

Rio Grande del Norte National Monument

A Summary of Economic Performance in the Surrounding Communities



Rio Grande del Norte National Monument, Photo: BLM

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.¹

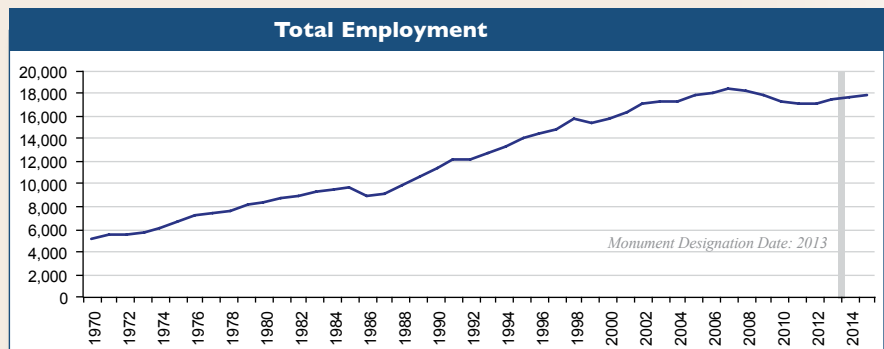
Western counties with protected public lands, like national monuments, have been more successful at attracting fast-growing economic sectors and as a result grow more quickly, on average, than counties without protected public lands.² In addition, protected natural amenities—such as the pristine scenery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

ECONOMY GROWING

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

From 2001 to 2015, in Taos County:⁴

- Population grew by 9%
- Real personal income grew by 38%
- Jobs grew by 8%
- Real per capita income grew by 27%



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

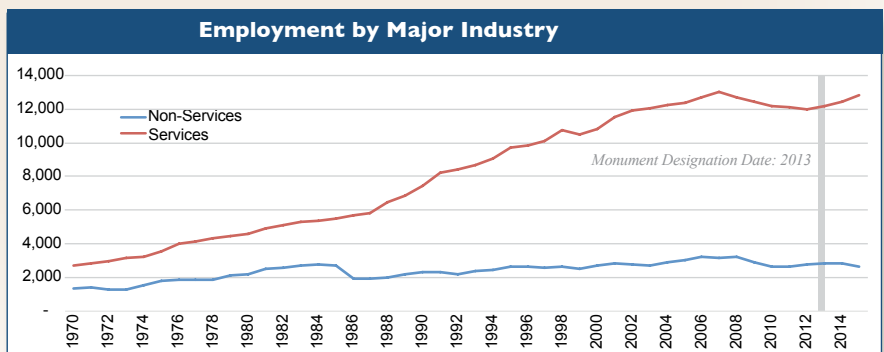
Travel and tourism are important to communities in Taos County, representing about 39% of total private wage and salary employment, or 3,460 jobs, in 2015. In New Mexico, the Outdoor Industry Association reports that recreation contributes more than \$6 billion annually to the state's economy.⁶

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:⁵

- Services grew from 11,519 to 12,834 jobs, an 11% increase
- Non-Services decreased from 2,870 to 2,669, a 7% decrease





Rio Grande del Norte National Monument, Photo: BLM

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.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
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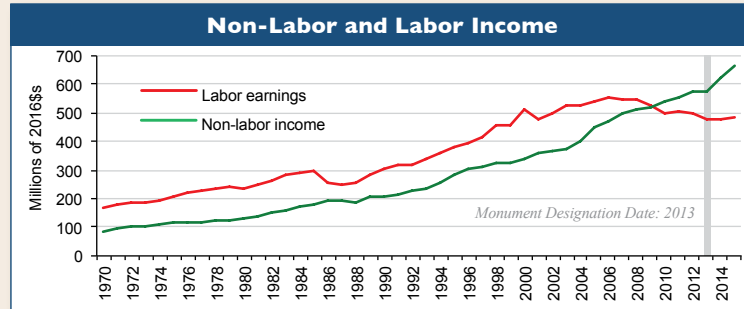
NON-LABOR INCOME GROWING FASTEST

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:

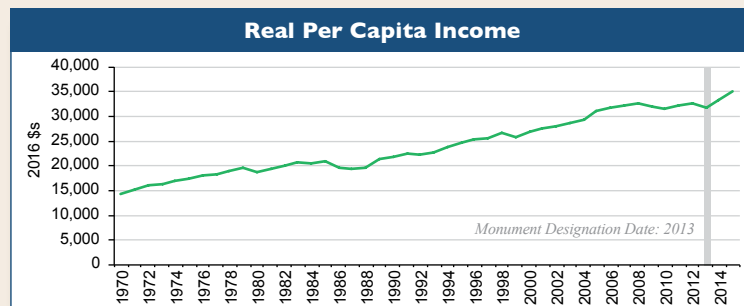
- Agriculture accounted for slightly more than 5% of total employment
- Mining accounted for nearly 4% of total employment
- Timber accounted for 0.3% of total employment

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



1 Headwaters Economics. [The Value of Public Lands](#); Lorah, P. and R. Southwick. 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. ERS, Agric. Econ. Rep. No. 781. USDA: Washington, DC; Haas, W.H. and W.J. Serow. 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., P.H. Gude, and M. Delorey. 2013. The Effect of Protected Federal Lands on Economic Prosperity in the Non-Metropolitan West. *Journal of Regional Analysis and Policy* 43(2): 110-122.

3 Deller, S.C., T.H. Tsai, D.W. Macrouiller, and D.B.K. English. 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 come from U.S. Department of Commerce. 2016. Bureau of Economic Analysis, *Regional Economic Accounts*, Washington, DC; U.S. Department of Commerce. 2017. Census Bureau, *County Business Patterns*, Washington, DC.

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.

6 Outdoor Industry Association. 2012. [The Outdoor Recreation Economy](#).

7 Headwaters Economics, [Non-Labor Income: Large and Growing in Importance Across the West](#); Frey, W.H. 2006. America's Regional Demographics in the '00s Decade: The Role of Seniors, Boomers, and New Minorities. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution.