



By Steve West

Like most my eyes tend to glaze over when confronted with a page of raw financial statistics. However, recently fishing guide Kevin Morlock shared some interesting economic data about his customers with local business owners and the Chamber of Commerce directors.

Morlock (Indigo Guide Service) has spent about 60 days during the last two summers guiding, primarily fly fisherman, in the Beaver Archipelago for carp and smallmouth bass. He has been so busy and successful that this season he is bringing a second guide, Steve Martinez. When not on the waters around Beaver Island they guide clients on the pristine Pere Marquette River. They cater to catch and release sportsmen who value an enjoyable outdoor experience over stocking the freezer.

Kevin Morlock surveyed his 104 customers from last season. He determined how long they stayed on Beaver Island and how much they spent on various items like food and transportation. It amounted to about \$40,000 during a 60 day time frame. Without too much eye glazing, quoting from his report, "Lodging \$15,051 - Transportation \$6,675 - Gifts/Misc \$4,450." Morlock's personal spending on the Island exceeded \$5,000.

Good Fishing & The Economic Benefits For Beaver

His numbers are very likely low as they don't include spouses and children who came along. Several customers picked up real-estate information. One is renting a beach home and bringing his extended family for a vacation this summer.

Quality fishing opportunities and great guide service are the key to quality sportsmen visitors. Catch and release anglers have low impact on the fishing resource while having the greatest economic benefit for Beaver Island. More bluntly, as is my way, these eco-tourists put the fish back and have drinks at the Shamrock and white-fish with champagne sauce at Nina's. The Beaver Island economy will benefit from more of them.

One of Morlock's principal marketing activities is, "host the writer." Last year he, the Chamber, Laurain Lodge and the Boat Company arranged for a visit by outdoor writer Brandon Butler. His piece, "Northern Island Angling Paradise" appeared in the Jan/Feb issue of the up scale Eastern Fly Fishing magazine. Morlock reports that his phone is ringing, he is booking and these new customers have never been to Beaver Island before. This June the Chamber and Morlock will host 9&10 TV producer Corey Adkins and hopefully Detroit Free Press writer

Eric Sharp for fly fishing adventures.

With a second guide on board and the additional business created by joint marketing Indigo Guide Service is on target to add nearly \$100,000 to the Beaver Island economy this summer. This suggests how shocking the cormorant economic damage report Jeff Powers is striving to fund will prove to

be. Cormorant numbers are finely declining after the herculean efforts of Powers and the Wildlife Club. The impact over decades, some predict, will prove to have been many millions of dollars.

Beaver Island, with an abundance of inland lakes and surrounding water resources, as well has a large amount of public and private hunting land, has an opportunity to leverage these resources for the economic benefit of those who live and work here. Done properly this will have little impact on the renewable resources and can positively impact those who choose to enjoy the outdoors in ways other than fishing and hunting as well.

Imagine the impact on our Island economy if 8-10 fishing and hunting guides were serving clients spring, summer and fall. We are using and marketing our outdoor resources in a responsible way to benefit the economy of Beaver Island. Are there some out there who think this is bad policy?

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