The Vernacular Up North Region

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Introduction

• Vernacular Regions
  – Defined by the collective perception of a group of people.
  – Not defined by any higher authority like the government or scholars
  – Everyone knows where the region is, but the area is not strictly defined

• This presentation will investigate multiple features in order to better define the vernacular region unique to Wisconsin.

• “Let’s Go Up North!”
Defining the northland region can be done by filtering out regional terms that appear in the greater extent of northern Wisconsin.

- Examples of Regional Terms acquired from the area’s phonebooks
  - Northwoods
  - Northbound
  - Northstar

This is the methodology that Wilbur Zelinski used in his study, “North America’s Vernacular Regions”
Figure 1:

This map defines the northland by the percentage of “up north” terms used. Each isoline represents the percentage of northern terms. Highest Concentrations appear in Vilas, Bayfield, and Ashland Counties.
Figure 2:

This choropleth map defines the northland terms weighted by population in ten thousands.

Bayfield and Ashland Counties fall out as leaders because the terms to population are not as significant of a ratio.

Sawyer and Vilas take the cake.
Other Determining Variables

• Ask anyone why they go “up north” and they will almost always refer to recreational activities
  – Developed and undeveloped recreational land
  – Boating, swimming, camping, fishing, and hunting to name a few

Forest Lake in Vilas County
Figure 3:
The amount of land that is set aside for recreation also mimics the vernacular regional created by Zelinkski.

The map to the right is a choropleth map showing the amount of land devoted to recreation as a % of total.
Figure 4: Recreational land can be divided into two classes: developed and undeveloped recreational acreage. The northland dominates when it comes to undeveloped recreational land. The rest of the state holds the majority for developed.
Figure 5: This choropleth map uses lake name data to show which counties hold the greatest density of lakes. Where there are lakes, there are recreation opportunities.

Figure 6: This graph reinforces the fact that there are more lakes in the North than the rest of the State.
Figure 7:

Another good indicator of the region tourism and recreation is the amount of hotel and motel beds available.

The data in the map is weighted by population. The darkest values indicate that there is 3 to 41 people per hotel/motel bed in the given county.
Figure 8: Fishing Licenses are a perfect example of types of data acquired by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Figure 8 shows the distribution of fishing licenses sold in a county based on its population. Darker counties show lower amounts of people per fishing license sold.

Anomalies around the map may correspond with known tourist/fishing areas, such as the Wisconsin Dells, and Lake Winnebago.
Figure 9: Using the 1985 and 2005 data from the Department of Natural Resources, a comparative analysis is possible for some components. Keeping in mind that this graph is a measure of fishing licenses per capita; it is possible to see that fishing licenses have been on the rise.

Up North went from 4.97 people per license in 1985 to 3.31 in 2005. The rest of the state went from 10.18 to 7.16 people per license.
Figure 10: Camping opportunities is another variable that can be compared between two decades.

The graph is not weighted at all so the numbers actually show a decline in camping opportunities over the years.

It is interesting to note that the rest of the state actually has more camping opportunities.
Another great indicator of the northern vernacular region, is the presence of seasonal homes. Often referred to as cabins or cottages, people use their seasonal home as a launch pad to nearby recreation. Higher concentrations appear in Vilas and Oneida counties.
Conclusions

- Developing a better perspective of the Up North Vernacular Region takes a multitude of different variables; even then, the area of the region is not definite.
- Primary features of this region include: toponyms, recreation lands, location of seasonal homes, hotel/motel rooms, and recreational activities
Bibliography

- *Cover Photo Taken by David Speer. Location: Lake Owen, Cable, Wisconsin*
- *Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, State Recreational Resources Inventory, 1985, 2005*