

The Economic Contributions of Recreational Visitation at St. Croix Wetlands Management District

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This paper establishes the economic contribution baseline for recreational visitation at St. Croix 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, St. Croix 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 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 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

Lying along the eastern edge of the tallgrass prairie in west-central Wisconsin, the St. Croix Wetland Management District encompasses a fascinating diversity of habitats. Within the eight-county district, one can travel north through the rolling hills and valleys of the St. Croix River of Pepin county, to the prairie potholes that dot the many small farms and housing sub-divisions of St. Croix county, through the mixed hardwood forests of Polk county to reach the pine barrens of Burnett county with its scattering of Jack Pine, shrubby oak species and prairie grasses and forbs.

The District includes Barron, Burnett, Dunn, Washburn, Pierce, Pepin, Polk, and St. Croix Counties. The central portion of St. Croix County, the heart of the district, is known as the Star Prairie Pothole Grasslands.

The District manages 43 units of prairie, wetland and grassland habitats known as waterfowl production areas (WPAs). WPAs are purchased using Federal Duck Stamp dollars within the historic prairie pothole portion of the district, including southern Polk, St. Croix and Dunn counties. After purchase, prairie wetland, oak savanna and grassland habitats found in the District are restored and managed for breeding waterfowl, other migratory birds, and indigenous wildlife.

Activity Levels

Table 1 shows the recreation visits for the District. The District had about 16,000 recreational visits in 2017 which contributed to the economic effect of the District. Non-consumptive recreation accounted for

about 3,000 visits with residents comprising 90 percent of District visitation. Interpretation activities at St. Croix Wetland Management District include special events hosted by the station and our Friends' group such as a guided walk on a Waterfowl Production Area during the winter called our "Winter Walk," special night out on a WPA to listen for and watch the special mating antics of the migratory Woodcock for our "Sky Dance" event, canoe outing for legislators, bird banding demonstrations, and hosting expert speakers in various conservation fields.

Table 1. St. Croix WMD: 2017 Recreation Visits

Activity	Residents	Non-Residents	Total
Non-Consumptive:			
Pedestrian	918	102	1,020
Auto Tour	95	11	105
Boat Trail/Launch	9	1	10
Bicycle	95	11	105
Photography	450	50	500
Interpretation	202	22	224
Other Recreation	-	-	-
Visitor Center	1,076	120	1,195
Hunting:			
Big Game	4,590	510	5,100
Small Game	4,590	510	5,100
Migratory Birds	2,340	260	2,600
Fishing:	468	52	520
Total Visitation	14,831	1,648	16,479

Source: Refuge Annual Performance Plan 2017 and Refuge Staff

Regional Economic Analysis

The economic area for the District is the eight-county area of Barron, Burnett, Dunn, Pepin, Pierce, Polk, St. Croix, and Washburn Counties in Wisconsin. It is assumed that visitor expenditures occur primarily within these counties. Visitor recreation expenditures for 2017 are shown in Table 2. Total expenditures were \$307,000 with non-residents accounting for \$71,000 or 23 percent of total expenditures. Expenditures on hunting activities accounted for 91 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 5 jobs, \$117,000 in employment income, \$27,000 in total tax revenue, and \$417,000 in economic output.

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

Activity	Residents	Non-Residents	Total
Non-Consumptive	\$16.5	\$4.6	\$21.0
Hunting	\$213.9	\$65.4	\$279.4
Fishing	\$4.8	\$1.3	\$6.1
Total Expenditures	\$235.2	\$71.3	\$306.5

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

	Residents	Non-Residents	Total
Economic Output	\$318.6	\$98.4	\$416.9
Jobs	4	1	5
Job Income	\$90.4	\$26.8	\$117.3
State and Local Tax Revenue	\$20.4	\$6.8	\$27.2

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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