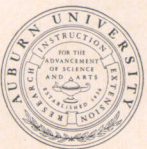
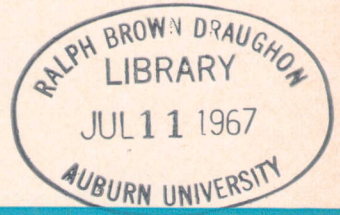


FAMILY CAMPING IN ALABAMA

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Family Camping in Alabama*

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IN THE FIELD of outdoor recreation, family camping has grown rapidly in popularity since World War II. Evidence of this gain is reflected in recent efforts of many state and private operators to supply campgrounds to meet increasing demand. The amazing improvement in camping equipment, increased leisure time, and higher disposable incomes are major factors contributing to gains in camping popularity. Many other minor factors, however, contribute to the increasing number of tent trailers, travel trailers, and various other camping rigs observed on highways today.

Many states are becoming increasingly conscious of the potential for deriving income from tourism-recreation trade. Camping families represent a significant part of this trade since one out of six American adults participated in camping in 1961.¹ Thus, Alabama's campground potential may warrant greater expansion and promotion to attract the State's share of the camping trade to both public and private facilities.

The present status of public campgrounds in Alabama does not promote camping as a prime attraction of the State. Presently there are approximately 55 advertised campgrounds in the State, 7 of which are in national forests and 3 in state parks. State parks

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** The author expresses appreciation to Robert R. Clark, Specialist in Rural Resource Development, Auburn University Cooperative Extension Service, for help in this study. Special appreciation is also expressed to Alabama campers who responded to the survey.

¹ Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission, *Study Report 20, Participation in Outdoor Recreation*. A report by Eva Mueller and Gerald Gurin, assisted by Margaret Wood, Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1962.

have 165 developed and 80 undeveloped campsites,² with another 84 undeveloped sites in national forests.³ Ten other state parks in Alabama offer camping in picnic areas subject to approval of camp managers; however, the areas are not designated and developed camping sites.

Of the 45 privately owned campgrounds listed in the *Alabama Camping Directory*, only 13 are currently listed in the most comprehensive 1966 Rand McNally, *Guidebook to Campgrounds*. Requirements for listing exclude campgrounds that do not allow tent camping and those without minimum requirements for camping. Listing, however, does not carry the publication's endorsement or recommendation. A total of 3,399 tent sites is available at the 13 listed Alabama campgrounds, with 2 facilities reporting over 88 per cent of the total.⁴ Quality camping is provided at many of the campgrounds listed in the *Guidebook*. On the other hand, many of the 45 listed in the *Alabama Directory* are not developed. Locations of listed camping areas are shown in Figure 1.

Numerous factors must be considered in meeting the increasing demand for outdoor recreational facilities, such as quality campgrounds. This is true of either the private or public sectors. If operators are to construct campground facilities that please the camper and promote visitation, they must know the answers to questions such as these: (1) What are the characteristics of people that go camping? (2) What kind of facilities and accommodations do campers desire? (3) How much are campers willing to pay for the desired facilities? (4) What are the good and bad aspects of camping experiences? (5) What type of advertisement is most effective in attracting the camper? (6) What are the various trends in camping? Answers to these and other pertinent camping questions must be provided to promote optimum resource utilization and camper satisfaction.

² Developed campsites are those considered as specifically designated and with such accommodations as water and toilets; undeveloped campsites are those in general areas with minimum accommodations.

³ Bureau of Publicity and Information, *Alabama Camping Directory*, Montgomery, Alabama.

⁴ *Guidebook to Campgrounds*, a family camping directory of campgrounds throughout the United States and Canada, Rand McNally and Company, New York, 1966.

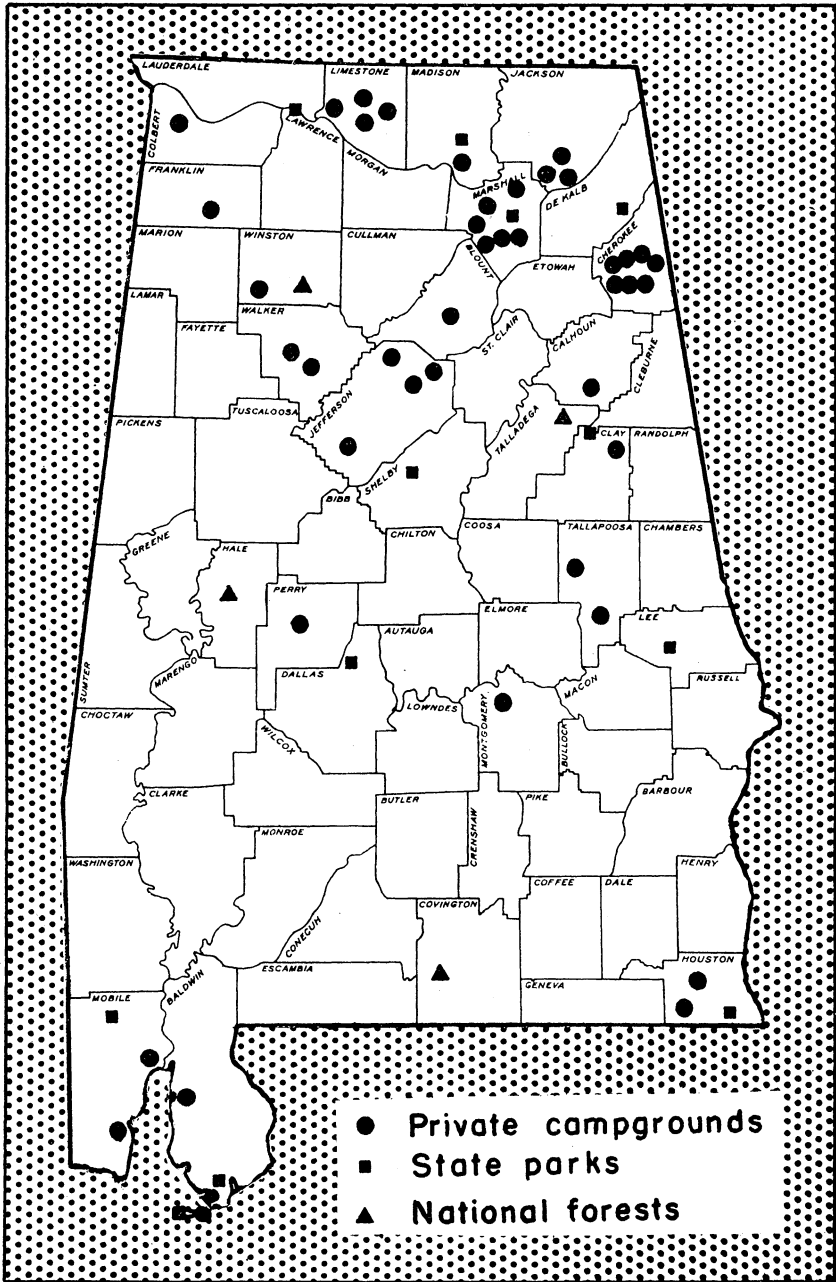


FIG. 1. Location of Alabama camping areas in 1966 are shown on the above map.

STUDY OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

The general objective of this family camping study was to provide camper and camping data that might be of value to the public and private sectors in providing the type of campgrounds desired, thereby contributing to marketing of outdoor recreation services in Alabama.

Specific objectives were:

(1) To determine the characteristics of campers, camper preferences, and related data.

(2) To determine trends in camping and in camping equipment.

A list of all members of the Alabama Campers Association and Alabama members of the National Campers and Hikers Association that are not affiliated with the State organization was secured. A total of 758 camping families was included, 124 of whom were not affiliated with any of 30 camping clubs in the Alabama Association.⁵

A mail questionnaire was designed to elicit needed information, yet kept short enough for maximum response. A brief letter and self addressed envelope accompanied each questionnaire. Before mailing the questionnaire, the Alabama Campers Association paper, *Echoes*, published a statement telling of the proposed study.

Response to the mailed questionnaires reached 50 per cent before a second mailing of 360 letters to non-respondents. Response had reached 72.5 per cent after 2 months when processing of data was begun and a cut-off time was established.

Distribution of Alabama camping clubs participating in the

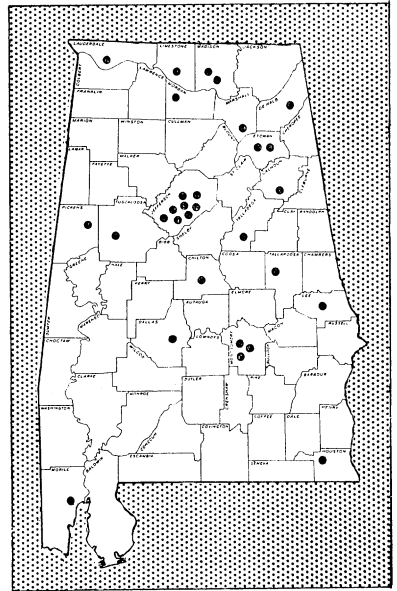


FIG. 2. Location of Alabama camping clubs that were included in the 1966 study are shown on the map.

⁵ Mailing lists of camping families were obtained through the cooperation and help of the Alabama Campers Association and the Auburn University Cooperative Extension Service.

study are shown in Figure 2. Other camping families participating were scattered throughout the State.

Data from questionnaires were coded, transferred to cards, and processed and summarized for analysis.

CHARACTERISTICS OF CAMPERS

More than 76 per cent of the campers in this study lived in cities of 5,000 population or more. The remainder were equally divided between smaller towns and rural areas.

Occupations of campers were distributed throughout the major occupation groups as defined by the Bureau of the Census. However, three major occupation groups cover 71 per cent of the total. Craftsmen, foremen, and kindred workers comprised 26 per cent; professional, technical, and kindred workers, 25 per cent; and managers, officials, and proprietors, 20 per cent. Sales workers were fourth, amounting to 9 per cent of the total. Included among the campers were 12 retired families.

Age distribution of 543 camper respondents is depicted in Figure 3. Average age of this group was about 44 years. Education

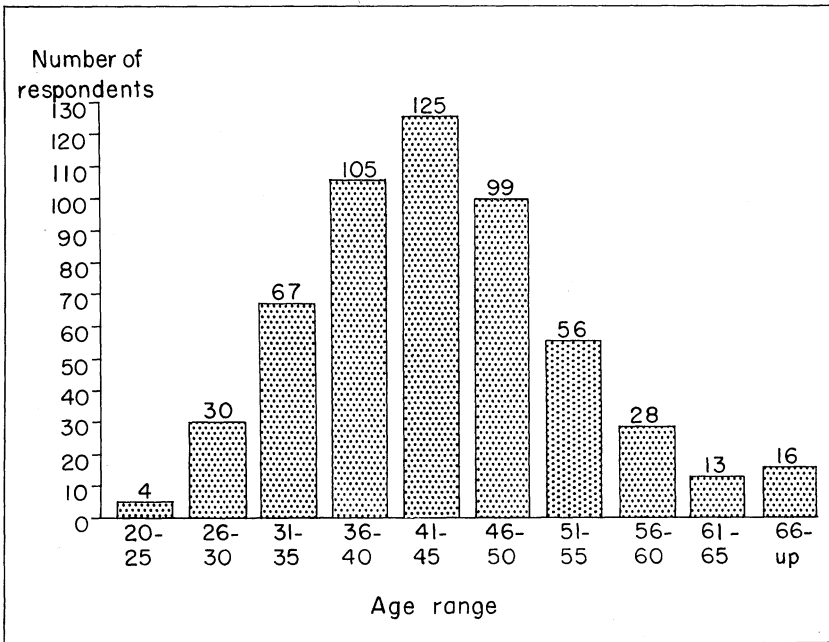


FIG. 3. Age distribution of 543 surveyed Alabama campers is shown here.

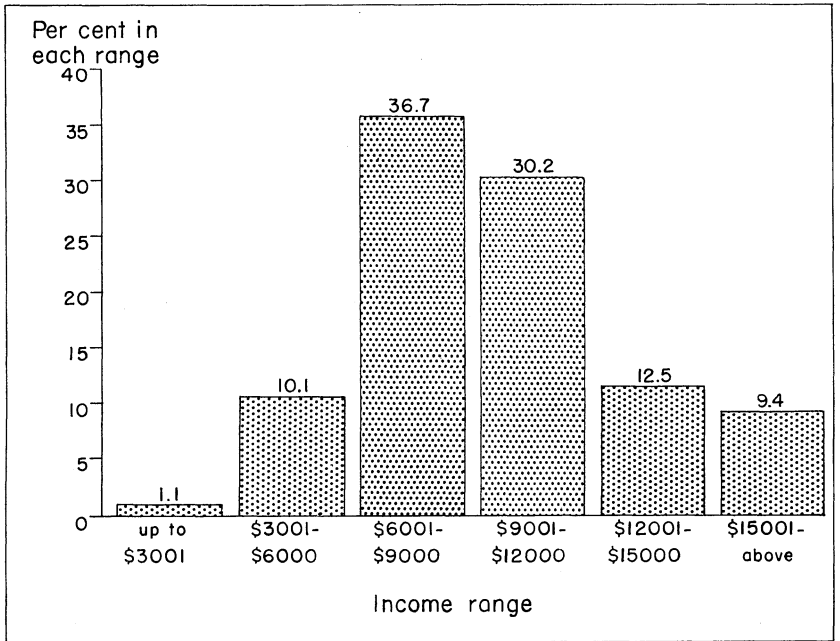


FIG. 4. Percentage of 534 responding Alabama camping families in each specified income range at time of the 1966 study is shown by the above graph.

was well above the State and National average. The 518 respondents to this question averaged slightly above 13 years of schooling, equivalent to beginning college sophomores.

Family income range of 534 camping respondents is shown in Figure 4. Average family income was approximately \$9,600. The wife worked outside the home in 35.9 per cent of the families.

TABLE 1. NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF CAMPING FAMILIES BY SIZE, ALABAMA, 1966

Size of family	Number of camping families	
	No.	Per cent of total families
1.....	6	1.1
2.....	93	16.9
3.....	85	15.4
4.....	177	32.2
5.....	125	22.7
6.....	47	8.5
7.....	13	2.4
8.....	2	.4
9.....	1	.2
No response.....	1	.2
TOTAL.....	550	100.0

This fact, coupled with a much higher average education level, contributed to the relatively high average family income of this group. Family income by occupation groups is shown in Appendix Table 1.

Family size of 549 respondents averaged four. Distribution according to family size and percentage included in each are shown in Table 1.

PREFERENCES OF CAMPERS

Desirable Aspects of Camping

Campgrounds must meet the needs and desires of campers for return patronage and increasing popularity. In view of this requirement and to gain insight into camping preferences, campers were requested to rate the most desirable and undesirable aspects of camping. The most desirable factor reported was being out-of-doors and close to nature, while second in importance was the chance for family participation in recreation together. Rated third was the chance to get away from the "hustle and bustle" of city life, while the "cheapest way to spend vacations" was listed fourth. The low rating assigned to the economic aspect of camping may be surprising, as was the lowest rating given the physical exercise aspect, Table 2. However, many campers may have considered

TABLE 2. MOST DESIRABLE ASPECTS OF CAMPING AS RATED BY ALABAMA CAMPERS, 1966

Desirable aspects of camping	Campers stating preference as					Ranking
	First choice	Second choice	Third choice	Total		
	No.	No.	No.	No.	Pct.	
Being out-of-doors and close to nature.....	222	122	82	426	26.5	1
Chance for family participation in recreation together.....	165	121	109	395	24.5	2
Chance to get away from "hustle and bustle" of city life.....	84	129	117	330	20.5	3
Cheapest way to spend vacations.....	50	77	75	202	12.6	4
Chance to meet new people.....	13	72	109	194	12.1	5
Good way to obtain physical exercise.....	3	14	44	61	3.8	6
TOTAL.....	537	535	536	1,608	100.0	

the chance for physical exercise as a part of being out-of-doors and close to nature.

Undesirable Aspects of Camping

Insight into the undesirable aspects of camping is of importance to campground operators in correcting specific discrepancies and making camping more attractive. The undesirable qualities of camping reported by campers undoubtedly reflect actual experiences, Table 3. Rated as the number one undesirable factor was poor sanitation and unkept facilities. Lack of restroom facilities was second in importance. Overcrowded campgrounds with campsites too close together was another major complaint. Minor complaints of excessive noise at night, pro and con complaints about restrictions on pets, and many others were added by respondents. However, consideration of the major complaints first, with correction of minor ones to follow, should improve camping experiences considerably.

TABLE 3. MOST UNDESIRABLE ASPECTS OF CAMPING AS RATED BY ALABAMA CAMPERS, 1966

Undesirable aspects of camping	Campers rating of undesirable aspects as					Ranking
	First choice	Second choice	Third choice	Total		
	No.	No.	No.	No.	Pct.	
Poor sanitation and unkept facilities.....	303	157	52	512	31.9	1
Lack of restroom facilities.....	134	235	77	446	27.8	2
Overcrowded campgrounds (sites too close together).....	73	79	219	371	23.2	3
Poor location of campsites.....	17	48	111	176	11.0	4
Lack of recreation facilities.....	3	9	42	54	3.4	5
Other.....	14	12	17	43	2.7	6
TOTAL.....	544	540	518	1,602	100.0	

Popular Camping Time

Campers were asked to select their three most popular camping months. Results indicated a preference for June, July, and August in that order, Table 4. The usual vacation time, normal out-of-school period for children, and favorable weather conditions undoubtedly contributed heavily to the selections made.

TABLE 4. MOST POPULAR CAMPING MONTHS AS INDICATED BY ALABAMA CAMPERS, 1966

Month	Campers stating preference as				
	First choice	Second choice	Third choice	Total	
	No.	No.	No.	No.	Pct.
January.....	2	0	0	2	.1
February.....	1	2	1	4	.2
March.....	11	6	12	29	1.8
April.....	31	15	14	60	3.6
May.....	89	44	40	173	10.5
June.....	217*	103	75	395	23.9*
July.....	88	192*	65	345	20.9*
August.....	48	83	179*	310	18.8*
September.....	20	46	75	141	8.6
October.....	23	29	58	110	6.7
November.....	0	7	5	12	.7
December.....	1	3	5	9	.6
No response.....	19	20	21	60	3.6
TOTAL.....	550	550	550	1,650	100.0

* First, second, and third choice of most popular camping months.

Seasonality of demand for use of camping facilities is evident. Higher labor requirements for campground operation and maintenance during the May through September period should receive consideration of the potential campground operator.

Location, Type, and Size

Another important consideration in the establishment of campgrounds is location.⁶ Contributing to or detracting from a particular location are factors of accessibility, availability of water, scenic qualities of the area, and location relative to other recreational attractions. In determining campground location preference of Alabama campers, respondents were asked to select one of four areas, Table 5.

Apparently a majority of campers prefer campgrounds located near lakes and streams. However, a combination of scenic areas with lakes or streams would be approaching the ideal situation, since 92 per cent of all campers prefer these two locations.

Closely related to campground location is the type of campground preferred. Although some campers still prefer to "rough it," the overwhelming majority apparently prefer campgrounds

⁶ Driscoll, L. S., and Kern, E. E., *Marketing Outdoor Recreational Services*, Bulletin 367, Agricultural Experiment Station, Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama, p. 34, May 1966.

TABLE 5. PREFERENCE OF ALABAMA CAMPERS FOR CAMPGROUND LOCATIONS, 1966

Location of campground	Campers stating preference	
	Number	Per cent
Near lakes and streams.....	392	71.3
Near scenic areas.....	114	20.7
Near historical sites.....	16	2.9
Near other recreational areas.....	12	2.2
No response.....	16	2.9
TOTAL.....	550	100.0

TABLE 6. TYPE OF CAMPGROUND PREFERRED BY ALABAMA CAMPERS, 1966

Type of campground	Campers stating preference	
	Number	Per cent
Moderately developed type (water, central toilets, electricity).....	373	67.8
Highly developed type (all conveniences, including sewer connections).....	128	23.3
Wilderness type.....	32	5.8
No response.....	17	3.1
TOTAL.....	550	100.0

that furnish "comfort." Results of camper preference for type of campgrounds are summarized in Table 6.

In relation to individual campsites, respondents were asked how large campsites should be. Answers ranged from extremes of 150 to 15,000 square feet. A majority of campers, however, indicated areas of 625 to 2,500 square feet. Since overcrowding is a major complaint, an average of 1,500 square feet (30×50) per site may be minimum requirements.

Designation and numbering of campsites was considered desirable by about 96 per cent of the campers responding to this question.

Campground Operation

Camper preference was shown for campgrounds operated by state parks over national parks and privately owned operations. Fifty-one per cent of 503 respondents to this question favored state park operation, with the remainder about equally divided between the other two.

Response to the above question was obviously in terms of state parks in general, rather than on the basis of Alabama parks, in view of answers to the following question: In comparison with other states, how do you rate camping areas visited in Alabama? A wide range of comparison from excellent to poor was provided

TABLE 7. CAMPER RATINGS OF PRIVATELY AND PUBLICLY OPERATED CAMPGROUNDS IN ALABAMA AS COMPARED WITH OTHER STATES, 1966

Ratings	Campers response to rating, by type campground			
	Privately owned and operated		Publicly owned and operated	
	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.
Excellent.....	75	14.6	19	3.7
Good.....	166	32.2	71	13.8
Average.....	147	28.5	97	18.8
Fair.....	96	18.7	136	26.4
Poor.....	31	6.0	192	37.3
TOTAL.....	515	100.0	515	100.0

for privately and publicly operated campgrounds, Table 7. Of 515 respondents to this question, over 63 per cent placed Alabama's publicly operated campgrounds in the poor to fair category as compared with those in other states. Privately operated campgrounds fared much better in the comparison, with more than 75 per cent rating them average through excellent.

Accommodations And Activities

As mentioned earlier, accommodations provided by campgrounds are important to the majority of campers. To identify the main accommodations desired by campers, respondents were asked to check each facility desired at campsites, Table 8.

TABLE 8. TYPE OF FACILITY OR ACCOMMODATIONS DESIRED AT CAMPSITES, BY NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF CAMPERS, ALABAMA, 1966

Type of accommodation or facility	Campers desiring facility	Percentage of total campers ¹	Ranking received
	No.	Pct.	No.
Water outlets and toilets.....	515	93.6	1 ²
Hot showers.....	482	87.6	2 ²
Swimming.....	426	77.4	3 ²
Picnic tables.....	419	76.1	4 ²
Electricity.....	370	67.3	5 ²
Chapel.....	330	60.0	6 ²
Fishing.....	327	59.4	7 ²
Nature trails.....	278	50.5	8 ²
Children's play areas.....	235	42.7	9
Barbecue pits.....	203	36.9	10
Concession stand nearby.....	195	35.4	11
Boat rentals.....	106	19.3	12
Other (sanitary sewage disposal, hook-up).....	94	17.1	13
Archery ranges.....	13	2.4	14

¹ Computed on 550 total camper basis.

² More than 50 per cent of campers desired these facilities.

TABLE 9. RECREATION ACTIVITIES DESIRED MOST BY CAMPERS DURING CAMPING TRIPS, ALABAMA, 1966

Recreation activity	Campers expressing a desire for activity as				
	First choice	Second choice	Third choice	Fourth choice	Fifth choice
	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.
Swimming.....	282	130	44	39	15
Planned campfire program.....	98	112	96	91	104
Boating and skiing.....	75	81	92	99	140
Hiking.....	45	117	142	103	88
Playground games.....	24	74	125	141	117
No response.....	26	36	51	77	86
TOTAL.....	550	550	550	550	550

Campers form definite opinions as to what facilities are desirable after visiting various campgrounds. First in preference was water outlets (includes flush toilets), followed closely by hot showers, swimming, picnic tables, and electricity. Spiritual aspect of camping and the outdoors was evidenced by the desire for chapel facilities by 60 per cent of all campers.

Closely related to the question on accommodations desired by campers was one posed on recreational activities wanted most on camping trips. When respondents rated five activities according to choices of one through five, a majority desired swimming as their first choice in recreational activities, Table 9. This also rated highest among the second choices made. Rating second among the various activities was planned campfire programs, drawing a combined total of 210 first and second place choices. Observations during this study indicated that campers as a group were friendly people, which may have contributed to the planned group programs being high on the list.

TRENDS IN CAMPING

While family camping is increasing in popularity, there is a trend toward providing more comforts and accommodations for campers. This trend holds significance for present and potential campground operators.

Types of Camping Equipment Used

The type of equipment in use by campers influences the planning and layout of campgrounds. Operators must make decisions on division of campgrounds according to equipment used and fa-

TABLE 10. TYPE OF CAMPING EQUIPMENT PRESENTLY USED BY ALABAMA CAMPERS, 1966

Equipment type	Campers reporting each type		Ranking No.
	Number	Per cent	
Tent trailer.....	178	32.7	1
Travel trailer.....	143	26.2	2
Tent.....	135	24.8	3
Truck camper.....	45	8.3	4
Home on wheels.....	40	7.3	5
Other.....	4	.7	6
TOTAL.....	545	100.0	

cilities required. Other regulations necessary to maintain a good camping atmosphere must also be in relation to equipment used.

Several questions were posed to gain insight into equipment presently used and plans for purchasing new kinds of camping equipment. Results from 545 campers revealed that tent trailers were most widely used, with 33 per cent reporting. Travel trailers were next with 26 per cent and tents followed with 25 per cent, Table 10.

Equipment presently used did not vary according to family income of campers, as shown by data in Appendix Table 2. However, more refined equipment was being used as years of camping experience increased.

Plans for New Camping Equipment

Results obtained from 537 respondents revealed that over 40 per cent planned to buy new equipment in the next 3 years, while nearly 59 per cent planned no new purchases, Table 11. The major trend found among those making purchases was a "moving up"

TABLE 11. NEW CAMPING EQUIPMENT PURCHASES PLANNED BY CAMPERS IN THE NEXT 3 YEARS, ALABAMA, 1966

Type of equipment	Campers planning purchase, by type of equipment	
	Number	Per cent
None planned.....	316	58.8
Travel trailer.....	87	16.2
Tent trailer.....	64	11.9
Truck camper.....	30	5.6
Other.....	17	3.2
Tent.....	8	1.5
TOTAL.....	537	100.0

to more comfortable types of equipment than formerly owned. Apparently many campers are changing to the plush way of "roughing it" since 16 per cent of all respondents indicated plans for purchasing travel trailers. Second in importance was the 12 per cent of all campers who listed plans to buy new tent trailers. Evidently, some campers anticipate replacing outdated or worn equipment with the same kind as that presently used.

Based on data from this survey and with allowances for repeated purchases of like equipment, it is estimated that the next 3 years will see a 20 per cent increase in purchases of travel trailers and truck campers combined. In addition, more than a 10 per cent increase in purchases of tent trailers can be expected if present plans of campers are carried out.

Distances Traveled by Campers

Family camping trips are normally of two major types, vacation trips and weekend campouts. The average distance traveled one-way was approximately 79 miles for weekend campouts and 564 miles for vacation trips. More than 85 per cent of the campers

TABLE 12. DISTANCES NORMALLY TRAVELED ONE-WAY BY CAMPERS ON WEEKEND CAMPOUTS, ALABAMA, 1966

Range in miles	Campers reporting stated distances	
	Number	Per cent
0 to 40.....	54	10.3
41 to 80.....	213	40.5
81 to 120.....	191	36.3
121 to 160.....	48	9.1
161 to 200.....	14	2.7
201 and above.....	6	1.1
TOTAL.....	526	100.0

TABLE 13. DISTANCES NORMALLY TRAVELED ONE-WAY BY CAMPING FAMILY ON VACATION CAMPOUTS, ALABAMA, 1966

Range in miles	Campers reporting stated distances	
	Number	Per cent
0 to 200.....	64	13.3
201 to 400.....	143	29.7
401 to 600.....	87	18.0
601 to 800.....	27	5.6
801 to 1,000.....	53	11.0
1,001 and above.....	108	22.4
TOTAL.....	482	100.0

reporting traveled less than 100 miles one-way on weekend campouts, and over 56 per cent traveled 500 miles or less one-way on vacation camping trips. However, about 22 per cent traveled more than 1,000 miles one-way on vacation campouts. Distances normally traveled one-way by campers for weekend and vacation campouts are given in Tables 12 and 13, respectively.

Expenses of Camping Trips

More than 80 per cent of all weekend campouts were for 2 nights' duration. Average normal expenses reported by 503 camping families for such campouts were \$19.41. On the other hand, vacation campouts for 491 camping families averaged 11 nights each with average expenses reported of \$183.23.

Expenses reported included those for car, food, sightseeing, and other normal camping expenses. Indications of the range of expenses and number of campers reporting are listed in Tables 14 and 15.

TABLE 14. AVERAGE AMOUNT SPENT ON WEEKEND CAMPOUTS BY CAMPING FAMILIES,¹ ALABAMA, 1966

Range in dollars	Campers reporting stated amount	
	Number	Per cent
\$0 to \$10	65	12.9
\$11 to \$20	232	46.1
\$21 to \$30	155	30.8
\$31 to \$40	31	6.2
\$41 to \$50	14	2.8
\$51 and above.....	6	1.2
TOTAL	503	100.0

¹ Includes expenses for automobile, food, sightseeing, and other normal costs.

TABLE 15. AVERAGE AMOUNT SPENT BY CAMPING FAMILIES ON VACATION CAMPOUTS,¹ ALABAMA, 1966

Range in dollars	Campers reporting stated amount	
	Number	Per cent
\$0 to \$80	93	19.8
\$81 to \$160	155	32.9
\$161 to \$240	81	17.2
\$241 to \$320	72	15.3
\$321 to \$400	36	7.6
\$401 and above.....	34	7.2
TOTAL	471	100.0

¹ Includes expenses for automobile, food, sightseeing, and other normal camping costs for 10.7 days.

Campers' Willingness to Pay

In relation to accommodations and facilities desired, campers were queried on how much they were willing to pay per night for use of campsites having recommended facilities. Recommended facilities were considered to include electricity, flush-type toilets, and hot showers. Of the 545 campers responding to this question, about 59 per cent were willing to pay up to \$2 per night, while 37 per cent said they would go as high as \$3. Only 2.2 per cent indicated a willingness to pay over \$3, Table 16. Willingness to pay above \$2 per night was directly related to family income level, Appendix Table 3.

TABLE 16. AMOUNT CAMPERS ARE WILLING TO PAY PER DAY FOR USE OF CAMPSITES WITH RECOMMENDED FACILITIES¹, ALABAMA, 1966

Range in dollars	Campers reporting specified amount	
	Number	Per cent
\$0 to \$1.00.....	6	1.1
\$1.01 to \$2.00.....	324	59.4
\$2.01 to \$3.00.....	203	37.3
\$3.01 and above.....	12	2.2
TOTAL.....	545	100.0

¹ Recommended facilities include electricity, flush-type toilets, and hot showers.

Campground operators may find that facilities desired and willingness to pay are not compatible. However, the price set by the private sector must cover costs of establishing and operating facilities over a long period. Therefore, campers will necessarily have to pay more as facilities are demanded.

The increased demand for family camping without corresponding increases in public accommodations may provide incentives for private operators to expand operations. The present status of public accommodations in the State strongly indicates this possibility.

Information Used by Campers in Selecting Campgrounds

Nothing substitutes for a quality product in creative marketing or advertising. Nowhere is this more evident than in marketing outdoor recreational services where "word-of-mouth" advertising is important.

Campers depend heavily on fellow campers for sound advice

TABLE 17. SOURCES OF INFORMATION USED BY CAMPERS IN CHOOSING THEIR NEXT CAMPGROUND, ALABAMA, 1966

Source of information	Campers reporting specified source		Ranking <i>No.</i>
	Number	Per cent	
Friends' recommendations.....	273	50.6	1
Camping guides.....	216	40.0	2
Other (state maps, AAA, road maps).....	28	5.2	3
Brochures, cards, and leaflets.....	20	3.7	4
Roadside signs.....	3	.5	5
TOTAL.....	540	100.0	

on the location of quality campgrounds. Actually, one of the major topics of conversation among campers is campgrounds and camping equipment. Moreover, many campers report that keeping current on campgrounds and camping in general is the major reason for belonging to camping clubs.

To gain insight into sources of information used in selecting their next camping areas, Alabama campers were queried on the subject. Over half of 540 respondents claimed recommendations from camper friends as their major source of information in selecting campgrounds. Ranking high among the various sources of information was camping guides, with about 40 per cent of the respondents using this medium. Some guides consider quality of campgrounds in determining those to be listed, so quality is important for both information sources.

Other sources of information are also used by campers in selecting campgrounds, Table 17. The low rating of roadside signs as a source of information in this respect is understandable. However, their importance to campers in location of specific campgrounds should not be overlooked.

Age and Camping Experience

The relative newness of family camping and the tendency to remain active in it for a limited number of years is indicated by the 6.6 years average camping experience of respondents. Of 530 camping families, over 69 per cent had been in camping for 6 years or less, while only 21 per cent reported experience of 10 years or more.

The 31 through 50 age bracket comprises about 73 per cent of

TABLE 18. NUMBER OF YEARS IN CAMPING AS RELATED TO AGE OF CAMPERS, ALABAMA, 1966

Years of camping experience	Campers reporting specified experience by age groups						Totals	Per cent
	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61 +			
	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.		
1-3 years.....	23	61	62	15	7	168	31.7	
4-6 years.....	6	70	85	30	9	200	37.7	
7-9 years.....	2	10	25	10	2	49	9.2	
10-12 years.....	1	12	23	11	2	49	9.2	
13-15 years.....	1	9	6	3	0	19	3.6	
16-18 years.....	1	2	5	3	1	12	2.3	
19 + years.....	0	6	13	10	4	33	6.2	
TOTAL.....	34	170	219	82	25	530	99.9 ¹	
Per cent.....	6.4	32.1	41.3	15.5	4.7	100.0		

¹ Does not equal 100 because of rounding.

the 530 campers, Table 18. Apparently income and age of children have reached the point at this age level where family camping is more attractive. The rapid decline in participation after age 50 tends to substantiate this assumption. However, there are indications that camping may become more popular with the older age groups since 64 per cent of those campers above age 60 started camping in the last six years. As retirement time approaches and camping equipment and facilities continue to improve, it is conceivable that an increasing trend in camping among the older age group may be expected. On the contrary, without improvement in camping facilities this age group along with others may find other recreation for their leisure time.

Camper Trips and Opinions

An average of 7.6 camping trips per year inside Alabama was reported by respondents, as compared with the average of 2.6 trips to out-of-state camping areas. Complaints of campers indicated the desire to camp closer to home if more adequate campgrounds and facilities were made available. However, the general consensus of opinion among campers was that neither was available in adequate quantity. Reference to Figure 1 reveals certain areas of the State (mainly southern Alabama) have fewest available camping areas.

Other trends of camper opinions on camping in general are included in Appendix A.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Family camping is an important type of outdoor recreation for an increasing segment of today's population. Its importance in the tourism-recreation business has encouraged action programs by some state and private campground developers in attracting more of this trade. Recognizing that successful programs of this nature require knowledge concerning the subject, data were collected for use by agencies and individuals considering or charged with the responsibility of supplying this type of outdoor recreation.

Data in this study revealed that of 543 campers the average age was about 44 with a family composed of four members. Average education of campers was equivalent to a beginning college sophomore. Annual family income averaged about \$9,600. Slightly more than one out of every three women in camping families work outside the home. Also, chances are more than three to one that camping families in this study come from a city with 5,000 population or more.

Indications of the desirable and undesirable aspects of camping, as viewed by the camper, give better insight to camping promotion. The two most desirable aspects of camping were: (1) being out-of-doors and close to nature, and (2) the chance for family participation in recreation together. These are interesting facts that are of value to the entrepreneur. Additionally, undesirable aspects of camping cited identify specific areas where corrections can be made in improving camping experiences. The two most undesirable aspects of camping were: (1) poor sanitation and unkept facilities, and (2) lack of restroom facilities. Overcrowded campgrounds were also rated as a major undesirable aspect of this type of outdoor recreation.

Of particular importance to campground operators is the seasonality of demand. June, July, and August were the three most popular camping months reported, but the spring and fall months were popular with a select few. Implications of higher labor requirements during the popular summer season should receive consideration by prospective entrepreneurs.

An overwhelming majority of campers prefer campgrounds located near lakes and streams. However, the ideal location would include scenic areas in conjunction with lakes and streams. Im-

plications of the above preferences may hold significance for individuals with sites ideally located or for public officials in promotion of similar public land areas.

Nearly 68 per cent of the campers preferred moderately developed campsites, with more than 23 per cent desiring those that are more highly developed. In addition, campers want adequate space provided for each campsite with individual sites designated or numbered.

Facilities and accommodations wanted by campers indicated the desire for "comforts" while "roughing it." The facilities listed most often, in order of importance, included: (1) water outlets (includes toilets), (2) hot showers, (3) swimming, (4) picnic tables, (5) electricity, (6) chapel facilities, (7) fishing, and (8) nature trails. All of the above facilities were selected by more than 50 per cent of the 550 campers surveyed. Children's play areas and barbecue pits were other popular facilities mentioned. Closely related to facilities were the activities desired. Swimming, planned campfire programs, and hiking were rated highest on this list. However, fishing probably would have been among the highest if it had been among the choices in activities offered.

The majority, 59 per cent, of 545 campers are willing to pay up to \$2 per night for moderately developed campground facilities and accommodations, while 37 per cent would pay up to \$3. Willingness to pay more than \$2 increases directly with family income. Facilities desired and willingness to pay by many campers are not compatible. Consequently, the attitude of some campers must change to get desired accommodations.

The type of camping equipment used at present and that planned for the future give entrepreneurs insight to campground requirements. Presently, tent trailers slightly outnumber travel trailers and tents in terms of equipment used. The trend for the future, however, is a "moving up" to more comfortable and refined types of equipment. In a list of anticipated purchases, travel trailers led with 16 per cent, tent trailers were next with 12 per cent, and truck campers accounted for 6 per cent. Increased demand for accommodating facilities for some of this equipment can be expected.

More than 8 out of 10 campers in this study traveled 100 miles or less on average weekend campouts and spent \$30 or less on normal camping expenses. Camping trips taken annually included

one vacation and nine weekend trips. More than one of every four of these trips were made outside the State of Alabama, with the longer vacation trip of 10 days included in this group.

Recommendations from friends were used more extensively by campers than any other form of campground "advertisement," while camping guides were second in importance. More than 90 per cent of the campers used these two sources. Prerequisites for good advertisement by campers are based on satisfactions received in specific camping experiences in return for fees paid. Consequently, quality campgrounds that maintain a good camping atmosphere encourage constructive advertisement, thereby increasing trade.

Family campers between the ages of 31 and 50 comprised about 73 per cent of 530 respondents, over 69 per cent of whom have been camping for 6 years or less. This indicates a recent surge in camping popularity or a decline in participation after 5 or 6 years' camping experience. The rapid decline in camper numbers after the sixth year indicates the feasibility of both assumptions. However, there are indications of an increasing trend in older age group participation in this form of outdoor recreation.

The concensus of opinion among the majority of campers was far from a recommendation for public campgrounds in the State. Comments volunteered by almost half the campers were critical of the camping situation in the State. Consequently, a random sample of the volunteered comments that are included in the Appendix will give an indication of the trend in camper thinking on the subject.

Implications for successful campground operation for either the public or private sector can be drawn from this study. Chances for success in attracting local and out-of-state campers should increase by following recommendations based upon such data.

Recommendations are as follows:

- (1) Locate campgrounds near lakes or streams, preferably with scenic and natural qualities.
- (2) Locate campgrounds near well traveled routes within a 100-mile radius of adequate population.
- (3) Maintain a moderately to highly developed campground with regulations that promote a good camping atmosphere.

- (4) Maintain clean and sanitary campgrounds with adequate restroom facilities.
- (5) Allow adequate space for each campsite and clearly mark each site.
- (6) Provide facilities or accommodations for swimming, fishing, campfire programs, water outlets, hot showers, picnic tables, electricity, chapel, and nature trails.
- (7) Plan more spaces for travel trailers and truck campers in the future with more campground division included.
- (8) Promote quality camping for repeat patronage and word-of-mouth advertisement. Also, maintain camper guest registers by name for promotion of repeat patronage.
- (9) Provide the chance for family campers to be close to nature and share in recreation together.
- (10) Promote listing of campground in camping guides.
- (11) Base charges on a normal profit basis.
- (12) Provide and maintain adequate roadside markers on all access roads and approaches to the area.
- (13) As the operator, maintain a friendly and helpful attitude at all times.

APPENDIX A

SAMPLE OF REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS BY
RESPONDENTS CONCERNING CAMPING IN
ALABAMA, 1966

The following statements are representative of those comments made by respondents in the study to this open-end question: Any further remarks or recommendations on camping?

"I would prefer camping more in Alabama and closer home if there were better facilities than what we presently have in the State."

"Alabama leaves much to be desired in public campgrounds when compared to Tennessee and Kentucky."

"With the waterways and natural woodland, Alabama has great potential for public recreational areas. At present, I would rate the State very low, however, it has much more potential to offer than Kentucky which is way out front in recreational development."

"No one goes to Alabama State Parks because there is nothing to go to."

"We have camped in 42 states. Alabama has much to offer, but the beautiful locations for camping have been neglected. This State should be among the first in camping programs."

"Promote more and better camping grounds in beautiful Alabama."

"Alabama is missing a lot of tourists by not having more and better state parks."

"In comparing private, state, and national campgrounds, I would rate Alabama very high in scenic beauty but low in state park and campground accommodations."

"Many people pass through Alabama without a stop because of our lack of camping facilities."

"I want to see and want to help Alabama excel in campgrounds and facilities that will attract more people to visit the number one State in the Nation."

"Alabama has the least and poorest campgrounds on the whole of any state I've been in, and I've camped in 30 other states. Ex-

cept for a couple of private campgrounds, camping is in bad shape. We are missing a golden opportunity by not having more campgrounds. Millions in revenue are being lost to other states."

"For long vacations, we like the highly developed campground in good locations so that it can be used as a base to visit other sights in the area."

"We need more camping areas located close to the big cities."

"Wake up Alabama! Realize the tourist dollars we are losing."

"Alabama needs more campgrounds in areas nearer home."

"They wish to bring industry into Alabama and overlook the fact that 95 per cent of campers bypass the State because of lack of camping facilities."

"Alabama unquestionably has the greatest natural resources and potential for excellent camping."

"Alabama needs campgrounds like Kentucky's."

"Have camped in about 20 states, but I am ashamed of my State in so far as camping goes."

"More state facilities are needed. I believe Gulf State Park could be one of the best state owned parks in the Nation if some effort was put forth."

"Many states have more campsites in a single camp than we have in all the state parks."

"Kentucky, Tennessee and Florida have excellent publicly owned parks."

"Alabama has the worst parks of any state that I have been in. I have camped from Alabama up to the State of Maine and back again."

"Camping is fast becoming modernized from tents to tent trailers and travel trailers, needing water outlets, electrical outlets, and sewer dumping stations."

"The contrast in campground density (public) in Alabama compared with other states is sickening. Travel trailers and truck campers are becoming numerous, and those who use them must have means. Hence, more tourist dollar income for Alabama."

"More camping areas are needed close to main highways."

"My family and I have traveled and camped in every state except Vermont and Hawaii, within the past four years. We have

also traveled the Trans-Canada Highway from the East Coast to the West Coast. It is my opinion that considering the quantity and quality of facilities, for the camper or traveler, the State of Alabama has less to offer than any of the areas that we have visited. On the other hand, we have the natural resources and scenery which are comparable to any area which we have visited.”

“I can’t understand why a state with all the water resources, and developable scenic areas, that Alabama does have should be so blind to the advantages of tourism in relation to the family campers. The best way to encourage tourism to the state is to first cater to those going through the state; maybe they will return and bring their friends with them next time.”

“In the last eight years I have camped in 20 or more states and Ontario, Canada. In all honesty my home State of Alabama is by far the poorest I have found. Campers I have met in other areas all remark that if they are going through they plan to pass through nonstop to the next state, not stopping in Alabama. Alabama has so many mountains, streams, lakes, and sea coast to be enjoyed by our families, but not camps.”

“Alabama has some of the most beautiful potential camping areas to be found anywhere. It is my belief that Alabama, as a state, is missing a wonderful opportunity to attract tourist and campers from other states simply because they won’t appropriate funds to develop camping facilities in its state parks. Camping facilities, as a whole, in Alabama State Parks, are far below those in adjoining states and other states where we have camped.”

“Alabama is far behind in campground development. Millions of dollars are being lost.”

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX TABLE 1. OCCUPATION AND FAMILY INCOME
RANGE OF ALABAMA CAMPERS, 1966

Occupation ¹	Number of campers in each salary range						Total	Pct.
	\$0- \$3,000	\$3,001- \$6,000	\$6,001- \$9,000	\$9,001- \$12,000	\$12,001- \$15,000	\$15,001 +		
	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	Pct.
Retired.....	3	3	3	1	0	0	10	1.9
Professional, technical.....	0	3	24	52	26	27	132	24.7
Farmers, farm managers.....	0	1	1	1	0	0	3	.6
Managers, offi- cials, prop.....	0	11	33	34	17	13	108	20.2
Clerical, kindred workers.....	0	4	17	6	3	1	31	5.8
Sales workers.....	0	2	16	11	12	6	47	8.8
Craftsmen, fore- men, kindred workers.....	1	18	70	44	5	1	139	26.0
Operatives, kin- dred workers.....	0	5	21	9	3	0	38	7.1
Service workers.....	0	5	8	2	1	0	16	3.0
Other.....	2	2	3	1	0	2	10	1.9
TOTAL.....	6	54	196	161	67	50	534	100.0

¹ Major occupations as defined by Bureau of the Census.

APPENDIX TABLE 2. TYPE OF CAMPING EQUIPMENT USED RELATIVE TO FAMILY INCOME,¹ ALABAMA, 1966

Family income range	Number and percentage of campers owning each type of equipment												All groups, no.
	Tent		Truck camper		Home on wheels		Tent trailer		Travel trailer		Other		
	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	
\$0 to \$3,000.....	1	16.7	1	16.7	0	0	1	16.7	3	50.0	0	0	6
\$3,001 to \$6,000.....	10	18.5	10	18.5	5	9.3	14	25.9	14	25.9	1	1.8	54
\$6,001 to \$9,000.....	58	29.3	12	6.1	15	7.6	63	31.8	48	24.2	2	1.0	198
\$9,001 to \$12,000.....	40	24.7	11	6.8	8	4.9	61	37.7	42	25.9	0	0	162
\$12,001 to \$15,000.....	15	22.0	8	11.8	5	7.4	20	29.4	20	29.4	0	0	68
\$15,001 and above.....	10	20.4	2	4.1	7	14.3	15	30.6	15	30.6	0	0	49
All income levels.....	134	25.0	44	8.2	40	7.4	174	32.4	142	26.4	3	.6	537

¹ Percentages computed for each type of equipment according to number of campers in that income range.

APPENDIX TABLE 3. AMOUNT PER NIGHT THAT CAMPERS ARE WILLING TO PAY FOR USE OF A WELL DEVELOPED CAMPSITE,¹ ALABAMA, 1966

Income range	Number and percentage of campers willing to pay								
	Up to \$1.00		\$1.01-\$2.00		\$2.01-\$3.00		\$3.01 +		All groups, no.
	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	
\$0 to \$3,000	0	0	4	80.0	1	20.0	0	0	5
\$3,001 to \$6,000	2	3.7	37	68.5	15	27.8	0	0	54
\$6,001 to \$9,000	0	0	138	69.4	56	28.1	5	2.5	199
\$9,001 to \$12,000	2	1.2	90	55.6	67	41.4	3	1.8	162
\$12,001 to \$15,000	0	0	34	50.0	32	47.1	2	2.9	68
\$15,001 and above	2	4.1	16	32.6	29	59.2	2	4.1	49
All income levels	6	1.1	319	59.4	200	37.3	12	2.2	537

¹ Well developed campsites include electricity, flush toilets, and hot showers.

APPENDIX TABLE 4. NUMBER OF YEARS IN CAMPING AS RELATED TO AGE OF CAMPERS, ALABAMA, 1966

Years of camping experience	Number of campers according to age										
	20-25	26-30	31-35	36-40	41-45	46-50	51-55	56-60	61-65	66 +	Total
	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.
1-3	2	21	27	34	41	21	7	8	4	3	168
4-6	0	6	25	45	42	43	19	11	2	7	200
7-9	1	1	3	7	15	10	8	2	1	1	49
10-12	0	1	5	7	13	10	9	2	2	0	49
13-15	1	0	4	5	3	3	2	1	0	0	19
16-18	0	1	1	1	4	1	2	1	1	0	12
19-21	0	0	1	0	1	5	3	0	0	1	11
22-24	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
25 and over	0	0	0	4	4	3	5	2	2	1	21
TOTAL	4	30	67	103	123	96	55	27	12	13	530

APPENDIX TABLE 5. CAMPERS AGE AS RELATED TO CAMPING TRIPS TAKEN ANNUALLY IN ALABAMA, 1966

Range in age	Annual camping trips taken in Alabama by Alabama campers											
	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	11-12	13-14	15-16	17-18	19-20	More than 20	Total
	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.
20 to 25	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	4
26 to 30	3	3	6	5	5	5	1	0	0	1	0	29
31 to 35	8	7	17	7	10	3	3	0	2	5	65	
36 to 40	18	20	17	10	9	9	0	6	1	3	4	97
41 to 45	11	40	21	18	18	4	2	6	0	1	1	122
46 to 50	13	15	19	10	12	9	3	6	0	3	5	95
51 to 55	9	12	13	3	7	1	0	1	0	2	1	49
56 to 60	7	2	10	3	1	2	0	1	0	1	0	27
61 to 65	2	1	5	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	12
66 and above	1	4	3	2	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	14
TOTAL	74	105	111	60	67	34	9	23	2	13	16	514