

New York's Boaters Spent \$2.4 Billion in 2003



Boat on Lake Ontario.
Photo by Barbara A. Branca

New York Sea Grant's recent boater survey showed that boating has a \$1.8 billion economic impact and creates 18,700 jobs in New York State.

The national economy may go through highs and lows, but in a New York Sea Grant-funded study out this month, Cornell researchers found that the state's recreational boaters spent a whopping \$2.4 billion last year despite the poor weather last summer. The effort is the first of its kind to directly measure expenditures related to recreational boating and their impact on the state's economy. Using questionnaires sent to a sample of New York's half a million registered boaters, researchers estimate that in 2003 recreational boating had a total statewide economic impact of \$1.8 billion, accounted for approximately 18,700 jobs, and contributed \$728 million to labor income.

Researchers **Nancy Connelly**, **Tommy Brown** and **David Kay** of Cornell University's Department of Natural Resources found that for boating trip related expenditures such as launching fees, lodging, food, and gas, boaters spent over \$431 million statewide. The survey also tabulated how much boaters spent on boat pur-

chases, equipment, boat repair, insurance, and annual fees associated with the use of marinas and yacht clubs. Overall in 2003, almost \$2 billion was spent statewide on these non-trip related expenses. Of this figure, \$1.2 billion was for boat purchases.

"With these research findings, it is clear that recreational boating is big business and an important economic generator for the people of New York State," said **Jack Mattice**, New York Sea Grant Director.

"The intent of the study was not only to quantify the impact of boating, but also to provide information that will help managers, planners, and other decision makers make more informed decisions regarding coastal resource use and development," adds NYSG's coastal processes and facilities specialist **Jay Tanski** who served as project manager.

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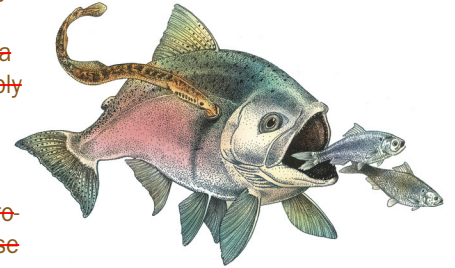
Photo of Montauk Harbor.
by Sharon O'Donovan

ship between sea lamprey and other fish. Some speculation surrounds the relationships between sea lamprey and native fish such as lake trout and Atlantic salmon that were likely the preferred targets for lamprey. It's possible that historically there was a stable parasite/prey relationship between lamprey and these large fish, with few lamprey induced mortalities and a low incidence of scarring observed on fish. As commercial fishing and spawning habitat destruction on lake trout and Atlantic salmon reduced their populations and the sizes of fish in the lake the frequency of lamprey attacks per individual trout and salmon likely intensified. This resulted in more mortalities in these fish and their eventual extinction from Lake Ontario. In a sense, the initial stable parasite/prey relationship may have shifted to a predator/prey relationship. It is also likely that stream temperatures increased from deforestation; this could have improved lamprey reproductive success while reducing that of Atlantic

salmon which require lower temperatures. These speculations raise some interesting questions. If the sea lamprey is native, does this weaken the case for lamprey control? Perhaps, perhaps not. Control efforts regarding any injurious species are targeted to optimize control efficacy at a level that is also economically sustainable. In other words, total eradication would be economically unfeasible so a certain amount of lampreys would inevitably remain. Given the economic damage that sea lampreys inflict upon recreational and commercial fisheries, continued lamprey control would be considered to protect economic revenues generated by these fisheries.

— **Barbara A. Branca and
David MacNeill**

**Sea Lamprey on Chinook Salmon.
Artwork by Jan Porinchak**



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Background photo of Gone Fishing Marina, Montauk.
Photo by Sharon O'Donovan

As one of the nation's major boating states, boating is a key recreational industry in virtually all areas of New York, especially the marine waters, Hudson River, Great Lakes, St. Lawrence River, the Finger Lakes, and Lake Champlain. The economic data will be used to develop tools that will allow managers to better evaluate the impact of boating on a regional scale.

The New York Sea Grant study broke out expenditure and economic impact figures by major boating region and boating major water body:

Trip related expenditures:

- \$173 million associated with trips to regions bordering the Great Lakes and Finger Lakes
- \$54 million associated with trips to Hudson River area
- \$162 million associated with trips to the New York City/Long Island Metropolitan area

Non trip related expenditures:

- \$661 million associated with the economic regions bordering the Great Lakes and Finger Lakes
- \$194 million associated with the Hudson River region
- \$907 million associated with the New York City/Long Island Metropolitan area

Total Economic Impact by region:

- \$600 million associated with the economic regions bordering the Great Lakes and Finger Lakes

- \$184 million associated with the Mid-Hudson and Capital District Regions
- \$843 million associated with the New York City/Long Island Metropolitan Area

The study was conducted in 2004 with the aid of an advisory panel of agency and boating industry experts from around the state. The estimates were based on a mail survey of 6,000 boaters registered in New York State in 2003. These figures may be conservative for the marine region since data indicate boating activity may have been suppressed due to the weather that year. "June 2003 was one of the wettest on record and the threat of Hurricane Isabel striking New York's marine coast in September resulted in many people pulling their boats early, further shortening the season," said Tanski. In addition, the figures do not include spending by transient boaters and others who are not registered in the state. Additional expenditures are most likely made in water bodies bordering other states, especially around Long Island and New York City. Non-motorized boaters, such as kayaks, canoes and small sailboats, are also likely to have made economic contributions throughout New York, but were not included in the study since they are not registered by the state.

For a downloadable copy of the report, go to New York Sea Grant's home page www.nyseagrant.org and follow the links.

— **Barbara Branca
Jay Tanski**