AN ANALYSIS OF ICE AGE TRAIL USERS

PREPARED FOR THE ICE AGE TRAIL ALLIANCE
BY THE FISCAL AND ECONOMIC RESEARCH CENTER UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-WHITEWATER
ABOUT THE ICE AGE TRAIL ALLIANCE

The Ice Age Trail Alliance (IATA) in partnership with the Fiscal and Economic Research Center (FERC) at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater analyzed and quantified the economic impact of the Ice Age Trail. The objective of this study is to measure the annual economic impact of the Ice Age Trail to the State of Wisconsin and the local Trail communities by determining the annual number of users who utilize the Trail. The consideration of a variety of factors is necessary to accurately portray the true impact of Trail users on the local economies and Wisconsin’s economy as a whole. More than 4,000 surveys were collected and used to quantify the monetary impact on local economies and for the Wisconsin economy as a whole by analyzing the average expenditures of Trail users. Additional methods applied were the IMPLAN input/output technique along with other statistical analyses which are discussed further in the report.
IATA VISION

IN COLLABORATION WITH OUR MANY PARTNERS, WE ENVISION A PREMIER, CONTINUOUS, PERMANENTLY PROTECTED ICE AGE NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL. COURSING THROUGH WISCONSIN, THE TRAIL IS A PLACE WHERE ALL PEOPLE CAN ENJOY AND EMBRACE THE UNIQUE NATURAL LANDSCAPES AND CULTURAL HISTORIES OF WISCONSIN, WHILE FINDING PHYSICAL AND MENTAL RENEWAL IN A PEACEFUL SETTING AND AN ENDURING SPIRITUAL CONNECTION TO THE LAND.
According to “Tourism Economics”, an Oxford economics company, Wisconsin tourism saw total business sales eclipse of $21 billion in 2018. The state had over 112 million people visit in 2018, as visitors per year continued to increase between 1.9% and 2.8% for the last five (5) years.

$13.3 billion was spent by tourists in 2018 an increase of 4.7% from 2017 as there was an increase in total visitation along with an increase in tourism prices.

Visitors to the state of Wisconsin generated $1.2 billion in federal taxes and $1.6 billion in state and local taxes, which resulted in the average Wisconsin household saving $680 due to tourism.

In addition, for every $1 spent on advertising for state tourism $7 was returned to the state in the form of tax revenue and $89 in the form of visitor spending.
PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Ice Age Trail Alliance, which is headquartered in Cross Plains has the responsibility of creating, supporting and protecting one of only eleven National Scenic Trails in the United States. This stunning thousand-mile footpath is the remnants of a colossal movement of glacial ice which left behind one of the world’s premium examples of glaciation.

The research objective of this project is to quantify the value local businesses and Wisconsin received from users on the Ice Age Trail along with the people who volunteered their time to maintain and build various segments of the Trail.

VISITOR NUMBERS

There are an estimated 2,300,000 VISITORS to the Ice Age Trail annually, which is up from 1,252,685 based on a 2011 survey.

514 respondents indicated they volunteered their time to the upkeep of the Trail.
WHO USES THE TRAIL?

- College Degree and High School Level Education
- Make more than the median income in the United States ($40k), have discretionary income.
- 80%, 30+ Age Years Old (Gen X, Older Millennial, Baby Boomer)
- 66% not WI residents, 33 average visits/year, 14% volunteer with the Ice Age Trail Alliance
ENJOY THE OUTDOORS

83%

People visit the Trail to enjoy the outdoors as a way for a retreat, leisure and as an educational opportunity.

WILLING TO TRAVEL

82%

Many of the consumers are willing to travel from out of town or further to visit the Trail.
“PERSONALLY THE TRAIL PROVIDES ME WITH AN ESCAPE. THE MOMENT I HIT THE TRAIL I CAN FORGET ABOUT WORK OR ANY STRESS I HAVE HAD THAT DAY. IT PROVIDES ME WITH SOLITUDE AND A SENSE OF FREEDOM. AS A PROFESSIONAL EDUCATOR THE TRAIL PROVIDES ME WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO SHOW MY STUDENTS MORE THAN I CAN THROUGH TRADITIONAL TEACHING METHODS. WHETHER IT IS DISCUSSING LAND FEATURES OR SEE UP CLOSE GEOLOGICAL FEATURES, THE TRAIL MAKES LEARNING REAL. IT IS ALSO AMAZING TO SEE AND HEAR THE TRAIL THROUGH THE EYES OF A CHILD.”

CHRIS MCNEILL
Teacher in Lodi
WORD OF MOUTH

54%

54% heard of the Trail through friends or family. Other ways include through tourism publications (i.e. being featured in their headlines.)

MAJORITY TRAVEL IN GROUPS

AVERAGE GROUP SIZE OF 2-4

People who hike or visit the Trail travel in groups of 2-4, occasionally they visit alone.
HOW IS IT USED?

- Hike or Enjoy The Outdoors
- Wellness and Fitness
- Sports and Recreation
- Niche - Fishing and Bird Watching

Overnight in Campsites
Most people who stay overnight tend to use campsites

Half Stay Overnight
Approximately half (46%) of the people who visit the Trail end up staying through the night or plan an overnight trip.
IF YOU WERE TO STAY OVERNIGHT, WHAT TYPE OF LODGING WOULD YOU UTILIZE?

- Hotel/Motel
- Campsite
- Bed and Breakfast
- Relative/Friend
- Other

[Bar chart showing the distribution of responses]
WHAT MATTERS TO THEM

Natural, Peaceful and Scenic
These three descriptors are what they emphasize about the Trail. Overall, they value these types of experiences.

Word of Mouth
Most people hear about or choose to use the Trail because of word of mouth or connections with others close to them.

Summer and Fall
They enjoy the use of the Trail particularly in Summer and Fall, promoting events during this time would be most effective.

Friends and Family
The group sometimes explores the Trail alone, but typically in couples (2). Groups consist of 1-4 people, mainly friends and family.

Discretionary Income
Willing to spend money on what matters to them and will maximize their enjoyment.
“AFTER BEING INTRODUCED TO THE ICE AGE TRAIL IN 2008, IT DIDN’T TAKE ME LONG TO FIGURE OUT WHAT MADE IT SO SPECIAL. THIS HIDDEN GEM OFFERS EVERYONE, OF ALL ABILITIES, A SERENE AND SECLUDED AREA TO ENJOY NATURE AND LEARN ABOUT WISCONSIN’S GLACIER HISTORY. IT AMAZES ME THAT DEDICATED AND HARD-WORKING VOLUNTEERS CARE FOR THE 1000-MILE FOOTPATH. IT OFFERS HEALTHY ACTIVITY THE WHOLE FAMILY CAN ENJOY AND IT’S FREE OF CHARGE! AS A WHEELCHAIR USER, THE TRAIL ALLOWS ME THE FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCE TO EXPLORE THE GREAT OUTDOORS AT MY LEISURE AND IT’S RIGHT HERE IN MY BACKYARD. IT’S AN HONOR TO BE A SMALL PART OF IT ALL.”

JENNY ADDIS
Waushara County Chapter

NICHE GROUPS

15 Visits a Year

Niche groups (fishing, birdwatching) visit the Trail 15 times on average, versus the average number of the typical person, 11 times a year.

80% are 30+

Majority of the groups who visit are adults.
WHERE THEY DIVERGE

**High Intensity**
Adventurous, engaging terrain looking for the ability to enjoy the Trail through active engagement i.e. (running, cycling, kayaking, cross country skiing.)

Willing to pay premiums for activities that emphasize this aspect and are the backbone of “adventure” economy.

Use the Trail more than any other group, 3-4 more times on average than anyone else.

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**Low Intensity**
Relaxing, retreat, educational opportunity looking to “take in nature” on their own time.

Engage with the Trail fewer times on average, but are focused on relaxation and leisure willing to pay twice as much for souvenirs/shopping and entertainment experiences (around $5 more.)

Make smaller purchases, but consistently
Rebecca Lewis
High Intensity
Rebecca lives for adventure, so much so that she made a whole group dedicated to their love of exploring nature. Her Trail is the Ice Age Trail because she doesn’t have to travel far for a session of backpacking. She buys fairly expensive equipment to ensure she is able to engage with the Trail at her highest level. Sometimes she even goes multiple times a week, both with others and by herself. She loves getting a retreat from every day life and exercises through her hikes.

Daniel Hernandez
Low Intensity
Daniel loves the Ice Age Trail because he gets to spent time with his wife on the Trail while they listen to the birds chirping. They visit the same park and have passes to their favorite attractions on the Trail. Every year they collect the park’s annual paper/magazine and send it out to their kids in other states.
## HOW THEY SPEND

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>High Intensity</th>
<th>Low Intensity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Convenient/Grocery</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misc./Equipment</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping/Souvenirs</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overnight Accommodations</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants/Bars</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gas/Travel</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **$173 Average**
- **$156 Average**
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE ECONOMIC IMPACT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>3,616</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>FULL-TIME</td>
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<tr>
<td>EQUIVALENT JOBS</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>$27</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>MILLION IN STATE</td>
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<tr>
<td>AND LOCAL TAXES</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>$355</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>MILLION IN ANNUAL</td>
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<td>ECONOMIC IMPACT</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>OVER <strong>$106</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>MILLION IN TOTAL</td>
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<td>WAGES</td>
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HOW WE CALCULATED

IMPLAN Analysis

It uses the following three effects to measure economic impact:

**Direct Effect** - Refers to production change associated with a change in demand for the good itself. It is the initial impact on the economy, which is exogenous to the model. In this case, it is the spending brought about by the businesses around the Trail.

**Indirect Effect** - Refers to the secondary impact caused by changing input needs of directly affected industries (e.g. additional input purchases to produce additional output.) It concerns inter-industry transactions: The businesses around the Trail have a demand for locally produced materials needed to procure their services. The success of these businesses affects all of the suppliers that provide inputs.

**Induced Effect** - Is caused by changes in household spending due to the additional employment generated by direct and indirect effects. The induced effect measures the effects of the changes in household income: those individuals working at the businesses around the Trail and the suppliers of those businesses spend money at restaurants, grocery stores and shops.

IMPLAN (short for “Impact Analysis for Planning”) is an economic analysis software system utilized to study the average survey responses.
RECOMMENDATIONS

Connect
Build a system to allow like-minded individuals to connect with each other. Facebook Groups can be advertised.

Communicate
Advertise entertainment, potentially collectibles, to low intensity individuals. Email them opportunities to engage with the Trail through their interests.

Collect
Start gathering data consistently and annually, other Trail data is few and far between. There is a great opportunity to get further ahead of other Trail services.
IMPLEMENTATION

Idea One
Create a Trail “collectible”, one that can be annual for those to collect each year, or a seasonal item. Example: “I went to the Ice Age Trail Summer 2020, I luv the Ice Age Trail.”

Idea Two
Open opportunities for revenue generation through the shopping/entertainment focus of low intensity individuals.

Idea Three
Integrate and promote initiatives with the Ice Age Trail Communities.

Idea Four
Open opportunities for revenue generation by targeting the “Other” category for high intensity individuals, what is it that they are willing to spend so much money on?
“THE TRAIL GIVES ME A SPACE WHERE I CAN LET GO OF THE STRESS OF THE DAY AND IMMERSE MYSELF IN THE BEAUTY AND SOLITUDE OF NATURE. IT ALSO CONNECTS ME TO MY PAST, WHEN I SPENT MY CHILDHOOD DAYS IN THE MOUNTAINS. THE TRAIL OFFERS AN OUTDOOR CLASSROOM WHERE, AS A PROFESSOR, I CAN HELP MY FUTURE TEACHERS IMAGINE ALTERNATIVES TO TRADITIONAL METHODS FOR TEACHING LITERACY.”

KELLY HATCH
UWW Professor

A SPECIAL THANKS TO THE VOLUNTEERS

The Ice Age National Scenic Trail is built, supported, and maintained by the Ice Age Trail Alliance (IATA) and hundreds of passionate volunteers. They donate thousands of hours of time every year to care for the Trail, lead hikes and field trips, and connect with communities near the Trail. In fact, without the volunteers, the Ice Age Trail would just be another line on a map.

2019 Yearly Achievements

- 2,376 Dedicated Volunteers
- 82,880 Volunteer Hours
- 4,561 Little Boots on the Trail
- 232 Acres Protected
- 22,064 Feet of Tread Built
About the Fiscal and Economic Research Center
The University of Wisconsin-Whitewater Fiscal and Economic Research Center provides research services or area businesses, not-for-profit organizations and government entities, including:

- Economic Analysis
- Land-use Planning
- Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Analysis
- Market Research, Marketing Strategy and Planning
- Statistical Analysis
- Simulation Analysis
- Ecological and Biological Analysis
- Government and Public Policy Analysis
- Entrepreneurship
- Economic Forecasting and Business Development

Data Analysis
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Kejuane Jennings

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Edel Contreras

Project Management
Dan Fink

Final Report and Coordination
Caleb Basu
Dr. Choton Basu, Ph.D.
Professor, FERC

For More Information A full version of the Economic and Fiscal Impact of Wisconsin's Brownfields Investments, complete with methodology, documentation, footnotes and appendices, is available at www.uww.edu/ferc/completed

Analysis report designed by Celtic Inc., celticinc.com.