

Oceans and Coasts Drive Florida's Economic Engine

TALLAHASSEE, Florida, October 1, 2008 (ENS) - After some serious number-crunching, the Florida Oceans and Coastal Council has determined that Florida's coastal economy contributed over \$562 billion in revenue to the state and Florida's ocean economy contributed \$25 billion in just one year - 2006.

Florida's coastal counties contribute about 79 percent of the state's economic productivity, the council states in its latest report, released today. Of Florida's 20 major population centers, 15 are located in coastal counties around a bay, estuary or at the mouth of a river that flows into the ocean.

All these figures and many more are contained in "Florida's Ocean and Coastal Economies Report, Phase II," released Wednesday which details information about the many ocean activities that affect Florida's economy, such as real estate values and marine research and education.

In fact, in 2007, marine research and education, which was measured for the first time, had annual budget of \$272.5 million and produced \$154 million in annual wages.

"Anything affecting coastal tourism, recreation and marine transportation has a huge impact on Florida's ocean economy," said economist and member of the council, Dr. James Cato.

"These sectors of economic activity represent 88 percent of Florida's ocean economy, making them very important," said Dr. Cato, who serves as senior associate dean and director of the School of Natural Resources and Environment at the University of Florida.



South Beach Miami, Florida (Photo by Bobby K.)

Prepared by the National Oceans Economic Program for the Florida Oceans and Coastal Council, the report was funded by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

A team led by principal investigator Judith Kildow of the Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute prepared the report. The team included researchers from the University of Maine, Florida Atlantic University, and University of Florida-Gainesville.

"Florida's economy has been strongly tied to the oceans through tourism and recreation for decades," the report states. "Yet, there are many facets of its

economy that are also dependent on its long and lovely coastline, but don't get reported in any single document or coherent report. That is the purpose of this effort."

The details are revealing. For instance, the Florida commercial fishing industry has declined since 1990, while the recreational fishery has grown.

Commercial saltwater landings generated \$143 million in inflation-adjusted dockside sales in 2007, compared to \$247.5 million in 1990.

Annual commercial saltwater landings declined 66 percent by weight and 56 percent in constant value between 1990 and 2007.

Commercial vessel registrations declined 13.3 percent from 1990 to 2007, while pleasure craft registrations increased by 11 percent.

In 2006, over two million saltwater anglers contributed \$3 billion in retail sales with over 180 million fish landed, making Florida the number one recreational fishing state in the United States.

Florida's 14 deepwater seaports managed 121 million tons of cargo, generating an overall economic contribution of \$73 billion.

Coastal state parks are also lucrative. In Fiscal Year 2007, the Florida system of state parks provided a direct economic impact of over \$936 million to local economies.

For every 1,000 people visiting a state park, the total direct economic impact exceeded \$43,200.

"Florida's ocean economy ranks second in the nation after California, further highlighting the need to protect our ocean and coastal resources," said Bob Ballard, the deputy secretary for land and recreation with the Department of Environmental Protection, who serves as an ex-officio member of the council.

"Protecting our sensitive coastal areas is not an easy undertaking," Ballard said, "but capturing this important information helps government officials and Florida researchers prioritize the best ways to succeed."

To read the report, "Florida's Ocean and Coastal Economies Report, Phase II," click [here](#).