

Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve

A summary of economic performance in surrounding counties



Photo courtesy BLM

BACKGROUND

The 750,000-acre Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve was designated in 2000 to protect The Great Rift, a 52-mile-long crack in the Earth’s crust. The monument showcases a remarkable volcanic landscape including lava fields, lava tubes, craters, and cinder cones. Located in Blaine, Butte, Lincoln, Minidoka, and Power counties, Idaho, the monument is co-managed by the National Park Service and the Bureau of Land Management.

PUBLIC ACCESS AND USES

The monument allows hiking, camping, cross-country skiing, wildlife viewing, and backcountry travel. In 2024, the monument attracted 314,118 visitors.¹

TRAVEL AND TOURISM

Travel and tourism are important to communities in the Craters of the Moon region, representing about 15% of total private wage and salary employment, or 4,773 jobs, in 2024.² Recreation contributed more than \$4.1 billion to Idaho’s economy in 2023.³

SUMMARY FINDINGS

Research shows that conserving public lands like the Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve helps to safeguard and highlight amenities that draw new visitors, businesses, and residents to surrounding communities.⁴

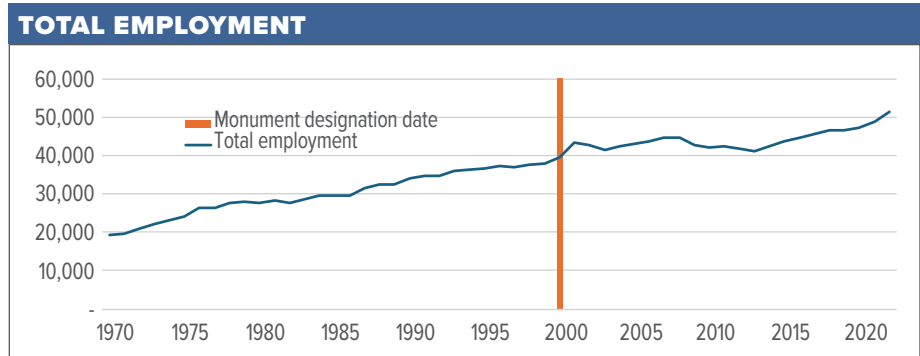
Western counties with protected public lands, like national monuments, have been more successful at attracting fast-growing economic sectors and as a result grow more quickly, on average, than counties without protected public lands. In addition, protected natural amenities—such as the vast lava flows, dramatic cinder cones, and otherworldly volcanic landscapes found at Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve —also help sustain property values and attract new investment.

ECONOMY GROWS AFTER DESIGNATION

The economy of Blaine, Butte, Lincoln, Minidoka, and Power counties neighboring the Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve grew after the designation of the monument, continuing previous growth trends.

From 2001 to 2022 in the Craters of the Moon region:⁵

- Population grew by 16%.
- Jobs grew by 18%.



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 Craters of the Moon region:⁵

- Service jobs grew from 28,263 to 35,171, a 24% increase.
- Non-service jobs declined from 12,157 to 11,473, a 6% decrease due to a loss of manufacturing-related jobs.

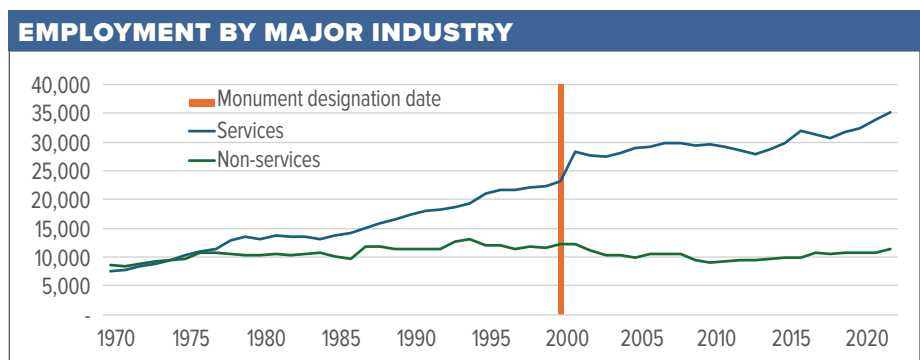




Photo courtesy BLM

The communities in Blaine, Butte, Lincoln, Minidoka, and Power counties neighboring the Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve 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. Flyr, M., Stockmoe, E., Cullinane Thomas, C., Koontz, L., & Huber, C. (2025). *2024 National Park Visitor Spending Effects: Economic Contributions to Local Communities, States, and the Nation*. Fort Collins, CO: National Park Service, Science Report NPS/SR—2025/353. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.36967/2315417>
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

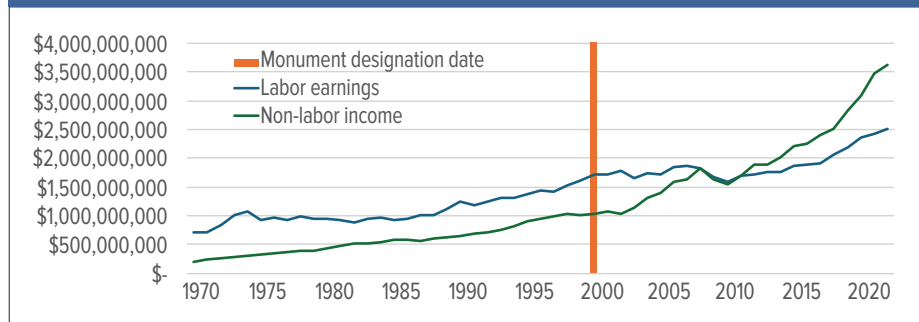
One of the largest and fastest growing sources of new personal income in the Craters of the Moon region is non-labor income, which is made up of investment income such as dividends, interest and rent, and government transfer payments such as Social Security and Medicare.

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 Craters of the Moon region:⁵

- Non-labor income grew from \$1.1 million to \$3.6 million, a 235% increase.
- As a result, in 2022 non-labor income made up 59% 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 Craters of the Moon region. These industries remain part of the region's economy today.

In 2022 in the Craters of the Moon region, agriculture accounted for 6% of total employment.⁵

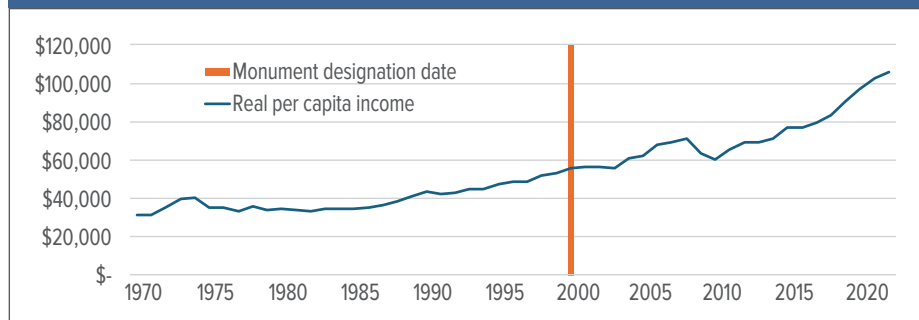
PROSPERITY ON THE RISE

As the economy has grown since the designation of the Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve, per capita income and earnings per job have risen as well. This indicates growing prosperity in the region.

From 2001 to 2022 in the Craters of the Moon region:⁵

- Real per capita income grew from \$56,508 to \$105,897, an 87% increase.
- Real earnings per job grew from \$69,453 to \$77,680, a 12% increase.

REAL PER CAPITA INCOME



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