



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

THE NEW ECONOMY OF THE WEST: FROM CLEARCUTTING TO CAMPING



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The project was made possible through the hard work of many people, including:

AUTHOR: Keren Murphy

RESEARCH: Keren Murphy

DESIGN: Michael Molanphy

COMMUNICATIONS, EDITORIAL, AND OTHER ASSISTANCE: Athan Manuel, Bart Semcer, Jeff Waner, Julie Eitner, Sean Cosgrove, Myke Bybee, Kim Haddow, Dave Willett, Kristina Johnson, and Hannah Simon and numerous volunteers from around the country.

The Sierra Club's members and supporters are more than 1.3 million of your friends and neighbors. Inspired by nature, we work together to protect our communities and the planet. The Club is America's oldest, largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization.

This report was made possible by funding from The Sierra Club Foundation.



85 Second Street, Second Floor, San Francisco, CA 94105, (415) 977-5500
408 C Street NE, Washington, DC 20002, (202) 547-1141
www.sierraclub.org

AUGUST 2007

THE NEW ECONOMY OF THE WEST: FROM CLEARCUTTING TO CAMPING

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The West has forever enchanted Americans and embodied the free spirit and independence of our nation. Thanks to the vision of conservationists like Presidents Ulysses S. Grant, Theodore Roosevelt, and Jimmy Carter, our most stunning landscapes have been protected as National Parks, National Forests and wildlife refuges. As part of this natural heritage, every American is part owner of 655 million acres of federal public lands and waters.

These lands also serve as rugged, living monuments to our nation's wild and natural history. They are a source of clean water, healthy wildlife, recreational opportunity and scientific and cultural discovery. But the role of public lands in the western economy is often overlooked. As the economy of the West shifts away from traditional industries — mining, wood products, farming and ranching — the West's economic growth is increasingly driven by new sectors like finance, technology, real estate, business services, and outdoor recreation.

Protected public lands are among the nation's most valuable economic assets. Increasingly, economic growth in the West stems from services to the rising number of residents who want to live, work, or retire in places surrounded by protected natural areas. Several studies have shown that scenery, recreational opportunities, and a slower pace of life are influencing decisions about where people live and do business.



- ▲ *Outdoor recreation generates \$61 billion annually for the Rocky Mountain West*
- ▲ *Hunting and fishing contributes over \$3 billion to the economy of the Rocky Mountain West.*
- ▲ *85 percent of total hunters in the West use public lands for hunting and fishing.*

The economy of the West has undergone a transformation, from relying on logging, mining, and oil, to relying on the unspoiled landscapes and abundant wildlife that support recreation and tourism. It's time to change the way we think about our western public lands. If we protect them now, they will provide a powerful economic asset for generations to come.

THE NEW WEST

Much of the West has been shaped by mining, oil and gas development, and timber production. However, these extractive industries no longer make up the job base for western states. Ninety-five percent of western counties now rely on non-extractive industries for the majority of their jobs.¹ The service-based and technology industry in the region has eclipsed historically important industries like logging and mining. Studies show that the more dependent a state's economy is on personal income earned from work in industries like oil, mining and logging, the slower the growth rate is for the economy as a whole.

According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, between 1990 and 2003 income in counties relying on wood products, mining, and oil and gas development grew by just two percent. By contrast, wages in the West as a whole grew by 12 percent during that same time².

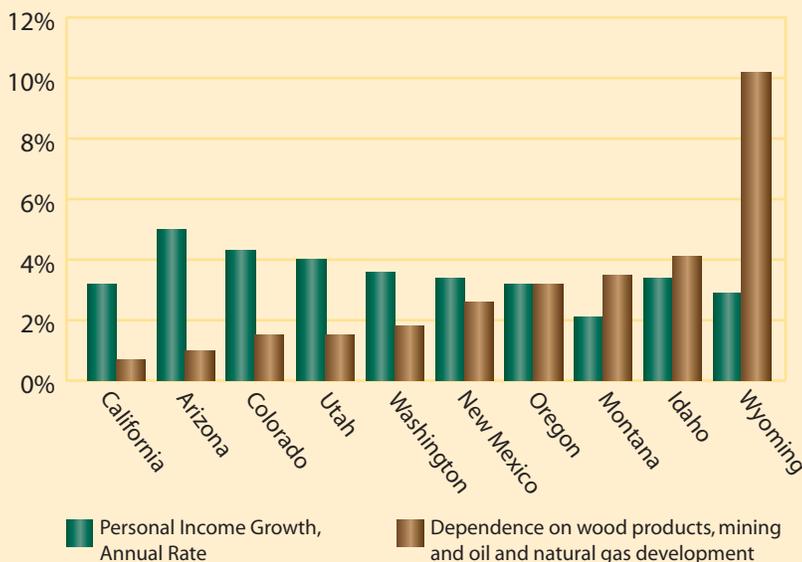
The fastest growth occurred where the predominant occupation is business or consumer services. Economists have found that the West's natural environment attracts workers, firms and investments, thereby increasing prosperity.³

Data gathered over the past 30 years shows that the closer a county is to federally protected lands, the faster that county's economy has grown. The reason for this shift is that people are increasingly moving to rural western towns for their unique landscapes and quality of life. Many of these new arrivals are retirees with investment income. They buy or build new homes, eat out in restaurants, and spend time hiking, camping and fishing on the public lands in their new communities.⁴ In fact, counties that experienced the highest rate of economic growth over the past three decades shared several attractive natural qualities: they all boasted warm climates, mountains, and rivers, streams and lakes.

The importance of mineral, cattle and timber production is dwarfed by the new economy based on a healthy environment, open space, and recreational property.⁵ Public lands are natural assets that give communities an advantage over other rural areas. The U.S. Department of Agriculture reports that rural tourism and recreational development:

- ▲ *Increase employment growth rates*
- ▲ *Buoy earnings and income levels*
- ▲ *Lower local poverty rates*
- ▲ *Spark improvements in local educational attainment and health*

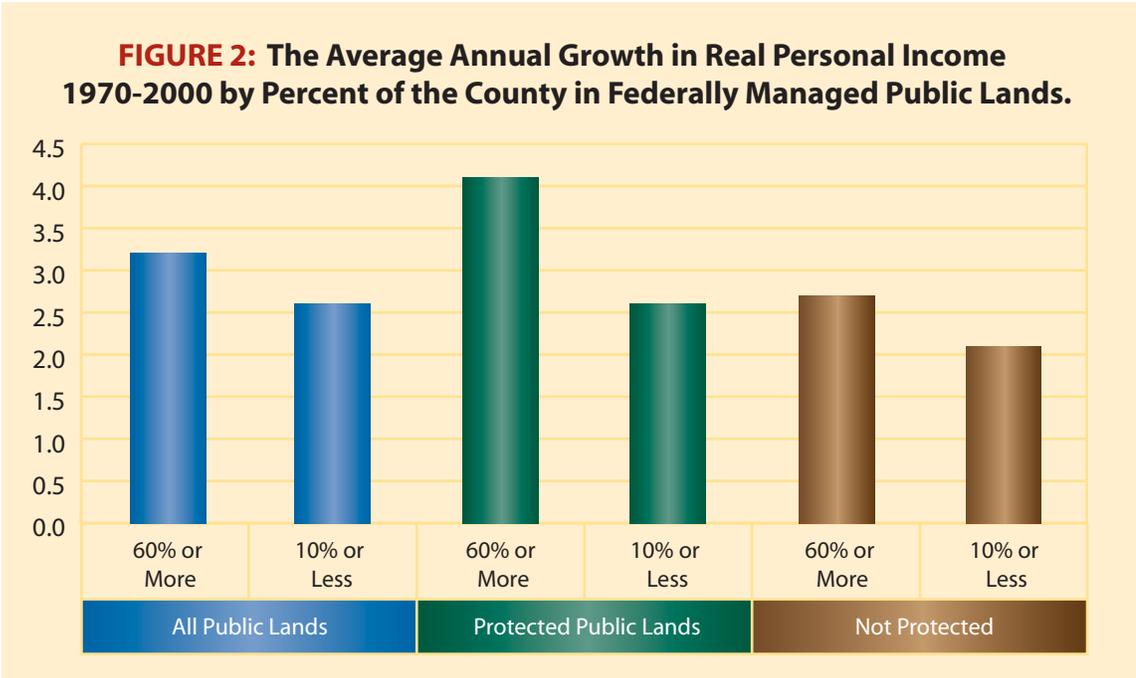
FIGURE 1: The Relationship Between a State's Dependence on Resource Sectors and Personal Income Growth, 1970 to 2000.



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce; Regional Economic Information System. Bureau of Economic Analysis. Washington D.C. 20001

Public land management can contribute to diversifying local economies by de-emphasizing resource extraction and emphasizing management and funding for ecological restoration, road decommissioning, recreation opportunities, and wildlife habitat conservation. This kind of management creates sustainable jobs while protecting natural assets for the future.

Protected land often enhances the property values of neighboring communities. In the West, counties where more than 60 percent of the federal public land is protected grew 66 percent faster from 1970 to 2000 than counties where the same percentage of public land has no permanent protective status.⁶



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce. (2004). Bureau of Economic Analysis, Regional Economic Information system (REIS CD-ROM). Washington, D.C.



THE THRIVING BUSINESS OF OUTDOOR ADVENTURE



The public lands of the West provide outdoor enthusiasts a place for backpacking, boating, camping, hunting and fishing adventures. The people who venture into these wild forests, parks and rivers each year also spend thousands of dollars preparing for their trips. They purchase camping equipment, outdoor clothing, and hunting and fishing gear. Without the protected public lands of the West, America’s outdoor retail industry could not survive. Outdoor retailers in eight western states generate over \$34 billion a year in outdoor trip related sales and more than \$4.7 billion in gear retail sales.⁷

TABLE 1: Economic Contribution of Active Outdoor Recreation in AZ, CO, ID, NM, MT, UT, NV, WY

Total Contribution	\$61 billion
Jobs Generated	617,186
Gear Retail Sales	\$4.7 billion
Trip-related Sales	\$34 billion
Taxes(federal and State)	\$8 billion

Source: Outdoor Industry Foundation. (2006). *The Active Outdoor Recreation Economy*. Outdoorindustryfoundation.org

Outdoor recreation supports approximately 617,186 jobs in the Rocky Mountain West. According to a recent Outdoor Industry Foundation report, one in twenty Americans depend on the outdoor recreation economy to make a living. Camping, fishing, hunting and other outdoor recreation contribute \$730 billion to the national economy annually and support 6.5 million jobs.⁸ With \$289 billion in total direct spending, outdoor recreation is larger than the annual expenditures of many other major industries, including power generation, legal services, and pharmaceuticals.

A 2003 survey indicated that nearly 70 percent of Americans have visited a National Park, one-third of them within the previous two years. Park visitors spend more than \$10 billion a year on their trips,

supporting more than 250,000 jobs. Spending at Yosemite National Park, Lake Mead National Recreation Area, and Yellowstone National Park combined generates approximately \$250 million a year. The recreation economy also accounts for \$88 billion in annual state and national tax revenue.

In one striking example, 76 percent of the population in the state of Oregon- approximately 2 million people-participate in some form of non-motorized outdoor recreation each year. Consumer spending on outdoor recreation merchandise contributes roughly \$125 million to annually to the state’s economy. According to the Outdoor Industry Association, the overall outdoor recreation economy, which includes retail gear purchases and trip-related expenditures, brings more than \$5.8 billion to Oregon’s economy and supports 73,000 jobs across the state.⁹

HUNTING AND FISHING: A Western Tradition and Economic Staple

Hunting and fishing are inseparable parts of our outdoor heritage. Beginning with the earliest efforts to protect our nation's pristine forests and rivers, hunters and anglers have played a critical conservation role. John James Audubon, President Theodore Roosevelt, Earnest Thomas Seton, Sigurd Olsen and Aldo Leopold, all sportsmen, led the earliest efforts to establish parks and wilderness areas, and to promote the conservation of native fish and wildlife. These were the leaders who championed the expansion of the National Forest System, established the National Wildlife Refuge System, protected special places like the Grand Canyon and first proposed establishing a national system of wilderness areas. Thanks to the vision and dedication of sportsmen and women, today Americans can still enjoy a rich outdoor heritage.

The economic impact of hunting and fishing in the West is significant, contributing approximately \$3 billion in 2001 to the combined economies of Arizona, Idaho, New Mexico, Montana, Utah, and Wyoming.¹⁰ The state of California alone generated more than \$48 million from sales of sport fishing licenses and stamps for the California Department of Fish and Game in 2000.

Last year, more than 87 million Americans 16 years old and older—38 percent of the U.S. population—enjoyed some recreational activity relating to fish and wildlife. Almost 34 million people fished and hunted in 2006, spending \$75.4 billion on their activities.¹¹

Since the 1930s, the Federal Sportfish and Wildlife Restoration program has raised over \$6 billion for efforts to conserve and maintain healthy fish and wildlife populations through an excise tax on firearms, ammunition, archery and fishing tackle. The sale of federal duck stamps, which must be purchased by waterfowl hunters, has generated an additional one-half billion dollars for wetlands and wildlife conservation since 1934. Hunting and fishing license sales generate millions each year to support the work of the state fish and wildlife agencies entrusted with the stewardship of America's natural heritage.

Public lands—including National and State Forests and Parks—support the West's hunting-based recreation economy. A report by the Fish and Wildlife



TABLE 2: Total Annual Expenditures for hunting and fishing by state:

Arizona	\$548 million
Idaho	\$543 million
Montana	\$530 million
New Mexico	\$329 million
Utah	\$685 million
Wyoming	\$335 million

Source: Sonoran Institute. (2006). Backcountry Bounty: Hunters, Anglers and Prosperity in the American West.

Service found that 85 percent of total hunters in the West used public lands for harvesting game.¹²

If future generations are to enjoy the outdoor traditions that depend on wildlife, we must protect the special places where wildlife make their homes. Conservation of public lands in the West is critical to attracting and retaining these important revenues.

AMERICA'S **CRITICAL** **PUBLIC LANDS**



ROADLESS AREAS: A Gift to Future Generations

The roadless rule, designed to protect 58 million acres of roadless forests in 39 states, emerged from the most extensive public comment process in history, spanning three years and 600 public meetings. During that time, President Bill Clinton's administration received a record-breaking one million letters, emails and phone calls in support of protecting roadless areas. The Forest Service has received more than 2.5 million comments from the American people, 95 percent of which favor the strongest protections for these wild forests. But

immediately after taking office, President George W. Bush made it clear that his administration would work actively to block the roadless rule.

The nation's 42 million acres of existing roadless areas create opportunities for camping, hunting and fishing that generate almost 600 billion dollars and support 24,000 jobs each year.¹³ A recent study found that every 10,000 acres of roadless area protected in the West generates \$162,750 a year in recreational income.

NORTHWEST FORESTS: A National Treasure

Timber-related industries represent a small percentage of the Oregon and Washington economy, as measured by jobs and by personal income. In 1999, forest products manufacturing provided 1.6 percent of all jobs in Washington and 3.0 percent of all jobs in Oregon. Forest products manufacturing jobs have fallen by an average of 0.5 to 0.7 percent per year since 1970.¹⁴ Earnings in forest products manufacturing totaled over 2 billion in 1999, a decrease of 0.6 percent per year (after adjusting for inflation) since 1970. Income for the state as a whole increased 3.3 percent per year over the same period. Forest products manufacturing earnings as a

percent of total personal income for Oregon fell from 8.9 percent in 1970 to 2.8 percent in 1999.

The industries employing the most people in Oregon today are: Services (615,755 jobs or 29.6 percent of total employment); Retail trade (355,884 jobs and 17.1 percent), and Government and government enterprises (262,661 jobs and 12.6 percent). The timber industry in National Forests, in contrast, is worth just \$4 billion and 76,000 jobs. Commercial logging undermines other economic benefits by reducing healthy habitat and decreasing recreation opportunities.

CALIFORNIA WILDERNESS AREAS: A Legacy of Protection

Named after famous naturalist John Muir, and nestled in the central Sierra Nevada, the 581,000 acre John Muir Wilderness is the largest and most popular wilderness area in California.

The Sierra Nevada range is home to several other prized wilderness areas: the Ansel Adams Wilderness, the Dinkey Lakes Wilderness, the Sequoia-Kings Canyon Wilderness, the Monarch Wilderness, and the Golden Trout Wilderness.

A study of the economic benefits of wild lands in the eastern Sierra Nevada region of California found that these areas, including the John Muir Wilderness, generate approximately \$700 million per year and support more than 2,800 jobs in neighboring communities.¹⁵

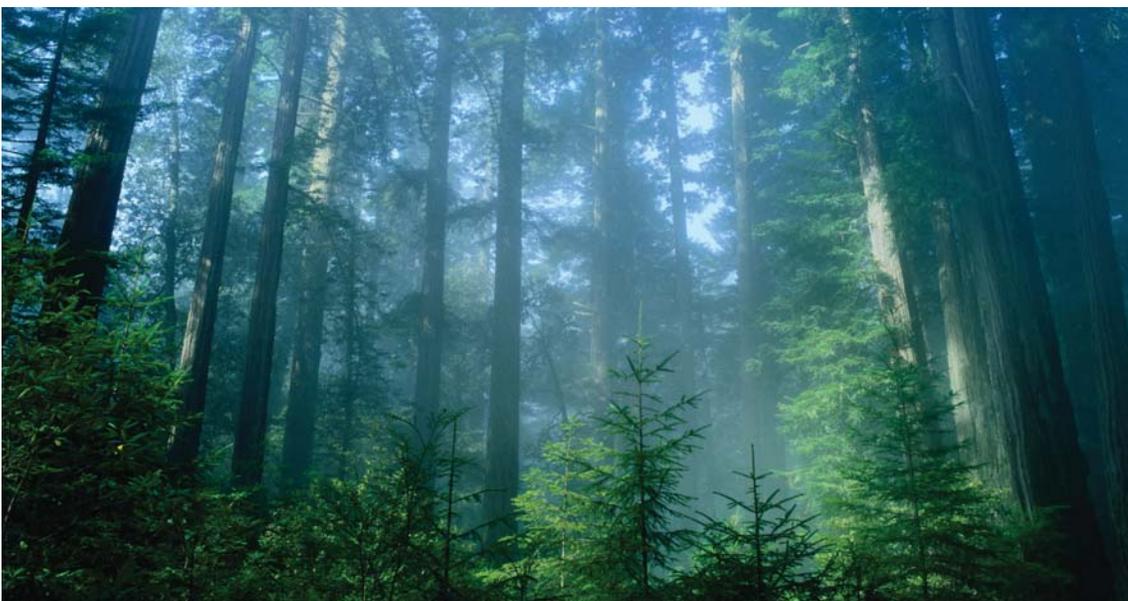
The economic benefits of recreational fishing in the Golden Trout Wilderness are estimated at \$148,000 to \$713,000 a year. Economic benefits from grazing in the Golden Trout Wilderness, on the other hand, are estimated at just \$35,000 a year.¹⁶

The California Desert region, protected in the California Desert Protection Act of 1994, features world-renowned attractions such as Death Valley and Joshua Tree National Parks, Mojave National Preserve, and Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. The 25 million acres that make up this area generate \$1.4 billion annually and support approximately 3,700 jobs in the surrounding four counties.¹⁷ This region, which includes the Mojave, Great Basin, and Sonoran Desert ecosystems, is one of the largest wild and undeveloped areas in the United States.

TABLE 3: Economic Impact of Visitor Expenditures at National Parks in the California Desert Region in 2004.

National Parks	Total Recreational Visits	Total Spending	Total jobs created
Death Valley	1,014,636	\$44,000,000	1,212
Joshua Tree	1,280,917	\$46,300,000	1,115
Mojave	492,745	\$5,100,000	121
TOTAL Desert Region	2,788,298	\$95,400,000	2,448

Source: Richardson, Robert B. *The Economic Benefits of California Desert Wildlands: 10 Years since the California Desert Protection Act of 1994.*



GRAND STAIRCASE-ESCALANTE: A Natural Wonder

President Clinton proclaimed the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in September 1996, the first of a series of new national monuments to be protected by the Bureau of Land Management. The Monument faced fierce opposition from the coal industry, because national monument status would prevent mining and other resource extraction in the area.

A national monument provides the sort of sustainable revenue that a coal mine can never hope to offer. In most counties in Utah over the last 30 years, income from resource extraction has declined or remained flat while income as a whole has grown substantially. This pattern suggests that in Utah much of the growth in personal income is independent of extractive industries. In 2000, jobs in resource extraction-including forestry, mining and oil land gas production-accounted for just 5 percent

of total personal income for Garfield County.¹⁸ For Garfield County, employment in the mining sector has been negligible, accounting for one percent of total employment in 2000.

According to a 2007 study by Utah State University's Institute for Outdoor Recreation and Tourism, 91 percent of Grand Staircase-Escalante visitors stopped in neighboring Kane and Garfield counties, spending \$20.6 million at 21 different kinds of businesses. On top of this, an additional \$5 million from visitors went to support more than 430 full-time jobs.

The positive economic impacts associated with protecting fish and wildlife habitat in the area are also substantial. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service found that total expenditures for wildlife-related recreation in the State of Utah topped \$1.3 billion in 2001.¹⁹

THE LAST FRONTIER: Alaska's Unparalleled National Forests

The Tongass and Chugach National Forests comprise more than 14 million acres of roadless areas—roughly 25 percent of land protected under the 58.5 million acre roadless rule. Over the years, logging has destroyed much of Alaska's wild forests. As a result,

protection for the Tongass and Chugach National Forests has become ever more critical. Over the past 45 years, the timber industry has clearcut more than one million acres of old-growth forest, building nearly 5,000 miles of logging roads in southeast Alaska. American taxpayers subsidize these roads and timber sales at a cost of \$30 million a year.

At 16.8 million acres—an area the size of West Virginia—Alaska's Tongass National Forest is the largest reserve of coastal temperate rainforest in the world. Stretching for more than 500 miles along the southeast coast of Alaska, the Tongass covers an island landscape fragmented by narrow inlets and glacier-carved fjords. There are 6.6 million acres within the Tongass National Forest that are congressionally designated Wilderness Areas, National Monuments, and Roadless Areas. The forest is home to old growth trees, wolves, bears, salmon, moose, and bald eagles. It is also home to the biggest timber subsidies in the nation, with American citizens paying roughly \$45 million a year to subsidize logging companies in the area—mostly by building new, unneeded roads. While the number of logging jobs in the Tongass has plummeted, peak-season employment in lodging, restaurants, and recreation has grown by one-third, from 3,450 in 1995 to 5,050 in 2002.



AMERICA'S OUTDOOR HERITAGE UNDER SIEGE

The lands and waters critical to America's outdoor traditions are at a crossroads. Unrestrained oil and gas drilling imperils big game winter range and migratory corridors. Road building and other development threatens remote areas of the National Forest System that provide high quality recreation opportunities and essential habitat for fish and wildlife, such as wild salmon and bull trout. Each year over one million acres of fish and wildlife habitat are lost to urban and suburban sprawl. Pressure to develop wetlands important for waterfowl conservation is growing.

The last several years have seen a radical shift in the way America's public lands are managed. The oil, gas, mining and timber industries are chomping at the bit to pursue resources in previously unspoiled areas like Wyoming's Red Desert, Colorado's Roan Plateau and Alaska's Tongass National Forest.

But oil and gas resources in the Rocky Mountain West are limited, while recreational opportunities are endless. In fact, according to U.S. Department of Energy estimates, the Rockies hold enough oil to supply the United States for just over three months. Even if oil prices skyrocketed beyond their current levels, revenues would only be generated for a brief window of time. In contrast, protecting western public lands for recreation would ensure revenues of more than \$65 billion a year for years to come.

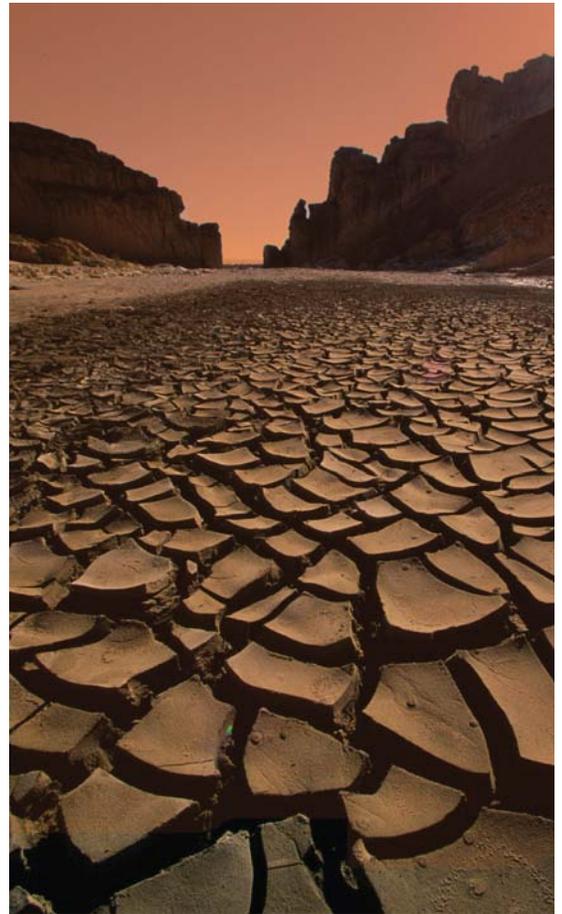
GLOBAL WARMING: The Biggest Threat to Our Public Lands

Global warming poses a serious threat to our public lands. Our most spectacular American landscapes — places like the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, the Everglades, the Northern Rockies, and Glacier National Park — are all threatened. Global warming is without a doubt the conservation challenge of our time.

Global Warming casts a long shadow over all other efforts to conserve wildlife and protect our last remaining wild places. In the last 30 years, approximately 400,000 Square miles of arctic sea ice has melted, which is an area roughly the size of Texas, threatening polar bear habitat and further accelerating global warming worldwide. Global

warming is predicted to wipe out between 15 and 37 percent of plant and animal species by 2050.

In addition to the widespread loss of habitat, traditional recreation and economic opportunities will be limited or lost due to global warming. A decreased snowpack will shorten ski seasons. Opportunities for fishing, hunting and kayaking will dwindle as stream flows and wildlife populations diminish. Climate scientists predict that as climate change continues, winter will start even later and end even sooner, with less winter snow on the ground, decreasing opportunities for snow-dependent outdoor winter recreation in western national parks and





Glacier National Park

The great ice masses of Glacier National Park, like glaciers all over the world, are shrinking. Slowly, inch by inch, warming temperatures are melting them away. On any given day, or any given year, the changes are not dramatic. But over decades, rising temperatures have a profound impact on the park. If nothing is done to curb global warming, park scientists predict that by the year 2030, there may not be a single glacier left in Glacier National Park.

Some of the Park's best known glaciers have already shrunk by more than half. The number of glaciers in the park has dropped from an estimated 150 in 1850 to approximately 35 today. Since 1968, as the warming trend has worsened, and the human influence on it been more sharply defined, many of the smaller glaciers have disappeared entirely.

The retreat of the glaciers within Glacier National Park will mean more than just less ice. It may have a devastating impact on natural ecosystems that have taken thousands of years to develop. The natural treasures the park was created to protect may disappear along with the ice. And as Glacier and other national parks change, so will the economic opportunities they offer today.

In 1997 alone, the National Park Service collected \$122.2 million in entrance and parking fees, and season passes. Concessionaire sales were estimated at \$650 million. Travel related expenditures by visitors to National Parks generate an estimated \$14.55 billion annually in local economies. There are significant tourism dollars at stake if declining global warming keeps visitors away from parks.

Protecting special places like our marine waters and Arctic wilderness from further oil and gas development is one way to move us off the path of global warming. It is simply not smart to develop more oil and gas resources from special areas when we have cleaner, safer, better energy solutions available-like wind and solar power and technologies that make a car go farther on a gallon of gas.

elsewhere. Popular winter destinations like Grand Teton National Park and Yellowstone National Park will see a drastic change in visitation.

We do not know what the full affect of radical climate change will be on our environment, but we do know that even a modest rise of 2°- 3°F (1.1°-1.7°C) could have dramatic effects. Few ecosystems could adapt to such a temperature change. In fact, half the world's nature reserves and one-fifth of coastal wetlands will likely be destroyed. Global sea levels could rise by more than 20 feet if the ice shelves in Greenland and Antarctica collapsed, which is a distinct possibility if temperatures continue to climb. Droughts and wild-fires will occur more often. More than a million species worldwide could be driven to extinction by 2050.

LOGGING: No match for recreation

America's first National Forests were established more than one hundred years ago, and today we have 155 of them, stretching across 191 million acres. National Forests are some of Americans' favorite places to hike, hunt, fish and camp. They provide habitat to more than 3,000 species of fish and wildlife, and clean drinking water to over 60 million people in 33 states. Unfortunately, logging an area for a single season can wipe out its recreation, habitat, and clean water for years into the future. Logging ruins recreation areas, destroys wildlife habitat, and chokes streams with silt, clogging municipal drinking supplies.

In addition to these costs, logging also costs jobs and in fact, hurts our economy. As an engine for a strong economy, recreation in healthy, wild forests dwarfs commercial logging. Logging has destroyed some of our best areas for recreation and clean drinking water. We can repair the damage done to our forests by decades of clearcutting, and in doing so we will create jobs that will last for generations.

Each year almost one billion dollars of taxpayer funding goes to subsidize the federal commercial

logging program. Investing these same funds in land health and restoration can help improve water quality, protect homes and restore the natural role of fire, replant trees and other native plant species, maintain or decommission old logging roads and help recover depleted fish and wildlife species.

In contrast to the heavily subsidized timber industry, recreation in National Forests generates \$108 billion for the national economy each year, and employs 2.6 million Americans. Fish and wildlife-related activities bring in another \$14 billion per year, and sustain 330,000 jobs.²⁰

One example of the successful shift from resource extraction to recreation occurred in the Pacific Northwest, where logging on federal lands fell 91 percent from 1988 to 1998, but total employment in the region rose 31 percent. Despite the timber industry's gloomy predictions, when logging tapered off in Oregon and Washington, employment shot up and the region's economy became stronger and more diverse.



OIL AND GAS DRILLING: A Threat to Wildlife and Natural Landscapes

The Bush administration has directed federal agencies to consider energy extraction as the highest priority use for public lands and has actively assisted the industry to expand drilling in several key places. This extraction imperative threatens to scar wild landscapes, pollute streams, and destroy important habitat for wildlife like the grizzly bear.

Development of oil and gas resources can also impact communities where revenues from hunters, anglers, and wildlife watchers are a significant part of the economy. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in 2001, outdoor enthusiasts in

Colorado spent over \$2 billion on equipment and trip-related expenses for wildlife-based recreation.²¹ Fragmentation of wildlife habitat from oil and gas projects threatens big game populations, and in turn threatens the quality of hunting experiences. With fewer hunters, we are likely to see a drop in spending in western states like Colorado. The overall negative economic effect for rural businesses and communities could be substantial.²²

Oil and gas development is land and capital-intensive. It provides limited employment and pay opportunities relative to the economic value it creates. This type of development requires specialized, skilled workers who by necessity must move to wherever new gas fields are constructed. As a result, many oil development jobs are not available to local residents. The spillover, or “multiplier” impacts on the local economy associated with natural gas development are very limited. Oil and gas development can be relatively short-term in duration and do not provide long-term, continuing support for local businesses.

Across the nation, regional economies that rely heavily on mineral development face instability and downward cycles of boom and bust. The experiences of other regions that have been through recent gas booms provide good indicators of what states with new oil and gas development can expect to face. As this gas boom continues, gas development will impose substantial additional costs on county governments. Oil and gas development often times requires additional county services such as road repair and maintenance, police patrols and other law enforcement activities, fire and other emergency responders, social assistance to families in crisis, waste disposal, environmental regulation, and other services.

The income generated by energy development does little to offset its burden on local governments. The expanding sectors of local western economies rely on the natural beauty of a region as a place to live or visit. These high-quality natural landscapes make the West economically competitive.

It doesn't make sense to destroy lands that can provide tourism dollars for years to come by drilling for a very limited supply—about three months worth—of oil and gas.





Valle Vidal, New Mexico

New Mexico's Valle Vidal — The Valley of Life— is a lush mountain basin in the heart of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. The Valle Vidal is home to abundant wildlife including mule deer, black bear, mountain lion, bald eagle, Rio Grande cutthroat trout and the largest herd of elk in New Mexico. The combination of scenery and wildlife makes a visit to the Valle Vidal a highpoint in the life of many outdoorsmen.

And visits to the area are important to New Mexico's economy. In fact, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service found that hunters, anglers, and wildlife watchers expend considerable sums of money in New Mexico each year. In 2001, state residents and visitors spent \$1 billion on wildlife-based recreation in New Mexico. Of that total, trip-related expenditures were \$302 million and equipment purchases totaled \$583 million. The remaining \$138 million was spent on licenses, contributions, land ownership and leasing, and other items and services.²³

The importance of high-quality natural landscapes and recreational opportunities can also be seen clearly in the property tax base of the Valle Vidal gateway communities. Just two towns in western Colfax County—Angel Fire and Eagle Nest—are responsible for 42 percent of Colfax County's property tax base—even though those two towns contain only nine percent of the county's population. Between 2001 and 2003 the residential and non-residential taxable values in Colfax County grew by \$170 million. In comparison, natural gas taxable value grew by just \$12.8 million. Ninety-three percent of the increase in the tax base was associated with the growth in the value of residen-

tial and commercial property.²⁴ The mountain landscapes of New Mexico, including Valle Vidal, are already supporting Colfax County's economy and tax base.

Oil and gas development in Valle Vidal is almost certain to fundamentally degrade its unique natural landscape, its wildlife habitat, and its recreation opportunities. This can only weaken the region's potential for ongoing, sustained economic development.



Roan Plateau, Colorado

Near the city of Rifle in Colorado's Garfield County, the Roan Plateau towers more than 3,000 feet above the Colorado River valley. The Plateau is one of Colorado's most biologically diverse areas and a popular backcountry recreation area. Due to its unmatched wildlife habitat and pristine qualities, the area has been targeted for Wilderness designation. But despite its outstanding natural character, the Roan Plateau has been put on the chopping block: Big Oil has targeted the area for oil and gas drilling.

This kind of invasive industry would not only destroy the wild character of the Roan Plateau, it would undermine the local recreation-based economy. Hunting on the Roan Plateau generates almost \$4 million annually alone, drawing at least 1,400 hunters each year. Oil exploration would displace wildlife in the area and diminish hunting opportunities. As a result, the area's important hunting economy would take a hit.

From 1970 to 1997, the Roan Plateau's Garfield County gained more than 18,000 jobs—a 306 percent increase. One-third of these jobs were in the

service sector, which includes tourism, health care, and high-tech work. Meanwhile, resource extraction industries, including oil and gas, accounted for only one percent of Garfield County's total personal income (TPI) by 1997, a steep decrease from 12 percent in 1970. Non-labor income, such as retirement funds, makes up one-third of Garfield County's taxable income. In order to attract and retain the retirees who contribute substantially to its economy, the county must protect wild and scenic surroundings like the Roan Plateau.²⁵

A balanced plan for the Plateau that protects the top and cliffs would also protect economic activity that relies on public lands, open spaces, and quality of life. This even-handed vision would safeguard the undeveloped public lands of the Plateau as they are today: Bold, dramatic, and undisturbed.



The Red Desert, Wyoming

The Red Desert in Wyoming includes the Jack Morrow Hills, the Great Divide, and Adobe Town, the largest potential Bureau of Land Management Wilderness Area in the state. One of the finest high desert ecosystems in the nation, the Red Desert provides a stronghold for sage grouse, pronghorn antelope, pygmy rabbit, ferruginous hawk, and a number of other wildlife species.

But the extractive oil industry has long sought the reservoirs of coal bed methane, natural gas, and oil beneath the desert's surface. Today, oil and gas leases in the area are proposed at an alarming level. A minimum of 10,000 wells are projected for the region

over the next few years. Along with these wells will come thousands of miles of roads, pipelines and telephone lines that create a web of industrialization.

These wells jeopardize one of Wyoming's economic workhorses, big game hunting. In 2005, hunting revenues in the norther Red Desert drew nearly \$900,000 to surrounding communities.²⁶ But due to the current energy boom, many of the Desert's traditional hunting grounds now face oil, gas and coalbed methane development.

Otero Mesa, New Mexico

With more than 1.2 million acres of Chihuahuan Desert grassland, Otero Mesa extends eastward from the Hueco Mountains to the Guadalupe Mountains and north from the Texas border into New Mexico. Otero Mesa provides habitat for wintering song birds, year-round raptors, one of two genetically pure New Mexico pronghorn populations and black-tailed prairie dog. It is also home to hundreds of acres of sacred archeological sites and the largest untapped freshwater aquifer in New Mexico. Along with providing outstanding biological, cultural and historical value, Otero Mesa provides recreational opportunities such as camping, hiking, and hunting.

According to the New Mexico Department of Tourism, the outdoor tourism industry in 2005 generated over \$5 billion dollars to the state economy. By contrast, the Bureau of Land Management estimates that oil and gas development would create only 75 additional jobs in Otero and Sierra Counties combined, and \$2.2 million in labor income in Otero County. This represents less than one percent of 2001 Otero County jobs and personal income.

Sportsmen visiting Otero Mesa have an unparalleled opportunity to hunt vast expanses of wild public land that receives little hunting pressure. The solitude offered by the area is primarily due to large tracts of roadless areas that total over 500,000 acres, making the Mesa the largest remaining roadless area in New Mexico.

But this unique landscape is currently targeted for energy development. In the very near future the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) may open the Mesa to oil and gas drilling-even though only minimal quantities of oil or gas can be found there.

CONCLUSION



The West has changed, and so should our management of its resources. Conserving public lands offers a clear economic advantage. In fact, many Americans assume our forests, parks and monuments are already protected from logging, unchecked development, and uncontrolled oil and gas development.

Protecting public lands promotes growth and economic stability. Data gathered over the past 30 years shows that the closer a county is to federally protected lands, the faster that county's economy has grown. Counties that have experienced the highest rate of economic growth share several attractive natural qualities. They all boast warm climates, mountains, and rivers, streams and lakes.²⁷ In the West, counties where more than 60 percent of the federal public land is protected grew 66 percent faster from 1970 to 2000 than counties where the same percentage of public land has no permanent protective status.²⁸

The economic impact of hunting, fishing, camping, and hiking in the West is key to the vitality of western communities. Outdoor recreation, whether it is

in the form of hunting and fishing, bird watching, hiking, or skiing, contributes \$730 billion to the economy annually and supports \$6.5 million in jobs. Recreation also generates \$289 billion in direct spending, which is larger than the annual expenditures of most other major industries in the nation.

The public lands of the West are one of our nation's greatest economic assets. But we must work vigilantly to protect this asset from runaway oil and gas drilling, logging, development, and global warming. By permanently protecting our outdoor heritage, we ensure that future generations can enjoy unspoiled landscapes, and the jobs and vitality that come with them.

ENDNOTES

- 1 U.S. Bureau of the Census. (2004). County Business Patterns.
- 2 U.S. Department of Commerce. (2004). Bureau of Economic Analysis, Regional Economic Information System.
- 3 "Economists challenge Bush Western land policies," (12/03/03). Forbes.com, (forbes.com/home_europe/newswire/2003/12/03/rtr1168448.html)
- 4 John Sterling, Outdoor Industry Conservation Alliance. 2007. Testimony in Support of S.647. Senate Subcommittee on Public Lands and Forests
- 5 Shumway J.M. and S.M. Otterstrob. (2001). Spatial Patterns of Migration and Income Change in the Mountain West: The Dominance of Service-Based, Amenity Rich Counties. *Professional Geographer*. Vol. 53 (4).
- 6 U.S. Department of Commerce. (2004). Bureau of Economic Analysis, Regional Economic Information system (REIS CD-ROM). Washington, D.C.
- 7 Outdoor Industry Foundation. (2006). *The Active Outdoor Recreation Economy*. OUTDOORINDUSTRY-FOUNDATION.ORG.
- 8 Outdoor Industry Association. (2006). *The Active Outdoor Recreation Economy*.
- 9 Id.
- 10 Sonoran Institute. (2006). *Backcountry Bounty: Hunters, Anglers and Prosperity in the West*.
- 11 FWS. (2007). 2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, National Overview.
- 12 FWS. (2005). Private and Public Land Use By Hunters: Addendum to the 2001 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation (Report 2001-8).
- 13 Loomis, John. (2000). *Economic Values of Protecting Roadless Areas in the United States*.
- 14 U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. (2000). *Regional Economic Information System CD-ROM*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce.
- 15 Richardson, Robert B.(2002)*The Economic Benefits of Wildlands in the Eastern Sierra Nevada Region of California*. The Wilderness Society.
- 16 Alkire, Carolyn. (2003). *Economic Value of Golden Trout Fishing in the Golden Trout Wilderness, California. California Trout*.
- 17 Richardson, Robert B. *The Economic Benefits of California Desert Wildlands: 10 Years Since the California Desert Protection Act of 1994*.
- 18 Wilderness Society, Economic Profiles of Utah Counties. <http://www.wilderness.org/Library/Documents/upload/Garfield-County-Economic-Profile-UT.pdf>
- 19 U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. (2001). National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation.
- 20 Ernie Niemi and Anne Fifield. (2000). *Seeing the Forests for their Green: The Economic Benefits of Forest Protection, Recreation, and Restoration*. Sierra Club.
- 21 US Fish and Wildlife Service. (2001). National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation
- 22 Impacts of Oil and Gas Drilling. Save the Roan Plateau. www.saveroanplateau.org
- 23 U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. (2001). National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation.
- 24 Power, Thomas Michael. (2005). The Local Economic Impacts of Natural Gas Development in Valle Vidal, New Mexico.
- 25 Wilderness Society. www.wilderness.org/Library/Documents/county_econ_profiles.cfm
- 26 WGFD 2006 Annual Report. (2004). *Wyoming Resident and Nonresident Deer, Elk and Antelope Hunter Expenditure Survey*.
- 27 McGranahan. (1999). Natural Amenities Drive Population Change. Food and Rural Economics Division, Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Report 781.
- 28 U.S. Department of Commerce. (2004). Bureau of Economic Analysis, Regional Economic Information system (REIS CD-ROM). Washington, D.C.





SIERRA
CLUB
FOUNDED 1892

For more information:
www.sierraclub.org