

Ravenswood Riverfront Development and Tourism Study



**The Economic Potential for Travel and Tourism
in Ravenswood WV
based on the Development of a
Sports & Recreation Complex
and Enhancements to the
Washington Lands Riverfront Park**



Contemplated Travel & Tourism Development Ravenswood, West Virginia

- Sports & Recreation Complex
- Washington Riverfront Park Enhancements
- Power Boat Harbor & Marina
- Sand Creek Paddle Sports Marina
- Sand Creek RV Park & Campground

Three “Value Streams” from Sports & Outdoor Recreation Development

- **Direct Economic Activity**
 - Visitor spending, including direct & indirect inputs
 - Higher visitor counts rewards investments in retail & hospitality businesses
- **Improved Health & Wellness of the Community**
 - Improved access to & awareness of exercise facilities
- **Economic Development**
 - Improved “Quality of Life” and community commitment improve site selection scores for new business & industrial investment and also can be a catalyst for attracting retirees seeking a quieter life style

The focus of this study are the direct economic potential of increased travel and tourism as a result of the investments in the Sports Complex and Riverfront Park and the associated marketing plan. In similar projects, the value of the two indirect benefits can be equal to or greater than the direct economic activity.

Opportunities & Challenges

Opportunities

- Ohio River
- Interstate 77 access
- Strong Historical Background
- Columbus, Ohio proximity
- Existing Facilities
- Centered in area of many outdoor recreation areas

Challenges

- No hotels or similar lodging establishments in town
- Sewage Lagoons to be moved
- No easy pedestrian access to downtown
- Limited retail & hospitality businesses in downtown

The Ohio River- the Ravenswood Opportunity

- Ravenswood is located in the **Great Bend of the Ohio** Region with a long history from prehistoric times to George Washington, Lewis & Clark, the Civil War into modern times
- **The Racine Pool**- 5,300 acres of flat water; nearly 100 miles of shore
 - Ravenswood is the only boat ramp with facilities on this pool
- **Ohio River Islands Wildlife Refuge** includes two islands in Racine Pool
- **Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail**
- **Ohio River Scenic Byway** (follows Ohio State Route 124 in area)
- **Ohio River Recreation Trail**- National Park Service funding initial development between Portsmouth OH & Louisville KY

WVU Parkersburg Methodology & Approach

- Ravenswood is evaluating various options for enhancing & expanding the Washington Riverfront Park and developing city property on the south end of town into a Sports & Recreation Complex
- It was determined that using an economic modelling program such as IMPLAN is not feasible at this early stage in the design of the proposed facilities
- The WVUP team has determined that the best method to evaluate the economic potential for travel & tourism based on these projects is using comparable developments in analogous settings
- The actual economic impact of each of the proposed facilities is dependent on the final design, the implementation of a marketing plan and various other factors including any lingering impacts from Covid or another outbreak.

Ravenswood Sports & Recreation Complex

- Initial plans call for two baseball diamonds, a full size football/soccer field, a peewee soccer field, a BMX park, a walking trail, practice fields and an indoor multi-purpose facility together with parking concession, restrooms, picnic shelters and similar facilities
- Based on subsequent conversations, the potential expansion of the plan will include a full cloverleaf (4) of ball diamonds, additional soccer fields and an expanded indoor facility similar to The Bridge facility located in Bridgeport, WV.
- In addition to The Bridge; sports complexes are built or planned at The Highlands near Wheeling, Shawnee Sports Complex in Kanawha County, Valley Park in Hurricane, The SportsPlex in Lewisburg and at the Barboursville Soccer Complex among others.

Ravenswood Sports & Recreation Complex

- The design of the Sports Complex has not been finalized so there is no estimated cost for the project, The Bridge in Bridgeport is offered as an example:
- The Bridge is a \$50 million, 160,000 sf indoor facility located on 60 acres adjacent to the existing outdoor sports complex that includes four baseball fields, multipurpose field & one mile walking trail plus playgrounds, press box & concessions. The Bridge includes:
 - Warm-up and 25-meter competitive swimming pool with spectator stands
 - Concession stand and picnic area
 - Hardwood gym hosting six basketball or volleyball courts
 - Indoor Turf Field hosting football, soccer and batting cages
 - Fitness Center
 - A 1/4-mile indoor elevated track
 - Indoor climbing area featuring 31 unique walls
 - Two party rooms

Expenditures per person for tournaments at Hays, KS Sports Complex

Sport Group	Lodging	Parking/Tickets/ Fees	Grocer Items	Restaurants	Shop Non Food	Cultural Amenities	Fuel	Total per Visitor per Visit
Youth Softball	34.12	5.43	9.24	23.65	4.41	6.05	18.92	101.83
Competitive Softball	34.12	5.43	9.24	23.65	4.41	6.05	18.92	101.83
Youth Baseball	34.19	6.67	8.49	25.10	9.06	7.33	25.68	116.52
Competitive Baseball	34.19	6.67	8.49	25.10	9.06	7.33	25.68	116.52
Women's Slow Pitch	34.19	6.67	8.49	25.10	9.06	7.33	25.68	116.52
Men's Slow Pitch	34.19	6.67	8.49	25.10	9.06	7.33	25.68	116.52
Coed Slow Pitch	34.19	6.67	8.49	25.10	9.06	7.33	25.68	116.52
Soccer	44.70	7.74	10.06	33.57	4.13	7.02	31.71	138.88
Western KS Football	29.57	4.95	8.80	21.07	9.16	8.13	21.58	103.27

Expenditures per person for tournaments at Hays, KS Sports Complex

Sport Group	Total \$ per Visitor per Visit	Visitors Per Tournament	Projected Revenue per Tournament
Youth Softball	101.83	1,273	129,587
Competitive Softball	101.83	667	67,869
Youth Baseball	116.52	817	95,249
Competitive Baseball	116.52	440	51,293
Women's Slow Pitch	116.52	346	40,317
Men's Slow Pitch	116.52	288	33,578
Coed Slow Pitch	116.52	115	13,439
Soccer	138.88	2,335	324,285
Western KS Football	103.27	2,120	218,926

Ravenswood Sports & Recreation Complex

Potential Annual Economic Impact

- **Florida-based Sports Facilities Advisory (SFA)** is the leading developer of Sports Complexes in the US. SFA estimates that for every \$1 invested into a new facility for the cost of development and operational subsidy over the first five years, approximately \$2.02 is generated in direct spending in the local area.
- With no final design or plan for activities, the following is an example of possible revenues generated by outdoor tournaments based on Hays study:

Sport Group	# Tournaments	\$/Tournament	Total
• Youth Softball	2	129,587	\$ 259,175
• Youth Baseball	4	95,249	\$ 380,996
• Soccer	4	324,285	\$ 1,297,139
• Competitive Softball	2	67,869	\$ 135,738
		Total	\$ 2,073,048

Ravenswood Harbor & Marina

Economic projections based on Ohio's Marietta Harbor, 2021 Results

- **Marietta Harbor Overview**

- Located on Ohio River Belleville Pool at confluence with Muskingum River
- Two other private boat docks in town attract most local boaters
- Municipally owned & contract operated
- Includes Fuel & Sewage Pump-out Station
- Electric Connections- Lighthouse Pedestals with 20a & 30a Service
- Transient Dock Space- 240' double side access docks (480' tie-up space)
- Seasonal Dock Space- 240' double side access docks (480' tie-up space)
- Temporary Dock Space- Limited area for 2 hour tie-up at fuel dock
- Small Concession Stand on site
- Restrooms on site

Marietta Ohio Harbor 2021 Results

• Seasonal Dock Rentals	\$38/ft with electric	\$ 18,240
• Transient Dock Rentals	\$2/ft per day w elect	\$ 110,000
• Short Term Dock Space	\$5 per two hour visit	\$ 2,000
• Fuel Sales (net of cost)	\$0.75 over fuel cost	\$ 34,500
• Concession Sales	Misc snacks & ice cream	\$ 25,000
Total Seasonal Revenue		\$ 189,740

The Marietta Harbor employs seven workers over the 20 week season; 2 adults and five student workers

Marietta Harbor 2021 Projected Economic Impact

Based on number & types of visits estimated by Harbor staff and National Center for Natural Resources Economic Research (NCNRER) spending estimates for each class of visitor

NCNRER Motorized Boating Classifications	Non-local Day Trips	Non-local Overnight Trips	Local Day Trips	Local Overnight Trips	Totals
NCNRER \$/Visit	140.61	357.33	74.82	172.86	
Seasonal Rental	53,994.24	228,691.20	9,576.96	22,126.08	314,388.48
Transient Dock	82,678.68	300,157.20	12,569.76	14,520.24	409,925.88
Short Term (2 hr)	11,248.80	-	23,942.40	-	35,191.20
Totals	147,921.72	528,848.40	46,089.12	36,646.32	759,505.56

Ravenswood Harbor & Marina

Potential Annual Economic Impact

• Direct Marina & Harbor Revenue	\$	190,000
• Economic Impact from Boating Travel & Tourism	\$	760,000
Total	\$	950,000

Key Point- For Ravenswood to realize the full economic impact of the harbor, significant investment in retail and hospitality establishments will be necessary. Within a short walk of the marina, Marietta has 24 Restaurants; 9 Coffee Shops, Bakeries, Ice Cream Shops; 50 retail shops; 2 Historic Hotels; 9 Bed & Breakfast Establishments and 17 Recreational, Personal Care & Similar Venues.

Most visitors to the Marietta Harbor cite the access to the variety of shops, bars & restaurants in a historic setting as the primary reason for their visit. With the historic district located a short distance away from the Washington Riverfront Park, a similar opportunity exists for Ravenswood.

Outdoor Recreation Travel & Tourism Opportunities

Potential for Growth Based on Enhancements to Washington Riverfront Park, the Sports Complex, Sand Creek Paddle Sports Marina and Campground and Ravenswood Harbor & Marina

- Ohio River Islands National Wildlife Refuge
 - Buffington Island & Letart Island
- West Virginia DNR Wildlife Areas- 61,525 acres
 - Jackson County 10,276 acres
 - Adjoining Counties 51,249 acres
- Ohio Outdoor Recreation Areas (within 1 hour drive)
 - Wayne National Forest 40,000 acres (approx.) of 250,000 total
 - Ohio State Forests & Wildlife Areas 58,678 acres

Ohio River Islands National Wildlife Refuge

Economic Impact Based on the 2017 Report

- Ohio River Islands NWR consists of 22 islands operated by the US Fish & Wildlife Service
- Two of the islands, Buffington & Letart, are located in the Racine Pool of the Ohio River
- USFWS reports nearly 70,000 people visit ORINWR each year and spend over \$1.1 million related to these visits
- Few are directed to the Racine Pool islands due to a lack of access
- With better access based on the construction of the marinas and the enhancements to the Washington Riverfront Park, Ravenswood can capture over \$100,000/year in ORINWR tourism

Shore Based Outdoor Recreation Potential

Based on number & types of visits from Wayne Nat Forest & ORINWR studies and National Center for Natural Resources Economic Research (NCNRER) spending estimates for each class of visitor group

NCNRER Classifications	Non-local Day Trips	Non-local Overnight Trips	Local Day Trips	Local Overnight Trips	Totals \$/year
NCNRER \$/Visit	\$70 to \$113	\$426 to \$610	\$47 to \$65	\$206 to \$320	
Hunting	\$17,312	\$217,184	\$131,251	\$33,592	\$399,339
Fishing	\$12,913	\$233,137	\$135,516	\$30,219	\$411,784
Birding & Wildlife Viewing	\$10,817	\$236,136	\$159,790	\$44,323	\$451,066
Totals	\$41,041	\$686,457	\$426,557	\$108,134	\$1,262,189

Sand Creek RV Park & Campground

Initial Plan Includes 21 Campsites with full hook-up with possible future expansion

- WVU Parkersburg surveyed ten RV campgrounds within a 30 minute drive of Ravenswood with a total of just over 1,000 campsites
- Camp season is April 1 to Oct 31; some have winter campsites available
- Nightly rates vary from \$15 for a primitive campsite to \$45 for full hook-up. Some campgrounds have weekly, monthly & seasonal rates
- Krodel Park in Point Pleasant is publicly owned with 64 full hook-up campsites with a stocked pond, clubhouse, playground & picnic shelter. Rate is \$25 per night.
- WVUP used a rate of \$45/d with avg occupancy to estimate direct annual revenue of \$145,000 with an additional revenue of \$25,000 for limited winter use
- Per NCNRER avg RV party of four spends \$152/d after campsite fee generating an additional economic impact of \$493,000 for a total of \$663,000 per year.

Sand Creek Paddle Sports Marina

Paddle sports include canoe, kayak, rafting & stand-up paddle boards. The planned marina includes ample parking and launch docks along Sand Creek

- The South Atlantic (WV) and North Central (OH) Regions are among the highest regional participation rates in paddle sports in the US. More than 200,000 canoes & kayaks are registered in Ohio
- Pennsylvania has developed an extensive system of water trails over the past ten years and has completed an IMPLAN model of the economic impacts that shows the average local paddle sport participant spends \$46/day which creates \$17.80 indirect and \$41.95 induced effects for a total impact of \$105.75 per day.
- Birding, wildlife viewing & fishing by kayak or canoe are fast growing areas
- In 2020 18.12 million participants in kayaking in the U.S. with an estimated participation rate of 7.6%

Sand Creek Paddle Sports Marina

Potential Annual Economic Impact

- The most paddle sports activity is from April through October with the first heavily dependent on water & weather conditions
- Approximately 3 million people live within a two hour drive of Ravenswood and an estimated 228,000 paddle sports participants
- Initial estimates suggest Ravenswood can attract 50 participants per week during the six month season with a proper marketing program
- The potential impact is \$46/visit x 50 x 26 weeks or \$59,800
- Based on the PA IMPLAN study this activity adds \$23,140 of indirect and \$54,535 of induced effects for a total impact of \$137,475

Washington Lands Riverfront Park Improvements

Current plans include the construction of a river wall with dock, an amphitheater, new restrooms with showers, improvements to the boat ramp and both a zipline and pedestrian bridge to connect to the downtown.

- **Fishing Tournaments**- the Ravenswood Boat Ramp hosts a number of fishing tournaments every year but the size and number is limited by the facilities. Expanding the launch ramp and parking will allow the city to host more & bigger tournaments
- **Ohio River Cruise Boats**- American Queen Voyages plans eight cruises past Ravenswood in 2022 with stops in Marietta & Point Pleasant. Each stop generates \$15,000 to \$30,000 in food, beverage and retail sales. Improvements will allow these boats to dock at Ravenswood.
- **Riverfront Events**- the city currently hosts a number of events on the riverfront including the Constellium Ohio River Power Boat Grand Prix & the Ohio River Festival. The amphitheater and improved facilities allows the expansion of these events and the addition of other events to the calendar.
- **Private Day Use**- upgrades to the facilities allows more day use rentals for parties and private events as well as an enhanced experience for both local and tourist use

Washington Lands Riverfront Park Improvements

Potential Annual Economic Impact

• Casual & Private Party Use-	\$	54,012
• IMPLAN model local spending of \$7 to \$20 per visitor		
• Fishing Tournaments-	\$	400,160
• Includes more multi-day events hosting competitors from several states		
• Additional Riverfront Events-	\$	378,300
• Additional festivals 4x/year using new facilities		
• Expanded Major Festival-	\$	542,565
• Facilities allow more visitors to the Power Boat Races & Festival		
• Ohio River Cruise Boats-	\$	86,184
• Up to eight potential visits per year, modelled four		
Total Potential Annual Impact	\$	1,407,209

Overall Potential Annual Direct Economic Impact

Full Development with Integrated Marketing Plan

• Sports & Recreation Complex	\$	2,073,048
• Washington Riverfront Park Enhancements	\$	1,407,209
• Power Boat Harbor & Marina	\$	950,000
• Sand Creek Paddle Marina	\$	59,800
• Sand Creek RV Park & Campground	\$	663,000
• Outdoor Recreation Activities	\$	1,362,189
Grand Total	\$	6,515,246

Other Possible Tourism Opportunities to Target

Important to offer a variety of activities to encourage longer stays & return visits

- **Historical Tourism-** prepare numerous half-day trips to explore historical sites within an hour or less of Ravenswood. In addition to the well-known ties to Washington, Lewis & Clark and the Civil War, there are over 400 historical markers within an hour drive of Ravenswood
- **Biking & Hiking-** five bike loop rides in the area are on cyclingscenicwv.com. More rides and hikes could be laid out and publicized locally and on social media.
- **Motorcycle Tourism-** while big rallies ala Sturgis might not be the thing, on average motorcycle riders are more affluent, spend more money and are always looking for new, scenic rides. Publicized routes promoted on social media with restaurants and shops that offer motorcycle parking and amenities are a low cost way to increase visitor count.
- **Birding-** while birding & wildlife watching are addressed in the Ohio River Islands Wildlife Refuge, there is an opportunity to broaden the appeal to birders by publishing a local birding trail guide and maintaining an active presence on wildlife related social media sites. Birding on the Water or paddle birding is one of the fastest growing segments and a natural fit. On average birders are older and have significantly higher disposable income.

Report compiled by WVU Parkersburg with Byers and Associates, Dorinda Byers and Eddy Biehl, and assistance from WVU Parkersburg students Morgan Cale and Rachel Fisher, Jackson County natives.

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