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Mountain biking in Canyonlands National Park | Photo Credit: Western Spirit Cycling

Best Practices for Balancing Recreation and Energy Development on Our Public Lands



Truck traffic near Dead Horse Point State Park | Photo Credit: Whit Richardson

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I. Executive Summary

As the recreation economy grows as an economic driver across the country, potential conflicts between the recreation experience and energy development on our federal public lands are increasing. However, there are a variety of tools that can be used—and in many places are already being used—to alleviate these conflicts and optimize public land use. Implementation of these tools both benefits nearby communities and helps goals related to energy production. This paper discusses the characteristics of prosperous communities who are benefitting from thriving recreation economies, and identifies solutions to common problems related to energy developments on federal public lands that impact recreation assets and experiences. As demand for multiple uses of public lands increases, these policies and tools provide options for land managers and local communities to balance energy development and recreation.

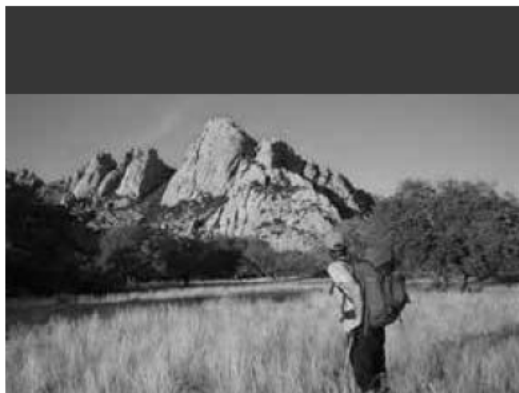
The recreation economy is growing like never before and exceeding many other more conventional sectors such as pharmaceuticals and household utilities. Indeed, many case studies exist of local communities that have invested in recreation assets and have successfully diversified and expanded their economic prospects. These locations—such as Moab, Utah, Lander, Wyoming, and Durango, Colorado—attract not only tourists, but also quality of life recruits and new businesses hoping to attract and retain a talented work force. Non-labor income for these communities, such as retirees, is also a significant benefit to communities that have chosen to protect and enhance access to outdoor recreation opportunities.

However, poor land use planning decisions can limit the ability of recreation economies to grow, especially when those decisions fail to account for the impacts that industrial activity and energy development can have on recreation resources. A number of policy solutions are available to federal land man-

agers to avoid these conflicts and better support communities that currently depend on resource extraction but who would like to build diversity through outdoor recreation opportunities and related economic benefits. These solutions include established planning tools like Master Leasing Plans; utilizing best management practices and technologies; and conducting forward thinking environmental reviews for leasing and development proposals which include identifying and evaluating potential impacts on recreation assets in and around project areas. By considering creative measures to balance development with the protection of recreation assets, such as master development plans and phased leasing and development, communities can supplement existing oil and gas development with long term planning for recreation infrastructure.

Land managers can also better coordinate public input through improved community outreach and workshops that provide more opportunities for synthesizing public input and information related to specific development proposals. State recreation directors, county public land officials, and county sponsored public land committees all increase opportunities for stakeholders to communicate and coordinate with industry and avoid conflicts. Through these efforts, local communities can continue to receive economic benefits from energy development while also building a stable and durable recreation economy.

This paper discusses the characteristics of prosperous communities who are benefitting from thriving recreation economies, and identifies solutions to common problems related to energy developments on federal public lands that impact recreation assets and experiences.



Sheepshead, Arizona in the afternoon light | Photo Credit: Jason Keith

II. Status of Recreation Economies

Cities and towns that can offer both citizens and visitors a chance to get outside are seeing increases in visitation along with business recruitment.

The outdoor industry is growing like never before and is outperforming all other economic sectors that depend on public land access. In 2017 the Outdoor Industry Association updated their economic numbers which show that outdoor recreation generates over \$887 billion in consumer spending, provides \$65.3 billion in federal tax revenue and \$594 billion in state and local tax revenue, and supports more than 7.6 million jobs nationwide.¹ All this success was acknowledged in 2016 when Congress passed the REC Act, a law ensuring that the outdoor recreation economy, including outdoor industry jobs and associated economic impacts, are measured by the federal government and accounted for as part of the national Gross Domestic Product. Broadly supported bipartisan legislation, the REC Act directs the Department of Commerce to work with the Department of Labor and the land and water management agencies to quantify the outdoor recreation economy and provide annual, objective federal government statistics quantifying the outdoor industry's contributions to the U.S. economy.²

These economic benefits are the direct results of 1) specific actions taken by local communities to protect and enhance public access to outdoor recreation, and 2) specific policies that support the success of those actions. Prosperous communities³ across the country are choosing to invest in access to recreation in natural places, including financial support for trails, rivers, lakes, cliffs and canyons where recreation of all types takes place. These activities include hiking, biking, fishing, hunting, climbing, paddling, motorized recreation and skiing to name just a few. Cities and towns that can offer both citizens and visitors a chance to get outside are seeing increases in visitation along with business recruitment. In the footloose economy of the 21st century, many businesses can locate wherever they choose which leads

to economic diversification opportunities for places that were previously dependent on one or two major employers.

In some communities near public lands, the major employer has been related to energy development in the form of coal, oil and/or gas production. As commodity prices for these resources fluctuate, communities suffer in terms of both jobs and royalty revenues that support local budgets. Several states and local county governments are facing budget challenges due to the dramatic drop in fossil fuel prices.⁴ State budgets that rely as much as 35% on energy production benefit during boom periods, but suffer significantly during downturns. Many of the top energy producing states have now fallen into recession,⁵ and among other budget reduction measures state governments are slashing education budgets.⁶

In light of this dynamic, communities in the West are increasingly looking to outdoor recreation on public lands as a reliable and growing source of revenue. Protected landscapes near communities throughout the country—in particular, the West—offer growing high-tech and service industries a competitive advantage. As the West shifts toward a knowledge-based economy, new research shows that protected federal public lands support faster rates of job growth and are correlated with higher levels of per capita income.⁷ These communities attract more non-labor income, such as retirees, and bring advantages related to business recruitment and retainment. Entrepreneurs and talented workers are choosing to live where they can enjoy outdoor recreation and natural landscapes.

Communities that have recreation revenue sources are weathering changes in prices for oil, gas, and coal precisely because they

have alternative economic drivers in the form of both recreation visitors and diverse businesses. By working to balance revenue sources, communities are able to optimize their public lands. One strong example can be found in Durango, Colorado—a community that benefits from recreation and oil and gas. In Durango, citizens formed a trails group called Trails 2000 that has long been work-

ing in partnership with oil and gas interests in the region.⁸ In Moab, Utah the recreation economy⁹ was well developed when the most recent oil and gas boom led to increased demand for drilling permits and leases in the area.¹⁰ Through careful planning and use of the tools listed below, both communities are now much better prepared for future developments in both energy and recreation.



Oil tanks near Island in the Sky District of Canyonlands National Park | Photo Credit: Whit Richardson

III. Common Problems from Energy Developments that Impact Recreation Resources on Our Public Lands

A variety of problems can and do result from poorly managing the interface between recreation and resource extraction, including alternative energy installations such as wind and solar. These issues require consideration not just with regard to the general effect of

energy development on the environment in terms of wildlife, air, soil, and water, but with regard to their specific effect on the outdoor experience and related recreation assets. Some common conflicts between energy development and recreation activity include:

If access roads cross trails at multiple points, the trail experience can be significantly impacted. In addition, in places like climbing areas, waterfronts, or camping areas where visitors remain in the same place for extensive periods of time, noise, dust, and congestion from nearby road traffic can undermine the outdoor experience.

Placement and design of **industrial infrastructure** and necessary access roads. If access roads cross trails at multiple points, the trail experience can be significantly impacted. In addition, in places like climbing areas, waterfronts, or camping areas where visitors remain in the same place for extensive periods of time, noise, dust, and congestion from nearby road traffic can undermine the outdoor experience. For example, these issues remain a serious concern for the Big Flat area north of Canyonlands National Park in Utah where climbers spend much of the day on nearby cliffs, and mountain bikers cross roads in multiple nearby places.¹¹ As the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has recognized, the presence of infrastructure and traffic related to energy development in recreation areas can “create poor road conditions, industrial level traffic, and fugitive dust that could degrade the recreation experiences and could conflict with recreational use. . . .”¹²

Views of surrounding landscapes are an important component of any outdoor experience, including those from national parks. Poorly designed infrastructure—such as power lines and pipelines—can extensively degrade iconic views. For instance, this is a problem for oil and gas development near Cortez and Durango, Colorado, where recent oil and gas proposals potentially affect views from Mesa Verde National Park. The La Plata County Commissioners echoed this concern while considering a plan for as much as 3,000 new oil and gas wells in the area.¹³ The degradation of adjacent lands can also have a significant impact on visitation numbers.¹⁴ In the Moab Master Leasing Plan the Bureau of Land Management acknowledged the effect of nearby drilling on visitation to Dinosaur National Monument: “In Uintah County, for example, Dinosaur National Monument (a major recreation amenity) has seen a decline in visitation of over 40 percent from 1999-2014 (1999 being the year in which Uintah County reversed years of declining oil and gas production); oil production increased over 358 percent during the same time period. During that time period, natural gas production increased over 339 percent.”¹⁵ This shows that poorly planned development can impact recreation resources not only on BLM-managed project areas, but also on adjacent lands, including national parks and other recreation areas managed by local, state, and federal agencies.

Safety of visitors and industry employees must be considered at places where the two are expected to interact. For example, in 2017 the oil and gas industry nominated lease parcels just outside of Zion National Park that, if issued, could lead to safety concerns on mountain bike trails that currently go directly through one of the parcels. This and many other concerns about the affect on the national park led the Washington County Commissioners to vote unanimously on a resolution that raises concerns for oil and gas leasing on these parcels.¹⁶ In similar situations elsewhere, the BLM has acknowledged the safety concerns presented by encouraging development in recreation areas, stating that “ac-

cidents/injuries could occur,” particularly without additional measures to protect recreation users. Noise, smell, air quality concerns from industrial operations can also affect outdoor visitors including the potential for oil and gas spills. These problems have posed a continual threat to visitors to the Theodore Roosevelt National Park in North Dakota where visitation to the Maah Daah Hey Trail decreased amid concerns about safety and air quality around oil well pads.¹⁷

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Water quality is another important consideration in places where people will have direct contact with the water. On May 20, 2014 an oil production well began leaking 100 barrels per hour into a dry wash near the Green River, and a subsequent storm pushed the crude oil into the river itself. This section of the river between the town of Green River, Utah and Canyonlands National Park—Labyrinth Canyon—is a popular paddling destination.¹⁹

Successful communities have worked to ensure that the outdoor experiences available near them meet visitor expectations in terms of quality. If there are concerns about too much traffic, the possibility of low air quality, the degradation of views, to name a few, the “product” or experience is seen to be inferior to that which may be available in another location. Well-managed communities have developed their own brands with regard to the experiences they can offer. If federal land managers do not appropriately balance energy development with the need to preserve these experiences, long-term damage can result making it more challenging for a

community to attract either visitors or residents when resource extraction operations have run their course.

As recreation revenues grow in communities with public lands, development proponents can expect protests, legal challenges, and delays if the need to maintain quality outdoor experiences is ignored or minimized.²⁰ Businesses that depend on visitation to multiple use public lands are likely to get increasingly involved if the quality of outdoor experiences which their customers demand is not maintained.

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Mountain biking at Amasa Back near Moab, Utah | Photo Credit: Western Spirit Cycling

IV. Legal Framework for Managing Recreation as a Multiple Use of Public Lands

As outdoor recreation grows as a “principle” and increasingly economically important use of our public lands, recreation assets should be given the same level of consideration during land use planning as energy development.

Outdoor recreation is one of the “principal” or “major” uses of public lands, alongside grazing, energy development, fish and wildlife, rights-of-way, and timber production.²¹ This principle, set forth in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), clearly places outdoor recreation on equal footing with development and other multiples uses. While the multiple use principle provides the overarching framework for managing public lands, the development of oil, gas, and coal on federal lands is governed primarily by the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920²² and the Energy Policy Act of 2005.²³ A multi-step approval process determines whether specific lands may be leased; however, FLPMA, along with the Multiple Use - Sustained Yield Act of 1960²⁴ (MUSY), requires that BLM and USFS managers administer federal public lands “for outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, and wildlife and fish purposes.” Further, under the multiple use mandate of FLPMA, BLM must “balance” the management of those resources²⁵ and not “prioritize development over other uses.”²⁶

Under MUSY “multiple use” is defined as the “management of all the various renewable surface resources ... so that they are utilized in the combination that will best meet the needs of the American people ...”²⁷ “Sustained yield” is defined as “the achievement and maintenance in perpetuity of a high-level annual or regular periodic output of the various renewable resources of the national forests without impairment of the productivity of the land.”²⁸ Accordingly, any one use of federal public lands cannot impair the productivity of another use. Thus, MUSY is the first law to have the five major uses of [public lands] contained in one law equally, with no one use given greater preference over any other, and with an emphasis on balanced land use planning to address the often competing interests and sometimes conflicting uses.

In 1976 Congress passed two more laws affecting management priorities of each agency: the FLPMA²⁹ for the BLM and the National Forest Management Act³⁰ (NFMA) for the United States Forest Service (USFS). Both these laws reaffirmed the multiple use mandate of MUSY;

NMFA, among other directives, prescribed how the USFS is to prepare its land use plans and “in particular, include coordination of outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, wildlife and fish, and wilderness” and “insure consideration of the economic and environmental aspects of various systems of renewable resource management, including ... to provide for outdoor recreation (including wilderness), range, timber, watershed, wildlife, and fish.”³¹ In FLPMA Congress declared that “the public lands be managed in a manner ... [to] preserve and protect certain public lands in their natural condition; that will provide food and habitat for fish and wildlife and domestic animals; and that will provide for outdoor recreation and human occupancy and use.” Neither NFMA nor FLPMA diminished the MUSY mandate that no multiple use has priority over any other. Under all these laws federal land agencies have promulgated regulations that are intended to carry out the directives of each law and which reflect a wide range of discretion regarding place-based specifics for managing multiple uses. As outdoor recreation grows as a “principle” and increasingly economically important use of our public lands, recreation assets should be given the same level of consideration during land use planning as energy development.

Many of the challenges described in this paper can be avoided through improved planning, better coordination with public stakeholders and implementation of best practices, both with regard to energy development and recreation management. As leases are sold and trails are designed, programs that encourage coordination between energy companies and recreation interests can lead to pro-active energy development in both traditional and alternative sources, while simultaneously planning for current and future recreation. Unlike other public land values like wildlife habitat or archeological sites, there are no organic acts like the Endangered Species Act or the Antiquities Act whose purpose it is to protect recreation assets. As a result, the need to protect recreation resources when planning for energy development by employing the correct tools, practices and technologies takes on even greater importance.

V. Solutions and Policy Recommendations

As noted above, competing uses can sometimes diminish the recreation experience. However, there exist several planning tools, best practices, improved technologies, and public engagement strategies that federal land managers and local communities adjacent to BLM and USFS lands can employ to safeguard recreation resources and support lasting recreation economies. Smart from the start planning tools such as Master Leasing Plans are an established, proven mechanism for protecting recreation assets on BLM lands while bringing diverse local stakeholders together to achieve, balanced common-sense solutions.

A. Planning Tools

Several planning tools exist that can help effectively balance energy development and the need to protect and enhance recreation opportunities.³²

Master Leasing Plans

A Master Leasing Plan is a proven approach from the BLM that helps minimize conflicts and achieve an optimal balance between development and the protection of outdoor recreation and other multiple uses. Master Leasing Plans are already helping to resolve long-standing conflicts between development and outdoor recreation in several places around the West, including around Dinosaur National Monument in Colorado and Arches National Park in Utah.

Master Leasing Plans work by employing a smart from the start process that includes early and often coordination with local stakeholders, including recreation users and businesses that may be operating in the planning area. This coordination, along with creative approaches to managing development and resolving conflicts, are the hallmark of MLPs which allow operators to efficiently develop

oil and gas resources without encountering surprises such as the presence of bike trails or the realization that a well pad is within the viewshed of a nearby state or national park. This also provides recreation-focused businesses and communities with the certainty that development will not harm key recreation assets that attract tourists and generate important revenue. By identifying and analyzing these concerns up front and developing a leasing plan that addresses these issues before a parcel is auctioned and a lease is awarded, development can proceed more efficiently.

In many cases, what is best for the operator is also best for the recreation asset. In places where existing well pads are present, directional drilling from these pads can be cost effective while limiting additional surface occupancy on nearby areas. Appropriate well pad design in terms of tank height, paint color, and utilization of natural features such as ridge lines and natural depressions can also be identified more effectively if potential effects on viewsheds are determined in advance. These kind of measures can be mapped out in an MLP, such as the widely supported plan for the Moab area which provides ample opportunities for new resource development while also protecting the popular recreation locations that bring visitors back to Moab every year. In Moab, local residents and businesses know their recreation amenities form the bedrock of the highly successful local recreation economy which brings in over \$200 million each year, and this is why local government and 75 Utah-based businesses enthusiastically supported this plan.

Other Conflict-Avoiding Planning Tools

To avoid problems between competing multiple uses the BLM can guide energy

Smart from the start planning tools such as Master Leasing Plans are an established, proven mechanism for protecting recreation assets on BLM lands while bringing diverse local stakeholders together to achieve, balanced common-sense solutions.

In areas where a significant amount of new drilling is expected, the BLM can require that operators and lessees coordinate construction of new roads, rigs and other infrastructure to minimize impacts to recreation resources and the broader landscape.

development and limit negative impacts on recreation and other non-energy resources by utilizing planning tools that are specifically designed to avoid conflicts and ensure an appropriate balance between outdoor recreation, development and other multiple uses of the public lands. By including the types of details included in the MLP process, a large variety of conflicts and development challenges can be avoided, thereby allowing communities to have the benefit of resource development and begin preparing for increased demand for outdoor access. Some additional measures that BLM can use and has successfully used to protect recreational resources include:

Master Development Plans and Unit Agreements

In areas where a significant amount of new drilling is expected, the BLM can require that operators and lessees coordinate construction of new roads, rigs and other infrastructure to minimize impacts to recreation resources and the broader landscape. Master Development Plans can provide a more localized blueprint for coordinated drilling and development activity on a smaller scale than a Master Leasing Plan. A Master Development Plan addresses two or more applications for a permit to drill (APDs) that share a common drilling plan (Surface Use Plan of Operations, and plans for future development and production). Submitting a Master Development Plan facilitates early planning, orderly development, and the cumulative effects analysis for all the APDs expected to be drilled by an operator in a developing field. For example, as part of a new planning process³⁵ the BLM is currently considering the use of Master Development Plans to reduce impacts to water resources that are popular with anglers in the South Park area of Colorado, where hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation are generating almost \$17 million in annual revenues.³⁶ BLM is also requiring the use of MDPs around Dinosaur National Monument as a means of limiting infrastructure and visual and auditory impacts.

Similarly, where oil and gas operators are accessing a common reservoir of minerals, BLM can require, or operators can voluntarily agree, to “unitize” their leases. Under a unit agreement, multiple leaseholders agree to cooperatively develop minerals, which generally reduces the amount of wells and other infrastructure required. This in turn can minimize conflicts with other multiple uses. Master development plans and unit agreements are both planning tools that, when used appropriately and include specific protections for outdoor recreation and other multiple uses, can reduce conflicts in areas projected for high resource development.

Development Density Limits

In recreational areas open to energy development, BLM can limit the allowable density of well pads, production facilities, pipelines and utilities to protect recreational uses and experiences. The BLM is currently considering this type of development density restriction to protect recreation areas on federal lands in the San Rafael Desert west of Canyonlands National Park.³⁷

Phased Leasing and Development

Phased leasing and development allow the BLM to prioritize new leasing and energy development authorizations on lands with industry interest and high potential for successful energy development and low levels of conflict with other resource values. BLM adopted such an approach in the Dinosaur Trail MLP, where it has prioritized leasing on higher development potential lands away from Dinosaur National Monument before leasing on lands with lower potential for successful development and closer to the Monument. Similarly, in the Absaroka Front, where migrating herds of big game from the nearby Yellowstone National Park attract sportsmen and wildlife watchers from across the country, the BLM is employing phased leasing to limit development in the most important habitats. By issuing leases incrementally through a strategic geographic

approach, land managers can limit the degree of impacts to a planning area while also allowing for responsible resource development.

All of these planning tools provide land managers an opportunity to better analyze planning areas through landscape level plans and consider ahead of time whether conflicts between multiple uses can be reduced or eliminated. In particular, MLPs are proven effective strategies for ensuring that appropriate oil and gas development can go forward while protecting recreation experiences.

B. Implementation of Best Practices and Improved Technologies

After the planning stage when development proposals are made, the BLM and operators can also limit impacts to nearby recreational resources by adopting best management practices and improved technologies. A range of options is available to federal land managers and oil and gas developers to minimize their impacts to local communities and other public land uses, including:

- Alternatives to pits used to store hydraulic fracturing fluids, produced water, and other drilling materials; containment tanks or closed loop drilling systems should be considered
- Directional drilling to minimize surface occupancy and consolidate drill rigs and pumps as a means of limiting surface impacts
- Technologies that minimize methane leaking and flaring to prevent wasteful, unnecessary and harmful emissions, and reduce light pollution
- Other strategies to limit air, noise, and water pollution, and to limit visual impacts

These best management practices,³⁸ which can and should be evaluated at the development stage given BLM's broad authority and

obligation to manage for outdoor recreation and other multiple uses, are all drilling/development techniques that allow for smaller surface disturbance, the ability to access multiple locations in a reservoir, and reduce emissions and impacts on recreation assets while simultaneously helping to avoid conflicts and costly delays.³⁹

C. Engaging the Public and Key Stakeholders Early and Often in Planning for Energy Development

Land managers should consider creating communication opportunities for recreation interests, business owners and investors, and resource extraction companies to optimize multiple land uses and foresee and address potential conflicts with energy development. Through detailed on the ground conversations with stakeholders knowledgeable about local needs and conditions, many conflicts can be avoided and stakeholder goals maximized.

Community Workshops

A productive method that land managers can pursue is to conduct—themselves or with a 3rd party facilitator—workshops bringing together a wide range of stakeholders to discuss proposed plans for energy development on public lands. Many communities, like Moab, Utah, boast popular recreation opportunities in addition to significant potential for energy development. In an effort to assess current and future land uses in the Moab area the BLM pursued its Master Leasing Plan to provide planning and analysis prior to new leasing of oil, gas and potash. To support this community conversation and collaborative process, the Keystone Policy Center facilitated two Moab Master Leasing Plan Stakeholder Mapping workshops in 2014⁴⁰ that were independent of the BLM's formal MLP process. These workshops brought together a comprehensive range stakeholders, along with federal land managers, to share and discuss map data lay-

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Counties have the opportunity to be liaisons to recreation interests and take responsible steps to protect income-generating recreation assets on nearby public lands.

ers reflecting their conservation, recreation, and energy and mineral development interests within the Moab MLP area. The workshops enabled participants to better understand the various concerns and interests held by each stakeholder.

Keystone's work resulted in a final report in April 2014 outlining the various stakeholders' detailed needs and perspectives on specific regions within the MLP planning area ahead of the BLM's formal process.⁴¹ This in turn greatly informed the BLM's decision making process, brought meaningful protections to recreation experiences, and avoided unnecessary conflicts between outdoor enthusiasts and energy developers in the region.

Enhancing Information Sharing and NEPA Processes

The BLM has in place a strong foundation for providing the public with information and opportunities to engage in the NEPA process for proposed energy development.⁴² This includes several opportunities for the public and key stakeholders to review and provide comments on proposed leases and the preparation of environmental analyses for those leases. The BLM also shares critical information, including GIS data, maps, and reports about proposed leases, that allows recreation users and businesses to identify potential conflicts, such as mountain bike trails, camping areas, and OHV routes before leases are issued. Doing so not only helps ensure that BLM has the right protections in place for recreations assets, but also avoids conflicts down the road when leases are proposed for development. The BLM should build on this existing framework to enhance the information that is being shared with the public about development proposals, and create more and better opportunities to engage with the public and stakeholders.

County Public Land Officials

To date many counties that are fortunate enough to have full time public land employ-

ees, do not include recreation management in that person's job description. Traditionally, industry representatives have been much more present and engaged in county activities and have thus been the primary focus of county public land officials. However, as local businesses and their investors learn more about risks to recreation assets on public lands which could affect their investment or relocation decisions, they will be increasingly active at the county level. Similar trends are being seen with recreation groups, such as mountain biking or climbing clubs and advocacy groups. Counties have the opportunity to be liaisons to recreation interests and take responsible steps to protect income-generating recreation assets on nearby public lands. But this will require an explicit commitment by local governments to require public land officials to communicate regularly, not just with extractive industry representatives, but also with recreation interests and others who depend on our public lands. In addition, counties should take steps to support policies that foster a supportive business environment for outdoor recreation, including the protection of recreation assets. An example of this is in Utah's Emery County where a fulltime staff position actively conducts field checks and monitors a wide range of activities to optimize public land uses and ensure that development proposals do not unnecessarily conflict with other uses such as recreation and events.⁴³

County Sponsored Public Land Committees

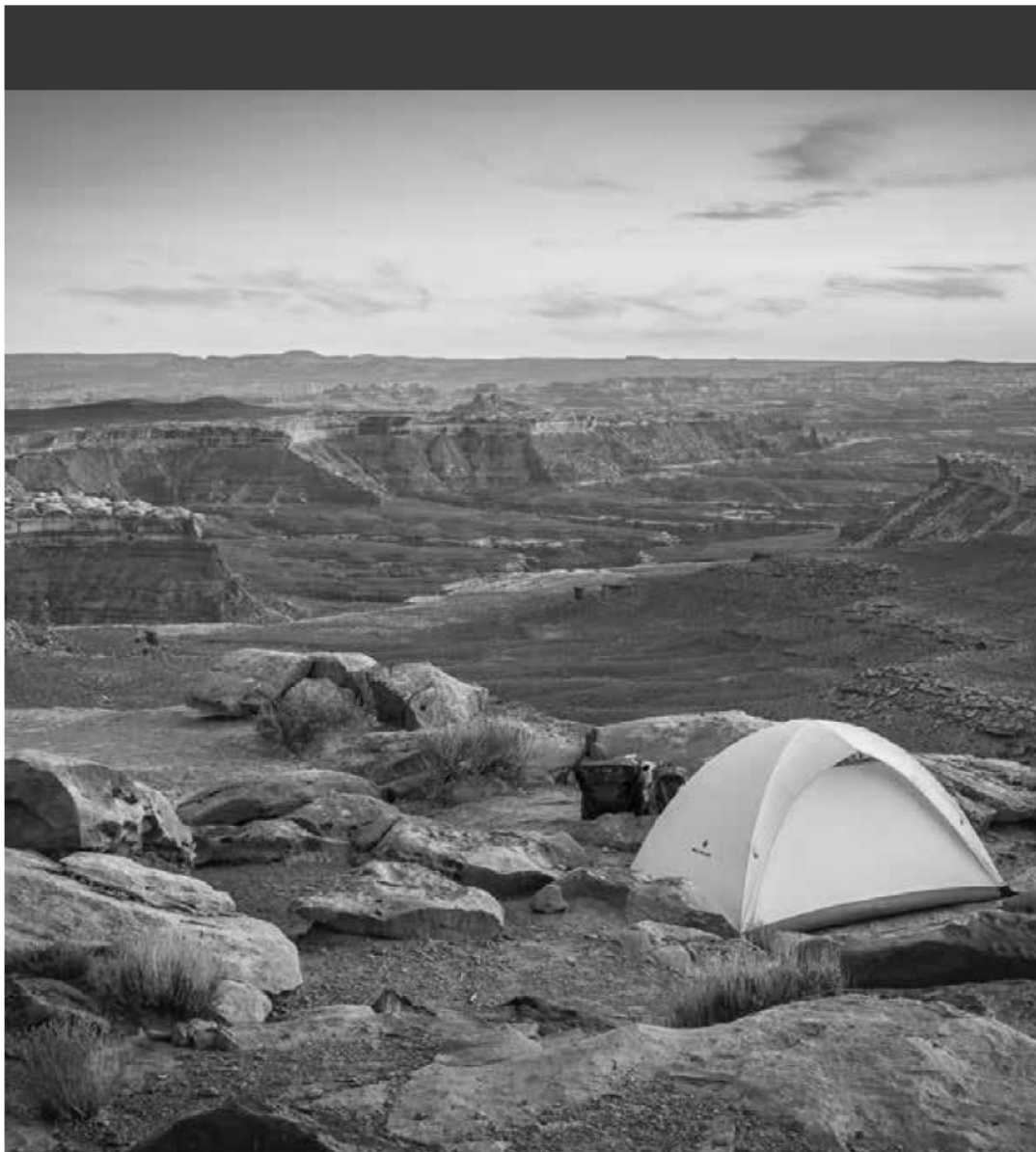
County sponsored public land committees are generally populated by volunteers, sometimes with a paid volunteer coordinator. Often they begin with a particular focus on trails for both motorized and non-motorized use, but on occasion the need for additional public land discussion can lead to groups with a broader focus. Monthly committee meetings allow the public to interface with county and public land officials at regular intervals, as opposed to only when there is a crisis or during an official

public comment period. Information exchanged and relationships built via county sponsored public land committees, can provide a regular platform to optimize the needs of all public land users including groups involved in conservation, recreation, and resource extraction. An example of this type of county-based trails committee is the Grand County-sponsored Trailmix committee based in Moab, Utah.⁴⁴

Supporting State Recreation Directors

Public land decisions greatly affect nearby communities, and more and more states are

hiring recreation directors to lead projects related to economic development in their states, and to coordinate with state energy departments.⁴⁵ Currently Washington, Colorado and Utah have state recreation directors; these officials work to better incorporate the recreation economy needs of their communities with those of industry for improved long-term public land management. By working to recognize and address the changing needs of the public land system, state recreation directors can coordinate the needs of the industry with those of the growing recreation economy.



| Photo Credit: Western Spirit Cycling

VI. Conclusion

The economic and quality of life benefits that recreation brings to communities across the country are growing with each year. The recreation economy now boasts over \$887 billion in consumer spending and many communities are choosing to invest in recreation assets as a way to diversify their local economies. However, while federal law requires that land agencies provide equal opportunities for multiple uses of public lands—including recreation—energy development can negatively impact recreation experiences and limit associated economic and health benefits. The good news is that many of the common problems brought by energy developments on recreation assets and experiences can be ameliorated through proven approaches such as smart from the start landscape level planning, the implementation of best practices,

improved technologies, and better communication among stakeholders.

Communities are demanding more from their public lands. They expect both mineral lease royalties and recreation assets. Poorly planned energy development has brought short-term booms to residents, but it has also left them with fewer options when either the resource price drops or the resource is exhausted. Local land managers and community leaders can utilize the policy recommendations outlined in this report to support appropriate energy production and meet the goals of communities who wish to diversify their public land use with investments in recreation assets. This will ensure that communities of all types are able to optimize nearby public lands today and into the future.



Slickrock Trail near Moab, Utah | Photo Credit: Western Spirit Cycling

Oil well near Long Canyon, Utah | Photo Credit: Whit Richardson

End Notes

- ¹ See <https://outdoorindustry.org>.
- ² See [https://outdoorindustry.org/article/policy blog senate votes to count outdoor recreation economy as part of u s gdp/](https://outdoorindustry.org/article/policy%20blog%20senate%20votes%20to%20count%20outdoor%20recreation%20economy%20as%20part%20of%20u%20s%20gdp/).
- ³ See <http://publiclandsolutions.org/pci/>.
- ⁴ See <https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=24512> and [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/state fiscal implications of fossil fuel production 0809216 morris.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/state-fiscal-implications-of-fossil-fuel-production-0809216-morris.pdf).
- ⁵ See [http://www.cnbc.com/2016/04/18/painful transition for energy states as oil revenues evaporate.html](http://www.cnbc.com/2016/04/18/painful-transition-for-energy-states-as-oil-revenues-evaporate.html).
- ⁶ See [http://westernvaluesproject.org/report states need more resilient public lands economies/](http://westernvaluesproject.org/report-states-need-more-resilient-public-lands-economies/) and [http://www.nakedcapitalism.com/2017/03/oil gas states forced cut education spending.html](http://www.nakedcapitalism.com/2017/03/oil-gas-states-forced-cut-education-spending.html).
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- ⁴² See BLM Instruction Memorandum 2010 117.
- ⁴³ See <http://www.emerycounty.com/publiclands/index.htm>.
- ⁴⁴ See [http://www.grandcountyutah.net/223/Trail Mix Committee](http://www.grandcountyutah.net/223/Trail-Mix-Committee).
- ⁴⁵ See <http://business.utah.gov/programs/outdoor/>.



Sheephead, Driagon Mountains, Arizona | Photo Credit: Jason Keith

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House on Fire, Mule Canyon, Utah | Photo Credit: iStock.com

Economic Development Planning for Cultural Tourism in Bears Ears National Monument

San Juan County, Utah

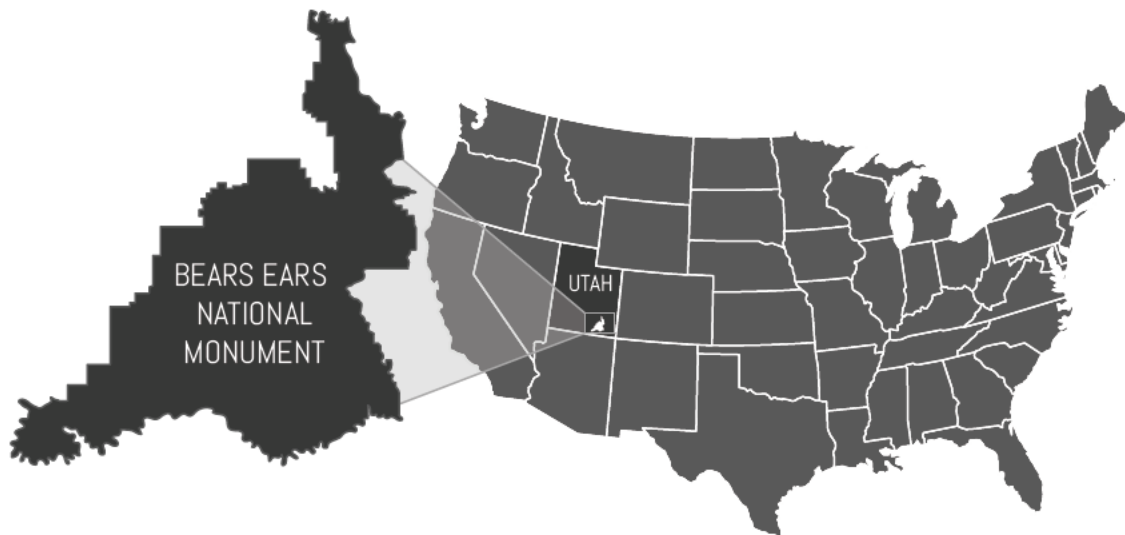


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I. Executive Summary

The goal of this report is to explore opportunities in the San Juan County region of southern Utah to anticipate and control regional economic growth by creating a county economic development plan in conjunction with the future land management plan for the Bears Ears National Monument (BENM).

This report summarizes the existing economics of San Juan County and highlights multiple examples of communities around the country that have adopted well planned cultural tourism programs which promote economic development, components of which could be applicable in southeastern Utah. A locally-driven economic development

plan, created in parallel with a fully funded management plan for the newly established BENM, could successfully integrate cultural tourism associated with the monument with existing land uses throughout the county such as Native American traditional uses, ranching, oil, gas, and mineral development. San Juan County residents can maximize economic opportunities through a locally-driven economic development plan involving the goals of the Bears Ears National Monument proclamation.¹

Ultimately, San Juan county will see growth in both visitors and residents, and the time is now to take control of that growth.



Dwelling | Photo Credit: Jason Keith

II. Economic Development in the 21st Century

Utah's population is growing twice as fast as the rest of the nation, and is expected to increase from 2.8 million in 2012 to 6.8 million by 2060.² Population increases will affect most regions of the state, especially San Juan County which is the fastest growing county in the nation by percentage according to census figures.³ To accommodate this growth, a new economic development plan is needed to capitalize on increased growth and visitation.

Traditionally, community economic development plans have focused on investments in infrastructure, improvements in education, and favorable business tax structures and incentives. In the 21st century these components are not enough. Successful communities in both rural and urban settings are tapping into the recreation economy, including cultural tourism and outdoor recreation activities, as long-term economic drivers that can supplement existing industries and maintain respect for traditional lifestyles.

Communities that have proactively supported and invested in recreation and cultural assets are seeing not just increases in visitors, but also an improved ability to recruit businesses and create a wide range of jobs. In the American West, national parks have long provided gateway communities with a steady stream of revenue. But the concept of a gateway community is expanding to include any place with recreation assets, such as trails, canyons, or river access. This has led to an economic revival in a large array of places from Fruita, Colorado to Bentonville, Arkansas, to East Burke, Vermont—places with no particular defining cultural or geological feature. And while these locations are seeing steady and improving economic diversity, the advantage still goes to the truly unique locations like San Juan County.

Moreover, macroeconomic trends in the 21st century have led to increasing mobility in all segments of the population, bringing important economic diversity to communities that previously depended almost exclusively on tourism or traditional industries such as agriculture, ranching, and resource extraction. Businesses that can locate wherever they want are choosing cities and towns with access to outdoor recreation, bringing a new source of job creation to these areas. As such, the trend of growing economies adjacent to national parks and monuments is likely to continue.

According to the US Travel Association,

U.S. Travel economists expect the share of international visitors stopping at U.S. national parks during their trips here to steadily increase. The total number of overseas arrivals to the U.S. is expected to reach 40 million in 2017, and the share of these travelers that visit a national park or monument is projected to increase to 36.5 percent. As a result, national parks and monuments will likely receive about 14.6 million overseas travelers in 2017, up 7.3 percent from 2015.⁴

U.S. Travel Association President Roger Dow explains,

There are a number of good theories as to why [growth estimates are so significant]—one is that many of the country's prime attractions, like the Grand Canyon or Yellowstone, can't be replicated just by going to a cheaper country; another is that the U.S. offers world-class activities at the full range of price points, from the tip-top of luxury to the freest of the free.⁵

While the uniqueness of the Bears Ears landscape gives it a brand that cannot be replicated, creating a permanent market advantage both for attracting visitors and attracting business investment San Juan County, planners should consider a full range of opportunities regarding costs and the degree of difficulty for outdoor adventure to maximize the potential of increased economic benefits from tourism.

The cultural treasures and unique landscapes of southeastern Utah led to the creation of the Bears Ears National Monument. The region is filled with abundant rock art, ancient cliff dwellings, ceremonial sites, and countless other artifacts that provide an extraor-

dinary archaeological and cultural record. The area is profoundly sacred to many Native American tribal members and the home of an important chapter in the pioneering history in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS). In addition, the area provides world-class outdoor recreation opportunities, including rock climbing, hunting, hiking, backpacking, canyoneering, whitewater rafting, mountain biking, and horseback riding. With all these natural and cultural advantages, San Juan County has a unique opportunity to capitalize on both the unique cultural history and recreation assets of the region to significantly improve economic conditions for all San Juan County residents.



Climbing at Indian Creek | Photo Credit: Dreamstime.com

Successful communities in both rural and urban settings are tapping into the recreation economy, including cultural tourism and outdoor recreation activities, as long-term economic drivers that can supplement existing industries and maintain respect for traditional lifestyles.

III. Utah and San Juan County: Current Economic Statistics

The State of Utah is outperforming much of the rest of the country in terms of job growth and economic prosperity. In 2016, Utah added jobs at more than twice the pace of the nation, and the unemployment rate is at an eight-year low. The Salt Lake Chamber of Commerce's annual Utah Economic Review reported that Utah added an estimated 49,500 jobs in 2016 and the state's 3.6 percent employment growth was more than double the national rate.⁶ Utah's leisure and hospitality sector posted 6.1 percent job growth in 2016, fueled by low unemployment and rising wages; the growth in travel and tourism activity is evidenced by a record number of visitors to Utah in 2016.⁷ Although the Wasatch Front attracts the largest share of this economic activity, much of southern Utah's economy has also been growing well above the national average for several years, powered by relatively low unemployment and cost of living.⁸

However, San Juan County, with a population of 15,152, is not experiencing the economic boom benefitting the rest of the state. With over 28 percent of its population below the poverty level, and unemployment at 7.5 percent,⁹ the typical household in San Juan County earns \$18,435 less than the typical Utah household. In 2016, San Juan County had Utah's lowest per capita income at \$23,399—only 60 percent of the average statewide—and a median household income at \$41,484, over \$20,000 lower than the state's average.¹⁰ While much of the rest of Utah has seen strong economic growth by attracting both visitors and quality of life businesses that appreciate and value of the state's recreation assets and world class landscape as both a recruiting and retention advantage, San Juan County's economy has remained primarily reliant on traditional extractive industries.

Agriculture and ranching are important components of the San Juan County economy, yet over the years this sector continues to decrease as a percentage of occupations in the county.¹¹ Oil and gas development in San Juan County,¹² as measured by mineral lease payments to the county, has dropped by nearly 53 percent in recent years from a high in 2014 of \$1.635 million to \$761,000 in 2016, with similar expectations for 2017.¹³ Losses in San Juan County mining and construction jobs were partially offset by increases in leisure/hospitality and government,¹⁴ but by economic metrics statistically the county remains the poorest in the state.

However, San Juan County has an opportunity to increase revenues and diversify its economy by capitalizing on the attention created by the Bears Ears National Monument designation. The Bears Ears combines a stunning landscape and unmatched recreation opportunities with growing public interest in the cultural resources of the West including both Native American and early LDS pioneer history. The town of Bluff saw its first European settlement by LDS pioneers in 1890 via the "Hole in the Rock" route, and both the Native American and Mormon cultural resources are key assets that could drive increased visitation and resulting revenues to San Juan County.

Importantly, the establishment of Bears Ears National Monument precludes very few existing uses of public land in San Juan County. Perhaps the most significant traditional use of monument lands is grazing, and the national monument proclamation was careful to maintain that grazing permits "will continue to apply" within the monument. And with regard to resource extraction—oil, gas, potash, and uranium mining—most of this activity

has historically occurred outside the current monument boundary. And even so, many existing oil and gas leases in San Juan County remain undeveloped. These existing leases located outside the monument boundary will remain an asset potentially benefitting San Juan County when the price of oil, gas, and

potash rebounds. Yet in the meantime, the monument can provide the county and its residents significant and reliable economic benefits from its rich cultural history, incredible landscapes, and world-class recreation assets.



Camping at Indian Creek | Photo Credit: Dreamstime.com

VI. Locally Driven Optimization of Public Lands

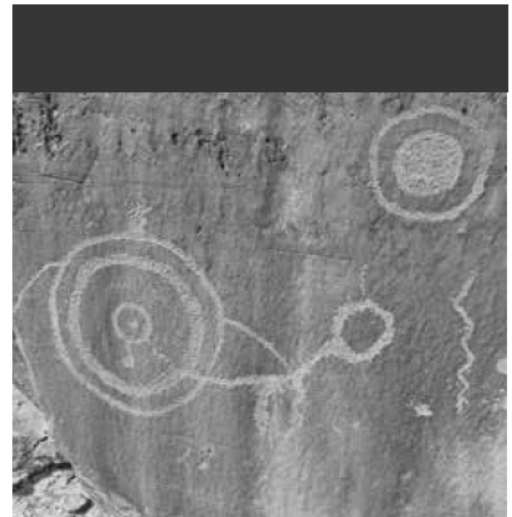
San Juan County boasts a unique landscape and a fascinating cultural history that has the potential to become a more robust economic driver for the region.

San Juan County boasts a unique landscape and a fascinating cultural history that has the potential to become a more robust economic driver for the region. A 2016 study by the Small Business Majority found that national monuments bring diversity to communities previously dependent on resource extraction. A substantial number of visitors each year from outside the region devote multiple days in the area, spending money at local businesses and contributing to the local economy.¹⁵ A key strategy for maximizing new economic opportunities related to Bears Ears would be to pursue a locally driven economic development plan, perhaps an addendum to the existing county master plan,¹⁶ created in parallel with the Bears Ears National Monument land management plan. If planned correctly, increased visitation to San Juan County can bring additional revenue to existing businesses along with new business opportunities of many types. In addition to visitor services and new well-planned infrastructure, professional services will be needed to accommodate this growth leading to additional increases in jobs and tax revenue.

As a management plan is developed for the monument, San Juan County has the opportunity to shape its future by determining what type of visitors and residents they wish to attract—and where they want visitors to go—via a parallel economic development plan. Executed concurrently with the monument land management plan, this focused economic development plan can map out effective strategies to improve unemployment rates and household incomes by maintaining existing economic sectors in San Juan County while taking advantage of the marketing opportunity presented by the new Bears Ears National Monument. A county driven economic development plan is an ideal opportunity for San Juan County to take charge of its own future.

For example, if San Juan County residents wish to control and calibrate visitation and residential development, planning and zoning decisions can be made that limit hotel construction and protect existing residential areas. Concerns about water availability and other capacity-driven issues can be addressed in advance. While a certain amount of growth in the county is inevitable given current trends, residents can use a supplemental county economic development plan to control and direct that growth to where it is wanted, and limit it where it is not. Decisions regarding the location of the visitor's center along with other key trail heads and staging areas for different types of visitors will be made as part of the land management plan, but will need to be coordinated with a parallel economic development plan to optimize stakeholder needs and maximize local participation.

While every community is different, highlighted next are several examples of communities who took it upon themselves to create and execute economic development plans that allowed them to move towards a future of their choice by capitalizing on cultural tourism opportunities while preserving existing industries and lifestyles.



Petroglyphs | Photo Credit: Jason Keith

V. Case Studies of Cultural Tourism Economies from Around the Nation and in the Bears Ears Region

Many communities across the nation have boosted their economic conditions by promoting cultural tourism opportunities. Cultural tourism can be defined as the subset of tourism concerned with a region's culture, specifically the lifestyle of the people in those geographical areas; the history of those people, their art, architecture, religion,

and other elements that helped shape their way of life. The communities listed here are examples of places where local business owners and longtime residents took charge of their economic future by strategically developing and interpreting their natural, cultural, and historic resources for the benefit of local residents.

Medora, North Dakota

This community in the "badlands" of North Dakota is the gateway to Theodore Roosevelt National Park. The Bakken formation and associated oil fields extend to the north and south and has brought boom and bust economics to the region. To diversify the regional economy, the Theodore Roosevelt Medora Foundation was created with the mission to:

- 1 Preserve the experience of the badlands and the historic character of Medora,
- 2 Present opportunities for guests to be educated and inspired through interpretive programs, museums and attractions that focus on the Old West, and
- 3 Serve the traveling public, providing for their comfort while visiting historic Medora, the badlands, and Theodore Roosevelt National Park.¹⁷

The mechanisms for delivering on this mission include activities such as the pageant style Medora Musical, promoting the 100 mile purpose built single track Maah Daah Hey Trail that accommodates hiking, horseback riding and mountain biking, and supporting Theodore Roosevelt National Park with its wildlife, history, geology and other learning opportunities inside the park. These are just a few of the many activities in the region that make tourism the third largest economic driver in North Dakota.¹⁸ The Medora example represents a wide range of opportunities available to a region like San Juan County that is fortunate to host both a rich cultural heritage and awe inspiring landscape.

Leavenworth, Washington

This Bavarian themed community is surrounded by the Okanogan Wenatchee National Forest and the towering peaks of the North Cascade Mountains. Like many western communities, European settlers were first attracted by the area's natural resources. Gold brought the first round of settlers and timber brought the second, but changes in demand for timber led the railroad to re route the line out of town and by the 1930s the town dying off was a real possibility. Many people had often compared the beautiful alpine terrain around Leavenworth to Bavaria, so in 1960 the community made a decision to adopt a Bavarian architectural theme. As the Leavenworth town website states, "This was no mere facelift. In addition to completely renovating the downtown area, community leaders created a series of festivals, drawing revelers into town. From there, the Autumn Leaf Festival, Maifest, and the immensely popular Christmas Lighting Festivals were born and continue to this day."

For decades now, Leavenworth has been a top tourist destination in the Pacific Northwest, and more than a million tourists walk its streets every year.¹⁹ Surrounded by public lands, Leavenworth enjoys a great many outdoor recreation opportunities, and because their community was very much planned, the number of hotels, restaurants and local residential areas are calibrated to match the infrastructure available. Some aspects of the Leavenworth experience may be available to select towns in San Juan County such as Bluff that has a strong pioneering history and cultural tourism infrastructure already onsite such as the Bluff Fort (see below).

Palmyra, New York

Palmyra is the home of the Hill Cumorah, a visitor center, and historic sites of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. The area includes the Joseph Smith Farm and The Sacred Grove among many other important sites. Each summer the area hosts the Hill Cumorah Pageant with over 650 performers on a 10 story stage as part of an outdoor theater that accommodates 9,000 guests. While Hill Cumorah is unique in its significance to the LDS faith, San Juan County has an opportunity to share its settlement history with members and non members alike who wish to learn more about the Mormon experience.²⁰ The Church of Latter Day Saints²¹ has a significant cultural history tied to the Bears Ears landscape that may serve as the basis for increased cultural tourism. The town of Bluff was established by the San Juan Expedition in 1890 and the community hosts the Bluff Fort Historic Site and Visitor Center²² that highlights the pioneer trail, early settlers, and Bluff Fort. Additionally, there is significant interest from tourists who want to visit the Hole in the Rock, and travel the San Juan Expedition route to visit its significant landmarks.²³

Plimoth Plantation in Plymouth, Massachusetts

Plimoth Plantation (historic spelling) is one of America's most historically and culturally significant living museums that provides the public with an authentic opportunity to gain a new level of understanding of historic events and lifestyles. The museum setting illustrates the connection between the people and the landscapes in which they lived, and allows people to go back in time to visit both a Native American community, the Wampanoag, and a 17th century English Village, populated by actors going about their daily lives as they would have 400 years ago. They speak from a modern perspective about Wampanoag history and culture, and invite the public to learn about their historic and modern cultural practices. Local tribes to the Bears Ears region have long used versions of the Plimoth Plantation model for economic development focused on cultural tourism (see below).



Cycling in the region | Photo Credit: Western Spirit Cycling

Indeed, many federally recognized tribes in the United States are embracing tourism as a way to keep culture alive and bring jobs and money to economically depressed areas. The

following case studies from the tribes that hold the Bears Ears landscape sacred may be relevant to other opportunities within and around the BENM.

The Zuni Tribe²⁴ welcomes the public “to indulge in our history, our culture, and our values that keep our heritage living strong.” Zuni Pueblo offers the visitor a variety of opportunities for cultural, historic, and outdoor enrichment, including the Old Zuni Mission Tour, “Middle Village” (Halona Idiwan’a) Walking Tour, A:shiwi A:wan Museum and Heritage Center, the Zuni Artist Workshop Tour, archaeological tours, picnicking, hiking, fishing, and promoting local Zuni artists and trading posts. Lodging, dining, and local artist shops are available for tourists. In 2012, Zuni became the first and only indigenous community to receive a MainStreet Community designation, encouraging positive economic development along its main street corridor and earning the recognition of state, federal, and tribal governments.²⁵

The Hopi²⁶ welcome visitors, but with very specific controls on visitor etiquette, recording and photography, and ceremony viewing. Tourists have options for museum visitation, lodging, groceries, dining, and a convenience store.

The Navajo Nation²⁷ offers services to tourists at tribal parks and other locations throughout the reservation. Some of the most popular attractions such as Monument Valley Tribal Park host entire developments that cater to visitors with lodging, dining, shopping, and access to local artists. The Navajo Tourism Department promotes a range of activities on the reservation, including hiking, camping and fishing. The tribe also offers a “Navajo Cultural Tour”²⁸ and a wide range of amenities²⁹ including hotels, camp grounds and RVs, Hogan accommodations, B&Bs, a retreat center, and gaming.

The Ute Mountain Ute Tribe³⁰ welcomes the public to Ute Mountain Tribal Park to experience a “trip back in time” and witness a special Native American interpretation of the culturally diverse homelands of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe. The tribe provides Ute tour guides who interpret Ute history, pictographs, geological land formations, and Ancestral Pueblo petroglyphs, artifacts and dwellings.³¹ The Ute Mountain Ute Tribe also operates a full service hotel, restaurant, and casino, and an off site pottery and jewelry enterprise where native artisans can be viewed at work.

Many federally recognized tribes in the United States are embracing tourism as a way to keep culture alive and bring jobs and money to economically depressed areas.

All of these examples of cultural tourism could be further developed within the Bears Ears National Monument bringing significant economic returns to San Juan County residents. In all of the cases above, communities have consciously decided to make a better living by sharing their histories, cultures and landscapes. Combining this with a well thought-out effort to attract diverse busi-

nesses and entrepreneurs who want to live where both their children and their employees will have access to the out-of-doors is proving a powerful combination across the country. In addition to the case studies outlined herein, the following activities could also prove very popular to tourists wishing to visit the area.



Visiting a ruin | Photo Credit: Western Spirit Cycling

VI. Recreation Tourism in Bears Ears National Monument

In addition to the many outstanding cultural attractions found in San Juan County, the Bears Ears region is famous for its adventurous recreational opportunities. The following locations are outstanding destinations for tourists to explore in the new Bears Ears National Monument. These locations are im-

portant to consider both in the management plan to ensure appropriate protections, carry capacity, and user protocols, but also in the county economic development plan that can appropriately market them for cultural and adventure tourism purposes.

Lockhart Basin is a remote and scenic valley near the Colorado River that borders Canyonlands National Park and offers mountain biking opportunities as well as a world famous jeep trail.

Indian Creek is a gateway canyon to Canyonlands National Park and a world class rock climbing destination. Visitors can also see rock art at Newspaper Rock State Park and in Harts Draw.

Beef Basin is a unique, high elevation archaeological area with many well preserved surface sites. Due to its remoteness, Beef Basin is less frequented by visitors and is a place of solitude, beauty and archaeological wonder.

Abajo Mountains and Elk Ridge are essential hunting grounds and gathering areas for contemporary Ute, Navajo, and other native peoples. This area is also rich with remote Ancestral Puebloan sites, dwellings and rock art.

White Canyon and its dozens of tributaries are filled with recreational activities for hikers, backpackers and canyoneers.

Bears Ears are twin buttes that overlook Cedar Mesa and create a landmark visible for many miles. Navajo Headman Manuelito was born near the buttes, and the site is sacred to Navajo people.

Moqui Canyon and Mancos Mesa are remote, scenic areas containing archaeological sites, important big horn sheep habitat, and many archaeological areas in its canyons and high elevation mesas.

Nokai Dome & Mikes Canyon is a remote and untouched area of dramatic canyons that drain into the San Juan River.

San Juan River is a world famous river float along the border between the Navajo Nation and the Bears Ears area. The river provides access to spectacular scenery, desert flora and fauna, archaeology and geology.

Valley of the Gods is a geologic wonderland with striking red rock monuments that rise sharply from the valley floor. These freestanding sandstone monoliths are celebrated by photographers, rock climbers and Native Americans.

Cottonwood Wash is a major canyon system that was heavily used by ancient people. It offers many natural features along with dwelling sites, rock art panels, great houses and great kivas for respectful visitation.

Comb Ridge is a dramatic geologic fold that runs from the Abajo Mountains to northern Arizona. Frequented by hikers, the Comb has a very high density of archaeological sites, testifying to thousands of years of occupation by Ancestral Pueblo, as well as Navajo and Ute people.

Cedar Mesa is a wild cultural landscape sacred to many Native American people, including the Pueblos, Utes, Paiutes, Hopi, and Navajo. With more than 56,000 archaeological sites and four wilderness study areas, Cedar Mesa is perhaps the best place in the U.S. to visit well preserved cliff dwellings in a remote setting where solitude is still possible.

VII. Front Country and Backcountry Management Techniques

Today's recreation management techniques are evolving from a time when we tended to manage specific areas with specific rules (i.e., National Forest recreation rules are often different from National Park rules), to a time when we are working to manage specific experiences. Instead of simply making a trail or road system available to the public, there are many advantages to providing specific information and interpretation about the experience the area provides. In this way, experiences gain a reputation and visitor expectations can be managed regarding the length of time or degree of difficulty of the experience. The county's economic development plan should consider each of the above Bears Ears tourist destinations in this light to bring the right product mix to support sustained economic activity.

Visitors range from the highly skilled who are seeking to check a specific place off their "bucket list," to families or other groups traveling with a diverse set of abilities who need activities that will work for their whole group. Locals on the other hand, are usually prepared to explore and travel independently. Creating a recreation system that meets the diverse needs of all groups and calibrates visitation to capacity is possible through landscape level planning. Thus, to the extent possible, the management plan for the monument should be coordinated with an economic development plan for the county focused on opportunities presented by BENM.



Petroglyphs | Photo Credit: Jason Keith

In analyzing such experiences it is useful to consider two general categories of recreation assets:

Frontcountry Recreation Assets: These activities include experiences that are near towns and paved roads. Frontcountry recreation assets do not require an overnight stay and generally include a few options for shorter visits for less skilled travelers. Within BENM, examples of frontcountry recreation assets include Indian Creek and Valley of the Gods.

Backcountry Recreation Assets: These activities that are harder to get to and may require overnight stay. Backcountry recreation assets generally require a higher level of skill or the assistance of an outfitter to prepare and execute safely for both the visitor and the resource. Within BENM, examples of backcountry recreation assets include Cedar Mesa and White Canyon.

By organizing the planning area into front-country and backcountry regions, a large number of acres which are sensitive or require a higher level of protection can be managed accordingly, while popular frontcountry assets—and lands adjacent to monument boundaries and local communities—can be managed to accommodate a wide variety of cultural and recreational experiences. As technology evolves there will be opportunities for reservation and notification systems that will protect the visitor experience and make planning travel more convenient. These systems can also help with visitor education and capacity management and may be designed to give locals or permittees special privileges to maintain traditional access.

VIII. Potential Business Opportunities

Many industries of all types can point to a significant development that brought their industry into the mainstream, a moment in time that lead to achieving critical mass for that industry, but which also significantly improved the business climate for existing participants. The creation of Bears Ears National Monument may be that moment for many San Juan County businesses.

The establishment of a well-designed monument management plan, in conjunction with an economic development plan for the county, will benefit businesses in the area. Many San Juan County businesses already exist that can service tourists wishing to visit

the region. These include a range of food and lodging establishments³² located throughout the county, as well as several outfitters that can guide tourists on hunting, trail rides, float trips, hiking, jeeping /ATV, canyoneering, mountain biking, rock climbing, and archeological trips.³³ By expanding the focus of these businesses on cultural tourism, while creating space for Native-driven entrepreneurship within the Bears Ears National Monument, existing business are likely to grow and additional businesses will be needed. The following examples demonstrate possible new business opportunities that are likely to emerge with the establishment of Bears Ears as a national monument.

Guides and Outfitters: Demand for motorized and non motorized outings in the monument is likely to increase. As mentioned above, a variety of permitted outfitters already exist in the region, and these businesses should be considered as new permit opportunities arise. To protect the resource and enhance the visitor experience, outfitters can provide a range of activities from those lasting just a few hours to those covering several days. There is an opportunity for enhancing the cultural component of the outfitting experience both with regard to the extensive Native history of the area and regarding LDS settlers. So in addition to the normal interpretive requirement associated with guiding visitors, other cultural experiences unique to the region, including Native owned businesses, must be considered when reviewing the need for permitted outfitter activities.

Activity Permits: There may be both a need and an opportunity for a variety of additional specific activity permits, either inside the monument or adjacent to it close to nearby communities. New activity permits could include things as simple as shuttle services for certain point to point trail experiences, or something that requires more infrastructure that might be located outside the monument boundary. Planners should also consider relatively low impact business opportunities for native people, such as establishing vending zones (jewelry, pottery, crafts and food), homestay/Airbnb, cultural immersion camping, horseback rides, among other business opportunities and target special use/business permits targeting underserved native communities.

Visitor Infrastructure: Many popular tourism communities suffer from poor zoning and mix of commercial developments, and it is important to plan for new businesses catering to an influx of tourists and the issues an expanded workforce brings. Problems can range from the availability of water to affordable and available housing to unplanned hotel and restaurant development. San Juan County has an opportunity to use an economic development planning process as a catalyst for getting ahead of these challenges. Population growth and visitation in the region has already occurred, and with this in mind, the communities of the county could work to establish some capacity calculations to shape the future of their towns. Rethinking zoning and commercial districts now could provide local residents with an important opportunity to control and manage the future of their communities, as opposed to reacting ad hoc to population growth, increased visitation and the sprawl experienced by some unplanned tourist communities.

Infrastructure Planning and Supporting Professionals: Community growth and increased visitation will spur the need to plan for new infrastructure and services to meet demand and expectations while preserving San Juan County's community character. For example, a revenue to plan to implement smart infrastructure growth such water, sewer, paved roads, airports, and broadband will be needed as will professional services from health care to accounting to technology. These supporting professionals will also create jobs and business opportunities for local residents.

IX. Policy Recommendations for a Successful Cultural Tourism Economy in San Juan County

Essential to the success of growing cultural tourism as a sector of San Juan County's economy is full federal funding of a management plan for the newly established BENM. Also important is an open and inclusive planning process for locals and other stakeholders to participate, providing meaningful opportunities for input while also developing a complimentary economic development plan that prepares the county for future growth.

Bears Ears National Monument Management Plan

For economic development associated with cultural tourism to be successful in and around Bears Ears National Monument, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) must develop, with a range of interested stakeholders, a strong management plan that incorporates guidance from the tribes about protecting cultural resources and incorporating traditional knowledge in the management of the region.³⁵ A landscape level analysis with a broad range of stakeholder input can ensure that sensitive locations are managed appropriately and that local entities have a hand in the development of the project. Robust funding is necessary to develop the management plan itself but also for BLM and USFS law enforcement to ensure protections for cultural resources and the natural beauty of the area. A well-funded monument plan will ensure that appropriate existing uses—such as grazing and other uses outlined in the proclamation—are protected while new opportunities for economic development using cultural tourism are planned and implemented such that sensitive resources are preserved.³⁶ In this way, a controlled increase in economic production can be facilitated without harming on-going uses in the monument.

In developing a management plan that fulfills the purposes of protecting and restoring

the objects identified in the proclamation establishing Bear Ears National Monument, the USFS and BLM are directed to provide for maximum public involvement and consider local and stakeholder input. It's critical that San Juan County residents, in consultation with federally recognized tribes and State and local governments, help design and implement the future of the Bears Ears landscape and its uses.

As stated in the BENM proclamation, most current appropriate uses will continue including:

- Motorized and non-motorized vehicle use as authorized through a transportation plan,
- Permitted grazing “shall continue to apply,” and
- The State of Utah shall continue to exercise its authority regarding fish and wildlife management.

Local residents and other stakeholders shall provide essential advice regarding how monument uses are administered. To incorporate public input into the BENM management plan, the USFS and BLM are to establish an **advisory committee** consisting of State and local governments, tribes, recreational users, local business owners, and private landowners. This advisory committee and other opportunities for public participation and input are key moments for San Juan County residents to influence plan outcomes and design their own futures on issues such as transportation, grazing and other uses of the monument. Also directed by the proclamation is a tribal commission to provide guidance and recommendations that ensure that management decisions reflect tribal expertise and traditional and historical knowledge. This **Bears Ears Commission**—consisting of one elected officer each from the Hopi Tribe, Navajo

Local residents and other stakeholders shall provide essential advice regarding how monument uses are administered.

Nation, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, Ute Indian Tribe of the Uintah Ouray, and Zuni Tribe—is another opportunity for local input into the future of Bears Ears.

The land management plan developed for the Bears Ears National Monument will include both infrastructure and permit opportunities. However, the plan only pertains to activities occurring on federal lands within the monument boundaries. The county has many opportunities to influence those activities, both via its participation in the land management planning process and through the development of a parallel locally driven economic development plan.

The implementation of a county economic development plan allows the county and community leaders to have broad control over the ultimate effect of the monument on residents of the area.

County Economic Development Plan

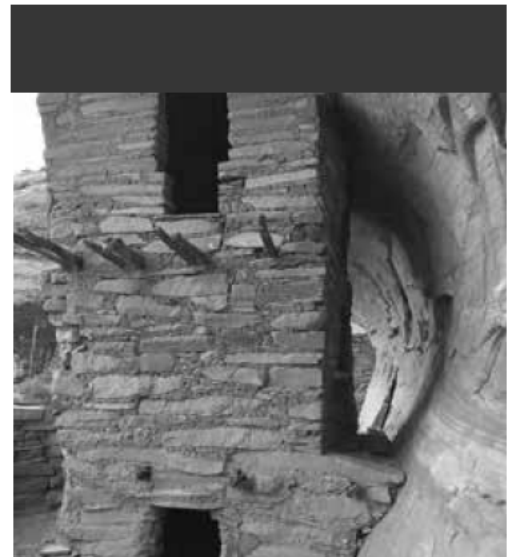
A key simultaneous step should be initiating an **economic development plan** that complements the monument land management plan and maximizes opportunities for economic growth in San Juan County. A complimentary plan also provides local residents with a critical opportunity to plan their desired future. By analyzing what experiences cultural tourists want when visiting Bears Ears, county planners can carefully market certain locations that are not sensitive while growing targeted economic sectors of the local economy.

The monument management plan will include prescriptions for building access to various cultural experiences. Executing this plan will require funding from a variety of sources. In many cases, partnerships between local government, non-governmental organizations, and the BLM are formed to implement the infrastructure improvements recommended by the land management plan. For example, if a plan calls for building/hardening a certain number of trails, the county has a variety of options for working with the BLM to enact a trail plan.

The monument management plan is likely to also recommend an assortment of permitted

activities and capacity guidelines. For example, if there are overnight outfitting activities, there will be a recommended user day cap on those activities. The county can use the associated projected volumes of visitors to guide in-town development with regard to hotel and restaurant needs. These calculations could lead to community zoning to meet local economic goals. This would allow cities and towns to make their own decisions regarding how many and what type of visitors they wish to attract. If a community wants to limit visitation, it can influence the number of hotel rooms it approves, and where those hotels are located, as well as insulate private lands from commercial activity through planning and zoning. In this way, community planning can control both the level of growth and the style and placement of that growth.

The implementation of a county economic development plan allows the county and community leaders to have broad control over the ultimate effect of the monument on residents of the area. One community may choose to encourage family-focused visitor services in order to attract both new residents and visitors, another community may choose to focus on attracting recreation visitors. Ultimately, the creation of a county-driven economic development plan affords the county a critical opportunity to plan its own future.



Dwelling | Photo Credit: Jason Keith

X. Conclusion

San Juan County is significantly underperforming the State of Utah and the nation as a whole on a number of economic metrics. While Utah is adding jobs at twice the rate as the country, San Juan County is the poorest in the state with high unemployment double the state's rate and per capita incomes only 60 percent of the average statewide. Several factors contribute to the baseline economic condition of San Juan County, including an over-reliance on extractive industry that often fluctuates wildly with global commodity prices.

However, San Juan County boasts a world-class and diverse landscape of canyons, rivers and mountains that is the envy of most places in the country. In addition, the Cedar Mesa region especially holds one of the largest concentrations of preserved archaeological resources in the world. And this, combined with the newly created Bears Ears National Monument, brings a ready-made marketing campaign for cultural tourism that can significantly diversify and boost San Juan County's economy.

Research shows that national monuments greatly benefit surrounding communities especially in rural areas like San Juan County. In addition, many case studies—including by Native American Tribes that support the monument designation—model what an appropriate and successful cultural tourism program might look like at Bears Ears. This expanded economic sector will not displace existing multiple uses of the area's public land; indeed, the economic growth from cultural tourism will allow many local families and residents the option for local jobs instead of having to leave the area for work. By building on existing businesses that increase their focus on cultural tourism, San Juan County can attract more tourists and business entrepreneurs who will contribute to improving the economy of southeastern Utah.

Key to accomplishing this goal is the development of a fully-funded management plan for Bears Ears National Monument that can outline appropriate uses and protections for sensitive areas, and permitting for appropriate ongoing prior uses such as grazing. However, this monument plan must also be accompanied by a county-driven economic development plan that can customize and support business opportunities that take advantage of the world-class cultural tourism and adventure recreation found at Bears Ears.

A sustainable and improving economy for San Juan County that respects local goals, existing businesses, and traditional land use is within reach. The County has an opportunity to utilize the monument management planning process, combined with an economic development plan focused on opportunities presented by the new monument, by:

- Creating its own distinctive brand of cultural tourism that draws from its unique history
- Catering the tourism experience to meet the needs Utah residents from across the state
- Compliments existing uses and economic sectors within San Juan County
- Analyzes capacity and planning for the amount of desired growth

Growth in the region is inevitable, and San Juan County is well-positioned to utilize its rich cultural history and fascinating landscapes to create a well-planned future of its own making.

Research shows that national monuments greatly benefit surrounding communities especially in rural areas like San Juan County.

End Notes

¹ See [https://www.blm.gov/documents/nevada/public room/blm library/bears ears national monument proclamation](https://www.blm.gov/documents/nevada/public%20room/blm%20library/bears%20ears%20national%20monument%20proclamation).

² See <http://business.utah.gov/publications/population/>.

³ See [http://www.deseretnews.com/article/865676241/Census San Juan County is fastest growing county in US.html](http://www.deseretnews.com/article/865676241/Census%20San%20Juan%20County%20is%20fastest%20growing%20county%20in%20US.html).

⁴ See [https://www.ustravel.org/press/study more overseas visitors choosing us national parks](https://www.ustravel.org/press/study%20more%20overseas%20visitors%20choosing%20us%20national%20parks).

⁵ Id.

⁶ See 2017 Economic Report to the Governor, at [https://www.stgeorgeutah.com/wp content/uploads/2017/01/2017 Economic Report to the Governor Highlights.pdf](https://www.stgeorgeutah.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/2017-Economic-Report-to-the-Governor-Highlights.pdf).

⁷ According to the Utah Office of Tourism, tourism is a key driver in Utah's economy, with travelers spending \$8.17 billion in 2015 and contributing \$1.15 billion in total state and local taxes. The Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute notes that income taxes from tourism related jobs contributed more than \$100 million to Utah schools in 2015, and gas taxes, from travelers contributed more than \$100 million to Utah's transportation and infrastructure.

⁸ 2017 Economic Report to the Governor, at [https://www.stgeorgeutah.com/wp content/uploads/2017/01/2017 Economic Report to the Governor Highlights.pdf](https://www.stgeorgeutah.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/2017-Economic-Report-to-the-Governor-Highlights.pdf).

⁹ See [https://datausa.io/profile/geo/san juan county ut/#intro](https://datausa.io/profile/geo/san-juan-county-ut/#intro). Compared to other counties, San Juan County has an unusually high number of mining, quarrying, oil, gas extraction, with the highest paying industries by median earnings are utilities; educational services, mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction. By share, accommodation and food service represents 8.6% of San Juan County's industry, and arts, entertainment and recreation represents 4.8 of the county's industries.

¹⁰ See [https://datausa.io/profile/geo/san juan county ut/](https://datausa.io/profile/geo/san-juan-county-ut/).

¹¹ See Id.

¹² As of October 2014 San Juan County had 3,568 wells on file and 509 producing wells, see [http://www.drillingedge.com/utah/san juan county](http://www.drillingedge.com/utah/san-juan-county), but in both 2016 and 2017 there was only one application to the BLM for a permit to drill a new well. Today (3/17) there is no new drilling in the county; the industry had a significant drop in early 2015 right after the latest price crash, [http://www.macrotrends.net/1369/crude oil price history chart](http://www.macrotrends.net/1369/crude-oil-price-history-chart).

¹³ See <https://www.udot.utah.gov/main/f?p=100:pg:0::::V,T,135>.

¹⁴ See <https://jobs.utah.gov/wi/regions/county/sanjuan.html>.

¹⁵ See [https://www.smallbusinessmajority.org/sites/default/files/research reports/040616 Economic Impacts of Obama Administration Natural National Monuments.pdf](https://www.smallbusinessmajority.org/sites/default/files/research-reports/040616-Economic-Impacts-of-Obama-Administration-Natural-National-Monuments.pdf).

¹⁶ See <http://www.sanjuancounty.org/documents/2008%20SJC%20Materplan.pdf>.

¹⁷ See <http://medora.com/>.

¹⁸ See <http://www.ndtourism.com/sites/default/master/files/pdf/2016AnnualReport.pdf>.

¹⁹ See <http://leavenworth.org/>.

²⁰ See http://www.hillcumorah.org/pageant_welcome.php?af=tl.

²¹ See [http://www.deseretnews.com/article/700096037/San Juan County stakes its future on tourism.html](http://www.deseretnews.com/article/700096037/San-Juan-County-stakes-its-future-on-tourism.html).

²² See <http://www.hirf.org>.

²³ See [https://www.lds.org/church/news/newest church historic site dedicated in utah bluff fort?lang=eng](https://www.lds.org/church/news/newest-church-historic-site-dedicated-in-utah-bluff-fort?lang=eng).

²⁴ See <http://www.ashiwi.org>.

²⁵ See [http://zunipueblomainstreet.org/about us/](http://zunipueblomainstreet.org/about-us/).

²⁶ See [http://hopi.org/visiting hopi/](http://hopi.org/visiting-hopi/).

²⁷ See <http://navajonationparks.org/htm/monumentvalley.htm>, <http://www.discovernavajo.com>.

²⁸ See [http://www.discovernavajo.com/indian cultural tour.aspx](http://www.discovernavajo.com/indian-cultural-tour.aspx).

End Notes

²⁹ See [http://www.discovernavajo.com/relax on the navajo nation.aspx](http://www.discovernavajo.com/relax%20on%20the%20navajo%20nation.aspx).

³⁰ See [http://www.fourcornersgeotourism.com/content/ute mountain tribal park/fca2A10185E286DF3A2F](http://www.fourcornersgeotourism.com/content/ute%20mountain%20tribal%20park/fca2A10185E286DF3A2F).

³¹ See <http://www.utemountaintribalpark.info/index.html>.

³² For example, see Monticello (<http://www.monticelloutah.org/Visitors/FoodLodging.aspx>), Blanding ([http://www.blandingutah.org/lodging dining.html](http://www.blandingutah.org/lodging_dining.html)), Bluff ([http://bluffutah.org/about bluff/](http://bluffutah.org/about%20bluff/)), and Mexican Hat/Fry Canyon, Etc. (<http://www.utahscanyoncountry.com/index.html>).

³³ San Juan County guides and outfitters near Bears Ears National Monument include the following. Hunting: Blue Mountain Hunts, Monticello; Redd Ranches Guides and Outfitters, Monticello; Sunrise Outfitting, Blanding. Trailrides: Horse Hotel, Monticello; Abajo Haven Guest Ranch, Blanding; Blanding Bunkhouse, Blanding. River Float Trips: Canyon Country Discovery Center, Monticello; Wild Rivers Expeditions, Bluff. Hiking: Canyon Country Discovery Center, Monticello; Roam Industry, Monticello; Abajo Haven Guest Ranch, Blanding; Blanding Bunkhouse, Blanding; Four Corners Adventures, Blanding; North Wash Outfitters, Blanding; Far Out Expeditions, Bluff; Buckhorn Llama Company, Bluff. Jeep, ATV, Side by Side UTV Tours & Motorcycle Tours: Black Hawk Tours, Blanding; Four Corners Adventures, Blanding. Canyoneering: Four Corners Adventures, Blanding; North Wash Outfitters, Blanding. Mt. Biking: Roam Industry, Monticello; Four Corners Adventures, Blanding. Guided Rock Climbing: Roam Industry, Monticello; Four Corners Adventures, Blanding. Guided Archeological Trips: Canyon Country Discovery Center, Monticello; Four Corners Adventures, Blanding; North Wash Outfitters, Blanding; Far Out Expeditions, Bluff.

³⁴ A recent report from the US Census bureau labeled San Juan County as the fastest growing county in the country, adding nearly 1,000 residents from 2015 to 2016. University of Utah's Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute's demographic analyst, Emily Harris, was surprised by the increase, "This data doesn't tell us the underlying reasons of why people are moving to San Juan County," Harris said. "It's a beautiful area in southeastern Utah, so we could assume maybe there's some retirement migrations. There's also the (Native American) reservations to think about. ... But these are all guesses. We can't really say for sure what's causing the migration in the past year." See [http://www.deseretnews.com/article/865676241/Census San Juan County is fastest growing county in US.html](http://www.deseretnews.com/article/865676241/Census%20San%20Juan%20County%20is%20fastest%20growing%20county%20in%20US.html). Regardless of the current reason for the population increase, this new information highlights the need for improved planning to get ahead of issues and challenges that will face the county as it grows.

³⁵ Planning for a Traditional Knowledge Institute, potentially a tremendous economic driver in its own right, could be both an intellectual base and physical home for education on native cultures, traditions, foods, lifeways, and ancient and contemporary traditions. This institute would be a first of its kind immersive storytelling and educational experience, much like a Native American version of the Bluff Fort on a multi cultural scale, drawing scholars, anthropologists, writers, artists, and professionals from all over the globe, as well as making the experience memorable for visitors and inviting return visitation.

³⁶ The establishment of the monument is subject to valid existing rights, including valid existing water rights. See [https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the press office/2016/12/28/proclamation establishment bears ears national monument](https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/12/28/proclamation-establishment-bears-ears-national-monument).



Dwelling | Photo Credit: Jason Keith



Getting the kids outside | Photo Credit: Western Spirit Cycling

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