

30TH ANNUAL



ECONOMIC IMPACT AND VISITOR PROFILE STUDY

Prepared by
The Maryland Business Research Partnership



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Executive Summary of the 2000 Waterfowl Festival Economic Impact & Visitor Profile Study

Introduction & Festival Mission Statement

Waterfowl Festival Inc., is dedicated to wildlife conservation, the promotion of wildlife art, and the celebration of life on Maryland's Eastern Shore

Waterfowl Festival Inc. stages an annual wildlife arts festival for the purpose of raising money to fund conservation projects. The annual Waterfowl Festival is held the second weekend of November in historic Easton, Maryland. As the longest running show of its type in the country, it encourages adults and children to explore the many facets of wildlife art and the history of the Eastern Shore and its sporting life. Founded in 1971, the Festival began with 50 exhibitors, 75 volunteers, 3 exhibits, and 4,000 visitors. Today, the Festival hosts 400 exhibitors with the help of 1,500 volunteers, conducts over 30 varied exhibits and events, and welcomes approximately 19,000 visitors for the three-day weekend. During the Waterfowl Festival, the town of Easton, named the 8th Best Small Town in America and one of the 100 Best Small Art Towns in America, is transformed into an interactive art museum and festival, utilizing the town's public and private buildings, streets, ponds, and open spaces as venues. Collectors, art patrons, artists, nature enthusiasts, and those seeking a day or weekend of unique entertainment enjoy one of the world's most exclusive and varied collections of memorabilia and art depicting our natural world. Fulfilling its mission, Waterfowl Festival Inc. has become a leader in the conservation of waterfowl and wildlife habitat. More than \$4 million has been donated to projects throughout the Atlantic Flyway and, in particular, the Chesapeake Bay.

The Waterfowl Festival Board of Directors retained the Jacob France Center of the University of Baltimore (the France Center) to analyze the economic impact of the 30th Annual Waterfowl Festival and to analyze the Festival's visitor demographics. In order to collect the information required for this study, the France Center research personnel conducted 1,091 intercept interviews with persons or groups that were attending the Festival held November 10, 11, and 12, 2000. During the interview, questions about age, place of residence, income, and overall satisfaction with the Festival were asked. Additionally, researchers asked individuals about specific expenditures made while attending the Festival in order to collect information enabling the France Center to analyze the economic impact of the Festival. A separate survey of 44 Easton area businesses likely to be significantly impacted by the Festival was also conducted in order to collect information on the overall importance of the Festival to the business community. The IMPLAN input-output economic model developed by the Minnesota Implan Group was used to estimate the economic impact.

1.0 Economic Impact Study Highlights

As the largest annual tourism event in Talbot County, Maryland, the Waterfowl Festival attracts tourists into the County from across the State and around the world. The expenditures of these tourists stimulate increased economic activity in the County and, in the case of out-of-State tourists, in the State of Maryland.

- *Economic Impact on Talbot County:* The total economic impact of the Festival on Talbot County from out of County visitors was \$5.0 million, which created a total of 108 jobs, earning a total of \$2 million in employee compensation.
- *Economic Impact on the State of Maryland:* The total economic impact of the Festival on the State of Maryland from out of State visitors was \$3.1 million, which created a total of 56 jobs, earning a total of \$1.2 million in employee compensation.
- The estimated total direct expenditures by visitors to the 2000 Waterfowl Festival were \$3.7 million.

2.0 Visitor Profile Study Highlights

Key findings from visitor interviews conducted throughout the Festival weekend are:

- Demographics of the typical 2000 Waterfowl Festival visitor:
 - Gender: 55% were men; 45% were women
 - Age: 52% were under the age of 55
 - Income: 53% had incomes of \$75,000 or above
- Over 19,000 persons attended the Waterfowl Festival
- Forty-five percent (45%) of attendees come from out-of-state.
- Eighty-eight percent (88%) of visitors live in Maryland and other Mid-Atlantic States (Virginia, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware).
- Seventy-four percent (74%) of visitors stayed at their homes or with a friend or relative while 24% of visitors stayed in paid accommodations.
- Each visitor group, with an average size of 3.0 persons, spent an average of \$418.36 during their trip of which 53% was spent on Waterfowl Festival purchases and 47% was spent on food, lodging and area retail purchases.

- Visitor groups that stayed in paid accommodations spent a total per group on average \$1,082.56 and visitors who did not stay in paid accommodations spent a total per group on average \$210.15.
- Ninety-six percent (96%) of the visitors surveyed were satisfied or very satisfied with the Waterfowl Festival.
- On average, the visitors surveyed had attended approximately 5 previous Waterfowl Festivals.
- During their Festival visit, 57% of the attendees also visited nearby locations such as Oxford and St. Michaels.
- Half (50%) of the visitors surveyed come to Easton at least one more time other than the Festival each year.

3.0 Business Survey Highlights

Key highlights from the 44 Easton-area businesses surveyed are as follows:

- Over half of the businesses surveyed responded that they rely on tourism for between 40% and 100% of their sales.
- Every business surveyed responded that they benefit from the Festival. Thirty-two percent (32%) of the businesses make 10% or more of their annual sales during the Waterfowl Festival.
- Thirty percent (30%) of the businesses surveyed hire additional staff for the Festival.
- Seventy-six percent (76%) of the hotels/motels surveyed had a vacancy rate of 1% or less during the Waterfowl Festival.