

# The Value of Recreational Fishing in Utah

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## Preserving Access to Waterways in Developing Areas Needed to Maintain the Value of Utah Angling



*Logan, Utah* – Fishing is a billion-dollar recreational activity in Utah, drawing people from all over to enjoy the state’s beautiful lakes, rivers, and streams. A new study by the Institute of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism at Utah State University, supported by funding from the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, shows that preserving access to these natural waterways is critical to keeping Utah’s fishing industry thriving well into the future.

The research examined thousands of fishing trips made across Utah and found that factors like population growth and weather conditions significantly impact where people choose to fish and how much enjoyment they get from the experience. As Utah’s population grows and cities expand, there’s increasing pressure on natural fishing sites, especially those near popular urban areas. This growth can lead to “crowding out,” where anglers feel they can no longer enjoy their favorite spots due to too many people or less natural surroundings.

Key findings show that anglers prefer fishing in less populated areas and tend to avoid sites that feel overcrowded. For Utah’s fishery managers, this means that protecting access to waterways, especially in developing areas, could help prevent angler dissatisfaction and keep the experience enjoyable.

Dr. Jordan W. Smith, a lead researcher on the study, emphasized, “By understanding how factors like population growth and climate changes affect angler

choices, we can make strategic decisions to protect these recreational areas for future generations. This isn’t just about conservation; it’s about making sure fishing remains a valuable and accessible part of Utah’s lifestyle.”

As temperatures continue to rise due to climate change, fishing spots may also become less attractive for certain species, impacting angler satisfaction and participation. The study suggests that by planning today, managers can take steps to offset these challenges, ensuring that Utah’s recreational fishing remains a sustainable and enjoyable activity for years to come.

## Contact

### Dr. Jordan W. Smith

Director, Institute of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism  
Professor, Department of Environment and Society  
Utah State University

**Phone:** (435) 830-6294

**Email:** [jordan.smith@usu.edu](mailto:jordan.smith@usu.edu)