



Minnesota Natural Resource Managers' Perspectives on Private Forestland Parcelization: Implications for Public Land Management

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BACKGROUND

- ❖ **What is Forestland Parcelization?** The conversion of larger ownership blocks to smaller ownership units.
- ❖ **Why Do we Care?** Parcelization is associated with loss of wildlife habitat and timber availability, diminished water quality, and greater restrictions on recreational access. It may also be a forerunner to forest fragmentation and development.
- ❖ Field-based natural resource professionals have an on-the ground understanding of the condition of the forest in their area, yet have largely been overlooked as a source of information on parcelization activity, drivers, and impacts.
- ❖ Further, while forestland parcelization is largely viewed as a private forestland issue, we suggest it has significant implications for public forest lands.
- ❖ The **purpose** of the study was to develop an in-depth characterization of how field-based public natural resource professionals in the Lake States view various aspects of forest parcelization.



Figure 1: Illustration of Forestland Parcelization
Forest block on the left is in single ownership. Forest block on the right split into multiple ownerships. (e.g., parcelization)

METHODS

- ❖ An on-line questionnaire was developed and sent to field-based public natural resource professionals in federal, state and county agencies in MN, MI and WI. (Forest Service, NRCS, FWS, DNR, county land departments, Soil and Water Conservation Districts).
- ❖ **Categories of Survey Questions:** respondents' familiarity with and perceptions of private forestland parcelization in their work area, perspectives on important drivers of parcelization, potential outcomes associated with a parcelized landscape, strategies for preventing or slowing parcelization activities and/or impacts, information needs, and respondent background information.
- ❖ 37% usable response rate (283 out of 773 surveys sent).

RESULTS

Natural Resource Managers Are:

AWARE

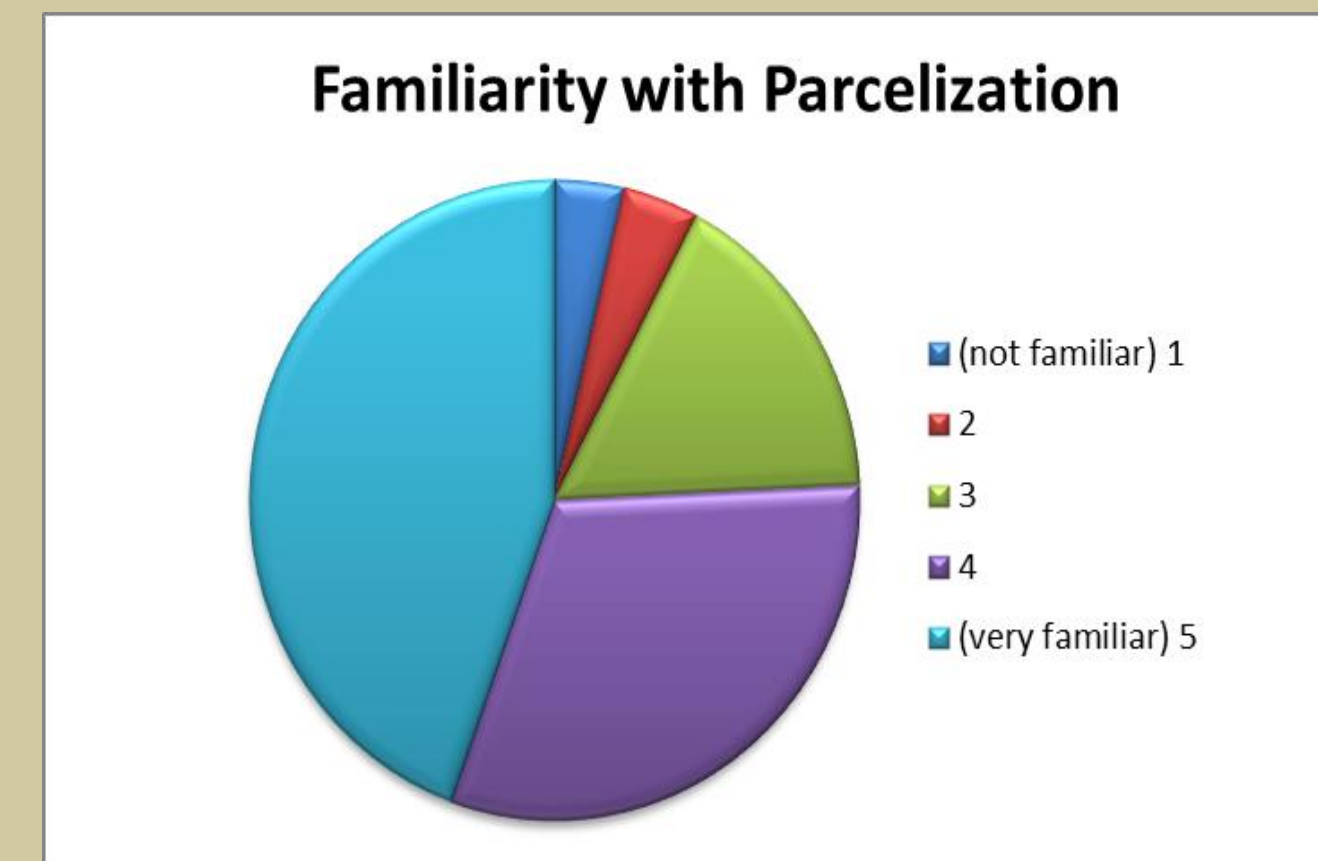


Fig 2. Respondent Familiarity With Forest Land Parcelization

CONCERNED

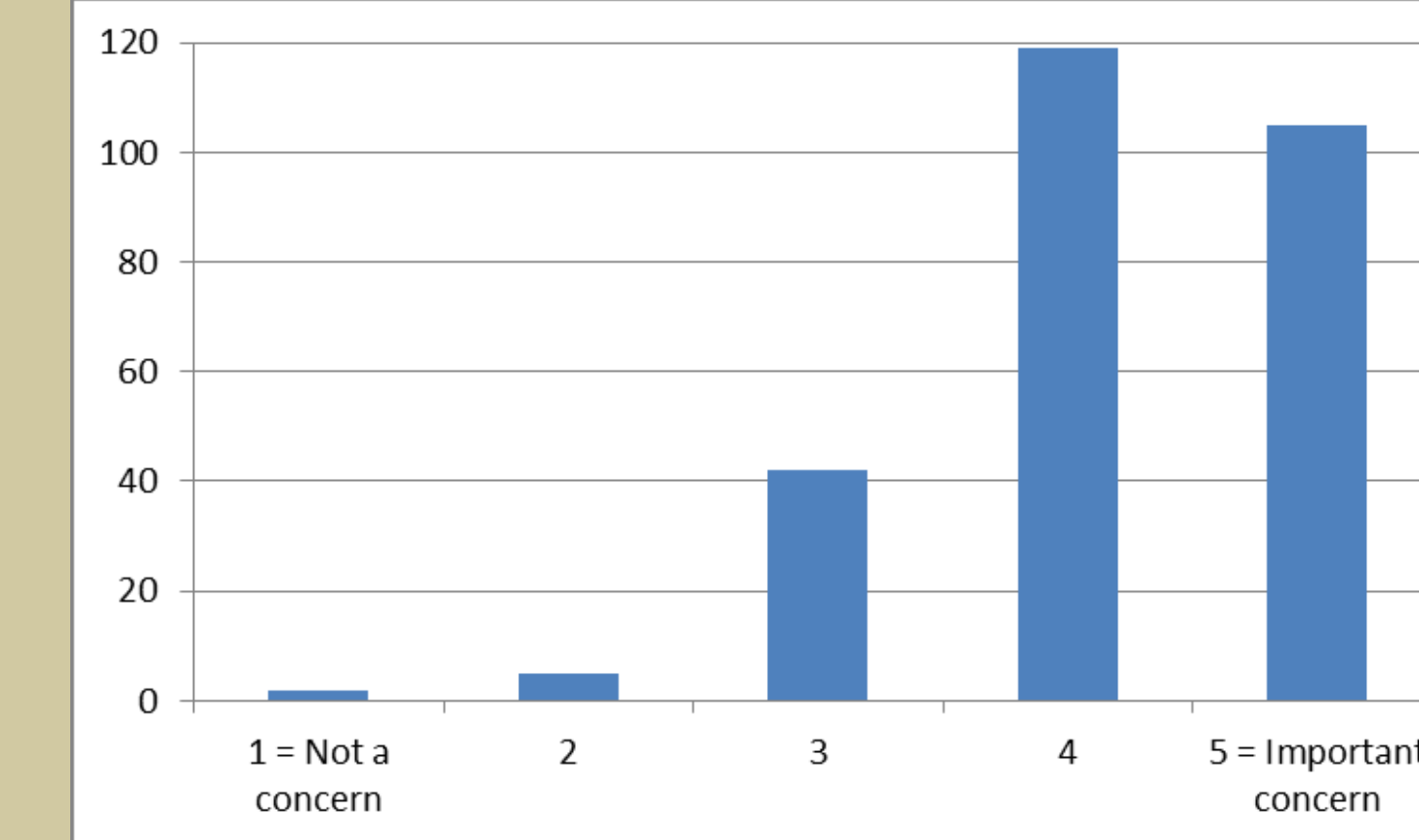


Fig 3. Respondent Concern about Forest Parcelization

UNCERTAIN ABOUT GOVT'S INFLUENCE

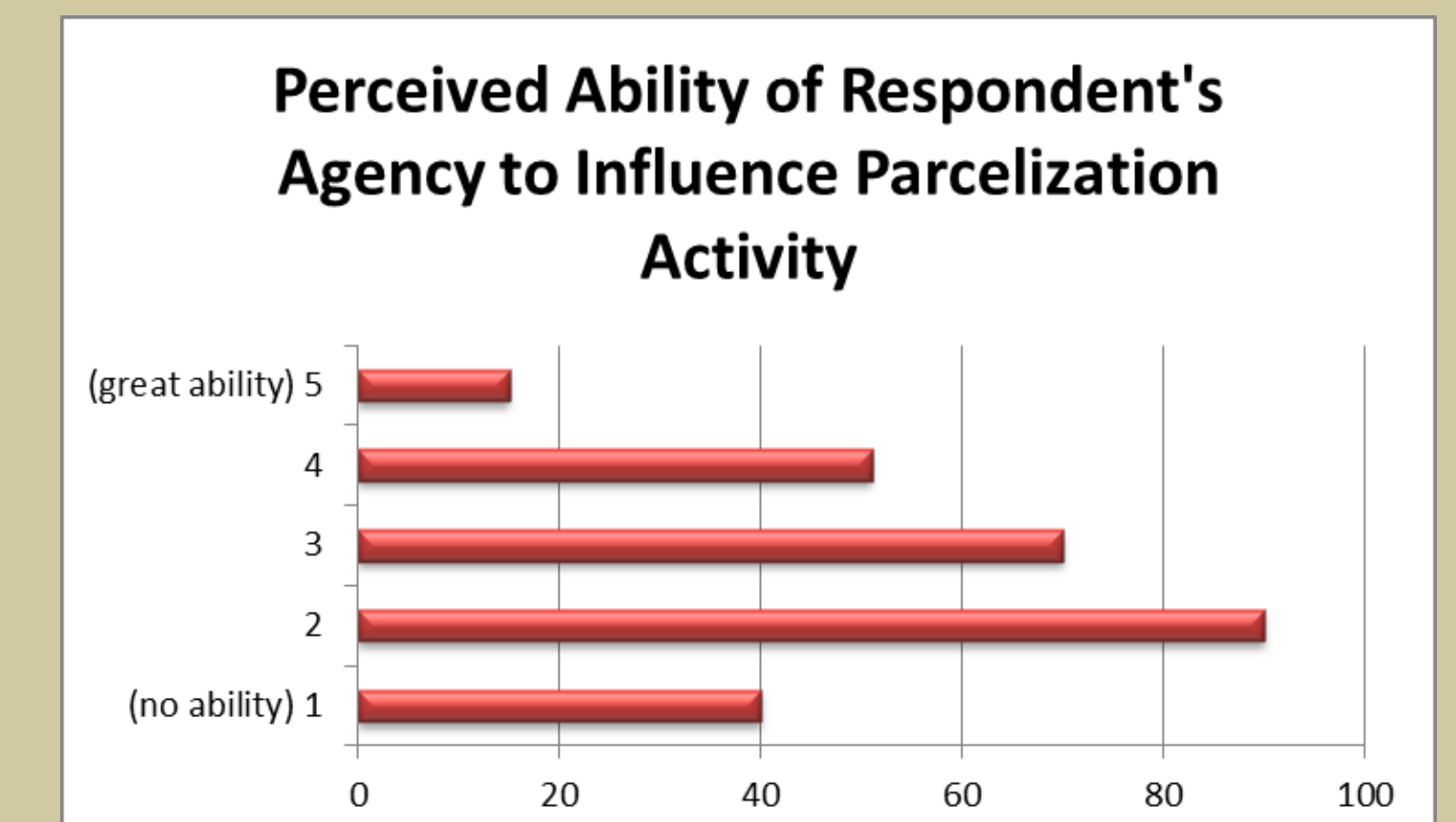


Fig 4. Respondent Perceptions about Government Ability to Influence Parcelization

Top-Rated Perceived DRIVERS of Parcelization

- Home Development Potential
- Proximity to Population Centers
- Parcel Features
- Land Prices
- Intergenerational Ownership Transfer
- Property Taxes
- Real Estate Speculation
- Proximity to Public Land

Top-Rated Perceived OUTCOMES of Parcelization

- Increased Forest Development
- Decreased Private Land Timber Supply
- Loss of Private Land Recreation Access
- Increased Demands on Public Land
- Loss of Wildlife Habitat
- Increased Cost of Providing Government Services
- Increased Conflict on Public Land
- Loss of Rural Character
- Increased Road Density
- Loss of Public Land Access
- Increased Public Land Management Costs
- Increased Damage to Public Lands.
- Loss of Private Forest Land

"Parcelization often threatens access to public forest lands for recreation and timber management needs. There tends to be a lot more 'gating' of forest accesses"

Representative Respondent Quotes:

"It becomes more difficult to pursue development of recreational trails because so many landowners become involved."

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

- ❖ Our study documented linkages between private forest land parcelization and public land management in areas such as increased conflict on, decreased access to, and increased recreation demand on public land. Decreased timber supply and loss of recreational access on private forest land may also impact the demand for these services on public forest land.
- ❖ Respondents indicated that current tools, policies, and incentives aimed at preventing or managing the impacts of parcelization have limited effect.
- ❖ One strategy for public land managers may be to develop assistance, education, and incentive programs targeted at small parcel holdings to help these owners understand the important, collective role their forests play in providing ecosystem services and recreational opportunities. Such efforts could also help these landowners understand the benefits of cross-boundary cooperation with private landowners and public land management agencies.