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Economic Impact of Kentucky State Parks

The Economic and Fiscal (Tax) Contributions of State
Parks in the Commonwealth of Kentucky

June 2026



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June 2026

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Introduction

Research Overview

Kentucky is home to 44 State Parks and state park owned properties that include resort parks and golf courses, hiking trails, caves, fishing, boating, camping sites, lodging sites, historic sites, museums, and additional recreation options and attract millions of Kentuckians and tourists from around the world each year. Kentucky State Parks ("the Parks" or "State Parks") are an integral driver for tourism in Kentucky, supporting jobs and local businesses throughout the commonwealth.

In order to understand the full extent of Kentucky State Parks' role as economic engines within local and state economies, Oxford Economics, with its Tourism Economics subsidiary, conducted a comprehensive economic and fiscal impact analysis of the parks to quantify their economic value and significance of the parks in 2024.

To quantify Kentucky State Parks' economic impact, Oxford Economics prepared a comprehensive model using multiple primary and secondary data sources to analyze the impacts arising from multiple channels of spending attributable to the parks. Impact modeling was based on an IMPLAN Input-Output (I-O) model for the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

The results of this study show the scope of Kentucky State Parks' impact in terms of park operational expenditures and spending by non-local visitors to Kentucky State Parks, as well as total economic impacts, including total business sales, employment, household income, and fiscal (tax) impacts.

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Key Findings



Kentucky State Parks Summary Statewide Economic Impacts Commonwealth of Kentucky (2024)

Direct Spending Impacts

Kentucky State Parks and state park owned properties generate significant economic impacts as State Parks spend money on operational expenditures throughout Kentucky.

In addition to spending money on-site at State Parks and state park owned properties, non-local visitors at parks also spend money at businesses and establishments during their stay in the respective local communities of State Parks, including local restaurants, retailers, and lodging establishments.

In 2024, Kentucky State Parks generated an estimated \$591.1 million in direct spending, including \$120.4 million in park operational expenditures and \$470.7 million in spending by non-local park visitors.

Direct Impacts of Kentucky State Parks & State Park Owned Properties in 2024

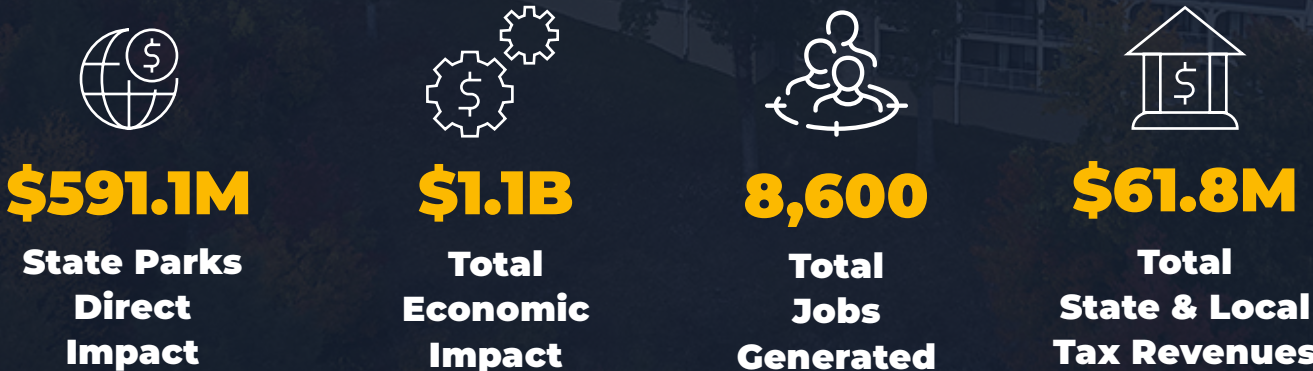


Kentucky State Parks and state park owned properties generated a total statewide economic impact of \$1.1 billion in 2024.

Summary Statewide Economic Impacts of Kentucky State Parks - 2024

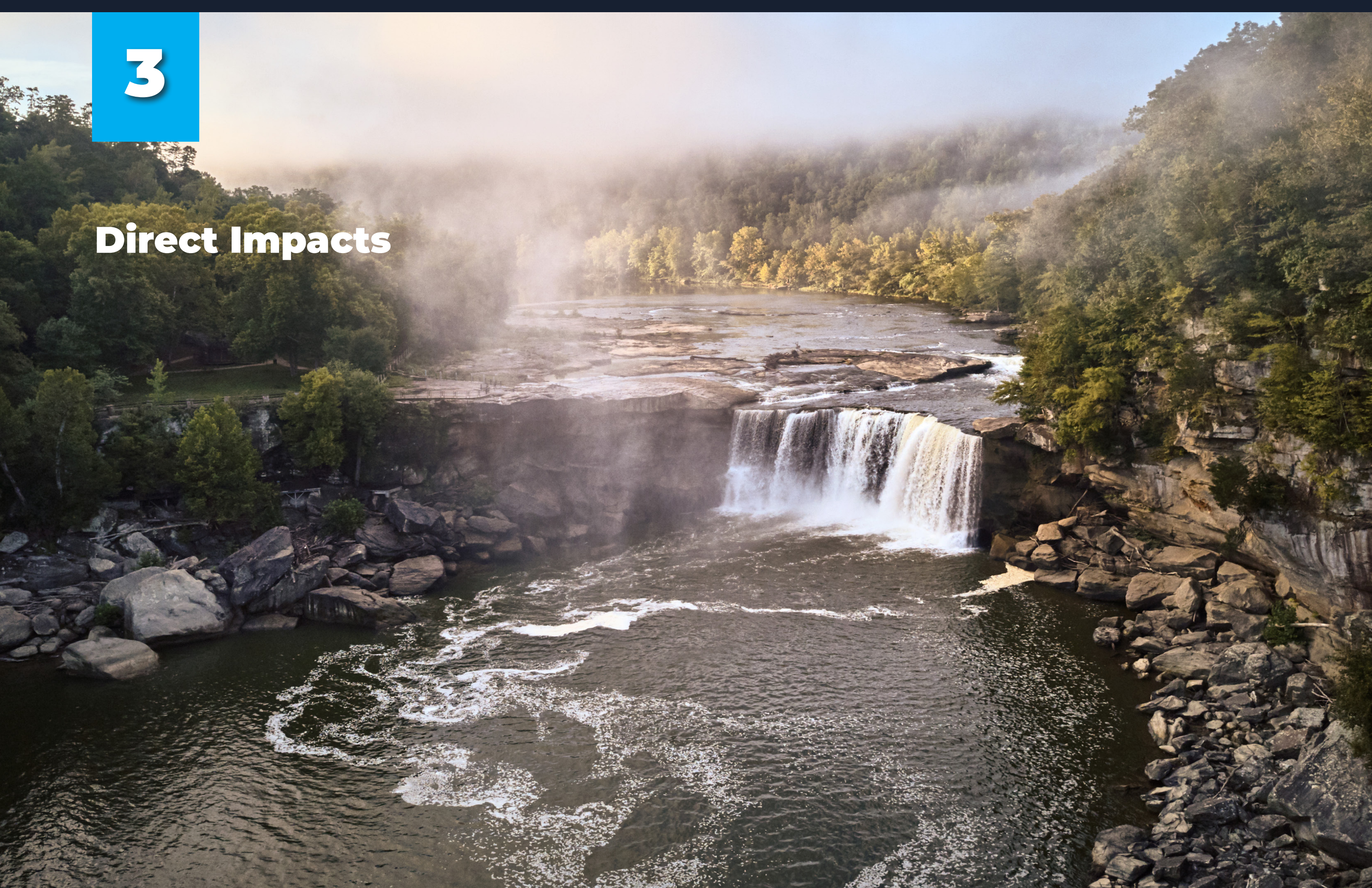
Kentucky State Parks and state park owned properties generated \$591.1 million in direct spending in 2024, including park operational spending and spending by non-local visitors at State Parks. This direct spending generated a total economic impact of nearly \$1.1 billion, which supported 8,600 total part-time and full-time jobs throughout Kentucky.

The total statewide economic impact of \$1.1 billion generated approximately \$61.8 million in total state and local tax revenues in 2024.



3

Direct Impacts



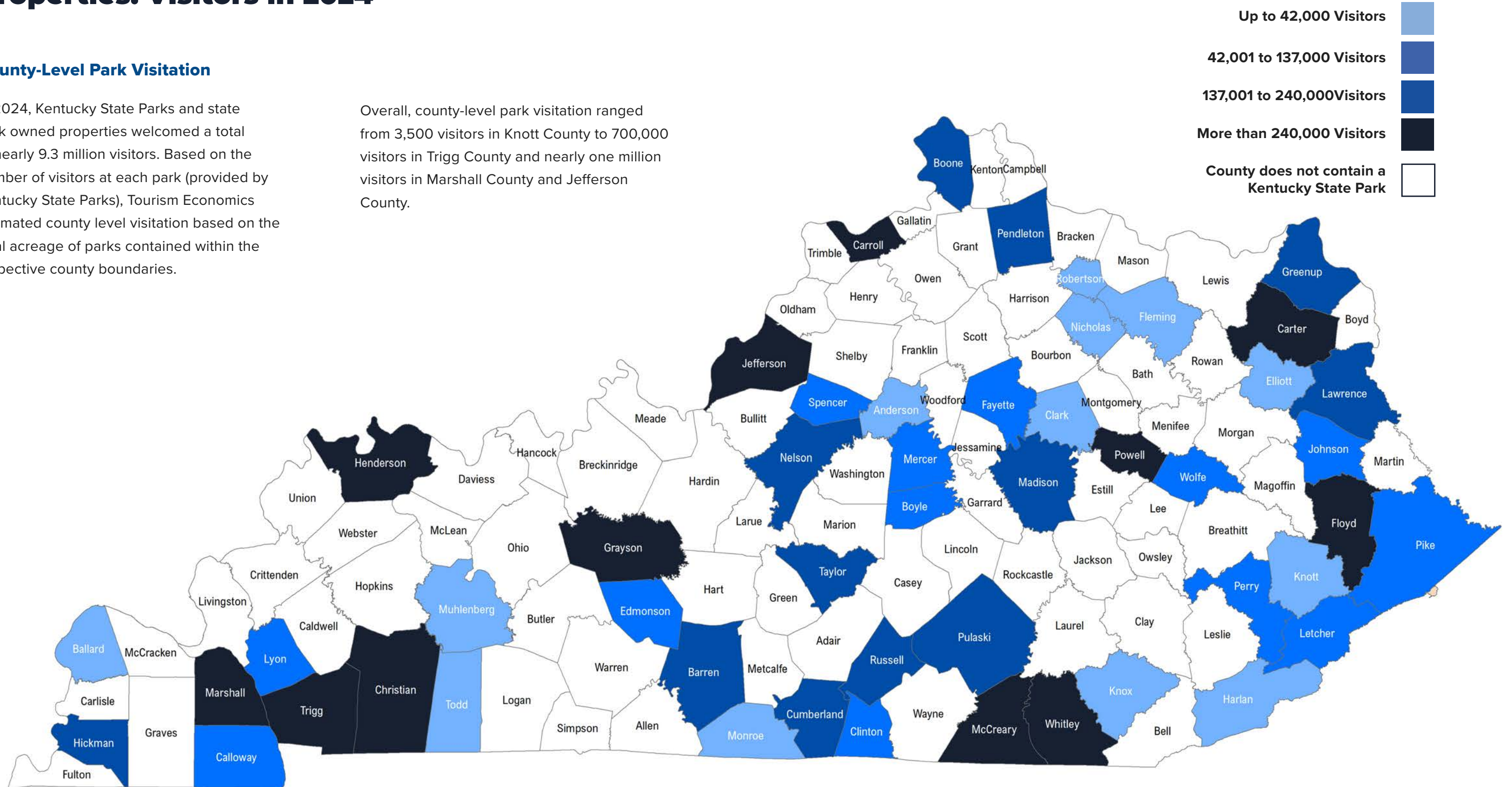
Kentucky State Parks & State Park Owned Properties: Visitors in 2024

Map of Kentucky Counties
Total Visits to Kentucky State Parks & State Park Owned Properties, by County

County-Level Park Visitation

In 2024, Kentucky State Parks and state park owned properties welcomed a total of nearly 9.3 million visitors. Based on the number of visitors at each park (provided by Kentucky State Parks), Tourism Economics estimated county level visitation based on the total acreage of parks contained within the respective county boundaries.

Overall, county-level park visitation ranged from 3,500 visitors in Knott County to 700,000 visitors in Trigg County and nearly one million visitors in Marshall County and Jefferson County.



Source: Kentucky State Parks & Tourism Economics

Note: Estimates of Parks visitation by county is based on the number of visits by Park and the number of Park acres in each county.

Direct Spending Impacts

Operational Expenditures & Visitor Spending

Direct expenditures amounted to \$591.1 million in 2024

Kentucky State Parks and state park owned properties generated a direct impact of \$591.1 million, including \$120.4 million in operational expenditures and nearly \$470.7 million in on-site and off-site spending by non-local visitors to Kentucky State Parks and state park owned properties.

Kentucky State Parks & State Park Owned Properties
Operational Spending & Spending by Park Visitors, 2024
(\$ millions)

Description	Amount (\$ millions)
Kentucky State Parks operational spending	\$120.4
Spending by visitors to Kentucky State Parks	\$470.7
Total Direct Impact	\$591.1



Kentucky State Parks and state park owned properties generated \$591.1 million in direct spending in 2024

Summary Direct Impacts of Kentucky State Parks in 2024

 \$120.4M Park Operational Spending	+	 \$470.7M Spending by Non-Local Park Visitors	=	 \$591.1M Direct Spending Impact of Kentucky State Parks
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Kentucky State Parks' direct spending of \$591.1 million impacted a number of industries

Direct Impacts Spending by Industry

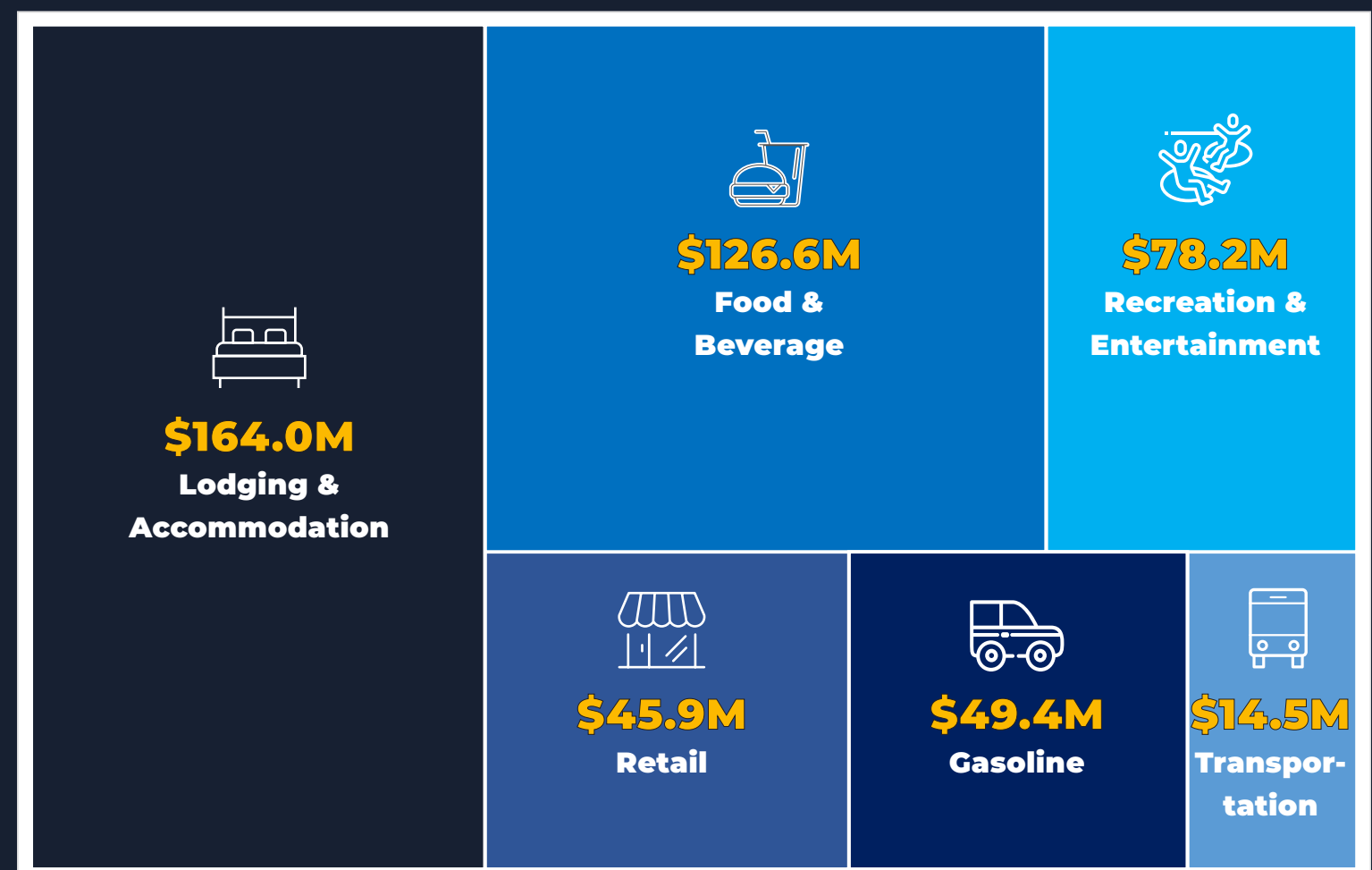
The lodging and food and beverage industries were the most impactful industries in 2024

Kentucky State Parks' direct impact of \$591.1 million was spread across a number of industries. The parks' direct impact included \$164.0 million in spending on lodging and accommodation (including hotels/motels, short-term rentals, and other lodging), \$126.6 million in food and beverage purchases (including full service restaurants, fast food outlets, convenience stores, and alcohol purchases), \$78.2 million in recreation and

entertainment (including purchases at parks, museums, theaters, and other entertainment venues), \$45.9 million in retail purchases (including souvenirs, general merchandise, and purchases at malls and local retailers), \$49.4 million in gasoline purchases, and \$14.5 million in transportation costs (including public transportation, bus tours, airfare, taxis and ride shares).

\$591.1 MILLION

Direct Impact of Kentucky State Parks & State Park Owned Properties



4

Economic Impacts



Economic Impacts Methodology

Oxford Economics estimated the economic impacts of Kentucky State Parks' direct spending using a regional Input-Output (I-O) model based on a customized IMPLAN (www.implan.com) model for the economy of the Commonwealth of Kentucky. IMPLAN is recognized as an industry standard in local-level I-O models.

An I-O model represents a profile of an economy by measuring the relationships among industries and consumers to track the flow of industry revenue to wages, profits, capital, taxes and suppliers. The supply chain is traced as dollars flow through the economy, representing indirect impacts. The model also calculates the induced impacts of spending. Induced impacts represent benefits to the economy as incomes earned as a result of direct spending are spent in the local economy, generating additional sales, jobs, taxes, and income.

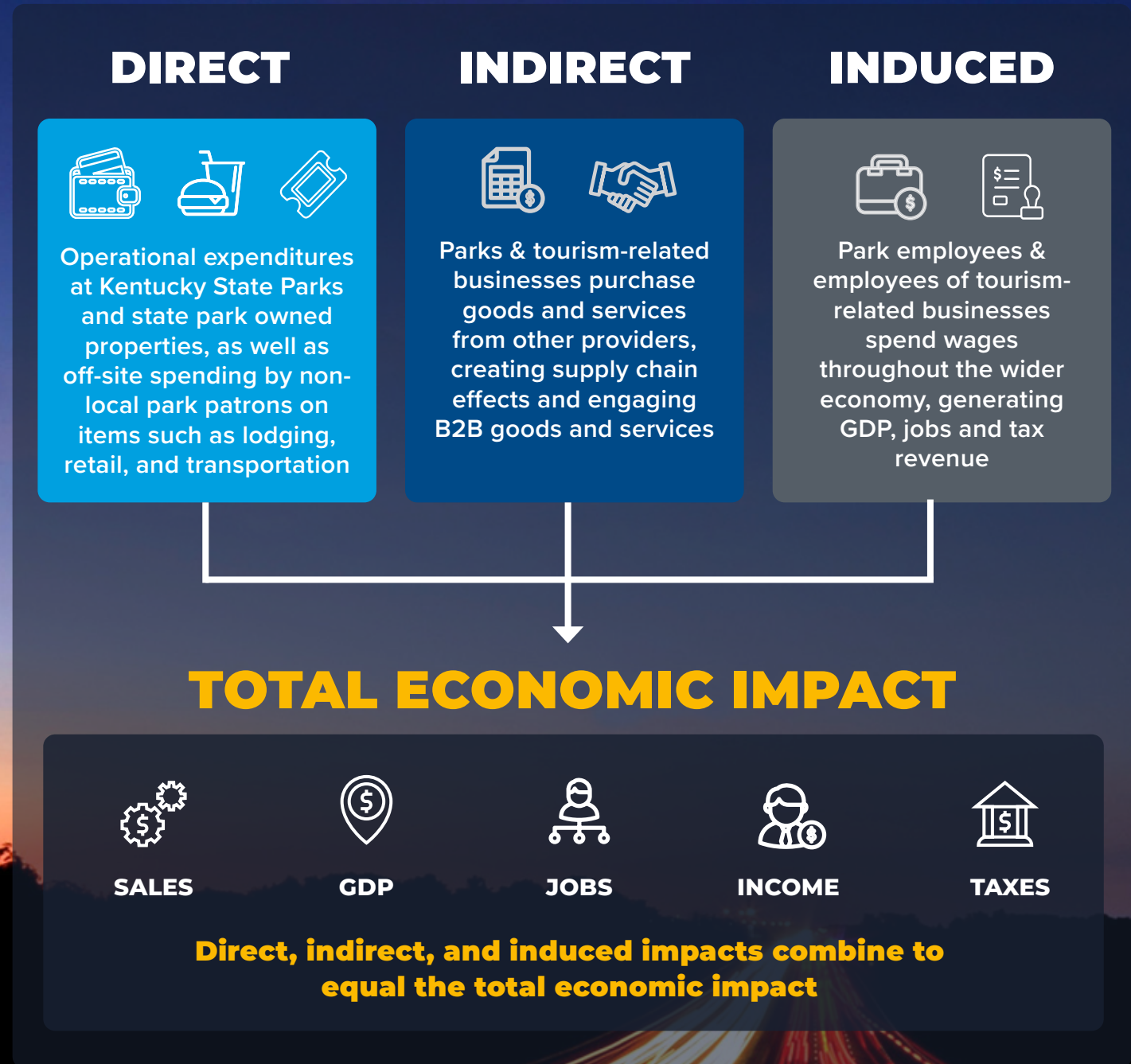
The modeling process begins with aligning the direct expenditure measurements with the related sectors in the model (e.g. hotels, restaurants, retail, and recreation). The model is then run to trace the flow of these expenditures through the economy. In this process, the inter-relationships between consumers and industries generate each level of impact.

IMPLAN calculates three levels of impact – direct, indirect, and induced – for a broad set of indicators.

These include the following:

- Business sales (also called gross output)
- Household income (including wages and benefits)
- Employment
- Federal taxes
- State and local taxes

Economic Impacts Model Framework



Economic Impacts of Kentucky State Parks & State Park Owned Properties Commonwealth of Kentucky (2024)

Park operational expenditures and spending by non-local visitors to Kentucky State Parks & state park owned properties generated a total statewide economic impact of nearly \$1.1 billion in 2024.

The \$590.1 million in park operational spending and spending by non-local park visitors generated \$251.9 million in indirect business sales and \$252.2 million in induced business sales, resulting in a total statewide economic impact of nearly \$1.1 billion throughout Kentucky in 2024.

The recreation and entertainment industry was the most-impacted industry with \$191.1 million in total business sales in 2024. Lodging and food & beverage followed with \$164.4 million and \$157.7 million in total business sales, respectively.

Kentucky State Parks & State Park Owned Properties Business Sales Impacts in Kentucky



\$591.1M

**State Parks
Direct
Impact**



+\$251.9M

**Indirect
Business
Sales**



+\$252.2M

**Induced
Business
Sales**



= \$1,095.1M

**Total
Economic
Impact**

**Kentucky State Parks
& state park owned
properties generated
a total economic
impact of \$1.1 billion
in Kentucky in 2024.**

Kentucky State Parks & State Park Owned Properties Business Sales Impacts in Kentucky 2024, by Industry (\$ millions)

	Direct Business Sales	Indirect Business Sales	Induced Business Sales	Total Business Sales
Total, all industries	\$591.1	\$251.9	\$252.2	\$1,095.2
By industry				
Recreation and Entertainment	\$188.0	\$1.0	\$2.2	\$191.1
Lodging	\$164.0	\$0.0	\$0.4	\$164.4
Food & Beverage	\$126.6	\$9.9	\$21.1	\$157.7
Finance, Insurance and Real Estate	\$0.0	\$78.1	\$68.4	\$146.5
Business Services	\$0.0	\$66.8	\$20.5	\$87.3
Retail Trade	\$45.9	\$3.6	\$23.4	\$72.9
Gasoline Stations	\$49.4	\$0.4	\$2.1	\$51.9
Education and Health Care	\$0.0	\$1.1	\$47.3	\$48.4
Other Transport	\$14.5	\$16.3	\$7.5	\$38.3
Construction and Utilities	\$2.7	\$19.4	\$8.1	\$30.2
Communications	\$0.0	\$17.2	\$9.1	\$26.3
Wholesale Trade	\$0.0	\$10.7	\$14.0	\$24.7
Personal Services	\$0.0	\$6.7	\$12.4	\$19.1
Manufacturing	\$0.0	\$9.0	\$8.0	\$17.0
Government	\$0.0	\$9.9	\$5.5	\$15.5
Agriculture, Fishing, Mining	\$0.0	\$1.1	\$1.2	\$2.3
Air Transport	\$0.0	\$0.7	\$0.9	\$1.6

Source: Tourism Economics

Note: Totals may not sum due to rounding.

Kentucky State Parks & State Park Owned Properties: Employment Impacts by Industry, 2024

Kentucky State Parks and state park owned properties generated a total employment impact of more than 8,600 part-time and full-time jobs throughout Kentucky in 2024.

The total economic impact attributable to Kentucky State Parks supported approximately 8,600 total part-time and full-time jobs in the statewide economy of Kentucky, including approximately 6,300 direct jobs, 1,200 indirect jobs, and 1,200 induced jobs.

Kentucky State Parks & State Park Owned Properties - Employment Impacts in Kentucky 2024, by Industry (number of part-time and full-time jobs)

	Direct Employment	Indirect Employment	Induced Employment	Total Employment
Total, all industries	6,255	1,167	1,220	8,642
By industry				
Recreation and Entertainment	2,758	16	27	2,801
Food & Beverage	1,473	103	195	1,771
Other Transport	0	118	46	164
Lodging	1,368	0	5	1,373
Retail Trade	565	26	174	765
Business Services	0	408	123	531
Finance, Insurance and Real Estate	0	291	130	421
Education and Health Care	0	10	311	321
Personal Services	0	55	108	164
Gasoline Stations	79	2	11	92
Wholesale Trade	0	24	27	51
Government	0	34	14	49
Construction and Utilities	12	24	12	48
Communications	0	26	14	40
Manufacturing	0	20	10	30
Agriculture, Fishing, Mining	0	7	11	18
Air Transport	0	2	2	3

Source: Tourism Economics

Note: Totals may not sum due to rounding.

Kentucky State Parks & State Park Owned Properties: Labor Income Impacts by Industry, 2024

Kentucky State Parks and state park owned properties generated a total labor income impact of \$382.6 million throughout Kentucky in 2024.

Park operational expenditures and spending by non-local Park visitors generated \$243.1 million in direct labor income, \$68.5 million in indirect labor income, and \$71.1 million in induced labor income, resulting in \$382.6 million in total labor income in 2024.

Kentucky State Parks & State Park Owned Properties - Labor Income Impacts in Kentucky 2024, by Industry (\$ millions)

	Direct Labor Income	Indirect Labor Income	Induced Labor Income	Total Labor Income
Total, all industries	\$243.1	\$68.5	\$71.1	\$382.6
By industry				
Recreation and Entertainment	\$115.5	\$0.4	\$0.8	\$116.7
Food & Beverage	\$50.3	\$3.6	\$6.1	\$60.0
Lodging	\$53.7	\$0.0	\$0.2	\$53.9
Finance, Insurance and Real Estate	\$0.0	\$28.4	\$8.2	\$36.6
Education and Health Care	\$0.0	\$0.5	\$24.9	\$25.4
Retail Trade	\$15.1	\$1.1	\$7.0	\$23.2
Business Services	\$0.0	\$10.3	\$7.4	\$17.7
Other Transport	\$5.1	\$8.4	\$3.0	\$16.6
Personal Services	\$0.0	\$2.7	\$4.7	\$7.4
Government	\$0.0	\$4.3	\$1.8	\$6.1
Wholesale Trade	\$0.0	\$2.4	\$3.0	\$5.4
Construction and Utilities	\$0.6	\$2.3	\$1.0	\$3.9
Communications	\$0.0	\$2.2	\$1.3	\$3.5
Gasoline Stations	\$2.8	\$0.1	\$0.4	\$3.3
Manufacturing	\$0.0	\$1.6	\$0.9	\$2.5
Air Transport	\$0.0	\$0.2	\$0.2	\$0.3
Agriculture, Fishing, Mining	\$0.0	\$0.1	\$0.1	\$0.2

Source: Tourism Economics

Note: Totals may not sum due to rounding.

Kentucky State Parks & State Park Owned Properties: Fiscal (Tax) Impacts

Kentucky State Parks' total economic impact of \$1.1 billion attributable to park operational spending and spending by non-local park visitors generated \$125.1 million in total tax revenues in 2024.

Park operational spending and spending by non-local park visitors generated a total fiscal (tax) impact of \$125.1 million in 2024.

Total federal taxes amounted to \$63.3 million, including \$25.9 million in personal income taxes, \$5.3 million in corporate taxes, \$2.6 million in indirect business taxes, and \$29.6 million in social insurance taxes in 2024.

Total state and local taxes amounted to \$61.8 million, including \$30.2 million in sales taxes, \$10.9 million in personal income taxes, \$2.3 million in corporate taxes, \$300,000 in social insurance taxes (including social security, medicare, and unemployment taxes), \$2.5 million in excise taxes and fees, and \$15.6 million in property taxes in 2024.

Kentucky State Parks & State Park Owned Properties: Fiscal (Tax) Impacts 2024, by Industry (\$ millions)

	Direct	Indirect & Induced	Total
Total Taxes	\$73.9	\$73.0	\$125.1
Federal	\$34.0	\$51.2	\$63.3
Personal income	\$16.0	\$9.9	\$25.9
Corporate	\$2.0	\$3.2	\$5.3
Indirect business	\$1.7	\$0.9	\$2.6
Social insurance	\$14.2	\$15.4	\$29.6
State and Local	\$39.9	\$21.8	\$61.8
Sales	\$20.1	\$10.1	\$30.2
Personal income	\$6.7	\$4.1	\$10.9
Corporate	\$0.9	\$1.4	\$2.3
Social insurance	\$0.1	\$0.2	\$0.3
Excise and fees	\$1.7	\$0.9	\$2.5
Property	\$10.4	\$5.2	\$15.6

Source: Tourism Economics

Note: Totals may not sum due to rounding.

About the Research Team



Oxford Economics was founded in 1981 as a commercial venture with Oxford University's business college to provide economic forecasting and modelling to UK companies and financial institutions expanding abroad. Since then, we have become one of the world's foremost independent global advisory firms, providing reports, forecasts and analytical tools on 200 countries, 100 industrial sectors and over 3,000 cities. Our best-of-class global economic and industry models and analytical tools give us an unparalleled ability to forecast external market trends and assess their economic, social and business impact.

Oxford Economics is an adviser to corporate, financial and government decision-makers and thought leaders. Our worldwide client base comprises over 2,000 international organizations, including leading multinational companies and financial institutions; key government bodies and trade associations; and top universities, consultancies, and think tanks.

This study was conducted by the Tourism Economics group within Oxford Economics. Tourism Economics combines an understanding of traveler dynamics with rigorous economics in order to answer the most important questions facing destinations, investors, and strategic planners. By combining quantitative methods with industry knowledge, Tourism Economics designs custom market strategies, destination recovery plans, forecasting models, policy analysis, and economic impact studies.

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