DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
Bureau of Fish Management

Management Report No. 25

CURRENT STATUS OF PUBLIC ACCESS TO WATERS[1]

By

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[1]An informational report intended to keep the public informed on fish management activities.

CURRENT STATUS OF PUBLIC ACCESS TO WATERS

The Fish Management Bureau faces the task of administering a land acquisition program and an access aid program. Consequently, it has a continuing interest in the status of access to public waters in order to evaluate program needs and measure progress. Also, the provision of management services are predicated on the existence of public access before the service can be provided.

A convenient measure of status was available from an atlas of Wisconsin lakes called Wisconsin Lakes which is periodically updated. Beginning with 1964, this publication has had an entry concerning the presence or absence of public access. Entries made in 1964 could be compared with entries made in the 1968 publication. Public access at the time was defined as public land which furnishes access and has parking in association with it. It does not quantify the number of sites or measure adequacy of access on each lake; it merely indicates the presence or absence of access.

Each issue of the lakes bulletin carries a listing and summation covering all the named lakes and the unnamed lakes over 20 acres in size. The number of named lakes and size of lakes reported in each succeeding issue varies as additional lakes are named and the quality of information is improved. Perfect comparisons, therefore, are not possible. The picture provided gives a summary of the relative status of access.

PRESERVATION OF RESULTS

A summary of the 1964 public access status by county, by fish management administrative area and statewide is presented in Table 1. The similar summary for 1968 is provided in Table 2. Slight differences in the number of lakes and area of lakes are immediately apparent. In 1964, 4,359 lakes measuring 896,504 acres were reported. In 1968, 5,080 lakes measuring 911,776 acres were reported. The differences probably represent new lakes and more refined data. To make valid comparisons between summaries, the amount of available access has been converted to percentages.

Comparisons between periods indicate the status of access has improved slightly. Slightly more lakes have access to them--.3 of a percent more. However, the total area served has increased more--1.4 percent.

Regional aspects of access are evident in the summary. Certain counties have a much lower percentage of access than others in the same region. These circumstances probably reflect local access policy and the pressures for providing access. Waukesha County is an example of a low percentage of both numbers and area of lakes with access. Ozaukee County is another county with poor access. It is significant that both of these counties surround the largest city in the state. The picture demonstrates a stronger inclination to provide access in the region less dominated by the major metropolitan area. Other low counties have either waters which are intentionally without access because of small size of lakes or the waters are devoted to game management.

Access conditions are good for counties having population centers which are not overwhelming in size but yet there is a large enough population to create local demand. Access conditions are poorer under the influence of the big cities and in the more remote lake endowed areas where local population pressures are low.

To illustrate the geography of the status of access, a state map has been provided on which the percent of number and percent of area of lakes having access has been quoted. Those having a high percentage of access availability tend to be counties with low numbers of lakes.

POLICY ASPECTS

There has been some improvement in the status of access since 1964. The change has not been dramatic, but it, nevertheless, represents progress. The improvement is, in part, due to continued acquisition of public lands, the effect of a state aid program, possibly increased platting of land with specified access requirements for each plat and local access development. In the years between 1964 and 1968 (4 years), 71 accesses were constructed under the state aid program. Some of these merely upgraded old sites while others were entirely new.

An examination of the area of water served by public access makes it evident that the bulk of the water area is available for public use. Lakes lacking public access are the smaller basins where the justification is not so strong.

If one assumes, as state law and custom suggest, that all waters are a common to which the public has a right, then there are still 2,670 lakes which do not have access as defined. Of course, it is also recognized that many of these should not have access because of small size or specialized management. Further, assuming that half the lakes require access and that one access is necessary for each lake, there are 1,335 access sites needed. At an average cost of $3,000 each, a $200,000 annual program is necessary if the inland lakes are to have adequate access in years ahead. Programmed over time, a twenty-year period, construction of 66 access sites per year at a cost of $198,000 would be desirable. This estimate makes no provision for upgrading or making more adequate that which we now have.

In conclusion, we can state that the status of access to Wisconsin waters is generally good, but that if we wish to assure access to all named lakes deserving access, a more intensive access acquisition and development program is warranted.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

1968. Wisconsin Lakes. Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Publ. 218-68 (in print)

TABLE 1

A SUMMARY OF THE STATUS OF PUBLIC ACCESS TO LAKES IN 1964
Source: Wisconsin Lakes, 1964*

		LAKES	AREA OF LAKES	LAKES WITH ACCESS	LAKES WITHOUT ACCESS	AREA WITH ACCESS	AREA WITHOUT ACCESS	PERCENT OF NO. WITH ACCESS	PERCENT OF AREA WITH ACCESS
NW	1. Ashland	55	10,992	15	40	8,267	2,725	27.2	75.2
	2. Barron	92	14,984	47	45	13,489	1,495	51.0	90.0
	3. Bayfield	199	20,826.20	59	140	12,390	8,436.20	29.6	59.4
	4. Burnett	163	26,603	42	121	14,073	12,530	25.7	52.9
	5. Chippewa	164	18,257.50	35	129	15,815	2,442.50	21.3	86.6
	6. Douglas	97	11,598	20	77	6,975	4,623	20.6	60.1
	7. Polk	164	18,913	45	119	12,874	6,039	27.4	68.0
	8. Price	95	12,080	47	48	9,069	3,011	49.4	75.0
	9. Rusk	54	7,297	30	24	6,438	859	55.5	88.2
	10. Sawyer	136	54,857	61	75	43,704	11,153	44.8	79.6
	11. Taylor	65	3,120	29	36	2,249	871	44.6	72.0
	12. Washburn	174	24,306	62	112	15,849	8,457	35.6	65.2
	AREA TOTAL	1,458	223,833.7	492	966	161,192	62,641.7	29.4	72.1
NE	1. Florence	80	5,160	53	27	3,550	1,610	66.2	68.7
	2. Forest	138	20,653	93	45	17,259	3,394	67.3	83.5
	3. Iron	150	36,022	71	79	32,036	3,986	47.3	88.9
	4. Langlade	166	7,818	119	47	6,819	999	71.6	87.2
	5. Lincoln	113	11,167	78	35	10,078	1,089	69.2	90.2
	6. Marathon	24	15,870	14	10	15,284	586	58.3	96.3
	7. Marinette	156	13,099.7	68	88	10,254.7	2,845	43.5	78.2
	8. Menominee	49	2,418.7	1	48	185	2,233.7	2.0	76.4
	9. Oconto	131	11,039	78	53	9,458	1,581	59.4	85.6
	10. Oneida	367	67,651	192	175	56,924	10,727	52.3	84.1
	11. Shawano	38	8,491	22	16	7,747	744	57.8	91.2
	12. Vilas	548	89,563	333	215	77,683	11,880	60.7	86.7
	AREA TOTAL	1,960	288,952.4	1,122	838	247,277.7	41,674.7	57.2	85.5

TABLE 1 (continued)

	LAKES	AREA OF LAKES	LAKES WITH ACCESS	LAKES WITHOUT ACCESS	AREA WITH ACCESS	AREA WITHOUT ACCESS	PERCENT OF. NO. WITH ACCESS	PERCENT OF AREA WITH ACCESS
WC 1. Adams	18	1,842	11	7	1,602	240	61.1	86.9
2. Buffalo	6	564	-	6	-	564	0	0
3. Clark	8	1,338	7	1	1,303	35	87.5	97.3
4. Dunn	7	3,614	5	2	3,553	61	71.4	98.3
5. Eau Claire	7	2,664	6	1	2,616	48	85.7	98.1
6. Jackson	57	3,429	40	17	2,786	643	70.1	81.2
7. Juneau	13	46,580	12	1	46,576	4	92.3	99.9
8. La Crosse	3	8,425	3	-	8,425	-	100	100
9. Monroe	34	3,135	8	26	1,068	2,067	23.5	34.0
10. Pepin	3	170	3	-	170	-	100	100
11. Pierce	2	18	-	2	-	18	0	0
12. St. Croix	24	6,354	6	18	5,208	1,146	25.0	81.9
13. Trempealeau	16	651	8	8	368	283	50.0	56.5
14. Vernon	3	12	2	1	4	8	66.6	33.3
15. Wood	15	7,894	11	4	6,432	1,462	73.3	81.4
AREA TOTAL	216	86,690	122	94	80,111	6,579	56.4	92.4
EC 1. Brown	1	42	-	1	-	42	0	0
2. Calumet	7	87	4	3	58	29	57.1	66.6
3. Dodge	12	9,950	9	3	9,817	133	75.0	98.6
4. Door	11	3,222	5	6	2,510	712	45.4	77.9
5. Fond du Lac	26	1,677	14	12	1,108	569	53.8	66.0
6. Green Lake	10	14,212	7	3	13,608	604	70.0	95.7
7. Kewaunee	8	242	6	2	182	60	75.0	75.2
8. Manitowoc	31	926	15	16	683	243	48.3	73.7
9. Marquette	34	4,848	14	20	3,919	929	41.1	80.8
10. Outagamie	2	66	1	1	62	4	50.0	93.9
11. Ozaukee	7	188	1	6	3	185	14.2	1.5
12. Portage	58	4,032	21	37	2,258	1,774	36.2	56.0
13. Sheboygan	28	1,858	18	10	1,707	151	64.2	91.8
14. Washington	46	3,171	10	36	982	2,189	21.7	30.9
15. Waupaca	117	6,238	50	67	4,835	1,403	42.7	77.5
16. Waushara	59	4,110	35	24	3,303	807	59.3	80.3
17. Winnebago	6	160,845	6	-	160,845	-	100	100
AREA TOTAL	463	215,714	216	247	205,880	9,834	46.6	95.4

TABLE 1 (continued)

	LAKES	AREA OF LAKES	LAKES WITH ACCESS	LAKES WITHOUT ACCESS	AREA WITH ACCESS	AREA WITHOUT ACCESS	PERCENT OF NO. WITH ACCESS	PERCENT OF AREA WITH ACCESS
S 1. Columbia	19	10,412	8	11	10,011	401	42.1	96.1
2. Crawford								
3. Dane	24	20,556	15	9	19,358	1,198	62.5	94.1
4. Grant	18	189	2	16	62	127	11.1	32.8
5. Green	2	172	2	-	172	-	100	100
6. Iowa	5	273	3	2	236	37	60.0	86.4
7. Jefferson	19	14,260	4	15	12,345	1,915	21.0	86.5
8. Kenosha	24	3,361.7	13	11	3,052	309.7	54.1	90.8
9. Lafayette	1	455	1	-	455	-	100	100
10. Milwaukee	5	31	-	5	-	31	0	0
11. Racine	16	2,759.6	6	10	2,047	712.6	37.5	74.1
12. Richland	12	667	1	11	30	637	8.3	4.4
13. Rock	7	312	4	3	172	140	57.1	55.1
14. Sauk	9	914	5	4	757	157	55.5	82.8
15. Walworth	34	12,539	22	12	11,395	1,144	64.7	90.8
16. Waukesha	67	14,413	23	44	6,724	7,689	34.3	46.6
AREA TOTAL	262	81,314.3	109	153	66,816	14,498.3	41.6	82.1
STATE TOTAL	4,359	896,504.4	2,061	2,298	761,276.7	135,227.7	47.2	84.9

*Data is abstracted from the bulletin entitled Wisconsin Lakes, published by the Department of Natural Resources. Some alteration of totals appears in this summary to better agree with Lakes Bulletin text information.

TABLE 2

A SUMMARY OF THE STATUS OF PUBLIC ACCESS TO LAKES IN 1968
Source: Wisconsin Lakes, 1968*

		LAKES	AREA OF LAKES	LAKES WITH ACCESS	LAKES WITHOUT ACCESS	AREA WITH ACCESS	AREA WITHOUT ACCESS	PERCENT OF NO. WITH ACCESS	PERCENT OF AREA WITH ACCESS
NW	1. Ashland	71	4,382	26	45	2,012	2,370	36.6	45.9
	2. Barron	93	15,373	53	40	13,908	1,465	56.9	90.4
	3. Bayfield	317	20,615	102	215	12,848	7,767	32.1	62.3
	4. Burnett	216	30,525	62	154	15,988	14,537	28.7	52.3
	5. Chippewa	182	18,397.5	38	144	15,883	2,514.5	20.8	86.3
	6. Douglas	108	11,833	26	82	7,894	3,939	24.0	66.7
	7. Polk	163	19,157	48	115	13,632	5,525	29.4	71.1
	8. Price	111	12,336	43	68	8,600	3.736	38.7	69.7
	9. Rusk	65	7,718	40	25	7,134	584	61.5	92.4
	10. Sawyer	253	57,401	102	151	51,164	6,237	40.3	89.1
	11. Taylor	83	5,635	32	51	4,752	883	38.5	84.3
	12. Washburn	239	25,158	97	142	18,726	6,432	40.5	74.4
	AREA TOTAL	1,901	228,530.5	669	1,232	172,541	55,989.5	35.1	75.0
NE	1. Florence	78	4,840	57	21	3,644	1,196	73.0	75.2
	2. Forest	152	20,441	92	60	17,079	3,362	60.5	83.5
	3. Iron	213	32,689.3	73	140	28,194	4,495.3	34.2	86.2
	4. Langlade	167	7,879	114	53	6,590	1,289	68.2	83.6
	5. Lincoln	115	11,189	79	36	10,077	1,112	68.6	90.0
	6. Marathon	24	15,885	18	6	15,580	305	75.0	98.0
	7. Marinette	158	13,001.7	76	82	10,440.7	2,561	48.1	80.3
	8. Menominee	49	2,418.1	48	1	2,216.1	202	97.9	91.6
	9. Oconto	141	11,603	80	61	9,974	1,629	56.7	85.0
	10. Oneida	405	67,517	195	210	54,980	12,537	48.1	81.4
	11. Shawano	55	9,110	34	21	8,727	383	61.8	95.7
	12. Vilas	549	89,593	335	214	78,335	11,258	61.0	87.4
	AREA TOTAL	2,106	286,166.1	1,201	905	245,836.8	40,329.3	57.0	85.9

TABLE 2 (continued)

		LAKES	AREA OF LAKES	LAKES WITH ACCESS	LAKES WITHOUT ACCESS	AREA WITH ACCESS	AREA WITHOUT ACCESS	PERCENT OF NO. WITH ACCESS	PERCENT OF AREA WITH ACCESS
WC	1. Adams	25	2,313	17	8	2,091	222	68.0	90.4
	2. Buffalo	6	564	1	5	450	114	16.6	79.7
	3. Clark	8	1,484	7	1	1,449	35	87.5	97.6
	4. Dunn	9	3,634	5	4	3,553	81	55.5	97.7
	5. Eau Claire	10	2,703	7	3	2,660	43	70.0	98.4
	6. Jackson	57	3,395	40	17	2,752	643	70.1	81.0
	7. Juneau	15	48,536	14	1	48,532	4	93.3	99.9
	8. La Crosse	3	8,690	3	-	8,690	-	100	100
	9. Monroe	34	3,135	9	25	1,100	2,035	26.4	35.0
	10. Pepin	3	170	3	-	170	-	100	100
	11. Pierce	3	147	1	2	129	18	33.3	87.7
	12. St. Croix	27	6,556	11	16	5,909	647	40.7	90.1
	13. Trempealeau	18	657	10	8	416	241	55.5	63.3
	14. Vernon	5	130	5	-	130	-	100	100
	15. Wood	27	5,502	17	10	4,540	962	62.9	82.5
	AREA TOTAL	250	87,616	150	100	82,571	5,045	60.0	94.2
EC	1. Brown	1	42	-	1	-	42	0	0
	2. Calumet	7	124	5	2	100	24	71.4	80.6
	3. Dodge	16	10,092	13	3	9,959	133	81.2	98.6
	4. Door	10	3,011	6	4	2,387	624	60.0	79.2
	5. Fond du Lac	30	1,439	17	13	1,147	292	56.6	79.7
	6. Green Lake	10	14,336	10	-	14,336	-	100	100
	7. Kewaunee	9	221	6	3	156	65	66.6	70.5
	8. Manitowoc	54	1,361	16	38	759	602	29.6	55.7
	9. Marquette	52	4,892	18	34	4,027	865	34.6	82.3
	10. Outagamie	2	66	1	1	62	4	50.0	93.9
	11. Ozaukee	14	270	4	10	67	203	28.5	24.8
	12. Portage	63	4,169	23	40	2,398	1,771	36.5	57.5
	13. Sheboygan	35	1,915	20	15	1,678	237	57.1	87.6
	14. Washington	47	3,168	12	35	1,995	1,173	25.5	62.9
	15. Waupaca	117	6,563	50	67	5,084	1,479	42.7	77.0
	16. Waushara	64	4,297	38	26	3,697	600	59.3	86.0
	17. Winnebago	6	169,550	5	1	166,480	3,070	97.5	83.0
	AREA TOTAL	537	225,516	244	293	214,332	11,184	95.0	45.5

TABLE 2 (continued)

	LAKES	AREA OF LAKES	LAKES WITH ACCESS	LAKES WITHOUT ACCESS	AREA WITH ACCESS	AREA WITHOUT ACCESS	PERCENT OF NO. WITH ACCESS	PERCENT OF AREA WITH ACCESS
S 1. Columbia	19	10,412	8	11	10,011	401	42.1	96.1
2. Crawford								
3. Dane	26	20,630	15	11	19,358	1,272	57.6	93.8
4. Grant	21	248	10	11	192	56	47.6	77.4
5. Green	4	347	4	-	347	-	100	100
6. Iowa	8	501	6	2	424	77	75.0	84.6
7. Jefferson	19	14,104	10	9	13,460	644	52.6	95.4
8. Kenosha	24	3,422.7	16	8	3,244	178.7	66.6	94.7
9. Lafayette	1	455	1	-	455	-	100	100
10. Milwaukee	13	96	6	7	52	44	46.1	54.1
11. Racine	16	3,608	9	7	3,405	203	56.2	94.3
12. Richland	12	667	4	8	105	562	33.3	15.7
13. Rock	7	312	4	3	172	140	57.1	55.1
14. Sauk	11	1,516	9	2	1,472	44	81.8	97.0
15. Walworth	34	12,726	22	12	11,562	1,164	64.7	90.8
16. Waukesha	71	14,903	22	49	6,516	8,387	30.9	43.7
AREA TOTAL	286	83,947.7	146	140	70,775	13,172.7	51.0	84.3
STATE TOTAL	5,080	911,776	2,410	2,670	786,127	125,720	47.5	86.3

*Data is abstracted from the bulletin entitled Wisconsin Lakes, published by the Department of Natural Resources. Some alteration of totals appears in this summary to better agree with Lakes Bulletin text information.
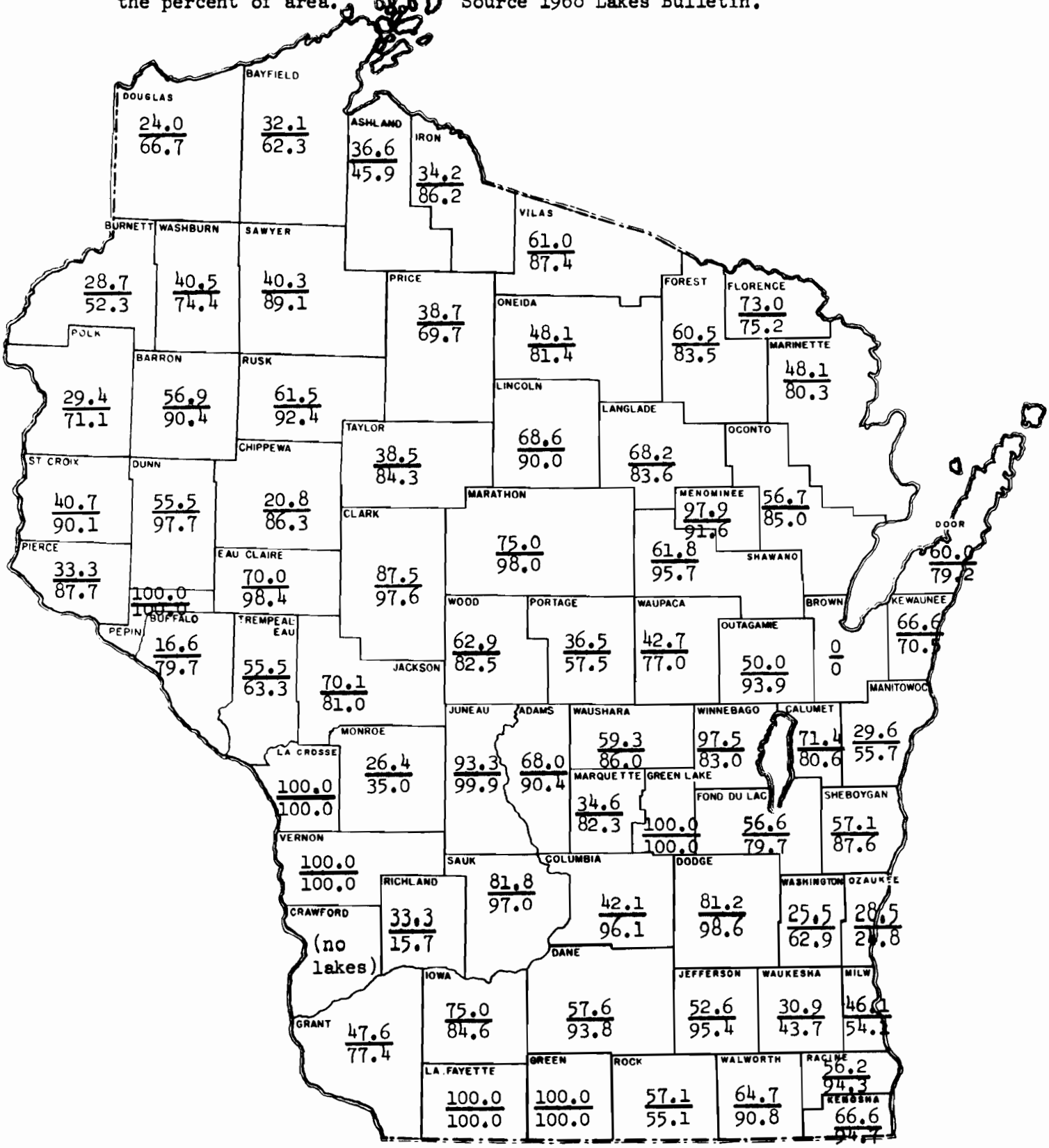
Fig. 1. The percentage of number of named lakes and area of named lakes having public access. The upper figure is the percent of numbers and the lower figure is the percent of area. Source 1968 Lakes Bulletin.