

THE ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION OF RECREATIONAL FISHING: WATERVILLE, CO. KERRY

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INTRODUCTION

This research evaluates the local economic benefit arising from recreational angling tourism in Waterville, Co. Kerry. Tourism is vital to the local economy, and fishing is an important tourist attraction. Fishing opportunities include sea fish angling for bass, pollack, mullet, etc., as well as lake and river angling for salmon, sea trout and brown trout. Other sporting and cultural attractions also exist locally and the area benefits from its situation on the 'Ring of Kerry'.

Waterville Lakes and Rivers Trust undertook a survey of anglers between February and June 2015. This research is based on that survey data but focuses on visiting tourist anglers and their expenditures in the local area, both angling-related (e.g. ghillie and boat hire, fishing tackle, bait, etc.) and non-angling expenditures (e.g. accommodation, meals, drinks and groceries, gifts, etc.). The survey includes both tourists where the sole focus of the trip was fishing and where fishing was only one component of a trip that included other tourist activities.

FINDINGS

The estimated contribution of angling tourism to the local economy in terms of contribution to local incomes is between €41–58 per trip or €8–11 per angler day. An angler trip, on average, contributed between 0.1–0.15 per cent of mean annual household income to the local economy during 2015. With up to several thousand anglers visiting the area per year, the aggregate economic contribution is relatively substantial within Waterville's small community and economy.

¹ This Bulletin summarizes the findings from: Curtis, J., Breen, B., O'Reilly, P., and O'Donoghue, C. (2017). "The economic contribution of a recreational fishery in a remote rural economy". *Water Resources and Rural Development*, 10:14–21. <https://authors.elsevier.com/a/1W34f7t5h~qRmv>

Game anglers (i.e. salmon and trout) who are long-term repeat visitors to Waterville, as well as those who stay in full service accommodation (i.e. hotels and B&Bs) spend the most locally. On average, repeat visitors spend 2 per cent more for each additional time they visit Waterville. This finding emphasises the importance and dividend associated with building a repeat clientele in the tourism sector.

Angling is just one of many tourist attractions in the area and the analysis suggests that visitors' total expenditure does not differ significantly with the number of activities undertaken. Some angling visitors focus solely on fishing while others engage in a range of local tourist offerings, including sporting and cultural activities. The policy implication is that the level of spending among specialist anglers is not substantially different than tourists who engage in angling as one of multiple activities they undertake in the area. If angling is promoted as a rural development strategy, it does not matter which type of angler is targeted (i.e. passionate versus occasional angler), in terms of their levels of expenditure in the local economy, though which local business benefit from that spending will vary depending on the services they provide.

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