

News Release

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For Immediate Release

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Outdoor Recreation Means Dollars for State's Economy

New study shows \$21.6 billion in spending

OLYMPIA — Outdoor recreation generates \$21.6 billion a year in spending on trips and equipment in Washington State, a new study prepared for the Legislature shows.

And Washingtonians love to play outside, spending an average of 56 days a year in some form of outdoor recreation.

The [study](#), prepared for the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office by Earth Economics, at the direction of the Legislature led by Sen. Kevin Ranker, D-Orcas Island, is the first comprehensive analysis of the recreation economy in Washington. It offers economic impact data both by geography, by county and by activity.

Highlights include:

- \$21.6 billion is spent every year on outdoor recreation trips and equipment on both public and private land in Washington.
- Nearly 200,000 jobs are supported by outdoor recreation, comparable to the aerospace and tech industries in Washington.
- \$10.4 billion is spent on sightseeing and nature activities including \$7 billion on wildlife watching and photography.
- \$8 billion is spent on activities around water, including fishing, boating, swimming and diving.
- Out-of-state visitors play an important role—accounting for 12 percent of recreation days, but 27 percent of dollars spent on outdoor recreation. Every dollar spent by an out-of-state traveler in Washington generates \$1.36 in economic impacts, resulting in a total of \$4.6 billion in new money circulating in the state's economy.
- The recreation market is one of the largest markets in the state for moving income from urban to rural areas and building jobs in more rural areas.

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“It’s no secret that we live in the most beautiful state in the union and that Washington’s natural splendor is an enormous economic generator,” said Sen. Ranker. “Until now, however, we didn’t fully understand just how powerful an economic force outdoor recreation is. We must not only continue to invest in the protection of our great outdoors, we must support and invest the hundreds of thousands of jobs that depend up it.”

“We’re grateful to Sen. Ranker for his leadership in ensuring that this vital research was done,” said Mo McBroom, director of government relations for The Nature Conservancy in Washington. “He, like many of us, values nature for its own sake, for beauty for wildlife, but also recognizes the importance of capturing the direct economic benefits to our state from its rich natural resources. With champions like Sen. Ranker we are optimistic that this bedrock of our state’s economy and quality of life will be protected for future generations.”

“We’re very excited to share this report,” said Kaleen Cottingham, director of the Recreation and Conservation Office, which commissioned the study. “I think it confirms what many of us know – that recreation is a big part of what makes Washington a great place to live. Outdoor recreation creates hundreds of thousands of jobs, supports many local businesses and is important to all of us for staying healthy, educating our children and giving us a beautiful place to live. This report puts hard numbers behind the benefits of outdoor recreation and shows that investments in outdoor recreation will bring a substantial return on the dollar.”

It also is available online at [Economic Analysis of Outdoor Recreation in Washington State](#). There also is a [fact sheet](#) summarizing the report’s findings and a [brochure](#) on the benefits of outdoor recreation.

This report supports the work of the Governor’s Blue Ribbon Task Force on Parks and Outdoor Recreation, which recommended 12 actions to be taken in the near future to increase participation in outdoor recreation and the resulting social and economic benefits. Read the [task force report](#).

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The Nature Conservancy is a leading conservation organization working around the world to protect the lands and waters on which all life depends. Visit The Nature Conservancy on the Web at www.nature.org/washington.