

The Economic Contributions of Recreational Visitation at Morris Wetlands Management District

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Division of Economics
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

This paper establishes the economic contribution baseline for recreational visitation at Morris Wetlands Management District (District). The paper addresses the levels of Refuge recreational activities and the economic effects of Refuge 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, Morris 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

After the enactment of the legislation that allowed for the acquisition of land known as Waterfowl Production Areas it was further codified into law that “*Lands acquired as Waterfowl Production Areas shall annually be open to hunting of migratory birds, upland game and big game subject to the provision of State law and regulations...*”. As such it is the Morris Wetland Management District’s intent to allow for recreational opportunities that don’t negatively impact the natural resources.

Some of the acceptable recreational activities on the District include: hunting, fishing, nature photography, wildlife observation, berry and mushroom picking, trapping, hiking, cross country skiing, snowshoeing and canoeing. Most of our environmental education programs center around a youth waterfowl hunt, Monarch butterfly tagging, native seed harvesting and school programs. The station does provide interpretive walks and presentations (when requested) and participates in various local community events by typically providing an employee to talk about the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the natural resources that we help conserve.

Activity Levels

Table 1 shows the recreation visits for the District. The District had about 73,000 recreational visits in 2017 which contributed to the economic effect of the District. Hunting recreation accounted for about 69,000 visits with residents comprising 32 percent of District visitation.

Table 1. Morris WMD: 2017 Recreation Visits

Activity	Residents	Non-Residents	Total
Non-Consumptive:			
Pedestrian	560	140	700
Auto Tour	700	300	1,000
Boat Trail/Launch	29	1	30
Bicycle	3	0	3
Photography	14	2	15
Interpretation	180	20	200
Other Recreation	613	263	875
Visitor Center	263	263	525
Hunting:			
Big Game	4,320	1,080	5,400
Small Game	6,750	20,250	27,000
Migratory Birds	9,750	27,250	37,000
Fishing:	343	7	350
Total Visitation	23,524	49,574	73,098

Source: Refuge Annual Performance Plan 2017 and Refuge Staff

Regional Economic Analysis

The economic area for the District is the eight-county area of Yellow Medicine, Lac Qui Parle, Chippewa, Swift, Big Stone, Traverse, Stevens, and Pope 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 \$3.6 million with non-residents accounting for \$3.1 million or 87 percent of total expenditures. Expenditures on hunting activities accounted for 99 percent of all expenditures.

Spending in the local area generates and supports economic activity within the eight county area (Table 3). The contribution of recreational spending in local communities was associated with about 53 jobs, \$1.1 million in employment income, \$427,000 in total tax revenue, and \$4.6 million in economic output.

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

Activity	Residents	Non-Residents	Total
Non-Consumptive	\$12.3	\$11.6	\$23.9
Hunting	\$457.7	\$3,117.3	\$3,575.0
Fishing	\$4.7	\$0.2	\$4.9
Total Expenditures	\$474.6	\$3,129.1	\$3,603.7

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

	Residents	Non-Residents	Total
Economic Output	\$583.0	\$4,046.6	\$4,629.7
Jobs	7	45	53
Job Income	\$149.9	\$959.9	\$1,109.8
State and Local Tax Revenue	\$48.0	\$378.8	\$426.8

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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