

Our Land, Our Water, Our Heritage

AMERICA DEPENDS ON THE LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND

ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF THE LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND

For over 50 years, Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) investments have protected parks and natural areas and funded the development of playgrounds, sports fields, bike paths and hiking trails. This network of public lands provides the foundation of America's strong outdoor recreation-based economy.

According to the Outdoor Industry Association's 2017 National Recreation Economy Report, hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, paddling and other outdoor recreation activities contribute a total of \$887 billion annually to the economy and supports 7.6 million American jobs. This sector generates \$65.3 billion annually in federal tax revenue, as well as \$59.2 billion in annual state and local tax revenue. The Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation has found that each year, 37.4 million Americans aged 16 and older hunt and fish, spending a total of \$90 billion. The larger outdoor recreation, conservation and historic preservation economy, contributes \$1.06 trillion annually, and supports 9.4 million American jobs.

Whether manufacturing, retail or service related, most of these jobs are sustainable resource or tourism-based jobs and cannot be exported. Looking forward, outdoor recreation has the potential to create an additional 100,000 to 200,000 U.S. jobs, again with magnified impacts in local and rural communities.

Federal lands are key to local recreation and tourism industries, and visitors to these areas spend money on food, lodging and equipment; for active outdoor recreation trips, \$243 billion in retail sales created a \$379 billion ripple effect for a total economic contribution of \$622 billion. This ripple effect persists beyond services: for active outdoor recreation gear, \$46 billion in retail sales created a \$62 billion ripple effect for a total economic contribution of \$108 billion. The outdoor industry is one of the most healthy sectors of our economy, even in difficult times.

Beyond recreation, economists have shown that higher-wage services industries are leading the West's job growth and diversifying the economy into high-tech, health care, real estate, and finance and insurance industries. This growth is proven to coincide with a concentration of the land base in federal protected status such as national parks, monuments, wilderness, and other similar designations (in high-protection counties jobs increased by 345% over the last 40 years, while low-protection counties increased employment by 83%). Entrepreneurs and talented workers are choosing to work where they can enjoy outdoor recreation and natural landscapes.

Increasingly, chambers of commerce and economic development associations in every western state are using the region's national parks, monuments, wilderness areas and other public lands as a tool to lure companies to relocate. High-wage services industries also are using the West's national parks, monuments, wilderness areas and other public lands as a tool to recruit and retain innovative, high-performing talent.



Recreation at Fisheating Creek, FL
Credit: Winnie Lo





Recreation at Odell Creek, MT
Credit: Alex Diekmann

In 2015, 443 million recreational visits to Department of the Interior (DOI) managed lands contributed over \$45 billion in economic activity and supported more than 396,000 jobs – many in rural areas. Use of water, timber and other resources produced from Federal lands supported about 405,600 jobs and \$51.4 billion in economic activity in 2015. The \$214 million that DOI spent on land acquisition in 2010 created an estimated \$442 million in economic activity—more than doubling the return on investment-- and about 3,000 jobs.

Land acquisition programs funded by LWCF do not simply add to the federal estate: they include conservation easements that protect working landscapes by allowing ranchers and farmers to stay on their land and continue acting as responsible stewards of open space. LWCF also funds the Forest Legacy Program, which works with timber owners to sustain working forests that provide jobs, forest products and opportunities for recreation, as well as protecting water supplies and important wildlife habitat. The LWCF state grants program further supports America's state park system, which contributes \$20 billion to local and state economies.

LWCF also helps landowners and local banks recover from economic challenges. For many farmers, ranchers and timberland owners, land is their biggest source of equity. In these tough economic times, many landowners are facing the loss of their properties through foreclosure. Working with federal and state land management agencies, the LWCF program provides landowners with another option to preserve their equity and keep iconic working landscapes intact. LWCF can also provide banks with an important option to move foreclosed properties off their balance sheets, strengthening the economic health of local communities.

Even while providing all these public benefits, LWCF is not funded by taxpayer dollars. To keep pace with intense development pressures and growth that threaten the few remaining open spaces we have left in this country, the LWCF Act of 1965 made a commitment to the American public that a small portion of revenues from offshore drilling paid by oil companies would go to conservation and outdoor recreation programs. This continued investment is crucial to maintaining public access and close-to home recreation for all Americans as our population and urban base inexorably grows.

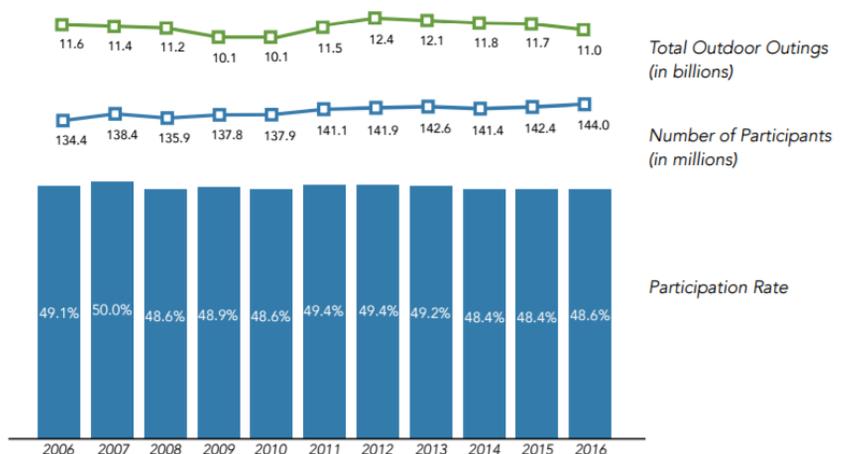


School Group at Congaree NP, SC
Credit: NPS



www.lwcfcoalition.org

Outdoor Participation, 2006 to 2016



Source: Outdoor Industry Association