

# Coastal Recreation Is Big Business for Southern California

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Coastal recreation generates tens of billions of dollars for local economies in states like California, where 70 percent of residents visit the ocean annually. A new peer-reviewed study by economists Linwood Pendleton and Chris LaFranchi found that the vast majority of coastal recreation in southern California is non-consumptive (does not involve the take or destruction of marine life). Moreover, these non-consumptive activities generate far more money than shore-based fishing. Protecting the ocean resources that attract millions of visitors to the south coast each year is not just a moral obligation for local communities; it's an economic imperative.



The Pendleton and LaFranchi survey was commissioned by the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Foundation to help inform efforts to protect southern California's ocean. It measured the number and type of coastal visitors and the amount of money they generate for local economies. Recreational activities such as beach walking, swimming in the ocean, surfing, SCUBA diving, visiting tide pools and watching birds and other marine life attract millions of visitors to the south coast each year, where they spend money on parking, ice, food, rentals, accommodations and other items. These expenditures support local businesses, create jobs and provide tax dollars. The survey found that non-consumptive ocean visitors overall spent 40 times more during visits than those who visited exclusively to fish or collect sea life.

Below is a summary of the key findings from the report\*:

- More than 93 percent of all visits between Point Conception and Point Fermin are estimated to be purely non-consumptive.
- Of the total expenditures on coastal visits by Southern California residents, 81 percent came from purely non-consumptive visits, and only 2 percent came from purely consumptive visits. The remaining 17 percent came from trips that were a combination of consumptive and non-consumptive.
- Non-consumptive visitors spend nearly \$115 million annually in this stretch of the coast.
- On average, each non-consumptive ocean visitor spends between \$13 and \$33 per visit, per day.
- Southern California residents made nearly 8 million nature-based visits to coastal sites in this region.
- The most popular activities for ocean visitors is “beach going” (63 percent of respondents participated), followed by “sitting in your car and watching the scene” (48 percent), “watching birds and/or other marine life from the shore” (31 percent) and “swimming in the ocean” (30 percent).

*\*Source: The California Coast Online Survey: Southern California Module. Report to the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Foundation by The Coastal Ocean Values Center and NaturalEquity, August 2009.*