

Report breaks down golf's \$1 billion desert impact



Larry Bohannon, The Desert Sun 7:29 a.m. PDT September 1, 2015



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(Photo: Jay Calderon/The Desert Sun)

Golf is big in the Coachella Valley, but just how big?

At least \$1.1 billion a year in direct and indirect impact on the 2014 desert economy, according to an economic study commissioned by the Hi-Lo Desert Chapter of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America.

The report, released Monday, studies golf's impact through spending, wages, employment as well as federal, state and local taxes in the desert. While the report is released as golf is under siege for using large amounts of water during the California drought and as the game seeks to move forward from a decade of declining play and participation, those behind the report say it is about showing that the game is alive and well in the Coachella Valley.



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"The intention of the study is to show the importance of the golf industry to the Coachella Valley, the importance to the tourism industry here, and the economic impact it has not only on the tourism industry but the secondary industries here in town as well," said Jeff Jensen, field staff regional representative for the GCSAA.

Conducted by Tourism Economics, an Oxford Economics Company with an office in San Francisco, the study says public, private and resort golf courses in the Coachella Valley generated \$476 million in gross revenues in 2014 and directly employed 8,000 local workers. In addition, indirect and induced revenue, generated by golfers at local shops, restaurants and hotels in the desert as well as in employment in those industries, bumps the impact number to \$1.1 billion.

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Joan Busch of Vancouver Island, Canada, hits a drive on the 12th hole at Palm Desert Country Club in 2012. A recent study says the golf industry has an economic impact of \$1.1 billion to the valley. (Photo: Jay Calderon, The Desert Sun)

The study began compiling the data in March for the 2014 calendar year. Funding for the study came from a grant from the national GCSAA as well as the Greater Palm Springs Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Southern California Golf Association and the Southern California PGA.

The local report comes two years after the California Alliance for Golf issued a study showing golf had a \$13 billion impact on the state's economy. Since then other regional reports for areas such as San Diego and the Monterey Peninsula have been commissioned, and now the desert has its own report.

Some of the intriguing numbers from the report include that 13.9 percent of all golf courses in California are in the Coachella Valley and that the desert's two big professional tournaments, the CareerBuilder Challenge and the ANA Inspiration, generated \$7.2 million in organization and media expenditures.

For Jensen, the overall \$1.1 billion total spending number is the most important aspect of the report. Scott White, president and CEO of the Greater Palm Springs CVB, said the breakdown of golf-related spending by categories such as lodging, second homes, food and beverage and retail trade mean the most for tourism marketing.

"Golf in the Coachella Valley has kind of run counter to the national trends. But there is not a way to quantify that without everyone releasing all of their data to us, which they are all kind of uncomfortable with," White said. "It's perfect timing, because we want to understand the value of golf and how it relates to tourism. (The superintendents) want to understand the value of golf and how it relates to tourism or the Coachella Valley as well. So it was perfect timing for both of us."

Jensen admits that the findings of the report could help the golf industry as it wades through water usage complaints in the third year of the drought. But it is also about promoting the game to golfers and government agencies.

"There are still a lot of people that don't know what the golf industry is doing in the Coachella Valley. They may be someone in New York or someone in Florida or Georgia who think, boy, the end of the world is here, it is crumbled everywhere. But that is not the truth here in the Coachella Valley," Jensen said.

"This is how we can get out there and promote (golf)," he added. "It does show the benefits of the game to the community and hopefully to our policy makers as well, what this really means in terms of jobs, in terms of tax creation, in terms of real estate and real estate value as well."

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Bill Haas and Justin Thomas make their way to the final green in front of a large crowd during the Humana Challenge at PGA West in January. A recent economic study found 13.9 percent of all golf courses in California are in the Coachella Valley. (Photo: Jay Calderon/The Desert Sun)

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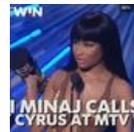


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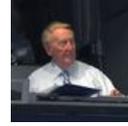
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