

# Economic importance of off-highway vehicle recreation: An analysis of Idaho counties

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## Summary

Off-highway vehicle (OHV) recreation is big business in Idaho. In 2012, Idaho OHV enthusiasts spent \$434 million in Idaho—\$186 million in trip expenditures and \$248 million in capital expenditures. They took close to 1 million OHV trips in Idaho that year. On average, each Idaho OHV household took 12 OHV-related trips, with a party size of just over four people. A typical OHV trip took close to three days.

The most frequently visited counties in Idaho were Valley, Owyhee, and Boise. The least-visited counties were Jerome, Lincoln, Oneida, and Washington. Of the 1 million trips taken by OHV enthusiasts, over half were taken outside the home county.

Owyhee County received the most out-of-county visitation, with 51,000 trips per year.

Of the \$186 million in total trip expenditures, \$84 million was spent on trips in the home county, and \$102 million was spent on out-of-county trips. Of the total trip expenditures for out-of-county trips, close to 76% were made within the home county and the remaining 24% were made in the destination county. Thus, the destination counties for OHV recreation failed to capture most of the trip expenditures.

Ada, Kootenai, Bonneville, Bannock, Twin Falls, and Canyon counties captured over half of Idaho's \$250 million in OHV capital expenditures.

## Study details

During the period August 2012 through November 2012, the University of Idaho, in cooperation with the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation (IDPR), surveyed Idaho’s registered off-highway-vehicle (OHV) owners. The goal of the survey was to determine the economic importance of OHV use in Idaho during the previous 12 months. The survey sample was drawn from IDPR-registered OHV owners. OHV activities not related to recreation (e.g., work) and out-of-state visitors could not be sampled. Trips and expenditures for OHV recreation in Idaho would be higher if nonresident OHV recreation could be estimated.

## Idaho OHV trips

Trips are estimated as total trips taken in each county in Idaho, either by residents of the county or by OHV users from other counties. For example, an estimated 44,000 total trips were taken in Shoshone County, 9,000 by Shoshone County residents and 35,000 by visitors from outside the county.

During 2012, close to 1 million OHV trips were taken, over half of which were outside of the home county. More OHV trips were taken in Valley County than in any other county in the state (table 1). Valley County hosted 58,000 OHV recreation trips during the year; county residents accounted for 9,000 of the trips and out-of-county visitors the remaining 49,000.

Three of the top ten counties in numbers of trips (Valley, Owyhee, and Boise) were the OHV playground for the Treasure Valley. Similarly, Kootenai and Shoshone counties were the playground for Coeur d’Alene and Post Falls residents. Most Kootenai County trips (49,000 of 53,000 trips) were taken by residents of Kootenai County. The St. Anthony Sand Dunes and Island Park area were huge OHV visitor destinations, which explains why Fremont County ranked 9th in total trips despite a low resident population. Owyhee, Valley, Boise, and Shoshone counties received the most visits from out-of-county residents. Lincoln, Oneida, Washington and Jerome counties hosted the fewest number of total OHV trips (table 4).

## OHV recreation expenditures

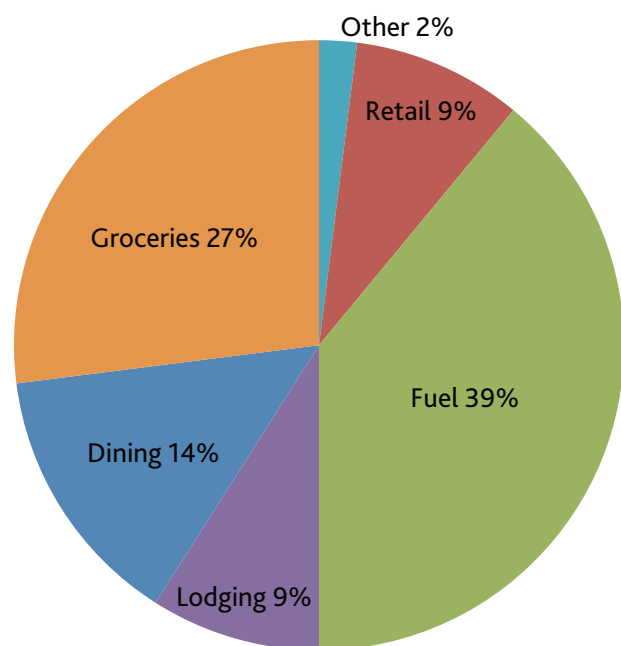
OHV expenditures were classified into two categories: trip and capital.

### Trip expenditures

Trip expenditures are those expenses made for nondurable goods and services. In 2012, fuel purchases constituted 39% of total trip expenditures (figure 1).

**Table 1.** Top 10 counties in numbers of OHV recreation trips (thousands), 2012.

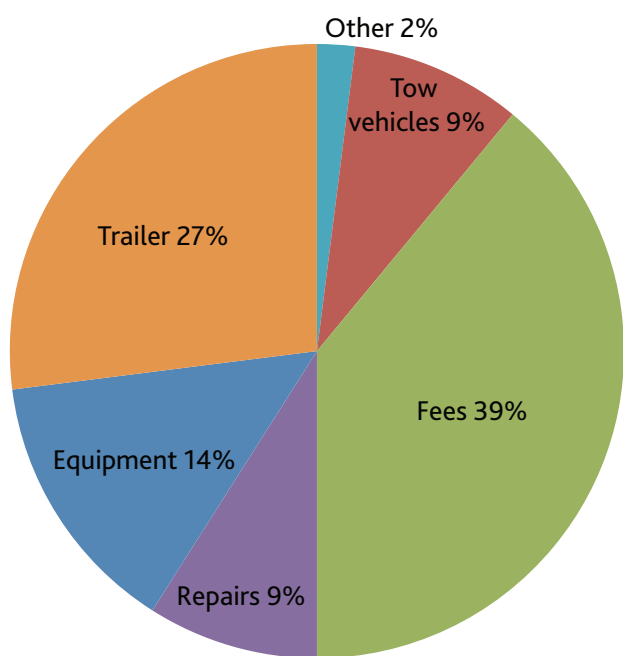
Trip location	Home-county households	Out-of-county households	Total
1 Valley	9	49	58
2 Owyhee	4	51	55
3 Boise	10	44	54
4 Kootenai	49	4	53
5 Ada	31	18	49
6 Idaho	23	21	45
7 Shoshone	9	35	44
8 Bonneville	19	21	41
9 Fremont	15	24	39
10 Bonner	19	19	38



**Figure 1.** OHV trip expenditures, 2012.

**Table 2.** Top 10 counties in total trip expenditures made by county households (\$ millions), 2012.

County of residence	Home-county trips	Out-of-county trips		Total
		Home	Destination	
1 Ada	7	23	6	35
2 Bonneville	3	18	3	24
3 Kootenai	12	4	1	17
4 Bannock	4	4	2	10
5 Bonner	2	3	5	9
6 Bingham	4	2	1	8
7 Jefferson	5	1	0	6
8 Twin Falls	1	3	2	6
9 Idaho	6	0	0	6
10 Latah	3	1	1	5



**Figure 2.** OHV capital expenditures, 2012.

**Table 3.** Top 10 counties in capital expenditures (\$ millions), 2012.

Spending location	Capital expenditures
1 Ada	40
2 Kootenai	22
3 Bannock	20
4 Canyon	20
5 Bonneville	16
6 Twin Falls	14
7 Nez Perce	13
8 Bingham	10
9 Cassia	7
10 Shoshone	7

Groceries accounted for 27%. Dining, retail, and lodging made up the remaining trip expenditures.

Trip expenditures are classified by the county in which the expenditure was incurred. For trips taken within the home county, expenditures are incurred in the home county. Expenditures for out-of-county trips can be made either in the home county or in the destination county (table 2).

Of \$186 million in total trip expenditures, \$84 million was for trips within residents' home counties. Of the \$102 million expended for out-of-county trips, \$78 million, or more than 75 percent, was spent in the home county and \$24 million was spent in the destination county (table 4). Destination counties, including the top destination counties (Owyhee, Valley, and Boise), thus often failed to capture trip expenditures for the majority of trips. For example, trip expenditures for visits to Owyhee, Valley, and Boise counties were made primarily in the Treasure Valley. Ada County OHV recreationists spent a total of \$28.3 million for trips to other counties but spent only \$5.5 million in the destination county (table 4). Similarly, Bonneville County OHV recreationists made 86% of their trip purchases in Idaho Falls before traveling out of county to recreate.

### Capital expenditures

Capital expenditures include OHVs, trailers, tow vehicles, OHV maintenance, and OHV accessories. Capital expenditures averaged \$4,500 per OHV household in 2012. More than 75% of capital expenditures were for OHVs and tow vehicles (figure 2).

Idaho's trade center counties of Ada, Kootenai, Bannock, Canyon, Bonneville, and Twin Falls captured over half of the total \$248 million capital expenditures made in Idaho (table 3). Ada County alone captured over 16% of the capital expenditures. Idaho's trade centers captured OHV capital expenditures made by their own residents and attracted the capital expenditures of surrounding rural counties. Six counties received virtually no capital expenditures (table 4).

**Table 4. OHV recreation trips and trip expenditures by county, 2012.**

	OHV trips (thousands)			Trip expenditures by county households (\$ millions)				Capital expenditures (\$ millions)
	Home-county households	Out-of-county households	Total	Home- county trips	Out-of-county trips		Total	
					Home	Destination		
Ada	31	18	49	7.1	22.7	5.5	35.3	40
Adams	3	28	31	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.8	1
Bannock	17	9	26	4.1	4.2	1.9	10.2	20
Bear Lake	10	9	19	1.0	1.1	0.0	2.2	2
Benewah	14	10	24	1.5	1.7	1.4	4.5	4
Bingham	9	4	13	4.5	2.5	1.4	8.4	10
Blaine	10	8	17	1.8	0.9	0.0	2.8	2
Boise	10	44	54	0.5	0.5	0.4	1.4	2
Bonner	19	19	38	1.7	2.7	5.1	9.5	5
Bonneville	19	21	41	3.1	18.0	3.0	24.1	16
Boundary	9	6	16	0.4	0.1	0.0	0.5	0
Butte	3	5	8	1.2	0.0	0.0	1.2	1
Camas	1	7	9	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.3	0
Canyon	11	4	14	2.1	0.8	0.2	3.0	20
Caribou	8	13	22	1.2	0.0	0.0	1.2	2
Cassia	7	8	15	0.7	2.3	0.3	3.3	7
Clark	0	11	11	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0
Clearwater	11	20	32	4.5	0.1	0.0	4.7	3
Custer	5	16	21	0.6	0.1	0.0	0.7	2
Elmore	11	23	33	2.3	0.6	0.0	2.9	2
Franklin	8	2	10	1.2	0.2	0.1	1.5	3
Fremont	15	24	39	4.8	0.0	0.0	4.8	3
Gem	3	11	13	1.0	0.2	0.0	1.2	3
Gooding	3	4	6	0.4	0.4	0.1	0.8	4
Idaho	23	21	45	5.6	0.0	0.0	5.6	6
Jefferson	8	5	13	5.0	1.1	0.2	6.2	6
Jerome	3	1	4	1.1	0.2	0.1	1.4	6
Kootenai	49	4	53	12.4	4.3	0.9	17.5	22
Latah	13	6	19	2.9	1.2	0.8	4.9	3
Lemhi	7	14	22	1.6	0.0	0.1	1.7	3
Lewis	2	4	6	0.4	0.1	0.0	0.5	0
Lincoln	1	1	2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0
Madison	5	8	13	1.0	0.8	0.3	2.0	6
Minidoka	8	1	9	1.7	0.3	0.1	2.0	3
Nez Perce	10	2	11	1.9	0.3	0.1	2.2	13
Oneida	3	1	4	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.2	2
Owyhee	4	51	55	0.3	0.8	0.1	1.1	1
Payette	3	2	5	0.4	0.3	0.0	0.6	2
Power	2	3	6	0.3	0.4	0.0	0.7	0
Shoshone	9	35	44	1.7	3.0	0.0	4.7	7
Teton	3	2	5	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.3	1
Twin Falls	14	5	19	1.4	3.1	1.6	6.1	14
Valley	9	49	58	0.1	2.5	0.1	2.7	2
Washington	2	2	4	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1	1
Idaho total	416	543	959	84	78	24	186	248

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