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.

Business Appeal

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.ii
- A study of 113 rural Western Counties found that wilderness is linked with higher growth in investment income and entrepreneurial activity.iii
- Wilderness and other protected lands have helped counties diversify their economies that had been stagnant due to over-reliance on declining resource extraction industries.iv

Catalyst for Recreation & Tourism Industry

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

A Glance at the Numbers: The Active Outdoor Recreation Economy

- 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

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.
- 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.

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6 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.
9 Sonoran Institute 2004, Prosperity in the 21st Century West - The Role of Protected Public Lands.