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“Quiet recreation” on Washington’s BLM lands generates millions of dollars, supports jobs

Communities near Washington landscapes managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) benefited from millions of dollars in spending in 2014 as the result of visitors who came to enjoy non-motorized recreation, such as hiking, hunting, and camping, according to a new study by the independent firm ECONorthwest. “[Quiet Recreation on BLM-Managed Lands: Economic Contribution 2014](#),” is the first-ever study focused entirely on the economic contribution of non-motorized recreation visitors on these lands.

“This study is significant because it is the first ever to quantify both the amount of quiet recreation and the spending associated with quiet recreation specifically on BLM lands,” said ECONorthwest’s Kristin Lee, who led the research. “We found that the majority of visitors to BLM lands enjoyed non-motorized recreation; in the process, they spent \$1.8 billion in the economies of local communities – which resulted in \$2.8 billion of economic output at the national level. This study shows that in addition to providing non-motorized recreational opportunities enjoyed by millions of people, these lands also provide local economic opportunities and contribute billions of dollars to the U.S. economy.”

The 413,000 quiet recreation visits to Washington’s BLM lands generated \$18 million in direct spending within 50 miles of the recreation sites. These dollars then circulated through the state economy, resulting in \$22 million in employees’ salaries, wages and benefits. View the [attached one page summary of the Washington State economic numbers](#) from the study.

“Our customers and employees are active outdoors people. They climb, hike, fish and hunt on our public lands. The easy access and close proximity of federal lands is essential to our ability to engage in these activities and be a successful company.” said Paul Fish, President and CEO of Mountain Gear, based in Spokane, WA. “This study is the latest evidence that outdoor recreation is not only a key reason why we call Washington State home but that it also fuels our local economies.”

Washington State recognizes that outdoor recreation is a foundation of our state’s quality of life, an economic engine and a gateway to active and healthy living. That is why in December 2015 Washington became just the third state in the nation to establish a dedicated outdoor recreation position in the Governor’s office.

“I am proud to have championed legislation that acknowledges the incredible economic driver that is outdoor recreation in Washington State,” said Washington State Senator Kevin Ranker, who introduced legislation that created a permanent Policy Advisor to the Governor focused on outdoor recreation and fully funded “No Child Left Inside” which hires veterans to get more

children outside. “The economic benefits and jobs associated with outdoor recreation in our state are major. Combined with jobs for veterans and thousands more children outside, this is simply as good as it gets.”

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manages more than 422,000 acres of land in Washington State, including conservation gems like the Juniper Dunes Wilderness, San Juan Islands National Monument and Chopaka Mountain Wilderness Study Area. They also manage more than 25 recreation sites, mostly in eastern Washington, including the Yakima River Canyon, Escure Ranch, Coffee Pot Lake, Palmer Mountain and Douglas and Duffy Creek.

“While many of us know about the economic impacts from our local national parks and national forests, this study shows that BLM lands are also a powerful economic resource” said Tom Uniack, Executive Director for Washington Wild. “This summer will be an important opportunity to support additional protections for these unheralded landscapes in the BLM’s draft Resource Management Plan for eastern Washington.”

A draft Resource Management Plan is expected to be released for public comment as early as June of this year. The plan will look at how to balance recreational and conservation opportunities with other activities like grazing, mining and energy development.

BACKGROUND

Researchers calculated the local economic contribution (jobs and income) generated by spending visitors who engaged in “quiet” recreation on BLM lands in 11 Western states—Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming—and Alaska. They based their calculations on 2014 visitation data from the BLM and spending data from the National Visitor Use Monitoring program. The study was commissioned by The Pew Charitable Trusts. Other reports have examined the economic impact of non-motorized recreation across the nation, but have not considered the contributions of visitors engaged in these activities on BLM lands alone.