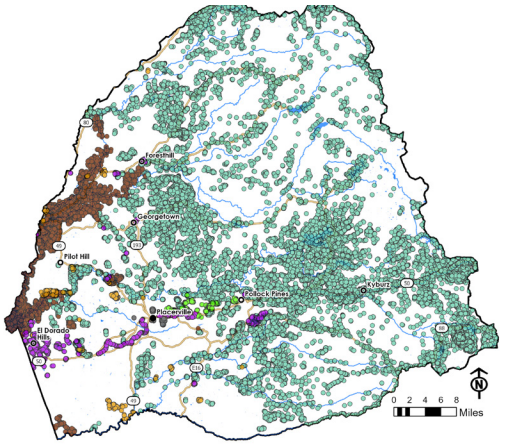
Outdoor Recreation in the Upper American River Watershed: An Analysis of Economic Impact and Value

Client: El Dorado Water Agency
Location: El Dorado County, CA
Study Period: Jan – Nov 2023

BACKGROUND

The Upper American River Watershed (UARW) is a significant asset for outdoor recreation that serves both locals and visitors from around California and beyond. As the demand for outdoor recreation continues to grow and additional pressure is placed on the UARW, a more detailed accounting of visitation and usage of recreational lands in the watershed can inform decision making, resource allocation, and engagement with interested parties.



UARW Visit Locations

SCOPE OF WORK

The primary objective of this study was to evaluate both the economic impacts, stemming from tourist spending, and the broader economic benefits supported by outdoor recreation lands in the UARW. Key steps included quantifying visitation patterns, developing expenditure profiles, estimating the economic impact of outdoor recreation-related spending, and quantifying the non-market benefits of such recreation.

To overcome the challenges of sparse and inconsistent visitation data, the study employed advanced data analytics, integrating geospatial and mobile location data to enhance and augment the existing observed visitation data (>500 million data points). With the support of big data processing and cloud-based platforms, coupled with machine learning techniques, the study offered a richer and more accurate insight into visitor volumes and behaviors than is possible with traditional counting methods.

RESULTS

Key findings from the analysis included:

- **Visitor Days:** The analysis estimated approximately 7 million visitor days within the watershed's outdoor recreation lands in 2022, of which 4.5 million were on state and federal lands.
- **Economic Impact:** Outdoor recreation in the UARW generated spending of $348 million in 2022, supporting roughly 3,100 jobs, more than $136 million in wages, and $25 million in taxes.
- **Tourist Spending:** Tourists – defined as visitors who live outside the watershed– were responsible for approximately 53% of all visits but accounted for more than 84% of total expenditures.
- **Non-market benefits:** Outdoor recreation in the UARW generated non-market benefits of at least $660 million in 2022, as measured through consumer surplus.

CONTACT

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