



National Park Service

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – December 8, 2008

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Visitor spending in national parks means green to local economies

WASHINGTON – Whether stunning landscapes or the historic and cultural sites that trace man’s impact on the land and each other – America’s national parks mean many things to many people. For those living in the hundreds of nearby communities, national parks also represent healthy contributions to local economies.

“Every tax dollar spent on national parks resulted in more than \$4 in visitor spending in communities within 50 miles of a national park site,” said National Park Service Director Mary A. Bomar. “Our total budget, including taxpayer financing through Congressional appropriations, park entry and camping fees, and donations, came to \$2.65 billion in 2007. Visitors that same year spent \$11.79 billion – mostly in travel, food, lodging and souvenirs – in national parks and nearby communities.”



Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore

According to Bomar, 275.6 million people visited national parks in 2007. “Most of them needed a place to stay overnight. They all needed meals each day and most of them bought something to take home and remind them of their experience. When you add that up you get a sense of the economic impact national parks have across the country – and it’s significant,” she said.

The analysis of visitor spending habits in 2007 was completed by the National Park Service’s Social Science Division. Michigan State University economist Daniel Stynes, who worked on the study, said it’s too early to tell what visitor spending will look like for the just-completed 2008 travel and vacation season.

Bomar said preliminary 2008 visitation numbers make her optimistic that visitor spending for 2008 will be equal to or slightly higher than 2007. In spite of \$4 per gallon prices for gasoline during the peak summer travel period, national park visitation was only off by about one-half of one percent for the first 11 months of 2008 compared to the same period in 2007.

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A look at visitor spending

Two-thirds of all overnight stays by park visitors were in motels, lodges, or B&B's outside the park, another 19 percent are in campgrounds outside the park, and 12 percent are inside the park in National Park Service campgrounds, lodges, or backcountry sites.

Visitors staying outside the park in motels, hotels, cabins and bed and breakfast accommodations accounted for 55 percent of total visitor spending. More than half of the spending was for lodging and meals, 16 percent for gas and local transportation, and 14 percent for souvenirs. Local economic impacts were estimated after excluding spending by visitors from the local area (9.5% of the total). Combining local impacts across all parks yielded a total impact, including direct and secondary effects, of 209,000 jobs, \$4.5 billion in labor income, and \$7 billion value added. The four economic sectors most directly affected by visitor spending were lodging, restaurants, retail trade, and amusements. Visitor spending supported roughly 56,000 jobs in each of the hotel and restaurant sectors, and over 22,000 jobs each in the retail trade and the amusements sectors.

Direct effects of visitor spending cover businesses selling goods and services directly to park visitors. Secondary effects include indirect and induced effects resulting from sales to local businesses for resale to visitors, and household spending of income earned directly or indirectly from visitor spending.

Direct effects of visitor spending in 2007 were \$9.6 billion in sales, \$3.7 billion in labor income, \$5.4 billion in value added, and 188,000 jobs.

Stynes said the combined effects of visitor spending meant 244,400 jobs in gateway communities, including 23,583 National Park Service jobs.

The economic impact of just the \$1.44 billion National Park Service payroll was \$1.8 billion in labor income and 35,000 total jobs including the National Park Service jobs. For every two National Park Service jobs, Stynes said another job is supported through the induced effects of employee spending in the local region.

There are additional local economic effects from National Park Service purchases of goods and services from local suppliers and from construction activity but those impacts were not estimated for this report.

The full report, *National Park Spending and Payroll Impacts for CY 2007* is available in PDF at:
http://www.nature.nps.gov/socialscience/pdf/MGM2_CY07.pdf

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