Use Profiles For Boaters and Regions

This section presents results of the cluster analysis employed to generate boater and regional use profiles.

Boater Profile

Boaters indicated a strong preference towards a morning launch. Owners of personal watercraft (PWC) prefer launching in the afternoon. Owners of small powerboats were split over weekday or weekend use preferences. Owners of big powerboats, sailboats, and KRC's preferred weekdays. Many indicated that it was less crowded then. PWC owners preferred weekend use.

The greatest proportion of survey respondents preferred to boat during the spring (39%; March, April, May) and summer months (29%; June, July, August). Smaller proportions preferred to boat during the fall (14% September, October, November) and winter months (18%; December, January, February). Some seasonal differences in use-preference are evident with respect to boat type. For example, owners of small powerboats indicated a strong preference for summer excursions. Owners of big powerboats and PWC indicated an equal preference for spring and summer. Sail-boaters favored winter and spring seasons. KRC operators indicated a strong preference for winter excursions.

The overwhelming majority of boaters (roughly 80 percent), regardless of the type of boat owned, indicated that they selected a travel route to reduce travel time to get to their favorite boating areas. Other significant reasons for selecting a travel route include avoidance of shallow water, scenic beauty, and preference for calm water. In addition to these preferences, KRC owners preferred travel routes that minimized contact with other boaters.

In response to the question, "What factors are important to you in selecting a travel route or favorite destination?" Less than five percent of respondents selected the "I don't have any favorite travel routes or destinations. I just cruise around." Instead, boaters indicate clear reasons for selecting travel routes and favorite destinations. Most boaters said they selected a destination for fishing access. Natural and scenic beauty, protected waters, and access to shore facilities and entertainment are also important reasons for selecting a destination.

In sum, results indicate that (1) boating is not "whimsical", and (2) boaters typically select the shortest route to a favorite destination. Boaters in the region may be "distance minimizers." Most respondents indicated that they select travel routes to reduce boat travel times (including avoiding speed and manatee zones) to their favorite destinations and choose destinations that are within close proximity to launch sites.
Figure 5. Weekend Boating Densities in Expert-Defined Fishing Areas.
Charlotte Harbor Boating Characterization
Composite Map of Expert and Boater Defined Fishing Areas

Darker shades of red indicate areas of higher use. Composite of expert-defined and boater-identified favorite fishing areas.

Figure 6. Composite Map of High-Use Fishing Areas.