

[Wildlife refuges bolster local economies](#)

- [Tom Stienstra](#)

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Ducks, geese and other wildlife mean big dollars for California towns located near national wildlife refuges.

Some 37 million visitors to wildlife refuges across America generated a \$1.37 billion economy (fees, lodging, food, fuel), according to a 400-page report issued last week by the Interior Department. Refuges generate \$1.21 for every \$1 spent, according to the report, with duck hunting, bird watching and scenic tours the most common activities.

California has 40 wildlife refuges, crowned in the Bay Area by the Farallon Islands National Marine Sanctuary and the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay Wildlife Refuge.

Fish money: U.S. fisheries managers could triple the value of ocean fish populations if they follow through with plans to rebuild populations, according to a new economic analysis released this week by the University of British Columbia Fisheries Centre.

Mammoth wins: Mammoth Mountain and its terrain parks in the eastern Sierra won "Best Overall Resort" in North America in TransWorld Snowboarding magazine's annual poll, beating out Whistler/Blackcomb (after a four-year reign). The official announcement comes next month.

Porkification of America: General outdoor sports outings fell 10 percent from 1998-2004, about the same rate as weight gains, according to a report from the Outdoor Industry of America. One of the biggest increases, however, was the 250 percent rise in snowshoe outings.

Pheasant hunt: For public hunting access, the Stockton Sportsmen's Club will open 2,000 acres stocked with 3,500 pheasants near Manteca from Nov. 12 through Dec. 3. Cost is \$25 per day for adults, \$10 for juniors (accompanied by adults), with all licenses and stamps required. (209) 957-9717 or www.stocktonsportsmensclub.com.

Wapama fire: After last week's lightning-caused fires near Hetch Hetchy in Yosemite National Park, all trails have been re-opened this week, including the route up to the Grand Canyon of the Tuolumne River.

Yosemite camps: Wawona and Hodgdon Meadow campgrounds are now first-come, first-served. Camps closed for the season are Tuolumne Meadows, White Wolf, Tamarack Flat, Bridalveil Creek, Yosemite Creek, North Pines, Crane Flat and Porcupine Flat.

Fall colors: The canyons of the eastern Sierra, best above Bishop Creek and Convict Lake, are exploding in yellows and oranges from turning aspens.

Thermal Curtain: The ill-fated "Thermal Curtain," one of the options listed for Lake Almanor by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in PG&E's bid for re-licensing its hydro plants



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on the Feather River, was all but killed at a hearing where two Congressmen and three state senators joined hundreds of others opposing it. The "thermal curtain" would be designed to take cold water out of Almanor and raise the temperature downstream in the North Fork Feather by 1 degree.

A new look: Kudos to the Department of Fish and Game for embracing locals and their concerns in Portola and Plumas County in the new bid to rid Lake Davis of northern pike, the predator fish that would threaten Delta salmon if they escaped downstream; in the past five years, DFG has taken 55,000 pike out of Davis.

Katrina, cont.: Hurricane Katrina destroyed 75 percent of the marinas along 150 miles of the Gulf Coast, reports the Boat Owners Association of The United States. Damage to recreation vessels is estimated at \$650 million to \$750 million, with only half covered by insurance.

A start: Bay Area scientist Robert Ovetz of the Sea Turtle Restoration Project filed a report that Taiwan will dismantle 120 long-line vessels, a 5 percent reduction in its fleet, as a start in reducing the number of unintended deaths of endangered leatherback sea turtles.

"The Great Outdoors With Tom Stienstra" airs Sundays at 6:30 p.m. on KBHK-TV (Channel 44) and Bay Area Cable 12.

Tom Stienstra's Outdoors Report can be heard Saturdays on KCBS (740 AM) at 7:35 a.m., 9:35 a.m. and 12:35 p.m.

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