



Hunters and Anglers: Supporting Our Nation's Economy and Conservation

Hunting and fishing are not simply traditions or hobbies – they are fundamental components of our nation's economy. Tens of millions of Americans enjoy these activities every year. The money they spend supports everything from major manufacturing industries to small businesses in communities across the country. It also generates hundreds of millions of dollars each year for wildlife management, habitat conservation, and public access.

These economic and conservation benefits plus hundreds of thousands of American jobs all depend on clean water and productive wetlands.

Streams and Wetlands At Risk

Healthy populations of fish and waterfowl and success in the field depend on clean water and abundant wetlands. Yet the streams and lakes that support trout and other fish and wetlands essential to ducks are at increasing risk of pollution and destruction. These resources are threatened by U.S. Supreme Court decisions in *SWANCC* (2001) and *Rapanos* (2006) and subsequent agency guidance issued in 2003 and 2008. Twenty million acres of wetlands, especially in the critical prairie pothole “duck factory,” have already lost Clean Water Act protections. Nearly 60 percent of streams nationwide – particularly small streams with the cleanest, coolest water – are also at risk.

America's Hunters and Anglers: Millions Strong

Hunting and angling have always been popular activities among Americans of all ages. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which conducts the most comprehensive assessment of hunting and angling nationwide, more than **14 million Americans of all ages are hunters**. More than **38 million Americans, including children, are anglers**.

Hunting and Angling Drive Economic Growth, Support Jobs

Hunters and anglers spend tens of billions of dollars annually to pursue the sports they enjoy. Their spending supports our economy at every level – from coffee shops and gas stations in small communities to major companies that manufacture firearms, boats, and fishing tackle. These expenditures directly support jobs in almost every corner of the country.

- Based on Fish and Wildlife Service research, **hunters spent nearly \$23 billion and anglers more than \$42 billion in 2006**. These figures track expenditures for goods and services only – they do not include the additional economic benefits this spending produces, such as jobs created or supported at local retailers or national manufacturers.
- The Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that **America's 1.3 million duck hunters had a positive economic impact in 2006 of more than \$2.3 billion, which supported more than 27,000 private sector jobs**.
- The American Sportfishing Association reports that **anglers generated nearly \$125 billion in total economic activity in 2006 and supported more than 1 million jobs**. Freshwater fishing, which is most closely tied to the waters threatened by the Supreme Court decisions, generated approximately \$88 billion – 70 percent of the total.
- The Fish and Wildlife Service reports that **6.7 million trout anglers contribute nearly \$5 billion annually to the U.S. economy**.

Photo: Shutterstock



Hunters and Anglers Fund Conservation Nationwide

In addition to boosting the economy, America's hunters and anglers provide a significant proportion of the funding that directly supports wildlife management, habitat conservation, and recreational access at the local and state levels.



Photo: Izaak Walton League of America

Hunters and anglers agreed decades ago to pay federal excise taxes on firearms, ammunition, fishing rods and tackle, archery equipment, and motorboat fuel to fund wildlife and fisheries restoration. These taxes, distributed to the states every year, along with license and other fees account for the majority of state fish and wildlife agency budgets. Although these payments directly support hunting and angling, they also provide incredible benefits to millions of other Americans who enjoy outdoor recreation, visit public lands, and watch wildlife.

The contributions of hunters and anglers are significant both annually and historically:

- **In 2011, states received nearly \$749 million in hunter/angler excise taxes** – \$364 million for conserving and restoring fisheries, \$384 million for wildlife.
- Over the past 70 years, **hunters have paid more than \$6.4 billion in taxes that directly support wildlife restoration, habitat conservation, and hunter education.**
- Since the 1950s, **anglers have paid more than \$6.5 billion in taxes that directly support fisheries restoration and public access to rivers, lakes, and other waters.**

If fewer people fish because small streams are polluted or hunt ducks because wetlands are drained, the revenue and economic activity associated with every aspect of hunting and angling will diminish. This will directly and negatively impact fish and wildlife management and habitat conservation in every state.

First Steps Taken to Restore Clean Water Protections

Restoring lost Clean Water Act protections is essential not only for the future of the sports we enjoy but for our economy as well. In late April, **the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Army Corps of Engineers took an important first step to put some of these protections back in place.** Under proposed guidance – instructions to agency staff in the field about how to implement the Clean Water Act – many tributary streams and wetlands adjacent to those streams would be protected once again.

On the other hand, prairie pothole wetlands and small streams that may not flow all year would remain at risk of being drained and filled or polluted. To begin restoring full Clean Water Act protections to these wetlands and other at-risk waters, it is essential that the agencies follow the guidance with a rulemaking.



Photo: Ducks Unlimited

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