

Scalping Season Monitoring in Taylor County Waters 1st Report (Period: June 16th to July 15th)

by

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Introduction

A passive method for sensing of the recreational scalping fishing effort in the Harvesting Area 2 of Taylor County State waters is being performed applying surveys in boat ramps. The goal is to carry out a qualitative and semi-quantitative analysis of the data collected at boat ramps to describe the involved variables on the scalping activity to estimate fishing effort over scallop population in Taylor County state waters and the economic impact to local businesses. Methodology includes data collecting with surveys in 2 Taylor County public ramps (Keaton Beach and Steinhatchee). This first report describes the preliminary results of the analysis of data collected from June 16 to July 15 of 2017, as a total, of the 2 sampled locations. Detailed information of the results and the analysis for each location and the County will be presented in the Final Report. All data units reported in this document are expressed in percent (%) of the total data collected, unless otherwise stated.

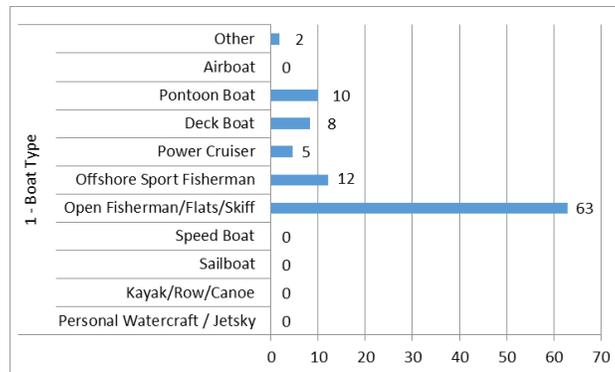
Results

A total of 120 surveys have been applied and collected in Keaton Beach and Steinhatchee during 5 dates of the scalping season, from June 16th to July 15th. The following table shows the number of surveys collected, number of trailers count at parking lot area and the surveys success/response rate for each location.

DATE	KEATON BEACH			STEINHATCHEE		
	No. Surveys	No. Trailers	Survey Rate (%)	No. Surveys	No. Trailers	Survey Rate (%)
06/16/2017	13	66	19.7	15	97	15.5
6/24/2017	11	126	8.7	24	121	19.8
6/30/2017	4	45	8.8	15	77	19.5
7/5/2017	2	45	4.4	0	56	-
7/15/2017	14	113	12.4	22	116	19.0
Total	44	395	11.1	76	467	18.5

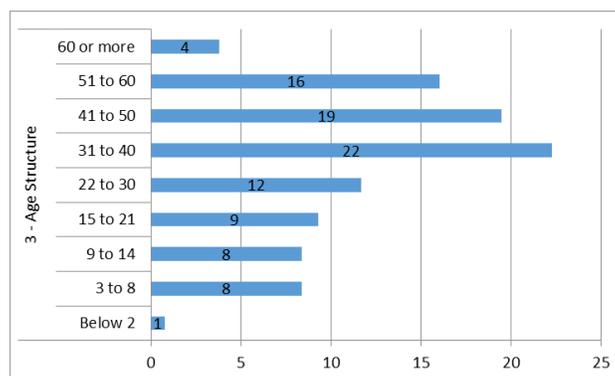
Basics of Scalloping in Tailor County

1 - Boat Type: 63% of boats surveyed at boat ramps were Open Fisherman/Flats/Skiff type, followed by Offshore Sport Fisherman type (12%), Pontoon boats (10%), Deck boats (8%), Power cruiser type (5%) and other types (2%). During this period there were not loaded airboats, speed boats, sailboats, kayaks/rows/canoes or personal watercraft/jetsky.

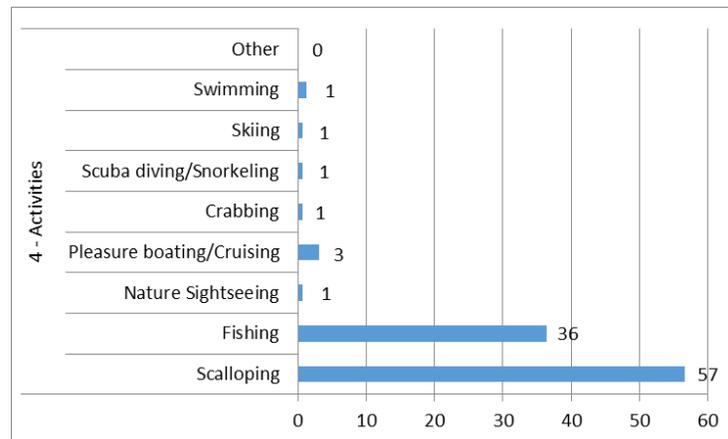


2 – Number of persons per boat: Of the total surveys collected it was estimated an average of 4.6 people per boat (4.8 in Keaton Beach and 4.4 in Steinhatchee), ranging from 2 to 11 persons per boat.

3 - Age Structure: The average or mean age range of people going in the boats at boat ramps is 31 to 40 years, representing 22% of the total population. The oldest groups of age (41 or more years) and the youngest group age (below 2 to 30 years) are represented at the same level (39% and 38%, respectively). This information is very important to develop educational or marketing strategies on target groups in the future.

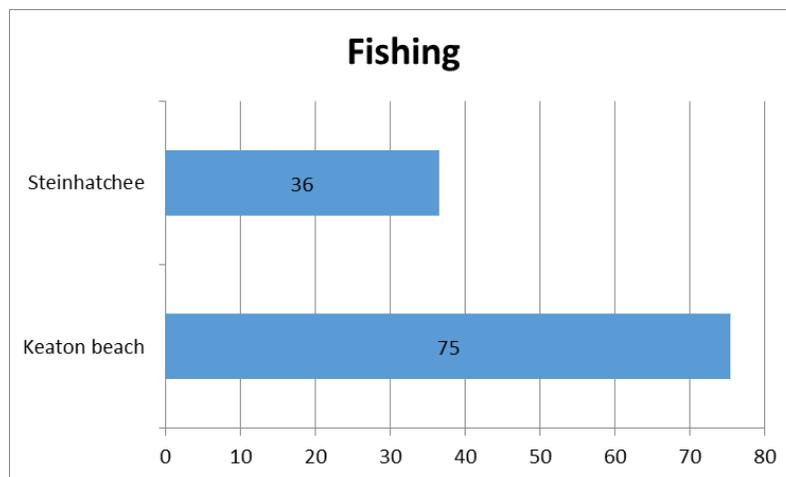


4 – Activities: 57% of interviewed boaters expressed they were going out scalloping, while 36% said they were going fishing, and about 23% said they were going to perform 2 or more activities, mainly fishing and scalloping. 3% expressed their activity was pleasure boating/cruising, and 1% said they were going crabbing, scuba diving/snorkeling, skiing or swimming.

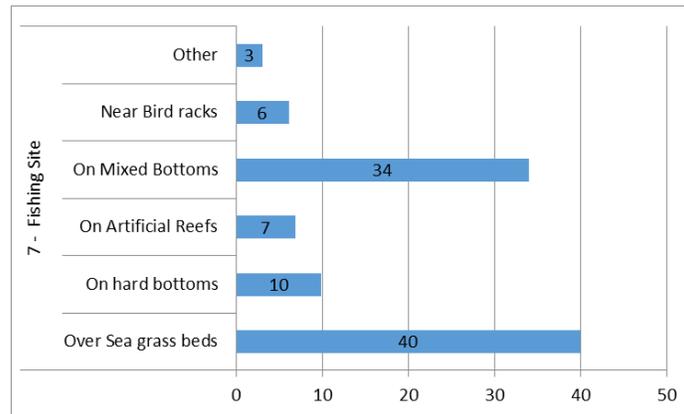


5 – Time in the water: the time boaters are in the water is a great indicator of fishing effort, so the difference of the time unloading the boat and the estimated time of return to the ramp is used to calculate this variable. An average of 5 hours and 12 minutes is the boating time that was estimated from collected data, varying between 2:52 and 6:49 hours.

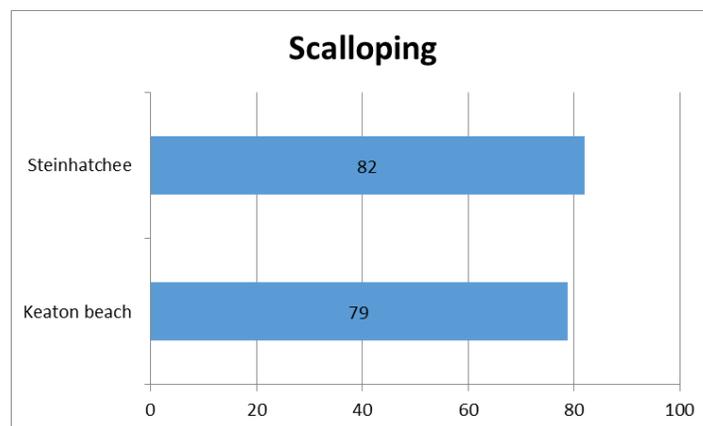
6 – Number of People Fishing: 1.6 people per boat and 3.6 people per boat were estimated going fishing for Steinhatchee and Keaton Beach sites, respectively. This means that 36% of boaters were going fishing in Steinhatchee while 75% were at Keaton Beach.



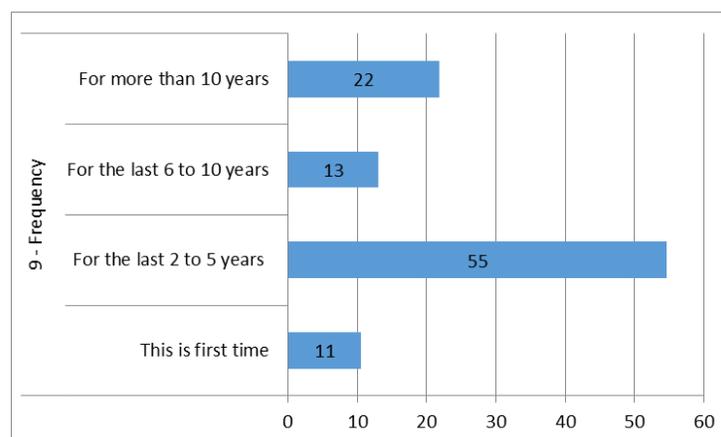
7 – Fishing Site: the preferred fishing sites of boaters in Taylor County waters are seagrass beds (40%) and mixed bottoms (34%). However, 26% of boaters fish in hard bottoms, artificial reefs, near bird racks and other marine locations.



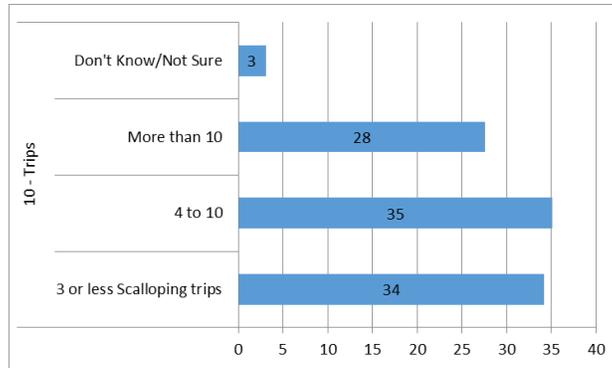
8 – Number of People Scalloping: 3.6 people per boat and 3.8 people per boat were estimated going scalloping for Steinhatchee and Keaton Beach sites, respectively; this means an average of 80% of boaters leaving the ramps were going scalloping.



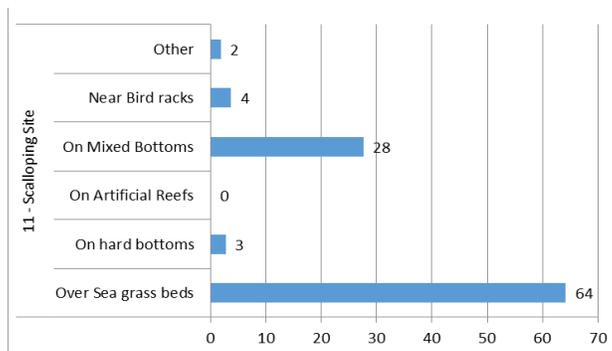
9 – Frequency: 55% of boaters have visited Taylor County during scalloping season for the last 2 to 5 years, 11% was their first time, 22% for more than 10 years (mostly residents or from the surrounding areas), and 13% for the last 6 to 10 years.



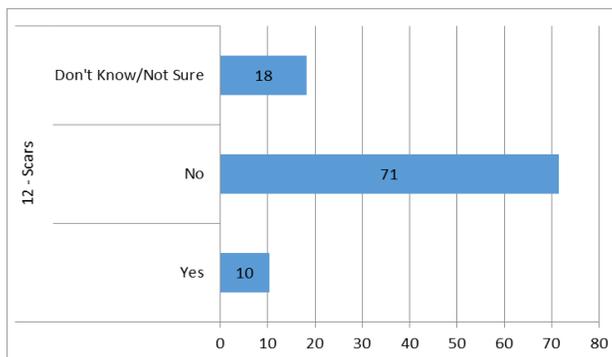
10 – Number of Trips: 79% of boaters take from 1 to 10 trips per scalloping season, and 28% make more than 10 trips. However, 3% said they don't know or are not sure of the number of trips they might take during the season. On the other hand, 34% of boaters have short stays and take 3 or less trips per season.



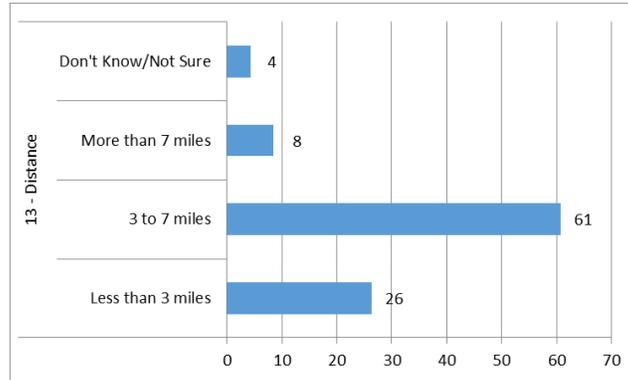
11 – Scalloping Site: 64% of interviewees said they go scalloping over seagrass beds and 28% on mixed bottoms (seagrass + sand). 4% go scalloping close to bird racks, 3% on hard bottoms.



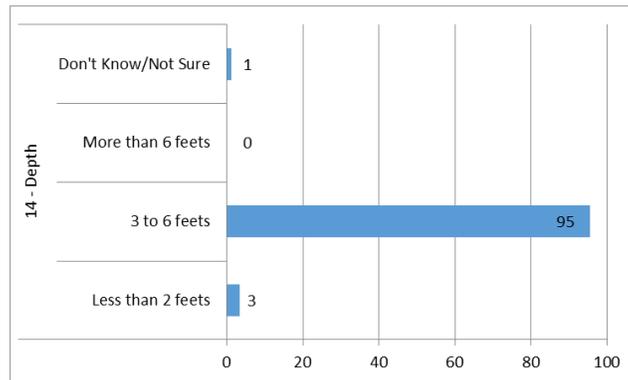
12 – Scars on Seagrass: Boaters have an impact on seagrass beds when they run over them. 71% of boaters said they have not run over or make scars to seagrass, and 18% expressed they didn't know or were not sure if they had. However, 10% accepted making scars on seagrass, reason why the “be seagrass safe” campaign must stay in place.



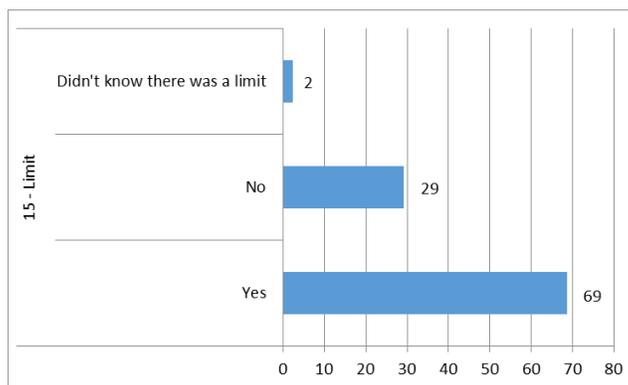
13 – Distance from Coastline: this question helps to define the fishing area. 61% of boaters said they go scalloping from 3 to 7 miles from the coast, and 26% go less than 3 miles away, for a total of 87% of boaters scalloping in State waters. 8% said they go scalloping more than 7 miles away from coast, and 4% said they didn't know or were not sure.



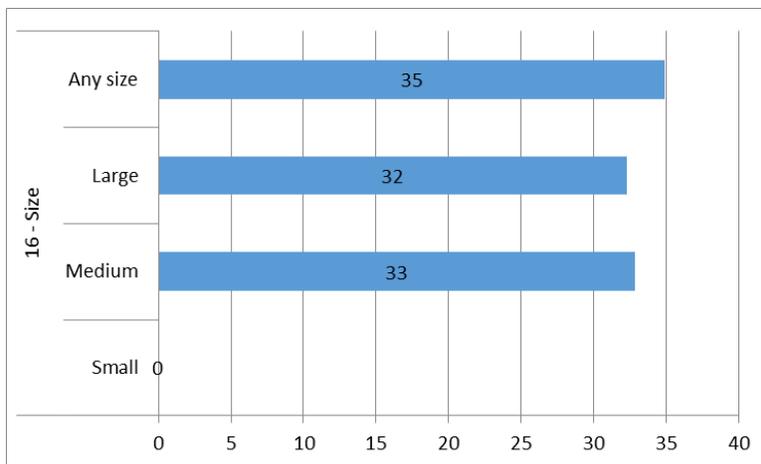
14 – Depth at scalloping site: This variable is related to the previous aspect. 95% of interviewees go scalloping from 3 to 6 feet depth, 2% in less than 2 feet of water, and only 1% didn't know or were not sure.



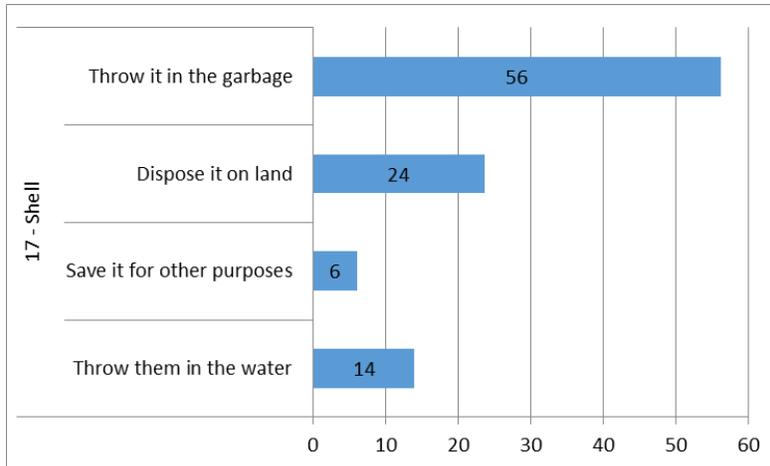
15 – Scallop Limit: 69% of surveyed boats said they harvest their daily limit of scallops, while 29% don't. Only 2% said they didn't know there was a harvest limit.



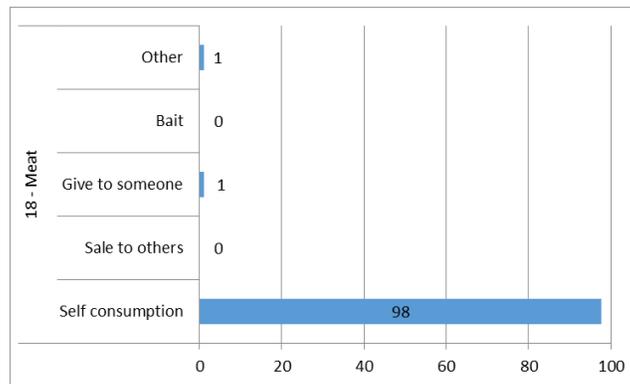
16 – Scallop Size: 35% of boaters get any size of scallops (including small), but 65% focus their effort on medium to large size scallops and leave the small in the water.



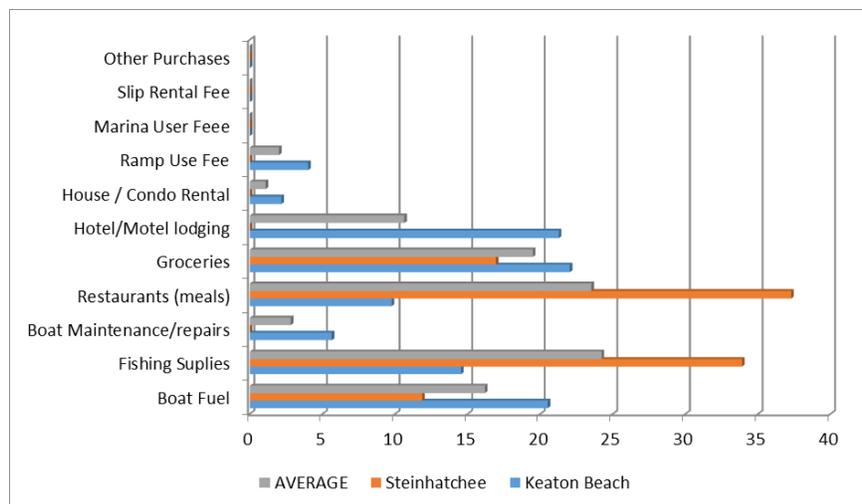
17 – Use of Scallop Shell: 56% of scallopers said they throw the scallop shell in the garbage, 24% dispose it on land and 6% save the shell for other purposes (e.g., handcraft). Only 14% throw the shell back in the water.



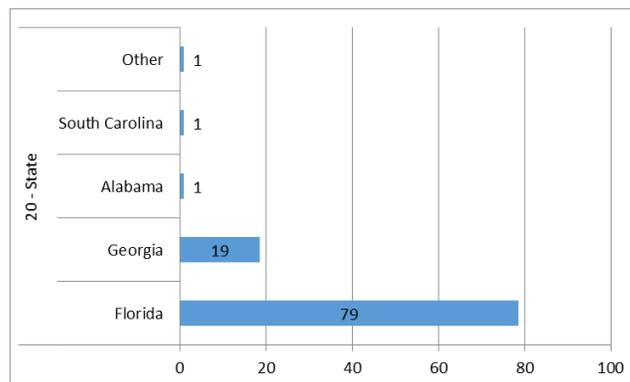
18 – Use of Scallop Meat: this variable is a good indicator of the level of awareness and knowledge of scallop harvest regulation by boaters, and it confirmed that all surveyed boats comply with scallop use regulation. 98% said the use the meat for self-consumption and only 2% expressed give it to someone or other use, different than sale to others.



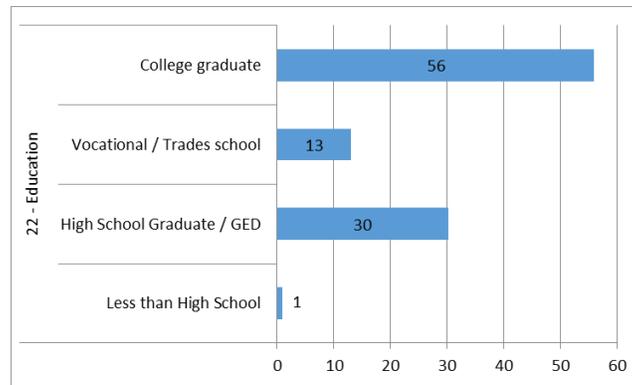
19 – Economic Aspects: It was estimated that each boat at Keaton Beach spent in average \$184.20 locally while Steinhatchee boaters spent \$561, so the average of expenses per boat in Taylor County is \$376.30. Fishing supplies and restaurants account for 47.7% of all expenses in the county, groceries for 19.5%, boat fuel for 16.2% and lodging for 10.6%.



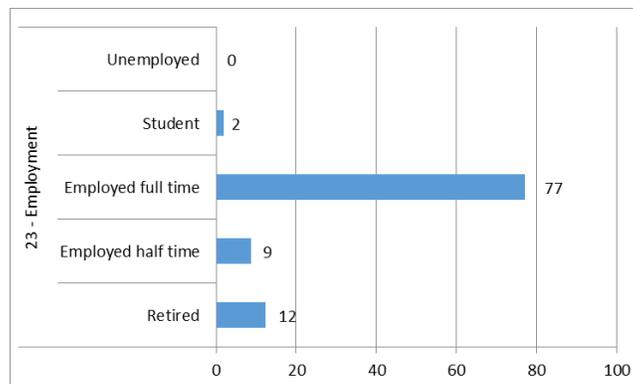
20 – Geographic Composition: 79% of interviewees were from Florida and 19% from Georgia, leaving only 3% for other States.



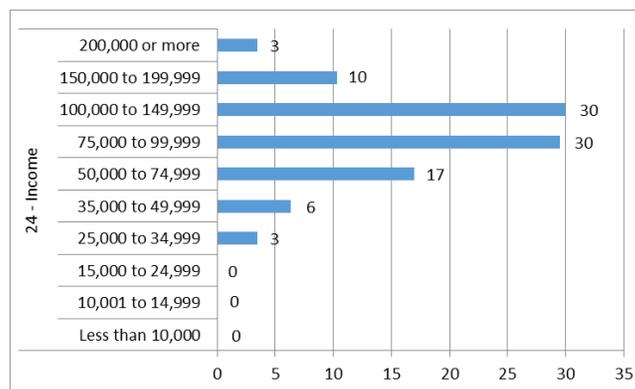
22 – Education: 56% of surveyed boaters were college graduate, and 30% at least completed High School. Only 1% said they had less than High School educational level.



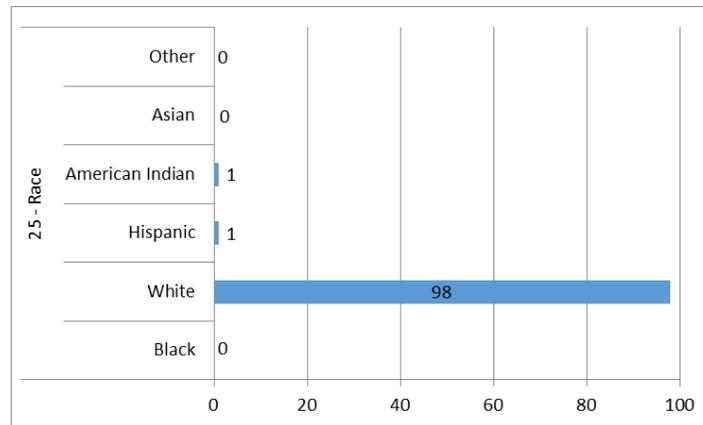
23 – Employment: 77% of boaters have a full time employment, 9% a half-time employment and 9% were retired. None of the interviewees was unemployed.



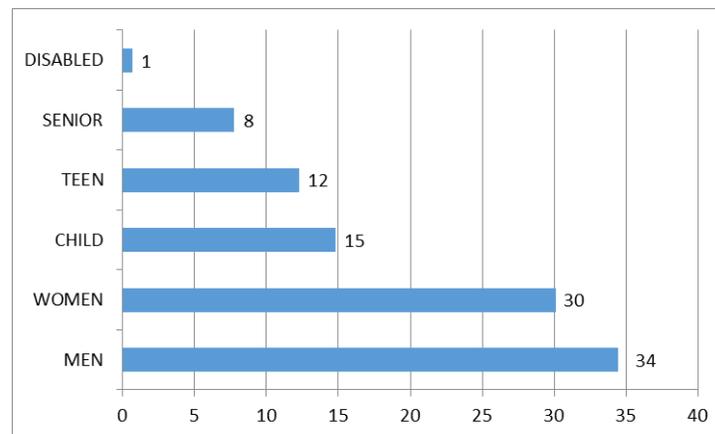
24 – Income: 60% of boaters have an income between \$75,000 and \$150,000, 13% have an income over \$150,000 and 26% between \$25,000 and \$75,000. None of the interviewees had an income less than \$25,000 per year.



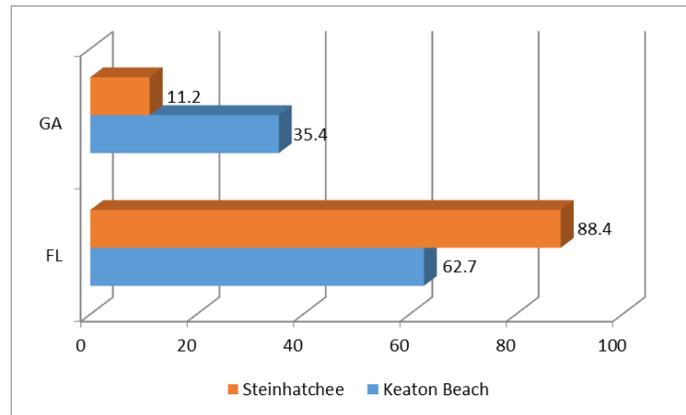
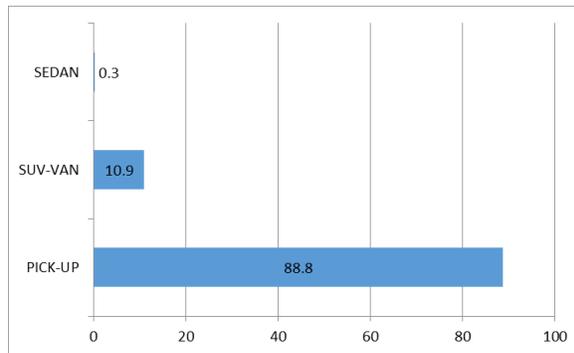
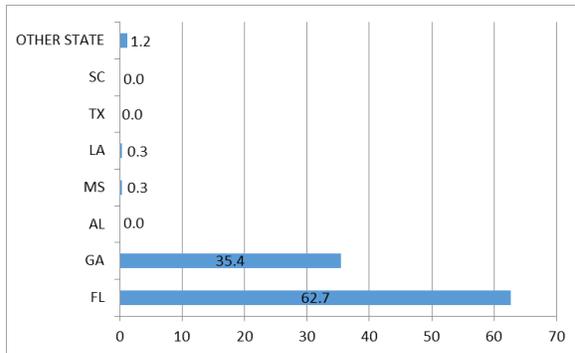
25 – Race: 98% of visitors are white, and only 1% Hispanic, and 1% American Indian. Neither Asian nor African Americans were identified.



26 – Boaters Composition: Besides the survey, another form was filled with data of boaters others than those surveyed to evaluate different gender, age group and other characteristics per boat. 34% of evaluated boats were men and 30% women. 15% were children and 12% were teens, while 8% were seniors, and only 1% was represented by disabled people.



27 – Composition of Motor Vehicles at Boat Ramps: Cars and trailers in parking lot of the boat ramp was assessed and counted. In total 62.7% of vehicles transporting boats to the boat ramp were from Florida, while 35.4% were from Georgia, and only 1.2% was from a different State (Indiana, Missouri and Texas). 88.8% of those trailers were moved by pick-up trucks, and 10.9% by SUV-VAN vehicles. It seems that visitor from Georgia prefer to take their boats to Keaton Beach (35.4%) more than Steinhatchee (11.2%), while 88.4% of residents from Florida prefer to go to Steinhatchee while only 63.7 go in the water through Keaton Beach.



Final Note

Results from overflights with manned and unmanned aircraft systems with preliminary outcomes of boat counts and distribution in the fishing area will be presented in next report.

Acknowledgments

- Perry-Taylor County Chamber of Commerce for funding the monitoring project.
- Eddie Cullaro and Lyn Charlton – Volunteers collecting survey data in Steinhatchee boat ramp.