

The Economic Contributions of Recreational Visitation at Seney National Wildlife Refuge

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This paper establishes the economic contribution baseline for recreational visitation at Seney National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge). 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, Seney National Wildlife Refuge 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 Refuge 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 Refuge would address all applicable economic effects associated with the use of refuge-produced goods and services. However, some of the major contributions of the Refuge 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 Refuge’s total social impacts.

Refuge Description

Seney National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1935 as a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife. Seney Refuge is located in the east-central portion of Michigan’s Upper Peninsula, halfway between Lake Superior and Lake Michigan. The 95,238 acre refuge encompasses the 25,150 acre Seney Wilderness Area, which contains the Strangmoor Bog National Natural Landmark.

Visitors can enjoy the Marshland Wildlife Drive which accesses a portion of the refuge rich in open water and marsh habitats and home to favorite species including the trumpeter swan, common loon, bald eagle, osprey, and sandhill crane. The Whitefish Point Unit of the Seney Refuge is located nearly 80 miles away from the headquarters. This 53-acre tract is renowned for its concentrations of birds during migration. Each year thousands of raptors, passerines and waterbirds funnel through the point, stopping here to replenish energy reserves before or after venturing across Lake Superior. It is also home to the Great Lakes Piping Plover a Federally Endangered Species. The area is recognized as a Globally Important Bird Area for birds migrating between the U.S. and Canada.

Activity Levels

Table 1 shows the recreation visits for the Refuge. The Refuge had about 156,000 recreational visits in 2017 which contributed to the economic effect of the Refuge. Non-consumptive recreation accounted for about 154,000 visits with residents comprising 13 percent of Refuge visitation.

Table 1. Seney NWR: 2017 Recreation Visits

Activity	Residents	Non-Residents	Total
Non-Consumptive:			
Pedestrian	4,167	37,501	41,668
Auto Tour	8,370	47,429	55,799
Boat Trail/Launch	189	756	945
Bicycle	237	552	789
Photography	5,219	29,576	34,795
Interpretation	322	597	919
Other Recreation	150	350	500
Visitor Center	1,092	17,111	18,203
Hunting:			
Big Game	75	425	500
Small Game	50	50	100
Migratory Birds	20	20	40
Fishing:	764	510	1,274
Total Visitation	20,655	134,877	155,532

Source: Refuge Annual Performance Plan 2017 and Refuge Staff

Regional Economic Analysis

The economic area for the Refuge is Schoolcraft County, Michigan. It is assumed that visitor expenditures occur primarily within this county. Visitor recreation expenditures for 2017 are shown in Table 2. Total expenditures were \$2.7 million with non-residents accounting for \$2.6 million or 93 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 Schoolcraft County (Table 3). The contribution of recreational spending in local communities was associated with about 29 jobs, \$752,000 in employment income, \$333,000 in total tax revenue, and \$2.9 million in economic output.

Table 2. Seney NWR: Visitor Recreation Expenditures (2017 \$,000)

Activity	Residents	Non-Residents	Total
Non-Consumptive	\$171.2	\$2,508.3	\$2,679.5
Hunting	\$2.7	\$28.5	\$31.2
Fishing	\$10.4	\$17.4	\$27.9
Total Expenditures	\$184.3	\$2,554.3	\$2,738.6

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

	Residents	Non-Residents	Total
Economic Output	\$207.4	\$2,726.0	\$2,933.5
Jobs	2	27	29
Job Income	\$56.9	\$695.6	\$752.4
State and Local Tax Revenue	\$20.3	\$312.8	\$333.1

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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