El Malpais National Monument

A Summary of Economic Performance in the Surrounding Communities

**SUMMARY FINDINGS**

Research shows that conserving public lands like the El Malpais 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 El Malpais—also help sustain property values and attract new investment.³

**ECONOMY GROWS AFTER DESIGNATION**

The communities in Cibola County, New Mexico neighboring the El Malpais National Monument experienced strong growth after the designation of the monument, reversing declines in the earlier 1980s.

From 2001 to 2015, in Cibola County:⁴
- Population grew by 3%
- Real personal income grew by 36%
- Jobs grew by 20%
- Real per capita income grew by 32%

**PUBLIC ACCESS AND USE OF THE MONUMENT**

The monument offers all forms of recreation from scenic drives and overlooks to strenuous trails and rugged backcountry. Each year, El Malpais attracts thousands of visitors who hike, camp, and explore this unique area.

**TRAVEL AND TOURISM**

Travel and tourism are important to communities in Cibola County, representing about 21% of total private wage and salary employment, or 1,047 jobs, in 2015. In New Mexico, the Outdoor Industry Association reports that recreation contributes more than $6.1 billion annually to the state’s economy.⁶

**SERVICES JOBS INCREASING ACROSS THE BOARD**

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

From 2001 to 2015, in Cibola County:⁵
- Services grew from 5,149 to 5,465 jobs, a 6% increase
- Non-Services grew from 983 to 1,076 jobs, a 9% increase

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THE COMMUNITIES IN CIBOLA COUNTY NEIGHBORING THE EL MALPAIS NATIONAL MONUMENT EXPERIENCED STRONG GROWTH SINCE ITS CREATION IN 1987.

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.

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Series: The Economic Importance of National Monuments to Local Communities

NON-LABOR INCOME GROWS FASTEST
One of the largest and fastest growing sources of new personal income in Cibola County 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 2015, in Cibola County:
• Non-labor income grew from $210 million to $369 million, a 76% increase
• As a result, in 2008 non-labor income made up 50% of total personal income

TRADITIONAL JOBS HOLD STEADY
Before the monument’s creation, commodity industries (agriculture, mining, timber) in Cibola County were small relative to the overall economy. These industries remain part of the county’s economy today.

In 2015, in Cibola County:
• Agriculture accounted for 4% of total employment
• Mining accounted for 6% of total private employment
• Timber accounted for 1% of total private employment

PROSPERITY ON THE RISE
As the economy has grown since designation of the El Malpais National Monument, per capita income has risen as well. This indicates growing prosperity in the region.

From 2001 to 2015, in Cibola County:
• Real per capita income grew from $20,343 to $26,803, a 32% increase

5 The U.S. Department of Commerce changed the 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.