

**More than twenty years** of studies in Pennsylvania and throughout the U.S. unequivocally show that parks, greenways, public forests and other protected natural lands can boost property values, improve local economies, attract and support businesses, save energy and water-treatment costs, and safeguard the natural systems on which our economic well-being depends.

## Parks and Forests Boost Land Values

Study after study shows that people value living next to parks and protected forestlands. In suburban areas where open space is limited, land values adjacent to permanently protected lands are higher, and in some cases up to 35% more. Higher land values, in turn, translate into higher property taxes for the municipality.<sup>1</sup>

## State Parks and Forests are an Economic Engine for Local and State Economy

A recent study of the economic impact of PA's State Parks was conducted by the Penn State University Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Management. Their study concluded that in 2008:

- PA State Parks hosted 33.6 million visitors who directly spent \$738 million on their trips — an average of \$22 per person per visit.
- This spending supported 10,551 jobs contributing \$291.4 million in labor income, resulting in \$464.7 million in value-added effects.
- For every tax-payer dollar invested in State Parks, \$7.62 of income (value added) is returned to Pennsylvania.<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, a study of New Jersey state parks and forests estimated that visitors spent an average of \$21 per visit,<sup>3</sup> and visitors to North Carolina state parks spend an average of \$24 per day.<sup>4</sup>

In 1995, U.S. Forest Service economists found that of the \$125 billion generated annually from forest service lands, 75 percent was from recreation.<sup>5</sup>



Photo: Paul Zeph

Visitors to most state parks and forests provide significant support for small businesses such as this bait, tackle and general camping supply store next to Gifford Pinchot State Park in York County. Hundreds of local grocery stores, boat stores, motels, gas stations and ice cream parlors depend upon state park visitors spending that supports more than 10,000 jobs and adds hundreds of millions of dollars to Pennsylvania's economy.

The 2006 national survey on recreation by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that residents and visitors to Pennsylvania spent more than \$5.4 million per year on hunting, fishing and wildlife watching alone — much of which takes place on state forest or state park lands.<sup>6</sup>

## State Parks and Forests Boost Local Economies by Attracting Businesses and Residents

People desire to live in communities with outdoor recreation amenities. Workers are making job choices based on quality of life factors, and studies show that people rank parks, recreation, and open space amenities as the most important quality-of-life factors.

Even retirees are showing that available recreation opportunities are a primary factor in their choice of retirement location.<sup>7</sup>

*For every tax-payer dollar  
invested in State Parks,  
\$7.62 of income (value added)  
is returned to Pennsylvania.*

Pennsylvania's state forests generate millions of dollars in revenue to local economies from in and out-of-state visitors. With more than 3,000 miles of trails, outdoor enthusiasts find endless opportunities for hiking, cross-country skiing, mountain biking, horseback riding, snowmobiling and ATV riding. Many of the best hunting grounds, finest fishing streams and grandest views in the state are found throughout the state forests. Most state forests also have one or more picnic areas equipped with tables, fire rings, and parking.



Photo courtesy of DCNR.

Pine Creek Gorge in Tioga State Forest

In a recent study on visitor use of state forests in north-central Pennsylvania, visitors responded that: 95% of them purchased gasoline and oil, 85% purchased food and drinks at local restaurants and bars, 69% purchased other food and beverages, and 45% used local overnight accommodations.<sup>8</sup>

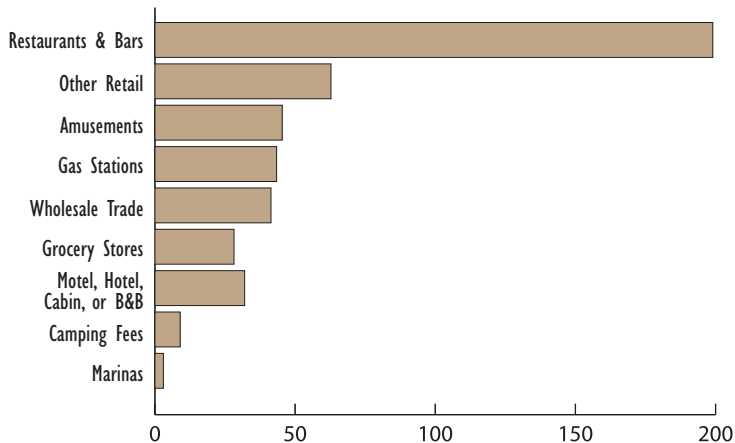
In addition to recreation revenue, the state forests grow some of the world's most valuable hardwood timber. This helps to support the state's sale of forest products exceeding a state economic impact of \$27 billion, employing more than 80,000 people.

## Studies Show Economic Benefits to Tourism

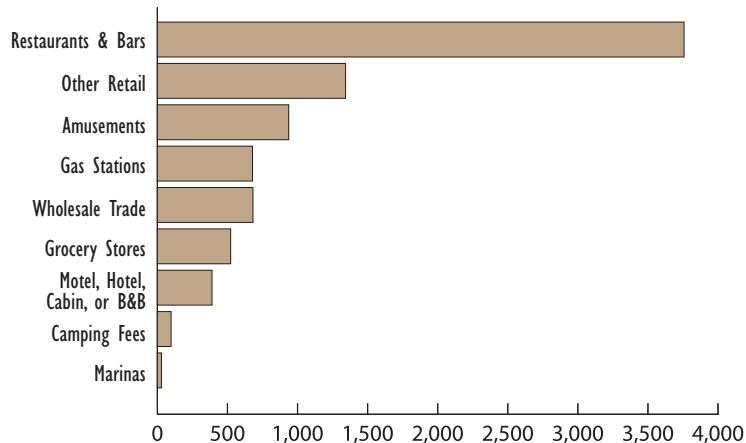
State parks and forests are key items in most visitor and convention bureau publications as major attractions. According to DK Shifflet and Associates in the *2001 Pennsylvania Year End Report*, visiting state and national parks ranked among the top five reasons to travel in Pennsylvania. This study also found that the average daily expenditure per person for leisure travel in 2001 was \$79.

In the *1999 Pennsylvania Outdoor Travelers Profile and Activities Analysis*, it was found that about one in five of Pennsylvania's leisure tourists travel for the primary purpose of outdoor recreation, and that outdoor recreation was the fastest growing segment of tourism. Direct expenditures for outdoor recreation in 1997 were \$4.03 billion, or 33% of Pennsylvania's leisure travel spending. The study went on to find that outdoor travelers spend about 35% more per trip than the average traveler.

Annual Sales by State Park Visitors (in \$ millions)



Total Jobs Created Annually by State Park Visitor Spending



Graphs developed with data from *The Economic Significance and Impact of Pennsylvania State Parks: An Assessment of Visitor Spending on the State and Regional Economy*, Penn State University, Dept of Recreation, Park and Tourism Management, 2010.

### Notes:

- 1, 5, 7. For specific studies, see *Conservation: An Investment That Pays— The Economic Benefits of Parks and Open Space*, Trust for Public Land, 2009.
2. *The Economic Significance and Impact of Pennsylvania State Parks: An Assessment of Visitor Spending on the State and Regional Economy*, Penn State University, Dept of Recreation, Park and Tourism Management, 2010.
3. *The Economic Value of New Jersey State Parks and Forests*, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, 2004 and revised 2006.
4. *Economic Contributions of visitors to Selected North Carolina State Parks*, North Carolina state University, 2008.
6. 2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, 2007.
8. *Recreation on the Tiadaghton and Tioga State Forests: A Survey of User Characteristics, Behaviors, and Attitudes* by: Alan R. Graefe, Harry C. Zinn, Elizabeth A. Covelli, Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Management The Pennsylvania State University and Donald B. K. English USDA Forest Service; 2008.