

Sportsmen and sportswomen keep Arizona cash registers humming

By Kurt R. Davis, Chairman Arizona Game and Fish Commission

Hunting and angling are more than just outdoor sports in Arizona. Their economic impact is downright staggering.

As the new chairman of the Arizona Game and Fish Commission, I want more Arizonans to understand and appreciate the fact that the state's hunters and anglers represent an economic powerhouse and a job driver, by their spending that exceeds \$1.2 billion per year. Arizona's 269,000 hunters and 637,000 anglers – that's one out of every seven residents-- are enough to fill every seat at Wildcat Stadium, the Walkup Skydome, Sun Devil Stadium, Chase Field and University of Phoenix Stadium more than *three times*.

Plain and simple, it's a constituency that deserves more credit and recognition for being a major driver of the state's economy. That \$1.2 billion annual figure is almost twice as much as the impressive \$719 million economic impact of this year's Super Bowl, Pro Bowl and related events throughout the Valley. The economic impacts generated by Cactus League spring training baseball (\$632 million) and Waste Management Phoenix Open (\$222 million) in 2012 pale in comparison. Those events are fantastic, but the point is: sportsmen and sportswomen are in a league by themselves.

If money talks, here are more reasons to listen. According to the latest report by the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation:

- Arizona hunters and anglers support 18,200 jobs, ranking just behind the state's two largest employers, Banner Health (38,527) and Walmart Stores Inc. (30,000), and ahead of Kroger Co. (16,856).
- Those 18,200 jobs generate \$699 million in salaries and wages.
- As a result, \$131 million in state and local taxes, and another \$156 million in federal taxes, are collected annually.

The annual spending by hunters and anglers fills small and large business cash registers – and state and local government tax coffers—from one end of the state to the other, particularly in our rural communities. When the big-game seasons begin in the high country, the words "Welcome Hunters" will be spelled out on small-town motel marquees. Restaurants will be packed. Businesses will hang banners and signs offering special deals for hunters. The Yuma Visitors Bureau estimates that dove hunting – which will draw thousands of wing-shooters to the Yuma area when the season opens Sept. 1 -- generates an economic impact of between \$2 million and \$5 million annually.

Angling is an even bigger economic driver, generating almost \$900 million in retail sales and supporting more than 12,000 jobs. A perfect example: On March 4, 2015, the Arizona Game and Fish Department, in cooperation with Mohave County and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, executed agreements to restore the stocking of rainbow trout at Willow Beach National Fish Hatchery, along the Colorado River south of

Hoover Dam. I'm proud to say the hatchery is associated with nearly 1,700 jobs in Mohave County and nearly \$75 million in economic output.

This is great news, not only for Arizona's economy but for our diverse wildlife. This year marks the 78th anniversary of the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration programs, which direct excise taxes on the sale of hunting and fishing equipment, as well as fees for licenses and stamps, toward conservation. Bottom line, without the hunters and anglers who support conservation, outdoor recreational opportunities would not be what they are today, our state and local governments couldn't afford to provide critical services and Arizona's more than 800 species of wildlife wouldn't be conserved.

Arizona's hunters and anglers – and I proudly count myself among them -- spend big money on everything from shotguns, fishing tackle and boats to groceries, hotel rooms and gasoline. They deserve credit for creating thousands of jobs and keeping rural Arizona's cash registers humming, and for being the very backbone of conservation.

Money well spent, I say. So thank a hunter or angler today for all they do for our state's economy.

Kurt R. Davis of Phoenix is chairman of the Arizona Game and Fish Commission.