

# Browns Canyon National Monument

A summary of economic performance in surrounding counties

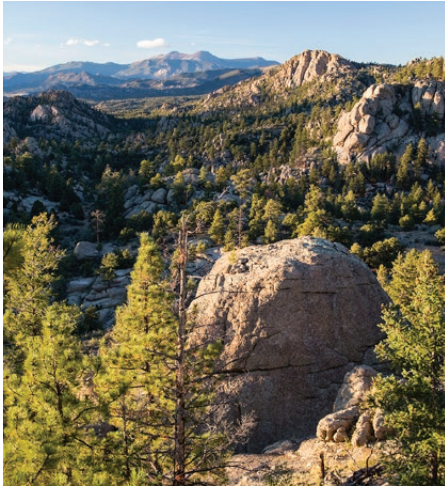


Photo courtesy Bob Wick, BLM

## BACKGROUND

The 21,589-acre Browns Canyon National Monument was designated in 2015 to protect unique geological formations, rugged granite outcroppings, and diverse riparian corridors. The monument also supports abundant wildlife, including bighorn sheep, eagles, and native fish, while providing world-class opportunities for recreation. Located in Chaffee County, Colorado, it is jointly managed by the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service.

## PUBLIC ACCESS AND USES

The monument allows whitewater rafting, hiking, fishing, horseback riding, mountain biking, and wildlife viewing. In 2023, the monument attracted 84,000 visitors.<sup>1</sup>

## TRAVEL AND TOURISM

Travel and tourism are important to communities in the Browns Canyon region, representing about 38% of total private wage and salary employment, or 2,449 jobs, in 2024.<sup>2</sup> Recreation contributed more than \$17.7 billion to Colorado's economy in 2023.<sup>3</sup>

## SUMMARY FINDINGS

Research shows that conserving public lands like the Browns Canyon 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 rugged canyons, towering rock spires, and free-flowing Arkansas River found at Browns Canyon National Monument—also help sustain property values and attract new investment.

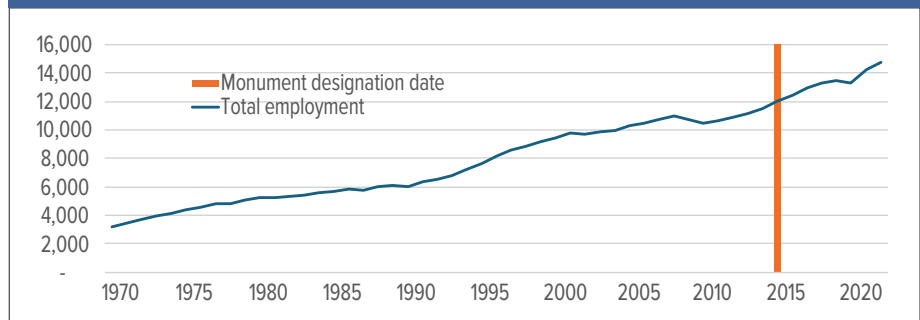
## ECONOMY GROWS AFTER DESIGNATION

The economy of Chaffee County neighboring the Browns Canyon National Monument has grown after the designation of the monument, continuing previous growth trends.

### From 2001 to 2022 in the Browns Canyon region:<sup>5</sup>

- Population grew by 23%.
- Jobs grew by 52%.

### TOTAL EMPLOYMENT



### SERVICE JOBS INCREASING/STEADY

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 Browns Canyon region:<sup>5</sup>

- Service jobs grew from 6,228 to 10,127, a 63% increase.
- Non-service jobs grew from 1,816 to 2,262, a 25% increase/decrease.

### EMPLOYMENT BY MAJOR INDUSTRY

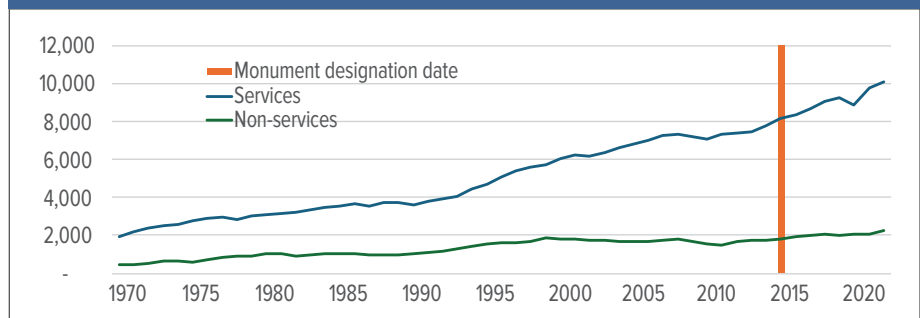




Photo courtesy Bob Wick, BLM

The communities in Chaffee County neighboring the Browns Canyon National Monument experienced strong growth since its designation in 2015. 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). *Browns Canyon National Monument Annual Manager's Report*. Canon City, CO: Bureau of Land Management, Royal Gorge Field Office. Retrieved from [https://www.blm.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2024-06/Manager%20Report\\_Browns%20Canyon\\_FY23%20%281%29.pdf](https://www.blm.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2024-06/Manager%20Report_Browns%20Canyon_FY23%20%281%29.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/>

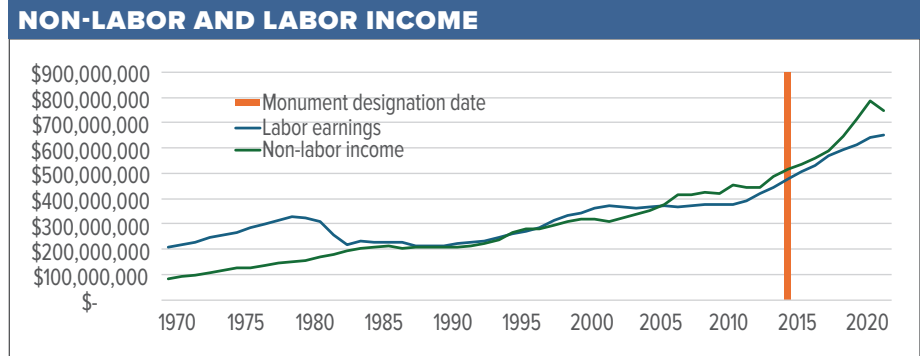
## NON-LABOR INCOME GROWS FASTEST

One of the largest and fastest growing sources of new personal income in the Browns Canyon 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 Browns Canyon region:<sup>5</sup>

- Non-labor income grew from \$321 million to \$750 million, a 134% increase.
- As a result, in 2022 non-labor income made up 54% of total personal 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 Browns Canyon region. These industries remain part of the region's economy today.

### In 2022 in the Browns Canyon region:

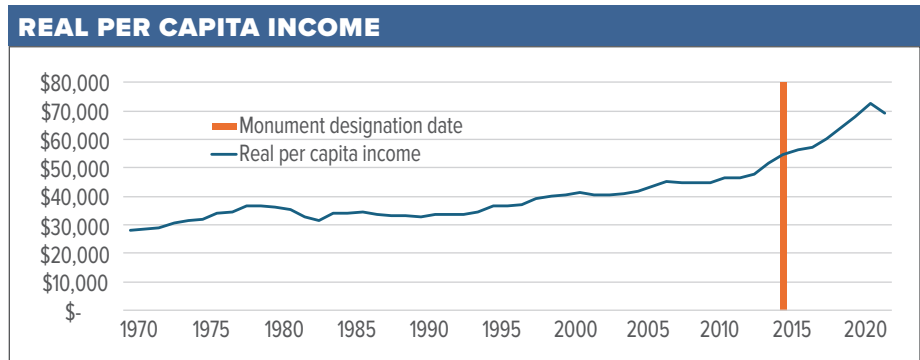
- Agriculture accounted for 2% of total employment.<sup>5</sup>
- Mining and timber accounted for 3% of total employment.<sup>2</sup>

## PROSPERITY ON THE RISE

As the economy has grown since the designation of the Browns Canyon 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 Browns Canyon region:<sup>5</sup>

- Real per capita income grew from \$41,534 to \$69,209, a 67% increase.
- Real earnings per job grew from \$41,997 to \$49,297, a 17% increase.



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