

WILDLIFE TOURISM IS HIGHLY IMPORTANT FOR THE GULF OF MEXICO STATES



According to a report that was released by Datu Research, an economic research firm, wildlife tourism in the Gulf of Mexico states is very profitable and generates over \$19 billion annually, with over 2.6 million jobs. The work contained in this research report was funded by the Environmental Defense Fund, and received support from Walton Family Foundation.

The wildlife tourism industry, alongside the Gulf Coast economy, is extensively significant to the economy of the region. **It heavily depends on the endangered ecosystem of the Gulf Coast in Florida, Texas, Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi.** The entire wildlife industry covered by this report entails hunting, recreational fishing, and wildlife watching.

Further to the total annual spending of about \$19 billion, the report reveals that the industry attracts 20 million people, generating \$5.3 billion through tax revenues, and tourism jobs.

The largest share of spending is about \$8 billion and is attributed by recreational fishing whereas the wildlife watching contributes to about \$6.5 billion. On the other hand, hunting generates over \$5 billion.

Wildlife tourism segment mainly flourishes in Florida with spending over \$8 billion, followed by Texas which has over \$5 billion. Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana also regard wildlife tourism highly important since the segment yields \$2 billion for each of the states.

The total number of visitors attracted by wildlife watching in the Gulf Coast is over 11.6 billion. This is more than any other wildlife activity, and is closely followed by recreational fishing and even hunting. Texas and Florida attract more than 7 million wildlife visitors. The number of visitors for states like Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama are about 2 million for each.

Another thing highlighted by the report is that the tourism industry creates over 489,256 jobs across the 53 counties, from Texas to Florida. Half of these jobs are based in Florida, whereas 26,294 jobs are created by Mississippi tourism, thus covering about three counties.

The total tax revenue is about \$5.3 billion. Out of it, \$2.5 billion is both local and state annual revenue. It is important to note that Florida leads the revenue with over \$1 billion, followed by Mississippi and its counties with over \$209 million.

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