

# THE ECONOMICS OF WATER ORIENTED OUTDOOR RECREATION IN THE KISSIMMEE RIVER BASIN

## INTRODUCTION

In the past recreation was taken for granted and was incidental to much water resource planning. Many recreational developments came about more through accident than design: recreational use was not considered a major factor. Today, government water projects attract many million recreational visitor-days of use a year. They are bordered with camps, parks, swimming areas, marinas, docks, launching ramps, and many other public facilities. The agencies involved in water resources planning have come to accept recreational use as a major factor to be considered in water resource development projects, but the process of determining the economic value of such use has been the subject of much controversy. The evaluation of benefits from recreation has recently been given attention by economic researchers. One of the primary purposes of this study was to estimate recreational values of water in the Kissimmee River Basin.

The Kissimmee River Basin (see Figure 1) is located in the central portion of Florida. The basin is bordered roughly within the boundaries of Orlando on the north, Lake Okeechobee on the south, the Sunshine State Parkway on the east, and U. S. Highway 27 on the west. The geography of the area is such that rainfall within the area drains primarily into the Kissimmee River, its small tributaries, and associated lakes. These lakes, as well as the Kissimmee River itself, furnish water for municipalities, agricultural uses, industrial processes, and, of course, recreational activities. The upper Kissimmee River Basin is located in proximity to a large metropolitan area as well as one of the nation's major amusement attractions. The central portion of the basin contains some smaller cities and towns, while the lower end of the basin is somewhat remote from population areas.

Water in the Kissimmee River Basin can be controlled by the Central and Southern Florida Flood Control District. Variations in water level have an influence on all uses of the water. Water oriented outdoor recreation is one of the primary uses of this basin.

Two types of recreationists utilize the Kissimmee River Basin Waters. There are recreationists actually living (either permanently or during vacation and holidays) on lakefront