

THE STRATEGIC ROLE OF WILDLIFE IN MONTANA'S ECONOMIC FUTURE: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE POLICY IMPLICATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Based on information from the U.S. Department of Interior, Fish & Wildlife Service's and U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau's 2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation [2] it was determined that consumers spent over 910 million dollars in Montana in 2006 on wildlife related recreation: hunting, fishing and watching. Using North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) to classify these expenditures and IMPLAN [3] (an economic input-output modeling software) it was determined that wildlife-related recreation generated a total economic impact of \$1,469,837,000 (2006 dollars) in Montana. This economic activity was compared to other industries in the State and the policy implications for Montana's future were discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Taylor [6] presented an analysis of the "New West" in regard to the dramatic cultural and economic changes occurring in the Rocky Mountain states. This paper will in a similar manner use the term "New West" to imply that the old economic industries of agriculture, timber and mining may not be the primary sources of wealth and jobs in the future. Agriculture, timber and mining played a significant economic role in Montana's past but their relative importance in the future is unclear. Power and Barrett [4] make it clear that most of the new jobs being created in the Rocky Mountain states are not in agriculture, timber and mining. Most of the new jobs are in the service and manufacturing sectors.

This paper's analyzes another area of Montana's economy that significantly improves the economic well being of many Montanans. The area of interest is wildlife related recreation. Hunting, fishing and wildlife watching have had long histories in the West. Hunters, anglers and wildlife watchers have been willing to spend significant amounts of their wealth and income on their sports. It can be argued many of the West's hunting, angling and wildlife-watching residents receive a great deal of personal, emotional, philosophical and religious satisfaction from their sports. Improved wildlife numbers will not only improve the economic well being of the State, but improve the overall satisfaction of many of its citizens.

The following analyses will demonstrate that hunters, anglers and wildlife watchers are willing to spend money on their sport and that resource policies might well be directed to improve wildlife habitat in Montana.

THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF HUNTING, FISHING AND WILDLIFE WATCHING IN MONTANA

Every five years the U.S. Department of Interior, Fish & Wildlife Service and U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau [2] conducts an extensive survey of the expenditures of hunters, anglers and wild-life watchers. They found that in Montana hunters, anglers and wildlife watchers spent nearly \$910,049,000 in 2006. Their survey provided large aggregated categories of expenditures. Table 1 lists these expenditures listed by categories similar to those used in Taylor [6].

TABLE 1: Expenses of Hunters, Anglers and Wildlife Watchers in Montana in 2006

Magazines & Books	\$2,658,106
Transportation	\$170,880,991
Equipment	\$262,359,677
Groceries	\$75,518,559
Bar & Restaurants	\$75,518,559
Lodging	\$45,111,203
Misc Services	\$132,112,474
Membership Dues	\$15,910,336
Licenses	\$129,979,095
Total	\$910,049,000

The expense categories presented in Table 1 were converted to NAICS codes. These codes were used to input the expense information into IMPLAN [3], an economic input-output modeling software package, using its most recent matrices: 2004. IMPLAN calculates the direct, indirect and induced economic impacts of hunters', anglers' and wildlife watchers' expenditures. When the direct, indirect and induced impacts are added together ("ripple" effects), the total economic impact of hunters, anglers and wildlife watchers in Montana in 2006 can be calculated. It was determined that the total economic impact of hunters in Montana was (in 2006 dollars) \$1,469,837,000.

The total economic impact of hunting, fishing and wildlife watching is over 40% the size of agriculture and timber combined. Wildlife related economic activity is 68% the size of mining. Hunters, anglers and wildlife watchers generate a great deal of economic activity in Montana. They account for over 2.5 percent of all the total economic activity in the state.

DISCUSSION

Clearly, hunters, anglers and wildlife watchers are willing to reach into their wallets and purchase goods and services in the pursuit of their sport. Their economic activity in Montana is approximately 1.47 billion dollars a year. The size of hunters', anglers' and wildlife watchers' impact compare favorable with other economic sectors in Montana and offers a potential growth area.

It can be argued when decision makers associated with real estate and natural resources in Montana are trying to increase the economic and social well being of its citizens, the positive impact on huntable, catchable and watchable wildlife should be a high priority. Increased populations of wildlife will lead to increased spending. If a decision will increase hunting, fishing and/or wildlife watching opportunities, a

strong case can be made that there will be subsequent increased economic activity. Conversely, if decisions (both private and public) negatively impact wildlife populations, Montana loses an opportunity for economic growth through hunters', anglers' and wildlife watchers' spending. Thus, decisions that negatively impact huntable, catchable and watchable wildlife should be evaluated against the lost in sportspersons' dollars. Wildlife habitat destruction that generates economic growth will be counterbalanced by a lost of economic activity from hunters, anglers and wildlife watchers.

Many agricultural resource managers recognize the value of providing hunting, fishing and wildlife-watching opportunities to sportspersons who are willing to pay for access to their game animals. In addition to individual land owners and managers making pro-wildlife decision, it can be argued that local, state, regional and national decision makers would be well advised to make decisions that increase hunters', anglers' and wildlife-watchers' opportunities [1]. If there are more animals to hunt, fish and watch on both public and private property, their will be more sportspersons willing to spend money to partake in their sport. If land supports a huntable, fishable and/or watchable population of animals might indeed become ***THE*** criteria to evaluate resource decisions. If there are animals to hunt, fish and/or watch on the land, the decisions have been good. If there are not huntable, catchable and/or watchable populations of game animals, the resource use decision could be improved. In fact, hunters have a long and well documented history of being the leaders in conservation [5]. It can now be argued that perhaps they have as much to say about economic development as they do about conservation.

REFERENCES

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