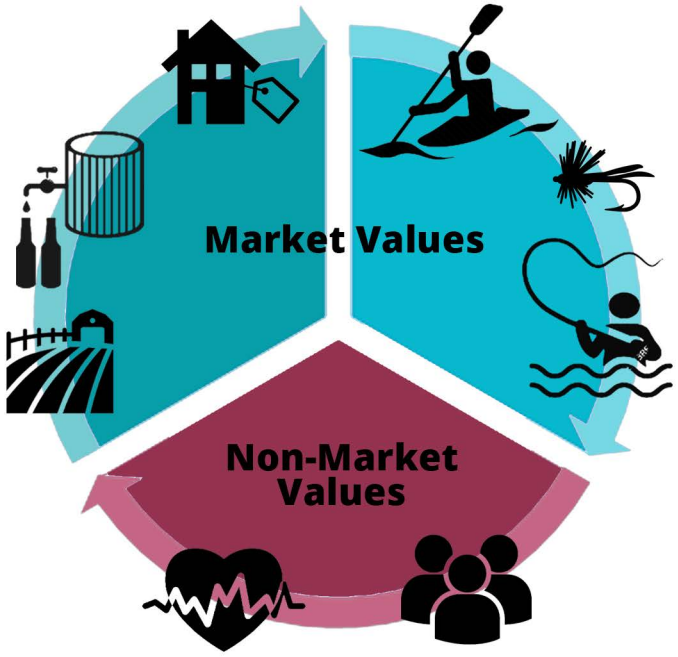
LAUREL HIGHLANDS

WATER RESOURCES
ECONOMIC VALUES STUDY

WATER is deeply interconnected with human health, the health of the environment, and social and economic systems. Policies designed to protect, restore and conserve water resources will therefore have impacts both within and far beyond the watershed.

In 2016 Key-Log Economics was commissioned to evaluate the total economic value of water and healthy watersheds in the Laurel Highlands. Upon completion, government agencies, local citizens, and the funding community can use this information to weigh the economic benefits of conservation and restoration projects and/or broader policies designed to produce water quality and quantity improvements in the region.

COMPONENTS



MARKET VALUES easily seen, such as recreation and tourism spending by anglers and whitewater enthusiasts

MARKET VALUES not so easily seen, including enhanced property value and a lower cost of doing business for industries with water-intensive production systems (dairy farms, breweries)

NON-MARKET OR NON-PRICED values, such as increases in human health and well-being that accompany improvements in water quality. This can also include the value of simply know-ing a pristine natural area exists or the value of restoring a watershed for the sake of some future use.

EXAMPLE SCENARIO
Erosion Control

Actions such as implementing streamside buffers, stabilizing stream banks, installing cattle fence and planting cover crops can dramatically reduce soil erosion. With less soil and sediment enter-ing waterways, fish habitat improves, flood risk goes down, and fewer pollutants are carried into waterways from non-natural sources, including active and abandoned mines. These environmen-tal improvements translate into benefits to people that translate into economic value:

ENVIRONMENTAL
- Less turbidity
- Lower stream temperatures
- More aquatic invertebrates
- Healthier aquatic habitat

HUMAN
- Healthier drinking water
- Food security in the form of fish protein
- More fishing days

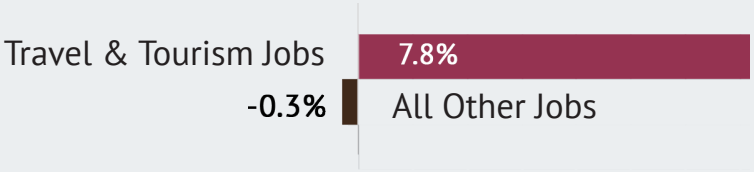
ECONOMIC
- Increased jobs in recreation and tourism (ex. guiding, outfitting)
- License fee revenue increases
- Lower water treatment costs

EXAMPLE: VALUING BENEFITS FOR PEOPLE

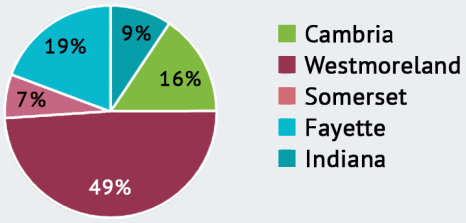
Travel & Tourism Employment

Travel & tourism is one of the world's largest industries, already accounting for one in 10 jobs, with continued growth expected over the next decade. In terms of employment growth, the sector already outperforms a number of others, including education, financial services and health care. Tourists choose their destinations for a variety of reasons — for the Laurel Highlands, stunning vistas and superlative fishing, boating and other recreation opportunities likely play a significant role. And all of these activities depend on clean, clear waterways.

EMPLOYMENT CHANGE, LAUREL HIGHLANDS
1998–2016

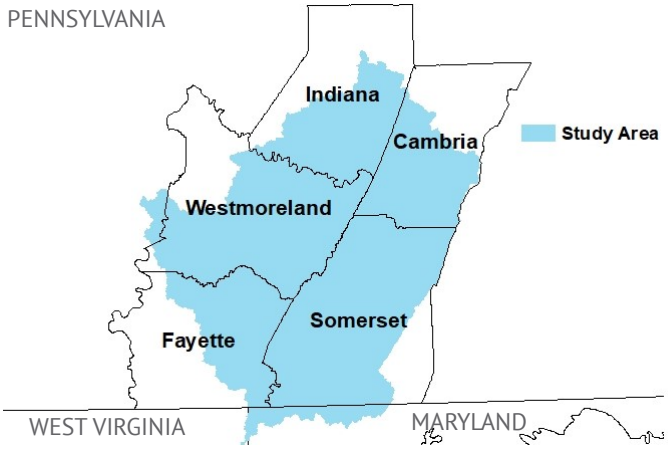


TOURISM JOBS, LAUREL HIGHLANDS
2016



STUDY AREA

The study area overlaps the following major watersheds: Blacklick Creek, Casselman River, Conemaugh River, Indian Creek, Jacobs Creek, Laurel Hill Creek, Little Conemaugh River, Loyalhanna Creek, Sewickley Creek, Stonycreek River, and the Youghiogheny River. As some economic data are available only at the county level, the study region will use data for the five mainly rural counties that overlap these watersheds.



HIGHLIGHTS

- **3,040** square miles
- **4,010** miles of streams
- **Highest peak** in Pennsylvania
- State's **deepest river gorge**
- **9** state parks
- **2** state forests
- **5** National parks

~44 MILLION
POTENTIAL VISITORS
living within 200 miles

TIMELINE & DELIVERABLES

1
Fall 2018
Written Research Plan

2
March 2019
Draft Project Report

3
May 2019
Public Meetings

4
Summer 2019
Final Report & Communication Materials

To learn more about the study, contact the Mountain Watershed Association at mwa@mtwatershed.com or Key-Log Economics at team@keylogeconomics.com