



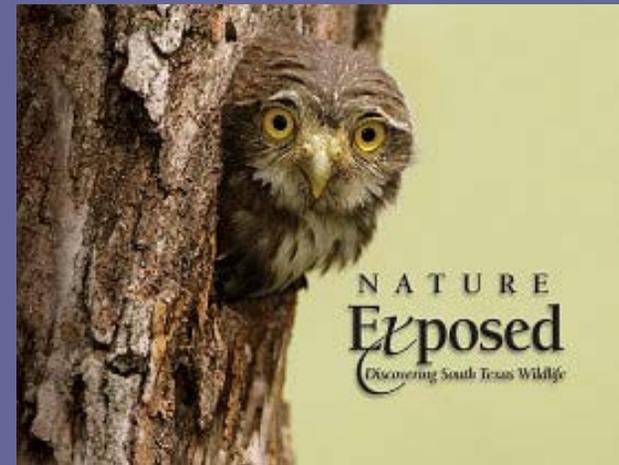
Economic Impact of nature tourism in the Lower Rio Grande Valley

Kyle O'Haver— Natural Resource Specialist,
Estero Llano Grande State Park

Why do they come to the
LRGV for
Nature Tourism ?

The growth of nature tourism

- Started with birding
 - Listers
 - General bird watchers
- Expanded to other nature related activities
 - Butterflying
 - Dragonfly watching
 - Nature Photography
 - General nature and wildlife experiences



¿Why the LRGV? ¡BIODIVERSITY!

Birds: ~520 species; only 4 states have recorded more species than this four county area



Above: Black Skimmer

Below: Pavon Emperor

Butterflies: ~ 300 species

Dragonflies: ~110 species



Rare Birds and other Wildlife





PLANTS: ~1,100 SPECIES

Many not occurring elsewhere in
The U.S.

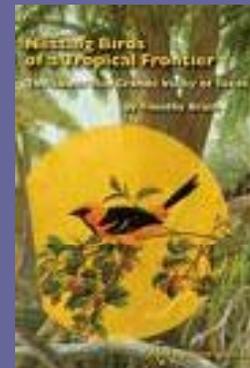
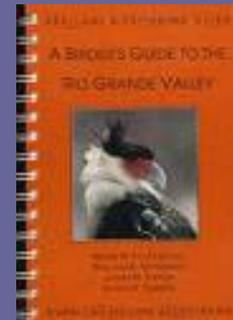
Lower Rio Grande Valley birding locations:

- World Birding Centers
- National Wildlife Refuges
- Audubon facilities
- Nature Centers
- City and County Parks
- Privately owned lands
- Levees



Lower Rio Grande Valley birding location references:

- Great Coastal Birding Trail
- Birding and Butterfly map of the Rio Grande Valley
- A Birder's guide to the Rio Grande Valley
- Nesting birds of a tropical frontier
- Texbirds (listserv)
- Texas E-bird



Lower Rio Grande Valley birding locations:

- In Weslaco alone there are 3 major birding/nature sites
 - **Estero Llano Grande State Park, World Birding Center**
 - Valley Nature Center
 - Frontera Audubon Thicket



World Birding Center

Is a partnership
between 11 government
organizations: the U.S.
Fish and Wildlife
Service, Texas Parks
and Wildlife
Department, Cities of
Roma, Mission,
Hidalgo, McAllen,
Edinburg, Weslaco,
Harlingen, Brownsville
and South Padre Island.



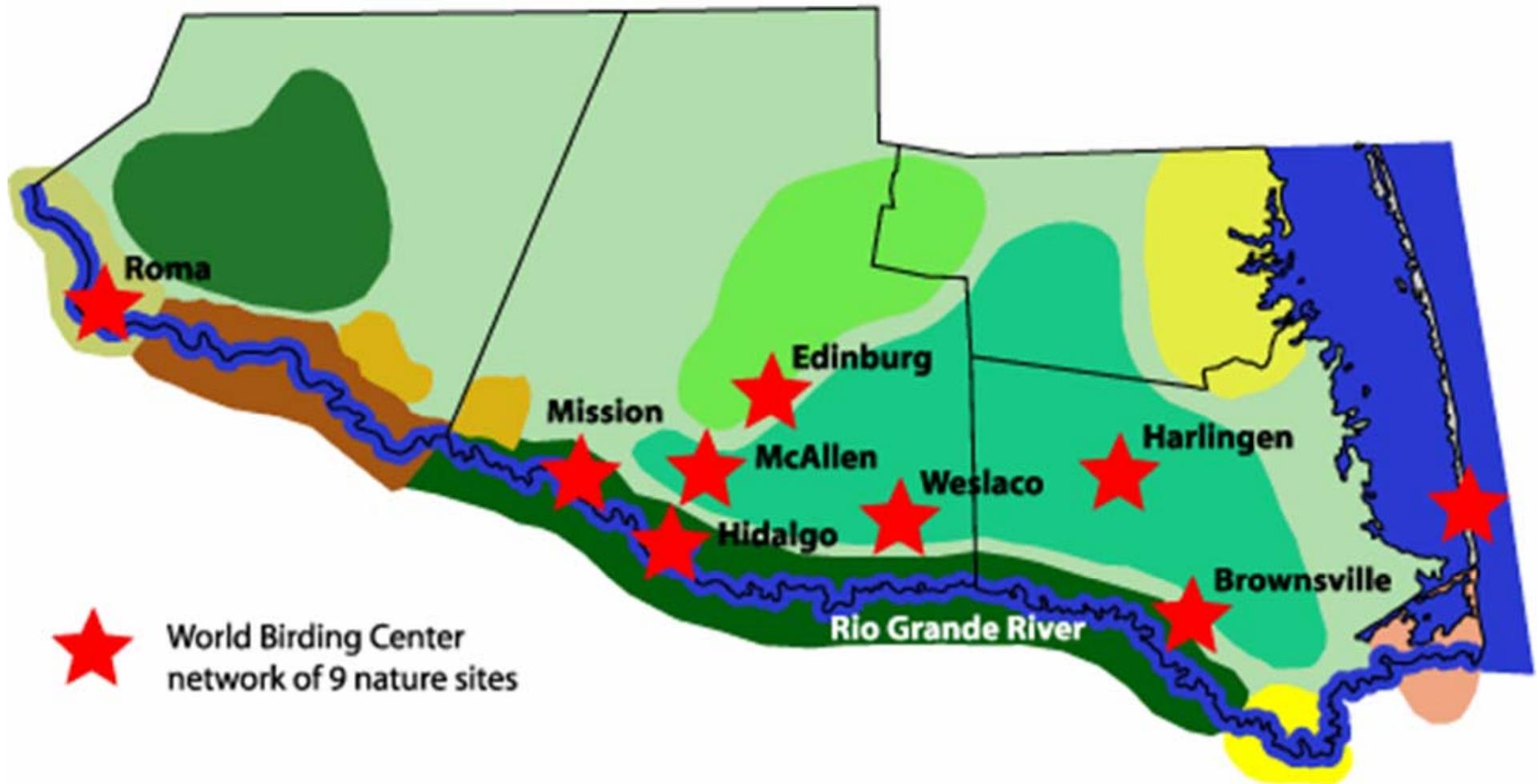
World Birding Center



- *120 miles along Rio Grande Corridor*
- *Diverse habitats:*
 - *Semiarid Brushlands*
 - *Lush resaca woodlands*
 - *Freshwater Marshes*
 - *Coastal Wetlands*



Lower Rio Grande Valley Biotic Community Map



Three State Parks



Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park

Mission



Estero Llano Grande
State Park

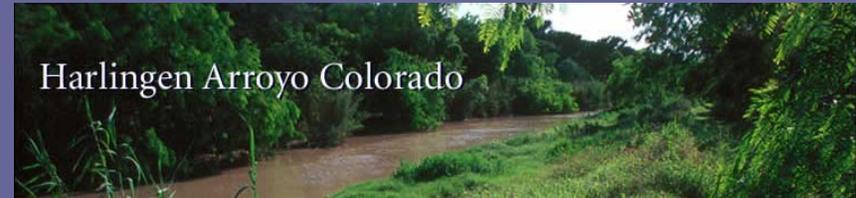
Weslaco



Resaca de la Palma State Park

Brownsville

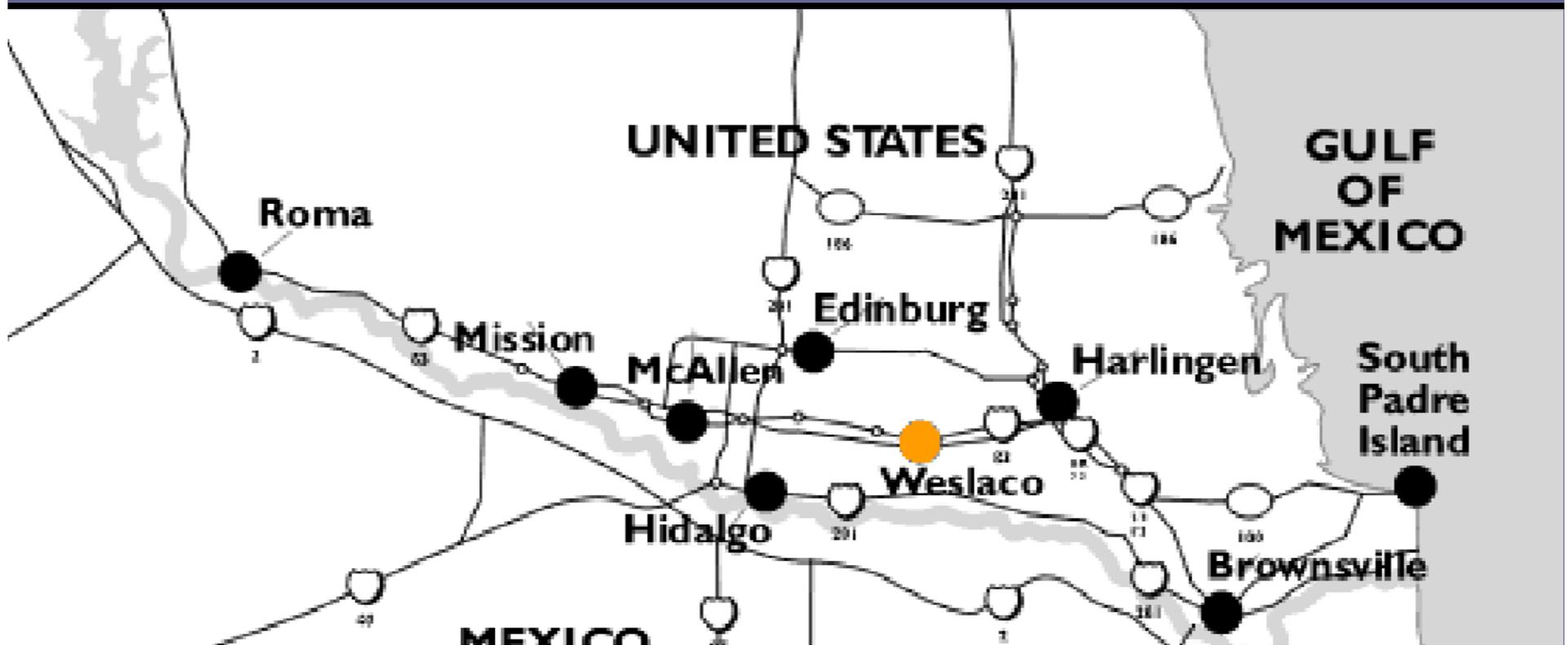
Six Municipal Sites





Estero Llano Grande State Park

250 acres of Wetlands and Thorn Scrub Habitat / 325 bird species

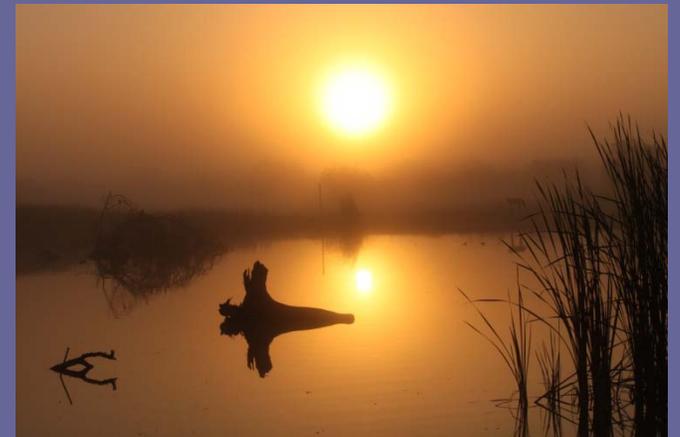




Facilities



- Construction of visitor center began July 2004
 - Includes an observation deck, classroom and gift shop
- Trails and boardwalks through wetlands and thorn-scrub habitats



Wetlands

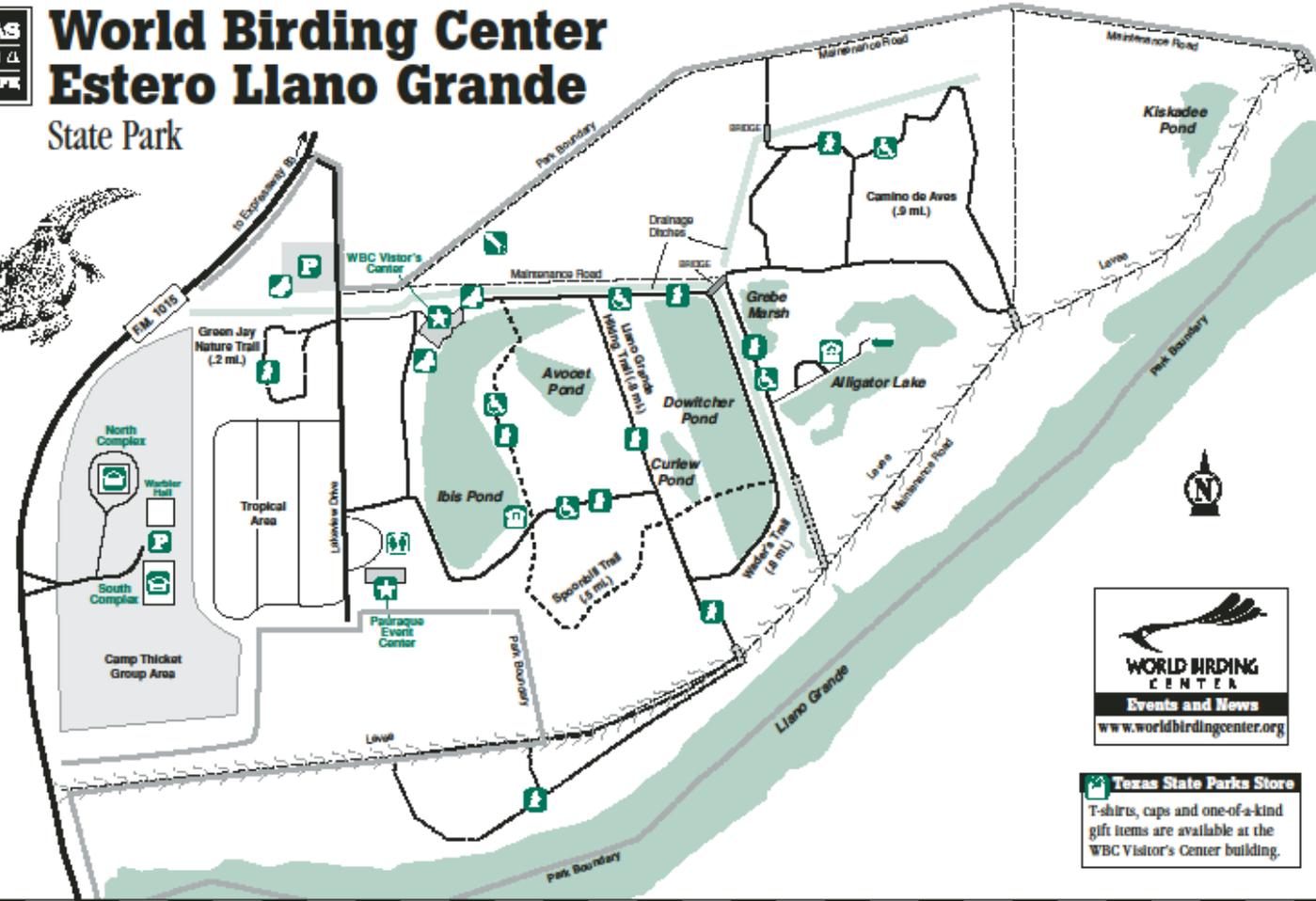
- Estero Llano Grande has largest wetlands environment in the WBC network
- Wetlands were created from former agricultural fields





World Birding Center Estero Llano Grande

State Park



Legend:

- WBC Visitor's Center
- Texas State Parks Store
- Viewing Deck
- Classroom
- Rest Rooms
- Pauraque Event Center
 - Full Kitchen
 - Event Room
 - Rest Rooms
 - Butterfly Garden
- Camp Thicket Group Area
 - North and South Complex
 - Bunks
 - Full Kitchen
 - Meeting Rooms
 - Rest Rooms and Showers
 - Warbler Hall
 - Meeting Hall, Rest Rooms
- Parking
- Rest Rooms
- Wheelchair Accessible Trails
- Camino de Aves
- Spoonbill Trail
- Wader's Trail
- Observation Deck
- Levee Access Point (non-ADA)
- Hiking Trails
- Pavilion
- Butterfly Garden
- Observation Deck
- Maintenance Area



Texas State Parks Store
T-shirts, caps and one-of-a-kind gift items are available at the WBC Visitor's Center building.

3301 S. International Blvd. (F.M. 1015)
Weslaco, TX 78596
(956) 565-3919

Estero Llano Grande Programs

- Public programs
 - Bird walks
 - Nature Walks
 - Breakfast with the Birds
- School group programs
- Special events



Estero Llano Grande State Park



"Unite with superheroes in an epic battle to save the park and its resources!"

Saturday, October 20th 6 p.m. - 10 p.m.

Join us for the 6th annual Spooky Science Fest. Superheroes of all ages from across the universe will be in a battle to save our parks as well as our natural and cultural resources from the clutches of evil. Superhero photos, mad science lab, games, crafts, hay rides, live animals, costume contests, food, drinks, and much, much, more. What can you do to save the park?

\$6 adults • \$4 children 12 and under • \$2 with a Texas State Parks Passport

October 27th and November 3
Dead Woods Haunted Trails
Valley Nature Center
301 S. Border Ave. Weslaco, TX
(956) 969-2475
www.valleynaturecenter.org
No one under 13 without parents

Also Check Out:



313 South Missouri Street
Weslaco, TX 78596
(956)-969-2200



Estero Llano Grande State Park • World Birding Center
3301 South International Blvd. (F.M. 1015)
Weslaco, Texas 78596
(956) 565-3919



Life's better outside.

2nd Nature Chaser 5K Fun Trail Run/Walk at Estero Llano Grande State Park Weslaco, TX

DATE & TIME: Saturday, November 3, 2012 *8:00 AM Sharp!

This is a Trail Run so wear the proper shoes

PRE-REGISTRATION FEE: 5K Race is \$10.00 Only at the park!
- Please do not mail checks or cash - we are not responsible for lost money
*(Checks can be made payable to: Estero Llano Grande State Park)

RACE DAY: Registration is from 6:00 AM- 7:30 AM
Late Registration Fee - \$12.00

LOCATION: Estero Llano Grande State Park
3301 S International Blvd Weslaco Texas
(South 1015 on the curve)
Phone : (956)565-3919

AWARDS: Top 3 finishers in each division will be awarded.

PRIZES & MUSIC



Nature Festivals

- There are 7 major nature festivals held in the valley each year
- These festivals bring in 50 – 500 out-of-town visitors each



-Texas Butterfly Festival, Mission

- Wild in Willacy, Raymondville

- Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival, Harlingen



Don't forget the Winter Texans

- Winter Texans don't just come down for the great weather
- A majority of Winter Texans enjoy:
 - Bird watching
 - Butterflying
 - Bicycling
 - Nature Watching
 - Nature Photography



Money to the community

- Hotels
- RV Parks
- Restaurants
- Park entry fees
- Groceries
- Gasoline
- Sales Taxes
- Souvenirs
- Misc.

**ALL THIS
EQUALS MORE
\$ IN OUR
COMMUNITY
AND MORE
LOCAL JOBS!**



Economic Impact of Nature Tourism on the Rio Grande Valley: Considering Peak and Off-Peak Visitation for 2011

Average peak visitor-

Group size of 2.3

M=57

Undergraduate or Graduate Education

Staying 20 days

Return visitor

Automobile

Spending \$822.08 (per person) on Nature Tourism Experiences

Average non-peak visitor-

Group size of 2.6

M=47

Undergraduate or Graduate Education

Staying 7 days

Return visitor

Automobile

Spending \$497.72 (per person) on Nature Tourism Experiences

What's the Impact

Estimated annual expenditures by intentionals for 2011 were **\$307 Million**

Economic contribution from RGV nature tourism led to a total economic output of **\$463 million** and **6,613 full- and part-time jobs** annually.

This total contribution includes a \$266 million contribution to gross regional product and a \$163 million contribution to labor income across the region.

Local taxes generated from direct nature tourist expenditures for 2011 was **\$2.5 Million for sales tax** and **\$7.5 Million for hotel tax**.

JOBS



Kyle O'Haver

(956) 565-3919

kyle.ohaver@tpwd.state.tx.us

