Second Homeowners: Findings from Research in Two Areas of Minnesota
Ryan Pesch, Merritt Bussiere, and John Bennett, Extension Educators

Introduction and Purpose
The purpose of this research (conducted in 2013 in Central and West Central Minnesota and in 2015 in Koochiching County) was to profile seasonal residents and measure their impacts on local communities, including their use of their second home, their plans for the future, and their local spending.

The Central MN and Koochiching study areas host a large number of second homes (30% and 22% of all housing units respectively). Seasonal residents impact local communities through their spending and involvement.

Methods
In Central Minnesota, the authors mailed a four-page survey instrument to a randomly selected sample of 1,200 seasonal-recreational property owners in proportion to the number of seasonal properties per county. We acquired mailing addresses from property tax records without an incentive to each participant. We received 573 responses for a 48% response rate.

In Koochiching County, the authors mailed all 1,066 seasonal households identified through property tax records without an incentive. We received 229 responses for a 21% response rate.

Seasonal Resident Demographics
Respondents in both study areas are predominately well-educated, middle-aged (in their 50s and 60s), and take home a healthy household income.

Seasonal Resident Spending
The survey asked participants to estimate the proportion of their household spending in select categories in the county where their second home resides. For the Koochiching County research, the authors designed the spending questions to match the consumer expenditure dataset for more accurate modeling of spending. We found overall spending in Koochiching lower than Central MN ($18,000 per year/HH vs. $6,800).

Reasons for Second Home Purchase
Although seasonal residents purchased their second homes for a mix of reasons, the most important attractants relate to natural amenities in both study areas.

Community Involvement of 2nd Homeowners
The survey asked participants about their attachment to their second home community, as well as their level of community involvement.

Plans for Second Homes
A bulk of seasonal residents from the Central Minnesota research (56%) plan to transition permanently to their second homes, but only small portion of Koochiching County respondents (9%). The types of seasonal homes, or the types of customers attracted to Koochiching County, may explain the difference. A greater proportion of seasonal housing units would be classified as “hunting property” in the Koochiching study area, and the distance from population centers may attract a certain type of seasonal resident interested in retaining their property as a “rustic haven” instead of a permanent home.

Application of Results
Communities in both study areas are using research results to learn about and better integrate seasonal residents:
- Main street merchants and entrepreneurs recognize the importance and types of seasonal resident spending.
- Second-home communities understand the opportunity to benefit from the talents and leadership of second homeowners.
- The transition from seasonal to permanent residence will have social and economic impacts on local communities that leaders recognize they need to prepare for.