

## Economic Benefits of Our Protected Lands

Permanently protecting our shared public lands will not only secure a variety of environmental benefits -- such as habitat for endangered and rare species -- but it will also ensure that future generations continue to have opportunities for backcountry recreation, scenic vistas and other important natural wonders that attract people and keep them coming back to our nation's wild places. Those opportunities and amenities translate into positive economic impacts for local communities through business and real estate investments, recreation and tourism spending, and the jobs and income earned that -- in the absence of those amenities -- might otherwise accrue elsewhere.



Whitney Pockets in Clark County, NV. Photo credit: David Bly

### Business Appeal<sup>i</sup>

Studies have shown that protected public lands are one of several key quality-of-life factors influencing business owners when determining the location of their offices and attracting a talented workforce. In addition, the presence of these protected public lands can also help communities diversify local economies that had been stagnant due to over-reliance on declining resource extraction industries.

- Business owners decide to locate their offices near protected public lands due to scenic amenities, rural character of towns, and proximity to wildlife-based recreation. These reasons far outrank labor costs and tax incentives.<sup>ii</sup>
- A study of 113 rural Western Counties found that wilderness is linked with higher growth in investment income and entrepreneurial activity.<sup>iii</sup>
- Wilderness and other protected lands have helped counties diversify their economies that had been stagnant due to over-reliance on declining resource extraction industries.<sup>iv</sup>

A Mesquite Chamber of Commerce survey found that owners highlighted anticipated community growth and quality of life as the major reasons for locating their businesses in Mesquite.

### Catalyst for Recreation & Tourism Industry<sup>v vi</sup>

Every year, millions of Americans spend time outdoors. When people visit public lands for camping, hunting, bird watching and other recreation activities, they frequently spend money in local communities on lodging, meals, gear, licenses, and other necessary expenditures. Without wild public

lands, this slice of the economic pie would shrink. According to Outdoor Industry Foundation, active recreation -- such as hiking, hunting, camping, and rafting -- contributes significantly to the U.S. economy.

A Glance at the Numbers: The Active Outdoor Recreation Economy<sup>vii</sup>

- Contributes \$730 billion annually to the economy
- Supports nearly 6.5 million jobs
- Generates \$289 billion annually in retail sales and services
- Creates \$88 billion in annual state and national tax revenue

In 2010, an estimated 5.9 million tourists visited BLM lands in Nevada and had an economic impact of \$283.6 million dollars.

### Community & Economic Development

Wilderness and other protective designations have been shown to increase local tourism and to attract new residents who treasure the quality of life that preserved lands provide. This high quality of life and sense of place are also key elements in keeping existing businesses and talented young people in the area. This preservation is crucial for maintaining a vibrant community and healthy economy.

- The presence of wilderness and other wild lands draws residents and new economic activity that has a substantial positive impact on local economies.<sup>viii</sup>
- From 1970 to 2000, individual income in more remote rural counties with protected lands grew more than 60 percent faster than similar counties without any protected lands.<sup>ix</sup>



Rock Art in Gold Butte, NV. Photo credit: Terri Rylander

<sup>i</sup> Mesquite Chamber of Commerce 2011. Development tab. Available at: <http://www.mesquite-chamber.com>.

<sup>ii</sup> Johnson, J.D. and R. Rasker. 1995. The Role of Economic and Quality of Life Values in Rural Business Location. *Journal of Rural Studies* 11(4): 405-416.

<sup>iii</sup> Holmes, F. P. and W.E. Hecox. 2004. Does wilderness impoverish rural regions? *International Journal of Wilderness*. 10(3): 34-39.

<sup>iv</sup> Lorah, P.A. 2000. Population growth, economic security, and cultural change in wilderness counties. In: McCool, Stephen F.; Cole, David N.; Borrie, William T.; O'Loughlin, Jennifer. *Wilderness Science in a Time of Change Conference*—. Ogden, UT: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station. 230-237.

<sup>v</sup> BLM 2011. The BLM: A Sound Investment for America. Available at: <http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en.html>.

<sup>vi</sup> Economic impacts are the jobs, income, tax revenue and other fiscal benefits that accrue to local communities and are very important reasons to protect some public lands from development.

<sup>vii</sup> Outdoor Industry Foundation, Active Outdoor Recreation Economy Report, 2006. Available at [http://www.outdoorindustry.org/research.php?action=detail&research\\_id=26](http://www.outdoorindustry.org/research.php?action=detail&research_id=26).

<sup>viii</sup> Lorah, P.A. 2000.

<sup>ix</sup> Sonoran Institute 2004, Prosperity in the 21 st Century West - The Role of Protected Public Lands.