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Outdoor retailers means big biz to Utah

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SALT LAKE CITY – The Wasatch Front can expect more precipitation of sorts this week as thousands of outdoor retailers "make it rain" on the local economy.

More than 18,000 outdoor recreation professionals are expected to descend on northern Utah as the Outdoor Retailer Winter Market 2011 expo kicks off at the Salt Palace Convention Center Thursday. The four-day event draws participants from around the globe and infuses about \$16.6 million of direct economic impact into the state, based on data from the University of Utah's Bureau of Economic and Business Research.

The yearly Outdoor Retailer Winter Market trade event will run from Jan. 20 through Jan. 23 and showcases the latest products from manufacturers, suppliers and retailers worldwide.

In addition, new products will be on display at Solitude during the All Mountain Demo on Wednesday.

The semi-annual Outdoor Retailer summer and winter events are the largest conventions in the state, representing \$35 million to \$40 million in annual spending, according to the Salt Lake Convention and Visitors Bureau. Last summer, the SLCVB signed agreements to retain Salt Lake as the host venue for the Outdoor Retailer Winter and Summer Markets through 2014.

"We fully appreciate the efforts ... the community has made to not only sustain our relationship, but strengthen our partnership," said Kenji Haroutunian, Outdoor Retailer show director.

The total estimated economic impact of the extended agreement could reach more than \$120 million, BEBR data estimated.

The data also showed that active Utah outdoor recreation contributes about \$5.8 billion annually to Utah's economy, supporting approximately 65,000 jobs, generating nearly \$300 million in annual state tax revenues, while producing almost \$4 billion in annual retail sales and services statewide.

In 2010, a record number of retailers registered for the 2011 Winter Market — and to date more attendees than last year have registered, the SLCVB stated.

"It's both exciting and rewarding to see that our destination continues to be relevant, particularly with the outdoor recreation industry," said Scott Beck, SLCVB president and chief executive officer. "When you combine the incredible natural surroundings of Salt Lake and the Wasatch mountains, our destination is the perfect place for this unique gathering of outdoor-related businesses and retailers."

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