



**Paper: Reno Gazette-Journal (NV)**  
**Title: Reno Rodeo spurs economy**  
**Date: June 28, 2002**

\$3.2 (see correction below) million local **impact**: Guests gamble, bring friends.

By John Stearns

## RENO GAZETTE-JOURNAL

The **Reno Rodeo** is spurring the local tourism economy just as it needs a good kicking.

"The casino operators and the hotel and motel operators appreciate having weekends that are full again - they have not been experiencing that in the last couple of months, so it's a breath of fresh air," said Jeff Beckelman, president/CEO of the **Reno-Sparks Convention & Visitors Authority**.

"**Reno** and **rodeo** are like chicken and dumplings - it brings a lot of people to town," he said.

RSCVA estimates the **rodeo's** total **economic impact** at \$32.2 million in lodging, gaming and nongaming spending, based on a 2000 MarkeTeclnc. survey of attendees. That makes the **rodeo** the fourth-largest of the region's annual events or fifth in the two out of every three years that there's a major bowling tournament, according to RSCVA data.

This match of **Reno** and **rodeo** - made in leather, dirt and denim - began last Saturday and runs through Sunday at the **Reno Livestock Events Center**, but the region will get added exposure with a taped broadcast from the event on ESPN2 on July 7. RSCVA bought a 30-second spot on the 7:30 p.m. show that touts the area's outdoor adventures, arts, culture and gaming.

"(ESPN's) viewership is our target market as we position the region (as `America's Adventure Place')," Deanna Ashby, RSCVA marketing director, said of the \$7,500 spot. "From that standpoint, it's a good buy."

To nourish the **rodeo** partnership, RSCVA was preparing Thursday to sign a 10-year contract for the **rodeo** to continue using the agency's livestock center rent-free. **Rodeo** costs are limited to RSCVA labor and equipment rental - a tab of about \$100,000, Beckelman said.

The **rodeo** has tried to sign extended contracts in the past, but negotiations always broke down, he said, calling the **rodeo** a "high-status" event that RSCVA wants to assist with a long-term contract. "They're a valued customer of the **Reno Livestock Events Center** and we want (them) to know how much we appreciate them."

June traditionally has not been a barnburner business month.

But this year, especially, the **rodeo** couldn't have come at a better time for a tourism-based industry bucked lately by declining gambling and room revenues.

Washoe County gaming revenues have declined 12 of the last 13 months vs. the same month a year earlier.

In the fiscal 10 months through April, county gaming revenues were off 5.5 percent from prior year, with **Reno** casinos' fiscal revenues off 7.6 percent.

Washoe County's taxable room revenues in the 10 months through April were running 4 percent below prior year, a figure sure to deepen after preliminary reports showing double-digit declines in May.

Beckelman hopes the **rodeo** signals the start of stabilized business and an end to high single-digit or double-digit declines in business.

Having what **rodeo** officials said will be more than 100,000 fans attend the event - an estimated 41 percent from outside **Reno-Sparks** based on 2000 research - is a good start.

Rick Murdock, vice president of sales and casino marketing at the Eldorado Hotel & Casino downtown, said **rodeo** participants and spectators are "everywhere" on the property.

"We've been rocking all week," Murdock said Thursday. "This kind of really gets you going into summer."

Eldorado's 816 rooms were sold out last Friday and Saturday, ran 99 percent the rest of the week and will sell out again this weekend, he said.

"(The **rodeo**) gives you something to advertise it's an out-of-market event," Murdock said. "We're able to invite our VIPs as well."

Morag and Ken Miranda came from Honokaa, Hawaii, to attend the **rodeo**, in which Ken participates in the double mugging event. In that, a rider ropes a steer while a partner on the ground tries to knock the steer to the ground for the roper to tie up.

It's the couple's third **Reno Rodeo**.

Ken also is participating in Perry DiLoreto's **Reno Rodeo** Invitational Team Roping Classic - one of the events that accompanies the **rodeo** and this year doubled to 500 ropers.

"We love it," Morag said. "It's a wonderful 10 days . . . and it's affordable. The room rates are very reasonable. You're not getting ripped off. You can afford to come here and have a great time."

"We figured this year there were about 40 people that came just because of the double mugging," 32 of them from Hawaii and eight from California, she said of family and participants. Five Hawaiian cowboys are competing.

Mike Mentaberry, 2000 **Reno Rodeo** Association president, was instrumental in bringing the double mugging event and its Hawaiian competitors to **Reno**.

"**Reno Rodeo** does promote **Reno** as a tourist destination," he said.

"You have people from vacation paradise that have focused on making **Reno Rodeo** their vacation destination for the year."

The event attracts about 1,000 participants, not including myriad other people associated with the **rodeo** and family members, Mentaberry said.

"I think there's bigger and better things in our future," he said. "(The **rodeo**) can grow, but we're really restricted by the size of the grounds that we're on."

RSCVA's Beckelman sees opportunity for growth, too, noting that livestock center expansion plans are under consideration.

RSCVA will seek the **rodeo's** help - financial and otherwise - when that time comes, he said.

For now, the **rodeo** is helping RSCVA coffers and **Reno-Sparks** businesses.

"We are doing really well," said Steve Trounday, marketing director at Fitzgeralds Casino/Hotel, whose 351 rooms are full all week. "**Reno** has to be a city of events. It's just critical."

TV doesn't hurt either, said Garry Jackson, this year's **rodeo** association president.

"The ESPN2 national broadcast is good for the **Reno Rodeo**, our community and our great sponsors," he said in a prepared statement.

Including all the events, more than \$2 million in prize money is being paid out during the week.

## WHO ATTENDS RENO RODEO

o 39 percent of attendees are from **Reno**, 20 percent from Sparks, 13 percent from Nevada, outside **Reno-Sparks** 18 percent

from California 10 percent from other areas.

o Median age is 38.

o Median household income is \$45,000.

o The average party size is 3.8, with three adults 21 or over and one under 21. Overnight visitors tend to average 4.1 adults, but that drops to three for day visitors and 2.7 for residents.

o The average number of nights stayed in the **Reno**-Sparks area is four.

o 71 percent of the overnight visitors say they will gamble this trip, but just 6 percent of the day visitors say they will gamble. For those who gambled, the overnight visitors' gaming budget for their trip averages \$632, with a median of \$82, while the day visitor averages \$7, with a median of \$1.

(2000 attendance survey by MarkeTec Inc. Results based on 404 interviews.)

## **RENO'S LARGEST EVENTS**

American Bowling Congress, \$89 million, based on 2001 data. Its sister event, the Women's International Bowling Congress, is slightly less.

Hot August Nights, \$63.5 million, based on 2001 data.

**Reno** National Championship Air Races, \$49.2 million, based on 2000 data.

Best in the West Nugget Rib Cook-Off, \$32.8 million, based on 2000 data.

**Reno Rodeo**, \$32.2 million, based on 2000 data.

Lauren Clifton/**Reno** Gazette-Journal

PACKED: A crowd of fans wait for the steer wrestling competition to start Wednesday at the Livestock Events Center.

CORRECTION, p.2-A, June 29, 2002 !

A Business section headline Friday understated how much money the **Reno Rodeo** brings to the local economy. Based on a 2000 survey, the event has a \$32.2 million **economic impact**.

Copyright (c) Reno Gazette-Journal. All rights reserved. Reproduced with the permission of Gannett Co., Inc. by NewsBank, inc.

*Author: John Stearns*

*Section: Business*

*Page: 1D*

*Copyright (c) Reno Gazette-Journal. All rights reserved. Reproduced with the permission of Gannett Co., Inc. by NewsBank, inc.*