

Incentives for Ecosystem Restoration in Wisconsin

A Public-Private Partnership in Agricultural Stewardship



Ecotourism: “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well being of local people” (The International Ecotourism Society, www.ecotourism.org)

Ecotourism is quickly coming to the forefront of family recreational activities. In recent years, more tourists have sought vacations where they can enjoy wilderness areas. According to the 2001 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, 39% of all American adults participate in some form of wildlife-related recreation. Wildlife watchers alone spent \$38 billion in the United States in 2001. Wolf-oriented ecotourism, part of this larger social trend, is evident by the fact that many Americans are willing to travel long distances to see wolves. Wolf-related activities have generated economic benefits throughout North America.

Red Wolves in North Carolina

Since the first red wolves were reintroduced to northeastern North Carolina in 1987, an estimated 100 red wolves now roam in the wild. A 2005 study (<http://www.biodiversitypartners.org/econ/report/redwolf.shtml>) found that the red wolf and wildlife may increase tourism throughout the “Inner” Banks region. Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge holds weekly howling tours in the summer as part of this tourism.

- Red wolf activities are forecast to attract over 25,000 households and bring in about \$37.5 million to Eastern North Carolina, boosting tourism by up to 19% in the region.
- A Red Wolf Center could potentially bring more than \$1 million in gate receipts and food or gift purchases over a summer season.
- About 900 local residents and visitors from across the United States participated in howling safaris in the summer of 2005.



Red wolf

Photo: John and Karen Hollingsworth, USFWS



Gray wolf in Yellowstone

Photo: William C. Campbell, USFWS

Gray Wolves in Yellowstone National Park

Since wolves returned to Yellowstone National Park in 1995, the charismatic predators have stimulated significant economic activity, indicating that wolves are clearly having a positive impact on the economy of the greater Yellowstone area. Visitors to the park now rank the wolf as one of the primary animals they come to see, thereby creating new demand for lodging, guided wolf-watching tours and a variety of wolf-related merchandise.

- In Cooke City, Montana, by the northeast entrance to Yellowstone, 22% more tourists passed through the town in the summer of 1995 than just one year prior, and 71% of business owners thought wolf recovery was responsible for the increased tourist travel.
- Safari Yellowstone is one of many guides and outfitters that offer wolf viewing opportunities in the park. Each year, about 200 people pay \$1,700 a week to come to Yellowstone to watch wolves.
- Merchants in the Lamar Valley report that stuffed wolves, books on wolves, wolf T-shirts and wolf stationary have been selling rapidly since the reintroductions.
- Each year, visitors to Yellowstone spend about \$35 million in Montana, Idaho and Wyoming, culminating in a regional economic impact of \$70 million a year.

The International Wolf Center in Ely, Minnesota

The International Wolf Center (IWC) is a wolf educational facility and a tourist destination for visitors to Ely, Minnesota. Along with outdoor recreational activities in the nearby lakes and forests, the IWC's educational programs and exhibit wolf pack are a main reason that tourists visit Ely. Visitors to the center have a major economic impact in St. Louis and Lake Counties.

- A third of all tourists to Ely visit the IWC, and about half of IWC visitors state that the center influenced their decision to visit Ely and that they might return on a future vacation.
- A recent survey shows that the IWC brings as much as \$3 million per year to Ely and creates as many as 66 jobs in tourism-related businesses and other industries.
- In 2004, the retail department at the IWC generated \$120,000 in net revenues.



Inside the International Wolf Center



Mexican wolf
Photo: Jim Clark, USFWS

Mexican Wolves in the Southwest

In 1998, the Mexican gray wolf was reintroduced in east-central Arizona and west-central New Mexico, including the Gila and Apache National Forests. Anecdotal evidence indicates that wolf reintroduction has triggered tourist visitation.

- The Arizona Heritage Alliance organizes wolf-related tours to the wolf reintroduction area during which participants lodge at local inns.
- Many private citizens lead hiking trips in the wolf reintroduction area for visitors to see wolves.
- The Grand Canyon Chapter of the Sierra Club organizes trips to the area to volunteer with wolf recovery. Participants stay at local lodges and generate benefits for the local economy.

Eastern Wolves in Algonquin Provincial Park

Algonquin Provincial Park in Ontario, Canada is the largest protected area for the wolf and has been successful in using wolves to attract visitors. Since 1963, the park's public wolf howls have been one of the most popular events in Algonquin. At these events, park naturalists imitate wolf howls in the hopes that a nearby pack will return the call, making an unforgettable thrilling experience.

- By 2005, more than 126,500 people had participated in the public wolf howl program.
- More than 2,000 people participate in the howling expedition each summer.
- Visitors to Algonquin contribute almost \$1.9 million to Ontario's economy.



Wolf in Algonquin Provincial Park

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