

THE CALIFORNIA DESERTS REGION

ECONOMIC BENEFITS

The Economic Link Between Conserved Lands and Local Communities

Studies have demonstrated an association between conservation of public lands and a significant boon to surrounding local economies.

Tourism: Economic Driver in the Desert

The California Desert region is experiencing a rapid escalation in tourist enthusiasm and visitation that has driven revenue for local economies.

Jobs and Desert Visitation

Tourism is an industry, and as desert visitation rapidly expands, so too has job creation and business opportunities for local residents who support related sectors such as business, finance, construction, and health.

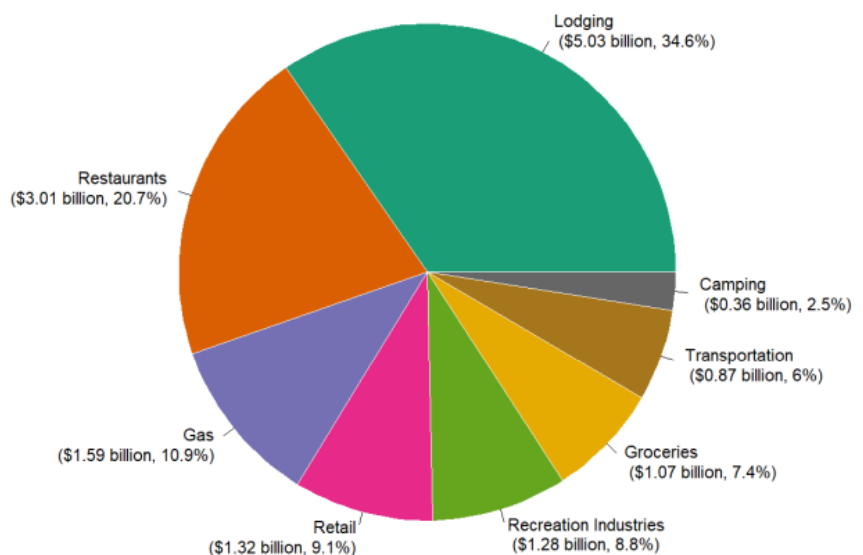
Per capita income in western nonmetropolitan counties [100,000 acres of protected lands] was on average \$4,360 higher [in 2010; \$5,319 in 2022] than per capita income in similar counties with no protected lands.

-The Economic Importance of National Monuments to Local Communities. 2017. Headwaters Economics.



DESERT CONSERVATION CONFERS ECONOMIC BENEFITS. IT'S MORE THAN SAVING BEAUTIFUL PLACES.

Monument designation has a positive and statistically significant average increase of approximately 10% on the total number of establishments [businesses] and 8.5% on the total number of jobs in Zip Code Tabulation Areas within 25 km of the 14 Mountain West designated national monuments analyzed across a 25-year time period.



M. Walls, P. Lee, & M. Ashenfarb. 2020. Resources for the Future. National monuments and economic growth in the American West. Science Advances. Vol 6 (12).
Graph: 2020 National Park Visitor Spending Effects [NPS].

Economic Benefits of Desert Conservation



SUMMARY POINTS: ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF DESERT CONSERVATION

- In a 2020 study published by the Washington D.C. based think tank Resources for the Future, authors reviewed data across 8 states in the Mountain West to estimate the economic impacts of 14 monument designations over a 25-year period. They concluded that monuments resulted in **greater average number of establishments and jobs in proximity to monuments**; increased average establishment growth rate; and had no effect on mining and other industries that use public lands.
- The National Park Service 2020 Report on *NPS Visits, Spending, and Economic Contributions to Local Economies* noted that for Joshua Tree National Park, visitation of 2,399,542 guests conveyed **\$121,857,000** spent in local economies; **1,512** jobs; and **\$60,065,000** in labor income consisting of employee wages, salaries and payroll benefits, as well as the incomes of proprietors that are supported by NPS visitor spending.
- Visit California's Economic Impact of Travel report for 2021 indicated Local Tax Revenue of **\$293,000** for the state's Desert Region, supporting community benefits such as safety, fire, recreation, and library services.
- Joshua Tree National Park and other desert public lands have experienced a dramatic increase in visitation across the last decade as the public has enthusiastically discovered our desert region. For instance, between 2011 and 2021, visitation at JTNP increased from 1,396,237 to 3,064,000 – a **119% increase**.
- A 2014 report [ECONorthwest] noted economic contributions of Quiet Recreation Visits within 50 miles of recreation sites on BLM-managed lands within California. Total Direct Spending was \$243,938,853. In inflation-adjusted dollars for 2022, that amount today would be **\$305,182,203**.
- Tourists to Imperial County generate an estimated \$347.6 million (2016; \$428.9 million adjusted for 2022) in the County and support more than 4,700 direct jobs, about 7 percent of total employment in the County.

National monuments and economic growth in the American West. 2020. [Link](#)
2020 National Park Visitor Spending Effects. Economic contributions to local communities, states, and the nation. 2021. NPS. [Link](#)
Economic Impact of Travel in California 2012-2021. Visit California. 2022. Dean Runyon and Associates. [Link](#)
National Park Service Stats. National Park Service Visitor Use Statistics. [Link](#)
The Economic Value of 'Quiet Recreation' on BLM Lands. 2017. Pew Charitable Trusts. [Link](#)
Updated Summary: The Economic Importance of National Monuments to Local Communities. 2017. Headwaters Economics. [Link](#)
Imperial County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. [Link](#)