



The Impact of Water Clarity on Home Prices in Vilas and Oneida Counties, Wisconsin

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Quick Q&A



Q: Does the clarity of lake water have an impact on home sale prices?

A: Yes, we find that home prices rise as water clarity improves. Using actual home sales data we find that within Vilas and Oneida Counties, an improvement of water clarity by 1 meter would increase average home sale prices by 8 to 32 thousand dollars.

Q: How to you determine the clarity of a lake?

A: We use Secchi disk readings averaged over the year in which the house was most recently sold to determine water clarity. This has been shown to be the most reliable and objective measure.

Q: Is water clarity the same as water quality?

A: No, our study measures the impacts of water clarity, not water quality. Undoubtedly water quality also effects property prices but that was not the focus of our study. Previous work has shown that the perception of water quality (clarity) has the most significant impact upon property prices.

Q: Do the benefits of improving water clarity outweigh the costs?

A: Uncertain, the causes of poor water clarity and costs associated with improving clarity vary from lake to lake. Poor clarity can be indicative of poor water quality or it can be a result of the natural environment in which the lake is located. This study considers only the benefits to single family home sale prices associated with improved water clarity.

Q: Are your findings consistent with other similar studies?

A: Yes, although our findings differs somewhat from other similar studies they are within expected ranges. Generally speaking, lake water clarity has a significant impact on the market price of single-family homes.