EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND DIVERSIFICATION THROUGH ENHANCEMENT
OF THE OUTFITTING INDUSTRY IN WYOMING

Prepared for:
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study was initiated by a request from the Wyoming Outfitters Association for an economic study of the outfitting industry in Wyoming. The study was funded by the Office of Research at the University of Wyoming through the Economic Development and Diversification Program. The Department of Agricultural Economics and the Cooperative Extension Service of the College of Agriculture conducted the analysis.

Introduction

Expansion of the tourism sector has been identified as an important aspect of economic development in Wyoming. Since previous research has shown that a large amount of business activity can be generated within the state from a small number of customers, the outfitting industry is a potentially attractive industry for further tourism development. However, the outfitting industry as a whole is not well understood in Wyoming. This study was undertaken to develop better information on outfitting in the state. The objectives of this study were to:

1) Assess the present and potential economic impact of the outfitting industry on the state's economy.

2) Provide profiles of both outfitting services offered in Wyoming and the clients using these services.

3) Provide information on outfitter and client opinions regarding the various policy issues affecting the outfitting industry.
Procedures

To meet the objectives of the study it was necessary to survey both outfitters and their clients. Outfitters were surveyed by both mail and personal interviews. A mail survey requesting general information was mailed to all licensed outfitters in the state in June, 1988. Of the 478 active outfitters contacted, 255 returned a completed questionnaire resulting in a 53 percent response rate. In addition, 50 outfitters were personally interviewed in the summer and fall of 1988. Outfitters surveyed on a personal basis were asked detailed questions about their income and expenditure patterns.

Outfitted hunting clients were contacted through a mail survey. A total of 1,897 outfitted hunting clients were contacted in March of 1988 requesting information on expenditures in Wyoming, opinions on outfitting, and socio-economic information. A total of 1,447 previous clients returned a completed survey resulting in a 76 percent response rate. The expenditure information from the outfitters and clients were utilized in an economic base model of Wyoming to obtain estimates of economic impact.

Results

The results of the mail surveys of outfitters and outfitted hunting clients are summarized below. Results of the personal interview of outfitters are discussed in the section on economic impact.

The major findings of the mail survey of outfitters include:

1) Outfitters provide a number of services in addition to hunting -- outfitting is not necessarily a one season industry.

2) The industry operates throughout the state -- outfitters are found in all 23 counties.

3) Most of the outfitted clients are participating in non-hunting activities (89 percent). However, over two-thirds of the gross
income comes from hunting due to the higher fees and longer stays associated with hunting clients (68 percent).

4) Excess capacity or under-utilization of resources is a major problem for Wyoming outfitters -- overall, it is estimated that the industry is currently operating at 60 percent of capacity.

5) There appears to be potential for expanding the outfitting industry in Wyoming.
   a. The outfitters reported that only 1 in 3 of big game hunters willing to hunt with an outfitter are able to draw a license.
   b. Only 1 in 2 of the deer and antelope hunters willing to hunt with an outfitter are able to draw a license.
   c. Only 1 in 10 of the individuals purchasing nonresident hunting license hunt with an outfitter.

6) The industry is composed of two types of outfitters -- a large number of part-time outfitters for whom outfitting is a source of supplemental income and a smaller number of full-time outfitters for whom outfitting is their primary source of income.

7) Outfitters spend significant amounts of money on out-of-state advertising. Indirectly these expenditures promote the entire state of Wyoming.

8) There appears to be stability within the industry -- 70 percent of the outfitters had been in business 6 years or more.

9) Outfitters feel that the major issue currently facing the industry is license allocation.

The major findings of the outfitted hunting clients are summarized below:

1) Participation in an outfitted hunt is the primary reason for coming to Wyoming for almost all hunting clients (98 percent).

2) The most important consideration in the outfitted hunter's decision to hunt in Wyoming is either their own or others previous experience in the state (48 percent). The second most important consideration is quality and availability of game (32 percent). Only a small proportion mentioned cost as the most important consideration (7.2 percent).

3) Previous experience with the outfitter is important in selection of an outfitter -- 79 percent of the clients indicated that they learned about the outfitter through their own or others previous experience.

4) The outfitting industry appears to be doing a good job in serving
clients.

a. Most clients rated the service of the outfitter good to excellent (86 percent).

b. Most clients indicated that they would be willing to return to Wyoming for another outfitted hunt (90 percent).

5) The outfitted hunting client spends substantial amounts of money during his stay in Wyoming -- the average expenditure ___ per hunter.

Economic Impact

The outfitting industry contributes to the state’s economy through the expenditures of nonresident clients. Total expenditures by outfitted clients in Wyoming are estimated to have been $32.9 million in 1988. Total expenditures with both outfitters and local business were evenly divided between hunting and non-hunting clients. Due to responding, within the local economy the total impact of these expenditures on the state’s economy was $64.6 million. The $64.6 million in sales generated a total of 1,072 full-time equivalents of employment and $14.9 million in personal income for residents of the state.

If the outfitting industry were able to expand from 60 to 80 percent of capacity, it would mean an additional $21.5 million in sales within the state. The increased sales would generate an additional 358 full-time equivalents of employment and increase personal income by $4.0 million. These are gross estimates which assume all the increase comes from new visitors to the state.

A comparison of outfitted and non-outfitted nonresident elk hunters, using the best information available, indicates the net gain to the state’s economy is greater for outfitted nonresident elk hunters. With current success rates, total sales are 2.33 times greater per harvested animal for