

Report: Outdoor recreation big business for California

By Jennifer Booton, Fox Business

Outdoor recreation generates more than \$85 billion in consumer spending and creates about 732,000 jobs each year in California, according to a report by the Outdoor Industry Association.

Contributing more nationally to consumer spending than both the household utilities and gasoline sectors combined, the industry that includes hiking, bicycling, fishing and skiing is bigger than most people realize, the group argues.

“Outdoor recreation is a significant economic driver,” it said in the report.



Lake Tahoe residents know all about playing outdoors.
Photo/LTN file

Offering a number of open, public spaces, including Yosemite National Park, Redwood national and state parks and Big Sur, a sparsely populated region of California’s Central Coast that spans dozens of miles, California is by far the nation’s largest contributor to outdoor recreation.

Money spent on gear, vehicles, trips and travel-related expenses there generate \$270 billion in California wages and salaries and \$6.7 billion in state and local tax revenue each year. The group estimates that at least 59 percent of California residents participate in outdoor recreation each year.

“This creates jobs, supports communities, generates tax revenue and helps drive the economy,” the Outdoor Industry Association said.

The report comes as California struggles to improve its economy in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis. The state pays public workers more than any of the other 12 most populous states, according to Bloomberg, and has struggled to overcome deep debt obligations.

On a national level, outdoor recreation generates \$646 billion in consumer spending while contributing nearly \$40 billion in federal and state and local tax revenue.

The market contributes more to consumer spending than household utilities and gasoline combined, and also trumps pharmaceuticals and motor vehicles, according to the report.

The next largest contributor to outdoor activity behind California is Florida, generating about \$38.3 billion in consumer spending a year, followed by New York with \$33.8 billion and Texas with \$28.7 billion.

The industry, which creates more than 6.1 million direct American jobs nationally, also generates more employment than construction, oil and gas, education and transportation, the industry group says.