

# Celebrating the Economic Impact of a Priceless Jewel

## Survey Overview

### 2016 TROUT UNLIMITED SURVEY

All trout anglers in Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa are required by Departments of Natural Resources to buy a trout stamp in addition to a regular fishing license. In 2016, a survey was mailed to a representative sample of anglers who bought trout stamps. Surveys were also made available online for trout stamp holders encouraged by those who received the mailed surveys.

The survey was conducted by Donna Anderson, Ph.D., a private consultant and economics professor at the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse. The survey contained questions developed in collaboration with Trout Unlimited (TU) pertaining to the following:

- Demographic characteristics of anglers.
- Home zip codes of anglers and whether the anglers visited the Driftless Area specifically to fish.
- Angler habits, including number of visits and length of time spent visiting the Driftless Area, and fish and fishing activity preferences.
- Visit-related expenditures within the Driftless Area.
- Knowledge and opinions on various issues important to Trout Unlimited.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Driftless Area Restoration Effort and this report are made possible through the generous support of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), numerous Trout Unlimited chapters, state councils and individual supporters, and through a National Fish Habitat Partnership grant administered by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, FWS, and Natural Resources Conservation Service. TU's Driftless Area Restoration Effort staff, (Project Manager Jeff Hastings and Outreach Coordinator Duke Welter) also contributed support to the surveyor.

The Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin Departments of Natural Resources assisted in providing random samples of trout stamp holders in each state. Prof. Donna Anderson, Ph.D., of the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse Department of Economics, designed the survey and selected the population surveyed, analyzed the data and wrote the report.

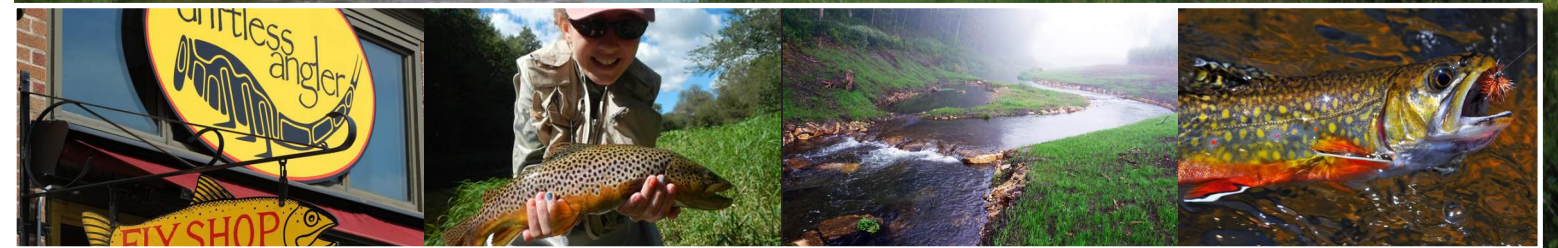
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#### DRIFTLESS AREA RESTORATION EFFORT

The goal of the Driftless Area Restoration Effort (DARE) is to expand restoration and protection of streams and watersheds in the unglaciated Driftless Area located in the heart of the Upper Mississippi River basin. TU and partner groups, principally the state Departments of Natural Resources, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, County conservation agencies, and other conservation organizations work cooperatively with landowners to implement land conservation and stream restoration practices that benefit water quality, fish and wildlife, land health, and rural economies. Increased coordination among numerous agencies and organizations has resulted in the ability to leverage significantly more resources for restoration and improve the quality of work being done.

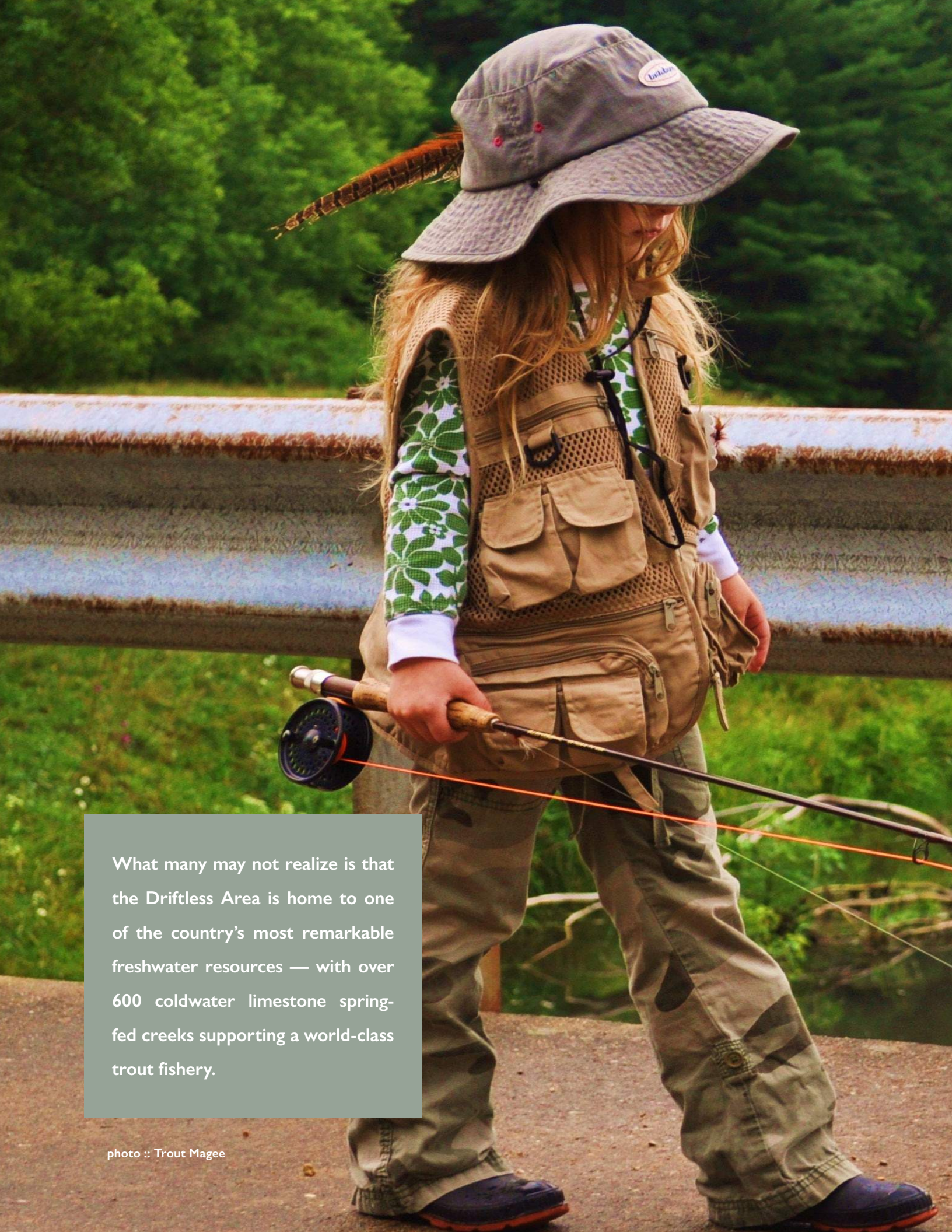
To download a copy of the complete Economic Impact report, to learn more about Trout Unlimited and the Driftless Area Restoration Effort, or make a donation to the project, please visit our website at [www.tu.org/driftless](http://www.tu.org/driftless) or [www.dare Restoration.com](http://www.dare Restoration.com).



The Economic Impact of Trout Angling  
in the Driftless Area







What many may not realize is that the Driftless Area is home to one of the country's most remarkable freshwater resources — with over 600 coldwater limestone spring-fed creeks supporting a world-class trout fishery.

photo :: Trout Magee

*“Driftless” refers to a geographic area in the Midwest that remained unglaciated during the last ice age. As glaciers moved across North America they altered the landscape and left behind “drift”—a mix of rock, boulders, silt and other residue. The Driftless Area retained its remarkable terrain because it was not altered by a glacier.*



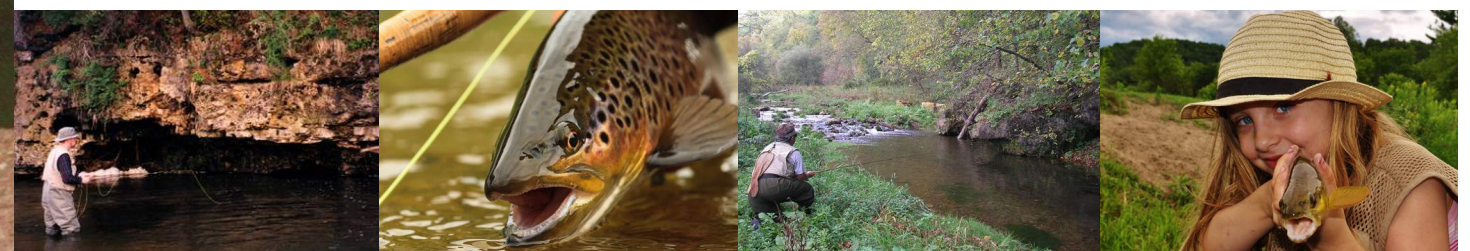
The Driftless Area makes up an unglaciated region in portions of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa and Illinois.

**THE REMARKABLE DRIFTLESS AREA** is 24,000 square miles in the upper Midwest characterized by limestone and sandstone bluffs, deep river valleys, and more than 600 coldwater spring creeks which flow more than 6,000 miles. The scenic area lies in southwest and Western Wisconsin, southeast Minnesota, northeast Iowa and northwestern Illinois.

The Driftless Area has emerged as a nationally-recognized attraction for sport fishing due to an abundance of wild trout in the cold, fertile streams. This Driftless Area resurgence in recent decades corresponds with a focus on improved and restored streams, though the area's intimate setting, wild streams and high-quality fishery remain permanent attractions.

Visitors to the Driftless Area who come to fish may also enjoy canoeing, kayaking, biking, bird-watching, geocaching and other outdoor activities—all of which add to the green economy of the area. The area attracts a loyal demographic of anglers who return year after year, and who bring younger anglers and family members with them. The entire economy of the region is strengthened by returning anglers and their friends and family.

The natural resource potential, wise investment in restoration and fishing access has enabled the communities in the Driftless Area to capture a sizable portion of those economic benefits. As this study shows, trout angling is an economic growth engine in the Driftless Area, with some communities working diligently to realize the economic benefits of these features.





## WHY A 2017 DRIFTLESS AREA ECONOMIC STUDY?

In 2016, Trout Unlimited commissioned a study of the economic impact of trout fishing and stream restoration activities the Driftless Area. The purpose of the study was to estimate the economic impact of trout fishing and stream restoration activities, summarize information on angler demographics and opinions, and identify characteristics of a healthy "Trout Economy." The study measures new spending in the region that occurs as a result of an event or feature such as trout streams, as opposed to spending that would have occurred anyway.

Healthy Trout Economies are comprised of a mixture of energetic private businesses, active non-governmental organizations and volunteers, and an effective government that all work together to make the most of the gift of miles of clear, cold trout streams. This study hopes to build awareness of the positive impact of trout fishing & stream restoration activities—and what a healthy Trout Economy can do for communities of the Driftless Area.

The goals of the study included:

- Providing current information about angler habits
- Exploring angler knowledge and opinions on stream and habitat restorative activities
- Providing an estimate of spending by trout anglers and the impact to local economies

*"Our first year, we did a survey of credit card zip codes, and found that during the season 62 percent of our customers were from Minneapolis, Chicago, Madison or Milwaukee. When I saw that, I was overwhelmed and flabbergasted. One Chicago angler made 16 trips to the Viroqua area last season, and had a meal each time at the same seat at the counter."*

*~Chef Luke Zahm  
The Driftless Cafe, Viroqua, WI*

## WHO'S FISHING THE DRIFTLESS AREA TODAY?

The typical angler fishing the Driftless Area today is a 51 year old male with a college education earning a median income of about \$90,000. These anglers fished in an average of 8 Driftless Area streams out of the over 600 available in the region. The average angler who lived outside the Driftless Area traveled 138 miles to fish (275 miles per trip), and has fished there 18 years. They typically travel with other companions and average nearly 6 trips annually to the area.

### PREFERENCES OF DRIFTLESS AREA ANGLERS

The Driftless Area's popularity with anglers can be attributed to the excellent trout fishing, a preference for streams with restored habitat, widespread legal public access (almost 1,200 miles and rising), and a generally hospitable attitude among landowners who grant permission to anglers who ask to fish. With almost 6,000 miles of designated trout water, and room for plenty more miles to be added as their conditions improve, the area is on the upswing.

Anglers may use several different methods to fish for trout. Fly fishing was the most preferred method for trout fishing (51.4%), but other methods including spin fishing with lures, live and artificial bait were reported. All methods have an effect on direct and indirect spending in the area.

On a typical trout fishing excursion to the Driftless Area, many anglers prefer to stay for more than one day, often accompanied by friends and family. They typically like to enjoy the area by staying at local campgrounds, motels and cabins—which help the area's economies thrive.

#### [Angler Lodging Preferences]

The average angler and traveling companions spend about 2.5 days per trip to fish Driftless Area streams. Many prefer to camp, but they have other options. In fact, more anglers are looking for additional lodging options (rural lodges, cabins, cabooses—even a converted grain mill) for trips with family and friends.

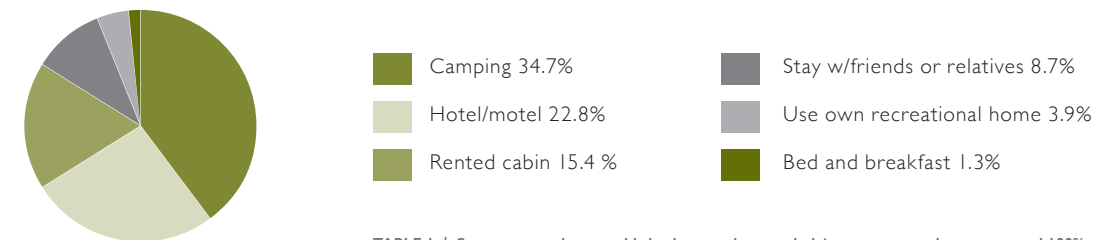
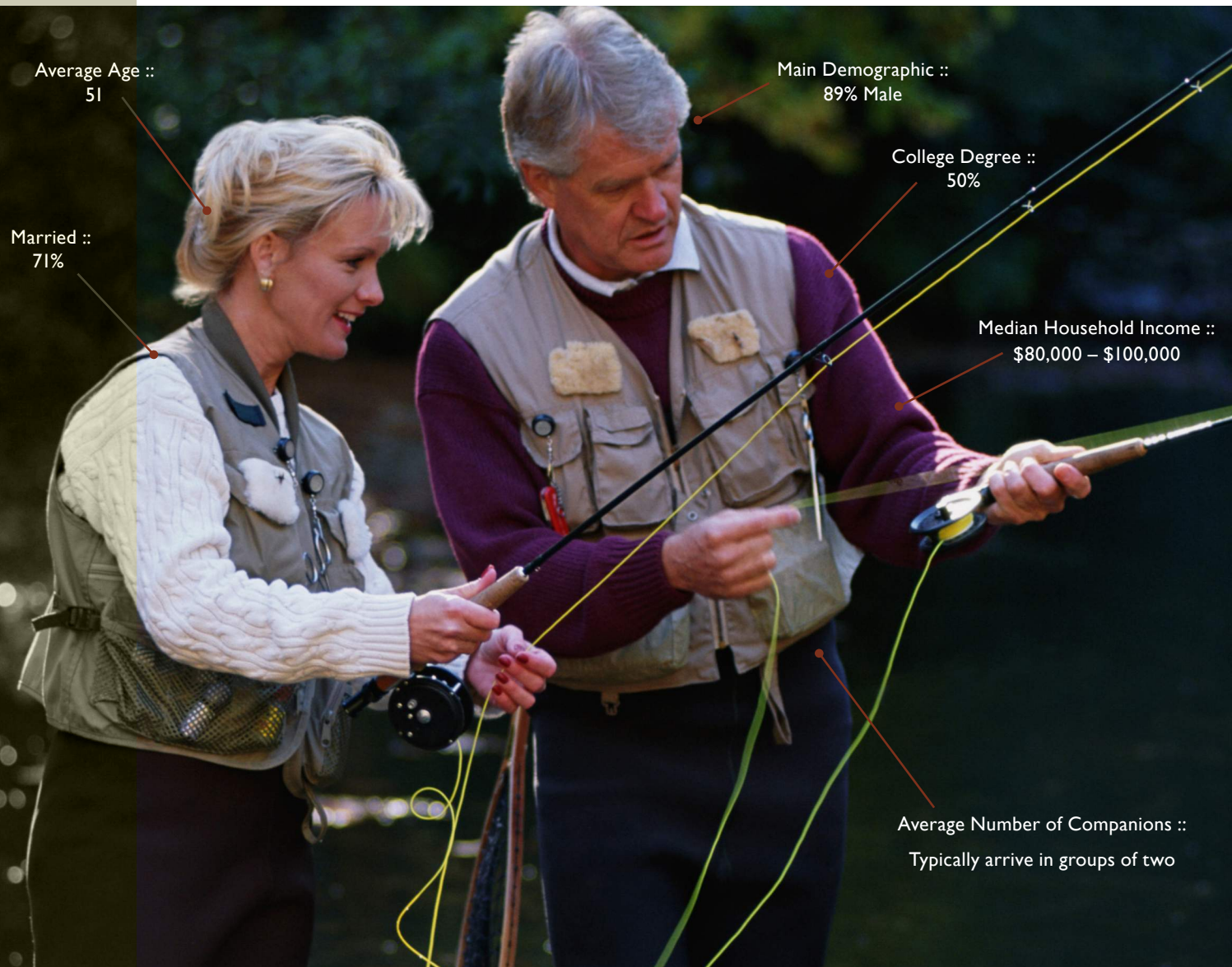


TABLE 1 | Survey respondents could check more than one lodging type, so total may not equal 100%



Average Age ::  
51

Main Demographic ::  
89% Male

College Degree ::  
50%

Median Household Income ::  
\$80,000 – \$100,000

Married ::  
71%

Average Number of Companions ::  
Typically arrive in groups of two





## MULTIPLIER EFFECT: DIRECT AND INDIRECT SPENDING IN THE DRIFTLESS AREA

### GROWING NUMBERS SHOW ECONOMIC BENEFITS

The full picture of economic benefit from trout angling and conservation efforts starts with people fishing. Anglers from inside and outside the Driftless Area account for the direct spending. But dollars spent on stream restoration projects (materials, fuel, equipment rental and purchase, repairs wages for restoration workers), along with spending from volunteers also have a significant impact on the Driftless Area economy. In fact, the direct spending by visiting anglers, government agencies and non-government organizations adds well over \$413 million to the Driftless Area economy each year. The secondary and ripple effects of this spending results in an additional estimated amount of over \$670 million added to the Driftless Area economy each year.

This study also reveals that 6,500 jobs across the region are supported by recreational angling, and that the total spending by visiting and resident anglers has increased significantly since 2008. Overall, it is estimated that the total spending and economic impact of recreational angling in the Driftless area has increased from \$1.1 billion in 2008 to \$1.6 billion in 2016.

*“Businesses in our small town look forward to spring, because we know visiting anglers will be showing up. They bring an immediate surge in our business activity, and the start of our busy season. When they visit, they pay for lodging, food, supplies and entertainment. The resulting ripple effect in the community is profound.”*

*~Steve Corson, co-owner, Trailhead Inn  
Preston, MN. (Population 1,305)*

### DIRECT EFFECTS

Some businesses have a front-row seat to the economic benefits and direct effects of trout fishing. Businesses like the Driftless Angler Fly Shop in Viroqua, Wisconsin, benefit from the many anglers who stop on their way into town to pick up trout flies, fishing equipment and neighborly advice.

| Category                                | Average         |
|---|-----------------|
| Fishing supplies (bait, tackle, etc.)   | \$55.91         |
| Guiding services                        | \$29.18         |
| Restaurants/bars                        | \$78.54         |
| Amusements/entertainment                | \$8.79          |
| Equipment rental (canoe, kayak, etc.)   | \$2.04          |
| Auto related services (gas, oil, etc.)  | \$61.96         |
| Lodging                                 | \$97.89         |
| Groceries (including alcohol)           | \$67.48         |
| Souvenirs, gifts, apparel, other retail | \$14.12         |
| Fishing equipment per year              | \$59.00         |
| <b>AVERAGE TOTAL PER ANGLER</b>         | <b>\$474.91</b> |

#### [Hospitality Benefits]

Hotels, motels, B&Bs, restaurants, bars, and other hospitality businesses staff up during the fishing season.

#### [Retail Benefits]

Grocers, gas stations, general merchandise stores and, of course sporting goods and fly shops all benefit from the fishing season. Sightseeing transportation, group tours, rental cars, rental gear —the list goes on. All these are directly impacted by the money spent by anglers.

#### [Regional Economic Benefits]

The regional construction and services industry is another economic sector affected by trout fishing in the Driftless Area. Restoration materials, building supplies, heavy equipment rental and maintenance, restoration expertise are other largely unseen and indirect economic effects from restoration of our coldwater resources.

### ECONOMIC MULTIPLIERS: INDIRECT AND INDUCED EFFECTS

The entire picture of economic effects must also include the largely unseen ripple effects that result from angler spending. These secondary effects of trout angler spending are also known as the “multiplier” effects on local businesses as the initial, direct, spending circulates further within the regional economy, creating additional sales and employment opportunities in other businesses.

#### TOTAL EFFECT OF ANGLERS

|                              |                           |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Total Spending by Anglers    | \$952,146,702.82          |
| Stream Restoration spending  | \$5,022,000.00            |
| Total Direct Spending        | \$957,168,702.82          |
| Total Secondary Effects      | \$670,018,091.97          |
| <b>Total Economic Impact</b> | <b>\$1,627,186,794.79</b> |

#### [Indirect Effects]

Indirect economic effects are those changes in sales, income, or jobs in those industries that supply goods and services to visitors. Examples include local organic farms that supply food to local grocery stores and farmer’s markets.

#### [Induced Effects]

Induced economic effects are those increased sales from households within the Driftless Area, households of people who are supporting the work in one of the sectors.

TABLE 3 | Total Economic Impact is a sum of direct, indirect and multiplier effects.

If Driftless Area habitat restoration amounts to \$5 million a year, and Driftless Area fishing brings in well over \$1.6 billion a year, local economies have a strong incentive to push for more restoration to take place.



**MAT WAGNER** | Co-Owner  
Driftless Angler Fly Shop, Viroqua, WI

