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Outdoor Sports:

The Economic Impact of Hunting and Fishing on the United States and Kentucky

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## Introduction

Main stream professional and collegiate sports organizations as well as local sports tournaments have been readily studied for their proposed economic driving forces in their community. However very few studies exist in the professional and peer reviewed journals that document the economic impact that the outdoor sports of hunting and fishing have on the national and local economies. The information provided in this paper was gathered by examining the report released by the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CFS) in February (2007). Their report was created using information from a study conducted by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service in 2006 which was finalized and published in October 2007.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (2006) national survey of fishing, hunting, and wildlife-associated recreation compiles economic data through the U.S. Census Bureau. This survey has been in existence since 1955 and is touted as one of the longest and most complete recreation surveys in existence. The 2006 survey is the eleventh survey to be completed since 1955. The continuity of the survey allows for the comparison of the impact these sports have on the national and state economies over time. The survey for the 2006 study was constructed after consulting with a number of agencies including: the Wildlife Management Institute, and the American Sportfishing Association. Additionally, researchers, shooting sports organizations, fishing organizations, and industry representatives provided information for the construction of the survey instrument. The collection of the data was completed using the U.S. Census Bureau who surveyed 85,000 thousand households across the nation that indicated that they had hunted, fished, or wildlife watched. Once each household was indentified and contacted, the survey was conducted by a one-on-one interview technique. The phone was used as the primary technique for conducting the interview. The survey was completed primarily by one person in each

household whom provided information on other family members whom participated in the activities. A total of 21,938 hunters and fisherman and 11,279 wildlife watchers completed the interviews. The sample sizes were chosen in order to assure that the statistics generated reliable results adhering to scientific protocol.

In order to make sense of the tables, graphs, and figures, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife provided the following definitions in the 2007 survey report.

Sportspersons are those who fished or hunted. Individuals who fished or hunted commercially in 2006 are reported as sportspersons only if they also fished or hunted for recreation. The sportspersons group is composed of three subgroups as shown in the diagram below: (1) those that fished and hunted, (2) those that only fished, and (3) those that only hunted. The total number of sportspersons is equal to the sum of people who only fished, only hunted, and both hunted and fished. It is not the sum of all anglers and all hunters because those people who both fished and hunted are included in both the angler and hunter population and would be incorrectly counted twice.

Anglers are sportspersons who only fished plus those who fished and hunted. Anglers include not only licensed hook and line anglers, but also those who have no license and those who use special methods such as fishing with spears. Three types of fishing are reported: (1) freshwater, excluding the Great Lakes, (2) Great Lakes, and (3) saltwater. Since many anglers participated in more than one type of fishing, the total number of anglers is less than the sum of the three types of fishing.

Hunters are sportspersons who only hunted plus those who hunted and fished. Hunters include not only licensed hunters using rifles and shotguns but also those who had no license, and those who hunted with a bow and arrow, primitive firearm, or pistol

or handgun. Four types of hunting are reported: (1) big game, (2) small game, (3) migratory bird, and (4) other animals. Since many hunters participated in more than one type of hunting, the sum of hunters for big game, small game, migratory bird, and other animals exceeds the total number of hunters.

The 2006 Survey uses a strict definition of wildlife watching. Participants must either take a “special interest” in wildlife around their homes or take a trip for the “primary purpose” of wildlife watching. Secondary wildlife watching, such as incidentally observing wildlife while pleasure driving, is not included. Two types of wildlife watching are reported: (1) away-from-home (formerly nonresidential) activities and (2) around-the-home (formerly residential) activities. Because some people participated in more than one type of wildlife watching, the sum of participants in each type will be greater than the total number of wildlife watchers. The two types of wildlife-watching activity are explained next.

**Away-From-Home Wildlife Watching** This group includes persons who took trips or outings of at least 1 mile from home for the primary purpose of observing, feeding, or photographing fish and wildlife. Trips to fish, hunt, or scout and trips to zoos, circuses, aquariums, and museums are not considered wildlife-watching activities.

**Around-The-Home Wildlife Watching** This group includes those who participated within 1 mile of home and involves one or more of the following: (1) closely observing or trying to identify birds or other wildlife; (2) photographing wildlife; (3) feeding birds or other wildlife; (4) maintaining natural areas of at least 1/4 acre where benefit to wildlife is the primary concern; (5) maintaining plantings (shrubs, agricultural crops, etc.) where benefit to wildlife is the primary concern; or (6) visiting public parks

within 1 mile of home for the primary purpose of observing, feeding, or photographing wildlife (pp. 2-3).

#### Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to provide information regarding the impact that hunting and fishing has on the national economy as well as the economy of the state of Kentucky. The national survey is too expansive to report all the findings in this article. The reader is encouraged to obtain a copy of the report in order to read and come to their own understanding of the findings. This paper will present select findings from the survey at the national and state level in order to put the impact of these sports in some form of perspective for the common reader or citizen of Kentucky. It is hoped that readers of the article will have a better appreciation for the sports of hunting and fishing as an economic driving force for the national and state economies.

#### Selected Report Findings

The following section provides information regarding the national and state of Kentucky facts related to the economic impact of hunters and anglers as reported by the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (2007).

#### National Findings

The report indicates that the 34 million hunters and fisherman across the United States spend \$76 billion dollars per year on their sports. To put this amount of spending into perspective from a business point of view if a single corporation grossed as much as what is spent on hunting and fishing, it would be among the nation's top 20 which would put it ahead of companies such as AT&T, Target, and Costco. This spending supports 1.6 million jobs. To put that number in perspective those 1.6 million jobs are more than the combined civilian jobs within

the armed services of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force. Hunters and anglers generate more than \$25 billion dollars a year in federal, state, and local taxes.

The report states that the ripple effect of the \$76 billion goes much further than the initial spending as gas stations, hotels, and restaurants that directly benefit from sportsmen's spending it creates a multiplier effect that results in \$192 billion dollars per year.

Politicians would be well served to pay particular attention to the findings of the report as it indicated that hunters and fisherman were a substantial voting bloc accounting for 31% of all votes cast in the 2004 presidential election. Eighty percent (80%) of voters are likely to visit the polls and this number far exceeds the national average.

The following are some of the more interesting comparisons of hunting and fishing with select U.S. industries and sports.

- Hunters and anglers spend more than the revenues generated by Microsoft, Google, eBay, and Yahoo combined (76 billion to 73.6 billion).
- If the 76 billion spent each year by sportsmen was a gross domestic product it would rank 57 out of 181 countries.
- Hunters and Anglers outnumber NASCAR fans by more than 2 to 1 and would fill every NASCAR track over 13 times (34 million to 15 million).
- More people hunt or fish than watch the newscasts of the three major news agencies of NBC, CBS, and ABC (34 million to 27 million).
- If we took the tax money generated by hunters and anglers and applied it to paying public servants they could directly pay for 476, 870 teachers, 527, 900 policemen, and 454, 000 firefighters.

- Hunters and anglers spend more on their activities than revenue generated by McDonalds (23 billion to 20 billion).
- If you added up the populations of the two largest cities in America, New York and Los Angeles (12 million people) it would still be less than the number of people who hunt.
- Hunters spend \$1,992 per hunter per year, that's \$24.9 billion pumped into our economy. Where do those billions go? \$2.1 billion goes just into food and drinks consumed on hunting trips. That's enough to feed 360,000 soldiers for a year. Another \$56 million goes towards boat fuel alone, plus \$30 million for boat trailers, motors and accessories. Bow hunters alone spend \$674 million just on their bows and arrows.
- Anglers spend an astounding 1.1 billion dollars each year on bait. This is twice the amount that ski enthusiasts spend on their gear each year (615 million).
- If you compared angling activities with golf you would find that there are 6 million more people willing to cast their line in a fishing hole than hit a hole in one (30 million to 24 million).
- Every year there are more people who go fishing than go to Orlando to visit Disney World (30 million to 16 million).
- Coastal wetlands and fisheries conservation, through the Federal Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Fund receives \$570 million dollars each year from fuel taxes related to fishing.
- Revenues paid by hunters and anglers, through federal excise taxes and license fees, allow states to manage 15.4 million acres of habitat.
- Since 1939 sportsmen have paid \$10 billion dollars, through excise tax and license fees, which provides 80% of the funding for state wildlife and fish agencies.

- The Federal Duck Stamp program has generated more than \$700 million dollars which goes directly to the National Wildlife Refuge system for the preservation of wetlands. To date more than 5 million acres of land have been purchased with these funds.

### State Findings

The state of Kentucky's facts related to outdoor sportsmen who hunt and fish provided the following for consideration. Table 1 provides information related to participation in their chosen outdoor sport using the definitions provided previously. Table 2 provides information related to spending within the areas outlined in the definitions previously mentioned. Table 3 provides employment estimates due to hunting and fishing participation.

Table 1: Kentucky Annual Participation in Selected Outdoor Sports

<b>Category</b>	<b>Participation</b>
Resident Sportsmen	670,000
Resident Anglers	580,000
Resident Hunters	241,000
Out of State Hunters	50,000
Out of State Anglers	141,000
Days Afield	4.8 million
Days on the Water	8.3 million

Table 2: Kentucky Annual Spending on Selected Outdoor Sports

<b>Category</b>	<b>Spending</b>
Sportsmen	\$1.3 billion
Fishing	\$880 million
Hunting	\$439 million



Table 3: Kentucky Jobs Supported by Participation in Hunting &amp; Fishing

<b>Category</b>	<b>Jobs Supported</b>
Sportsmen	23,000
Fishing	14,800
Hunting	8,400

The state of Kentucky's facts related to outdoor sportsmen who hunt and fish provided the following interesting data for consideration.

- Had all the sportsmen who hunted and fished in Kentucky voted in the presidential election in 2004 it would have equaled 56% of the entire vote for the state.
- If you compared the number of jobs created by sportsmen in the state of Kentucky you would discover that they outnumber the total jobs created by the University of Kentucky, Army National Guard, and the Ford Truck Plant combined (23,000 jobs).
- The four fastest growing companies in the state, ISCO Industries, MedAssist, Neace Lukens and Citizens Union Bancorp, combined revenues would still fall short of the annual spending by Kentucky sportsmen (1.29 billion compared to 1.3 billion).
- Kentucky's horse industry, which generates 1.1 billion in spending still is less than the 1.3 billion spent by Kentucky's sportsmen.
- If you took the total populations of Louisville, Owensboro, and Bowling Green, 664,000, they would still not equal the total number of outdoor sportsmen which equals 678,000.

Table 4 presents a summary of the total economic impact that outdoor sportsmen who hunt and fish have in the state of Kentucky.

Table 4: Kentucky Sportsmen's Annual Economic Impact

<b>Category</b>	<b>Impact</b>
Jobs	23,000
Salaries & Wages	\$617 million
Federal Taxes	\$138 million
State and Local Taxes	\$132 million
Ripple Effect	\$2.1 billion

### Conclusion

It is apparent, from the previous information, that outdoor sportsmen have a substantial economic impact both nationally and within the state of Kentucky. While the United States Fish and Wildlife service conducts a study every five years not enough study has been done by individuals within the profession or higher academia. It is suggested that more studies be conducted at the local and state levels in order to provide more precise figures to use in the justification of new services, programs, and land purchases. Furthering the knowledge base about how sportsmen affect economies provides government administrators with hard data that is difficult to ignore. This can be of significant use especially during hard economic times when spending on any type of recreational endeavor comes under very close scrutiny. Providing more economic studies may provide an avenue to combat the dilemma.

References

- Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation. (2007). *Hunting and fishing: Bright stars of the American economy: A force as big as all outdoors* ([http://www.sportsmenslink.org/reports\\_and\\_data/Sportsmens-Economic-Impact.html](http://www.sportsmenslink.org/reports_and_data/Sportsmens-Economic-Impact.html)). Washington, D.C: Author
- U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of Commerce, and U.S. Census Bureau. (2007). *National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation*