

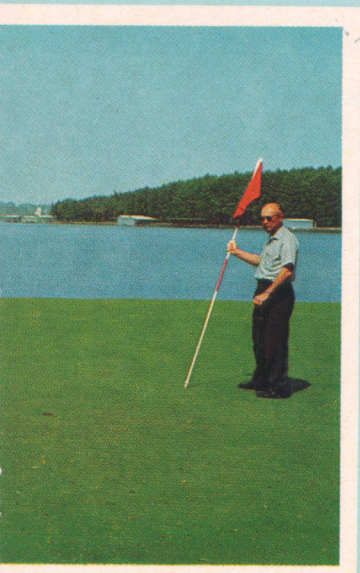
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TOURISM-RECREATION POTENTIAL

In Cherokee, DeKalb,
Jackson, and Marshall
Counties Alabama

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TOURISM-RECREATION POTENTIAL in Cherokee, Dekalb, Jackson, and Marshall Counties Alabama¹

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TOURISM-RECREATION³ has been recognized as a means of stimulating and contributing to the economy of an area. Effective use of physical resources of an area's recreational potential may contribute greater economic benefits than comparable efforts in other endeavors. Possibilities for success, however, depend partly upon the quality of existing recreation attractions, availability of recreational resources, potential markets, and promotional efforts. Recognizing this fact, present and potential recreation attractions in Cherokee, Dekalb, Jackson, and Marshall Counties, Alabama, were considered in this study, with special emphasis being placed on currently operating attractions.

¹ This report was prepared under authority of research project USDA 508-15-3 (AS), State 1-033, titled "Development and Use of Physical and Human Resources in Selected Areas of the Extreme Southern Appalachian Region of the United States."

² The author wishes to express appreciation to the owners and managers of the recreation attractions who graciously cooperated in this study. This includes the owners of Cathedral Caverns, Guntersville Caverns, Manitou Cave, Sequoyah Cave, and the manager of Little Mountain State Park.

Appreciation is also expressed to John E. Dunkelberger, Lowell E. Wilson, J. H. Yeager, Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology Department, and Robert R. Clark, Paul D. Johnson, Cooperative Extension Service, for constructive suggestions on organizing and preparing the manuscript for publication.

³ A term recently applied to the tourist recreation trade, outdoor recreation facilities and activities serving as the attraction for the tourist or "person away from home."

Objectives of the Study

The overall objective of this study was to appraise existing recreational potential of the area and explore the possibilities for increasing tourism-recreation in Cherokee, Dekalb, Jackson, and Marshall Counties, Alabama, thereby contributing to the local economy. Specific objectives were:

1. Identify and describe the existing potential recreational resources of the study area.
2. Determine the quality of selected attractions through customer evaluation.
3. Determine patronage patterns and advertisements that affect patronage.
4. Determine other factors that would temper recommendations and suggestions for increasing tourism-recreation in the area.

Method

Identification of existing and promising recreational resources in the area was accomplished through area surveys, aid of personnel in public agencies, and from secondary data.

In accomplishing other objectives of this study, five major recreation attractions that included four caves and one state park were selected for sampling customer reaction. Short questionnaires were designed for use by customers after completion of their visits to these selected points of interest. All visitors were asked to complete a short questionnaire form and drop-in boxes designed for the survey, Figure 1. Location of boxes for use in depositing questionnaires was based on the local facility and situated for optimum utilization by patrons.

Small boxes were made of plywood with drop slots in lid. Posters were placed near each box with printed invitations for each person to participate. Also, all patrons were given equal opportunity to participate in the study through invitations extended by guides and operators of the selected attractions. It was assumed that equal percentage response would be obtained from all visitors.

The most popular season for recreation and tourism was selected for the study. This phase of the study was 3 months in duration. The boxes were placed at each of the designated attractions on June 12, 1966 and removed immediately after September 12, 1966.



FIGURE 1. Drop-box and sign used at selected recreation attractions northeastern four-country area, Alabama, 1966.

A total of 1,709 usable survey forms representing 8,321 people were completed by visitors to the four caves or caverns while 100 forms were completed by campers at the state park installation.

Managers and owners of five recreational facilities were also interviewed to obtain data relative to management practices and other related problems. All were cooperative in the study and particularly interested in promoting tourism-recreation in Alabama.

Another aspect of the study included a short check-type questionnaire placed in selected motels of the area. Tourists were asked to complete the questionnaire and leave it in their rooms or at the check-out desk. Managers of motels cooperated but response by tourists was limited.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SELECTED ATTRACTIONS

The four caves or caverns selected for study are the first attractions of this kind encountered as one enters the southern extremities of Appalachia, Figure 2. Attracting more than 100,000 visitors yearly, such attractions are making significant contributions to the economy of the four-county area.

Manitou and Sequoyah Caves are located in DeKalb County. Manitou is located within the city limits of Fort Payne, Alabama

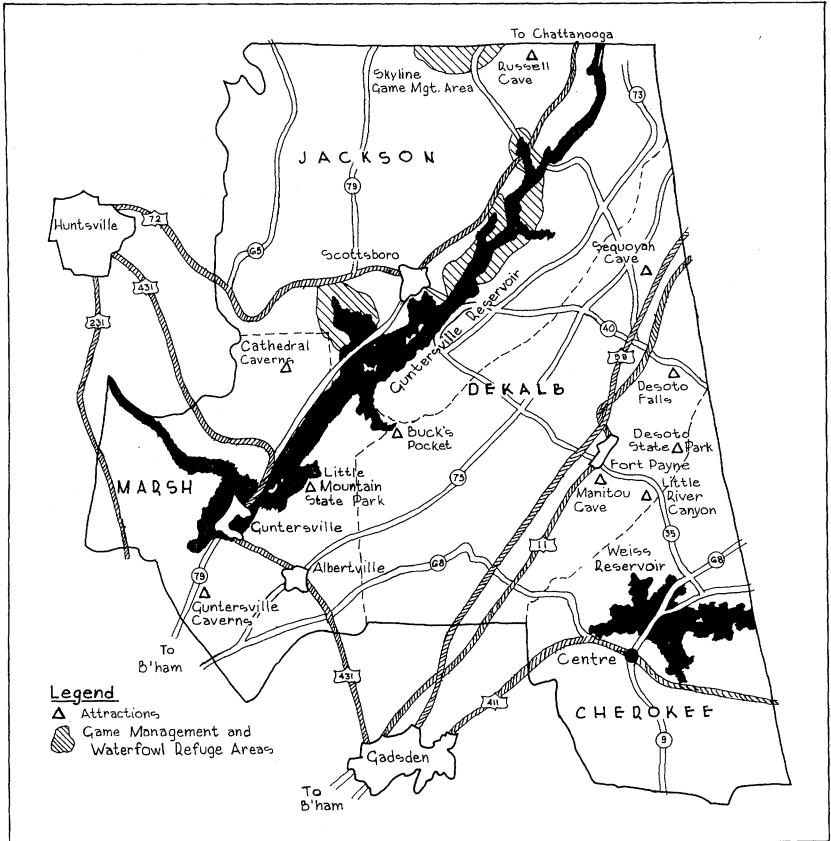


FIGURE 2. Location of major recreation attractions northeastern four-county area, Alabama, 1966.

at the foot of the historic Lookout Mountain Range just six blocks off U.S. Highway 11 and one mile from Interstate 59. Sequoyah cave is located five miles north of Hammondville—just a five minute drive off U.S. Highway 11 and Interstate 59. Both depend heavily upon tourist traffic that flows in a northeasterly or southwesterly direction on the newly completed Interstate Highway 59. This is one of the main arteries of transportation leading from the south and southwest toward Chattanooga and the Great Smoky Mountain area. Figures 3 and 4.

Cathedral Caverns are located in Marshall County near Grant, Alabama. This attraction is farther removed from main arteries of transportation and depends heavily upon east-west tourist



FIGURE 3. Interesting Manitou Cave, located in Fort Payne, DeKalb County.



FIGURE 4. Colorful Sequoyah Caverns located near Hammondville, DeKalb County.



FIGURE 5. Mouth of Cathedral Caverns, 40 feet high and 128 feet wide, located near Grant, Marshall County.

traffic of U.S. Highway 72 and north-south traffic of U.S. Highway 431. Figure 5.

Guntersville Caverns are also located in Marshall County, nine miles south of Guntersville on Alabama Highway 79. Tourist

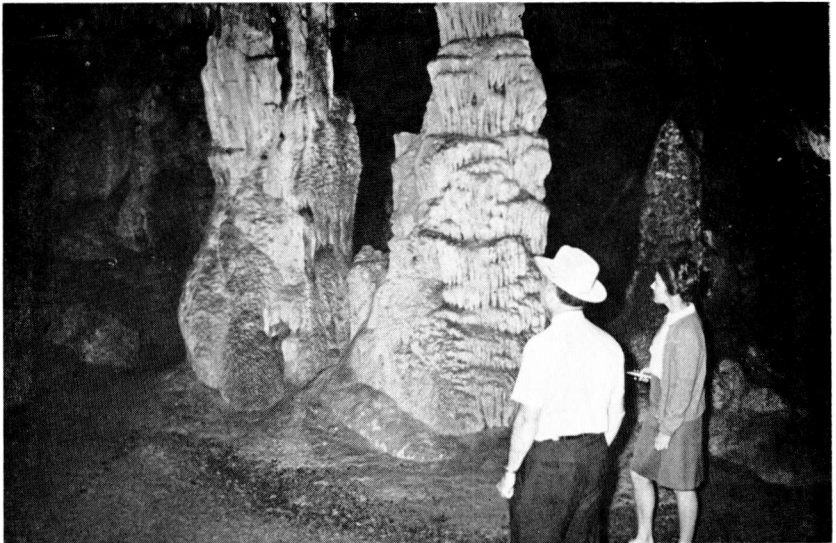


FIGURE 6. Scene inside Guntersville Caverns located nine miles south of Guntersville, Marshall County.

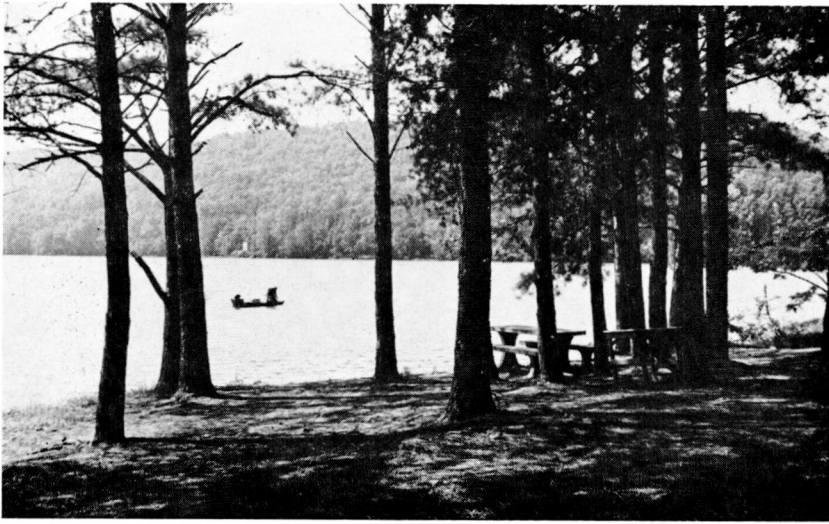


FIGURE 7. Scene inside Little Mountain State Park Camping Area, Guntersville, Marshall County.

traffic of U.S. Highway 431 also contributes to patronage of this attraction. Figure 6.

Each of the four caves or caverns mentioned has many points of interest for sightseers. Guide services are furnished patrons with commentaries on geology, history, and particular points of interest. Fees per tour are from \$.75 to \$.90 per child under 12 years of age and \$1.50 to \$1.75 per person over 12 years of age. Tours usually last from 45 minutes to an hour. Welcome centers with adequate free parking, souvenirs, and picnic tables are available at most of these attractions.

Two of the 13 major Alabama state parks are located in this area. Little Mountain State Park which was included in the study is located in Marshall County, Alabama. It contains 4,000 acres along the shoreline of Guntersville Lake. Facilities for camping, boating, swimming, and fishing are available. From October 1, 1965 through September 30, 1966, there was a total of 253,361 in-state and 23,140 out-of-state visitors to the park. Campers were the principal respondents from this attraction. Figure 7.

OTHER RECREATION ATTRACTIONS IN THE AREA

Russell Cave

Russell Cave National Monument, not included in patronage evaluation, is located in Jackson County near Bridgeport, Ala-

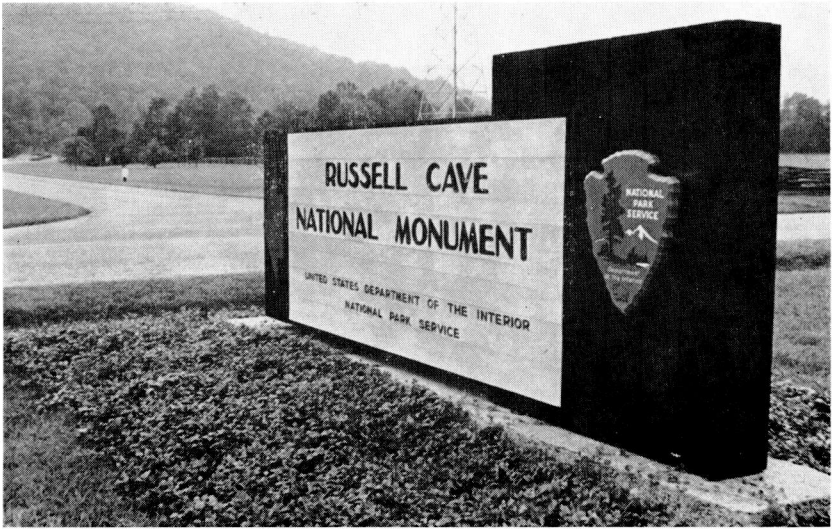


FIGURE 8. Entrance to Russell Cave National Monument featuring Woodland Indians and their use of the cave for more than 8000 years, Bridgeport, Jackson County.

bama. It has been developed to show the history of nearly 8,000 years of man's life in the area. The cave is primarily a rock shelter in which vertical excavations have been made into the cave floor deposits to show man's progress from pre-historic times



FIGURE 9. Russell Cave, an outstanding archeological site, located at Bridgeport, Jackson County.

up through the Cherokee Indian period of occupancy. A three-minute recording at the site gives a brief summary of man's existence at the cave from 6400 B.C. This attraction is publicly operated by the National Park Service with an informative visitor center, and is free to the public. According to the National Park Service, this attraction has been drawing approximately 16,000 visitors yearly. U.S. Highway 72 is the nearest main artery of transportation. Figure 8 and 9.

Guntersville Lake

Guntersville Lake, one of the impoundments of the Tennessee River, has been described as "the South's most beautiful lake" and is the foremost attraction of the four-county area. With nearly 11 million person-visits estimated for 1966, it has the greatest annual visitation of any lake in the TVA system.⁴ It is widely known for its boating (the new world speed boat record was set here in June 1967), swimming, water skiing, and camping. Also, it provides opportunities for sport fishing and water



FIGURE 10. Formerly a land-locked community, the city of Guntersville, now rests on a peninsula jutting into Guntersville Lake. A portion of the waterfront is zoned for recreation and other sections are reserved for industry. TVA's Guntersville Dam impounds the lake. TVA, the State of Alabama, and the city joined in developing a land-use plan for the city.

⁴ Estimates made by Tennessee Valley Authority.

fowl hunting. At full pool elevation of 595 feet, it contains 69,100 surface acres of water with 962 miles of shoreline. This shoreline extends through the major portions of Marshall and Jackson Counties, Alabama. Figure 10.

Included in the shoreline of Guntersville Lake are approximately 36,000 acres of land used for some form of recreation, most of which is open for public use. About 32,000 acres of this includes 25 public recreation areas; 6 group camps with nearly 700 acres; and 21 public commercial areas containing nearly 300 acres. Private subdivisions and private clubs use the remaining 3,000 acres. Total value of all recreation developments in the lake area in 1966 was estimated by TVA at \$39,415,800.

According to TVA estimates, visitation to the lake has steadily increased from about 1.8 million in 1950 to approximately 11 million in 1966.

In addition to Little Mountain State Park, three county parks containing about 266 acres are located on Guntersville Lake. Marshall County operates two parks while Jackson County operates the other. Boating, swimming, fishing, and camping facilities are provided. Seven municipal parks include nearly 300 acres of land on the lake while public access and roadside parks compromise about 130 acres.

Game Management and Waterfowl Refuge Areas

There are five wildlife hunting areas located in Jackson County managed by the Alabama Department of Conservation Game and Fish Division. Four of these border the lake shoreline. The largest of these is Mud Creek Waterfowl Management Area with 8,193 acres. It is located 12 miles northeast of Scottsboro on U.S. Highway 72. In addition to providing waterfowl and small game hunting, it also has facilities for picnicking, swimming, and boating. The Raccoon Creek Waterfowl Management Area contains 7,080 acres located four miles east of Stevenson. Camping facilities, small game, and waterfowl are available. The North Sauty Waterfowl Refuge, containing 6,700 acres, is operated for the protection of migratory waterfowl but has small game for hunting, and facilities for picnicking, swimming, and camping. The Crow Creek Waterfowl Area contains 4,556 acres, and is divided almost equally into a waterfowl refuge of 2,395 acres and a waterfowl public hunting area of 2,161 acres. Small game hunting is permitted on both tracts as well as fishing, swimming, boating,

picnicking and camping. This area is located near Stevenson, Alabama.

The Skyline Management Area contains 23,000 acres. Located 18 miles north of Scottsboro, it does not border on the lake. In addition to small game, deer are plentiful in the area. A more detailed information guide on each area is included in the Appendix.

The major part of the public commercial area on the lake shoreline is located on the lower end of the reservoir. Rental boats and other fishing supplies are available at most of these installations. In addition to boat launching facilities, many operators of small businesses rent outboard motors, sell gasoline and oil, provide lodging, and camping facilities.

Motel and restaurant accommodations appear to be adequate in the area adjacent to the lake shoreline. However, during peak periods of summer business the more popular places are strained to meet the demand. Some places report operating at an average of 85 per cent of capacity during the peak summer periods of the year.

Val Monte Resort

Important among motels of the lake area is the Val Monte Motel and Resort. This facility is ideally located on Guntersville Lake. Water-based recreation of all kinds is available to the visitor. Also, attractive to golfers is the nine-hole golf course that borders the lake. Multiple recreational facilities of this installation tend to attract and hold visitors in the area much longer than other attractions. See golfing scene on cover.

Buck's Pocket

Undeveloped natural attractions located in close proximity to Guntersville Lake include Buck's Pocket Cove. This scenic attraction is located about 20 miles west of Fort Payne atop Sand Mountain on South Sauty Creek near Grove Oak in DeKalb County. The area has a magnificent scenic gorge approximately 800 feet in depth. Backwaters of Guntersville Dam are within 1.5 miles of the pocket affording excellent fishing and boating. The area also includes an Indian burial ground and a historic Indian cave as special points of interest. Figure 11.

Local promotion groups have proposed that the cove be developed as an 800-acre park or recreation area. Consideration is

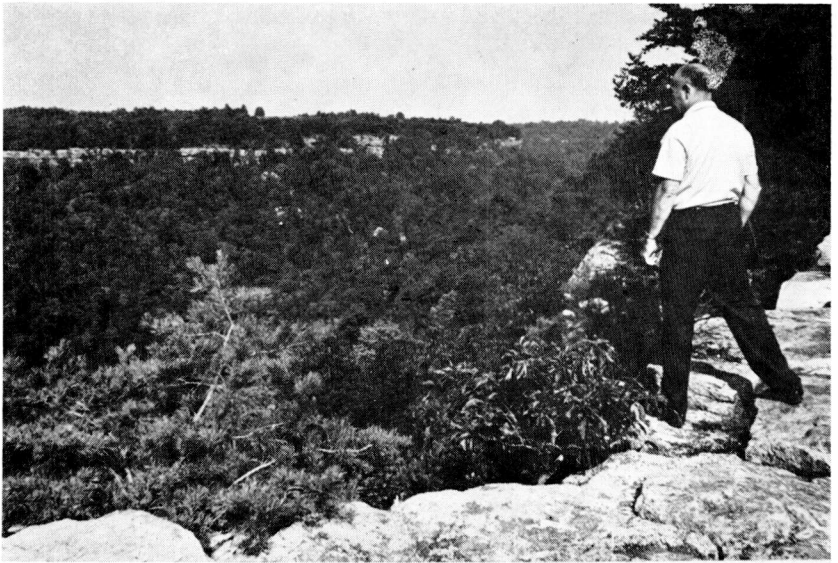


FIGURE 11. Overlook scene at Buck's Pocket located 18 miles west of Fort Payne, DeKalb County.

being given the proposal by appropriate State and Federal agencies with some decision anticipated in the near future in making this Buck's Pocket Tri-County Park.

DeSoto State Park

Contributing greatly to the scenic attractions of the area is the 4,830-acre DeSoto State Park, located atop the Lookout Mountain Range in DeKalb County. It is considered a major attraction for Alabama visitors. The park provides picnicking, camping areas, and has 12 overnight rental cabins. DeSoto Parkway leads from the park to DeSoto Falls about five miles upstream on Little River. Picnicking and swimming facilities along with a concession stand are provided at an impoundment just upstream from the falls. Wild flowers and shrubs provide a riot of color in season. Figure 12.

Little River Canyon, the deepest gorge east of the Mississippi River and sometimes called the Grand Canyon of the South, is another scenic attraction of the DeSoto State Park complex and the Lookout Mountain range area of DeKalb County. A 16-mile parkway along the rim of the canyon provides the visitor with an array of scenic thrills.



FIGURE 12. DeSoto Falls, DeSoto State Park, near Fort Payne.

The center of organized summer camping in Alabama is also located atop the Lookout Mountain Range near Mentone, Alabama. Lower mean temperatures provided by the higher elevation contribute to the desirability of this location. Nine camps are located in close proximity to this area.

Weiss Reservoir

Located in the southern part of the four-county area is Weiss Reservoir; a relatively new recreation attraction for Cherokee County. The 30,200-acre impoundment was formed in 1961-62 by construction of dams on the Coosa River near Leesburg, Alabama. Excellent fishing, boating, camping, and picnicking are among the recreational attractions of this lake. A shoreline of 447 miles offers further opportunities for developing the recreational appeal of the County.

Increased economic benefits resulting from construction of the reservoir have been a boon to Cherokee County. Contributing greatly to this is the availability of water-based recreation, a favorite with most recreation seekers.

Weiss Reservoir is more removed from the main arteries of travel than is Guntersville Reservoir. U.S. Highway 411, which

leads from Gadsden, Alabama, to Rome, Georgia, and Alabama State Highways 9 and 68 serve the lake area.

With fishing and hunting facilities in abundance, indications of the importance of these two outdoor recreation activities are gained by reference to the number of licenses sold. Cherokee County, location of Weiss Reservoir, led all counties in non-resident annual and non-resident trip fishing licenses sold in 1963-64, while Marshall County was second in the State for resident rod and reel licenses issued. Total fishing and hunting licenses sold for the 4-county area in 1963 was 54,535 and 18,075, respectively. Boat registrations totaled 4,248 for the same year.⁵ Revenue from these licenses was approximately \$175,000 in 1963. Of more economic importance to the area, however, is the expenditures of each fisherman, hunter, and boater while engaging in the available outdoor recreation.

FACTORS RELATED TO SELECTED ATTRACTIONS

Information about the characteristics of customers is of primary interest to businessmen. This is especially true in the recreation business. Both public and private entrepreneurs can utilize resources more advantageously if factors such as customer origin, product evaluation, and advertisement effectiveness are known. Consequently, efforts were made to determine information pertaining to the five selected attractions in the area.

PATRONAGE OF ATTRACTIONS

Completed questionnaires revealed that more than half the visitors to the four cave attractions came from states other than Alabama. Individual cave attendance for out-of-state visitors ranged from about 48 to 75 per cent of the total for each attraction. The percentage of out-of-state patronage was higher for those attractions located nearer main highways.

Origin of out-of-state patronage was arbitrarily divided into four geographic areas, Figure 13. The southern area (excluding Alabama) contributed more than 41 per cent of total patronage. Next in importance was the midwestern area which contributed 8.3 per cent, northeastern area 4.2 per cent, and western area 3.2 per cent.

Among the 11 states in the southern area (excluding Alabama)

⁵ *Annual Report* 1963, Alabama Department of Conservation, Montgomery, Alabama.

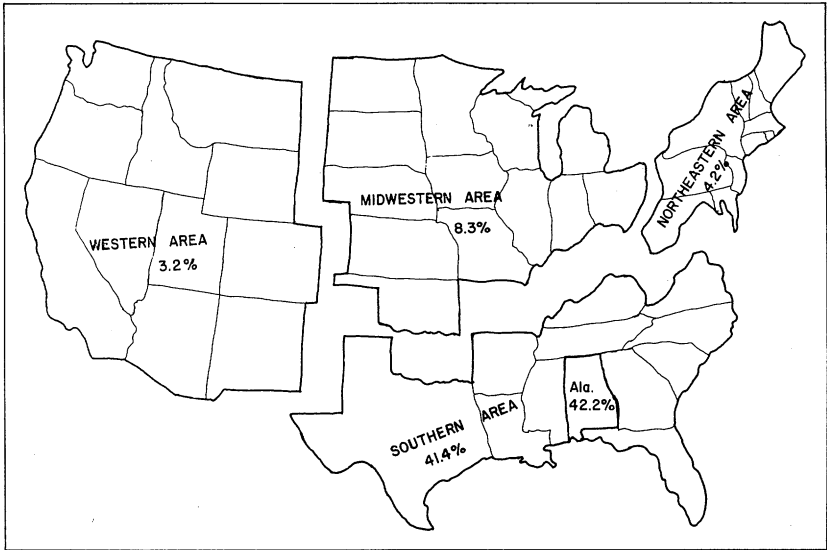


FIGURE 13. Percentage of total patronage, by areas of the United States, to selected recreation attractions northeastern four-county area, Alabama, June-September, 1966.

Louisiana supplied the most visitors at these attractions. Other states in descending order of importance were Mississippi, Georgia, Texas, Florida, and Tennessee, Table 1.

The pattern of patronage varied with the attraction. Contributing to this was the location of attractions in relation to main highways and tourist travel patterns. This was of particular importance to individual operators in placing priority on use of

TABLE 1. PERCENTAGE OF VISITORS BY STATES OF RESIDENCE FOR TOTAL SOUTHERN RESPONDENTS TO SELECTED ATTRACTIONS, NORTHEASTERN FOUR-COUNTY AREA, ALABAMA, JUNE-SEPTEMBER, 1966

Southern state of residence	Caves or caverns visited				Total
	Manitou	Cathedral	Sequoyah	Guntersville	
	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.
Arkansas	*	*	*	2	*
Florida	8	17	7	16	11
Georgia	8	18	22	18	16
Kentucky	*	4	*	4	2
Louisiana	38	13	27	22	26
Mississippi	26	9	17	16	17
North Carolina	3	5	4	6	4
South Carolina	2	2	*	*	2
Tennessee	4	10	11	2	8
Texas	8	19	6	10	11
Virginia	*	2	3	2	2

* Denotes less than one per cent.

effective advertisement in strategic locations. For instance, the high percentage of Louisiana and Mississippi patrons to the DeKalb County attractions may warrant study in locating effective advertisement on the southwestern approaches to this area and to Alabama.

Leading states in patronage from the midwestern area were Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. The Marshall County attractions tended to receive a higher percentage of the midwestern and western patronage. Partly responsible for this was the travel pattern through this area of the east-west and north-south tourist traffic in addition to the tourist appeal and nearness of the Huntsville area.

Campers reporting were primarily from Alabama with the remainder coming from bordering states. The neighboring states of Georgia and Tennessee contributed most to the out-of-state camping patronage at Little Mountain State Park. Fishing and swimming were main attractions for campers at this installation. Figure 14.

The number of recreation seekers visiting an area is economically important, the degree of importance increasing with length of stay. About 29 per cent of those reporting in this survey indicated that they had or were going to stay overnight in motels



FIGURE 14. Entrance to West Camping Area of Little Mountain State Park, Guntersville, Marshall County.

or hotels in the nearby area. Because of the nearness of Huntsville and Chattanooga to the area, it is conceivable that even part of these were referring to those places as nearby overnight stops. More attractive overnight accommodations in certain areas that furnish family appeal may contribute to more overnight plans.

The number of visitors to the two DeKalb County attractions who reported overnight plans was greater than from any of the others. A partial explanation for this was the fact that Louisiana and Mississippi visitors, traveling toward Chattanooga and the Smokies on Interstate 59, often reached the end of their first day's travel in this vicinity. Plans for spending the night in the area as reported by respondents from the various attractions ranged from a high of 43.5 per cent to a low of 20.2 per cent.

Overnight visitors to motels in the area were unanimous in their reports of hospitable treatment received while in the area. Such reports are conducive to recommendations by visitors and subsequent increases in tourist patronage.

Tourists Visit Several Recreation Attractions

Also of importance was the number of people planning to visit other recreation attractions in the area. Of the 1,709 respondents having visited one attraction, about 62 per cent reported



FIGURE 15. Boat racing on Guntersville Lake.

having visited or having plans for visiting other attractions within the four-country area. Highest on the list was Guntersville Lake with caves of the area next in importance. This correlates highly with recreation appealing most to visitors — water-based recreational activities and sightseeing. Figure 15.

Types of Advertisement Affecting Visitation

Approximately 40 per cent of all cave-visiting respondents reported recommendations from friends as being their initial awareness of the recreation attraction visited. Roadside signs were a close second with about 38 per cent; post cards or brochures 10 per cent; newspapers or magazines 6.0 per cent; and others (includes maps, travel guides, etc.) 5 per cent. Only one person mentioned radio or television advertisement, Table 2.

Again, differences in data were reflected by individual cave attractions because of their location. A much higher rate of roadside sign advertising was reported as the initial contact with patrons of the more favorably located units. Similarly, friends' recommendations rated higher for attractions less favorably situated, implying the importance of a quality product.

In the case of state park visitors, respondents, indicated that friends' recommendations were partly responsible for 56 per cent of their camping visits to the park. Second in importance were such items as maps, camping guides, etc. for camping areas, Table 3. The higher percentage of recommendations by friends could be expected in this case because of more preplanning for such recreational experiences.

Other Factors Affecting Visitation

Location is a major factor affecting patronage of recreational attractions. For instance, attractions located near interstate highways are fortunate if road accesses and exits are in the immediate vicinity. On the contrary, attractions may be seriously handicapped by completion of nearby interstate roads if no easy exits and entrances are provided. Interstate Highway 59 through DeKalb County serves as a prime example of this problem. Lack of access and exit roads at points conducive to tourist stops has had adverse effects on recreation attractions in this area.

Adequate parking space at attractions is a necessity. Generally, the parking facilities were found to be fair to good but improve-

TABLE 2. INITIAL ADVERTISEMENT INFORMING VISITORS OF SELECTED RECREATION ATTRACTIONS, NORTHEASTERN FOUR-COUNTY AREA, ALABAMA, JUNE-SEPTEMBER, 1966

Place of residence	Visitors reporting		Types of advertisement						
			Roadside signs	Friends' recommendation	Postcards or brochures	Newspaper or magazines	Radio or TV	Other ¹ (Maps, guides, etc.)	No response
	<i>No.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>
Alabama	721	100	32.2	40.9	11.4	8.9	.1	5.0	1.5
Southern States	708	100	46.9	36.3	7.6	3.0	.0	5.4	.8
Midwestern States	142	100	31.0	45.1	11.3	7.7	.0	4.9	.0
Northeastern States	72	100	38.9	40.3	11.1	4.2	.0	4.1	1.4
Western States	54	100	27.9	48.1	13.0	5.6	.0	5.6	.0
Foreign countries	12	100	33.3	50.0	0	8.3	.0	8.3	.0
Total	1709	100	38.3	39.6	9.8	6.0	.0	5.2	1.1

¹ Includes maps, AAA guides, and other sources.

TABLE 3. INITIAL ADVERTISEMENT INFORMING VISITORS OF STATE PARK VISITED IN THE NORTHEASTERN FOUR-COUNTY AREA, ALABAMA, JUNE-SEPTEMBER, 1966

Camper's home residence	Campers reporting		Types of advertisement						
			Roadside signs	Friends' recommendation	Postcards or brochures	Newspapers or Magazines	Radio or TV	Other ¹ (Maps, guides, etc.)	No response
	<i>No.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>
In-state	66	100	4.6	68.2	9.1	0	3.0	13.6	1.5
Out-of-state	34	100	5.9	32.4	17.7	2.9	0	38.2	2.9
Total	100	100	5.0	56.0	12.0	1.0	2.0	22.0	2.0

¹ Includes Alabama maps and AAA camp guide publications.



FIGURE 16. Roadside signs attract tourists' attention to points of interest.

ments were needed in specific cases. Immediate access roads to parking areas were generally fair to good. Some problems were reported concerning the narrowness of roads and high water trouble following heavy rains in one area.



FIGURE 17. Roadside signs attract tourists' attention to points of interest.

Difficulty in locating attractions was a definite factor affecting visitation. Almost one-fourth of the respondents from one attraction reported difficulty in this respect while more than 13 per cent of the visitors to two other facilities experienced the same trouble. More complaints of this kind were reported by those visitors to attractions farther removed from main arteries of travel, indicating the need for more roadside markers or guide signs and periodic checks to see that signs are clearly visible. Correction of this discrepancy by installation of direction-type signs was in progress by one operator. However, more road markers are still needed in specific areas. Figures 16 and 17.

Advertising by owners and operators of these attractions was reported to be moderately accomplished on an individual basis. Owners felt that patronage could be increased greatly through more advertising. Extensive advertising was not practiced by owners because of reported high costs. Nevertheless, one-half the operators were interested in low interest rate loans for additional advertising purposes.

Evidence of the importance of roadside advertising was gained by an operator of one of the selected attractions during the study period. Upon the completion and opening of a new highway, and before roadside signs were erected, patronage at his business dropped drastically, but returned to normal immediately after installation of roadside signs on the new highway. With the large potential market of tourists passing through this area enroute to or from Chattanooga, the Smoky Mountains, and points farther east, only a small per cent was stopping for any length of time. Consideration must be given the fact that these people may be induced to stop before they had planned. Attractive, curiosity arousing signs must be a part of any plan for increasing recreation's contribution to the economy of the area.

Further development and improvement of attractions could contribute to greater patronage. Difficulties, however, have been experienced by private owners in securing long term loans for planned development and needed improvements. Specific cases have been cited by owners in which adequate loans have not been available.

Another factor cited by one owner that has adversely affected patronage involved the unfavorable image many tourists have of the State so that they do not plan to include Alabama in their travel itinerary.

Evaluation of Attractions by Patrons

Price and quality are important factors directly affecting customer reaction to products bought (in this case recreation). Customers at the various attractions were asked to rate the particular facility they had just visited. Choice of ratings was wide enough to give the respondent adequate freedom in placing an evaluation on the attraction, Table 4. Ratings were tabulated by area and by individual attractions. The combined ratings by respondents for all attractions were as follows: excellent, 72.5 per cent; good, 18.1 per cent; average, 5.6 per cent; fair, .9 per cent; poor, .6 per cent; and 2.3 per cent failed to answer the question.

Ratings for individual attractions ranged from 4.3 per cent below to 7.5 per cent above the combined excellent rating. The combined good and excellent ratings totaled 90.6 per cent of all responses with another 5.6 per cent in the average category. With only a 1.5 per cent combined total reporting poor and fair, an overwhelming endorsement of the attractions was given by those reporting.

As a check on these ratings, another question was posed to all respondent — “would you recommend this attraction to others?” Of the 1,709 respondents to the question, 1,660 persons indicated “affirmative” answers; only 28 people said “no.”

Willingness to recommend the product by 97.1 per cent of the respondents indicated approval and subsequent recommendations to friends by those reporting. The percentage of endorsement reflected here suggests a product that may warrant wider advertisement and exposure to larger audiences. Returns over added advertisement costs may prove to be an incentive for operators to invest more in the advertising medium.

POTENTIAL DEMAND FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION

Adequate demand for outdoor recreation must precede the profitable allocation of resources to recreation enterprises. Indications of a large and continuing demand for such services in the four counties would reinforce certain recommendations that might be made. Continuing demand requires rather large concentrations of population with income sufficient to participate in recreational activities after basic necessities are provided. Other factors, such as the number and travel patterns of tourists will also greatly affect the aggregate demand.

TABLE 4. RATINGS GIVEN BY AREA PATRONS TO RECREATION ATTRACTIONS VISITED, NORTHEASTERN FOUR-COUNTY AREA, ALABAMA, JUNE-SEPTEMBER, 1966

Area of residence	Visitors reporting		Rating of attraction by visitors											
			Excellent		Good		Average		Fair		Poor		No answer	
	No.	Pct. of total	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.
Alabama	721	42.2	525	72.8	136	18.9	38	5.3	4	.5	3	.4	15	2.1
Southern area	708	41.4	514	72.6	123	17.4	38	5.4	8	1.1	5	.7	20	2.8
Midwestern area	142	8.3	107	75.4	19	13.4	11	7.7	0	0	1	.7	4	2.8
Northeastern area	72	4.2	52	72.2	15	20.8	3	4.2	2	2.8	0	0	0	0
Western area	54	3.2	33	61.1	15	27.7	2	3.7	2	3.7	1	1.9	1	1.9
Foreign countries	12	.7	8	66.7	1	8.3	3	25.0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	1709	100.0	1239	72.5	309	18.1	95	5.6	16	.9	10	.6	40	2.3

Even though the physical resources of an area are sufficient to provide outdoor recreation in large quantities, demand for such services must of necessity be evaluated.

Population

The population of the four-county area declined by 3.0 per cent during the 1950-1960 period, and stood at 142,419 in 1960. During the same period, however, sharp increases were registered in the Guntersville Lake and Marshall County areas.

Population within a 50-mile radius of the area can be considered as the prime market of all types of recreational patronage. There are nearly one million people that reside within a 50-mile radius of the center of the area, Figure 18. This number would increase considerably if areas within 50 miles of the extremities

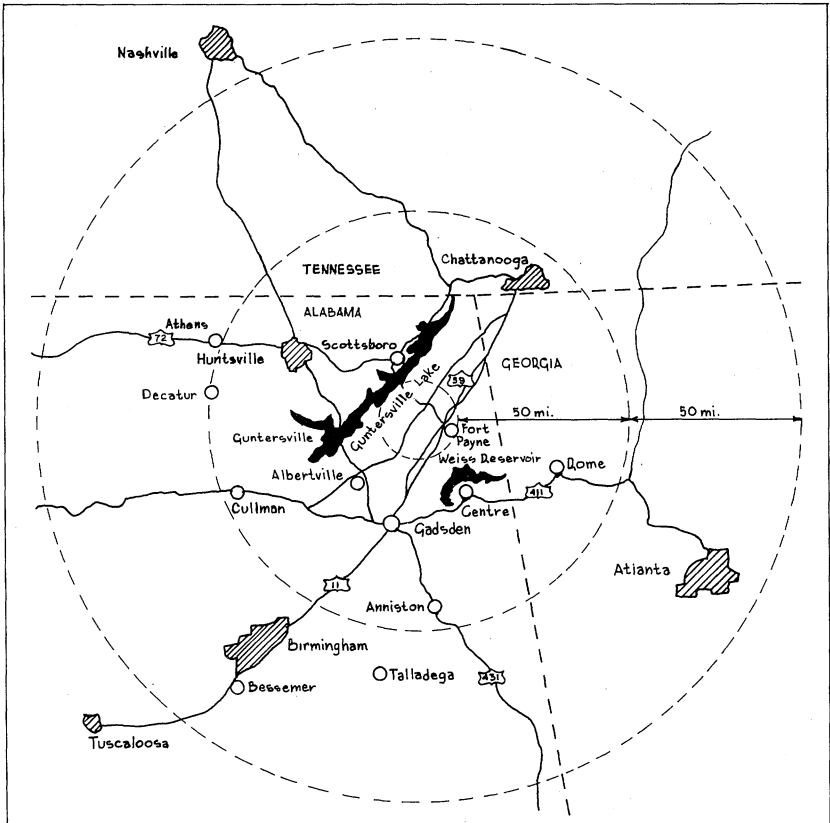


FIGURE 18. Fifty and 100-mile perimeters to the four-county area, Alabama, 1966.

were included. When the perimeter is extended 100 miles to include Birmingham and Atlanta, the urbanized population potential is increased well over one million. It may be concluded that with a fairly close population potential, the outlook is favorable for recreational patronage.

Income of Population

Median family income in 1960 for the four-county area was \$2,952. This was considerably lower than that for the State and Nation. Since 1960, however, estimates of increases in median family income have been reflecting a favorable comparative position.

Even more favorable is the fact that neighboring areas reflect a much higher income level than the immediate area and clearly points up the recreational patronage potential. Huntsville, for example, had a median family income level of \$6,313 in 1960 as compared with \$5,660 for the Nation. Also, nearly 21 per cent of the families were making more than \$10,000 per year. While income per family was not as high for Birmingham, Gadsden, Chattanooga, and Atlanta, the level of income is conducive to family recreation participation by the majority of this urban population.

When considered from the standpoint of income and population, the four-county area does not have enough people and income within its boundaries to produce the demand required to justify commercial development of large supplies of outdoor recreational services. Nevertheless, the area is very fortunate to be located near population centers that reflect higher income averages than for the State as a whole. Thus, the land and water resources in addition to present recreation attractions give added inducement for the area to further utilize its outdoor recreation potential.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The four-county area is richly endowed with scenic and natural attractions, such as lakes, gorges, caves, waterfalls, archeological sites and other points of interest. The quality recreation attractions of the area as evidenced by visitors to the area, in addition to the rich recreation resource base needed for expansion, present opportunities for meeting the increasing demand for recreation and contributing to the economy of the area.

The strongest point for outdoor recreation in the region is the water resources and the multiple uses that can be made of the two large reservoirs. Guntersville Lake is the foremost attraction of the area and has more visitors than any lake in the TVA system. Much more can be done to improve facilities and increase the recreational appeal of attractions closely associated with both Guntersville Lake and Weiss Reservoir. Fishing and boating in Guntersville Lake can be enhanced by better control of water vegetation.

Undeveloped areas such as Buck's Pocket and further development needed at state parks add to the potential for expansion of outdoor recreation in the four counties. In addition, the extensive wildlife management areas located in Jackson County are potential areas for greater recreation utilization.

Recreation attractions in the form of caves and caverns are attracting well over 100,000 visitors yearly. More than 90 per cent of the 1,709 respondents who took part in the patronage survey evaluated them in the good to excellent category, and over 97 per cent claimed they would recommend the attraction to others. Based upon the above data, it may be concluded that quality does exist in the present attractions of the area and may warrant more action in attracting wider tourist markets.

Nothing substitutes for a quality product and "red carpet" treatment of patrons. This was evidenced by the number of visits to attractions based on friends' recommendations. Roadside signs rated second in advertising importance and require further research on how to obtain maximum results. Oil company maps and travel guides also deserve mention in contributing to patronage. Recognizing the importance of advertising, owners believed that more advertising activity should be carried on, but reported high costs restricted its extensive use.

Patronage patterns for individual attractions varied with location relative to main highways. Home state patronage was of the greater single source of customers with Louisiana, Mississippi, Georgia, Texas, Florida, and Tennessee following in that order. In terms of patronage, the midwestern area was second to the southern area in importance.

Recreational preference of respondents indicated that water-based recreation was their first choice and sightseeing second. Guntersville Lake was the top attraction that respondents had visited or were planning to visit in the area.

Val Monte Resort and Little Mountain State Park are attracting and holding tourists in the area longer than other attractions. Another sufficiently large multi-purpose recreation complex that might serve as a "stop-over" for tourists and headquarters for sightseeing could prolong the average staying time of tourists and other visitors to the four-county area.

Conclusions pertaining to tourism-recreation in the area are that it can be substantially increased. However, planning, cooperation, maintenance of quality standards, and promotion must necessarily precede successful programs that will greatly increase local and national patronage to the area. Recommendations and suggestions for increasing patronage can be made from data and observations of this study.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Establish a large multi-recreational complex on Guntersville Lake that will provide all water-based recreational activities, golf, and other types of recreation necessary to attract widespread patronage and overnight stays. Such a complex could serve as a focal point for tourists coming into the area and better acquaint them with properly planned "sightseeing packages" of the area. Recreation services of such a facility should include something for all members of the touring family.

2. Although Little Mountain State Park is considered one of the better camping areas of the State, expansion of facilities to accommodate campers and improve camping and picnicking is sorely needed. Because of its ideal location, this park could be developed into one of the most popular camping grounds in the South. Campers attracted to this park already contribute heavily to sightseeing patronage at other attractions in the area. Considerable increase in the out-of-state patronage by campers could be accomplished by improving camping facilities.

3. Expand DeSoto State Park facilities to include all types of camping and add more lodge-type accommodations. This should greatly increase the popularity and patronage of this scenic area.

4. Develop the unique qualities of the Buck's Pocket area. This could serve as one of the multiple attractions of the area. The deep canyon and water resources present would complement the development of camping, picnicking, fishing, boating, hiking, and many other types of activities.

5. Establish a recreation complex on Weiss Reservoir that will provide multiple recreation opportunities. In addition to local patronage Rome, Georgia, and Gadsden, Alabama, would be in the prime market area for such services.

6. Establish and maintain a cooperative and coordinated multi-county promotional effort that will provide greater advertisement at a lower cost for all participating attractions. This can provide advertising to a wider national audience. Singular attraction advertisement could then be directed toward the greater tourist potential audience for individual attractions as revealed in the patronage study. Greater use of roadside signs at strategic locations and more directional markers should be investigated.

7. Maintain quality recreation facilities and practice highly acceptable ethics which will solicit good advertisement and subsequent increases in patronage.

8. Install adequate access and exit roads on Interstate 59 to complement existing recreation attractions in DeKalb County.

9. Establish information and welcome centers to inform tourists of the various recreation attractions in the area. DeKalb County has already established one on Interstate 59; another one is needed in the Guntersville vicinity for informing tourists and vacationers of the attractions and accommodations available throughout the Guntersville Lake area.

10. Long term credit for needed improvement and expansion of privately owned attractions should be made available by responsible government agencies.

APPENDIX

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA INFORMATION, NORTHEASTERN FOUR-COUNTY AREA, ALABAMA, 1966

SKYLINE MANAGEMENT AREA

Hunting Rules and Regulations—October 1966—April 1967

PERMITS: A permit will be required for all hunting and trapping. Deer permits will be issued daily from checking stations located at north end of the pavement on Hwy. 79 and at the intersection of Little Coon and Big Coon Roads near Rash School. Deer hunters will be required to leave their hunting license at the checking station in exchange for a permit. Checking stations operated from 5:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Small game, turkey, and archery permits obtained by writing James H. English, Jr., Box 366, Decatur, (enclose current hunting license number) or locally from Word Lumber Co. Hardware, Scottsboro; Thackerson Gulf Station & Gro., Hytop Community, Hwy. 79; Jones Hardware, Stevenson; Mud Creek Fish Camp, Hwy. 72; Pyle Tackle Shop, Huntsville; and by Refuge Manager, Wade Manning.

WEIGHING STATIONS: Hunters should report their deer killed to the administrators of the hunt to be checked for scientific data.

HUNTING DATES:

Deer — Stalk hunting only:	Nov. 18-19; Nov. 28-29; Dec. 2-3; Dec. 16-17
Archery — (All legal games except turkey) (Turkey)	Nov. 1-Dec. 17 March 20-April 25
Turkey	March 20-April 25
Squirrel	Oct. 8-31 (No dogs); Dec. 18- Dec. 31 (Dogs allowed)
Quail	Dec. 18-Jan. 31
Trapping	Nov. 20-Feb. 20
Rabbit	Oct. 15-31 (No dogs); Dec. 18- 31 (Dogs allowed)

PERMITTED FIREARMS:

Deer—Stalk hunts	Rifles of .24 caliber or larger using softnose or hollow point ammunition or shotguns using slugs only.
Turkey	Shotguns using No. 2 shot or smaller.
Squirrel	Shotguns using No. 4 shot or smaller and standard .22 caliber firearms only.
Quail	Shotguns using No. 6 shot or smaller.

BAG LIMITS: Deer — (Bucks only with bare antlers visible above natural hair line) 1 a day; Squirrel — 8 a day; and Turkey — 1 a day or 5 a season; Quail — 10 a day.

GENERAL RULES:

1. It shall be unlawful for any person to hunt on the management area without a valid permit.
2. No person under 16 years of age shall be permitted to hunt on the management area unless accompanied by an adult at all times.
3. It shall be unlawful for any person to carry firearms in vehicles with ammunition in the magazine, breech, or clip attached to firearm.
4. Campfire or warming fires must be extinguished before departing.
5. No species of wildlife except those designated for hunting shall be killed or wilfully molested.
6. Administrators of the hunt shall have the right to distribute hunters and to inspect all vehicles or other equipment while on the area.
7. It shall be unlawful for any person to discharge fireworks on deer hunts.
8. It shall be unlawful for any person to use fire to smoke out game.
9. No target shooting shall be permitted on management area.
10. No deer hunting shall be permitted within one-half mile of any camping area, dwelling, dam or timber operation.
11. Camping shall be permitted on management area at designated camping sites only.

12. The Department of Conservation and any landowners who are making the hunting possible hereby put each hunter on notice that each hunter hunts at his own risk and the Department of Conservation and said landowners shall not be responsible for any accidents or injuries that may occur.

A SPECIAL \$3.00 LICENSE IN ADDITION TO REGULAR HUNTING LICENSE IS REQUIRED FOR HUNTING DEER AND TURKEY ON THE MANAGEMENT AREA.

CROW CREEK, MUD CREEK, AND RACCOON CREEK MANAGEMENT AREAS

Waterfowl, Quail, Squirrel, Rabbit, Dove, Raccoon, Opossum, Fox, and Trapping: State Season

CROW: Oct. 1-Feb. 28

BIRD DOG TRAINING PERMITTED:
Oct. 1-March 25

RACCOON & FOX RUNNING PERMITTED DURING CLOSED SEASON
DOGS MAY BE USED FOR HUNTING DURING LEGAL SEASONS

A season permit required for all hunting. A special permit required for all fox running, dog training, and trapping. This special permit must be obtained from the Refuge Manager, T. W. Linville. Waterfowl and small game permits obtained by writing James H. English, Jr., Box 366, Decatur (enclose current hunting license number).

Permits issued locally by T. W. Linville, W. A. Chamness, and from the Blue Bonnet Service Station & Gro., Scottsboro; Mud Creek Fish Camp, Hwy. 72, Mud Creek; Comer Bridge Boat Dock, Scottsboro; and Jones Hardware, Stevenson.

NORTH SAUTY & CROW CREEK WATERFOWL REFUGES

SQUIRREL: Oct. 8-30

DOVE: Sept. 24-Oct. 30

QUAIL: Feb. 1-14

RABBIT: Feb. 15-28

RACCOON & OPOSSUM: Oct. 15-30

CROW: Oct. 1-30 & Feb. 1-28

TRAPPING: Nov. 20-Feb. 20

BIRD DOG TRAINING PERMITTED:
Oct. 1-30

DOGS MAY BE USED FOR HUNTING DURING LEGAL SEASONS.

THE GOOSE POND ISLAND WILL BE CLOSED TO ALL HUNTING, TRAPPING, AND DOG TRAINING THIS YEAR DUE TO INDUSTRIAL CONSTRUCTION IN PROGRESS.

A season permit required for all hunting. A special permit required for all dog training and trapping. This special permit must be obtained from the Refuge Manager, T. W. Linville. Small game permits obtained by writing James H. English, Jr., Box 366, Decatur (enclose current hunting license number). Permits issued locally by T. W. Linville, W. A. Chamness, and from the Blue Bonnet Service Station & Gro., Scottsboro; Mud Creek Fish Camp, Hwy. 72, Mud Creek; Comer Bridge Boat Dock, Scottsboro; and Jones Hardware, Stevenson.

APPENDIX TABLE 1. HUNTING AND FISHING LICENSES SOLD, NORTHEASTERN FOUR-COUNTY AREA, ALABAMA, 1962-1963

County	Hunting licenses				Fishing licenses				
	Non-resident	Non-resident trip	State	County	Non-resident	Non-resident trip	Resident rod & reel	Resident hook & line	Resident life-time
	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.
Cherokee	78	89	1,138	1,135	3,249	2,624	7,885	1,581	126
DeKalb	50	27	2,327	1,824	96	135	2,484	355	171
Jackson	52	53	1,579	3,991	1,124	1,284	6,695	1,054	88
Marshall	----	16	4,149	1,567	298	1,460	20,877	2,781	168
TOTAL	180	185	9,193	8,517	4,767	5,503	37,941	5,771	553

SOURCE: *Annual Report 1963*, Alabama Department of Conservation, Montgomery, Alabama.

APPENDIX TABLE 2. HUNTING AND FISHING LICENSES SOLD, NORTHEASTERN FOUR-COUNTY AREA, ALABAMA, 1963-1964

County	Hunting licenses				Fishing licenses				
	Non-resident	Non-resident trip	State	County	Non-resident	Non-resident trip	Resident rod & reel	Resident hook & line	Resident life-time
	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.
Cherokee	79	85	1,193	1,142	3,022	1,936	6,831	975	84
DeKalb	56	29	2,378	1,690	119	104	2,465	299	147
Jackson	58	61	2,013	3,798	1,066	1,324	7,079	979	117
Marshall	1	9	4,473	1,102	247	1,487	19,805	2,168	141
TOTAL	194	184	10,057	7,732	4,454	4,851	36,180	4,421	489

SOURCE: *Annual Report 1964*, Alabama Department of Conservation, Montgomery, Alabama.

APPENDIX TABLE 3. BOATING REGISTRATIONS BY CLASS, NORTHEASTERN
FOUR-COUNTY AREA, ALABAMA, 1962-1963 AND 1963-1964

County	Boat registrations							
	1962-1963				1963-1964			
	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV
	<i>No.</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>No.</i>
Cherokee	717	150	16	1	779	160	20	1
DeKalb	597	79	---	---	595	76	---	---
Jackson	882	103	5	---	1,038	49	7	---
Marshall	1,385	257	52	4	1,453	282	54	4
TOTAL	3,581	589	73	5	3,865	567	81	5

SOURCE: *Annual Report 1963 and 1964*, Alabama Department of Conservation, Montgomery, Alabama.



TOP PHOTO—Little River Canyon,
DeSota State Park, Fort Payne;
RIGHT PHOTOS—golf course at
Val Monte Motel and Resort, Gun-
tersville and sailing on Guntersville
Lake.

