

Impacts of Land Use on Water Quality in Minnesota

https://github.com/lhr12/HDA_Project

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Abstract

Abstract tbd

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Contents

1	Research Question and Rationale	5
2	Dataset Information	6
3	Exploratory Data Analysis and Wrangling	7
4	Analysis	8
5	Summary and Conclusions	9

List of Tables

List of Figures

<Note: set up autoreferencing for figures and tables in your document>

1 Research Question and Rationale

- Land use has a large impact on nutrient runoff into streams, lakes, and other water bodies
- Minnesota has wide variety of land uses. Includes large urban centers, natural lands, and agricultural area.
- Nutrient management has been a challenge for states in the effort to control harmful algal blooms and coastal dead zones.
- Understanding the causes of nutrient problems will better inform management strategies.

Research questions:

1. What are the predictors of nutrients based on land use in watersheds in the state of Minnesota?
2. How do you characterize seasonal variation between the predictors of nutrients?

Goals: * Determine how land use, watershed size, and ecoregion explain variation in nutrient loading indicators. * Discern whether there are seasonal trends in nutrient loading indicators based on land use types, watershed size, and ecoregion. * Provide insight to inform decisions about nutrient management practices based on land use types, watershed size, and ecoregion.

2 Dataset Information

The data used in this analysis include data from the Lake Multi-Scaled Geospatial and Temporal Database (LAGOSNE) and the EPA ecoregion spatial datasets.

LAGOSNE is a collection of several data modules that contain information on lakes in the northern United States. The modules contain data from thousands of lakes in 17 states in the northeastern and midwestern United States, from Missouri to Maine. The dataset includes a complete list of all lakes bigger than 4 hectares in the 17 state area, and water quality data on a large number of lakes, spanning every state.

Ecoregions are used by planning managers to understand the type of land use that occurs in different regions of the United States. There are different levels of ecoregions. Level 1 divides North America into 15 ecological regions, while Level IV offers fine ecological resolution for each state. This data was published by the U.S. EPA Office of Research and Development (ORD) - National Health and Environmental Effects Research Laboratory (NHEERL). For the purposes of our project, we selected Level III ecoregions because they appear to offer a descriptive narrative of the land use patterns of Minnesota without making a ‘distinction without a difference’.

```
Variables.table <- read.csv("../Output/Variable_Descriptions_Table.csv")
library(knitr)
kable(Variables.table)
```

Column.Name	Description	Units	Variable.Type
chla	Chlorophyll a	mg/L	Dependent
secchi	Secchi depth	m	Dependent
Urban.pct	Percent urban land cover	%	Independent- fixed
Undeveloped.pct	Percent natural land cover	%	Independent- fixed
Ag.pct	Percent agricultural land cover	%	Independent- fixed
LakeIWS.Ratio	Lake surface area to watershed area ratio	N/A	Independent- fixed
Season	Early, prime, and late growing “seasons”	N/A	Independent- fixed
US_L3NAME	Level 3 ecoregions	N/A	Independent- random

3 Exploratory Data Analysis and Wrangling

4 Analysis

- First we will create correlation plots in order to eliminate variables with a correlation greater than 0.8.
- Then we will run Shapiro-Wilkes tests to determine normality and the need for possible data transformations.
- After determining the distributions of the data, then we will generate mixed effect linear models with chlorophyll a and secchi depth as response variables, land use and watershed size as fixed effects, and ecoregion as a random effect.

Final figures will include: * 6 maps of the state, each showing the relationship between land use and both response variables. Ecoregion will be included as a base layer for each map. * Scatter plots showing the strongest relationships between land use and the response variables.

* Table showing results of linear model.

5 Summary and Conclusions

- Conclusions will include a discussion of our results within the context of MN nutrient management plan.