparison		Sig <sup>2</sup>
			Own/Manage Local Business		Non-Business Resident		Hospitality Business Sample		
Percent female	54.3%	(105) <sup>3</sup>	54.8%	(31)	54.1%	(74)	66.7%	(51)	ns
Average age	52.2yrs	(104)	45.8yrs	(31)	54.9yrs	(73)	49.1yrs	(51)	0.006
Average years in Cook County	22.8yrs	(104)	19.3yrs	(31)	24.3yrs	(73)	21.1yrs	(51)	ns
Living within 1 mile of Lake Superior	42.9%	(42)	35.7%	(14)	46.4%	(28)	40.9%	(22)	ns
Business is tourist-related	–		46.7%	(30)	–		86.0%	(50)	<0.001
<b>Frequently notice:</b>									
Snowmobilers	71.8%	(103)	77.4%	(31)	69.4%	(72)	84.3%	(51)	ns
Skiers	60.6%	(104)	77.4%	(31)	53.4%	(73)	80.4%	(51)	0.004
<b>Problems for Cook County by:</b>									
Snowmobilers	65.4%	(104)	64.5%	(31)	65.8%	(73)	60.8%	(51)	ns
Skiers	6.7%	(105)	9.7%	(31)	5.4%	(74)	6.0%	(50)	ns
<b>Desired change in number coming to Cook County:</b>									
Increase snowmobilers	41.6%	(101)	38.7%	(31)	42.9%	(70)	51.0%	(49)	ns
Increase skiers	69.4%	(98)	71.4%	(28)	68.6%	(70)	87.5%	(48)	ns
No change snowmobilers	36.6%	(101)	32.3%	(31)	38.6%	(70)	28.6%	(49)	ns
No change skiers	28.6%	(98)	25.0%	(28)	30.0%	(70)	10.4%	(48)	ns
Decrease snowmobilers	21.8%	(101)	29.0%	(31)	18.6%	(70)	20.4%	(49)	ns
Decrease skiers	2.0%	(98)	3.6%	(28)	1.4%	(70)	2.1%	(48)	ns
<b>Would pay \$10 in property tax to support trail facilities for:</b>									
Snowmobilers	27.6%	(98)	33.3%	(30)	25.0%	(68)	41.9%	(43)	ns
Skiers	39.8%	(93)	46.2%	(26)	37.3%	(67)	56.5%	(46)	ns
<b>Agree activity has a positive impact on economy:</b>									
Snowmobilers	95.2%	(104)	90.4%	(31)	97.3%	(73)	98.0%	(50)	ns
Skiers	88.3%	(102)	83.9%	(31)	90.2%	(71)	94.0%	(50)	ns

<sup>2</sup> Chi-square or ANOVA probability tests – “ns” means the columns were not statistically significant at the .05 level.

<sup>3</sup> The number in parenthesis is the total number of households responding (the basis of the percentage or average).

	Total Resident Sample		Resident Sample				Statistical Comparison		Sig <sup>2</sup>
			Own/Manage Local Business	Non-Business Resident		Hospitality Business Sample			
<b>Agree activity has harmed the environment:</b>									
Snowmobilers	55.4%	(101)	48.4%	(31)	58.6%	(70)	46.9%	(49)	ns
Skiers	7.7%	(104)	6.4%	(31)	8.2%	(73)	7.8%	(51)	ns
<b>Agree visitors have been respectful of residents:</b>									
Snowmobilers	69.0%	(100)	76.6%	(30)	65.7%	(70)	62.6%	(48)	ns
Skiers	92.9%	(98)	96.6%	(29)	91.3%	(69)	98.0%	(49)	ns
<b>Overall impact of activity is positive:</b>									
Snowmobilers	35.6%	(104)	29.0%	(31)	38.3%	(73)	38.0%	(50)	ns
Skiers	81.3%	(102)	80.6%	(31)	81.7%	(71)	86.2%	(51)	ns
<b>Overall impact of activity is both positive and negative:</b>									
Snowmobilers	54.8%	(104)	64.5%	(31)	50.7%	(73)	56.0%	(50)	ns
Skiers	15.7%	(102)	16.1%	(31)	15.5%	(71)	9.8%	(51)	ns
<b>Have done activity in past 2 years:</b>									
Snowmobiling	51.0%	(104)	67.7%	(31)	43.8%	(73)	51.0%	(51)	ns
Skiing	53.8%	(104)	67.7%	(31)	47.9%	(73)	74.5%	(51)	ns
<b>If "yes" to activity</b>									
<b>Location of activity:</b>									
<b>Inside Cook County</b>									
Snowmobiling	67.9%	(53)	81.0%	(21)	59.4%	(32)	80.8%	(26)	ns
Skiing	71.4%	(56)	66.7%	(21)	74.3%	(35)	81.6%	(38)	ns
<b>Both inside and outside</b>									
Snowmobiling	28.3%	(53)	19.0%	(21)	34.4%	(32)	11.5%	(26)	ns
Skiing	23.2%	(56)	28.6%	(21)	20.0%	(35)	15.8%	(38)	ns
<b>Outside Cook County</b>									
Snowmobiling	3.8%	(53)	0.0%	(21)	6.3%	(32)	7.7%	(26)	ns
Skiing	5.4%	(56)	4.8%	(21)	5.7%	(35)	2.6%	(38)	ns
<b>Activity at least once/month in winter</b>									
Snowmobiling	71.7%	(53)	66.7%	(21)	75.0%	(32)	73.1%	(26)	ns
Skiing	71.4%	(56)	61.9%	(21)	77.1%	(35)	68.4%	(38)	ns
Average number of snowmobiles owned	1.2%	(53)	1.2%	(21)	1.2%	(32)	1.6%	(26)	ns
Average number of persons in household owning skis	1.8%	(56)	2.0%	(21)	1.7%	(35)	2.2%	(38)	ns

### Impact of visitors

A goal of the survey was to understand residents' opinions about impacts that result from x-c skiers and snowmobilers. This includes economic, environmental, and social impacts. The economic and environmental perceptions gathered here could be different from measured statistics if they were known. Revenues and costs were not documented through this study nor did it include an environmental impact analysis. Social impacts are less equivocal as they measure opinions.

**Economic impact:** Most agree or strongly agree that snowmobilers and x-c skiers have a positive impact on the economy of Cook County (95% and 88%, respectively).

**Environmental impact:** Over half (55%) agree or strongly agree that snowmobiles have harmed the environment, compared to 8% for x-c skiers.

**Social impact:** While the majority of respondents feel both skiers and snowmobilers are respectful of residents, 93% feel that x-c skiers are respectful whereas 69% feel snowmobilers are respectful.

**Overall impact:** Respondents were asked to summarize their opinions about the social, environmental, and economic impacts of these visitor activities. Feelings about snowmobilers are mixed. Most respondents (55%) think that snowmobilers have both positive and negative impacts while just over a third (36%) feel snowmobiles have an overall positive impact. Ten percent of residents feel snowmobilers have a negative overall impact. Visiting skiers fare better in generating positive resident perceptions; 81% feel skiers have a positive overall impact. About 16% of respondents view x-c skiers as having positive and negative impacts while 3% feel skiing impacts are negative.

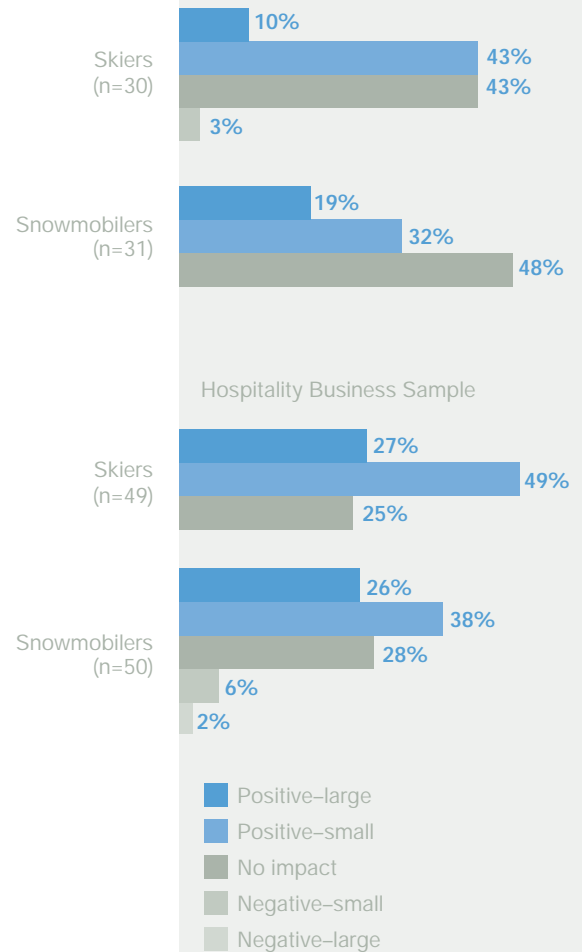
### Impact to businesses

Among people in both samples owning or managing a business, most see a positive impact from skiing and snowmobiling on their business. This apparently varies by the type of business (Chart 10). Just over half of residents who owned and managed businesses felt that these winter activities had a positive impact on their business (53% for skiers and 52% for snowmobilers). Among hospitality business responses, the impacts are more widely spread (76% felt skiers had a positive impact on their business; 64% for snowmobilers).

10

### Businesses Respond: Impact of Winter Visitors on Business

Business Owner/Manager,  
Resident Sample



*Note: Resident respondents identified whether they were also an owner or manager of a local business. This sample includes all types of businesses of which 47% were tourism-related. The hospitality businesses responding included 86% identifying the business as related to tourism.*

## section b. perceptions of resident and hospitality samples with respect to activity type

Table 2 is organized to compare responses about x-c skiers and snowmobilers between residents and hospitality businesses.

### Awareness and participation

Residents are more aware of snowmobilers than they are of x-c skiers (14% are not usually aware of skiers but 6% are usually not aware of snowmobiles). Hospitality businesses are more aware of both activities than residents.

Over half of respondents had snowmobiled within the last two years. About half the residents skied in the last two years as did about 75% of those in the hospitality business. For those who have engaged in one or both of these winter activities, the majority did so only in Cook County. More residents ski or snowmobile in and outside of Cook County than do business operators. Few respondents ski or snowmobile only outside the county.

About 70% pursue their sports at least once a month in the winter and this does not differ markedly between skiers and snowmobilers. People in a hospitality business own slightly more snowmobiles than do residents (1.6 vs. 1.2) and have more members of their household owning skis (2.2 vs. 1.8).

### Visitor volumes

Both residents and businesses note far more problems with snowmobilers than with skiers. Over 60% in both samples say snowmobilers create problems for Cook County residents but only 6% say the same for skiers. A fifth of both samples want a decrease in the number of snowmobilers coming to Cook County compared to 2% wanting fewer skiers. In both groups, respondents generally want more skiers than they want more snowmobilers (Table 2).

### Support for trail improvements

When asked if they would pay \$10 more in property tax to support improved trail facilities, more residents and hospitality business people supported ski facilities than snowmobile facilities (residents: 40% support for ski vs. 28% for snowmobile; hospitality business: 56% support for ski vs. 42% for snowmobile).

### Impact of visitors

**Economic impact:** The vast majority of both groups of respondents feel that skiers and snowmobilers who come to Cook County have a positive impact on the economy (Table 2).

**Environmental impact:** When asked if ski or snowmobile trails have harmed the environment of Cook County, about half of both samples agree this is the case for snowmobilers (56% for residents and 47% for businesses). Less than 10% feel the same way about x-c skiers. In fact, nearly three-quarters of both samples strongly disagree that skiers have harmed the environment (about 20% have this view of snowmobilers).

**Social impact:** Resident and business respondents think skiers are more respectful of residents than snowmobilers. Most agree skiers are respectful but most in both samples are more ambivalent or negative about snowmobiler respectfulness.

**Overall impact:** Respondents see the impact of snowmobilers who come to Cook County as both positive and negative while the impact of skiers is seen as somewhat or very positive.

Table 2: Resident and Hospitality Business Responses to Skiers and Snowmobilers

	Residents		Hospitality Businesses	
	About Skiers	About Snowmobilers	About Skiers	About Snowmobilers
<b>Awareness:</b>				
Usually unaware	13.5% <sup>4</sup>	5.8%	0.0%	0.0%
Occasionally notice	26.0%	22.3%	19.6%	15.7%
Frequently notice	60.6%	71.8%	80.4%	84.3%
	(104) <sup>5</sup>	(103)	(51)	(51)
<b>Problems for Cook County:</b>				
Yes	6.7%	65.4%	6.0%	60.8%
No	93.3%	34.6%	94.0%	39.2%
	(105)	(104)	(50)	(51)
<b>Desired change in number coming to Cook County:</b>				
Increase	69.4%	41.6%	87.5%	51.0%
No change	28.6%	36.6%	10.4%	28.6%
Decrease	2.0%	21.8%	2.1%	20.4%
	(98)	(101)	(48)	(49)
<b>Would pay \$10 in property tax to support trail facilities</b> (such as public trails, signs, parking and shelters at trail heads):				
Yes	39.8%	27.6%	56.5%	41.9%
No	60.2%	72.4%	43.5%	58.1%
	(93)	(98)	(46)	(43)
<b>Agree activity has positive impact on the economy:</b>				
Strongly agree	41.2%	62.5%	56.0%	68.0%
Somewhat agree	47.1%	32.7%	38.0%	30.0%
Somewhat disagree	4.9%	3.8%	6.0%	2.0%
Strongly disagree	6.9%	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	(102)	(104)	(50)	(50)
<b>Agree activity has harmed the environment:</b>				
Strongly agree	1.9%	14.9%	0.0%	16.3%
Somewhat agree	5.8%	40.6%	7.8%	30.6%
Somewhat disagree	21.2%	21.8%	17.6%	24.5%
Strongly disagree	71.2%	22.8%	74.5%	28.6%
	(104)	(101)	(51)	(49)

<sup>4</sup> Bold values indicate a statistically significant difference.

<sup>5</sup> The number in parentheses is the total number of households responding to the question. This is the basis of the percentages.



	Residents		Hospitality Businesses	
	About Skiers	About Snowmobilers	About Skiers	About Snowmobilers
<b>Agree visitors have been respectful of residents:</b>				
Strongly agree	65.3%	22.0%	69.4%	18.8%
Somewhat agree	27.6%	47.0%	28.6%	43.8%
Somewhat disagree	5.1%	26.0%	2.0%	31.3%
Strongly disagree	2.0%	5.0%	0.0%	6.3%
	(98)	(100)	(49)	(48)
<b>Overall impact of activity:</b>				
Very positive	43.1%	16.3%	62.7%	18.0%
Somewhat positive	38.2%	19.2%	23.5%	20.0%
Both positive and negative	15.7%	54.8%	9.8%	56.0%
Somewhat negative	2.9%	8.7%	3.9%	6.0%
Very negative	0.0%	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	(102)	(104)	(51)	(50)
<b>Have done activity in past 2 years:</b>				
Yes, I did	21.2%	13.5%	21.6%	11.8%
Yes, someone in household did	6.7%	8.7%	9.8%	11.8%
Yes, both	26.0%	28.8%	43.1%	27.5%
No	46.2%	49.0%	25.5%	49.0%
	(104)	(104)	(51)	(51)
<b>If "yes" to activity</b>				
<b>Location of activity</b>				
Inside Cook County	71.4%	67.9%	81.6%	80.8%
Both inside and outside	23.2%	28.3%	15.8%	11.5%
Outside Cook County	5.4%	3.8%	2.6%	7.7%
	(56)	(53)	(38)	(26)
<b>Activity at least once/month in winter</b>				
Yes	71.4%	71.7%	68.4%	73.1%
No	28.6%	28.3%	31.6%	26.9%
	(56)	(53)	(38)	(26)
<b>Average number of snowmobiles owned</b>				
	-	1.2 (53)	-	1.6 (26)
<b>Average number of persons in household owning skis</b>				
	1.8 (56)	-	2.2 (38)	-

## section c. comparison of views based on recreational groupings

Table 3 provides data for the resident sample divided by the activities in which their family participates (ski, both ski and snowmobile, snowmobile or neither). Hospitality business responses were not included due to the small sample size and because resident responses adequately represent the views held in Cook County.

### Demographics

Those who neither ski nor snowmobile are most likely to be women (73%) and only 33% of snowmobiling family respondents were women. Families who ski had, on average, older respondents (61 years) compared to families who snowmobile (48 years). Families who snowmobile and ski tend to have more people in their household who own skis (1.9).

### Awareness and participation

All groups report more problems related to snowmobilers than for skiers. Except for “snowmobile only” households, nearly 70% of respondents list problems with snowmobiles. Thirty-three percent of the “snowmobile only” group identified problems caused by snowmobilers. Regarding skiers, the “snowmobile only” group again diverged from the others. In the other three groups, zero to 6% of the respondents listed problems (22% of “snowmobile only” reported skier problems).

### Visitor volumes

As Table 3 shows, the “snowmobile only” group differs substantially from the other three groups. Households in three groups want to increase the number of x-c skiers coming to Cook County by 64-89% (“snowmobile only,” 41%). The reverse is true about snowmobiler visitors where only 19-48% want increases but in the “snowmobile only” group, 67% support increases.

All groups except “snowmobile only” want some decrease in snowmobilers but no decrease in skiers. Among “ski only” households, 43% want a decrease in snowmobilers. A small number of “snowmobile only” households (12%) desire a decrease in the number of x-c skiers, otherwise there was no desire to see x-c skiing activity decrease.

### Support for trail improvement

About 10% of the “ski only” households would be willing to pay an extra \$10 in property taxes to support snowmobile interests and the same is true for snowmobiler support of x-c ski interests. Both groups would be willing to support their own sport. Except within “snowmobile only” households, residents are more willing to support skiing.

### Impact of visitors

Economic impact: All groups agree that both activities have a positive impact on the Cook County economy (Chart 11). For all groups, 86-100% feel snowmobile visitors have a positive economic impact. The groups similarly agree that x-c skiers have a positive economic impact (except for the “snowmobile only” group (67%), which is less certain).

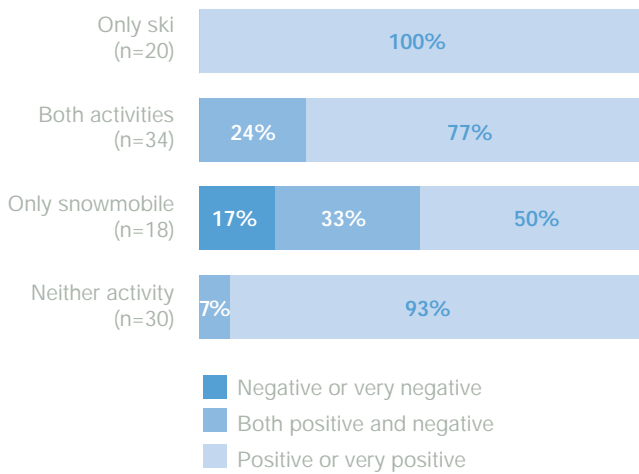
Environmental impact: All groups agree that snowmobiling harms the environment more than x-c skiing (Chart 12). Among those who only ski, 81% see snowmobiling as harming the environment versus 5% who see x-c skiing harming the environment. The difference is somewhat smaller for those who do both activities (57% say snowmobiles harm the environment, 3% who say skiing does). Among the snowmobile only group, the difference is smallest (28% harm by snowmobilers, 22% harm by skiers). Among those who do neither activity, 52% see harm by snowmobilers and 7% see harm by x-c skiers.

Social impact: For each activity group except for those who snowmobile only, a higher percentage agree or strongly agree that skiers are more respectful of residents (Chart 13). The differences are largest in favor of skiers considering those who only ski (100% vs. 50% for snowmobilers) and smallest for those who snowmobile. Among those who do neither activity, 59% agree or strongly agree that snowmobilers are respectful and 93% agree that skiers are respectful.

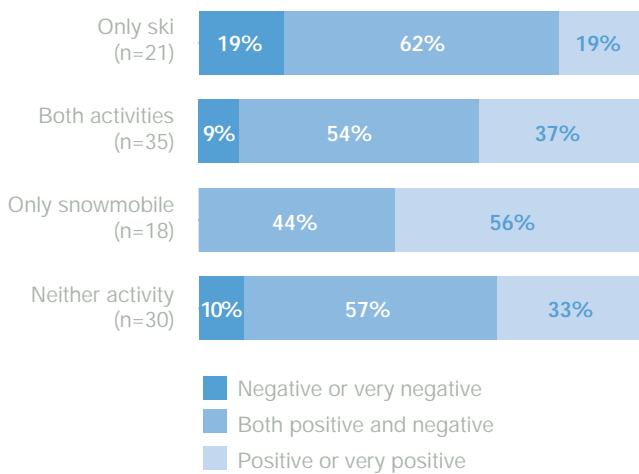
Overall impact: Only the “snowmobile only” group, 55% of them, gave snowmobilers a mostly positive rating in overall impact. Other groups’ support ranged from 19-37%. All groups gave x-c skiing a very positive rating (77-100%) except the “snowmobile only” group (50%). This view is also evident in the percentage of respondents who see each activity as having both a positive and negative impact on Cook County.

Except for questions on impact on the environment and respectfulness, respondent groups appear to be more in agreement about their assessment of snowmobiles (i.e., differences across groups are generally not statistically significant) than they are about skiing. Also, residents who only ski or only snowmobile view impacts of those activities more positively while viewing impacts of the non-participating activity less positively (Charts 14 and 15).

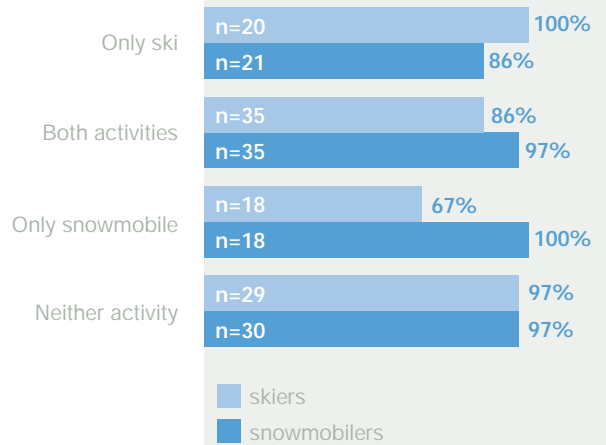
**14** Response by Activity: Overall Impact of Cross-Country Ski Visitors



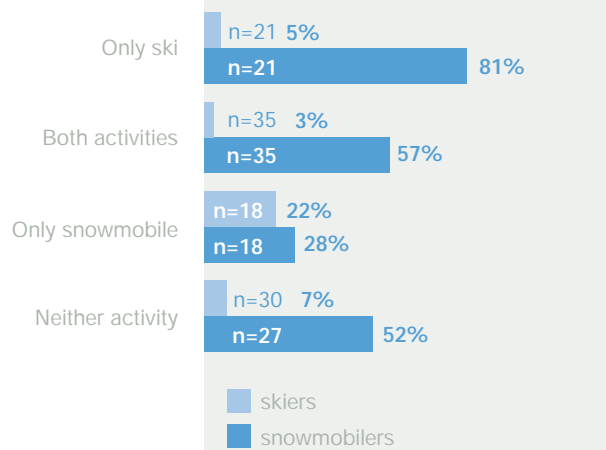
**15** Response by Activity: Overall Impact of Snowmobile Visitors



**11** Response by Activity: Strongly or Somewhat Agree that Economy Benefits from Winter Visitors



**12** Response by Activity: Strongly or Somewhat Agree Winter Visitors Harm the Environment



**13** Response by Activity: Strongly or Somewhat Agree Winter Visitors are Respectful of Residents

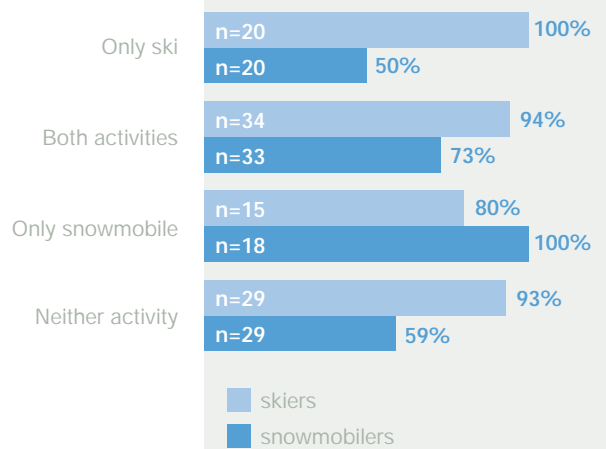


Table 3: Comparison of Responses Based on Skier and Snowmobiler Biases

	Respondent or family only ski		Respondent or family ski and snowmobile		Respondent or family only snowmobile		Neither activity		Sig <sup>6</sup>
Percent female	57.1%	(21) <sup>7</sup>	48.6%	(35)	33.3%	(18)	73.3%	(30)	0.044
Average age	60.6yrs	(21)	45.1yrs	(35)	47.6yrs	(17)	56.7yrs	(30)	0.001
Average years in Cook Co	16.4yrs	(21)	19.9yrs	(34)	28.3yrs	(18)	27.8yrs	(30)	ns
Average number of snowmobiles owned	–		0.9	(35)	1.9	(18)	–		ns
Average number of persons in household owning skis	1.6	(21)	1.9	(35)	–		–		0.001
Living within 1 mile of Lake Superior	50.0%	(8)	37.5	(16)	16.7%	(6)	58.3%	(12)	ns
<b>Frequently notice:</b>									
Snowmobilers	61.9%	(21)	77.1%	(35)	77.8%	(18)	48.1%	(29)	ns
Skiers	71.4%	(21)	80.0%	(35)	38.9%	(18)	44.8%	(29)	0.005
<b>Problems for Cook County by:</b>									
Snowmobilers	76.2%	(21)	68.6%	(35)	33.3%	(18)	73.3%	(30)	0.017
Skiers	0.0%	(21)	5.7%	(35)	22.2%	(18)	3.3%	(30)	0.029
<b>Desired change in number coming to Cook County</b>									
<b>increase</b>									
Snowmobilers	19.0%	(21)	37.1%	(35)	66.7%	(18)	48.1%	(27)	0.026
Skiers	75.0%	(20)	63.6%	(33)	41.2%	(17)	88.9%	(27)	0.005
<b>no change</b>									
Snowmobilers	38.1%	(21)	37.1%	(35)	27.8%	(18)	40.7%	(27)	0.026
Skiers	25.0%	(20)	36.4%	(33)	47.1%	(17)	11.1%	(27)	0.005
<b>decrease</b>									
Snowmobilers	42.9%	(21)	25.7%	(35)	5.6%	(18)	11.1%	(27)	0.026
Skiers	0.0%	(20)	0.0%	(33)	11.8%	(17)	0.0%	(27)	0.005
<b>Would pay \$10 more in property tax to support trail facilities for</b>									
Snowmobilers	10.0%	(20)	32.4%	(34)	41.2%	(17)	25.9%	(27)	ns
Skiers	57.9%	(19)	50.0%	(30)	11.8%	(17)	34.6%	(26)	0.021
<b>Agree activity has a positive impact on economy:</b>									
Snowmobilers	85.8%	(21)	97.1%	(35)	100%	(18)	96.7%	(30)	ns
Skiers	100.0%	(20)	85.7%	(35)	66.7%	(18)	96.6%	(29)	0.014

<sup>6</sup> Chi-square or ANOVA probability. "ns" means not statistically significant at the .05 level of significance.

<sup>7</sup> The number in parentheses is the total number of households responding to the question. It is the basis of percentages or averages.

	Respondent or family only ski		Respondent or family ski and snowmobile		Respondent or family only snowmobile		Neither activity		Sig <sup>6</sup>
<b>Agree activity has harmed the environment:</b>									
Snowmobilers	80.9%	(21)	57.1%	(35)	27.8%	(18)	51.8%	(27)	0.043
Skiers	4.8%	(21)	2.9%	(35)	22.3%	(18)	6.7%	(30)	0.053
<b>Agree visitors have been respectful of residents:</b>									
Snowmobilers	50.0%	(20)	72.7%	(33)	100.0%	(18)	58.6%	(29)	0.015
Skiers	100.0%	(20)	94.1%	(34)	80.0%	(15)	93.1%	(29)	0.005
<b>Overall impact of activity is positive:</b>									
Snowmobilers	19.0%	(21)	37.1%	(35)	55.5%	(18)	33.3%	(30)	ns
Skiers	100.0%	(20)	76.5%	(34)	50.0%	(18)	93.3%	(30)	<0.001
<b>Overall impact of activity is both positive and negative:</b>									
Snowmobilers	61.9%	(21)	54.3%	(35)	44.4%	(18)	56.7%	(30)	ns
Skiers	0.0%	(20)	23.5%	(34)	33.3%	(18)	6.7%	(30)	<0.001
<b>Location of activity</b>									
<b>Inside Cook County</b>									
Snowmobile	–		68.6%	(35)	66.7%	(18)	–		ns
Ski	81.0%	(21)	65.7%	(35)	–		–		ns
<b>Both inside and outside</b>									
Snowmobile	–		25.7%	(35)	33.3%	(18)	–		ns
Ski	14.3%	(21)	28.6%	(35)	–		–		ns
<b>Outside Cook County</b>									
Snowmobile	–		5.7%	(35)	0.0%	(18)	–		ns
Ski	4.8%	(21)	5.7%	(35)	–		–		ns
<b>Activity at least once/month in the winter</b>									
Snowmobile	–		57.1%	(35)	100.0%	(18)	–		0.001
Ski	81.0%	(21)	65.7%	(35)	–		–		ns
Own or manage a business	28.6%	(21)	44.1%	(34)	33.3%	(18)	14.3%	(28)	ns
<b>If respondent operates a BUSINESS in Cook County:</b>									
<b>Positive impact on respondent's business</b>									
Snowmobilers	50.0%	(6)	46.7%	(15)	50.0%	(6)	75.0%	(4)	ns
Skiers	83.3%	(6)	46.7%	(15)	20.0%	(5)	75.0%	(4)	ns
Business is tourist-related	66.7%	(6)	35.7%	(14)	50.0%	(6)	50.0%	(4)	ns

## report conclusion

Developing recreational trail infrastructure commits large strips of natural resources for a substantial time period. Choosing what trail activities are appropriate for any particular area is not merely an exercise in creating economic return. Residents have a legitimate interest in the use and development of local public resources. At the same time, residents must acknowledge that the public resources within the county are mostly held by state and federal agencies and that others outside the county also have a stake in their use. However, a major portion of visitor use of natural resources is channeled through private tourism businesses. Because of this, the county has a major role in guiding tourism development. County government, the tourism industry, local residents and other interested parties have the ability to influence tourism's future direction.

Recreation opportunities that attract visitors create both positive and negative impacts on local residents. It is clear that Cook County residents are aware of many impacts created by visiting x-c skiers and snowmobilers. This study also points out that residents are overwhelmingly supportive of x-c skiers and are highly interested in seeing more of them. While the economic impact of skiers is seen as being comparatively less than snowmobilers, x-c skiers are seen as having virtually no negative qualities.

Residents have indicated many concerns about snowmobilers. Residents feel that although snowmobilers may spend more money than x-c skiers, they create costs, particularly environmental costs, as well as significant unwanted social impacts. Residents are less willing to see growth in snowmobiler use of local trails and a significant minority would wish to see fewer snowmobilers.

Recreation opportunities that attract visitors create both positive and negative impacts on local residents. It is clear that Cook County residents are aware of many impacts created by visiting x-c skiers and snowmobilers.

## key issues

### **What is needed to protect the high quality of natural resources upon which the tourism industry depends?**

- This study, while not specifically asking the question, indicates that residents are highly concerned about preserving the quality of natural resources that they currently enjoy. Respondents infer support for tourism developments that preserve high resource quality and view with skepticism developments that may lower resource quality.
- The cumulative impact of all tourism activities in the county on natural resource quality (recreation, roads, lodging and other tourist services, public infrastructure such as water, sewer/septic, power, and other ancillary support and services including services needed to support the labor pool for the tourism industry).

### **Should the tourism industry modify its marketing strategy for these activities in light of resident perceptions?**

- More marketing for x-c skiing, less for snowmobiling?
- Create an effort to reduce negative impacts from snowmobilers?
- Create ways to improve the economic impact from x-c skiers?
- Determine what should be the marketing goal for each of these activities?

### **Should local officials and government agencies create a strategic long-range plan for these activities?**

- Where should these activities fit into an overall tourism development plan?
- Where does tourism itself fit within the overall planning vision for the county?
- Involve local residents in planning efforts.
- Involve the tourism industry in planning efforts.
- Seek buy-in and support from people interested in or affected by tourism goals.

The tourism industry and government officials can take advantage of this understanding of resident perceptions.

