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## Researchers look for link between state weather and tourism

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TRAVERSE CITY, Mich. (AP) -- Researchers are working to pinpoint just how a cold or rainy summer day can result in lost dollars for the state's tourism and agriculture industries.

The four-year Pileus Project, funded by the Environmental Protection Agency, is now in its second year.

Tourism, agriculture and meteorology researchers have reviewed climate and weather data and consulted representatives of both industries, such as golf and ski resort operators and tart cherry producers.

Among their findings is that a 1 degree increase in a day's high temperature means 1 percent more traffic on state roads, while a 1 degree decrease means 1 percent less traffic, said research specialist Lori Langone of the Travel, Tourism and Recreation Resource Center at Michigan State University, which is part on the project.

Last summer, with temperatures about 4 degrees below normal in Michigan, resulted in about a 4 percent decline in tourism traffic, she said.

"Other than several leisure variables, including holidays and weekends, temperature is the largest single factor that we have identified that impacts tourism traffic volume," Langone told the Traverse City Record-Eagle for a Sunday story.

On a typical July 4, researchers estimate that a high temperature of 64 degrees would mean about 8,600 vehicles along U.S. Route 127, a main freeway to northern Michigan.

A July 4 temperature of 78 degrees would bring out about 9,300 vehicles, while a 92-degree day would bring more than 10,000

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vehicles.

A goal of the research is to provide access to weather data to those who work in the state's \$16 billion-a-year tourism industry, such as campground and canoe livery operators, convention and visitor bureaus and special event organizers.

Tom Kern, executive director of the National Cherry Festival, said data would help with planning and scheduling.

"It would be very helpful to special events across the state," he said. "Right now a lot of the information we have is anecdotal, but not necessarily empirical."

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