

2012 Pennsylvania Recreational Water Trails Economic Impact Study

- The Pennsylvania Water Trails Partnership is a partnership between the PADCNR, PFBC, NPS – Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network, NPS – Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program and the Pennsylvania Environmental Council. The PWTP cultivates the development and designation of water trails in PA.
- On behalf of the PA Water Trails Partnership, PEC worked with Senator John Pippy to introduce Senate Resolution 143, which directs the Legislative Budget & Finance Committee to study the economic impact of recreational water trails on local communities in the Commonwealth.
- This is also included as one of the recommendations of the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (2009-2013) to, “Conduct an economic impact analysis to benchmark the economic impact of water trails.” This information will improve our efforts to increase water trail development in the Commonwealth and to maintain our position as a national leader in water trail development.
- The Legislative Budget & Finance Committee, in collaboration with the Pennsylvania Water Trails Partnership, contracted with ICF International to conduct a 4-trail case study of the economic impact of Pennsylvania’s water trails on the state economy. Four of the state’s 22 water trails were selected for the study: the Schuylkill, Susquehanna—North Branch, Juniata, and Three Rivers. The study was conducted from the end of July to September 2012.
- The goals of the study were:
 - Use the 2012 PA Water Trails Economic Impact Study to understand more about the economic impact of the Commonwealth’s 22 water trails on the state economy.
 - Estimate and gain a better understanding of the direct, indirect, and induced economic impacts of expenditures by water trail visitors.
- Over 40 days, ICF collected 352 interviews. The survey captured important information about visitor trip characteristics, trip expenditures, and knowledge of water trails.

Key study findings:

- There were approximately 3,530 visitors to Pennsylvania’s four surveyed water trails during the six-week sampling period. Approximately 38 percent were first-time visitors.
- Almost 40 percent cited fishing as their principle reason for visiting. Anglers overlapped with other visitor categories as well. Over 70 percent of visitors cited their reason for visiting as fishing, canoeing, kayaking, or paddling, or motor boating. Nearly 30 percent cited other tourism activities as their reason for visiting the water trails. Among those reasons were picnicking, relaxing, enjoying the river scenery, photographing, and watching wildlife.

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- Visitors reported spending the most days per year (approximately 17.8 days) on average, fishing.
- The total economic output generated by all visitors to the four surveyed water trails over a six-week period was \$731,000.
- The total Gross State Product (GSP) generated by all visitors during the six week period was \$593,000.
- The total employment generated from the impact of the water trail visitors over the six-week period was 11 full-time, year-round jobs.
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- Respondents reported spending the most days per year, approximately 17.8 days on average, fishing.

November 2, 2012