National Treasures as Economic Engines
The Economic Impact of Visitor Spending in California’s National Parks

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Yosemite Bug Lodge & Hostel
Yosemite Guides
Yosemite Mariposa KOA
Yucca Valley Town Council Member

The Central California Hispanic Chamber of Commerce recognizes the importance the national parks within our region play in the vitality and sustainability of our economy.

Lorena Martinez, Executive Director
Central California Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
Fresno, California

Protecting Parks for Future Generations®
The Economic Impact of Visitor Spending in California’s National Parks

With the establishment of Yellowstone in 1872, America’s national parks have protected our most fragile natural and cultural landscapes and provided opportunities for adventure, inspiration, relaxation, and education. The national parks have also served as tremendous economic engines, supporting businesses and jobs in neighboring communities that have come to depend upon the viability of the parks.

In 2001, the 280 million people who visited the 388 sites within the National Park System spent $10.6 billion during their park visits. This spending generated $4.5 billion in wages, salaries, and payroll benefits, and 267,000 jobs in tourism-related businesses.

California boasts 23 national park sites that protect millions of acres of significant cultural, historical, and natural landscapes and welcome millions of visitors annually.

This report examines the economic impact of visitor spending in ten national park sites in California: Death Valley National Park, Joshua Tree National Park, Lassen Volcanic National Park, Mojave National Preserve, Pinnacles National Monument, Point Reyes National Seashore, Redwood National Park, Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, Sequoia-Kings Canyon national parks, and Yosemite National Park. These parks were chosen for analysis because of their geographic diversity within the state and economic relevance.

Visitors to these ten California parks in 2001 spent $643 million in the surrounding communities, supporting nearly 16,900 non-National Park Service jobs and generating more than $266 million worth of wages, salaries, and payroll benefits (see chart).

This significant financial influence cannot be dismissed and reinforces the need to adequately protect the national parks, both to preserve these naturally significant places for generations to come and to maintain their important role in our state and national economies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Park Site</th>
<th>Total Recreation Visits</th>
<th>Total Spending</th>
<th>Spending Per Party Per Night</th>
<th>Personal Income Generated</th>
<th>Total Jobs Created</th>
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<td>$118,520,000</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td><strong>11,056,276</strong></td>
<td><strong>$643,250,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>$100</strong></td>
<td><strong>$266,600,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>16,866</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Total recreation visits are reduced by 15% to adjust for double counting of visitors who visit both national parks on the same trip.
Estimating Economic Impact

The Money Generator Model 2 (MGM2) used in this report was designed by Michigan State University in June 2000 to measure the contribution of visitor spending in the region surrounding a national park. By focusing on visitor spending data, MGM2 is able to increase the integrity of its findings by providing a conservative estimate of the contribution of parks to their regional economies.

The MGM2 measures the benefits of visitor spending through two principal elements of economic activity: personal income and employment. Personal income includes wage and salary income and employee benefits. Employment refers to the number of jobs in a region supported by the visitor spending in a particular park, including part time and seasonal positions, but not including the National Park Service employees who work in the park.

Parameters describing park visitors, including their spending patterns, are based on recent visitor surveys. Impact estimates for 2001 assume that most parameters did not change between 2000 and 2001. As per the research of MGM2 developers Daniel Stynes and Dennis Propst, it can be assumed that many of the model parameters remain reasonably stable for at least three to five years.

Economic impacts are estimated by applying the visitor spending information to a set of economic ratios and multipliers for each park. These multipliers are based on economic input-output models developed for the region around the park. Spending per party per night refers to the amount of money spent by an average-size group of visitors in or around a park in one night. The model also accounts for lower spending by local day visitors.

Despite the fact that measurements of visitor spending do not capture the full economic contribution of a park to the surrounding areas (e.g., it does not account for a park’s operating budget or associated expenditures), this tip-of-the-iceberg approach to approximating economic impact allows for conservative, reliable estimates. Other economic benefits of national parks to local communities not addressed by this report include construction activities, park operations, including payroll, purchases of goods and services from local suppliers, and economic development induced by the presence of the park.

For more information on the methodology of this model, please visit www.prr.msu.edu/mgm2

The findings of this report give further merit to the importance of protecting our national treasures. Our nation should ensure adequate investment in park protection.

Courtney Cuff
Pacific Regional Director
National Parks
Conservation Association
Death Valley National Park was proclaimed a national monument in 1933. The California Desert Protection Act of 1994 recognized the natural beauty and scientific importance of Death Valley by re-designating it as a national park and expanding it to 3.4 million acres—the largest national park outside of Alaska.

A region of unrivaled desert scenery with shimmering salt flats, shifting dunes, and rugged peaks over 11,000 feet, Death Valley National Park protects 38 reptile species, more than 200 species of birds, and 31 mammal species as well as several historic sites, including old mines. The park also contains the lowest point in the Western Hemisphere at 282 feet below sea level, where our nation's hottest temperature of 134° F has been recorded.

State Route 127 brings visitors to Death Valley National Park directly through Baker, Tecopa, and Shoshone. Visitors entering the park through other routes drive through towns such as Ridgecrest, Barstow, Lone Pine, and Independence. Additionally, the town of Death Valley, within the park, is an overnight destination for many park visitors.

Local endorsers of this analysis include the Death Valley Chamber of Commerce, Shoshone Development, Inc., and China Ranch Dates.

In 2001:

- Death Valley National Park received 1,014,636 visitors, and the average visitor party spent $73 per night.
- Total visitor spending was $44 million.
- Visitor spending generated $16.2 million worth of personal income, defined as wage and salary income, and employee benefits for area residents.
- Tourist dollars supported 1,212 jobs.
Economic Impacts of Visitor Spending
Joshua Tree National Park

Joshua Tree National Park’s starkly beautiful 800,000 acres draw visitors from around the world. The low Colorado Desert and the higher, slightly cooler, and moister Mojave Desert, meet here; nowhere else is the contrast between these two deserts more vividly illustrated. The park also encompasses some of the most interesting geologic displays found in California’s deserts.

People of the early Pinto Culture once settled the now-dry Pinto Basin; later, indigenous Indian cultures lived in and traveled through the area, leaving behind rock paintings, pictographs, and pottery. The Lost Horse and the Desert Queen mines are reminiscent of the self-reliant homestead life from the late 19th through mid-20th century.

State Route 62 brings visitors to Joshua Tree National Park directly through the Morongo Basin. This access offers exposure to many facilities available in the towns situated along the park’s northern and western boundary, including Twenty-nine Palms, Joshua Tree, Yucca Valley, and Morongo Valley. Park visitors also stay in Coachella Valley communities such as Desert Hot Springs, Palm Springs, Palm Desert, and Indio, all accessed by Interstate 10 on the park’s south side.

Local endorsers of this analysis include the Joshua Tree Chamber of Commerce, Morongo Basin Innkeepers Association, Twenty-nine Palms Chamber of Commerce, the City of Twenty-nine Palms, and Chad Mayes, a Yucca Valley Town Council Member.

In 2001:

- Joshua Tree National Park received 1,280,917 visitors, and the average non-local visitor party spent $77 per night.
- Total visitor spending was $46.3 million.
- Visitor spending generated $21.9 million worth of personal income, defined as wage and salary income and employee benefits for area residents.
- Tourist dollars supported more than 1,115 jobs.

Becky Boyer, Executive Director Chamber of Commerce Joshua Tree, California

Chad Mayes, Council Member Town of Yucca Valley Yucca Valley, California
Economic Impacts of Visitor Spending

Lassen Volcanic National Park

Lassen Volcanic National Park became America’s 13th national park in 1916 after Lassen Peak exploded in 1915, sending a mushroom cloud seven miles into the stratosphere. Before the 1980 eruption of Mount Saint Helens in Washington, Lassen Peak was the most recent volcanic outburst in the contiguous 48 states. Several types of volcanoes and geothermal activity, such as bubbling mud pots and steaming fumaroles, can be found in Lassen Volcanic National Park. This active volcanic park is also home to more than 700 plants and 250 wildlife species and preserves several important American Indian archaeological sites and historic structures.

Lassen Volcanic is located in a very rural part of California, and visitors to the park contribute to the economic well-being of the cities of Red Bluff, Redding, Burney, Chester, Susanville, and numerous smaller towns such as Mineral, California.

Local endorsers of this analysis include the Lassen County Chamber of Commerce, Red Bluff-Tehama County Convention & Visitors Bureau, California Guest Services, Cinnamon Teal Bed & Breakfast, and the Sierra College Small Business Development Center.

In 2001:

- Lassen Volcanic National Park received 376,695 visitors, and the average visitor party spent $69 per night.
- Total visitor spending was $11.8 million.
- Visitor spending generated $5.4 million worth of personal income, defined as wage and salary income and employee benefits for area residents.
- Tourist dollars supported 276 jobs.
Economic Impacts of Visitor Spending
Mojave National Preserve

Established in 1994 by the California Desert Protection Act, Mojave National Preserve encompasses 1.6 million acres of unique landscapes at the intersection of the Mojave, Sonoran, and Great Basin deserts.

The name of the park comes from the Indian words, Aha Macav, which mean “the people who live along the water.” Mojave National Preserve protects the region’s only year-round stream in addition to seven mountain ranges, the famous 500-foot-high Kelso Dunes, forests of Joshua trees, as well as archaeological remains. Nearly half of the park is designated wilderness, allowing for the preservation of a wide variety of plant and wildlife species, including coyote, more than 200 species of birds, and one of the largest herds of desert bighorn sheep in the United States.

Accessed by Interstates 15 and 40, visitors to the park provide economic benefits to surrounding towns and communities including Baker, Barstow, Needles, and Nipton.

Local endorsers of this analysis include Hotel Nipton/Nipton Trading Post, Bun Boy Company, and The Mad Greek.

In 2001:

- Mojave National Preserve received 492,745 visitors, and the average visitor party spent $24 per night.
- Total visitor spending was $5.1 million.
- Visitor spending generated $2 million worth of personal income, defined as wage and salary income and employee benefits for area residents.
- Tourist dollars supported 121 jobs.
Economic Impacts of Visitor Spending

Pinnacles National Monument

Pinnacles National Monument preserves 24,000 acres of wildlands in San Benito County, one of the fastest-growing urban areas in California. The park was established to protect the unusual spire-like rock formations created by an ancient, eroding volcano. The landscape sharply contrasts the otherwise smooth-contoured coast range landscape east of the Salinas Valley.

Located in rural central California, approximately 50 miles south of San Jose, Pinnacles attracts visitors who spend money in nearby towns including Salinas, Soledad, Greenfield, King City, Hollister, and Paicines.

Local endorsers of this analysis include the San Benito County Chamber of Commerce, Inn at the Pinnacles, Pinnacles Campground, Inc., Epic Adventures Rock Climbing, Friends of Pinnacles, and Pacific Edge Climbing Gym.

In 2001:

- Pinnacles National Monument received 178,243 visitors, and the average visitor party spent $77 per night.
- Total visitor spending was $3.2 million.
- Visitor spending generated $1.1 million worth of personal income, defined as wage and salary income and employee benefits for area residents.
- Tourist dollars supported 82 jobs.

The Pinnacles National Monument is our reason for existence, since we provide the only camping and R.V. facilities within 30 miles.

S.K. Kingman, President
Pinnacles Campground, Inc.
Paicines, California
Economic Impacts of Visitor Spending

Point Reyes National Seashore

Authorised in 1962, Point Reyes National Seashore was officially established in 1972. It achieved wilderness designation in 1976 and was proclaimed a Biosphere Reserve in 1983. Containing more than 110,000 acres, Point Reyes is located on a peninsula just an hour's drive from both San Francisco and the Napa-Sonoma wine country.

Scenic Highway 1 (Pacific Coast Highway) leads visitors to Point Reyes along the coast while US Highway 101 offers an inland route. Along the way, visitors to the seashore can stop at towns such as Muir Beach, Stinson Beach, Bolinas, Olema, Point Reyes Station, Inverness, and Inverness Park from the south and Tomales and Marshall from the North.

Local endorsers of this analysis include the West Marin Chamber of Commerce, Roundstone Farm Bed & Breakfast, Carriage House Bed & Breakfast, The Creamery/The Emporium, Holly Tree Inn, Bar—or Ranch, and One Mesa Bed & Breakfast.

In 2001:

- Point Reyes received 2,222,762 visitors, and the average visitor party spent $95 per night.
- Total visitor spending was $83.6 million.
- Visitor spending generated $39.3 million worth of personal income, defined as wage and salary income and employee benefits for area residents.
- Tourist dollars supported 2,007 jobs.

Blue Waters Kayaking serves approximately 8,000 Point Reyes National Seashore visitors each year. Nearly 100 percent of our local business depends on park visitors. These visitors support approximately 20 part-time/seasonal and three full-time employees.

Kate McClain, Owner
Blue Waters Kayaking
Inverness, California
Economic Impacts of Visitor Spending

Redwood National Park

Designated a national park in 1968, Redwood National Park was declared a World Heritage Site in 1980 and an International Biosphere Reserve in 1983 in recognition of its extraordinary ecosystem. The national park, in conjunction with several state parks, protects 45 percent of the old-growth coast redwood forest remaining in the world. These trees, some of the tallest on Earth, can live for 2,000 years and grow to more than 350 feet.

The parks also protect 35 miles of Pacific coastline, prairies, and lush forests, as well as 17 historic structures, 104 miles of hiking trails, nearly 400 bird species, and nine threatened and endangered species.

U.S. Highway 1 brings visitors to Redwood National Park directly through the towns of Crescent City, Requa, Klamath, Orick, and McKinleyville.

Local endorsers of this analysis include the Klamath Chamber of Commerce, Crescent City-Del Norte Chamber of Commerce, Greater Eureka Chamber of Commerce, Redwood Harbor Guest Ranch, Palm Café & Motel, and Trees of Mystery.

In 2001:

- Redwood National Park received 388,352 visitors, and the average visitor party spent $72 per night.
- Total visitor spending was $14.5 million.
- Visitor spending generated $6.1 million worth of personal income defined as wage and salary income, and employee benefits for area residents.
- Tourist dollars supported 360 jobs.

The Board of Directors of the Greater Eureka Chamber have long supported and valued the mutually beneficial partnership with Redwood National Park. We recognize the increasingly significant economic impact to the North Coast region that is provided by visitor activity.

J. Warren Hockaday
Executive Director
Chamber of Commerce
Eureka, California
Economic Impacts of Visitor Spending
Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area

Created by Congress in 1978, Los Angeles’ 153,750-acre Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area is the world’s largest urban national park. The mountains and adjacent coastline have a colorful and varied history; archaeological and cultural sites include the beautiful rock paintings and burial sites of Chumash and Tongva peoples. Today, the area’s diverse ecosystems, including woodlands and grasslands, rocky canyons, and streamside oak groves are home to more than 175 threatened or endangered animals, including mountain lions, bobcats, and golden eagles.

With more than 17 million Americans living within an hour of the park, visitors on their way to Santa Monica Mountains are likely to pass through or stop in Los Angeles, Thousand Oaks, Agoura Hills, Malibu, Santa Monica, Woodland Hills, Westlake Village, Calabasas, Encino, Newbury Park, Camarillo, Beverly Hills, Hollywood, Sherman Oaks, Bel Air, Brentwood, and Simi Valley.

Local endorsers of this analysis include the Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce, the City of West Hollywood, Sundance Cycles, LLC, and Los Angeles Conservation Corps.

In 2001:

- Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area received 532,898 visitors, and the average visitor party spent $86 per night.
- Total visitor spending was $16.9 million.
- Visitor spending generated $7.9 million worth of personal income, defined as wage and salary income and employee benefits for area residents.
- Tourist dollars supported 406 jobs.

As the world’s largest urban park, Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area serves a vital function for both visitors and local area residents. Each year, our organization uses the park for service projects, which in turn help maintain the park and its ability to engage visitors for generations to come.

Bruce Saito
Executive Director
Los Angeles Conservation Corps
Los Angeles, California
Economic Impacts of Visitor Spending
Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park

Established in 1890, Sequoia is one of the oldest national parks in the country. In 1940, what was then General Grant National Park was incorporated into the newer and larger Kings Canyon National Park. Today, Sequoia and Kings Canyon, which encompass nearly 870,000 acres of the southern Sierra Nevada in California, are managed as one national park site.

The parks contain some of America’s most awe-inspiring scenery, including Mount Whitney—the tallest mountain in the United States outside of Alaska and the General Sherman sequoia, the most massive tree on Earth. The topographic diversity of the parks is ideal for many mammal species, including wolverines, bighorn sheep, black bears, and mountain lions. The parks also protect more than 1,300 plant species.

Visitors to Kings Canyon National Park are likely to take Highway 180 East from Fresno and travel through towns such as Squaw Valley, Dunlap, and Wilsonia. On the way to Sequoia, visitors travel along Highway 198 from Visalia and stop through towns such as Three Rivers, Hammond, and Potwisha.

Local endorsers of this analysis include the Central California Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Visalia Chamber of Commerce, City of Visalia, Greater Fresno Area Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Corporation of Fresno County, Plantation Bed & Breakfast and Monetcito-Sequoia Lodge.

In 2001:

- Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Parks received 1,200,297 visitors, and the average visitor party spent $131 per night.
- Total visitor spending was $98.1 million.
- Visitor spending generated $48.2 million worth of personal income, defined as wage and salary income and employee benefits for area residents.
- Tourist dollars supported 2,423 jobs.
Economic Impacts of Visitor Spending

Yosemite National Park

Yosemite National Park, set aside as a national park in 1890, embraces a spectacular tract of mountain and valley scenery in the Sierra Nevada. The park’s 760,000 acres harbor a collection of waterfalls, meadows, and forests that include groves of giant sequoias. Yosemite includes 263 miles of road and 800 miles of hiking trails, and protects wildlife, including more than 150 bird species.

Highlights of the park include Yosemite Valley’s high cliffs and waterfalls; the Mariposa Grove, which contains hundreds of ancient giant sequoias; Glacier Point’s spectacular view of Yosemite Valley and the high country; and Tuolumne Meadows, a large sub-alpine meadow surrounded by mountain peaks.

Yosemite is a regional economic powerhouse, significantly contributing to the regional economies of the six counties surrounding it: Fresno, Tuolumne, Mariposa, Madera, Merced, and Mono. Visitors to the park are likely to spend money in towns such as Oakhurst, Mariposa, El Portal, Groveland, Senora, Merced, Fresno, and Lee Vining.

Local endorsers of this analysis include the Central California Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Eastern Madera County Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Fresno Area Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Corporation of Fresno County, Bear Creek Cabins, Yosemite Bug Lodge & Hostel, Yosemite Mariposa KOA, and Yosemite Guides.

In 2001:

- Yosemite National Park received 3,368,731 visitors, and the average visitor party spent $116 per night.
- Total visitor spending was $319.8 million.
- Visitor spending generated $118.5 million worth of personal income, defined as wage and salary income and employee benefits for area residents.
- Tourist dollars supported 8,864 jobs.
This report so clearly highlights a huge new reality that government and business leaders need to wake up to. The economic impact of nature-based tourism, i.e. every visitor to a national park unit or wilderness area, will far surpass any previous extractive industry. The ability of the income generated from these preserved ecological treasures to stay within the nearby communities is also significant.

Communities and federal agencies need to work together to gain the most sustainable benefit from this economic growth. Thank you for this informative report.

Peter Mayfield, Founder and President
Yosemite Guides
El Portal, California