

Sonoran Desert National Monument



A Summary of Economic Performance in the Surrounding Communities



Sonoran Desert National Monument, Photo: BLM

BACKGROUND

The 487,000 acre Sonoran Desert National Monument was designated in 2001 to protect part of the most biologically diverse desert in North America. Located in Maricopa and Pinal counties, Arizona the monument is managed by the Bureau of Land Management.

PUBLIC ACCESS AND USE OF THE MONUMENT

The national monument protects hunting, fishing, rights-of-way, and access to inholdings. The monument contains three distinct mountain ranges—the Maricopa, Sand Tank, and Table Top Mountains—and is home to a number of historic and archeological sites. It attracts thousands of visitors each year.

TRAVEL AND TOURISM

Travel and tourism is important to the Sonoran Desert Region, representing about 16% of total private wage and salary employment, or 258,849 jobs, in 2008. In Arizona, the Outdoor Industry Foundation reports that recreation contributes more than \$5 billion annually the state's economy.⁶

SUMMARY FINDINGS

Research shows that conserving public lands like the Sonoran Desert National Monument helps to safeguard and highlight amenities that draw new residents, tourists, and businesses to surrounding communities.¹

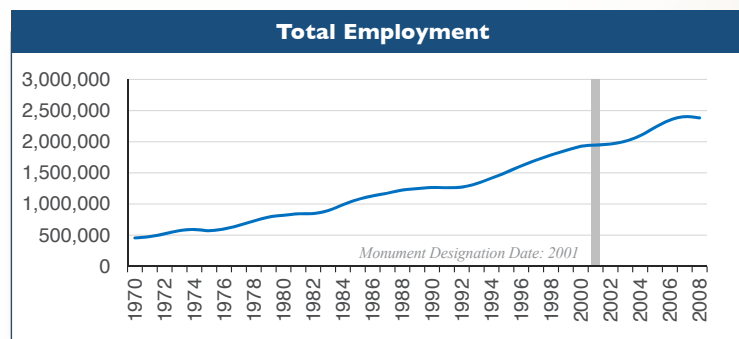
Western counties with protected public lands, like national monuments, have been more successful at attracting fast-growing economic sectors and as a result grow more quickly, on average, than counties without protected public lands.² In addition, protected natural amenities—such as the pristine scenery found at Sonoran Desert—also help sustain property values and attract new investment.³

ECONOMY GROWS AFTER DESIGNATION

The communities in Maricopa and Pinal counties, Arizona neighboring the Sonoran Desert National Monument (the Sonoran Desert Region) experienced strong growth after its designation in 2001, continuing previous growth trends.

From 2001 to 2008, in the Sonoran Desert Region:⁴

- Population grew by 27%
- Real personal income grew by 28%
- Jobs grew by 22%
- Real per capita income grew by 1%

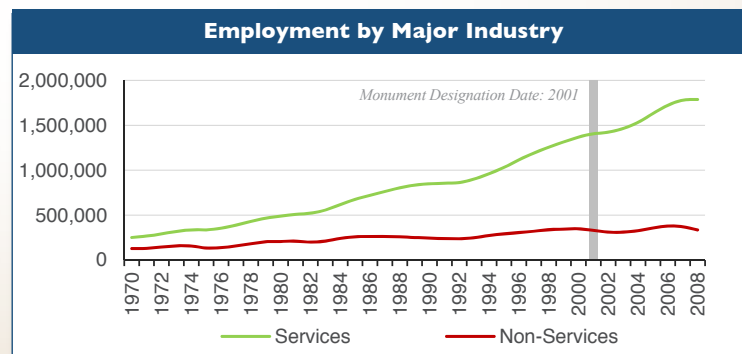


SERVICES JOBS INCREASING ACROSS THE BOARD

Services jobs—such as doctors, engineers, and teachers—account for the majority of employment growth in the Sonoran Desert Region in recent decades. These jobs are increasingly mobile, and many entrepreneurs locate their businesses in areas with a high quality of life.

From 2001 to 2008, in the Sonoran Desert Region:⁵

- Services grew from 1,405,674 to 1,787,497 jobs, a 27% increase
- Non-Services grew from 330,455 to 336,091 jobs, a 2% increase





Sonoran Desert National Monument, Photo: BLM

THE COMMUNITIES IN MARICOPA AND PINAL COUNTIES NEIGHBORING THE NATIONAL MONUMENT EXPERIENCED STRONG GROWTH SINCE ITS DESIGNATION IN 2001.

THE INCREASES IN POPULATION, JOBS, PERSONAL INCOME, AND PER CAPITA INCOME ALSO MIRROR OTHER WESTERN COUNTIES WITH NATIONAL MONUMENTS OR OTHER PROTECTED LANDS.

METHODOLOGY

This fact sheet is part of a series that assesses the economic performance of local communities that are adjacent to national monuments. The series examines national monuments in the eleven western continental states that are larger than 10,000 acres and were created in 1982 or later.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact Ben Alexander,
Headwaters Economics
ben@headwaterseconomics.org
406-599-7423

Series: *The Economic Importance of National Monuments*

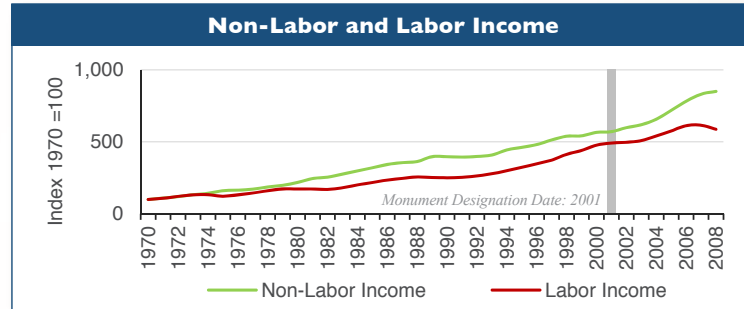
NON-LABOR INCOME GROWS FASTEST

One of the largest and fastest growing sources of new personal income in the Sonoran Desert Region is non-labor income, which is made up of investment income such as dividends, interest and rent, and government transfer payments such as Social Security and Medicare.

For people with investment income and many retirees, protected public lands and recreation provide important aspects of a high quality of life. Non-labor income already represents more than a third of all personal income in the West—and will grow as the Baby Boomer generation retires.⁷

From 2001 to 2008, in the Sonoran Desert Region:

- Non-Labor income grew from \$34.3 billion to \$51.1 billion, a 49% increase
- As a result, in 2008 non-labor income made up 33% of total personal income



TRADITIONAL JOBS HOLD STEADY

Long before the monument's creation, commodity industries (agriculture, mining, timber) in the Sonoran Desert Region were small relative to the overall economy. These industries remain part of the region's economy today.

In 2008, in the Sonoran Desert Region:

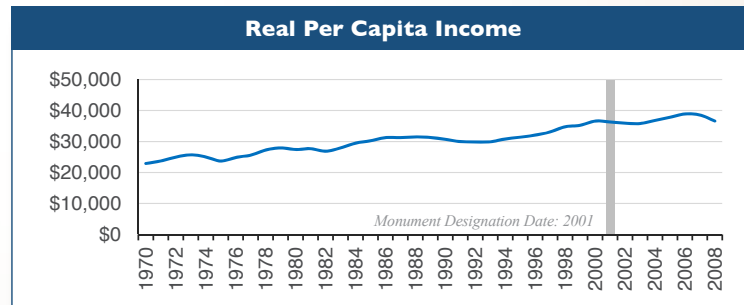
- Agriculture accounted for 0.4% of total employment
- Mining accounted for 0.1% of total private employment
- Timber accounted for 0.5% of total private employment

PROSPERITY ON THE RISE

As the economy has grown since designation of the Sonoran Desert National Monument, per capita income has risen as well. This indicates growing prosperity in the region.

From 2001 to 2008, in the Sonoran Desert Region:

- Real per capita income grew modestly from \$36,319 to \$36,619, a 1% increase



1 Lorah, P., R. Southwick, et al. 2003. Environmental Protection, Population Change, and Economic Development in the Rural Western United States. *Population and Environment* 24(3): 255-272. McGranahan, D. A. 1999. Natural Amenities Drive Rural Population Change. E. R. S. U.S. Department of Agriculture. Washington, D.C. Haas, W. H., W. J. Serow, et al. 2002. The Baby Boom, Amenity Retirement Migration, and Retirement Communities: Will the Golden Age of Retirement Continue? *Research on Aging* 24(1): 150-164.

2 Rasker, R. 2006. An Exploration into the Economic Impact of Industrial Development Versus Conservation on Western Public Lands. *Society & Natural Resources*, 19(3): 191-207.

3 Deller, S. C., T. H. Tsai, et al. 2001. The Role of Amenities and Quality of Life in Rural Economic Growth. *American Journal of Agricultural Economics* 83(2): 352-365.

4 All economic data comes from U.S. Department of Commerce. 2010. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Regional Economic Information System, Washington, D.C.; U.S. Department of Commerce. 2010. Census Bureau, County Business Patterns, Washington, D.C.

5 The U.S. Department of Commerce changed with way it classifies industries between 2000 and 2001. To show a continuous timeline for services and non-services employment we subtracted non-services jobs from total private employment to derive services jobs. The national recession from March-November 2001 also may account for short-term employment volatility around 2001.

6 Outdoor Industry Foundation. 2006. *The Active Outdoor Recreation Economy: A \$730 Billion Annual Contribution to the U.S. Economy.*

7 Frey, W.H. 2006. *America's Regional Demographics in the '00 Decade: The Role of Seniors, Boomers and New Minorities.* The Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C.