



# Regional Socioeconomic Atlases for NPS Units

## Introduction

The natural and cultural landscapes adjacent to National Park System units are experiencing dramatic change. Parks once remote and distant from cities are increasingly surrounded by expanding urban and suburban areas. Parks in rural areas are attracting gateway community development. Changing activities in regions adjacent to national park units may influence resource management and visitor use within the parks.

Information about trends in the regions that surround NPS units can be used to help address management challenges. Maps can be powerful tools for park managers. A collection of maps of regional socioeconomic trends (e.g., related to population, resource use, commerce, land use, and so forth) can be organized into an atlas. Such an atlas can improve understanding of the changing character of adjacent lands. It can provide park managers with a critical planning, management, and public participation tool.

## Progress in Developing A Socioeconomic Atlas Series for NPS Units

Since 2000, 15 socioeconomic atlases have been produced for national park units. Several parks have used their atlas in the development of their General Management Plans. A sample atlas page spread is provided on the reverse side.

Opportunities are available to produce atlases for other NPS park units. Please contact Dr. Jean McKendry, Project Manager for details.

## How Each Atlas is Prepared

Park staff participate and provide important input into the preparation of their atlas:

1. Park staff work with the Project Manager to identify a "region of interest" to be mapped, i.e., the geographic area around the park that may influence or impact its management. A region of interest includes one or more counties.
2. The Project Manager provides the park staff with a set of socioeconomic "indicators" – trend data that are available and mappable at the county level. The set is divided into *core* and *additional* indicators. Core indicators are mapped for each park. Additional indicators allow each park to have its own customized atlas.
3. A draft version of the atlas is prepared, and reviewed by park staff.
4. The draft is revised, and final CD-Rom copies of the atlas are sent to the park.

## What Each Park Atlas Includes

1. Each park atlas includes over 30 color maps.
2. Each map in the atlas is accompanied by a data table, number line, and description of the socioeconomic indicator.
3. Each park receives its atlas on CD-Roms. The atlas can be shared easily with park staff and partners in the region.
4. The CD-Rom includes:
  - an electronic version of the atlas that can be viewed on a computer and/or printed to a desktop printer.
  - individual graphic files for each map (to use in presentations).
  - data and GIS files.

## Benefits to Each Park

An atlas of regional socioeconomic trends has benefits to each park:

1. The atlas provides important and timely information about the spatial character of human activities and changing land use in the region adjacent to the park.
2. The data and maps can be linked to general management planning and other planning needs.
3. The atlas can be used as a tool to orient park staff (and regional office staff) about regional trends around the park.
4. The atlas can be used as a public participation tool with local communities.

## Benefits to the NPS

Developing an atlas series has benefits to the NPS:

1. Managers can become better informed about trends affecting park units around the National Park System.
2. The NPS can use the atlas series as an educational tool to share information with the public, gateway communities, media, and Congress.
3. Comparisons can be made among different parks, and atlases could be developed that link parks at the regional level.

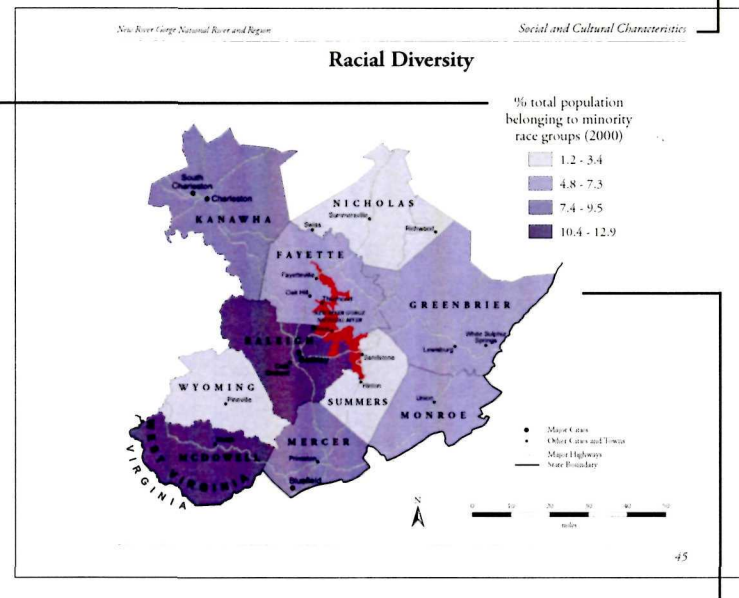
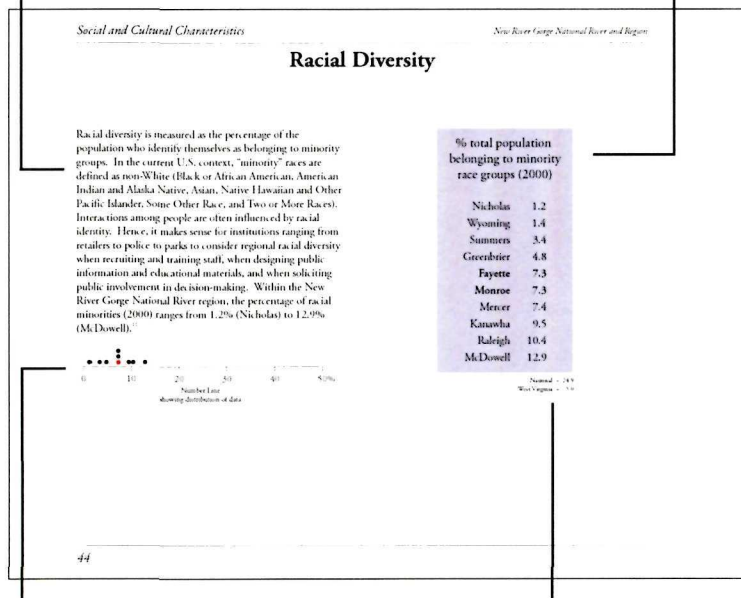
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# Using the Socioeconomic Indicators and Maps

The socioeconomic indicators for the New River Gorge National River region of interest are presented in a series of maps. The best available county-level data are presented for each indicator. The following information is provided for each indicator:

- a brief description of the socioeconomic indicator and an observation about the spatial variation in the data as displayed on the map.
- a table that shows the data and relative rank for each county. The median value is highlighted in bold. The table allows the reader to look up and compare specific indicator values for each county.
- a map legend describing how the indicator is measured, the year that the data were gathered, and the range of values for each quartile grouping.
- the name of the general category to which this particular indicator belongs (such as general population or land use). Maps in the same general category share similar sets of color symbols.



- a number line that shows the distribution of values for the indicator, useful in understanding patterns in the data. The median value is represented by a **red** dot.
- a section displaying national and state data that can be compared with regional county data.
- a map that displays general patterns inherent in the data. For most indicators, counties are grouped into four classes that correspond to four sub-ranges of data values. These groups are called quartiles. The highest-ranked quartile receives the darkest shading. For more information on quartile classification, see Appendix 2, page 83.