

Sonoran Desert National Monument



A Summary of Economic Performance in the Surrounding Communities



Sonoran Desert National Monument, Photo: BLM

BACKGROUND

The 487,000 acre Sonoran Desert National Monument was designated in 2001 to protect part of the most biologically diverse desert in North America. Located in Maricopa and Pinal counties, Arizona the monument is managed by the Bureau of Land Management.

PUBLIC ACCESS AND USE OF THE MONUMENT

The national monument protects hunting, fishing, rights-of-way, and access to inholdings. The monument contains three distinct mountain ranges—the Maricopa, Sand Tank, and Table Top Mountains—and is home to a number of historic and archeological sites. It attracts thousands of visitors each year.

TRAVEL AND TOURISM

Travel and tourism are important to the Sonoran Desert Region, representing about 18% of total private wage and salary employment, or 284,760 jobs, in 2015. In Arizona, the Outdoor Industry Association reports that recreation contributes more than \$10 billion annually to the state's economy.⁶

SUMMARY FINDINGS

Research shows that conserving public lands like the Sonoran Desert National Monument helps to safeguard and highlight amenities that draw new residents, tourists, and businesses to surrounding communities.¹

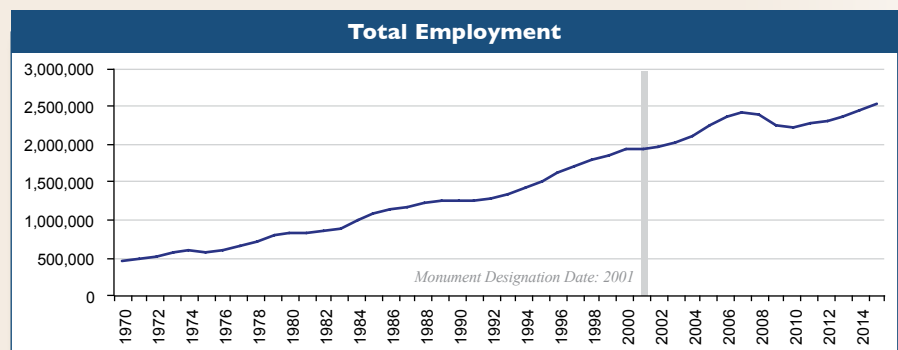
Western counties with protected public lands, like national monuments, have been more successful at attracting fast-growing economic sectors and as a result grow more quickly, on average, than counties without protected public lands.² In addition, protected natural amenities—such as the pristine scenery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

ECONOMY GROWS AFTER DESIGNATION

The communities in Maricopa and Pinal counties, Arizona neighboring the Sonoran Desert National Monument (the Sonoran Desert Region) experienced strong growth after its designation, continuing previous growth trends.

From 2001 to 2015, in the Sonoran Desert Region:⁴

- Population grew by 36%
- Real personal income grew by 44%
- Jobs grew by 29%
- Real per capita income grew by 6%

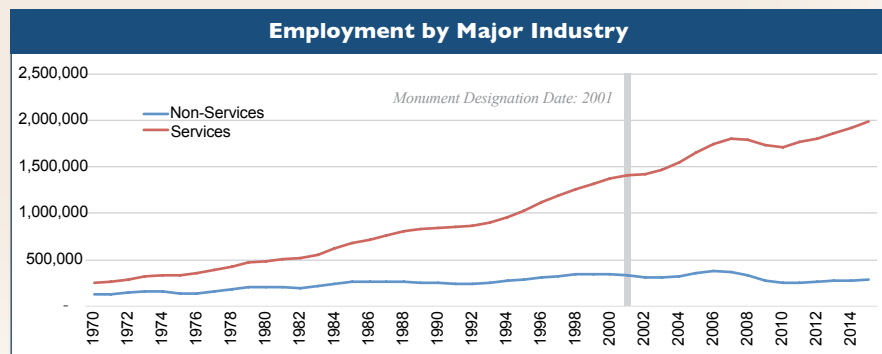


SERVICES JOBS INCREASING ACROSS THE BOARD

Services jobs—such as doctors, engineers, and teachers—account for the majority of employment growth in the Sonoran Desert Region 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 the Sonoran Desert Region:⁵

- Services grew from 1,410,101 to 1,990,114 jobs, a 41% increase
- Non-Services shrank from 330,581 to 284,108 jobs, a 14% decrease





Sonoran Desert National Monument, Photo: BLM

THE COMMUNITIES IN MARICOPA AND PINAL COUNTIES NEIGHBORING THE NATIONAL MONUMENT EXPERIENCED STRONG GROWTH SINCE ITS DESIGNATION IN 2001.

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.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Series: [The Economic Importance of National Monuments to Local Communities](#)

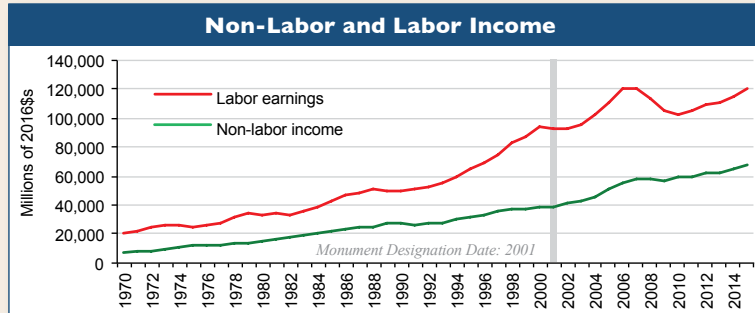
NON-LABOR INCOME GROWS FASTEST

One of the largest and fastest growing sources of new personal income in the Sonoran Desert Region 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 the Sonoran Desert Region:

- Non-Labor income grew from \$39.2 billion to \$68.1 billion, a 74% increase
- As a result, in 2015 non-labor income made up 36% of total personal income



TRADITIONAL JOBS HOLD STEADY

Long before the monument's creation, commodity industries (agriculture, mining, timber) in the Sonoran Desert Region were small relative to the overall economy. These industries remain part of the region's economy today.

In 2015, in the Sonoran Desert Region:

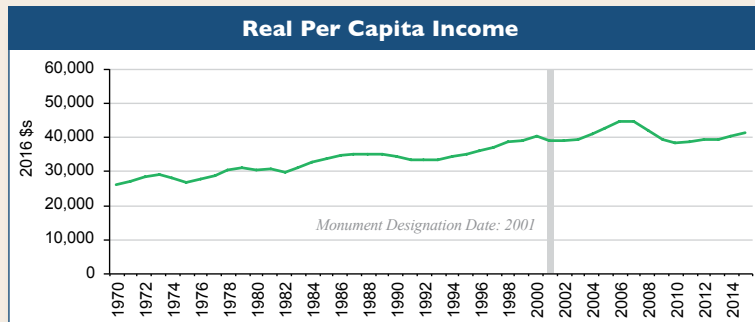
- Agriculture accounted for 0.4% of total employment
- Mining accounted for 0.1% of total private employment
- Timber accounted for 0.3% of total private employment

PROSPERITY ON THE RISE

As the economy has grown since designation of the Sonoran Desert National Monument, per capita income has risen as well. This indicates growing prosperity in the region.

From 2001 to 2015, in the Sonoran Desert Region:

- Real per capita income grew modestly from \$39,158 to \$41,342, a 6% 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.