Rio Grande del Norte National Monument

A Summary of Economic Performance in the Surrounding Communities

**BACKGROUND**

The 242,500 acre Rio Grande del Norte National Monument was created in 2013 to protect the rugged land of the region, intercut by rivers and steep canyons in northern New Mexico. Located almost entirely in Taos County, the monument is managed by the Bureau of Land Management.

**PUBLIC ACCESS AND USE OF THE MONUMENT**

The Resource Management Plan (RMP) for the monument is under development. In the meantime, visitors can enjoy a wide variety of outdoor recreation such as white water rafting, hiking, hunting, and mountain biking. Traditional and existing rights also will continue.

**TRAVEL AND TOURISM**

Travel and tourism are important to communities in Taos County, representing about 39% of total private wage and salary employment, or 3,460 jobs, in 2015. In New Mexico, the Outdoor Industry Association reports that recreation contributes more than $6 billion annually to the state’s economy.

**ECONOMY GROWING**

The communities in Taos County, New Mexico nearing the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument continue to grow, echoing previous growth trends.

From 2001 to 2015, in Taos County:
- Population grew by 9%
- Jobs grew by 8%
- Real personal income grew by 38%
- Real per capita income grew by 27%

**SUMMARY FINDINGS**

Research shows that conserving public lands like the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument helps to safeguard and highlight amenities that draw new residents, tourists, and businesses to surrounding communities.

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. In addition, protected natural amenities—such as the pristine scenery found at Rio Grande del Norte—also help sustain property values and attract new investment.

**SERVICES JOBS INCREASING ACROSS THE BOARD**

Services jobs—such as doctors, engineers, and teachers—account for the majority of employment growth in Taos County 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 2015, in Taos County:
- Services grew from 11,519 to 12,834 jobs, an 11% increase
- Non-Services decreased from 2,870 to 2,669, a 7% decrease
THE COMMUNITIES IN TAOS COUNTY NEIGHBORING THE MONUMENT HAVE GROWN STEADILY SINCE THE TURN OF THE CENTURY.

THE INCREASES IN POPULATION, JOBS, PERSONAL INCOME, AND PER CAPITA INCOME 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 GROWING FASTEST
One of the largest and fastest growing sources of new personal income in Taos 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 Boom generation retires.7

From 2001 to 2015, in Taos County:
• Non-Labor income grew from $358 million to $663 million, an 85% increase
• As a result, in 2015 non-labor income made up 58% of total personal income

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

In 2015, in Taos County:
• Agriculture accounted for slightly more than 5% of total employment
• Mining accounted for nearly 4% of total employment
• Timber accounted for 0.3% of total employment

PROSPERITY ON THE RISE
As the economy has grown, per capita income has risen as well. This indicates growing prosperity in the region.

From 2001 to 2015, in Taos County:
• Real per capita income grew from $27,628 to $34,983, a 27% 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.

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