

# Economic Impact of Local Parks, Recreation and Open Space in Pennsylvania

## National Economic Engine



The economic impact of parks, recreation and open space is substantial. Spending by recreationists provide direct earnings, jobs and tax revenues.

In 2017, The Outdoor Industry Association (OIA) released an economic impact report for outdoor recreation that demonstrates how big of an industry outdoor recreation is in this country.

The study found that outdoor recreation provides 7.6 million direct American jobs, \$887 billion in direct consumer spending each year, \$65.3 billion in federal tax revenue, and \$59.2 billion in state/local tax revenue.

## State Economic Engine

Local parks, open space and trails provide close-to-home recreation that fuels the local economy.

In 2017, Pennsylvania ranked 5<sup>th</sup> in the nation for spending on outdoor recreation. The OIA went on to report that 56% of Pennsylvania residents participate in outdoor recreation each year.

Communities across Pennsylvania recognize that outdoor recreation supports, contributes to a high quality of life and—perhaps most importantly—attracts and sustains employers and families. Investing in outdoor infrastructure attracts employers and active workforces, ensuring those communities thrive economically and socially.

## Value of Recreation in PA

The Outdoor Industry Association examined the impact of spending on outdoor recreation in 2017. Outdoor recreation is an enormous industry in Pennsylvania and nationally.

In Pennsylvania, outdoor recreation generates \$29.1 billion in consumer spending, \$1.9 billion in state and local tax revenue, \$8.6 billion in wages and salaries, and sustains 251,000 direct Pennsylvania jobs.

## Economic Benefits of Natural Systems in Pennsylvania

There have been many return on environment (ROE) studies analyzing counties across Pennsylvania and each study reports the same findings, a healthy environment will provide economic benefits for the community. A firm understanding of the services that our natural systems provide can help to guide policy makers, businesses and residents alike in finding a balance between growth and environmental and economic sustainability.

The Keystone Conservation Trust states that nature's values can be expressed as avoided costs, revenues, or premiums for real estate value based on proximity to open space.

Of the many ROE studies conducted, the Keystone Conservation Trust looked at six counties in Pennsylvania – Berks, Cumberland, Lehigh, Northampton, Monroe and Dauphin and the results of these studies found that the average county ROE financial benefit was over \$1 billion.



Following the Lehigh Valley's 2014 Return of Environment Study, Northampton County Commissioners added \$2.2 million to their 2015 open space budget proving the worth and effectiveness of studies of this nature.

## Regional & Heritage Tourism

Since 1989, Pennsylvania Heritage Areas have been created to preserve the rich, unique history and heritage in Pennsylvania. In 2014, Pennsylvania's 12 heritage areas supported 7.5 million visitor days/nights that purchased \$2 billion worth of goods and supported 25,708 jobs.

In 2013, a study of the combined annual economic benefits of the Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area and Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Area was completed and documented the following:

- Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor
  - Economic Benefit - \$238,667,237
  - Employment - 3,323 jobs
  - Tax Revenue - \$22,407,779
- Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area
  - Economic Benefit - \$69,441,323
  - Employment - 901 jobs
  - Tax Revenue - \$6,047,217



## Return on Investment for Pittsburgh Riverfront Park

In 2015, Riverlife contracted Sasaki Associates to analyze the economic benefits of Three Rivers Park in Pittsburgh. The park stretches 13 miles through downtown Pittsburgh's riverfront park system.

- The \$130 million invested in the Three Rivers Park over the past 15 years helped to catalyze nearly \$2.6 billion in riverfront development activity, and nearly \$4.1 billion in total riverfront and adjacent development.
- Solely analyzing the \$2.6 billion riverfront yield, the ratio between park investment and riverfront development is 20:1.
- Since 2001, the property value within the vicinity of riverfront investment projects has risen 60% compared to the 32% rise in citywide property value outside the riverfront investment. Similarly, the historically underdeveloped South Side area of riverfront property has seen property values increase by 117% since 2001.

## Economic Return on Keystone Funded Projects

Communities across all 67 counties benefit from thousands of capital projects – long-lasting investments in Pennsylvania and Pennsylvanians. The Keystone Recreation, Park, and Conservation Fund was set up in 1993 to have a dedicated funding source for recreation, parks, conservation, libraries, historic preservation, and education.

- \$3.31 leveraged in direct local investments in our parks, trails, and natural space for every Keystone Fund dollar spent
- \$1.02 billion leveraged through public/private partnerships to complete over 4,500 Keystone-funded projects

- 800+ projects have been funded specifically in small communities to help improve outdoor recreation opportunities
- Every \$1 invested in conservation through the Keystone Fund returns \$7 in flood control and prevention, water treatment, and other natural services. These returns are above and beyond the jobs, tourism, improved tax base, and other economic benefits generated by the Keystone Fund investments

## Value of Trails in PA

The Rails to Trails Conservancy conducted an economic impact study for the Three Rivers Heritage Trail in 2014. This trail runs for 24 miles along the banks of the Allegheny, Monongahela, and Ohio rivers.

The study documents how trails have become economic engines and have spurred the rebirth of communities along their path. The study found and documented:

- Trail users spent an average of \$1,842,228 on durable goods such as bikes, bike equipment, running shoes, strollers, etc.
- Trail users spent an average of \$5,866,660 on consumable goods such as water, snacks, lunch, etc.
- On average, trail users spent \$577,078 on overnight accommodations and stayed for 2.7 nights.
- Annual visitation was 622,873 and total economic impact was \$8.3 million

Other trails such as the 150-mile Great Allegheny Passage in southwestern Pennsylvania are also great economic engines generating more than \$40 million in revenue each year, while the 270-mile Erie to Pittsburgh Trail attracts more than 160,000 users, contributing \$7.5 million annually to local economies.



### More Information

For more information on contact:  
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