

Opinion: Recreation on USFS land helping California's economy

By John Heil

Outdoor recreation activities in California's national forests contributed \$2 billion to local economies and helped sustain an estimated 38,000 jobs in 2010.



The U.S. Forest Service's National Visitor Use Monitoring report released last month shows national forests attracted 170.8 million recreational visitors nationwide and sustained approximately 223,000 jobs in rural communities across the country.

"The Forest Service is proud to be a vital part of our local communities by providing both recreational pastimes and vital economic sustainability," said Randy Moore, Pacific Southwest regional forester. "Outdoor activities are important to California residents and to the visitors who use local hotels, restaurants, or buy groceries and gasoline in the communities in and around the national forests."

National forests in California received nearly 30 million visitors in 2010. The Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, Inyo, Angeles, San Bernardino and Shasta-Trinity National Forests had a combined total of approximately 19 million visitors.

National Forests in California account for 17 percent of National Forest recreation nationwide. The forests offer unique outdoor recreation opportunities such as Mt. Shasta, Lake Tahoe, Mt. Whitney, and the Big Sur coast, as well as important ecological and prehistoric sites.

“As we seek to improve the health, diversity and productivity of the nation’s forests and grasslands, we have made ecological restoration a top priority,” Moore said. “We want to provide quality recreational experiences and real economic and social growth for generations to come.”

According to the U.S. Forest Service’s National Visitor Use Monitoring Report:

- Recreation activities on National Forests and Grasslands sustain 223,000 jobs in the rural communities within 50 miles of the national forests and grasslands, where visitors purchase goods and services for their recreational activity.
- Visitors spend \$13 billion directly in those communities within 50 miles of the national forests and grasslands.
- Visitor satisfaction is very high, with an overall satisfaction rate of 94 percent.
- Approximately 83 percent of visitors are content with the value received for any fees paid.
- Nearly 95 million visitors (over 55 percent) come to a forest to primarily engage in physical activity.

Results of the National Visitor Use Monitoring Report are online.

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