

The Economic Contributions of Recreational Visitation at Litchfield Wetlands Management District

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This paper establishes the economic contribution baseline for recreational visitation at Litchfield Wetlands Management District (District). The paper addresses the levels of District recreational activities and the economic effects of District 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, Litchfield WMD 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 District 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 District would address all applicable economic effects associated with the use of District-produced goods and services. However, some of the major contributions of the District 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 District’s total social impacts.

District Description

The Litchfield Wetland Management District was established in 1978 to acquire, restore, and manage habitat for waterfowl production and other migratory birds.

Today, the District manages 153 separate parcels of federally owned land, called Waterfowl Production Areas, within a seven county area in south-central Minnesota. Together, the Waterfowl Production Areas encompass about 36,000 acres of land dedicated to wildlife and wildlife-dependent recreation. District lands contain diverse native habitats from native forest in the northeast to the tallgrass prairie in the south and west, with the transition zone in between.

In addition to managing land for public use, the District also protects more than 13,000 acres of privately-owned wetland and grassland habitat, purchased as permanent easements to restore and protect habitat. The land remains in private ownership, but the easements protect the integrity of the wetlands and surrounding uplands for wildlife. The District also works with private landowners to protect privately-owned wetlands and prairies through the voluntary Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program.

Activity Levels

Table 1 shows the recreation visits for the District. The District had about 131,000 recreational visits in 2017 which contributed to the economic effect of the District. Non-consumptive recreation accounted for about 33,000 visits with residents comprising 75 percent of District visitation. The District annually hosts their Habitat Day where the public learns about wildlife and wildlife habitat in the area, construct a bird house, feeder, or bat box.

Table 1. Litchfield WMD: 2017 Recreation Visits

Activity	Residents	Non-Residents	Total
Non-Consumptive:			
Pedestrian	13,300	700	14,000
Auto Tour	-	-	-
Boat Trail/Launch	6,715	1,185	7,900
Bicycle	8,160	1,440	9,600
Photography	425	75	500
Interpretation	380	20	400
Other Recreation	765	135	900
Visitor Center	48	3	50
Hunting:			
Big Game	14,450	2,550	17,000
Small Game	23,460	15,640	39,100
Migratory Birds	22,120	9,480	31,600
Fishing:	8,500	1,500	10,000
Total Visitation	98,323	32,728	131,050

Source: Refuge Annual Performance Plan 2017 and Refuge Staff

Regional Economic Analysis

The economic area for the District is the seven-county area of Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker, Renville, Stearns, Todd, and Wright Counties in Minnesota. It is assumed that visitor expenditures occur primarily within these counties. Visitor recreation expenditures for 2017 are shown in Table 2. Total expenditures were \$2.4 million with non-residents accounting for \$1.2 million or 51 percent of total expenditures. Expenditures on hunting activities accounted for 80 percent of all expenditures.

Spending in the local area generates and supports economic activity within the seven county area (Table 3). The contribution of recreational spending in local communities was associated with about 30 jobs, \$1.4 million in employment income, \$293,000 in total tax revenue, and \$3.5 million in economic output.

Table 2. Litchfield WMD: Visitor Recreation Expenditures (2017 \$,000)

Activity	Residents	Non-Residents	Total
Non-Consumptive	\$203.9	\$74.5	\$278.3
Hunting	\$830.5	\$1,087.4	\$1,917.9
Fishing	\$144.9	\$64.2	\$209.0
Total Expenditures	\$1,179.3	\$1,226.0	\$2,405.2

Table 3. Litchfield WMD: Local Economic Contributions Associated with Recreation Visits (2017 \$,000)

	Residents	Non-Residents	Total
Economic Output	\$1,706.7	\$1,826.6	\$3,533.3
Jobs	15	15	30
Job Income	\$704.5	\$690.2	\$1,394.6
State and Local Tax Revenue	\$136.8	\$156.1	\$293.0

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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