Once a man-made lake is completed for recreation nowadays, it is amazing how great an impact it can have on an area. People flock to the reservoir, and recreation spending takes on significance.

In recreation spending, three reservoirs of Reclamation's Colorado-Big Thompson water resources project generated a cash flow of nearly $5 million last year.

Those lakes are Granby and Shadow Mountain located about 2 miles from each other in a spectacular mountain area of Colorado, and Horsetooth Lake in a barren foothills area in another part of the project.

The two mountain lakes—Granby and Shadow Mountain—are west of the Continental Divide at more than 8,300 feet elevation. The foothills lake on the eastern side—Horsetooth—is at 5,400 feet. A water tunnel through the Rocky Mountains connects the water storage facilities on the west slope to those on the east slope.

The study noting the economic and social impact of these 3 reservoirs was recently completed for the Bureau of Reclamation by the University of Denver's Denver Research Institute. Built by Reclamation during the 1940's, the Colorado-Big Thompson project facilities transport water from the Colorado River across the Continental Divide and delivers it for extensive irrigation and municipal and industrial uses in northeastern Colorado.

From exhaustive studies and interviews, DRI economists estimated the 1968 impact of recreationist-visitors at Shadow Mountain-Granby at $3,396,000 and Horsetooth Reservoir at $1,486,000.

$532,000 in Boats

Included in these figures are boat sales estimated to be $532,000 at Shadow Mountain-Granby and $1,260,000 at Horsetooth Reservoir. Almost three-fourths of the total investment in boats and boating equipment was represented by purchases outside the impact areas adjacent to the reservoirs.

Magnitude of the economic growth taking place near Horsetooth Reservoir is indicated by the fact that estimated 1967 property tax revenue from the area adjacent to the reservoir was $175,000 while the cumulative tax loss during the period from 1946 to 1968 from reservoir rights-of-way removed from tax rolls amounted to only $54,000.

The study reports a sizeable increase in net land values, investment in recreation facilities, and other improvements of $4.84 million within the impact area at Shadow Mountain-Granby. The comparable figure for increased investments of this type at Horsetooth Reservoir is $3.29 million.
DRI interviewers found that Coloradans comprise 46 percent of the summer recreation population at mountainous Shadow Mountain-Granby, and 95 percent of the visitors to Horsetooth. Of the Shadow Mountain-Granby recreationists, 58 percent reported family incomes of more than $10,000 per year, while 43 percent of the Horsetooth visitors indicated salaries in that range.

**People From Denver**

The 220-mile, 1-day trip to and from Shadow Mountain-Granby is a favorite for people from the Denver Metropolitan area. They boat, fish, swim, horseback ride, or sightsee. The highway takes them through Rocky Mountain National Park, includes Estes Park and Grand Lake, crosses the Continental Divide twice, and offers views of snow-capped peaks and water along 7 miles of reservoir shoreline. They can camp near the lake or stay in a motel near the shore.

Horsetooth Reservoir is about 70 miles north of Denver and 5 miles from Fort Collins. While this area offers different scenic views than the other area in the mountains, no major highways pass by it, and few out-of-state tourists utilize its facilities.

The area around this body of water has become an important relaxation area for residents of rapidly growing Fort Collins. The reservoir is accessible year-around and during most months, many people of retirement age spend part of the day fishing and sightseeing.

Because warmer weather and lower elevation (5,400 feet) prevail at Horsetooth, the water is relatively warm and allows swimming 4 or 5 months of the year.

At Shadow Mountain and Granby however, the water is colder and swimming is desirable only for about two months during the year. Because part of the highway, Trail Ridge Road at over 10,000 feet, is closed during winter (roughly from late October to May) only a few recreationists, primarily ice fishermen, visit these two lakes during this period.

For a population whose unity and driving force years ago was to bring an irrigation project into being for their dry but fertile lands, the water based recreation bonus has turned out to be an unexpected and pleasing windfall for northern Colorado.

(Author Mr. Mew is Research Engineer and Dr. Milliken is Research Economist in the Denver Research Institute of the University of Denver. Summarized in this article, their 206 page technical report is entitled: "Economic and Social Impact of Recreation at Reclamation Reservoirs," and it is available at $6 each from the University of Denver, Denver, Colo. 80210.)