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## **Economic Contributions of Blue Ridge Guide Association Guided Trout Fishing Trips to the Local Economy**

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The Blue Ridge Guide Association is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to preserving the waterways of the South Holston and Watauga rivers. Their mission focuses on conserving the local flora and fauna while protecting the natural beauty of these rivers for future generations. To support ecosystem balance, they offer guided fishing tours, providing anglers with opportunities to enjoy the waters while contributing to the economies of Northeastern Tennessee and Western North Carolina.

An online survey was administered to BRGA anglers via Qualtrics© online survey software. Two hundred and sixty-eight anglers participated in a guided trout fishing trip to the tailwaters of the South Holston River or the Watauga River during the past 12 months and completed the survey. Anglers took an average of 3.80 guided trout fishing trips to the South Holston River or the Watauga River during the past 12 months during the previous 12 months. The average household income reported by these anglers is \$171,000 (83% of respondents answered the income question). Thirty-two percent of the anglers are from North Carolina, 16% are from Tennessee, 12% are from South Carolina, 11% are from Georgia and 10% are from Virginia. The rest of the anglers are from 17 other states. The average one-way travel distance from the anglers' resident Zipcode to Johnson City, TN is 274 miles.

Twenty-two percent of the most recent guided trout fishing trips were on the South Holston River, 18% were on the Watauga River and 61% were on both rivers. Sixty percent of the anglers had an annual Tennessee fishing license, 30% had a three-day license, 6% had a lifetime license and 4% had some other type of license. Fifty percent of these trips were overnight trips. For those who stayed overnight, the average number of nights stayed was 3.08. The average number of days fished on the most recent trip was 1.84. The average number of people in the travel party was 3.31 and 2.49 of these were anglers. Sixty-five percent of anglers were very satisfied with their most recent trip and 22% were somewhat satisfied.

Respondents answered questions on their expenditures over ten categories, including entertainment, lodging, restaurants, gasoline, groceries, sporting goods, entertainment, travel, souvenirs and other spending. The top two categories for expenditures per angler

per trip were lodging and restaurant meals. The average lodging expenditure is \$561 per trip (the median is \$282). The average expenditure on restaurant meals is \$121. Average spending on entertainment is \$130 per trip, spending in an “other” category is \$120 per trip and spending on sporting goods is \$95 per trip.

The average total spending per travel party per trip was \$2,962. The average total spending per angler per trip was \$1,119. Individual anglers were asked for expenditures by the travel party to account for shared lodging and other group expenditures. Sixty-five percent of the anglers who answered for the travel party said that other members of the travel party who fished spent about the same amount of money on the trip. Eighty-seven percent of the respondents said that the most recent trip was “typical” in terms of trip duration, size of the travel party and spending.

An estimate of aggregate spending is equal to product of the number of angler trips and spending per trip. An estimate of the number of float trips in Tennessee on the Watauga and South Holston River is 12,000. These trips typically have 2 anglers. Each angler fishes 1.84 days on each trip. The average total spending per angler per trip was \$1,119. Our estimate of annual direct spending is \$14,595,652 across all angler trips.

Direct spending circulates through the regional economy and generates additional spending through the “multiplier effect.” Total direct spending, by spending category, is entered into a geographic input-output model (IMPLAN) that captures these multiplier effects. The total economic contributions of the BRGA guided trips are estimated as \$23,166,024 in economic activity (sales). This implies a spending multiplier of 1.58 across all expenditure categories. This level of annual economic activity creates local jobs and labor income. A job count is an appropriate way to measure impact as it’s an intuitive concept and provides a broad measure of economic opportunities created for workers. However, just reporting job creation ignores the fact that not all jobs are equal. Therefore, labor income is also reported and represents the sum of both employee compensation and proprietor income. Associated with the annual estimate of economic impact is 215 jobs and \$7,709,565 in labor income. Finally, this level of economic activity generates \$3,553,493 in tax dollar revenues.

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