

The Economic Value of the Nature Valley Bicycle Festival: A Pilot Study of the Stage 5 Menomonie, WI Road Race

Introduction:

On June 19, 2010, Menomonie, WI hosted Stage 5 of the professional bicycling road race of the Nature Valley Bicycle Festival. This was the first time in the Festival's 12-year history that a stage of the race has been held outside of Minnesota. Dunn County, in which Menomonie resides, is well known as a premier bicycle destination with bicycle-friendly roads, rolling hills and long climbs that add the extra challenge that many pro bike racers have been fervently requesting.

The 95-mile pro men's road race and 76-mile pro women's road race started with a parade lap around the University of Wisconsin-Stout campus and then headed into the challenging western Dunn County terrain, and finished with four laps on a larger circuit around UW-Stout campus.

This pro/elite bike racing spectacle is a brutal contest of endurance as riders fly by at break-neck speeds shoulder to shoulder and wheel to wheel over the route that challenges even the most experienced riders.

While the pro men and women racers are away, the Greater Menomonie Area Chamber of Commerce hosted a bicycle festival and expo for spectators from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., on the Clock Tower Plaza, at the intersection of Main and Broadway streets. The festival included bike and fitness displays, stunt rider demonstrations, children's games, a secure bike corral for spectators who pedal to the event, and a series of three amateur bike races ranging from 30 to 45 minutes in duration on a one mile criterium lap around UW-Stout campus.

While pro bicycle racing is a dazzling sport of endurance featuring some of the top athletes in the world, it is important to recognize the economic impact that the race has on the area. The Fiscal and Economic Research Center (FERC) at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater surveyed the spectators to estimate the economic impact that the road race has on the region.

Summary of Results:

Results from the analysis indicate that

- 47 percent of the spectators at the race traveled from outside of Menomonie
- 89 percent of the spectators have some form of post-secondary education
- 60 percent of the spectators come from a household whose income is at least \$60,000
- Spectators spent \$47 on refreshments, meals, souvenirs, etc. during the day.

These results showcase the social and economic importance of the Bicycle Festival on the area as it was able to

- Generated over \$65,000 for the local Menomonie economy
- Provided entertainment for an estimated 2000 spectators in Menomonie and an additional 1000 spectators as the peloton raced through Eau Galle, Elmwood, Knapp and Boyceville.





About the Nature Valley Bicycle Festival:

The 2010 Nature Valley Bicycle Festival was held from June 16th to June 20th with six stages including a time trial, three short circuit races (criteriums) in the downtowns of St. Paul, Minneapolis and Stillwater, and lengthy road races in Cannon Falls, MN, and now in Menomonie, WI.

The Nature Valley Bicycle Festival started in 1998, and has now grown into a top ranked national bicycle race featuring 150 professional men and 100 professional women racers and attracting spectators from across the upper Midwest.

Proceeds from the Nature Valley Bicycle Festival support the Children's Hospitals and Clinics of Minnesota.

Methodology:

On June 19, 2010, the Fiscal and Economic Research Center (FERC) at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater surveyed the spectators to estimate the economic impact that the road race has on the region. FERC members in collaboration with the Tainter/Menomine Lake Improvement Association randomly surveyed spectators about the amount of money they spent or plan to spend because of the bike race, their household income, their highest level of household education, and tracked the amount of money spectators were spending by category (i.e., refreshments, meals, souvenirs, etc.).

CONTRIBUTORS

Principal researcher and analyst

Russ Kashian, PhD
kashianr@uww.edu

Department of Economics
University of Wisconsin-Whitewater
800 W. Main Street, Whitewater, WI 53190

UW-Extension
Economic Development Specialist

Co-principal researcher and analyst

Data Entry and Report Preparation

Justin Kasper, research assistant
Fiscal and Economic Research Center

Database design, collection and auditing

Christie Kornhoff, administrative assistant