

Chuckwalla National Monument

A summary of forecasted economic performance in surrounding counties



Photo courtesy Bob Wick

BACKGROUND

The 740,000-acre Chuckwalla National Monument was designated in 2025 to protect the living landscape with interconnected cultural, natural, and spiritual significance that continues to sustain the well-being and survival of Indigenous peoples today. The monument spans the transitional zone where the Sonoran and Mojave deserts come together, offering stunning landscapes, rich biodiversity, and unique geological features. Located in Imperial and Riverside counties, California, the monument is managed by the Bureau of Land Management. Monument designation was led by the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians, the Fort Yuma Quechan Indian Tribe, the Cahuilla Band of Indians, the Chemehuevi Indian Tribe, the Colorado River Indian Tribes, the Morongo Band of Mission Indians, and the Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians.

PUBLIC ACCESS AND USES

The monument allows rockhounding, hiking, camping, backpacking, sightseeing, mountain biking, and access to numerous wilderness areas.

TRAVEL AND TOURISM

Travel and tourism are important to communities in the Chuckwalla region, representing about 18% of total private wage and salary employment, or 127,360 jobs, in 2024.² Outdoor recreation contributed more than \$83.9 billion to California's economy in 2023.³

SUMMARY FINDINGS

Research shows that conserving public lands like the Chuckwalla National Monument helps to safeguard and highlight amenities that are expected to draw new visitors, businesses, and residents to surrounding communities.⁴

Western counties with protected public lands, like national monuments, are projected to be more successful at attracting fast-growing economic sectors and as a result are expected to grow more quickly, on average, than counties without protected public lands. In addition, protected natural amenities—such as the striking geologic formations, palm oases, slot canyons, and rugged desert mountains found at Chuckwalla National Monument — are projected to help sustain property values and attract new investment.

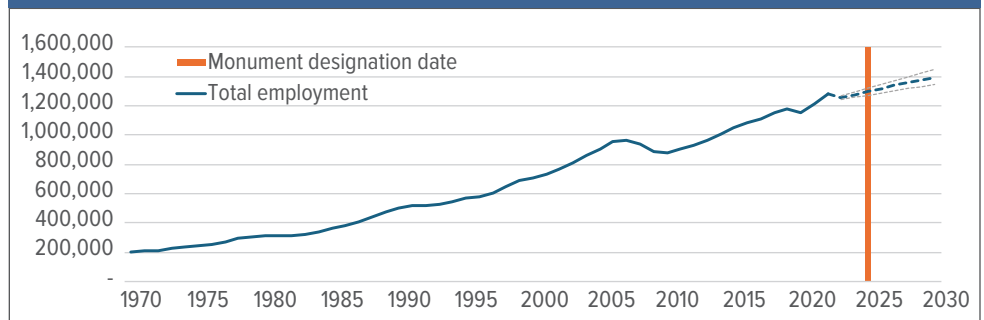
ECONOMY IS FORECASTED TO GROW AFTER DESIGNATION

The economy of Imperial and Riverside counties, California, neighboring the Chuckwalla National Monument have experienced steady growth since 2001. After the monument was designated, similar trends are likely to continue.

Based on historical economic performance in Imperial and Riverside counties from 2001 to 2022:⁵

- Employment increased by 76%. By 2030, it is expected to increase by another 9%.
- Population increased by 51%. By 2030, it is expected to increase by another 12%.

TOTAL EMPLOYMENT



SERVICE JOBS INCREASING

Services jobs—such as doctors, hospitality workers, and teachers—reflect economic diversification in many communities. These jobs are increasingly mobile, and many entrepreneurs locate their businesses in areas with a high quality of life.

From 2001 to 2022 in the Chuckwalla region:⁵

- Service jobs grew from 449,834 to 946,157 jobs, a 110% increase.
- Non-services jobs grew from 162,559 to 182,675, a 12% increase.

Following monument designation in 2025, forecasts predict continued growth in services and jobs in non-services will remain steady by 2030.

EMPLOYMENT BY MAJOR INDUSTRY

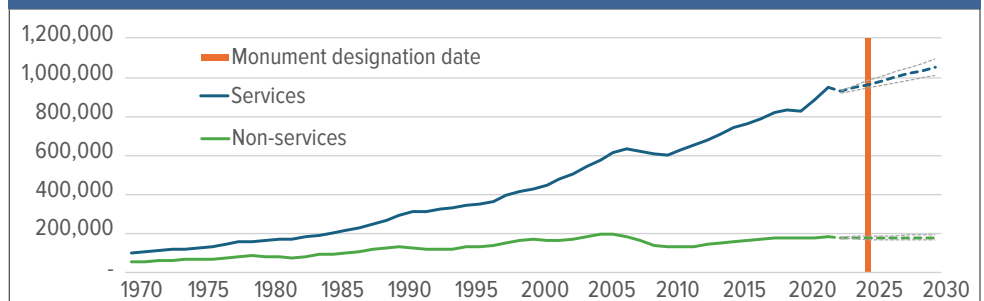




Photo courtesy Annie Nyborg

The communities in Imperial and Riverside counties neighboring the Chuckwalla National Monument are expected to experience strong growth following its designation in 2025. The projected increases in population, jobs, personal income, and per capita income are expected to mirror other Western counties with national monuments or other protected lands

ABOUT

This fact sheet is part of a series created by Headwaters Economics that assesses the economic performance of local communities adjacent to national monuments. Economic growth for 2023–2030 was projected using data for large national monuments in the western United States. Trends before and after monument designation were modeled, controlling for unique characteristics of each monument. For more information, see <https://headwaterseconomics.org/public-lands/economic-performance-national-monuments>.

1. Bureau of Land Management. (2025). Avi Kwa Ame National Monument Annual Manager's Report, Fiscal Year 2024. Las Vegas, NV: Bureau of Land Management, Southern Nevada District Office. Retrieved from <https://www.blm.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2025-04/AKANM%20FY24.pdf>

2. U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2023). Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor. Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/cew/>

3. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis. (2024). Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce. Retrieved from <https://www.bea.gov/data/special-topics/outdoor-recreation>

4. Headwaters Economics. (2021). National Monuments Can Boost Local Economies. Bozeman, MT: Headwaters Economics. Retrieved from <https://headwaterseconomics.org/public-lands/national-monuments-studies/>

5. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis. (2023). Regional Economic Accounts. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce. Retrieved from <https://www.bea.gov/data/economic-accounts/regional>

6. Lawson, M. (2019). Non-Labor Income in the Rural West. Bozeman, MT: Headwaters Economics. Retrieved from <https://headwaterseconomics.org/public-lands/papl-lawson/>

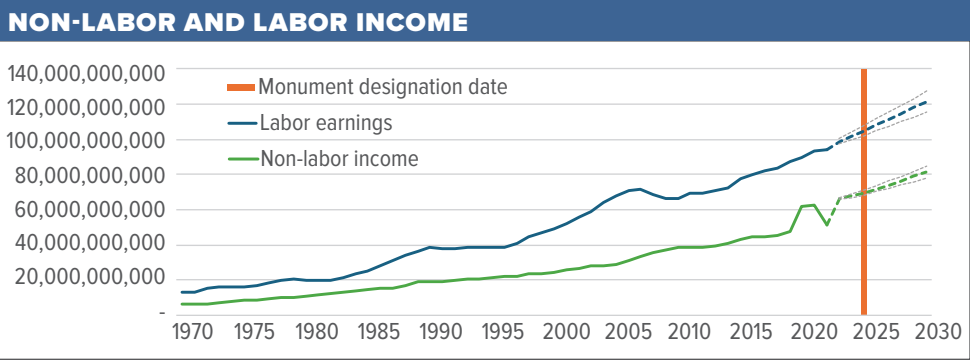
NON-LABOR INCOME IS PROJECTED TO GROW FASTEST

One of the largest, fastest growing future sources of new personal income in the Chuckwalla region is expected to be 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 is projected to grow as the Baby Boomer generation retires.⁶

From 2001 to 2022 in the Chuckwalla region:⁵

- Non-labor income grew from \$26.2 billion to \$51.1 billion, a 95% increase.
- In 2022 non-labor income made up 35% of total personal income and is projected to account for 40% of all personal income by 2030.



TRADITIONAL JOBS HOLD STEADY

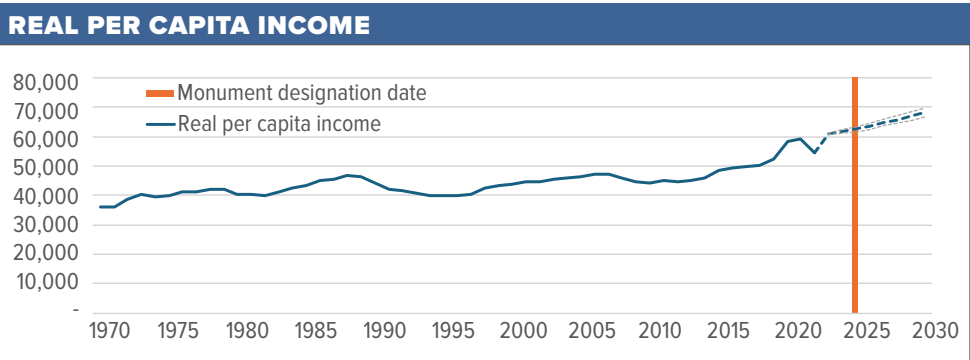
Long before the monument’s creation, commodity industries (agriculture, mining, timber) were becoming a smaller share of the overall economy in the Chuckwalla region. These industries are projected to remain a small part of the region’s economy in the future.²

PROSPERITY ON THE RISE

As the economy is forecasted to grow following the designation of the Chuckwalla National Monument, per capita income is projected to rise as well. This indicates expected growing prosperity in the region.

From 2001 to 2022 in the Chuckwalla region:⁵

- Real per capita income grew from \$44,489 to \$54,667, a 23% increase. By 2030, it is expected to increase another 24% to \$67,941 annually.
- Real earnings per job increased from \$62,581 to \$62,464. By 2030, it is expected to increase another 19% to \$74,526 annually.



Headwaters Economics is an independent, nonprofit research group that works to improve community development and land management decisions.