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NEWS

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National Wildlife Refuges Provide Significant Local Economic Impact

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recently completed a new analysis examining the impacts to local economies of visits to national wildlife refuges. The study, called *Banking on Nature*, covers the period October 1, 2010 to September 31, 2011 and included 92 of the more than 550 national wildlife refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System in the analysis. Visitor spending in four areas was examined: food, lodging, transportation and other expenses (such as guide fees, land-use fees and equipment rental). The economic benefit, which includes retail sales, taxes and job income, came from visitor spending tied to recreation activities on refuges.

During the study period, wildlife refuges pumped \$2.4 billion into the economy nationwide, and supported more than 35,000 private sector jobs. Wildlife refuges contributed an average \$4.87 in total economic output for every \$1 appropriated and produced nearly \$793 million in job income for local communities. The refuges are part of the National Wildlife Refuge System, which is managed by the Service.

“Our National Wildlife Refuge System is the world’s greatest network of lands dedicated to wildlife conservation but is also an important contributor to our economy, attracting more than 46 million visitors from around the world who support local restaurants, hotels, and other businesses,” said Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell. “Every dollar we invest in our Refuge System and other public lands generate huge dividends for our country.”

In Alaska, subsistence activities provide significant economic benefit to communities within and adjacent to the boundaries of Alaska’s national wildlife refuges, as most residents use the refuges for subsistence, which figures into the economic impact. More than half of the sixteen national wildlife refuges in Alaska were included as part of the study. Among the findings:

- **Kenai National Wildlife Refuge** generated more than \$113 million in economic benefit, returning \$27.10 for every \$1 dollar appropriated, calculated in 2011 dollars. More than 570,000 people visited Kenai Refuge in 2011 to participate in recreational opportunities including camping (including wilderness cabins), canoeing, hiking, wildlife viewing and wilderness horseback riding.
- **Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge** generated almost \$9.7 million in economic benefit, returning \$3.24 for every \$1 dollar appropriated, calculated in 2011 dollars. More than 50,000 people

visited Kodiak Refuge in 2011, where recreational opportunities include wildlife viewing and photography, cabin camping, fishing and hunting.

- **Koyukuk and Nowitna National Wildlife Refuges** generated almost \$1.1 million in economic benefit, during which time 11,623 people visited.
- **Selawik National Wildlife Refuge** had 21,203 visitors in 2011. These visits generated \$1.4 million in economic benefit, returning \$1.28 for every \$1 dollar appropriated, calculated in 2011 dollars.
- **Alaska Peninsula and Becharof National Wildlife Refuges** generated more than \$1.6 million in economic benefit in Fiscal Year 2011. That same year, 8,200 people visited Alaska Peninsula and Becharof Refuges. Recreational opportunities at these refuges include fishing and hunting, photography, hiking, backpacking, boating and camping.
- **Tetlin National Wildlife Refuge**, which had more than 90,000 visitors in 2011, generated more than \$9.9 million in economic benefit for the surrounding area, returning \$5 for every \$1 dollar appropriated.
- **Togiak National Wildlife Refuge**, which had 32,827 visitors in 2011, generated more than \$14 million in economic benefit, returning \$5.15 for every \$1 dollar appropriated, calculated in 2011 dollars.

Alaska's sixteen refuges are part of the National Wildlife Refuge System managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. To find out more about the National Wildlife Refuge System, go to:

<http://www.fws.gov/refuges/>

To learn more about the study visit: <http://1.usa.gov/185tp06>

The National Wildlife Refuge System protects wildlife and wildlife habitat on more than 150 million acres of land and water from the Caribbean to the Pacific, Maine to Alaska. Refuges also improve human health, provide outdoor recreation and support local economies. Visit our [homepage](http://www.fws.gov/refuges/) at www.fws.gov/refuges. Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov. Connect with our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/usfws, follow our tweets at www.twitter.com/usfwshq, watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwshq>.

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