

DIVERSE COUNTIES, DIVERSE ECONOMIC CHANGES

CRATERS OF THE MOON NATIONAL MONUMENT AND PRESERVE

Designated: Originally as a National Park 1928; expanded several times, most recently in 2000 to add surrounding land under NLCS management; co-managed with National Park Service

Location: South-Central Idaho

Size: 715,000 acres

Counties: Minidoka [rural without air service, 33.35 percent of county land base (clb)]
Blaine (rural with air service, 22.48 percent of clb)
Butte (rural without air service, 9.49 percent of clb)
Power (metro/commuter, 5.59 percent of clb)
Lincoln (rural with air service, 2.18 percent of clb)



Craters of the Moon area in Idaho. Duane Reynolds, Idaho Bureau of Land Management.

As its name implies, Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve encompasses a landscape that appears to be not of this earth. Layer upon layer of volcanic eruptions, starting about 15,000 years ago and most recently 2,100 years ago, have resulted in an ancient lava sea that includes features such as cinder cones, lava tubes, caves, and The Great Rift, a 62-mile long crack in the earth's crust.

Craters of the Moon was officially recognized as a unique place deserving of protection in 1928, when it was designated a National Park. The area has undergone several expansions since then, most notably in 2000, which added

about 270,000 acres under NLCS management and expanded protection to include vast stretches of sagebrush steppe grasslands. It is now co-managed by the Park Service and the BLM.

Before and After Designation

As the tables below illustrate, the five counties where the Monument is located have experienced a wide range of economic changes over the long term and since the Monument was designated. For Power County, these changes include declines in all four indicators examined from 2000 to 2002, and in total and per capita personal income over the longer term, from 1980 to 2000.

TABLE 1 Socioeconomic indicators in Minidoka County, Idaho

	1980	2000 (year expanded)	2002	% Change 1980 - 2002	% Change 2000 - 2002
Personal income (millions)	351	379	388	11	3
Population	19,786	20,099	19,444	-2	-3
Per capita personal income	17,747	18,838	19,975	13	6
Total employment	9,365	11,042	10,743	15	-3

TABLE 2 Socioeconomic indicators in Blaine County, Idaho

	1980	2000 (year expanded)	2002	% Change 1980 - 2002	% Change 2000 - 2002
Personal income (millions)	283	887	923	226	4
Population	9,937	19,124	20,358	105	6
Per capita personal income	28,529	46,381	45,347	59	-2
Total employment	6,992	17,835	18,979	171	6

TABLE 3 Socioeconomic indicators in Butte County, Idaho

	1980	2000 (year expanded)	2002	% Change 1980 - 2002	% Change 2000 - 2002
Personal income (millions)	66	65	67	1	3
Population	3,365	2,900	2,921	-13	1
Per capita personal income	19,526	22,248	22,791	17	2
Total employment	6,656	6,076	5,981	-10	-2

TABLE 4 Socioeconomic indicators in Power County, Idaho

	1980	2000 (year expanded)	2002	% Change 1980 - 2002	% Change 2000 - 2002
Personal income (millions)	169	167	162	-4	-3
Population	6,866	7,512	7,419	8	-1
Per capita personal income	24,624	22,288	21,852	-11	-2
Total employment	4,504	5,477	4,760	6	-13

TABLE 5 Socioeconomic indicators in Lincoln County, Idaho

	1980	2000 (year expanded)	2002	% Change 1980 - 2002	% Change 2000 - 2002
Personal income (millions)	71	88	91	28	3
Population	3,459	4,060	4,226	22	4
Per capita personal income	20,570	21,735	21,519	5	-1
Total employment	1,903	2,096	2,199	16	5

Economic Change in Five Counties

A look at economic change in each of the five counties within the planning area shows that the economies of adjacent counties can be very different. While some typify changes that are occurring in many areas of the Western U.S., others retain high levels of more traditional economic sectors or reflect unique histories.

Local economic changes may be linked to the area's natural amenities and protected areas, such as the Monument, but other factors are important as well. As is the case across the Western U.S., the counties and communities in the planning area that are experiencing the greatest economic prosperity are those like Blaine County. In addition to the ski areas and mountain scenery it is known for, it has a diverse mix of businesses, a well-educated population with many newcomers who have moved in within the past decade, an easily accessible airport in Hailey, and fairly easy access from the more populous areas of Idaho. Blaine and Minidoka counties also follow widespread patterns of economic change, in that the Services and Professional and Non-Labor income (e.g., income derived from investments, retirement, and social security) categories have shown the most significant growth. Despite this similarity, these two counties are at the high (Blaine) and low (Minidoka) ends of the spectrum in terms of per capita income, housing values, and educational attainment.

Counties that are less prosperous are often more reliant on traditional industries such as agriculture and are relatively isolated from larger population centers by long drives and the lack of an airport. Lincoln County fits this profile, but has experienced strong growth in the Non-Labor income and Services and Professional sectors, although government and agriculture continue to be key elements of the county's economy.

Power and Butte counties are unusual in their dependence on a single employer—in the case of Power County, the American Falls Electrical Generating Station, and in Butte County, the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory (INEEL). Despite the relatively high wages paid by INEEL, few employees actually live in Butte County, which decreases the amount of income and spending that remain in the local economy.

Power County stands out as one of the few counties with an NLCS unit included in this study that has experienced declines in real total personal income from 1980 to 2000. It is the only metro/commuter county included in this study that has also seen declines in population, per capita personal income, and total employment since Craters of the Moon became part of the NLCS in 2000. One key question we might ask is:

Has Power County's economy been in decline because of restrictions on resource development in the Monument?

Power County is unusual in that it has a high level of manufacturing income, due largely to jobs at the American Falls Electrical Generating Station (the county's major employer) being classified in this sector. Employment in this sector has fluctuated, but declined by 209 jobs over the past three decades and accounted for 45.5% of earnings in real terms in the county in 2000. This accounts for a large portion of the county's economic downturn and is unrelated to the designation of Craters of the Moon.

Figure 1 shows that over a third of the county's income is from Non-Labor income sources, such as retirement and investment income. Less than one third of one percent of total personal income in the county is from mining or any other type of natural resource development (e.g., energy, timber).

Twenty percent of Power County's income is from agriculture. Many agriculturally dependent counties in the rural West are not doing well, and the same is true for Power County, where net profits for agricultural producers dropped by over 40 percent from 1990 to 2004 (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2004). Within this sector, there has been a 30-year shift from grazing to crops: from 1970 to 1992, grazing's share of total agricultural income declined by 8 percent, and another 1.8 percent from 1992 to 2002.

Crops increased from 56 percent of the total in 1970 to 65 percent in 1992, and by another 1.6 percent from 1992 to 2002. Given that this trend was well established before the Monument was designated in

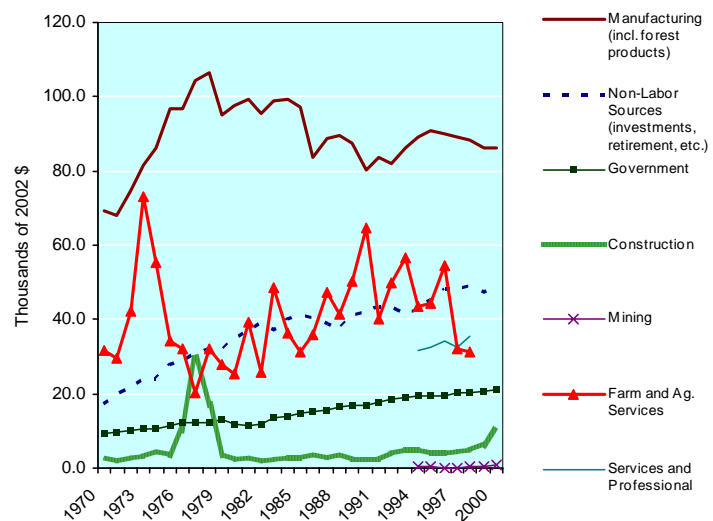


FIGURE 1. Personal income by major sector in Power County, Idaho

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, Regional Economic Information System, 2004.

2000, the possibility that tighter restrictions on grazing permits on public lands had much impact on the overall declines in this sector is unlikely .

Power County encompasses the southwestern corner of the Monument; only 5.59 percent of the county is within the Monument. There are no communities within the county that are considered part of the planning area, nor any entrances to it through Power County. The city of American Falls, where the American Falls Reservoir and hydroelectric generating plant are located, lies about 10 miles to the east of the Monument.

Another factor that undermines the idea that the NLCS designation played a role in Power County's economic downturn is the fact that each of the other four counties with Monument lands did not experience similar slumps; in fact, Blaine County, with a much larger share (22.48 percent) of its land base under NLCS management, experienced a dramatic increase in total personal income since the designation, while Lincoln, Minidoka, and Butte counties experienced upturns of various degrees.

Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve is an integral part of Central Idaho's rich and varied network of protected and private lands, which offer boundless recreational opportunities and attract visitors and residents from around the nation and the world. However, the changing economy is affecting the various counties and communities within the planning area in very different ways. In addition to skiing at the renowned Sun Valley ski area, winter visitors to Blaine County may enjoy snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, and ice-skating. Summer tourists may golf, play tennis, fish, river raft, and enjoy music and arts festivals. The nearby Sawtooth National Recreation Area, the largest National Recreation Area in the National Forest System, averages more than one million visitor days per year . The Idaho Division of Tourism Development estimated in its 1997 Tourism Impacts study that total tourism spending for Blaine County was \$98.8 million (<http://www.idoc.state.id.us/trvdiv/pdfs/travelspendingbycounty.xls>).

This is in stark contrast to total tourism spending in adjacent Lincoln County, which the same study estimated at \$741,000, the lowest for any Idaho County. Despite the fact that the BLM Shoshone Field Office, located in Lincoln County, records an average of 900,000 visitors per year, most are passing through on their way to better-known tourism destinations.

Conclusion

Throughout the planning region, residents of counties and communities that continue to depend heavily on a single employer or on more traditional economic activities, such as agriculture, which are growing more slowly than those with more diversified economies. On the other hand, as property values rise in the Sun Valley area, the search for affordable housing, along with the appeal of more traditional small town life, are pushing increasing numbers of residents into communities closer to the Monument. The Monument, and the recreational and environmental amenities it offers, may provide these communities with an important advantage over other Idaho towns in shaping themselves as appealing, unique places to retire or locate new businesses.

