

# Vermilion Cliffs National Monument

A summary of economic performance in surrounding counties



Photo courtesy Bob Wick, BLM

## BACKGROUND

The 280,000-acre Vermilion Cliffs National Monument was designated in 2000 to protect lands that feature dramatic sandstone cliffs, deep canyons, and striking formations such as The Wave, while providing habitat for California condors. Located in Coconino and Kane counties, Arizona, the monument is managed by the Bureau of Land Management.

## PUBLIC ACCESS AND USES

The monument allows wilderness backpacking, scenic views, wildlife viewing, and camping. In 2023, the monument attracted 240,373 visitors.<sup>1</sup>

## TRAVEL AND TOURISM

Travel and tourism are important to communities in the Vermilion Cliffs region, representing about 38% of total private wage and salary employment, or 18,090 jobs, in 2024.<sup>2</sup> Recreation contributed more than \$14.5 billion to Arizona's economy in 2023.<sup>3</sup>

## SUMMARY FINDINGS

Research shows that conserving public lands like the Vermilion Cliffs National Monument helps to safeguard and highlight amenities that draw new visitors, businesses, and residents to surrounding communities.<sup>4</sup>

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 dramatic red sandstone cliffs, deep canyons, and winding desert plateaus found at Vermilion Cliffs National Monument—also help sustain property values and attract new investment.

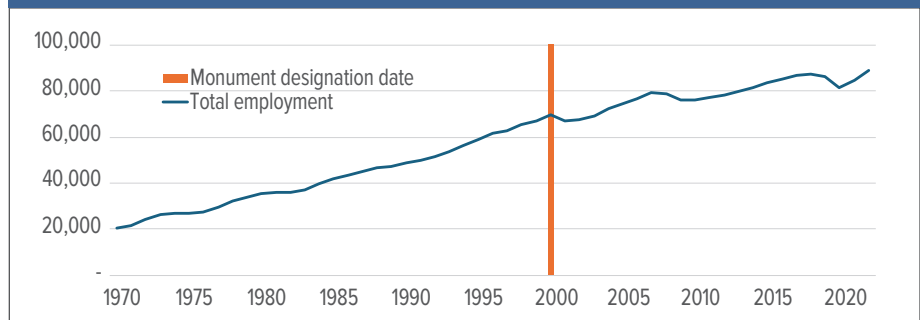
## ECONOMY GROWS AFTER DESIGNATION

The economy of Coconino and Kane counties neighboring the Vermilion Cliffs National Monument has grown after the designation of the monument, continuing previous growth trends.

### From 2001 to 2022 Vermilion Cliffs region:<sup>5</sup>

- Population grew by 22%.
- Jobs grew by 33%.

## 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 Vermilion Cliffs Region:<sup>5</sup>

- Services grew from 43,419 to 61,354, a 41% increase.
- Non-services grew from 7,645 to 10,458, a 37% increase.

## EMPLOYMENT BY MAJOR INDUSTRY

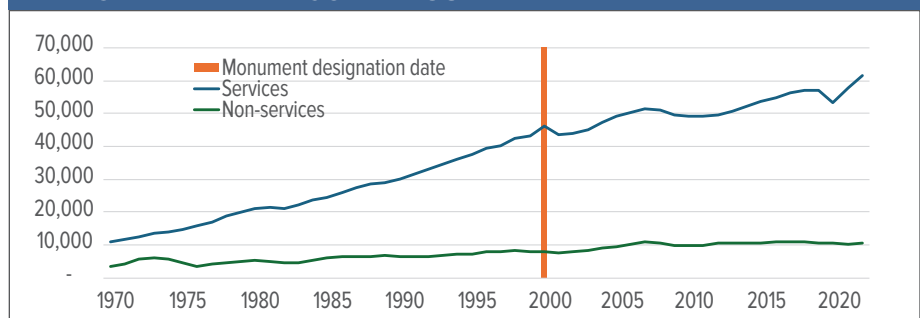




Photo courtesy Bob Wick, BLM

The communities in Coconino and Kane counties neighboring the Vermilion Cliffs National Monument experienced strong growth since its designation in 2000. 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. (2024). Vermilion Cliffs National Monument Annual Manager's Report, 2023. St. George, UT: Bureau of Land Management, Arizona Strip District Office. Retrieved from <https://www.blm.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2024-06/2023%20VCNM%20Managers%20Report%20Final.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

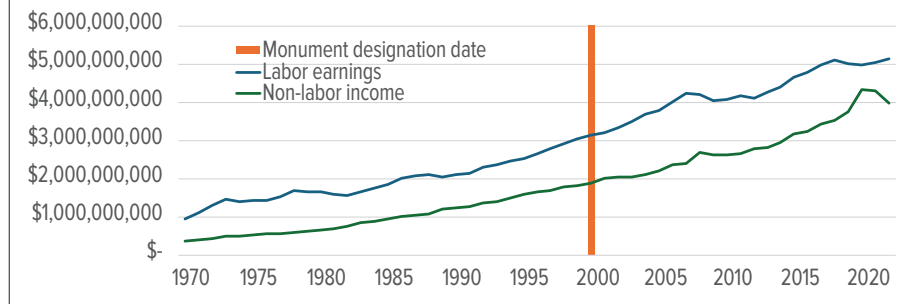
One of the largest and fastest growing sources of new personal income in the Vermilion Cliffs region is non-labor income, which is made up of investment income such as dividends, interest and rent, and government transfer payments such as Social Security and Medicare.

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.<sup>6</sup>

### From 2001 to 2022 in the Vermilion Cliffs region:<sup>5</sup>

- Non-labor income grew from \$2.0 billion to \$4.0 billion, a 99% increase.
- As a result, in 2022 non-labor income made up 44% 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 Vermilion Cliffs region. These industries remain part of the region's economy today.

- In 2022 in the Vermilion Cliffs region, agriculture accounted for 2% of total employment.<sup>5</sup>

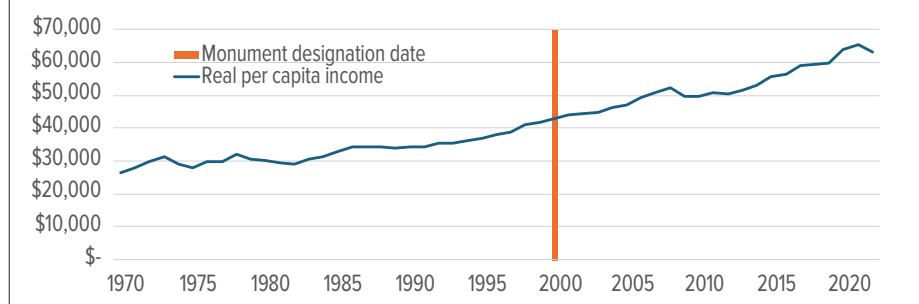
## PROSPERITY ON THE RISE

As the economy has grown since the designation of the Vermilion Cliffs 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 Vermilion Cliffs region:<sup>5</sup>

- Real per capita income grew from \$44,096 to \$63,176, a 43% increase.
- Real earnings per job grew from \$54,302 to \$61,541, a 13% increase.

## REAL PER CAPITA INCOME



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