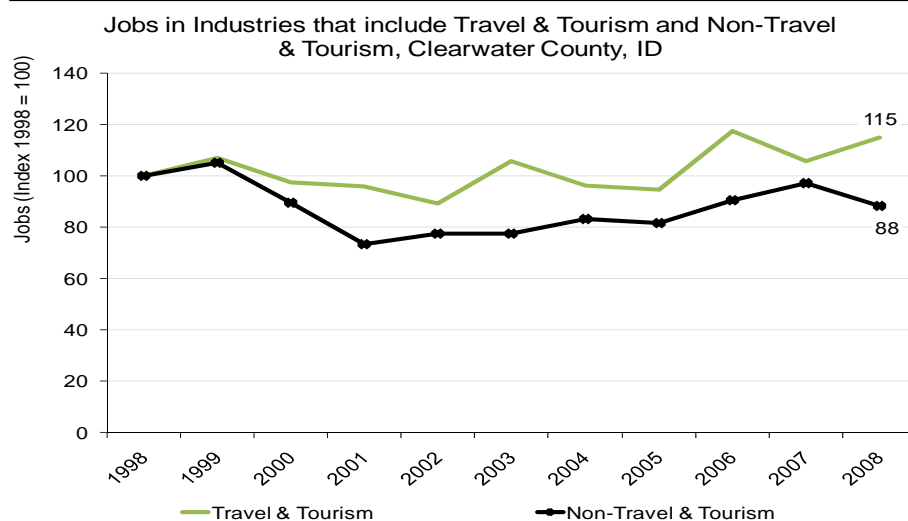


Potential Economic Benefits of a Rail to Trail Conversion

What are the likely economic outcomes a rails-to-trails conversion in Clearwater County, ID?

Trails Boost Travel and Tourism Jobs and Business Opportunities

Travel and tourism related jobs are a bright spot in the overall economy of Clearwater County, ID. In 2008, Travel and Tourism related jobs employed 278 people making up 14 percent of total private wage and salary employment.ⁱ These sectors increased 14 percent from 1998 to 2008, adding 36 new jobs while total private wage and salary employment fell by 224 jobs (an 11.7% decline). Although these jobs can be seasonal and low wage, a USDA study shows workers in recreation-based rural counties earn on average \$2,000 more than workers in other rural counties.ⁱⁱ



A trail connecting Orofino and Pierce could attract regional visitors to fish, bike and ski, and would add to the numerous destinations attracting people from out of state. More visitors and extended stays would benefit local hotels and restaurants, and create new business opportunities. For example, a new specialty outdoor recreation shop could cater to local and visiting trail users.

One key to maximizing local benefits will be extending the trail directly into Orofino. Experience shows trail users spend more money locally when accessing trails in town.ⁱⁱⁱ

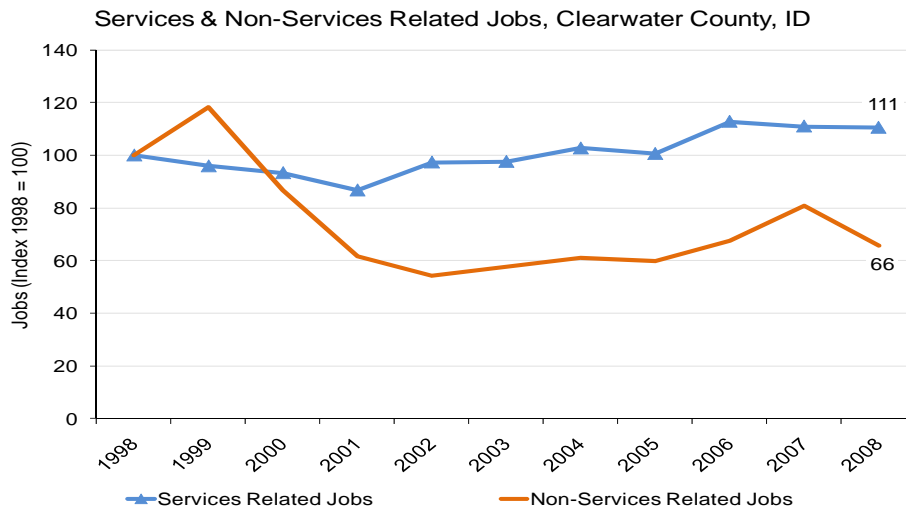
Trails Attract Businesses, Jobs

People and businesses increasingly make decisions about where to locate based on “community amenities,” including recreation opportunities. Surveys show that business



Orofino Creek Rail Bridge. Photo: Monica Walker

owners rank trails among the most important factors when making business location decisions (behind family, but ahead of taxes).^{iv} Recreation and cultural industries represent an important basis for economic growth in the rural west, attracting businesses, jobs, and new residents.



Services related sectors accounted for 1,367 jobs in 2008, 83 percent of total employment. These industries added 130 jobs from 1998 to 2008, an 11 percent increase, while total employment declined by 34 percent. Services sectors include jobs related to travel and tourism, but also include health care, finance, insurance, and professional scientific and technical jobs—jobs and industries with relatively high wages and likely to be attracted by amenities and quality of life.^v

Trails Increased Property Values

A National Association of Homebuilders study reports that trails are a top amenity (behind highway access) sought out by potential homeowners.^{vi} Other studies document increased property values of between 6 and 49 percent adjacent to community trails.^{vii} Developers routinely design subdivisions around community trails, and regional land trusts and economic development boards are implementing regional trail plans to boost economic activity and tax revenue. Trails can offset some or all of the community’s costs of acquisition, construction, and maintenance through increased tax revenue.^{viii}

ⁱ U.S. Department of Commerce. 2010. Census Bureau, County Business Patterns, Washington, D.C.

ⁱⁱ Reeder, R.J., D.M. Brown. 2005. “Recreation, Tourism, and Rural Well-Being.” Economic Research Service. U.S. Department of Agriculture. Washington, D.C.

ⁱⁱⁱ Economic Benefits of Trails and Greenways. Rails to Trails Conservancy, Washington, D.C.

^{iv} William B. Beyers. 2007. Cultural and Recreational Industries in Rural America. *Journal of Regional Analysis and Policy*, 37(1)25-27.

^v U.S. Department of Commerce. 2010. Census Bureau, County Business Patterns, Washington, D.C.

^{vi} National Association of Homebuilders and National Realtors Association, Home Buyer Survey on the Importance of Community Amenities. 2002.

^{vii} Economic Benefits of Trails and Greenways. Rails to Trails Conservancy, Washington, D.C.

^{viii} Economic Values of Greenways, Trails, and River Protection. National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program. 1995.