



Report points to positive economic impacts of fishing

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By Earl Bolender

Southern Siskiyou County business owners agree in concept with a report published earlier this month that details the importance of recreational fishing to the local economy.

Released Jan. 10 by California Trout, the report says recreational fishing in California is responsible for reeling in more than \$2 billion annually.

Written by Carolyn Alkire of Environmental Economics and Policy Consulting, the report details fishing activities in northern, central and southern California.

Referencing various sources including the California State Lands Commission, U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the California State Lands Commission, the report states that, after its beaches, California's rivers "draw more users than any other location, with fishing the most popular of all river recreational uses."

Results of the most recent National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife Associated Recreation show that in 2006, 1.7 million people fished in California with over three- fourths of these being freshwater anglers, it states.

The report also indicates that the state's visitors guide highlights the Shasta-Cascade region "as home to some of California's best fly fishing for salmon, trout and steelhead."

Local businesses and guides concur with the results of report, saying that anglers from locations such as the San Francisco Bay Area and southern California make the trek to the southern Siskiyou county each year during the summer to fish the area's pristine waters including the Upper Sacramento and McCloud rivers.

"Because we're such a small community, it's hard to put a value in economic dollars," Dunsmuir's Ted Fay Fly Shop owner Bob Grace said of the report's findings that show anglers s, owner of Ted Fay Fly Shop in Dunsmuir. "But, a lot

of visitors come up here to fish and they stop in my store to buy their supplies. Obviously, there are more people during the summer than in the winter, but we do get those people who are willing to brave the winter to fish.”

Darlene Mathis, owner of McCloud Mercantile in the historic lumber town of McCloud, said fishing has a major impact on the community's economy.

“A lot of them stay in the hotel upstairs and buy their fishing supplies in the store,” she said. “They also stay in other hotels and motels and the local campgrounds. They fish the McCloud River and spend their money in the community.

“We get a large selection of both fly and bait anglers,” she said. “Fishing is a very big deal in McCloud and the McCloud River.”

Louie Dewey, owner of Cave Springs Resort in Dunsmuir, said out-of-area anglers have a major impact on the local economy.

“I can say that fishing is directly responsible for 70 percent of my business; it's everything,” he said. “If it has that much of an impact on my business, I'm sure it also benefits other business in the area. People come up here to fish. They stay in our motels, eat at our restaurants and shop at our stores.”

Dunsmuir Rod Company owner Chris Raine, who was instrumental in getting year round fishing approved for the Upper Sacramento River, agrees that recreational fishing does bring people to the area. However, he said he is not sure how much of an impact it actually has on the local economy.

“I certainly think it's a viable resource,” Raine said. “It brings people up here who spend quite a bit of money. But, I really think having a more complex economic business would be better for us.”

He said he feels the current cost of fuel is a factor in someone's decision to drive to Siskiyou County as opposed to going elsewhere.

“I think with gas prices, that someone driving an SUV from the Bay Area could probably buy a couple of airplane tickets to Montana or Colorado, which are also known for their fishing opportunities,” Raine said.

Curtis Knight, Cal Trout's Mount Shasta area manager, said the report is a clear statement of the impact fishing actually has on the local economy.

“It has specifics and shows how valuable our natural resources are,” Knight said. “Just ask local motel and restaurant owners how valuable fishing is to the economy.

“I think one of the things the report underlines is that we need to be careful and ensure that we protect and maintain our watershed and habitat that makes fishing possible. We need to preserve what we have for the future.”

The complete report is available at www.caltrout.org.