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Jan 1974

for the fun of it...

and then some!

recreation
and community growth
through
small watershed projects

Issued January 1974



Youngsters are enthusiastic users of watershed lake parks. Flat Creek watershed, Arkansas



for the fun of it... and then some!

More and more Americans want to be outdoors in their leisure time, and a lot of them want to be around water. Small watershed projects have helped put new lakes closer to home for many people. Parks built around the lakes are increasingly popular, and their use helps the economy of local communities as much as the well-being of the visitors.

How popular?

What are the economic effects?

How satisfactory are the facilities?

How can they be improved to in-

crease enjoyment and community growth?

The Soil Conservation Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, sought answers to these questions, to improve its assistance to local sponsoring groups in watershed projects under the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act 83-566 as amended. By agreement with SCS, the Department of Recreation and Park Administration, University of Missouri, studied five watershed lake developments in three states.

Under the leadership of Glenn Gillespie, department chairman, staff members checked attendance figures and interviewed 400 groups at these lakes in 1970. Results showed that the parks are used more, people come from farther away and spend more, and the dollar benefits are far greater than project planners expected. And nine of every ten groups—mostly families or couples—think the lakes and the quality of



the facilities are just right.

Attendance at these lakes in 1970 was more than 760,000 recreation-days (a visitor was counted each day he used the park). Benefits to nearby communities in admission fees, equipment sales, and purchases of food, fuel, and supplies totaled \$1.8 million for the season. Adding costs of travel to the watersheds made the total regional benefit \$3.2 million. This is an average of \$4.26 a recreation-day, almost three times the standard figure used to compute project recreation benefits.

The study showed that the average person interviewed:

- Was in his late thirties,
- Had a high school education,
- Worked 40 hours a week,
- Had an income between \$7,000 and \$10,000,

Picnicking is the most popular form of outdoor enjoyment at the five lakes studied. Flat Creek watershed, Arkansas

- Lived in a larger community now than when he was a child,
- Spent more than 2 days at the park and another day or two in travel,
- Spent 60 percent of his trip costs outside the immediate area,
- Spent from \$8 to \$29 in the local area and about the same amount getting there,
- Preferred a lake of 500 to 1,000 acres with highly developed and well-maintained recreation facilities.

The following provides a glimpse of how much the five lakes mean to the people who use them and to the communities that helped build them. They show how communities, government agencies, and local conservation districts working together can provide outdoor enjoyment as well as flood prevention and improved land and water use. The study indicates that recreation benefits may outweigh all other benefits from these watershed projects.



Fishing is one of the most popular activities on Lake Fuqua's 1,500 acres, attracting people from as far as 300 miles. Wild Horse Creek watershed, Oklahoma

lake fuqua, oklahoma

Wild Horse Creek needed to be tamed to protect the town of Duncan and nearby farms and ranches in Stephens County. A dam to hold back stormwater and release it slowly to prevent floods was part of the watershed project plan. City officials of Duncan worked with SCS to make the dam bigger, to provide for storage of much-needed water for municipal use and recreation. The completed lake is 1,500 acres.

The recreation facilities aren't all

in yet, but the lake already has a reputation for excellent fishing—

- More people fished, from boats or from the banks, at Lake Fuqua than at any other lake in the study. (Bank fishing was highly popular among all the 400 families interviewed, second only to picnicking.)

- A third of the fishermen had traveled more than 40 miles and two groups more than 300 miles.

- Ninety-six percent of the fishermen said they were delighted with the lake (the others hadn't caught anything yet).

Park usage in 1970 amounted to more than 97,000 recreation-days, with local community benefits of \$370,000. The regional boost was more than \$400,000.

At Lake Fuqua they're working on a small store, sanitary facilities, campgrounds, a fishing pier, a swimming beach, boat ramps, and picnic areas to make the park even more inviting.

lake charles, arkansas



Helping people enjoy a variety of outdoor fun in an attractive setting was a major aim early in the Flat Creek watershed project in Lawrence County. The efforts of state and federal agencies and the town of Walnut Ridge paid off big.

Before the 650-acre lake was built, economists figured it would someday have an average use of 200,000 recreation-days and return \$277,000 in community benefits a year. In 1970, Lake Charles provided 345,330 recreation-days and



Lake Charles means fun for every member of the family—and a boost for the local economy. Visitors spend well over \$500,000 in the area annually. Flat Creek watershed, Arkansas

pumped \$642,314 into the local economy—more than double the original estimates. Benefits to the region were nearly \$1.5 million, almost as much as the lake and park cost to build.

Lake Charles is the most highly developed of the five lake parks. Well over 90 percent of the visitors interviewed were pleased with the varied facilities and the way they were maintained.

The winding all-weather trails allow intensive use of wooded areas

without trampling the vegetation or causing soil erosion. Garbage cans are out of sight—underground. Boat ramps, picnic tables and grills, playground equipment, campsites, and the like help people get away from it all in style.

Besides boating, fishing, and swimming—and its mainstay job of keeping floodwaters off farmland and out of Walnut Ridge—Lake Charles performs another valuable role. It stores water for flooding several hundred acres in the Rainey

Brake wildlife refuge every fall, giving migratory waterfowl a place to rest on their way south. It also supplements water supplies for the public hunting and fishing area in Rainey Brake during dry periods.

An interesting sidelight: Almost 14 percent of the groups using Lake Charles were actually on their way somewhere else. Like the waterfowl, they couldn't resist stopping at Lake Charles on the way. More than a third of the visitors had traveled more than 100 miles.



Boating is a popular activity on Lake Sullivan's 461 acres and the boat launching ramp is a busy place most of the time. Busseron Creek watershed, Indiana

lake sullivan, indiana

The park at Lake Sullivan in the Busseron Creek watershed is so big and popular it's hard to remember that recreation is only one of many benefits of watershed projects.

The 400-acre park surrounding the



Young and old alike enjoy fishing along the banks of Lake Sullivan. Busseron Creek watershed, Indiana



461-acre lake is especially inviting to family groups. Many spend their entire vacation at Lake Sullivan and plan to come back again.

Nearly 200 campsites at the park in Sullivan County have electricity, water, and sewage-disposal hookups. The picnic areas with tables, grills, and comfort stations can accommodate more than 400 people. The swimming area has a diving

platform, two comfort stations, and a big parking area. Boat docks, boat launching ramps, and extra-long parking spaces for trailers round out the busy park.

Attendance at Lake Sullivan was 145,856 recreation-days in 1970 with community benefits of \$428,817, far above the expected totals. Regional benefits totaled \$573,214, almost as much as the

construction costs for recreation in the project.

Three-fourths of the families visiting the lake came from the city of Sullivan or elsewhere within a 40-mile radius. But nine families came more than 100 miles. The average group spent \$37.19 per trip, including \$27.84 spent at the lake.

They got quality recreation for the money.

lake el reno,oklahoma

Large areas of the city of El Reno frequently were covered by floodwaters. Now, a lake in the Four Mile Creek watershed in Canadian County keeps water where it belongs and provides new recreation. Young people and senior citizens seem to be Lake El Reno's primary visitors.

Attendance at the lake in 1970 was 140,400, and community benefits totaled \$327,132. The regional economy gained nearly \$700,000. (Compare these figures

with preconstruction estimates of \$97,000!)

All but four of the groups interviewed had come from less than 40 miles away, making this lake a real community asset. They spent an average of \$15.54 a trip, including \$7.43 at the lake.

The 175-acre lake stretches out 1 mile long and $\frac{1}{4}$ mile wide. Stocked with black bass and channel catfish in 1966, it was opened to fishing in 1968. The lake was second only to Lake Fuqua in the number of people who indulged in bank fishing, and it had by far the greatest number of repeaters—12 groups had fished at El Reno 20 times or more that season.

Park facilities include picnic tables and shelters, grills and fireplaces, boat launching ramps, parking area, $6\frac{1}{2}$ miles of all-weather roads, and complete water and sewer service.

Lake El Reno is 1 mile long and provides water for both wildlife and people. Four Mile Creek watershed, Oklahoma



indian rock lake, indiana



Smallest of the lakes studied, Indian Rock Lake in the Prairie Creek watershed project in Daviess County nonetheless has attracted many people. And more than 95 percent of them are quite happy with the facilities.

Most of them came as families, in somewhat larger groups than at other lakes studied. They stayed an average of 4½ days per trip, enjoyed a variety of recreation, and spent about \$46 a trip, \$29 of

it in the local area. Five of the groups questioned said they had been at the lake more than 20 times during the season.

Picnicking is especially enjoyable at Indian Rock Lake, and that's the No. 1 activity of 57 percent of the groups interviewed in the study.

During 1970 the 26-acre lake and adjacent park furnished a total of 31,648 recreation-days with community benefits of \$64,562. (Preconstruction estimates were 19,000 recreation-days). With total trip costs added, the regional economic boost was more than \$100,000.

Improvements and additions have been made to the park near Montgomery every year since it opened—more beach area, more campsites, more electrical outlets, more restrooms, more parkland.

Indian Rock may be reaching its potential for such a small lake. But that potential is a lot more outdoor fun in Daviess County.

The 26-acre Indian Rock Lake is extremely popular with boaters and campers. Visiting families stay an average of 4½ days per trip. Prairie Creek watershed, Oklahoma





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