

# *Economic Impact Study*



**PLANNING  
DECISIONS**

Research & Planning

## An Economic Impact Study of Youth Camps in Maine

For: The Maine Youth Camping Association  
P.O. Box 1861  
Portland, Maine 04104

Funded by: The Children's Camp Alliance of Maine

April 22, 2005

From: Planning Decisions, Inc.  
22 Cottage Road, P.O. Box 2414  
South Portland, ME 04116-2414

## I. SUMMARY

Maine's youth camping industry has been a mainstay of the state's rural economy for over a hundred years. In areas of the state that have suffered both from the loss of jobs in traditional farming and manufacturing industries and from the ever-widening spread of suburban sprawl, residential camping has remained a vibrant but largely invisible economic engine.

There are nearly 200 licensed youth camps in Maine.<sup>1</sup> These run the gamut from seasonal residential camps to trip or activity specific camps to limited activity day camps. They encompass for-profit businesses, religious based organizations and non-sectarian non-profit organizations. Approximately half of the camps belong to the Maine Youth Camping Association (MYCA), a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization dedicated to promoting youth camping in Maine. Table 1 presents the estimated composition of the industry in 2004.

**Table 1**  
**Estimated Composition of the Maine Youth Camping Industry, 2004**

Membership	Residential	Day Camp	Total
MYCA	104	5	109
non-MYCA	17	64	81
Total	121	69	190

Source: MYCA and Maine Department of Health and Human Services

To estimate the industry's impact on the Maine economy, MYCA surveyed its members concerning their operational spending, their capital spending and the visitors they attract to Maine. Analysis of survey results indicates that the total economic impact on Maine of MYCA activities is approximately \$245 million per year and that this economic activity supports approximately \$25 million in tax revenues for Maine's state and local governments.

Clearly, the impact of the state's *entire* youth camping industry is even greater. How much greater cannot be known without a survey of non-MYCA camps. What is clear, however, is that--taken as a whole--the one hundred plus MYCA camps constitute an industry that:

---

<sup>1</sup> The Maine Department of Human Services, Division of Health Engineering establishes health and sanitation rules for camps and maintains a licensing program. The most recently available total number of licensed camps is 190.

- ✓ Provides a wide range of often life transforming youth development experiences to approximately 20,000 campers per year;
- ✓ Maintains nearly 17,000 acres of Maine's rural landscape and over 270,000 feet of lakefront property;
- ✓ Generates annual tuition revenue of over \$120 million;
- ✓ Provides over 8,000 seasonal and nearly 400 full-time, year-round jobs in Maine that generate an in-state payroll of nearly \$35 million each year;
- ✓ Purchases food, supplies, construction materials, professional services and a wide variety of other items that represent sales of over \$52 million annually to Maine businesses;
- ✓ Pays nearly \$5 million in local property taxes to Maine communities; and
- ✓ Generates over 130,000 visitor-days per year for the Maine tourism industry through the travel of families dropping off, visiting and picking up their children at camp as well as visiting camps they may want their children to attend; this travel represents approximately \$20 million in revenue to the hotels, motels, restaurants, gas stations, shops and other businesses these visitors patronize.

In addition to these direct effects, MYCA camps, through the supply-chain and payroll linkages of both its own spending and that of the visitors it brings to the state, have a much wider indirect and induced impact on the Maine economy. Analysis of these multiplier effects using the IMPLAN Pro 2 impact model of the State of Maine indicates that:

- ✓ the total annual impact of MYCA camps on Maine's economy exceeds \$245 million; and
- ✓ this spending supports nearly \$25 million annually in tax revenues for Maine state and local governments.