

The Economic Impacts of Recreational Fishing in the Sabine Lake Estuary

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Executive Summary

The objective of this report was to estimate the economic impacts of marine recreational fishing in the Sabine Lake estuary. The estimates presented include only impacts associated with fishing trips and not spending on durable goods (fishing gear, rods, boats, etc.) related to fishing. The data used to estimate the economic impacts came from fishing effort estimates provided by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and a National Marine Fisheries Service study titled: “The Economic Contribution of Marine Angler Expenditures in the United States, 2011.” Major findings include:

- Total annual economic impacts of marine recreational fishing in the Sabine Lake estuary were estimated to be:
 - 455 jobs,
 - \$15.5 million in labor income,
 - \$24.4 million in value-added (contribution to Texas GDP), and
 - \$42.3 million in output (sales value of goods and services).
- Only 1.6% of all Sabine Lake recreational fishing trips were for-hire, a lower percentage than any other Texas bay system.
- Shore-based fishing trips accounted for approximately 63% of all angler-trips and economic impacts.
- Resident anglers accounted for most angler-trips (~98%) and economic impacts (~97%).

Introduction

Sabine Lake, contrary to the name, is not a lake and is, in fact, a salt water estuary. Sabine Lake estuary covers approximately 93 square miles and is connected to the Gulf of Mexico by Sabine Pass (Moretzsohn et al. 2016). The Sabine Lake estuary straddles the Texas-Louisiana border; the Texas section is in Jefferson and Orange counties⁵. The estuary is fed by the Neches and Sabine rivers and drains approximately 500,000 square miles of Texas and Louisiana into the Gulf of Mexico (Wooster 2016). The estuary's varied habitats (oyster reefs, grass flats, and mud bottom) allow for numerous recreational fishing opportunities. Species commonly targeted by anglers include spotted seatrout, flounder, and red and black drum.

The abundant fishing opportunities available in the Sabine Lake estuary make recreational fishing a favored pastime of both locals and visitors to the area. The Texas economy benefits from these fishing trips through angler spending on goods and services such as lodging, food, ice, bait, and fuel. In this paper, we estimate the annual economic impacts of Sabine Lake estuary recreational fishing on the Texas economy. Our analysis combines data from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) on recreational fishing in the Sabine Lake estuary with Texas marine recreational angler spending estimates from a National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) report (Lovell, Steinback, and Hilger 2013) to calculate estimated economic impacts. The analysis presented covers three types of bay fishing: 1) for-hire fishing trips utilizing a guide or charter service, 2) fishing from a private vessel, and 3) fishing from shore⁶.

Recreational Angler Effort Data

Data on fishing effort by bay system in the state of Texas are collected annually by the TPWD through their creel surveys. TPWD conducts creel surveys throughout the year at specified boat-access sites along the Texas coast from Port Arthur to Port Isabel. More than 1,000 surveys are scheduled annually on randomly selected weekdays and weekend days, with site survey frequency proportional to site fishing pressure, meaning more active sites are surveyed more frequently (Green 2016). While the major objective of the surveys is to determine how many fish are being caught, TPWD also uses the data gathered to estimate fishing effort (number of trips) in each bay system,

⁵ The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department fishing effort data are only collected at Texas-based boat access sites; as such, the analysis presented in this paper is based on Sabine Lake Estuary recreational fishing trips (for-hire and private vessel) ending at a Texas boat access site. Similarly, shore and pier-based fishing trip estimates are only for fishing done on the Texas side of Sabine Lake (Green 2016).

⁶ Shore fishing includes fishing from fishing piers.

including the Sabine Lake estuary. Table 1, shown below, provides TPWD estimates of recreational angler effort in the Sabine Lake estuary for anglers employing for-hire vessels (charter trips), fishing from private vessels, and shore anglers. The estimates are provided in “angler-trips,” which accounts for multiple anglers on a trip; for instance, if four anglers went fishing together, it would represent four angler-trips, not a single group fishing trip. The percentage of anglers from Texas is also included. The estimates for private vessel and for-hire effort is from the 2014-2015 fishing year, while the estimate for shore fishing effort is from the 2013-2014 fishing year⁷.

Table 1. Sabine Lake Estuary Recreational Fishing Effort by Angler Type

<u>Angler Type</u>	<u>Angler Trips</u>	<u>% Texan</u>
For-Hire	4,001	94.7%
Private Vessel	88,826	96.3%
Shore	164,493	99.1%

Recreational Angler Spending Data

Data on recreational angler spending were gathered from a NMFS report titled “The Economic Contribution of Marine Angler Expenditures in the United States, 2011.” This report used survey results to estimate marine recreational fishing expenditures for each coastal state. The report defined marine recreational fishing as: “... fishing for finfish in the open ocean or any body of water that is marine or brackish for sport or pleasure.” The surveys collected data on angler-trip expenditures related to their most recent marine recreational fishing trip. The data gathered were used to calculate the economic impacts of marine recreational fishing at the state and national level (Lovell, Steinback, and Hilger 2013). The analysis presented in this paper adjusts the trip expenditure estimates to account for changing prices (fuel) and general inflation and calculates current estimates of the economic impacts associated with marine recreational fishing in Texas.

Texas survey data were collected through a mail survey of fishers with valid Texas fishing licenses that allowed marine recreational fishing in 2011⁸. Surveys were conducted monthly

⁷ TPWD creel survey data are annualized for a fishing year spanning from May 15th to May 14th. TPWD collects shore angler effort data less frequently, and the 2013-2014 creel year represents the most recent estimate of shore angler effort.

⁸ Some Texas fishing licenses are restricted to freshwater fishing only; these were excluded from the sample frame. The license holders that were included in the sample frame were: resident fishing and hunting combination, resident all-water, resident marine, non-resident all-water, and non-resident marine.

throughout the year to capture seasonality in trip expenditures. The survey response rate was 17.6%; 1,025 of the 5,820 mail surveys sent out were at least partially completed⁹ (Lovell, Steinback, and Hilger 2013). The survey asked respondents about their expenditures related to their most recent marine fishing trip and spending on marine fishing-related durable goods (tackle, clothing, boats, license fees, etc.) during the previous year¹⁰. Respondents were asked to report what they personally spent on themselves and others and to not include any money that was spent on them by others; the question was asked in this manner in an attempt to calculate per-angler expenditures and not per-angling-party expenditures. For multi-day trips that included other activities (sightseeing, beach-going, etc.), fishers were asked to estimate expenses related to the entire trip and not just the days spent fishing. Although all spending on multi-day trips was included in survey responses, reported mean trip expenditures were for an angler-trip, which was defined as a single day of fishing for a single angler (Lovell, Steinback, and Hilger 2013). Mean angler-trip expenditures from the report are presented in Table 2 by angler effort type (for-hire, private vessel, and shore) and residency status. The next section outlines the calculation of angler-trip economic impact estimates.

Angler-Trip Economic Impact Estimates

The first step in calculating the angler-trip economic impact estimates was to update the 2011 spending estimates to account for inflation and price changes. Spending estimates were updated to 2015 values. Fuel costs were adjusted to account for the decrease in fuel costs that occurred between 2011 and 2015¹¹. All other expense categories were adjusted for inflation using the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics CPI figures¹². After accounting for inflation and lower fuel costs, mean angler-trip costs fell an average of 5% across the different angling types (for-hire, private boat, and shore) and angler types (resident and non-resident).

The second step in estimating the angler-trip economic impacts was to use IMPLAN, an input-output analysis software package, to determine how spending on recreational fishing impacted the Texas state economy (IMPLAN Group LLC. 2015). Each type of trip expenditure (fuel, lodging, food, etc.) is included in an IMPLAN sector that matches the type of business activity it represents,

⁹ Some responses did not have all questions answered.

¹⁰ The analysis presented in this paper focuses on fishing trip expenditures and their impacts; durable goods expenditures are not included in the analysis.

¹¹ The United States Energy Information Administration website was used to estimate changes in fuel costs. Per the website, the average fuel cost was \$3.37/gallon in 2011 and \$2.17/gallon in 2015. Mean angler trip fuel expenditures were divided by the 2011 value and then multiplied by the 2015 value.

¹² Estimated inflation was 5.5% between 2011 and 2015.

and the economic impacts associated with spending in each sector are calculated. Once the appropriate IMPLAN sectors were identified, the IMPLAN model was run to estimate the associated impacts. Four different economic impact measures were calculated: employment, labor income, value-added, and output. Employment measures the number of jobs created by the marine recreational fishing expenditures. Labor income measures the wages paid to those employed due to marine recreational fishing in the Sabine Lake estuary. Value-added measures the increase in Texas GDP due to the spending of recreational fishers, and output measures the total value of goods and services purchased because of Sabine Lake estuary recreational fishing. Labor income is a component of value-added, which is a share of output; thus, these figures cannot be summed. The economic impacts estimated in this report are state-level impacts. Respondents to the NMFS survey were asked to report their trip expenditures incurred in the State of Texas; as such, we are unable to determine what percentage of spending occurred in the Sabine Lake estuary area. Because we are unable to determine where in Texas expenditures were incurred, estimating city or county level impacts was not feasible. The IMPLAN sectors associated with each expense category are presented in Table 3¹³.

For each impact measure, three different effect types were estimated: direct, indirect, and induced. Direct effects are directly attributable to marine recreational fishing and include spending on goods and services by recreational anglers. Indirect effects are due to changes in inter-industry purchases as businesses used by recreational fishers purchase more goods and services from other businesses; an example of an indirect effect would be increased recreational fishing leading bait shops to buy more bait from commercial bait fishers. Induced effects include increased purchases of goods and services by those employed due to marine recreational fishing (bait fish retailers, charter guides, etc.).

¹³ An examination of Table 3 will highlight differences between the IMPLAN sectors we used in our calculations of economic impacts and those used in the NMFS study. For a few of the expense categories, we felt different IMPLAN sectors better fit the expense than the sectors selected by the NMFS researchers.

Table 2. Mean Angler-Trip Expenditures by Fishing Type (from Lovell, Steinback, and Hilger 2013)

	For-Hire		Private Boat		Shore	
	Resident	Non-Resident	Resident	Non-Resident	Resident	Non-Resident
Auto Fuel	\$54.94	\$85.63	\$46.04	\$36.93	\$44.52	\$47.26
Auto Rental	\$0.00	\$22.57	\$0.00	\$14.27	\$0.04	\$3.16
Bait	\$4.26	\$2.55	\$13.60	\$10.20	\$12.33	\$10.35
Boat Fuel	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$32.99	\$16.11	\$0.00	\$0.00
Boat Rental	\$6.72	\$5.89	\$1.98	\$0.66	\$0.00	\$0.00
Charter Fees	\$205.77	\$152.20	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Crew Tips	\$13.86	\$19.65	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Fish Processing	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.09
Food from Grocery Stores	\$34.16	\$27.89	\$32.74	\$15.64	\$33.16	\$32.21
Food from Restaurants	\$37.31	\$30.41	\$23.84	\$28.68	\$24.39	\$24.82
Gifts/Souvenirs	\$8.13	\$24.83	\$1.70	\$8.94	\$3.04	\$10.24
Ice	\$5.45	\$2.42	\$4.19	\$3.17	\$2.87	\$3.50
Lodging	\$38.56	\$67.44	\$22.35	\$21.35	\$33.84	\$48.66
Parking & Site Access	\$0.58	\$4.64	\$1.68	\$1.59	\$2.33	\$2.60
Public Transportation	\$0.00	\$13.55	\$0.00	\$21.37	\$0.02	\$3.56
Tournament Fees	\$0.00	\$0.11	\$1.74	\$2.71	\$0.00	\$0.00
Total	<u>\$409.74</u>	<u>\$459.78</u>	<u>\$182.85</u>	<u>\$181.62</u>	<u>\$156.54</u>	<u>\$186.45</u>

Table 3. IMPLAN Sectors

Expense Category:	IMPLAN Sectors	IMPLAN Sector Descriptions
Auto Fuel	402	Retail - Gasoline Stores
Auto Rental	442	Automotive Equipment Rental & Leasing
Bait	404	Retail - Sporting Goods
Boat Fuel	402	Retail - Gasoline Stores
Boat Rental	443	General and Consumer Goods Rental
Charter Fees	414	Scenic and Sightseeing Transportation
Crew Tips	414	Scenic and Sightseeing Transportation
Fish Processing	93	Seafood Product Preparation & Packaging
Food from Grocery Stores	400	Retail - Food & Beverage Stores
Food from Restaurants	501	Full Service Restaurants
Gifts & Souvenirs	406	Retail - Miscellaneous
Ice	402	Retail - Gasoline Stores
Lodging - Hotels & Motels	499	Hotels & Motels
Lodging - Other Accommodations	500	Other Accommodation
Parking & Site Access	512	Other Personal Services - Parking
Public Transportation	408	Air Transportation

Calculation and Presentation of Economic Impacts

Angler-trip economic impacts were calculated for all three angling types (for-hire, private vessel, and shore) for both Texas resident and non-resident anglers. Total economic impacts from recreational fishing in the Sabine Lake estuary were calculated as the product of TPWD estimates of angler-trips, and the estimated economic impacts per angler-trip. The economic impacts from for-hire, private vessel, and shore anglers are presented in Tables 4, 5, and 6, respectively. Shore fishing accounted for the largest share of economic impacts by fishing type (~63%), followed by private vessel (~31%) and for-hire (~6%). The smaller economic impacts associated with for-hire fishing was due to the small size of the Sabine Lake estuary for-hire industry, only 1.5% of all Sabine Lake angler-trips were for-hire trips. Total impacts across all three angler types (for-hire, private vessel, and shore) are presented in Table 7.

Table 4. Economic Impacts of Sabine Lake Estuary For-Hire Recreational Fishing

For-Hire Resident				
Impact Type	Employment	Labor Income	Value Added	Output
Direct Effect	12.77	\$497,285	\$624,393	\$1,287,667
Indirect Effect	4.46	\$246,610	\$387,146	\$681,011
Induced Effect	4.65	\$216,174	\$376,677	\$661,074
<u>Total Effect</u>	<u>21.88</u>	<u>\$960,069</u>	<u>\$1,388,216</u>	<u>\$2,629,752</u>
For-Hire Non-Resident				
Impact Type	Employment	Labor Income	Value Added	Output
Direct Effect	0.75	\$28,469	\$39,426	\$76,205
Indirect Effect	0.24	\$13,407	\$21,501	\$38,111
Induced Effect	0.26	\$12,174	\$21,213	\$37,229
<u>Total Effect</u>	<u>1.26</u>	<u>\$54,049</u>	<u>\$82,140</u>	<u>\$151,544</u>
For-Hire Total				
Impact Type	Employment	Labor Income	Value Added	Output
Direct Effect	13.53	\$525,754	\$663,819	\$1,363,872
Indirect Effect	4.70	\$260,017	\$408,647	\$719,122
Induced Effect	4.91	\$228,348	\$397,890	\$698,303
<u>Total Effect</u>	<u>23.14</u>	<u>\$1,014,119</u>	<u>\$1,470,356</u>	<u>\$2,781,296</u>

Table 5. Economic Impacts of Sabine Lake Estuary Private Vessel Recreational Fishing

Private Vessel Resident				
Impact Type	Employment	Labor Income	Value Added	Output
Direct Effect	97.05	\$2,679,052	\$3,849,923	\$6,414,242
Indirect Effect	16.59	\$858,140	\$1,518,734	\$2,728,130
Induced Effect	22.22	\$1,033,819	\$1,801,720	\$3,161,931
<u>Total Effect</u>	<u>135.87</u>	<u>\$4,571,011</u>	<u>\$7,170,378</u>	<u>\$12,304,303</u>
Private Vessel Non-Resident				
Impact Type	Employment	Labor Income	Value Added	Output
Direct Effect	4.26	\$131,075	\$207,362	\$361,634
Indirect Effect	0.85	\$47,528	\$85,282	\$157,778
Induced Effect	1.12	\$52,176	\$90,930	\$159,578
<u>Total Effect</u>	<u>6.23</u>	<u>\$230,779</u>	<u>\$383,574</u>	<u>\$678,991</u>
Private Vessel Total				
Impact Type	Employment	Labor Income	Value Added	Output
Direct Effect	101.31	\$2,810,127	\$4,057,285	\$6,775,876
Indirect Effect	17.44	\$905,668	\$1,604,017	\$2,885,909
Induced Effect	23.35	\$1,085,995	\$1,892,650	\$3,321,509
<u>Total Effect</u>	<u>142.10</u>	<u>\$4,801,790</u>	<u>\$7,553,952</u>	<u>\$12,983,294</u>

Table 6. Economic Impacts of Sabine Lake Estuary Shore-Based Recreational Fishing

Shore Angler Resident				
Impact Type	Employment	Labor Income	Value Added	Output
Direct Effect	203.64	\$5,522,665	\$8,146,744	\$13,686,670
Indirect Effect	35.99	\$1,861,467	\$3,250,631	\$5,872,993
Induced Effect	46.44	\$2,159,790	\$3,764,128	\$6,605,829
<u>Total Effect</u>	<u>286.07</u>	<u>\$9,543,921</u>	<u>\$15,161,503</u>	<u>\$26,165,491</u>
Shore Angler Non-Resident				
Impact Type	Employment	Labor Income	Value Added	Output
Direct Effect	2.39	\$67,072	\$102,268	\$171,533
Indirect Effect	0.45	\$23,310	\$40,560	\$73,546
Induced Effect	0.57	\$26,422	\$46,049	\$80,814
<u>Total Effect</u>	<u>3.41</u>	<u>\$116,804</u>	<u>\$188,877</u>	<u>\$325,892</u>
Shore Angler Total				
Impact Type	Employment	Labor Income	Value Added	Output
Direct Effect	206.04	\$5,589,736	\$8,249,013	\$13,858,202
Indirect Effect	36.44	\$1,884,777	\$3,291,191	\$5,946,539
Induced Effect	47.00	\$2,186,212	\$3,810,177	\$6,686,642
<u>Total Effect</u>	<u>289.47</u>	<u>\$9,660,725</u>	<u>\$15,350,380</u>	<u>\$26,491,384</u>

Table 7 Economic Impacts of Sabine Lake Estuary Recreational Fishing (All)

Resident				
Impact Type	Employment	Labor Income	Value Added	Output
Direct Effect	313.46	8,699,002	12,621,060	21,388,579
Indirect Effect	57.03	2,966,217	5,156,511	9,282,134
Induced Effect	73.31	3,409,782	5,942,526	10,428,833
<u>Total Effect</u>	<u>443.82</u>	<u>15,075,002</u>	<u>23,720,097</u>	<u>41,099,546</u>
Non-Resident				
Impact Type	Employment	Labor Income	Value Added	Output
Direct Effect	7.41	\$226,615	\$349,057	\$609,371
Indirect Effect	1.54	\$84,245	\$147,343	\$269,435
Induced Effect	1.95	\$90,772	\$158,192	\$277,620
<u>Total Effect</u>	<u>10.90</u>	<u>\$401,632</u>	<u>\$654,592</u>	<u>\$1,156,427</u>
Total				
Impact Type	Employment	Labor Income	Value Added	Output
Direct Effect	320.87	\$8,925,617	\$12,970,117	\$21,997,950
Indirect Effect	58.58	\$3,050,461	\$5,303,854	\$9,551,569
Induced Effect	75.26	\$3,500,555	\$6,100,717	\$10,706,454
<u>Total Effect</u>	<u>454.72</u>	<u>\$15,476,634</u>	<u>\$24,374,689</u>	<u>\$42,255,973</u>

Concluding Remarks

Marine recreational fishing in the State of Texas is not only a popular recreational activity but also a valuable part of the Texas economy. Our analysis indicates that Sabine Lake estuary recreational fishing trips generate 455 jobs and \$15.5 million in labor income in Texas annually. Trip spending by Sabine Lake recreational fishers is also responsible for \$42.3 million of economic activity and contributes \$24.3 million to the Texas economy each year. Although non-resident anglers spent more money per trip on average; economic impacts from resident fishing trips were much larger than non-resident impacts because 98% of the trips were by residents.

The results of this analysis are presented with some caveats regarding the data from the NMFS survey. The first issue is that the data were not specific to the Sabine Lake estuary; the survey gathered data on Texas marine recreational fishing regardless of where the fishing occurred. It is possible that Gulf of Mexico anglers spend more on fishing trips, on average, than bay anglers, which would lead to overstated economic impacts. Such a problem would be exacerbated if Gulf anglers were more willing to respond to the survey. Similar problems could arise if spending on fishing trips varied significantly by coastal region or bay system. The second issue concerns the possibility of response bias. Anglers were asked to report only what they personally spent on themselves or others and not to include expenses paid on their behalf by others (Lovell, Steinback, and Hilger 2013). If anglers that funded trips were more likely to respond to the survey than those being funded, the spending estimates at the angler-trip level would be skewed upwards, which would lead to overstated impacts. The NMFS survey did not look specifically at this form of response bias; the authors evaluated other possible forms of response bias and found no issues. While the issues noted could impact the findings of this analysis, we have no evidence that any of these issues exist (regional spending differences, bay vs. Gulf differences, non-response bias among non-paying anglers) and believe the results presented provide an appropriate estimate of the annual economic impacts of recreational fishing in the Sabine Lake estuary.

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