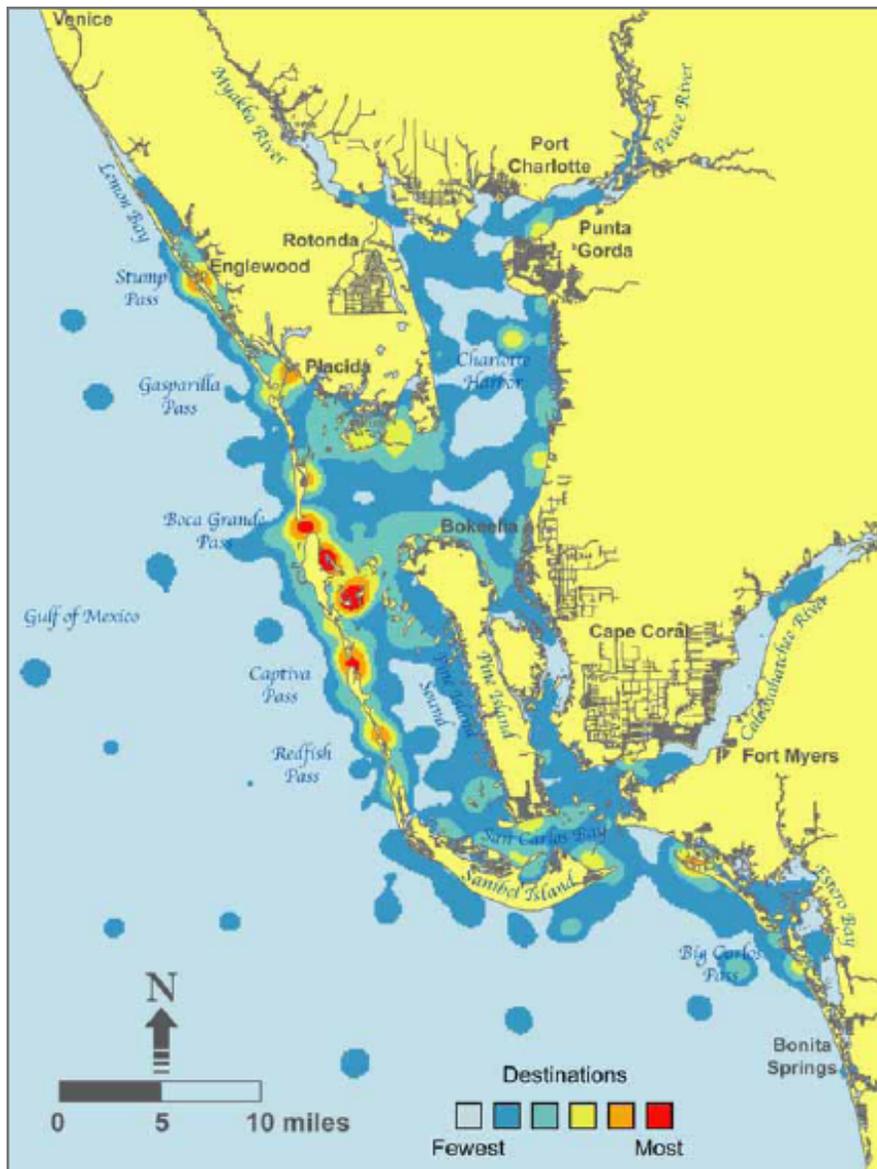


A RECREATIONAL BOATING CHARACTERIZATION FOR THE GREATER CHARLOTTE HARBOR

Did you receive a survey in 2005 asking you about your boating trips ... favorite destinations, travel routes, primary activities, etc.? Did you fill it out? Would you like to know the results of those surveys? Well the results are in!

The study that I am referring to was conducted by Florida Sea Grant from February through September 2005, to survey and characterize boaters who recreate in the Greater Charlotte Harbor region (Charlotte and Lee County waterways), on the basis of trip departure category (marina wet slip, marina dry storage, public ramp, and private dock). Vessel and boat trailer registration numbers collected at area marinas and boat ramps were used to obtain names and mailing addresses from the State's Vessel Title Registration System (VTRS) for marina and ramp samples. Names and mailing addresses for waterfront parcel owners obtained from County tax records were compared to the VTRS to identify the dock sample (those waterfront parcel owners that also own a boat). A map-based questionnaire was mailed to a random sample of 6,944 area boaters. 1,473 surveys were returned, of which 1,447 could be used for the statistical or spatial (map based) analyses.



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Questionnaire recipients marked the start and end point of their last two recreational boating trips, traced their travel routes, identified their favorite boating destinations, and the primary activities that they engaged in while at a particular destination. In addition, much descriptive data about boaters' trips, including preferences for selecting trip departure sites, destinations, and travel routes, favorite activities, vessel types, and the timing, duration, and frequency

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October 1, 2008

of trips, was collected and linked to the mapped data. A content analysis identified important issues and needs from the perspective of the boating community. Lastly, an analysis that compared the responses of early and late responders to the survey was undertaken to evaluate the potential effects of non-response bias; late responders were used as a surrogate for non-responders. This information is intended to be used for resource management and planning applications, and as the basis for developing map based products intended to improve boating experiences and instill resource stewardship.

The results of this effort are very comprehensive but clearly described in a 94-page document that can be accessed at the following web address: <http://nsgl.gso.uri.edu/flsgp/flsgps05004.pdf>.

Why is this study important? As demand for the use of Florida's waterways increases, so does the need for enhanced public access, public safety, and environmental protection. There is, however, little information available to resource managers and planners that describes the preferences and use patterns of the boating community. This study builds upon previous work conducted in the Charlotte Harbor and Tampa and Sarasota Bay boating regions (Sidman &

Flamm, 2001; Sidman, Fik, & Sargent, 2004) by refining the questionnaire design, developing a sample selection method to target specific boater groups, and implementing a mail survey to characterize boater preferences, activities, and water-use patterns for the high-use Greater Charlotte Harbor boating region that includes Lemon Bay to Estero Bay. Information obtained from this study is intended to enhance resource management and planning applications, and contribute to educational products that can improve boating experiences and encourage resource stewardship.

Source: A Recreational Boating Characterization for the Greater Charlotte Harbor, Florida Sea Grant, University of Florida. TP-150.

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