

ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS OF Water-related Outdoor Recreation in Colorado



**BUSINESS FOR
WATER**
STEWARDSHIP



WATER-RELATED RECREATION

From its mountains, forests, and high plains to its rivers, plateaus and canyons, Colorado serves up a vivid canvas on which to paint endless kinds of outdoor recreational experiences. Business for Water Stewardship has taken the opportunity to both broaden and update an earlier study from 2012 investigating the economic contributions of recreational activity on the Colorado River and its tributaries across six states. This study focuses on recreational days spent on or along the water anywhere within the state of Colorado. No matter the type of water that speaks to you, a babbling brook, raging river, or a flowing stream, and no matter the kind of activity that calls you outside, a peaceful hike, kayaking white waters, or a streamside two-wheeled trail ride, purchases to support those activities provide fuel to the engines of the state's economy.

Recreating on or along the water in Colorado is an integral part of the outdoor opportunities enjoyed by the state's residents and visitors.

THE STUDY

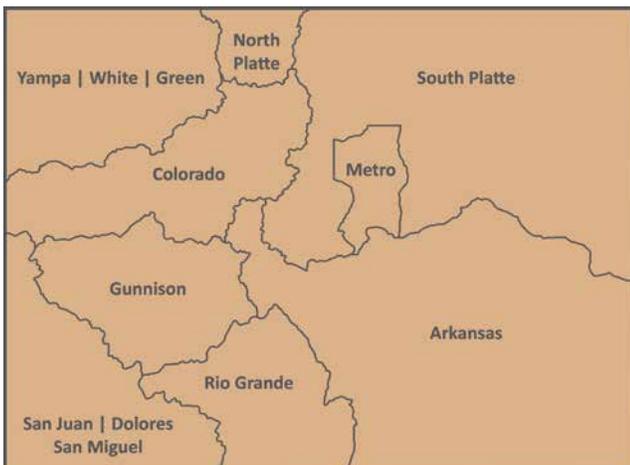
— Introduction —

Business for Water Stewardship commissioned a study to characterize outdoor recreation on or along waterways within Colorado in 2019. Part of the goal involved characterizing where the water-related outdoor recreation occurs across the state. More specifically, it was important to understand which river basins people travelled to for different activities. A second aim was to quantify the activity; what percentage of Colorado adults engage in this recreation, how many days do they recreate, and how much money does Colorado's outdoor community spend for these activities. Quantifying spending in this way enables an estimation of the economic benefits of outdoor recreation on or along the water, which can be characterized by modelling the contributions of the activities on Colorado's economy.

— Scope —

Nine outdoor recreational activity types taking place within Colorado along waterways were the focus of this work. The outdoor recreation participants include all adults (18 and over) who engage in the targeted activities within Colorado (i.e., both state residents and those from out-of-state are included). The results reflect one year of participation (2019), and all economic estimates are reported in 2019 dollars.

— River Basins & Activity Types —



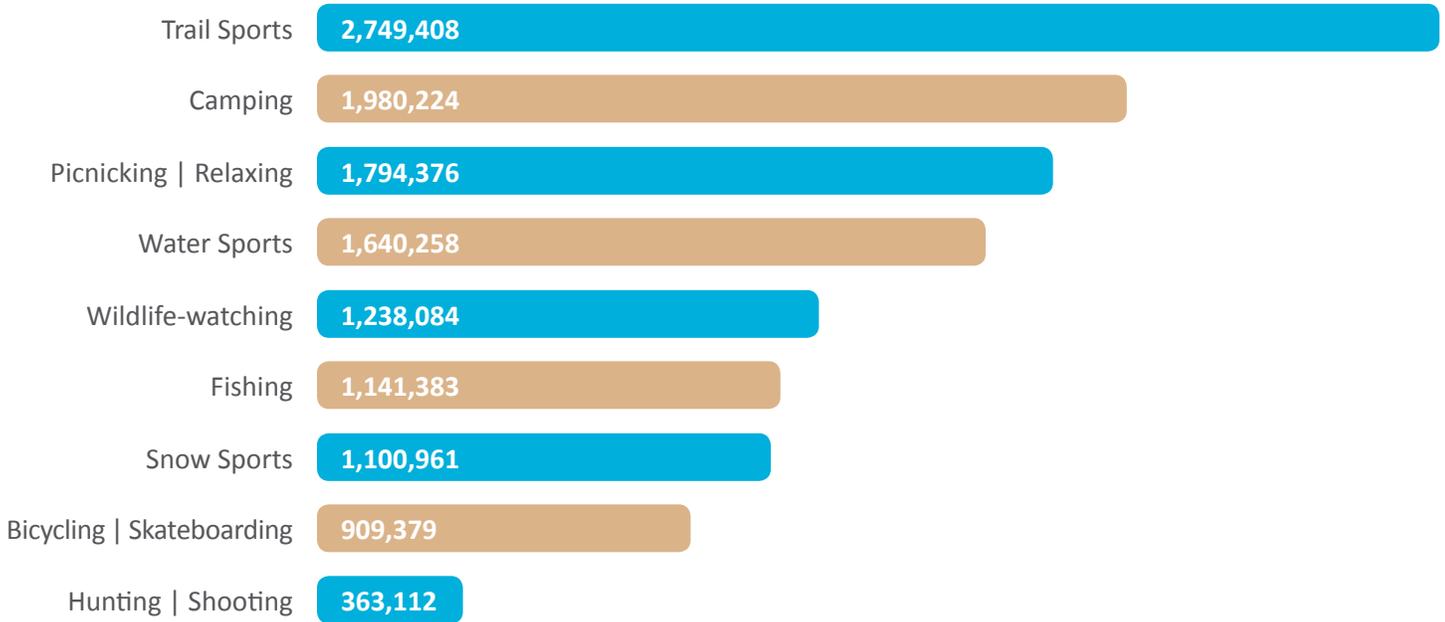
- Trail Sports
- Camping
- Picnicking or Relaxing
- Water Sports
- Wildlife-watching
- Fishing
- Snow Sports
- Bicycling or Skateboarding
- Hunting or Shooting

RESULTS

— Participation —

Statewide, an estimated 6.7 million people, both resident and non-residents, participate in one of the selected outdoor activities along the water in Colorado. Trail sports is the most popular activity with 2.7 million participants followed by camping with just under 2 million and picnicking with 1.8 million. In terms of the total number of days spent participating in these activities along the water, wildlife watching was the highest with 15.4 million days followed by trail sports with 15.1 million and water sports with just under 15 million days.

Participation by Activity



Respondents were asked to report their participation within nine river basins and regions. Forty percent participated in at least one of the target activities within the Colorado River basin followed by 35% within the South Platte River Basin (excluding Metro Area). In terms of number of days, however, the Metro Area saw the most participation with 28% of all days spent recreating along the water.



RESULTS

— Expenditures —

Outdoor recreators make expenditures on a number of trip-related and equipment items. Trip-related items are similar across all types of activities and can include fuel, food, admission fees, and lodging. The types of equipment purchases are specific to the type of activity. Anglers purchase items such as rods, reels, lines and lures while hikers purchase items such as apparel, boots, and other accessories.

An estimated \$10.8 billion was spent on outdoor recreation within Colorado’s river basins by both residents and visitors to the state. Just under a quarter of this was spent by trail sports participants, followed closely by campers and water sports participants.

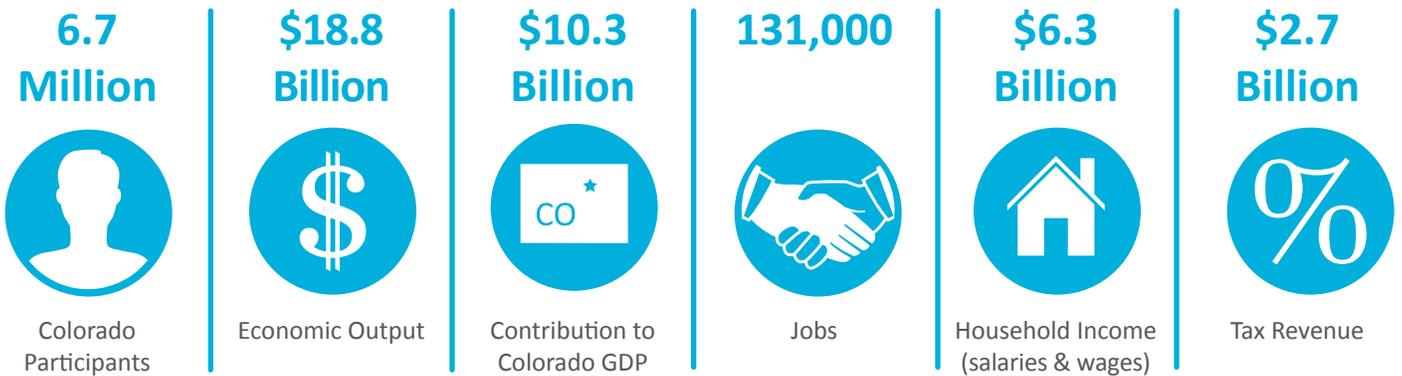
\$10.8 billion was spent on outdoor recreation within Colorado’s river basins

— Economic Contributions —

This retail spending provides the basis for estimating economic contributions for each activity in Colorado as a whole. Spending by outdoor recreators continues to cycle through the economy generating additional rounds of spending, known as the multiplier effect, by businesses who provide supporting services and goods to these outdoor recreators. Using an IMPLAN™ model, the flow of these multiple rounds are tracked and measured.

Collectively, the retail spending by these recreationists and the related multiplier effects contributed an estimated \$18.8 billion in economic output and contributes \$10.3 billion to the state’s GDP. Total contributions support over 131,000 jobs that provide \$6.3 billion in household income and generate an estimated \$2.7 billion in tax revenues.

Facts & Figures



RESULTS

— Contributions by Basin —

The river basin estimates reflect the contribution that outdoor recreation in those locales has on the statewide economy.

Economic Contributions of Water-Based Outdoor Recreation by River Basin

	Participants (thousands)	Output (millions)	GDP (millions)	Jobs	Wages (millions)	Tax Revenues (millions)
Arkansas	1,583.8	\$2,628.8	\$1,436.9	18,400	\$876.3	\$381.3
Colorado	2,722.0	\$3,827.6	\$2,092.2	26,800	\$1,275.9	\$555.2
Gunnison	974.3	\$879.4	\$480.7	6,200	\$293.1	\$127.6
Metro	1,948.9	\$5,190.7	\$2,837.3	36,300	\$1,730.2	\$752.9
North Platte	905.2	\$968.3	\$529.3	6,800	\$322.8	\$140.4
Rio Grande	623.5	\$476.5	\$260.4	3,300	\$158.8	\$69.1
San Juan Dolores San Miguel	544.0	\$711.2	\$388.7	5,000	\$237.1	\$103.1
South Platte	2,371.6	\$3,721.6	\$2,034.3	26,000	\$1,240.5	\$539.8
Yampa White Green	508.2	\$424.7	\$232.1	3,000	\$141.6	\$61.6

DISCUSSION

Recreating on or along the water in Colorado is an integral part of the outdoor opportunities enjoyed by the state's residents and visitors. This study presents economic contributions based on estimated retail spending in Colorado attributable to time on or along the water spent engaging in a set of nine target activities. The total economic contributions associated with that spending supports 131,000 jobs that provide \$6.3 billion in household income and generate \$2.7 billion in tax revenues.

Total economic output, including the multiplier effect, generates an estimated \$18.8 billion annually and supports over 131,000 jobs

Front cover photo | A fly fisherman selects a fly in the Flat Tops Wilderness.

Back cover photo | A paddle-boarder glides across a lake near Fort Collins.





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