

Absentee Landowners in the Great Lakes Basin

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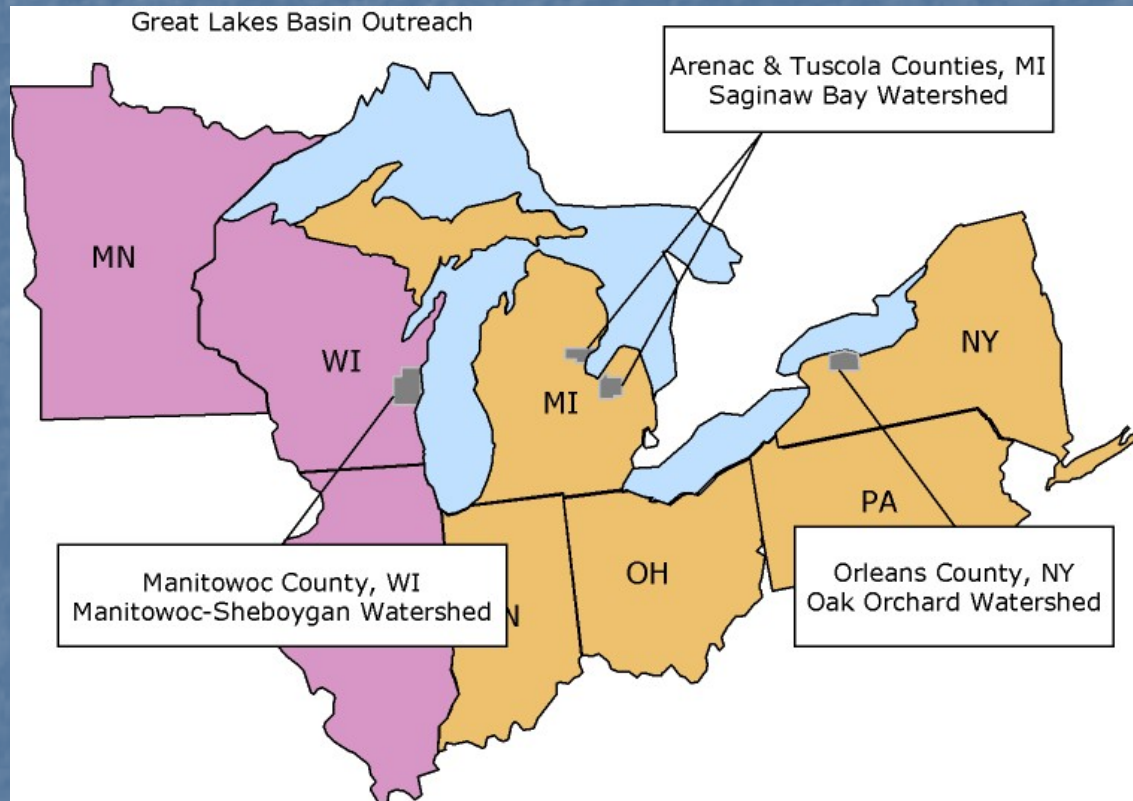
Issue #1

- Non-point source pollution is the primary pollution threat facing Great Lakes with surface runoff a major factor impacting water quality of the Great Lake basin.
- Approximately 48% of landowners in Great Lakes basin do not operate agricultural land they own (ALEOS 1999).

Innovating Outreach to Great Lakes Basin Absentee Landowners

- Goals of Three-Year Project:
 - Reduce the amount of nutrients & sediment that enters the Great Lakes through installation of vegetative filter strips.
 - Improve ability of conservation organizations in Great Lakes Basin to market conservation practices to absentee landowners.

Map of Study Sites:



Study Sites

- 40% of landowners in Wisconsin, 41% in Michigan & 44% in New York are absentee landowners.
- In Great Lakes Basin, owner operators enroll almost twice as many acres in the Conservation Program or Wetland Reserve Program than absentee landowners (AELOS 1999).

Survey Methods

- Survey conducted in Spring 2007.
- Names of absentee landowners obtained through county tax rolls, sorted to include only those living outside of county, double checked by agency staff.
- Survey sent to “primary contact” listed on tax roll or mailed to names on property deed.

Response Rates

- Wisconsin—67% response rate, n=275
- Michigan—66% response rate, n=556
- New York—57% response rate, n=73

- Total N=904

Demographics

Male 74%

Female 26%

Income

Less than \$25,000 13%

\$25,001-\$75,000 46%

\$75,001-\$125,000 27%

Over \$125,000 14%

Average Age 60 years

Method of Acquisition of Land

Purchased 68%

Inherited 30%

Demographics (continued)

Miles live from land

Less than 25 miles	27%
25 to 49.9 miles	17%
50 to 149.9 miles	33%
150 miles or more	23%

Own land with others?

Yes	43%
No	57%

If yes, co-owners

Spouse	44%
Siblings	40%

Activities do on land

Recreational activities	62%
Crop Production	59%
Forestry/timber production	16%

Important topics regarding land (% indicating 'yes')

Soil/Land Conservation	77%
Wildlife Conservation	75%
Water Conservation	66%
Government Conservation Programs	52%

Influences upon decision making on land

(mean based on 1=not at all to 4=a good deal)

Conservation/concern for environment	3.22
Recreational or wildlife value	3.21
Need for income	2.10

Level of activity in conservation programs

Is currently, or has in past been enrolled in state and conservation programs

Yes	24%
No	69%
Don't know	7%

If yes, type of programs (n=253)

Set aside	58%
Cost share	14%
Both	6%
Don't Know	32%

Important Sources of Information when making decisions regarding land

(means based on scale where 1=not important to 4=very important)

SWCD	2.43
DNR	2.41
NRCS	2.34
Tenant	2.24
Spouse	2.17

- Levels of activity in traditional conservation programs low, & no natural resource agency ranks highly as an important source of information for decision-making regarding the land.
- Yet, importance of conservation to respondents shows through clearly—both in terms of topics of importance to them regarding their land & as factors they indicate influence their decision making on the land.

So.....

A closer look at involvement in decision making on the land....

Issue #2

- Ownership of agricultural land by women is on the rise (e.g. 47% of farm acres in Iowa owned by women—Clayton 2009).
- Research on absentee landowners which exists is minimal, outdated, & seldom differentiates between male & female landowners.

Previous Research

Who has control over the land? Owner or Tenant?

- Gilbert & Beckley (1993) suggest a dominant tenant-subordinate landlord relationship is occurring.
- Rogers & Vandeman (1993), Effland et al (1993) both find women tend to participate less in farm decision making than men.
- Constance et al (1996) specifically look at absentee landowners, find 70% or more of landlords give decision making control to renter.

Previous Research

- Carolan (2005), female landlords reluctant to talk about sustainable practices on land.
- Bregendahl et al. (2007) finds female landowners excluded from decision making on land. "Male renters don't think women can make decisions" (p. 20).
- Eells (2008) & Wells (2003) both find maintaining "peace in the family" overrides preferences on decision making on land.

Previous Research

- Eells (2008) suggests female landowners take more of a conservation approach on land than male landowners.
- Salamon (1992:223) study suggests “absentee landowners don’t care about conservation so don’t take care of land like they should.”

Research Questions

- What similarities/differences exist between male & female landowners in terms of demographics, conservation values & behavior, and landowner-tenant relations?
- What factors influence landowners' involvement in agricultural decision making on their land?
- What factors influence landowners' involvement in conservation decision making on their land?

Methods

- Male landowners make up 74% of sample (n=664)
- Female landowners make up 26% of sample (n=227)
- Independent t-tests, Cramer's V, regression and logistic regression used.

Research Question #1

- What similarities/differences exist between male & female landowners in terms of demographics, conservation values & behavior, and landowner-tenant relations?

Demographics (incl. t-tests & Cramer's V results)

	Female	Male
Mean age***	64	59
Importance of land as source of income***	2.00	1.68
Net household income for 2006***		
Less than \$25,000	28%	8%
\$25,001 to \$75,000	44%	47%
\$75,001 or more	26%	45%
Employment status***		
Employed full-time	24%	50%
Retired	57%	39%
*** p < .001		

Demographics (Cramer's V results)

	Female	Male
Marital Status***		
Married	50%	81%
Widowed	32%	4%
How land was acquired***		
Purchased	41%	67%
Inheritance	44%	25%
Own with spouse***	27%	48%
Own with siblings***	55%	35%
Consider/have considered selves farmers	52%	52%
*** p < .001		

Demographics (Cramer's V results)

	Female	Male
Distance live from land***		
< 25 miles	19%	29%
25 – 49.9 miles	16%	17%
50 – 149.9 miles	31%	34%
> 150 miles	34%	19%
Frequency visit land***		
At least weekly	12%	29%
Monthly	13%	25%
Several times a year	36%	33%
Once a year or less	38%	13%
*** p < .001		

Attitudes toward conservation (ind. t-tests & Cramer's V results)

	Female	Male
Influences when making decisions re: land Conservation/concern for environment Recreational or wildlife value***	3.14 2.90	3.25 3.31
% indicating importance of topics re: land		
Soil/land conservation	80%	77%
Wildlife conservation***	66%	77%
Water conservation	64%	66%
Government Conservation Programs	49%	52%
Participation in state/federal conservation programs***	21%	25%
*** p < .001		

Tenant arrangement (Cramer's V results)

	Female (n=134)	Male (n=356)
Type of agreement		
Written lease agreement*	60%	49%
Verbal lease agreement*	40%	51%
Cash rent lease agreement	86%	83%
Crop share lease agreement	9%	8%
Relationship to person farming		
Local farmer	75%	76%
Family member	11%	11%
Friend of family	9%	8%
* p < .05		

Agricultural decisions made on land (Cramer's V results)

	Female (n=134)	Male (n=356)
Crop inputs (fertilizer, seed, chemicals)		
Owner	4%	4%
Tenant	89%	86%
Tillage practices		
Owner	2%	6%
Tenant	91%	84%
Crops grown/rotation		
Owner	2%	5%
Tenant	91%	86%
Conservation practices**		
Owner	21%	36%
Tenant	70%	53%
**p < .01		

Research Question #2

- What factors influence landowners' involvement in agricultural decision making on their land?

Dependent variable: involvement in agricultural decision making on land. Scale from 0 (no involvement by landowner) to 4 (landowner makes all decisions)

Independent variables:

- Farm background
- Visits to land
- Distance from land
- Relationship to person farming
- How land was acquired
- Co-ownership relationship
- Importance of land as source of income
- Marital status
- Importance of conservation/concern for environment
- Participation in conservation programs
- Age & education

Regression Results Predicting Participation in Agricultural Decision Making

	Female	Male
Frequency visit land	.028*	.005
Land farmed by local farmer	.164***	.266***
Acquired through inheritance	.105***	-.005
Own land with sibling	-.141***	.028
Land's importance as source of \$	-.041**	.000
Participated in conservation prog.	.075*	.032
Adjusted R square	.185	.141
*p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01		

Findings

- For female landowners, dynamics shaping involvement in decision-making on their property include relationship-based factors like inheritance and owning land with siblings.
- For male landowners, participation in decision-making on their land relates to who is farming the land, more involved when land is farmed by local farmer.

Research Question #3

- What factors influence landowners' involvement in conservation decision making on their land?

Dependent variable: involvement in conservation practices (0=no involvement, 1=involvement)

Independent variables:

- Farm background
- Visits to land
- Distance from land
- Relationship to person farming
- How land was acquired
- Co-ownership relationship
- Importance of land as source of income
- Marital status
- Importance of conservation/concern for environment
- Participation in conservation programs
- Age & education

Logistic Regression Results Predicting Participation in Conservation Practices on Land

	Female	Male
Frequency visit land	.532**	-.019
Land farmed by local farmer	-1.504***	-1.076***
Acquired through inheritance	-.767**	-.036
Own land with sibling	-2.685**	.325
Own land with spouse	1.777*	.152
Land's importance as source of income	-.615*	.075
Widowed	.478	-.636*
Retired	-.975**	.087
Participated in conservation prog.	-.695*	-.146
Pseudo R square	.281	.172
Log-likelihood	49.419	93.118
*p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01		

Findings

- When focus shifts to solely conservation practices, family dynamics also change and having inherited land becomes barrier for women's involvement in decision making on conservation practices, as does owning land with siblings. This appears to be a non-issue for men.
- "local farmer" is the one power ceded to for conservation decision making on the land. Why?
 - Tenants reluctance to adopt conservation practices on land?
 - Landowners not wanting to disrupt relationship have with tenants? Particularly if have personal in addition to business relationship.

Implications for outreach & future research

- Different approaches for outreach needed based on landowner.
- Should landowners, tenants, or both be focus of outreach?
- Closer examination needed for why involvement in conservation programs has negative relationship with conservation decision making.