Valuing Recreational Fishing

By R. Max Melstrom, Natural Resources Extension Economist

Oklahoma has 744,000 anglers who take more than 7 million fishing trips in the state each year. With typical spending exceeding $100 per trip, anglers contribute more than $800 million each year to Oklahoma’s economy. Yet fishing-related expenditures only capture a part of the value of fishing. What about the value of trips taken close to home that required only a token expense? Whatever the situation, the fact anglers deliberately take their trips reveals something about their value to economists. This information can be used to assess, for example, the economic benefits of improving catch rates or the economic damages of a fish kill from changing water conditions. If you are interested in learning about the value of the fishing trips at a lake near you, read OSU fact sheet AGEC-1054, “The Economic Value of Sportfishing Trips to Oklahoma Lakes.”