

ISLAND LAKE CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN PUBLIC SURVEY RESULTS



1.0 Overview

Island Lake Conservation Area (ILCA), located in the Towns of Mono and Orangeville, Ontario, encompasses 329 hectares, and is one of the best recreational environments in the Credit River Watershed. It is a much-loved visitor destination and local landmark that contains a diversity of habitats and sensitive species. The opportunities and pressures for ILCA are widespread and diverse, and include everything from aging and insufficient infrastructure, financial sustainability, community use and enjoyment, climate change and invasive species management.

Credit Valley Conservation (CVC) is currently undertaking a management planning process for ILCA, which, when completed, will outline the vision, objectives and directions for the next 25 years. To gain an understanding of public perspectives, concerns, and ideas, a short online survey was developed. This survey marked the first activity to engage interested members of the public in the management planning process.

2.0 Survey Design and Schedule

The survey was created using Survey Monkey® and was posted to CVC's website and highlighted on our social media platforms. The survey was open from November 3, 2020 to January 31, 2021. Survey results will inform the development of the management plan, influence strategic directions and help to focus consultation activities.

3.0 Question Summary

The survey, which collected 437 responses, contained 5 questions. The findings from each question are summarized below.

3.1 Origin of Survey Respondents

Survey respondents were asked to provide their postal code to determine what municipality of origin. 77% respondents replied to this question. The most common area of origin was Orangeville (31%), followed by Mono (17%), Caledon (10%), Brampton (8%), Mississauga (7%), Toronto (5%) and Erin (3%) (Figure 1). Under other (19%), survey respondents included those as far as West Elgin in the south-west, Georgian Bluffs in the north, Scugog in the east and St. Catherine's in the south.

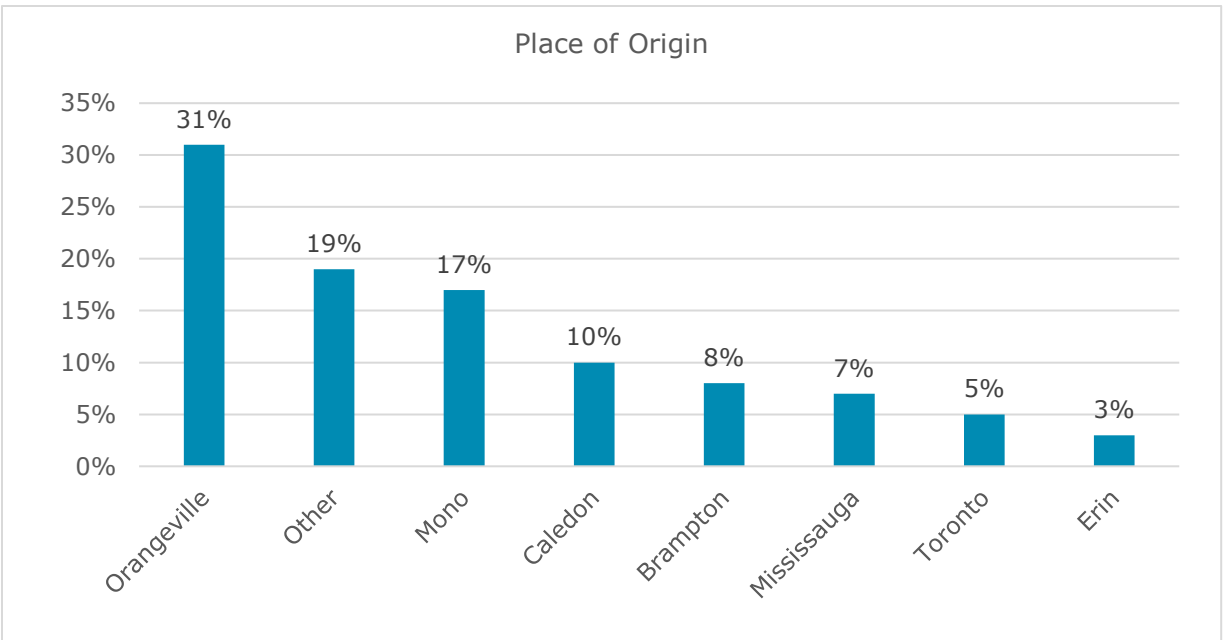


Figure 1. Origin of Survey Respondents

Postal code analysis allows us to understand spatial distribution of survey respondents (local, regional) as well as the proportionally, their place of origin. Postal codes were mapped using UTM coordinates and placed into a Geographic Information System (GIS). Figure 2 below displays the spatial distribution of survey respondents by postal code.

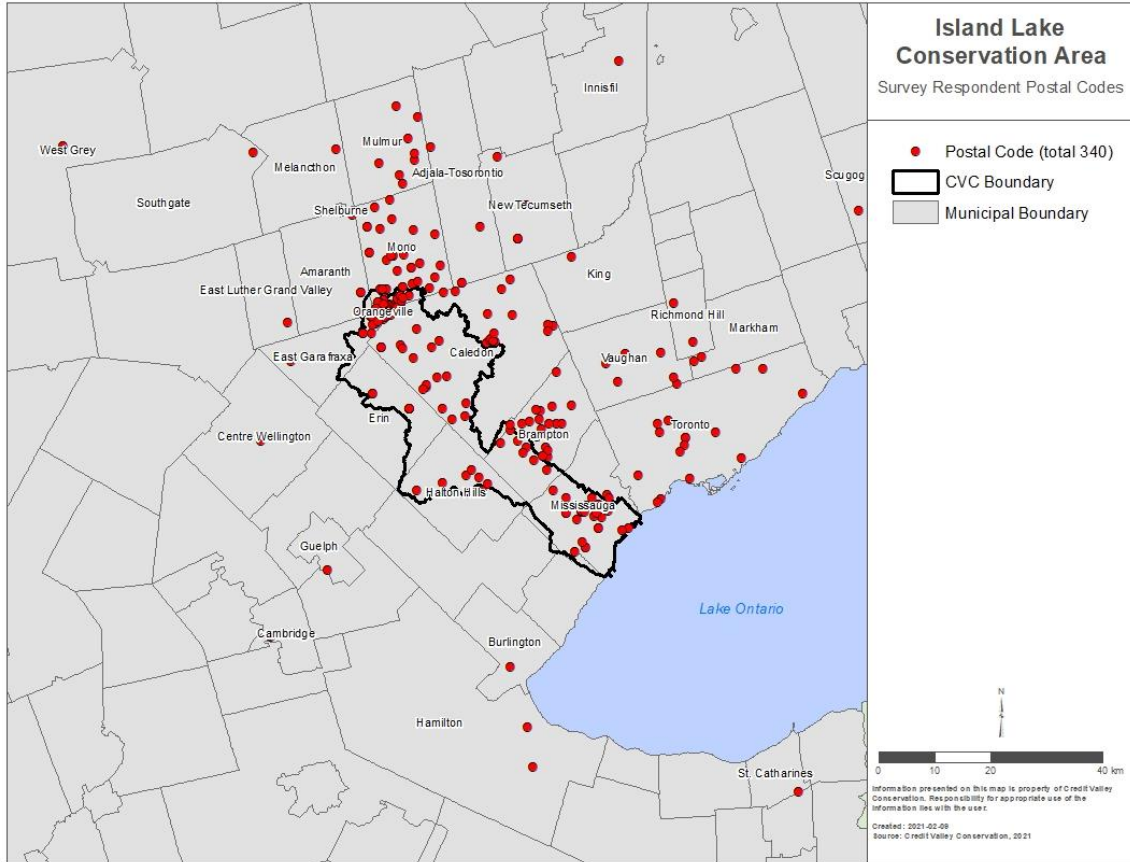


Figure 2. Survey Respondents by Postal Code

3.2 Question #1: How often do you visit Island Lake Conservation Area?

To gain an understanding of how survey respondents are connected to ILCA they were asked how often they visited. Figure 3 shows respondents visitation by frequency.

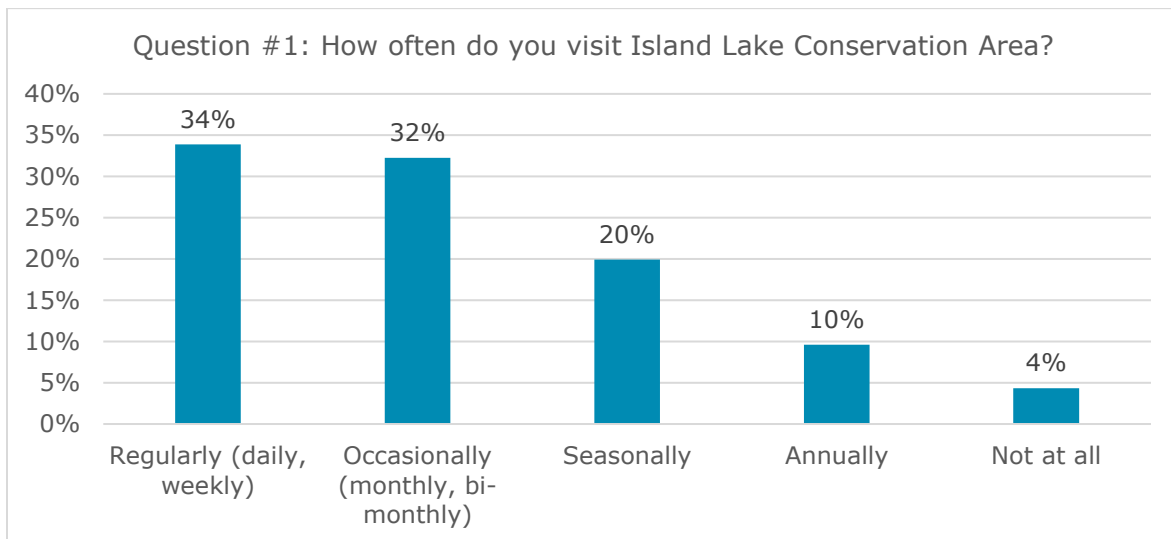


Figure 3. Frequency of Visitors

From the 437 responses, there is a significant proportion of respondents who frequent ILCA regularly or monthly (66%). The remainder either visit ILCA seasonally (20%) or annually (10%). Only a small number of individuals (4%) stated they had never visited ILCA before.

3.3 Question #2: What do you value most about Island Lake Conservation Area?

This open-ended question was intended to learn what respondents' value most about ILCA. 78% responses were collected for this question.

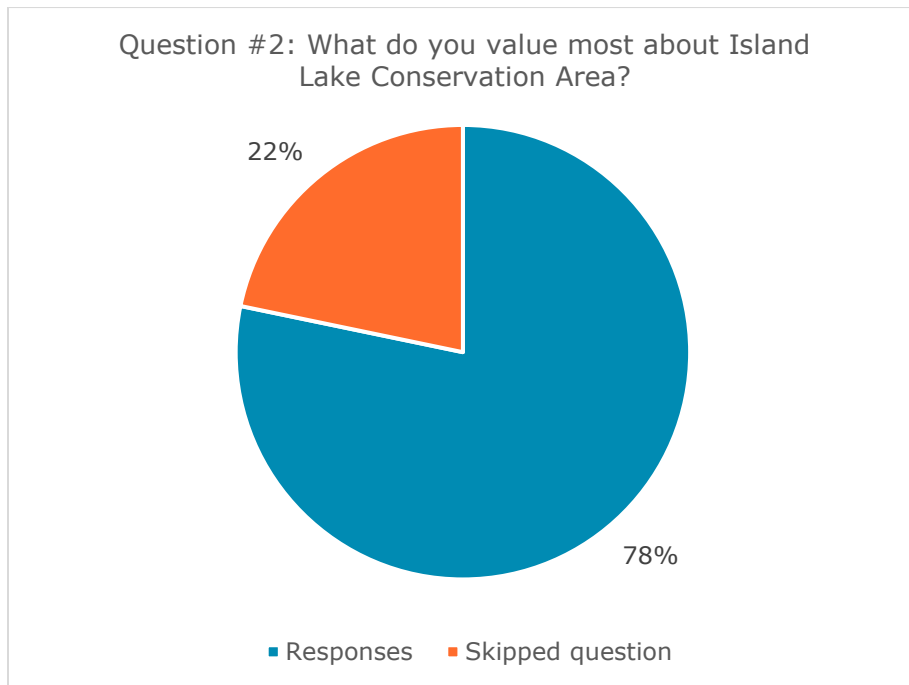


Figure 4. Value of ILCA

Since this was an open-ended question, responses were analyzed and categorized into the following six main themes (Figure 5).

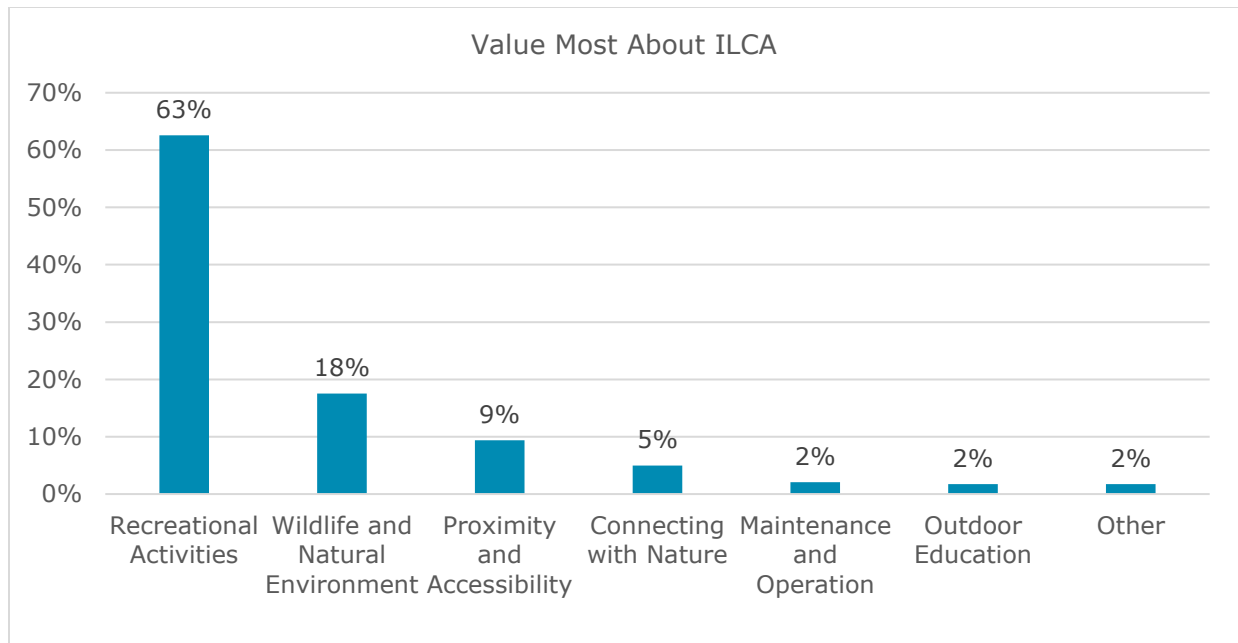


Figure 5. Six themes on what respondents' value most

Recreational Activities

Regardless of visitation frequency, 63% of respondents valued ILCA's recreation opportunities. Further analysis captured five subthemes to get a sense of what was important. The top recreation subtheme shows that 72% value the trail system at ILCA - runners, walkers, cyclists and hikers all use the trail. The second highest subtheme, with 12%, enjoyed the variety of activities available onsite. The remaining 16% value the lake and the ability to access it to either fish, canoe or kayak.

Recreational Activities Subthemes	Count	Percent
Trail System	154	72%
Variety of Activities	18	8%
Fishing	17	8%
Lake Itself	16	7%
Canoe and Kayak	9	4%
TOTAL	214	100%

Wildlife and Natural Environment

18% valued the natural beauty ILCA has to offer including the views, trails, wildlife and natural landscapes. These individuals identified the importance of maintaining the balance of access and the natural environment.

The remaining 18% of respondents valued the proximity and accessibility of ILCA, the sense of connection to nature, how well the site and trails are maintained and the importance of camps and environmental education.

A variety of comments were received, including:

#224: The further you get from HWY 10, the more you feel like you've left the city behind

#417: I love the trails and spend a lot of recreation time there, they are a safe place to run away from traffic and are busy enough that I'm happy running alone. I also bike there with my kids and hike with my dog. The free parking lots are a great bonus. And I really value the free access to the Vicky Barron trail. Thank you for all you do!

#377: The proximity of a natural environment so accessible to Orangeville and the fact this area has been preserved and maintained for the benefit of so many

#372: The trails which take you through natural spaces and over the lake and is a wonderful place to experience a natural environmental close to an urbanizing area.

#368: Having a natural space so accessible near an urban area (can walk or bike to it from town), the quality and condition of the trails, the peaceful setting for meaningful memorials, and perhaps most of all the outdoor education from UGDSB - those are powerful experiences for kids that will stay with them.

3.4 Question #3. Which statements best describe you as a visitor at Island Lake Conservation Area? Other please specify.

890 responses were recorded for this question as shown in Figure 6. It's important to note that individuals had the ability to select all options that applied. The top statement for visiting ILCA was "I participate in physical activity" with 32% of respondents selecting this option. Following physical activity, the next most highly ranked statement selected was "I spend quality time with family and friends" with 24% of respondents selecting this option.

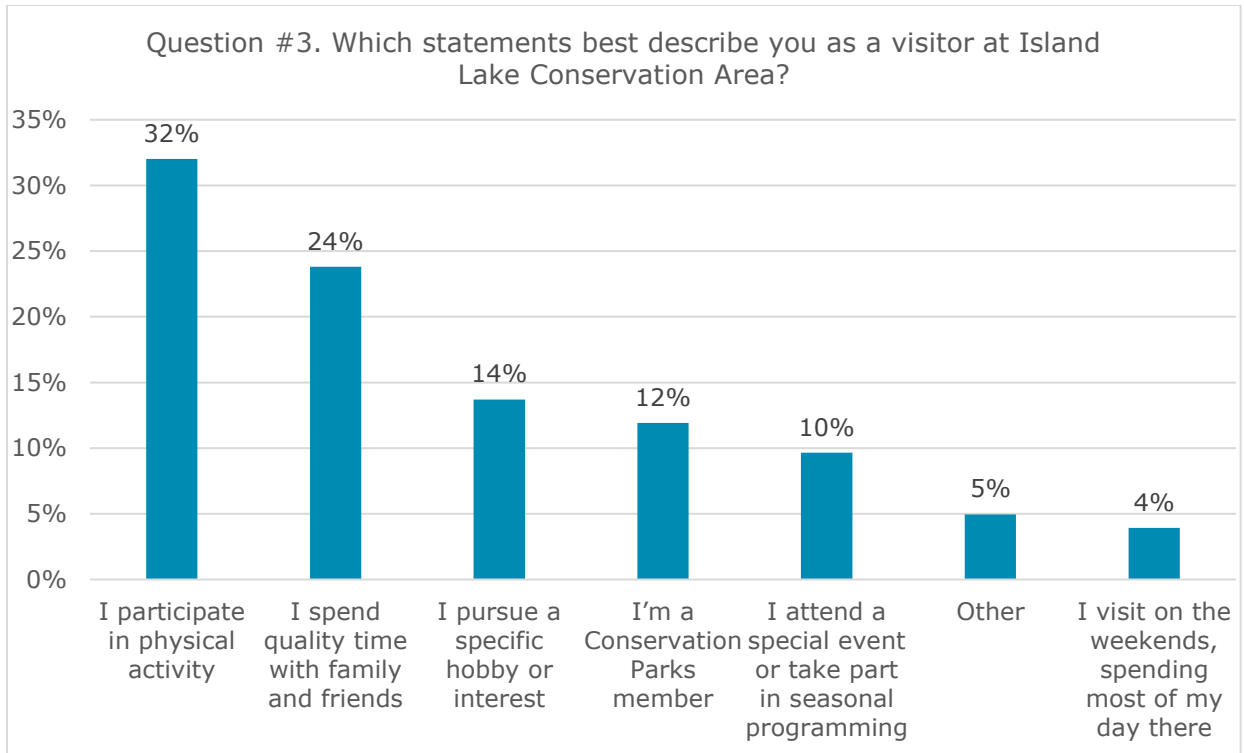


Figure 6. Best statement as a ILCA visitor

Under the other category, three additional visitor statement themes emerged:

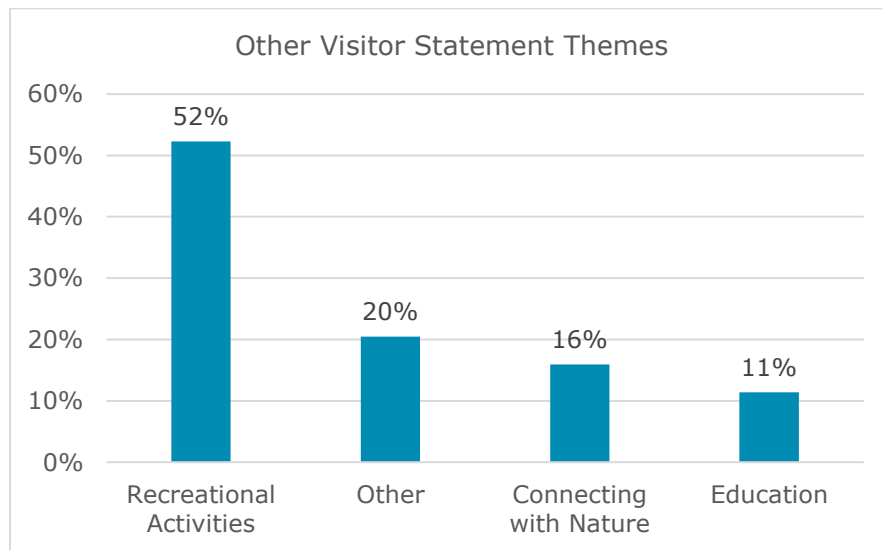


Figure 7. Other category additional visitor statements

Recreational Activities

52% identified with this statement. Some common activities respondents identified as participating in were using the trail system, socializing, events, fishing and the ability to enjoy a variety of activities all on one site.

Recreational Activities Subthemes	Count	Percent
Trail System	9	39%
Variety	7	30%
Socializing	2	9%
Birding and biomass surveying	2	9%
Events	2	9%
Fishing	1	4%
TOTAL	23	100%

Connecting with Nature

16% of respondents go to ILCA to enjoy the peaceful atmosphere and the sense of connection to nature for their mental health.

Education

11% identified as current educators or parents of children who attended educational programming at ILCA and found value and importance in maintaining it.

Other

This theme with 20% respondents captured miscellaneous statements that did not fit in any of the above themes identified.

A variety of comments were received, including:

#71: We walk around for serenity. We like the fact we could do a full loop.

#92: My children also attend school days learning outside and for many years went to Ecocamp there in the summer. Spectacular learning to love nature at both 5Ks. Attend summer events at the park. Kids attend Eco Camp - fantastic program.

#33: I Love taking my grandson there for a walk

#75: Nightly walks (more in the summer) with my family and dog. Using the skating rink on the lake occasionally. Running in the Island Lake Classic and Seven Bridges 5Ks

3.5 Question #4. If CVC could do one thing to make your experience better at Island Lake Conservation Area, what would it be?

When asked what CVC could do to make their experience better at ILCA, 59% individuals responded to this open-ended question (Figure 8).

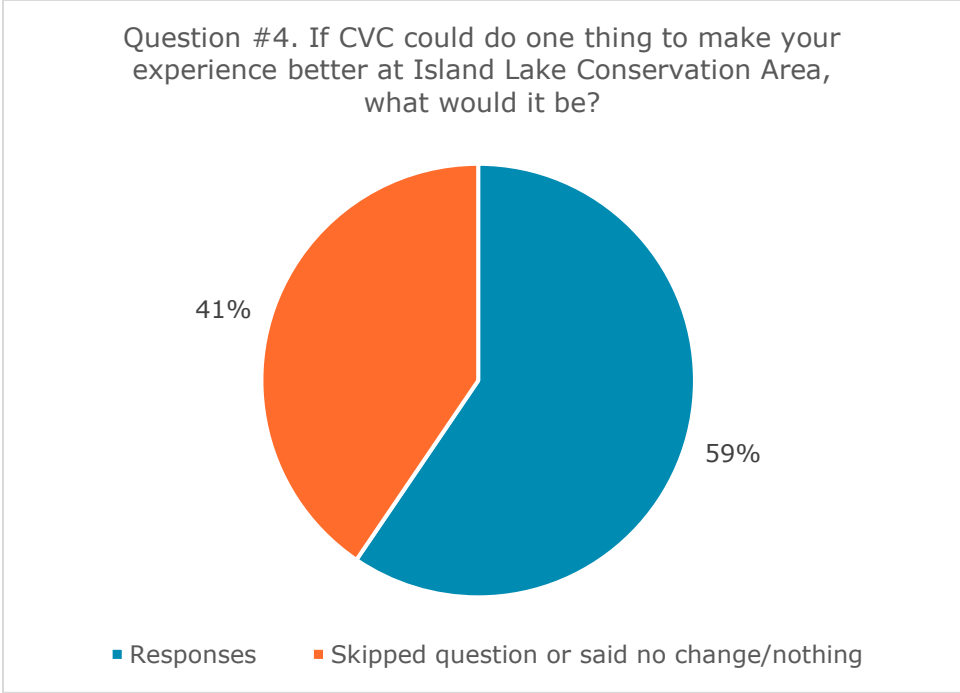


Figure 8. Improving Experience

The responses were broken down into 12 different themes as identified in Figure 9 with the top three being: Improvements, Enforcement and Maintenance and Recreational Activities.

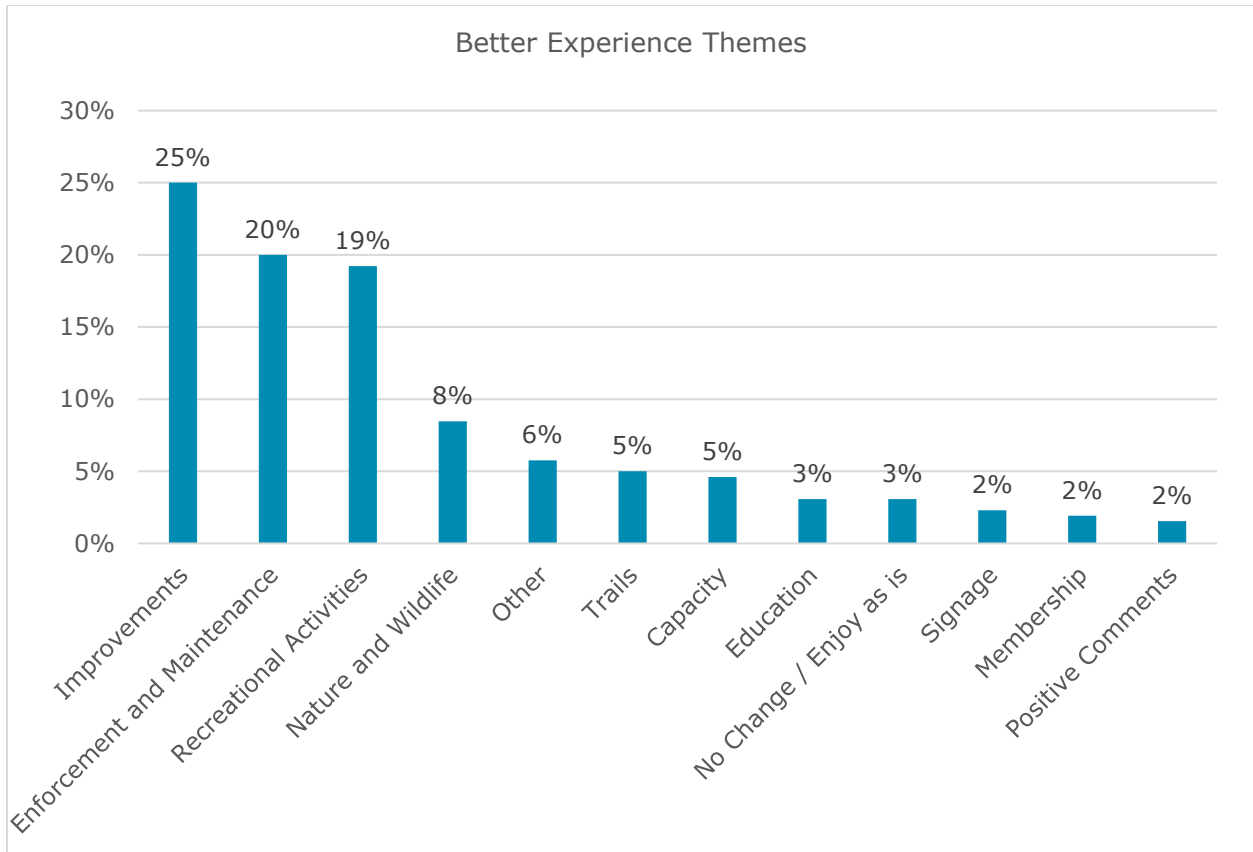


Figure 9. Better Experience Themes

For the three main themes identified, further subthemes were captured to get a better understanding of what CVC could do to improve visitor experience.

Improvements

25% identified this as an important area for CVC to focus on. The most popular response as outlined in the table below was parking, followed by outdoor facilities (e.g. improving the beach area and expanding the trails) and indoor facilities (e.g. adding more washrooms)

Improvement Subthemes	Count	Percent
Parking	29	45%
Facilities Outdoors	21	32%
Facilities Indoors	15	23%
TOTAL	65	100%

Enforcement and Maintenance

20% addressed further concerns that were captured into subthemes as identified in the table below. Top two emerged for this category:

- Recreational activities, year-round trail maintenance, control bike traffic vs pedestrian traffic and improve the boat launch area were common responses.
- Waste, it was identified that more garbage cans should be added onsite.

Enforcement and Maintenance Subthemes	Count	Percent
Recreational Activities	22	42%
Waste	11	21%
Environment	10	19%
Facilities	3	6%
CVC Presence	3	6%
Capacity	3	6%
TOTAL	52	100%

Recreational Activities

19% of respondents were categorized into subthemes as reflected in the table below. The top three that were identified:

- Introduce new components, such as a place to swim or splash pad
- Offer more recreational programming and events onsite.
- Improve existing components such as adding more trails and making access to water free.

Recreational Activities Subthemes	Count	Percent
Introduce new components	15	30%
Events, Activities, Programming	12	24%
Improve Existing components	9	18%
Fishing	7	14%
More rest areas	4	8%
Price	3	6%
TOTAL	50	100%

A variety of comments were received, including:

#280: Keep the Island Lake Conservation Area the way it is. Preserve the nature for our future generations

#333: Multiple entrances where people are trying to park to get free access (Ashwood Drive, Home Hardware) is becoming a huge issue. These areas are not designed to be parking areas. This will only get worse.

#155: Upgrade facilities like washrooms, picnic shelters, more accessible trails for strollers and bikes

#111: With the crowds increasing ...more parking and visitor number control.

#93: Find a better way to manage expectations when there are lineups at the entrance (like there were in the spring/summer)...maybe sandwich boards or electronic signs to say 30 min wait from this point...so people can choose to stay or not. Waits are expected, of course, but its the "how long" that is hard to judge knowing the lengthy entrance road to the gatehouse.

#261: Limit crowds. I went this summer and it was too crowded to socially distance. I did not enjoy it and did not return.

#112: Less litter. Dislike the big group parties/picnics there. People leave their garbage. There are no signs or literature informing people to NOT Litter. Make people sign a waiver that they will respect nature. Enough is enough.

3.6 Question #5. Do you have any questions or comments?

Question 5 asked respondents for any final thoughts or comments. 26% of respondents provided additional information (Figure 10).

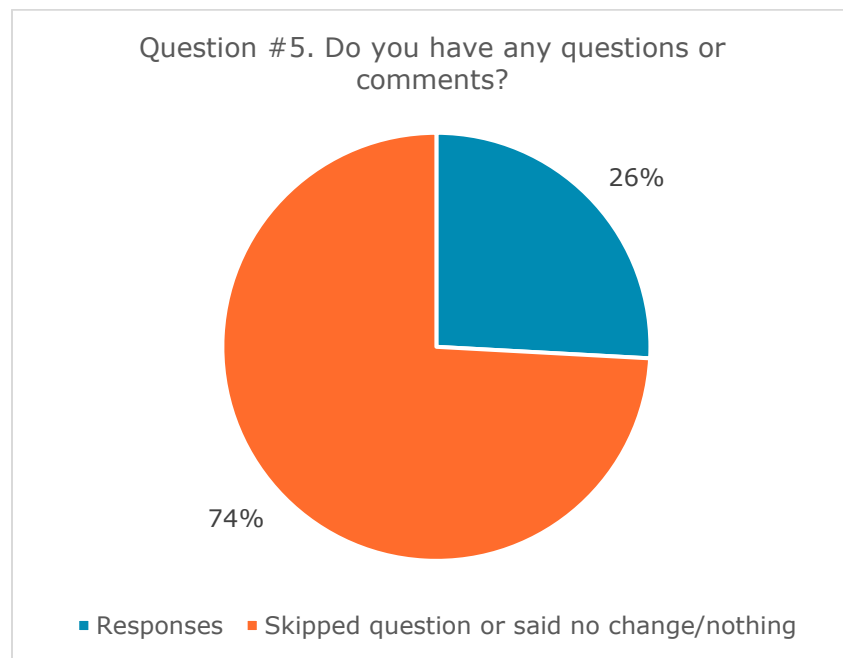


Figure 10. Additional Responses collected

As shown in Figure 11, 57% of respondents shared positive comments identifying the value and appreciation not just for ILCA but also for the staff who manage the area. Respondents understand how much dedication, determination and passion it takes to maintain the conservation area and thanked CVC staff for it. 8% of respondents had questions

requesting CVC staff to follow up on and the remaining 36% provided input that was divided into three additional themes.

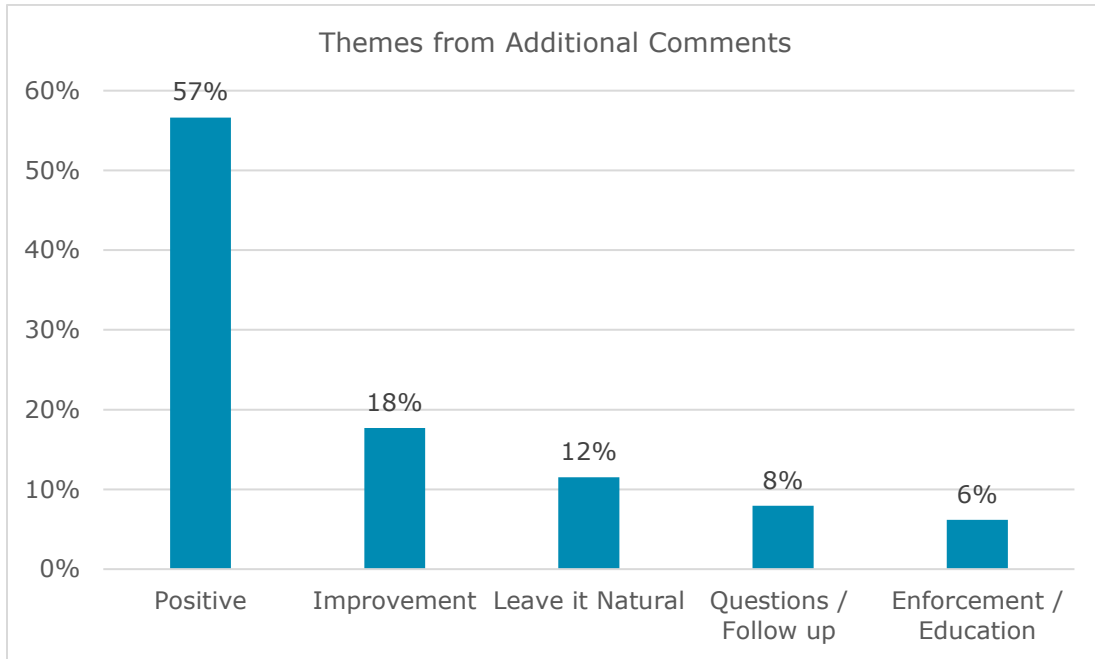


Figure 6. Themes from Additional Comments

Improvement

18% of respondents stated that some sort of improvement was important / needed at ILCA. To get a better sense of what this entailed, we further narrowed it down into six subthemes as identified in the table below.

Improvement Subthemes	Count	Percent
Recreational Activities	10	50%
Accessibility and Safety	5	25%
Parking and Entrance	2	10%
Keep it Natural	2	10%
CVC Members	1	5%
TOTAL	20	100%

The top two subthemes were as follows:

- Recreational Activities, 50% of respondents identified this as the most important area that needs improvement. Some common responses included creating a safe swimming area, adding an additional play area, creating a skating path and having more beach events.
- Accessibility and Safety, 25% of respondents identified this as the second area of concern for CVC to address. Some common responses included keeping ILCA safe and clean, create an overhead bridge in two spots, create a safer path between the front entrance and gatehouse and incorporated further aspects of accessibility into ILCA

Leave it Natural

12% of respondents don't want to see further development done but would prefer to see more wild spaces maintained and protected.

Enforcement / Education

6% identified that enforcement should be increased on dog owners who don't pick up after their pets or have them off leash.

A variety of comments were received, including:

#83: It is wonderful for visiting my daughter and grandchildren aged 5 and 2. They live in Mansfield, I live in TO, and we meet at Island Lake. During COVID it's the only way we can have a visit is outdoors - and this is a really ideal place for this. If it were possible to swim that would make it even better.

#90: I love being able to use the park land and often times spend early mornings there in the summer- being able to access the park land from town is amazing. I'd love to be able to access a little more from town but understand that's next to impossible. Albeit- the land is a fantastic addition to town, as a 31 year resident of Orangeville I love that the property keeps growing in a sustainable manner.

#333: Island Lake is a real jewel. As Orangeville and area grows, we must prepare for increases in visitors traffic. The focus should be on keeping it as natural as possible. Gathering areas with kids play areas are good. Becoming a park where large groups come to party....less good.

#325: I am so grateful for the Island Lake Conservation Area! The park, the staff, the scenery, the birdwatching - such a splendid place :)

#326: We love what you all do for our communities & environment. Even if I'm not there on a daily or weekly basis, I know how valuable all the work that CA's do & are involved with & have made sure our MP knows that they need to continue to operate to protect our environment & watersheds.

#11: There should be a bypass lane for members so they do not need to wait in line. also there should be a shuttle bus from the further parking lots to the main building so people do not have to carry all their fishing or hiking equipment to the main area.

332: bicyclists DO NOT yield to walkers and there has been many close calls. They simply refuse in many cases to even slow down let alone advise of their approach.

#404: What ever you do keep the natural areas, things have changed so much in the last ten years I don't see any of the wildlife I once saw there. I have photos of deer, coyote, beaver, mink and muskrat, closeups of nesting geese and other water fowl that you never see now It's become too busy with too much litter these days, and the children at the education centre make so much noise and wreck everything underfoot round the ponds and in the woodlands. The natural areas need to be protected.

3.7 Interest in Receiving Information from CVC

At the end of the survey, respondents were asked if they would be interested in being notified of updates regarding the Island Lake Conservation Area Management Plan. If interested, respondents were asked to provide their name and contact information, usually in the form of an email address. As Figure 12 illustrates 48% of respondents provided contact information.

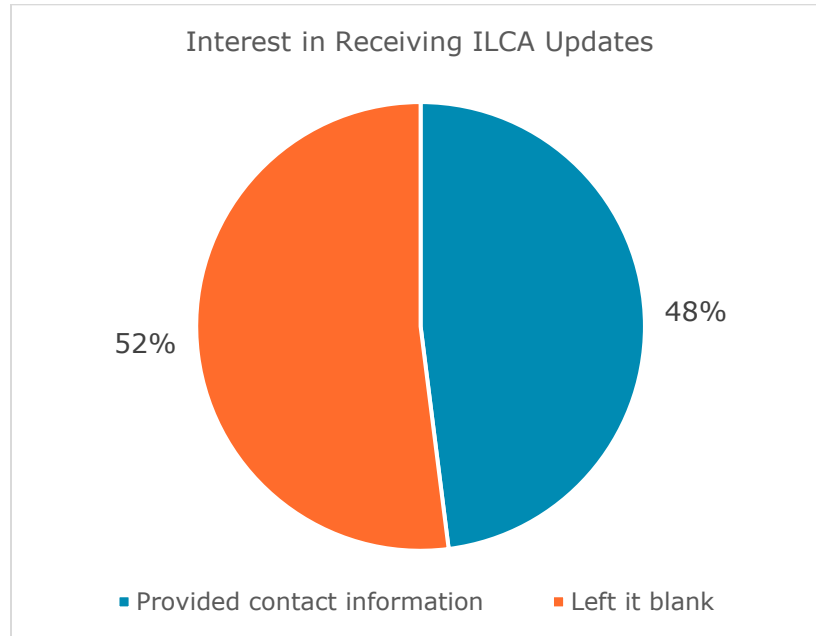


Figure 72. Contact Information Received

4.0 Consultation Summary and Next Steps

The information collected through this survey provides a foundation for understanding what survey respondents value about ILCA as well as their major concerns and changes they

would like to see. Throughout the late fall and early winter, an impressive 437 responses were received from a variety of geographic regions indicating that online surveys are a good tool to collect this type of information. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, CVC staff have not been able to engage visitors onsite or conduct in-person engagement activities. Going forward, we will include online surveys in our consultation toolbelt as we continue engagement activities for the ILCA management plan.

Respondents that provided contact information via this survey will be invited to future public engagement activities and receive updates as the plan progresses. Newsletters, social media posts and other outreach tactics will help focus conversations to ensure that we are responding to issues that are important to the public.

The overall positive feedback received from the respondents goes to show just how many people care about ILCA. From regular users to annual visitors, people come here to connect with nature, participate in extracurricular activities, socialize with friends and family and admire and absorb the natural surroundings. As the management plan unfolds, the results of this survey will be used to confirm directions and shape actions and projects.

Public consultation ensures that a wide range of interests are considered which is instrumental to creating a comprehensive, balanced management plan. CVC will continue to invite public input throughout the development of the management plan.

Members of the public are welcome to contact CVC at any time to discuss the project or provide feedback. Kate Burgess, *Conservation Lands Planner*, is the primary contact for the ILCA Management Plan. Kate can be reached at: kate.burgess@cvc.ca.