

The Economic Contribution of Bear Viewing to Southcentral Alaska

Prepared by:

Taylor B. Young & Joseph Little
School of Management
University of Alaska Fairbanks
May 2019

Executive Summary

For Alaskans and tourists alike, the opportunity to view brown bears flourishing in their natural setting is something very special. Given the quality of habitat and vibrancy of local ecosystems, Southcentral Alaska is home to the largest concentration of brown bears found anywhere on earth. The regular presence of a large number of brown bears has influenced the development of permanent bear viewing sites within the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary, Katmai National Park & Preserve, and Lake Clark National Park & Preserve. Each year thousands of visitors come to the region during the peak summer season because of the quality of the bear viewing experience. To reach key bear viewing sites local businesses have been providing services, such as air/boat taxis, wildlife guides and lodging for over 40 years. Drawing on proprietary business data covering 2017, this report highlights the economic contribution of bear viewing service providers in Southcentral Alaska. The availability of high quality bear viewing opportunities serves as a strong foundation for the economic viability of local service providers operating in the region. **Some of the key findings include:**



- Bear viewing related service providers (air/boat taxis, guides, lodging) reported **\$34.5 million in sales**.
- Service providers paid approximately \$10 million in direct wages and benefits and hired 371 employees.
- Direct purchases by service providers and spending by households support approximately **\$36.3 million in economic production** in the region.
- Similarly, direct spending by service providers and households contributes approximately **\$19 million in value added** to the regional economy.
- Spending by service providers and households supports approximately **\$17.3 million in labor income** in the region, including \$10 million in direct wages and benefits.
- Spending by service providers and households supports **490 jobs** in the region, including 371 reported direct hires.