

MICHIGAN
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Hunting generates big bucks for Michigan's economy – and conservation efforts

New analysis shows license and equipment purchases in advance of deer season provide millions annually to protect the state's outdoor resources

LANSING – However individual hunters fare in their pursuit of deer during this year's Nov. 15-30 firearms hunting season, the Michigan Wildlife Council notes that this much is guaranteed: The entire state will benefit from the economic impact.

Hunting contributes \$2.3 billion annually to Michigan's economy and supports more than 34,400 jobs, according to Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) calculations.

Outdoor retailers and other businesses that cater to hunters, such as northern Michigan restaurants and gas stations benefit from that spending. But so do conservation projects statewide that maintain wildlife species and their habitat, said Michigan Wildlife Council (MWC) Chairman Matt Pedigo.

"What many people don't realize is that the purchase of hunting and fishing licenses and equipment – not state taxes – provides most of the funding for conservation projects throughout the state," he said. "In fact, license funding was key to the comeback or protection of many beloved species in Michigan, including elk, peregrine falcons, wild turkey, osprey and the Kirtland's warbler."

All told, hunting and fishing licenses generate about \$62 million a year for wildlife and natural resources conservation projects, with more than \$40 million coming from hunting license sales. Deer season license sales alone generated \$22.6 million in 2017 – not including the cost of a base hunting license. Under state law, that money is entirely dedicated to wildlife management and conservation activities.

"When you consider that of the 700,000 people who hunt in Michigan each year, 60 percent hunt only deer, it becomes clear just how important deer season is to preserving our state's outdoor heritage on a year-round basis," Pedigo said.

In addition, an analysis by the Michigan Wildlife Council based on 2017 DNR data shows:

- 89% of hunting licenses were purchased by men, while 11% were purchased by women.
- The majority of hunting license purchases took place in Oakland (5.6%), Macomb (4.8%), Kent (4.8%), Wayne (4.7%), and Genesee (3.7%) counties.
- Out-of-state purchases of Michigan hunting licenses most frequently come from Wisconsin, Ohio, Illinois, Indiana and Florida. Out-of-state hunting license purchases accounted for 4% of sales.

Pedigo further notes that 87 percent of Michigan's adult population participates in outdoor recreation activities – not just hunting and fishing, but also camping, hiking, canoeing, bird-watching and other pursuits.

“It’s safe to say that anybody who enjoys Michigan’s outdoors benefits when people hunt and fish,” he said, adding that hunting and fishing are also important conservation tools because they help keep wildlife populations in balance with their habitats.

The MWC is a public body established by the Michigan Legislature in 2013. Members are appointed by the governor and subject to the advice and consent of the state Senate. The nine-member, nonpartisan all-volunteer panel was created to direct spending by the Michigan Wildlife Management Public Education Fund, which is dedicated to informing the state’s residents about the benefits of wildlife conservation and management.

To ensure that the wildlife populating Michigan’s waters and lands continue to thrive, Michigan uses scientifically based conservation and management methods, Pedigo said. The ultimate aim is to protect, maintain or restore wildlife populations, spur sustainable recreation use and enjoyment, and support local economies that are based on natural resources.

Michigan’s conservation managers are responsible for a wide variety of activities. Examples range from stocking walleye and managing their habitats near Beaver Island or protecting endangered ospreys from near extinction in southeast Michigan’s Huron Valley. Conservation staff also measure the impacts of climate change on West Michigan fisheries, overseeing construction of new pump stations that help manage wetlands along the Saginaw Bay, monitoring the health of deer herds in the northern Lower Peninsula and harvesting trees in the Upper Peninsula.

Besides hunting and fishing license sales, equipment purchases also are a key source of funding for conservation projects. The Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act, commonly called the Pittman-Robertson Act, is a tax on sporting arms, handguns, ammunition and archery equipment, while the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act, otherwise known as the Dingell-Johnson Act, assesses a similar levy on fishing-related equipment.

Proceeds from each act are distributed among the states for outdoors conservation and management activities. In 2017, the Michigan DNR received \$24.2 million in Pittman-Robertson funds and \$12.5 million in Dingell-Johnson funding.

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