

The Economic Contributions of Recreational Visitation at Great Plains Nature Center

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This paper establishes the economic contribution baseline for recreational visitation at Great Plains Nature Center (Center). The paper addresses the levels of Center recreational activities and the economic effects of Center recreational activities. The analysis is followed by a glossary of terms. For more information regarding the methodology, please refer to “Banking on Nature – The Economic Contributions to Local Communities of National Wildlife Refuge Visitation” at <https://www.fws.gov/economics/divisionpublications/divisionpublications.asp>.

From an economic perspective, Great Plains Nature Center provides a variety of environmental and natural resource goods and services used by people either directly or indirectly. The use of these goods and services may result in economic effects to both local and state economies. The various services the Center provides can be grouped into five broad categories: (1) maintenance and conservation of environmental resources, services and ecological processes; (2) protection of natural resources such as fish, wildlife, and plants; (3) protection of cultural and historical sites and objects; (4) provision of educational and research opportunities; and (5) outdoor and wildlife-related recreation. A comprehensive economic profile of the Center would address all applicable economic effects associated with the use of Center-produced goods and services. However, some of the major contributions of the Center to the natural environment, such as watershed protection, maintenance and stabilization of ecological processes, and the enhancement of biodiversity are beyond the scope of this paper. Therefore, this paper focuses on economic effects associated with recreational visitation. As a result, benefits represent conservative estimates and do not represent the Center’s total social impacts.

Center Description

The Great Plains Nature Center, located in Wichita, KS is a unique U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service facility. The Center is staffed and managed by four partners – the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism, the Wichita Department of Park and Recreation, and the Friends of the Great Plains Nature Center. Chisholm Creek Park, a 240-acre city park, surrounds the Center and is used as an outdoor classroom. The Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism’s Region 3 offices are located on one end of the building. The Center is the third most visited attraction in Wichita and provides a connection to nature for the urban population that lives here.

Activity Levels

Table 1 shows the recreation visits for the Center. The Refuge had about 363,000 recreational visits in 2017 which contributed to the economic effect of the Refuge. Non-consumptive recreation accounted for about 360,000 visits with residents comprising 92 percent of Center visitation.

Table 1. Great Plains Nature Center: 2017 Recreation Visits

Activity	Residents	Non-Residents	Total
Non-Consumptive:			
Pedestrian	97,501	5,132	102,633
Auto Tour	-	-	-
Boat Trail/Launch	-	-	-
Bicycle	5,918	121	6,039
Photography	17,206	906	18,112
Interpretation	178,482	19,831	198,313
Other Recreation	486	54	540
Visitor Center	30,676	3,408	34,084
Hunting:			
Big Game	-	-	-
Small Game	-	-	-
Migratory Birds	-	-	-
Fishing:	3,441	181	3,622
Total Visitation	333,710	29,633	363,343

Source: Refuge Annual Performance Plan 2017 and Refuge Staff

Regional Economic Analysis

The economic area for the Center is Sedgwick County, Kansas. It is assumed that visitor expenditures occur primarily within this county. Visitor recreation expenditures for 2017 are shown in Table 2. Total expenditures were \$3.2 million with non-residents accounting for \$819,000 or 25 percent of total expenditures. Expenditures on non-consumptive activities accounted for 98 percent of all expenditures.

Spending in the local area generates and supports economic activity within Sedgwick County (Table 3). The contribution of recreational spending in local communities was associated with about 40 jobs, \$1.6 million in employment income, \$291,000 in total tax revenue, and \$5.0 million in economic output.

Table 2. Great Plains Nature Center: Visitor Recreation Expenditures (2017 \$,000)

Activity	Residents	Non-Residents	Total
Non-Consumptive	\$2,363.3	\$810.3	\$3,173.6
Hunting	-	-	-
Fishing	\$46.3	\$8.2	\$54.5
Total Expenditures	\$2,409.6	\$818.5	\$3,228.1

Table 3. Great Plains Nature Center: Local Economic Contributions Associated with Recreation Visits (2017 \$,000)

	Residents	Non-Residents	Total
Economic Output	\$3,736.8	\$1,274.3	\$5,011.1
Jobs	31	9	40
Job Income	\$1,206.9	\$383.9	\$1,590.8
State and Local Tax Revenue	\$215.0	\$76.4	\$291.3

Glossary

Economic Contribution: The economic activity generated in a region by residents and non-resident recreation spending.

Expenditures: The spending by recreational visitors when visiting refuges. Expenditure categories include food, lodging, transportation, and other. Expenditure information is based on the 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife Associated Recreation (NSFHWR).

Economic Output: The total spending by final consumers on all goods. The amount reported in this study is the change in spending by final consumers in the region attributable to refuge visitation. Economic output includes spending by people who earn income from refuge visitors' activities as well as spending by refuge visitors themselves.

Impact: The new economic activity generated in a region as a refuge attracts non-residents to the area. This figure represents economic activity that would be lost if the refuge were not there.

IMPLAN: An economic modeling software package that applies input-output analysis techniques to regional economies.

Jobs: Full and part time jobs.

Job Income: Income to households from labor including wages and salaries.

Resident/Non-Resident: People living more than 50 miles from the refuges are considered non-residents for this study.

Tax Revenue: Local, county and state taxes: sales tax, property tax, and income tax

Visitors: A visitor is someone who comes to the refuge and participates in one or more of the activities available at the refuge.

Visits (visitation): A visit is not the same as a visitor. One visitor could be responsible for several visits on a refuge. For example, if a family of four went fishing in the morning and hiked a short nature trail in the afternoon, they would have contributed eight activity visits to the refuge; yet, they are only four visitors.

References

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