

## **HUNTING ON THE FRONT**

Along the Rocky Mountain Front, expenditures by hunters have held steady through the most recent recession, making this popular outdoor pursuit a rare bright spot when compared to the struggles of the broader economy.

According to Fish Wildlife and Parks data, hunter expenditures along the Front, over a five year period from 2006 to 2010, have held steady despite the broader economic challenges facing other industries during the recent recession.

In real terms, during 2006, at the peak of the last business cycle, sportsmen hunting along the Rocky Mountain Front spent \$9.8 million; growing to \$10.4 million in 2008 in the middle of the recession; and falling only slightly in 2010 to \$10.1 million.

Using a well vetted formula, Fish Wildlife and Parks conservatively determines the approximate dollar amount spent directly related to hunting opportunities. No other expenditure data from other outdoor activities such as hiking, camping, summer outfitting, or fishing were included in their analysis.

These impressive numbers show that the high quality of the hunting resources on the Rocky Mountain Front is known not only to local residents but also to hunters from across the region and the country. In 2010 alone, Fish Wildlife and Parks measured more than 90,000 hunter days on its districts along the Front.

According to Fish Wildlife and Parks most hunters visit the Rocky Mountain Front for upland game birds, deer, and elk while a smaller number of sportsmen hunted antelope, big horn sheep, moose, and mountain goats. In 2010, sportsmen hunting upland game birds spent more than \$4 million and those hunting deer and elk spent more than \$5 million.

## **OUTDOOR RECREATION**

Montana's fish, wildlife, and habitats annually contribute \$2.5 billion to the state's economy through hunting, fishing, and all forms of outdoor recreation. These activities sustain 34,000 jobs (roughly equal to farming and forestry combined) and generate more than \$118 million in state tax revenue.<sup>i</sup>

Wildlife viewing alone is one of the most popular activities in Montana, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that an astonishing 755,000 Montanans engage in this practice annually. This participation rate brings in significant amounts of local revenue, and USFWS notes that, in 2006, wildlife watching expenditures and economic impacts totaled 9,772 jobs, \$376 million for retail sales, and \$213 million in wages, salaries, and business income.<sup>ii</sup>

Looking at hunting, fishing, and wildlife-viewing on only U.S. Forest Service lands in Montana, another study from 2007 found that these activities generated \$383 million in retail sales and 8,851 jobs.<sup>iii</sup>

To put the economic importance of tourism and recreation for rural communities into context, a study by the Economic Research Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture found that “recreation and tourism development contributes to rural well-being, increasing local employment, wage levels, and income, reducing poverty, and improving education and health.” Job earnings in rural recreation counties, for example, are \$2,000 more per worker than for those in other rural counties.<sup>iv</sup>

### **IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC LANDS:**

Conserving one of Montana’s assets, the Rocky Mountain Front, is a foundation for both economic vibrancy and quality of life. A sustained effort to protect wildlife, increase outdoor recreation, and remove noxious weeds provides direct benefits, including hundreds of jobs in local communities.

Keeping the Rocky Mountain Front the way it is now will provide an immediate return through employment and revenue, while also helping to promote long-term economic growth and development that extends beyond tourism. Conserving lands, for example, helps safeguard and highlight the amenities that attract people and business.<sup>v</sup>

Research published in the *American Journal of Agricultural Economics* also has shown that, nationwide, protected natural amenities—such as pristine scenery and wildlife—help sustain property values and attract new investment.<sup>vi</sup>

The counties in the West with protected public lands, like national recreation areas or Wilderness, have been more successful at attracting fast-growing economic sectors and as a result grow more quickly, on average, than counties without protected public lands.<sup>vii</sup>

### **SUMMARY OF HUNTER EXPENSE BY SPECIES:**

#### **2006 Season**

Deer Hunting	\$1,005,432
Elk Hunting	\$2,960,466
Antelope Hunting	\$ 194,735
Other Big Game	\$ 51,750
Upland Bird Hunting	\$5,609,837
Total	\$9,822,220

#### **2008 Season**

Deer Hunting	\$1,988,818
Elk Hunting	\$3,029,192
Antelope Hunting	\$ 148,960
Other Big Game	\$ 55,047

Upland Bird Hunting	\$4,065,518
Total	\$9,287,535

**2010 Season**

Deer Hunting	\$ 1,933,136
Elk Hunting	\$ 3,097,408
Antelope Hunting	\$ 146,066
Other Big Game	\$ 75,091
Upland Bird Hunting	\$ 4,830,006
Total	\$10,081,707

**SUMMARY OF R and NR HUNTER DAYS AND DIRECT EXPENDITURES:**

**2006 Season**

	Hunter Days			Direct Expenditures
Residents	86,276			\$ 5,240,414
Non-residents	12,621			\$ 4,362,659

**2008 Season**

	Hunter Days			Direct Expenditures
Residents	89,028			\$ 5,741,679
Non-residents	15,931			\$ 4,535,079

**2010 Season**

	Hunter Days			Direct Expenditures
Residents	75,906			\$ 5,169,788
Non-residents	14,412			\$ 4,749,847

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<sup>i</sup> The habitat employment and taxation statistics from this paragraph all come from Outdoor Industry Foundation. (2006). “The Active Outdoor Recreation Economy: A \$730 Billion Annual Contribution to the U.S. Economy.” The farm and forestry information comes from the U.S. Department of Commerce. 2011. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Regional Economic Information System, Washington, D.C. Table CA25N.

<sup>ii</sup> U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (2008). “Wildlife Watching in the U.S.: The Economic Impacts on National and State Economies in 2006.” Washington, D.C.

<sup>iii</sup> American Sportfishing Association (2007), “State and National Economic Effects of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Related Recreation on U.S. Forest Service-Managed Lands.” Prepared for the U.S. Forest Service, Washington, D.C.

<sup>iv</sup> The information for this paragraph comes from Reeder, R.J., D.M. Brown (2005). “Recreation, Tourism, and Rural Well-Being.” Economic Research Service. U.S. Department of Agriculture. Washington, D.C.

<sup>v</sup> Lorah, P. R. Southwick, et al. (2003). Environmental Protection, Population Change, and Economic Development in the Rural Western United States. *Population and Environment* 24(3): 255-272; McGranahan, D. A. 1999. Natural Amenities Drive Rural Population Change. E. R. S. U.S. Department of Agriculture. Washington, D.C.

<sup>vi</sup> Deller, S. C., T.-H. Tsai, et al. (2001). “The Role of Amenities and Quality of Life in Rural Economic Growth.” *American Journal of Agricultural Economics* 83(2): 352-365.

<sup>vii</sup> Rasker, R. (2006). An exploration into the economic impact of industrial development versus conservation on western public lands. *Society & Natural Resources*, 19(3), 191–207.