

The Economic Contributions of Recreational Visitation at William L. Finley National Wildlife Refuge

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This paper establishes the economic contribution baseline for recreational visitation at William L. Finley 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, William L. Finley 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

With habitats ranging from wetlands to upland oak savanna, the William L. Finley National Wildlife Refuge is a hotspot for a diverse array of birdlife, mammals and plants. It’s a favorite birding destination and elk viewing and hunting location. Established in 1964, the William L. Finley National Wildlife Refuge’s primary management goal is to provide wintering habitat for dusky Canada geese. At 5,325 acres, William L. Finley Refuge is the largest in the Complex. Across the Willamette River is the 341 acre Snag Boat Bend Unit, known for its large population of Western pond turtles and the only area in the Complex to have main stem Willamette waterfront acreage.

From the eastern entrance of the Refuge, visitors can meander through one of the last remaining intact wet prairies of the valley, which supports endangered plant species such as Bradshaw’s desert parsley, and an amazing array of bird life including western meadowlark, streaked horned lark and northern harrier. Refuge lowlands also support Muddy Creek’s riparian habitats as well as sprawling wetlands and systems of ponds housing western pond turtles and red-legged frogs. These refuge wetlands provide vital wintering habitat for both Canada geese and many other migratory waterfowl and thousands of birds can be seen there in winter. From there the habitat shifts to upland Oregon white oak savannas and mixed deciduous forests where you might find acorn woodpecker colonies, great-horned owl, or the resident Roosevelt elk herd. Bobcat sightings have been a visitor favorite for the last 5 years.

Aside from the 12 miles of trail that meander through each of these habitats and the plethora of wildlife to be seen, the refuge also provides opportunities to explore the cultural history of the area. Interpretive signs mark vast camas fields, once tended by the native Kalapuya people, and the 1855 Fiechter House,

said to be the oldest building in Benton County, which provides a glimpse at the lives of European settlers and marks the track of the Applegate trail which runs through the refuge as well.

Activity Levels

Table 1 shows the recreation visits for the Refuge. The Refuge had about 231,000 recreational visits in 2017 which contributed to the economic effect of the Refuge. Non-consumptive recreation accounted for nearly all visits with residents comprising 80 percent of Refuge visitation. Interpretation activities include festivals, Critters in Clay, Natural Areas Celebration Week, Winter Wildlife Field Day, and others.

Table 1. William L. Finley NWR: 2017 Recreation Visits

Activity	Residents	Non-Residents	Total
Non-Consumptive:			
Pedestrian	77,520	19,380	96,900
Auto Tour	70,400	17,600	88,000
Boat Trail/Launch	-	-	-
Bicycle	120	30	150
Photography	29,600	7,400	37,000
Interpretation	-	-	-
Other Recreation	-	-	-
Visitor Center	7,200	1,800	9,000
Hunting:			
Big Game	234	-	234
Small Game	-	-	-
Migratory Birds	-	-	-
Fishing:	4	-	4
Total Visitation	185,078	46,210	231,288

Source: Refuge Annual Performance Plan 2017 and Refuge Staff

Regional Economic Analysis

The economic area for the Refuge is Benton County, Oregon. It is assumed that visitor expenditures occur primarily within this county. Visitor recreation expenditures for 2017 are shown in Table 2. Total expenditures were \$4.2 million with non-residents accounting for \$2.5 million or 60 percent of total expenditures. Expenditures on non-consumptive activities accounted for nearly all expenditures.

Spending in the local area generates and supports economic activity within Benton County (Table 3). The contribution of recreational spending in local communities was associated with about 52 jobs, \$1.6million in employment income, \$280,000 in total tax revenue, and \$4.9 million in economic output.

Table 2. William L. Finley NWR: Visitor Recreation Expenditures (2017 \$,000)

Activity	Residents	Non-Residents	Total
Non-Consumptive	\$1,674.6	\$2,541.7	\$4,216.3
Hunting	\$3.9	-	\$3.9
Fishing	-	-	-
Total Expenditures	\$1,678.5	\$2,541.7	\$4,220.2

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

	Residents	Non-Residents	Total
Economic Output	\$1,858.0	\$3,041.6	\$4,899.5
Jobs	22	30	52
Job Income	\$615.9	\$997.6	\$1,613.4
State and Local Tax Revenue	\$101.1	\$179.5	\$280.6

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 8 activity visits to the refuge; yet, they are only four visitors.

References

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