

Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument

A summary of economic performance in surrounding counties



Photo courtesy Lisa Phillips, BLM

BACKGROUND

The 496,000-acre Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument was designated in 2014 to protect the historic and biological resources of five mountain chains in southern New Mexico. Located in Doña Ana County, New Mexico, the monument is managed by the Bureau of Land Management.

PUBLIC ACCESS AND USES

The monument allows horseback riding, hunting, hiking, and ATV riding. In 2022, the monument attracted 662,445 visitors.¹

TRAVEL AND TOURISM

Travel and tourism are important to communities in the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks region, representing about 18% of total private wage and salary employment, or 10,264 jobs, in 2024.² Recreation contributed more than \$3.3 billion to New Mexico's economy in 2023.³

SUMMARY FINDINGS

Research shows that conserving public lands like the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument helps to safeguard and highlight amenities that draw new visitors, businesses, and residents to surrounding communities.⁴

Western counties with protected public lands, like national monuments, have been more successful at attracting fast-growing economic sectors and as a result grow more quickly, on average, than counties without protected public lands. In addition, protected natural amenities—such as the towering granite spires, rugged desert peaks, and sweeping vistas found at Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument—also help sustain property values and attract new investment.

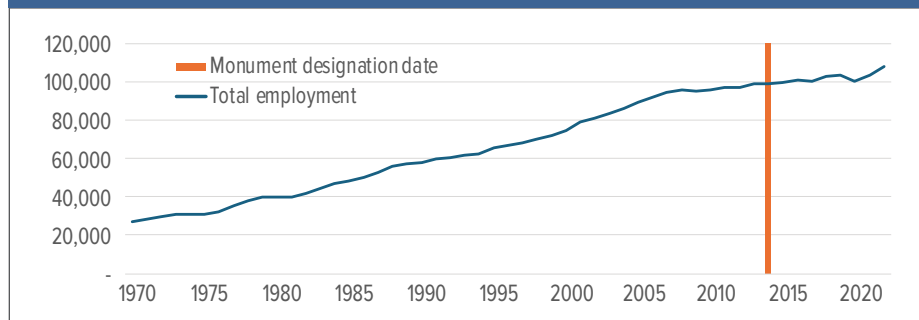
ECONOMY GROWS AFTER DESIGNATION

The economy of Doña Ana County neighboring the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument has grown after the designation of the monument, continuing previous growth trends.

From 2001 to 2022 in the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks region:⁵

- Population grew by 27%.
- Jobs grew by 37%.

TOTAL EMPLOYMENT



SERVICE JOBS INCREASING

Service jobs—such as doctors, hospitality workers, and teachers—reflect economic diversification for many communities. These jobs are increasingly mobile, and many entrepreneurs locate their businesses in areas with a high quality of life.

From 2001 to 2022 in the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks region:⁵

- Service jobs grew from 46,327 to 72,535, a 57% increase.
- Non-service jobs grew from 12,655 to 14,415, a 14% increase.

EMPLOYMENT BY MAJOR INDUSTRY

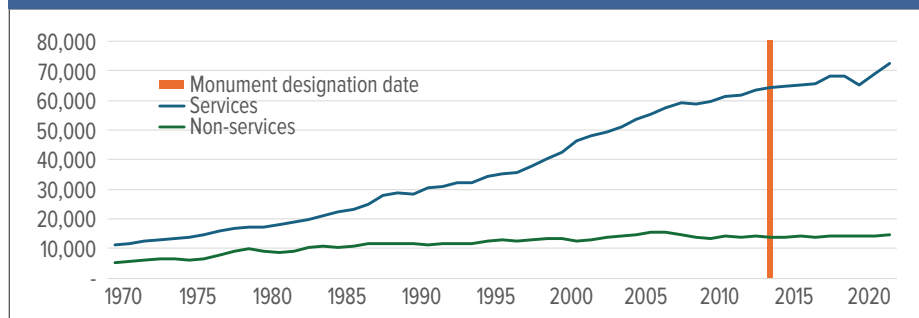




Photo courtesy BLM

The communities in Doña Ana County neighboring the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument experienced strong growth since its designation in 2014. The increases in population, jobs, personal income, and per capita income mirror other Western counties with national monuments or other protected lands.

ABOUT

This fact sheet is part of a series created by Headwaters Economics that assesses the economic performance of local communities adjacent to national monuments. For more information, see <https://headwaterseconomics.org/public-lands/economic-performance-national-monuments>.

1. Bureau of Land Management. (2022). *Organ Mountains–Desert Peaks National Monument Annual Manager’s Report, Fiscal Year 2022*. Las Cruces, NM: Bureau of Land Management, Las Cruces District Office. Retrieved from https://www.blm.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2023-08/ManagersReport_OMDPNM_FY2022.pdf
2. U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2023). *Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor. Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/cew/>
3. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis. (2024). *Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce. Retrieved from <https://www.bea.gov/data/special-topics/outdoor-recreation>
4. Headwaters Economics. (2021). *National Monuments Can Boost Local Economies*. Bozeman, MT: Headwaters Economics. Retrieved from <https://headwaterseconomics.org/public-lands/national-monuments-studies/>
5. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis. (2023). *Regional Economic Accounts*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce. Retrieved from <https://www.bea.gov/data/economic-accounts/regional>
6. Lawson, M. (2019). *Non-Labor Income in the Rural West*. Bozeman, MT: Headwaters Economics. Retrieved from <https://headwaterseconomics.org/public-lands/papl-lawson/>

NON-LABOR INCOME GROWS FASTEST

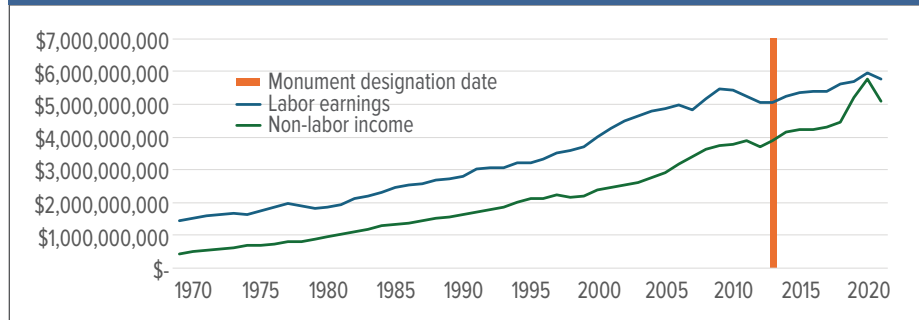
One of the largest and fastest growing sources of new personal income in the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks Region is non-labor income, which is made up of investment income such as dividends, interest and rent, and government transfer payments such as Social Security and Medicare.

For people with investment income and many retirees, protected public lands and recreation provide important aspects of a high quality of life. Non-labor income already represents more than a third of all personal income in the West—and will grow as the Baby Boomer generation retires.⁶

From 2001 to 2022 in the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks region:⁵

- Non-labor income grew from \$2.4 billion to \$5 billion, a 112% increase.
- As a result, in 2022 non-labor income made up 47% of total personal income.

NON-LABOR AND LABOR INCOME



TRADITIONAL JOBS HOLD STEADY

Long before the monument’s creation, commodity industries (agriculture, mining, timber) were becoming a smaller share of the overall economy in the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks region. These industries remain part of the region’s economy today.

In 2022 in the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks region, agriculture accounted for 3% of total employment.⁵

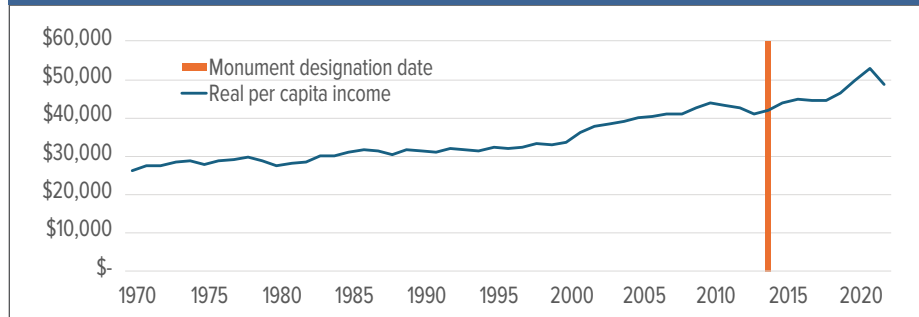
PROSPERITY ON THE RISE

As the economy has grown since the designation of the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument, per capita income and earnings per job have risen as well. This indicates growing prosperity in the region.

From 2001 to 2022 in the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks region:⁵

- Real per capita income grew from \$36,246 to \$48,627, a 34% increase.
- Real earnings per job grew from \$52,472 to \$57,292, a 2% increase.

REAL PER CAPITA INCOME



Headwaters Economics is an independent, nonprofit research group that works to improve community development and land management decisions.