

The Economic Contributions of Recreational Visitation at Upper Ouachita National Wildlife Refuge

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This paper establishes the economic contribution baseline for recreational visitation at Upper Ouachita 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, Upper Ouachita 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

Upper Ouachita National Wildlife Refuge, located north of Sterlington, Louisiana, lies on the western edge of the Mississippi Alluvial Valley. It was established in 1978 to provide habitat for migratory birds. Additionally, the Refuge provides habitat for alligators, forest interior songbirds, bald eagles, Louisiana black bear, the little known Rafinesque's big-eared bat, migrating shorebirds and the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker. The Refuge is bisected by 18 miles of the Ouachita River, which is in the Louisiana Natural and Scenic Rivers System, and is the drainage for numerous creeks, sloughs and oxbow lakes. Cypress swamps, bottomland hardwood and upland forests complete the landscape that is habitat for a diverse group of plants and animals.

In years of normal or above rainfall, the Refuge’s bottomland hardwood forest is a very important overflow area for the Ouachita River floodplain. High water levels, which usually occur between January and June, can flood up to 87 percent of the refuge. The wetland forests not only provide habitat to wetland dependent wildlife, they also reduce damage from flooding in developed areas, filter silt and other particles from the water, help neutralize pollutants and provide recharge areas for aquifers.

Activity Levels

Table 1 shows the recreation visits for the Refuge. The Refuge had about 19,000 recreational visits in 2017 which contributed to the economic effect of the Refuge. Hunting accounted for about 5,000 visits with residents comprising 78 percent of Refuge visitation.

Table 1. Upper Ouachita NWR: 2017 Recreation Visits

Activity	Residents	Non-Residents	Total
Non-Consumptive:			
Pedestrian	-	-	-
Auto Tour	180	120	300
Boat Trail/Launch	400	100	500
Bicycle	-	-	-
Photography	-	-	-
Interpretation	-	-	-
Other Recreation	-	-	-
Visitor Center	-	-	-
Hunting:			
Big Game	1,167	500	1,667
Small Game	775	194	969
Migratory Birds	1,551	665	2,216
Fishing:	10,400	2,600	13,000
Total Visitation	14,473	4,179	18,652

Source: Refuge Annual Performance Plan 2017 and Refuge Staff

Regional Economic Analysis

The economic area for the Refuge is the two-parish area of Morehouse and Union Parishes in Louisiana. It is assumed that visitor expenditures occur primarily within these parishes. Visitor recreation expenditures for 2017 are shown in Table 2. Total expenditures were \$587,000 with non-residents accounting for \$202,000 or 34 percent of total expenditures. Expenditures on fishing activities accounted for 67 percent of all expenditures.

Spending in the local area generates and supports economic activity within the two parish area (Table 3). The contribution of recreational spending in local communities was associated with about 6 jobs, \$184,000 in employment income, \$55,000 in total tax revenue, and \$647,000 in economic output.

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

Activity	Residents	Non-Residents	Total
Non-Consumptive	\$7.2	\$14.5	\$21.7
Hunting	\$81.2	\$90.6	\$171.8
Fishing	\$296.1	\$97.2	\$393.2
Total Expenditures	\$384.5	\$202.2	\$586.7

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

	Residents	Non-Residents	Total
Economic Output	\$421.1	\$226.3	\$647.4
Jobs	4	2	6
Job Income	\$122.5	\$61.3	\$183.8
State and Local Tax Revenue	\$35.5	\$19.5	\$55.0

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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