

News Release



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Preliminary Data Shows Americans Spent \$120 billion on Wildlife Related Recreation in 2006

America's passion for wildlife and the outdoors continues to be a major engine of the nation's economy, according to preliminary survey data released by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

In 2006, more than 87 million Americans, or 38 percent of the United States' population age 16 and older hunted, fished or observed wildlife. They spent \$120 billion that year pursuing those activities – an amount roughly equal to Americans' total spending at all spectator sports, casinos, motion pictures, golf courses and country clubs, amusement parks and arcades combined.

“This very important survey shows in real economic and participatory terms the impact that wildlife has on the nation's economy, but simply talking about dollars and cents doesn't fully capture the importance of wildlife to our nation. Wildlife related recreation rejuvenates our spirit and gets us outside pursuing healthy activities,” said U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director H. Dale Hall at the Outdoor Writer Association of America's annual conference in Roanoke, Va. “Americans should be proud that the outdoor tradition continues to be such a prevalent part of our lives.”

Preliminary data from the 2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation shows the importance of wildlife-related recreation to the American people. Of all Americans age 16 or older,

- 30 million or 13 percent fished and spent \$41 billion on their activities,
- 12.5 million or 5 percent hunted and spent \$23 billion, and
- 71 million or 31 percent observed wildlife and spent \$45 billion.

The National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation has been conducted every 5 years since 1955 and is one of the nation's most important wildlife

recreation databases. It is considered to be the definitive source of information concerning participation and expenditures associated with hunting, fishing and other forms of wildlife recreation nationwide.

The Survey is conducted at the request of State fish and wildlife agencies and is funded by grants from the Multistate Conservation Grant Program. A wide range of individuals and groups depend on the Survey to analyze participation rates, economic impacts of expenditures, demographic characteristics, and trends in participation and activities.

“This expenditure of \$120 billion highlights the benefits of these activities on national and state economies,” said Survey economist Jerry Leonard. “It is roughly equivalent to one out of every one hundred dollars of goods and services produced in our economy. And much of this activity occurs in places which rely significantly on wildlife-related recreation expenditures for their economic well being.”

After losing ground in the early 1990s, wildlife-related activities such as bird watching and photography increased 13 percent over the last decade. In 1996, 62.9 million Americans observed wildlife; 66.1 million did so in 2001, and 71.1 million in 2006. Wildlife watchers spending increased 19 percent, from \$37.5 billion in 1996, \$43.7 billion in 2001 to \$44.7 billion last year.

The preliminary data shows decreases in both angling and hunting participation from 1996 to 2006. In 1996, 35.2 million anglers fished compared to 34.1 million in 2001 and 30.0 million in 2006, representing a 15 percent decline in participation of the ten year span.

“Participation levels in 2006 were likely reduced due to several factors: higher gas prices, hurricanes, the increasing age of baby boomers, and continuing urbanization,” said Leonard.

Anglers spent \$40.6 billion last year, which is similar to 2001 but 16 percent lower than 1996. While overall spending—including trips, fishing equipment, special equipment, and other related items—was flat from 2001 to 2006, spending on fishing equipment such as rods and reels and travel-related items such as food and lodging were up.

For hunting, there was a 10 percent decline in participation from 1996 to 2006. In 1996, 14.0 million Americans hunted compared to 13.0 million in 2001 and 12.5 million in 2006. Hunters spent \$22.7 billion last year, 3 percent lower than 2001 and 14 percent lower than 1996. Similar to fishing, while overall spending was down, expenditures on hunting equipment such as rifles and ammunition were up 3 percent since 2001.

It is important to note that the National Survey is a snapshot for the specific year in which it is conducted and does not necessarily represent the total number of anglers, hunters, and wildlife watchers in the U.S. because they do not consistently participate every year. For example, examination of survey data shows that over the five year period from 2002 to 2006, cumulatively over 44.4 million fished and 18.6 million hunted. However, this

information serves as a valuable tool to gauge general trends in the participation of Americans in wildlife related activities and related expenditures.

The report is available at <http://library.fws.gov/nat_survey2006.pdf>.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 97-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 547 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

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