



The Northern Forest Canoe Trail: An Economic Impact Study



Over 1,000 paddlers were surveyed during the summer of 2006 to determine the economic impact of paddler recreation along sections of the Northern Forest Canoe Trail (NFCT), a 740 mile canoe route spanning New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine.

A full version of the report can be found at <http://www.uvm.edu/tourismresearch/>



Methodology

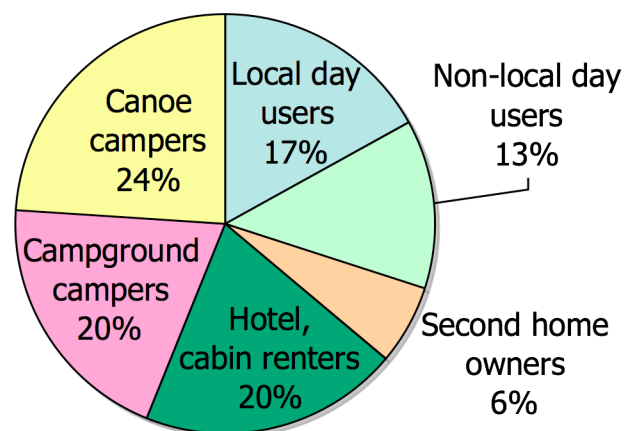
Economic impacts were assessed in six regions: the Moose & Raquette Rivers, NY (58 mi.); the Missisquoi River Delta, VT (10 mi.); the Clyde & Connecticut Rivers, VT (38 mi.); the Androscoggin River, NH (10 mi.); Rangeley Lake, ME (8 mi.); and the Allagash Wilderness Waterway, ME (90 mi.).



Paddlers were surveyed at boat launches through the use of registration kiosks and in-person interviews conducted by University of Vermont researchers. Visitation rates were estimated by observing the use of registration kiosks and by surveying campground and lodging establishments.

A range of paddlers recreated on the waterways.* Expenditure data was categorized by accommodation type, and MGM2 (an input-output modeling software) was used to calculate economic impacts.

Types of paddlers*



*Canoe campers are paddlers on multi-day, backcountry trips. Campground campers stay in road accessible campsites. Local day users live within 25 miles of the waterway.

Economic impacts

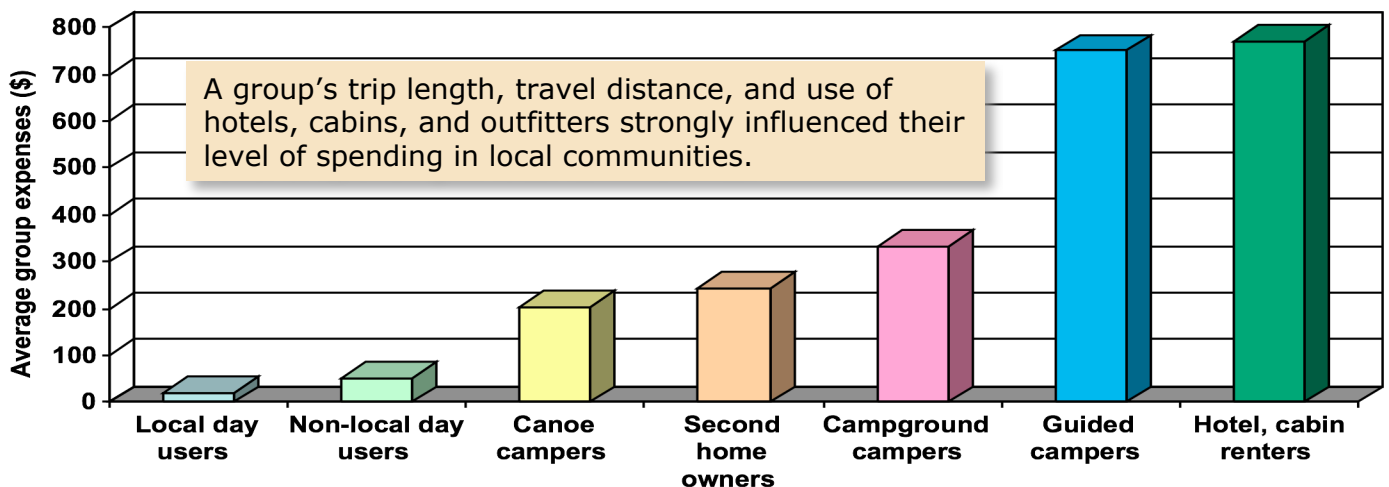
Nearly 90,000 visitors paddled the waterways in the six study regions, creating over \$12.6 million in total economic impacts, \$4.1 million in personal income, and over 280 jobs.

The median paddler group spent \$215 per trip in local communities. Non-locals spent an average of \$46 per person, per day. The majority of local expenses were made in communities adjacent to the waterways.

On average, the trip expenditures of 85 non-local paddler groups supported the equivalent of one full-time job.

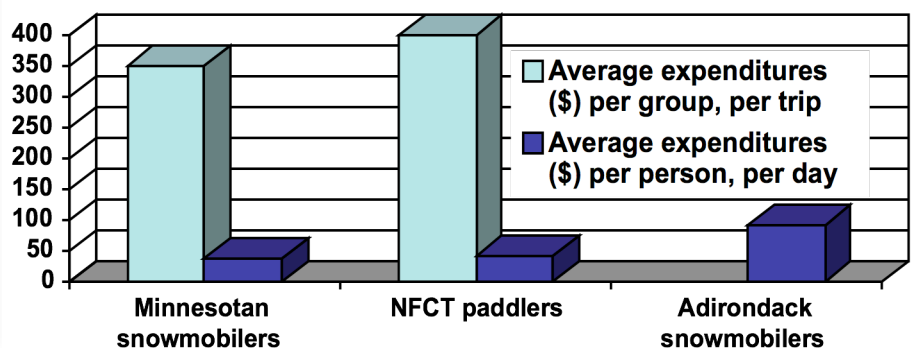
Expenditure Category	Percentage of groups making this type of expenditure
Restaurants	47%
Grocery stores	50%
Service stations	38%
Hotels & campgrounds	35%
Outfitters	7%
Other retailers	19%

Average expenditures



Paddler expenditures compared to other tourists

Paddlers make similar levels of expenditures compared to other tourists. A recent study of Vermont visitors reported average per visitor expenditures of \$192, comparable to this study's estimate of \$185. While results vary between studies, paddler trip expenditures are also similar to snowmobilers.



Expenditures are in 2006 dollars. Snowmobile data are from Schneider, I. (2005). *Snowmobiling in Minnesota: Economic impact and consumer profile*. St. Paul: University of Minnesota Tourism Center, and Chugh, R. (1998). *Snowmobiling in New York. An analysis of economic impact and overview of the industry in the empire state*: New York State Snowmobile Association, Merwin Rural Services Institute at SUNY Potsdam.

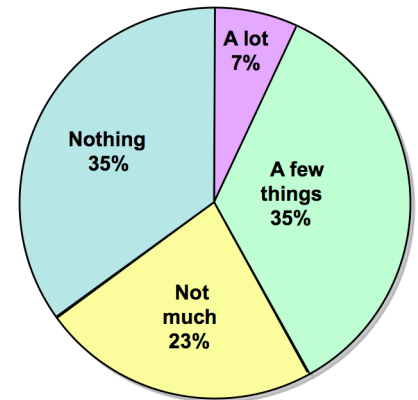
Paddler knowledge of the NFCT

The NFCT is fairly visible, with 65% of paddlers reported some knowledge of the NFCT.

The NFCT is also beginning to attract users; 17.7% indicated it was a reason for their trip.

Managers at 35% of waterway lodging establishments reported either knowing a lot or a few things about the NFCT.

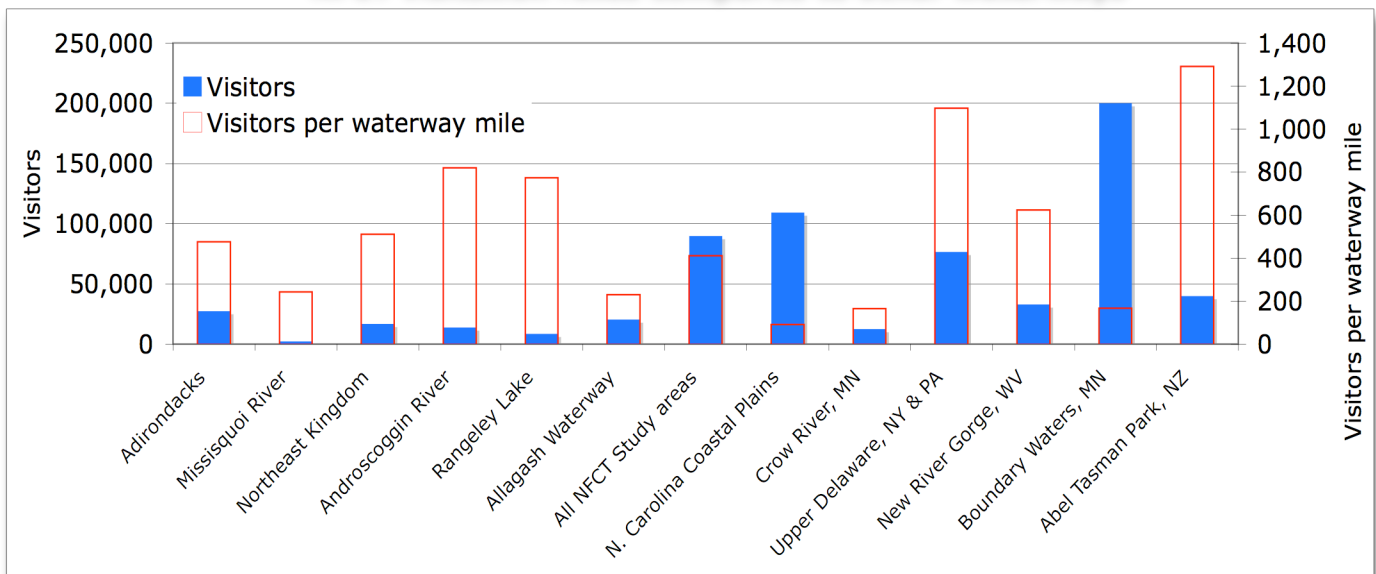
Paddler knowledge of the NFCT



Visitation rates across the waterways

The Adirondacks had the heaviest use, followed by the Allagash, the Northeast Kingdom, Rangeley Lake, the Androscoggin, and the Missisquoi River. Standardized by waterway miles, Rangeley Lake and the Adirondacks appear to have the highest use intensity, due to the presence of state campgrounds and waterway lodging establishments. The results of other studies also show a wide range in visitation levels and use intensities across rivers and lakes.

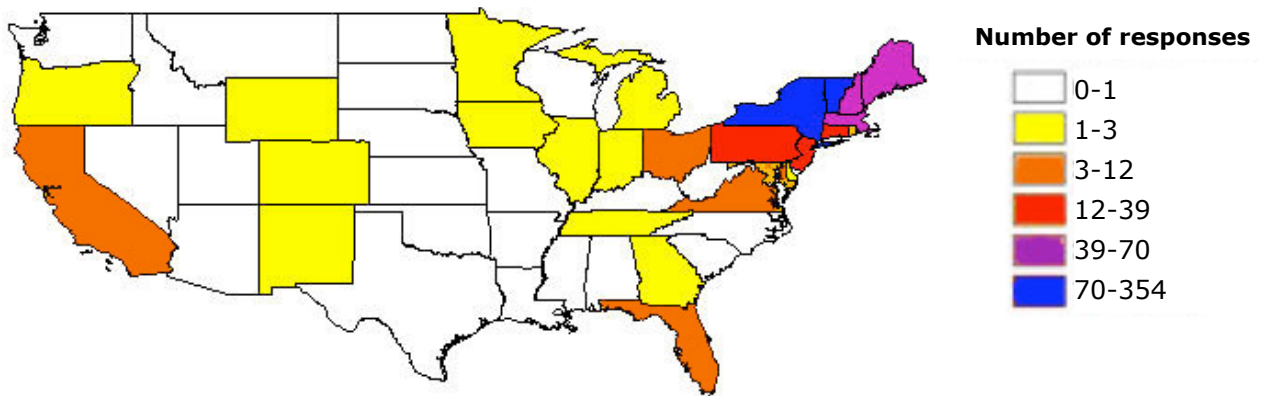
NFCT visitation rates compared to other waterways



Visitation data for non-NFCT waterways are from Thigpen et al. (2001). *North Carolina Coastal Plains Paddle Trails Initiative: The State of North Carolina Coastal Paddling Survey*. Raleigh: North Carolina Sea Grant; Blank, U., & Simonson, L. (1982). *Recreational Resource Use: Who Gains? Who Pays? The Crow Wing Canoe Trail Case*: Department of Agriculture and Applied Economics, University of Minnesota; Cordell et al. (1990). Economic Effects of River Recreation on local economies. *Water Resources Bulletin*, 26(1), 53-60; Manni et al. (2005). *New River Gorge National River Visitor Study – Summer 2004*: National Park Service Social Sciences Program; Friends of the Boundary Waters. (2006) Personal Communication; Tourism Industry Association New Zealand. (2006). *Abel Tasman Nation Park Draft Management Plan*. Tourism Industry Association.

Paddler home states

While paddlers came from a variety of locales, most live in the northeastern U.S. and the majority were paddling in their home state. The median group traveled 3.5 hours to reach their destination.



Conclusions and recommendations

The results suggest that paddler recreation and tourism can positively impact local economies. Expenditures by new visitors attracted by the NFCT may help stabilize and diversify the local economy, supporting a greater mix of businesses in rural communities.

Local communities have an important role to play in guiding the development of the Northern Forest Canoe Trail. Economic benefits can be increased by expanding camping and lodging opportunities on both public and private lands, constructing rustic shelters to attract additional users, developing and supporting guide training and promotion initiatives, holding organized events such as canoe races and festivals, and participating in collaborative marketing efforts.

At the same time, local communities and the NFCT must work together to proactively plan and implement strategies to minimize the negative social and environmental impacts of increased visitation, which may include the spread of invasive aquatic species, wildlife disturbance, increased traffic, overcrowding of waterways, and land degradation at campsites.