

Social and Economic Conditions and Trends

In the planning area, the social and economic conditions are intertwined to an extent that it is difficult to discuss them separately. The following identifies *key* conditions and trends for the social and economic resources. Some conditions and trends are quantifiable with numbers. Others, particularly the social conditions and trends, are made from qualitative observations. This section highlights forest and regional conditions and trends. Information about county-level conditions and other aspects can be found in the referenced documents.

GENERAL SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

Extraordinary Population Growth: Utah is the third fastest growing state in the nation. This rapid rate of growth is very evident in some parts of the planning area while other parts are not keeping up with the State average.¹ Urban areas that tend to supply large amounts of forest users – namely Salt Lake City and Las Vegas – are experiencing record growth that is projected to continue. According to the most recent population projections, the following condition and trend exist across the State of Utah.

Condition: As of July 1, 2005, the State of Utah has an estimate population of 2,547,389 people. This is a 2.5% or roughly a 313,000 person increase over 2000 estimates.

Trend: The 2005 Baseline Highlights Report (BHR 2005) prepared by the demographic and economic analysis branch of the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget (GOPB) projects state population to reach roughly 4,000,000 by 2030.

Utah's population is getting older and more wealthy. However, Utah is still the youngest state in the country and will likely remain so in the foreseeable future.

Condition: In 2005, the median age for the State of Utah is 27.

Trend: In spite of the growth of the retirement population, the projected median age for Utah will only increase to 33 by 2030.

Forests are a Factor in Quality of Life for Many Regional Residents: Many participants in the Dixie and Fishlake planning effort have suggested that for a variety of reasons, the forestlands contribute to the high quality of life people enjoy in the planning area.

¹ According to a 2005 News Release from the Governor the growth rates for 2004-2005 in the counties in the planning area were: Washington (8.4%), Iron (6.4%) (two highest in the state), Beaver (0.5%), Millard (0.3%), Sevier (1.2%), Piute (0.1%), Garfield (1.7%), Kane (2.6%), and Wayne ((-0.6%). The state average for the 2004-2005 year was 3.2%. Only Washington and Iron beat the state average.

Condition: The Dixie and Fishlake National Forests provide opportunities for traditional family² gatherings and social events.

Trend: The Dixie and Fishlake will continue to provide these opportunities, but with increased use and different patterns of use, it will be increasingly difficult to guarantee a quality of experience identical to past experiences.

New Economic Engines are Emerging: Many traditional sources of economic income such as natural resource extraction and mining are projected to decrease their share of the state economic output; and professional business, education, and health services are projected to grow.³

Condition and Trend: According to the BHR 2005

Economic Sector	Actual % in 2005	Projected % in 2050
Natural Resource and Mining	2%	1%
Professional and Business Services	13%	16%
Education and Health Services	11%	24%

Caveat: Oil and gas discoveries in central Utah could increase the share of the Natural Resources and Mining sector in individual counties. It is probably still too early to speculate about how this discovery will impact economic projections.

A note on community sustainability. The following condition and trend describe the Forests role and the trend for this role in the future.

Condition: Management of Forest Service lands is an important, but not a determining, ingredient in the recipe for economic and social sustainability of rural communities.

Trend: While the Forest Service continues to contribute to the sustainability of rural communities, larger regional, national, and often global factors increasingly impact the “sustainability” of rural communities. The Forest Service will likely provide a similar suite of opportunities for rural communities into the future, however, due to constraints outside of Forest Service control, traditional resource based economic endeavors and customs may decline. Thus, “sustainable” communities will need to embrace more diversified economic strategies to survive irrespective of forest management practices.

FOREST CONSUMPTIVE RESOURCE ECONOMIC TRENDS

One component of community sustainability that lends itself to quantitative measures is the use of renewable and non-renewable resources. The following highlights are presented:

² National Visitor Use Monitoring data and surveys seem to suggest that many families located along the Wasatch Front and in the Las Vegas area share this social and cultural connection with the forestlands of the Dixie and Fishlake NFs. Many regional residents have historical ties to Southern Utah. A study by Dale Blahna and Steve Burr at Utah State University suggested that this was the primary reason that people felt many forest areas were “special places.”

³ It is important to note that traditional and “new” economic sectors are not mutually exclusive. The Sonoran Institute tries to disavow people of this notion. Mining, logging, and agriculture can coexist with tourism and recreation.

Logging

- In recent years, the total timber volume offered from the Dixie NF has been relatively consistent at about 28,000 Hundred Cubic Foot (CCF). The total volume offered from Fishlake NF has varied from 3,900 to 7,100 CCF.
- The trend for timber volume offered appears to have been stable over last 5 years.

Livestock Grazing

- Over the last five years, the total Animal Unit Months (AUMs) permitted by the Fishlake National Forest has been relatively stable at about 130,000. The number of AUMs permitted on the Dixie National Forest has declined 10% to about 75,000.
- However, it should be noted that actual numbers of livestock that graze fluctuates annually based on range conditions and annual allotment plans.

Oil and Gas and Minerals

- The Dixie NF has a relatively small and stable number of active mining operations on the Forest; these numbers represent two small locatable operations, one producing oil field, and a bonded mineral material operation.
- The Fishlake has a declining number (27→12 over five years) of active mining operations on the Forest. Virtually all were for locatable minerals exploration; two represent energy minerals exploration or production. This trend reflects a nationwide decline in locatable mining exploration activities on federal lands.

Recreation Use

- In 2002, the Fishlake National Forest hosted about 447,000 visitors; the Dixie hosted about 774,000 visitors in 2003. This data is based on the National Visitor Use Monitoring project. The project completed the first national forest-wide monitoring of visitors. Because this data was collected for the first time, there is no comparable data to determine a trend. However, population demographics implies an increasing trend in visitors.

Recreation Condition and Trend

The Dixie and Fishlake National Forests provide a variety of developed and dispersed recreation opportunities. Common activities are: camping, fishing, hunting, off-highway vehicle use, hiking, picnicking, horseback riding, skiing, snowmobiling, biking, and viewing wildlife and scenery.

The Dixie National Forest manages 31 campgrounds and picnic areas, about 1,500 inventoried dispersed camp sites, over 20 motorized trails totaling over 500 miles (most of this system is a mixed-use portion of the classified road system), and over 1,000 miles of non-motorized trails. In addition to the motorized and non-motorized trail system, the Dixie NF has an extensive Wilderness trail system including 21 trails totaling 143 miles of trail located on the Ashdown Gorge, Pine Valley, and Box Death Hollow Wilderness Areas. The Forest also has a National Recreation Trail leading to Cascade Falls.

The Fishlake National Forest manages 27 developed recreation sites, thousands of dispersed camp sites, over 2,300 miles of motorized trail (most of this system is a mixed-use portion of the classified road system), and approximately 1,000 miles of non-motorized trails. The Forest has two National Recreation Trails: the Skyline Trail in the Tushar Mountains and the Fish Lake Shoreline Trail.

The following table summarizes acres by Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) classification from the ROS existing condition map prepared for forest plan revision.

Dixie

Recreation opportunity category	Acres
Roaded Natural	275,000
Semi-primitive Motorized	751,000
Semi-primitive Non Motorized	749,000
Primitive	106,000

Fishlake

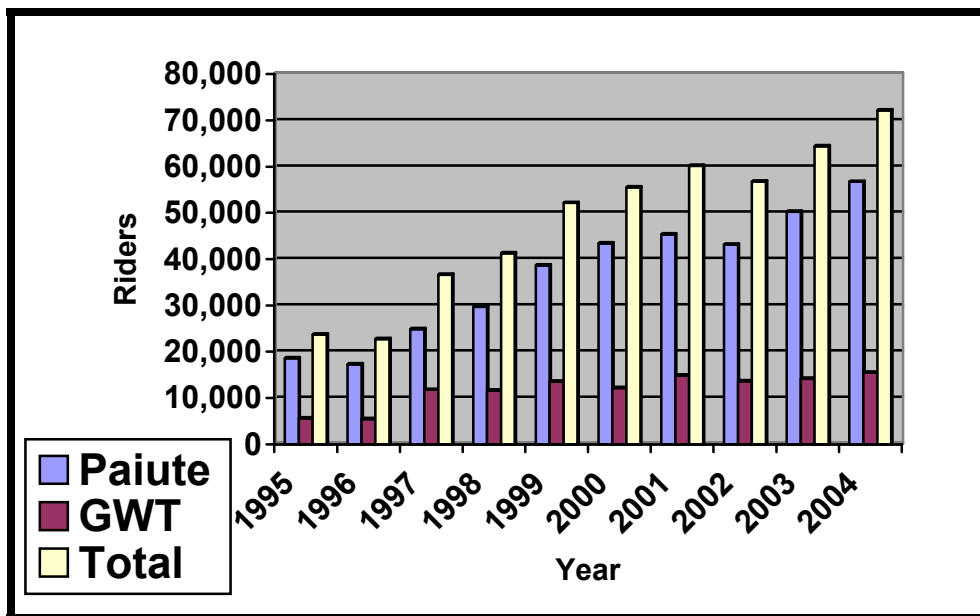
Recreation opportunity category	Acres
Roaded Natural	200,000
Semi-primitive Motorized	537,000
Semi-primitive Non Motorized	701,000
Primitive	16,000

An important trend we anticipate to continue on both Forests is a steady increase in visitors from outside the area. In addition to an increase in visitation from the Wasatch Front, we anticipate a steady increase in visitors from neighboring states (Arizona, Nevada, and California). Visitation from Clark County, Nevada in particular, is rapidly expanding, especially in areas close to I-15. We expect to see an increase in general summer use, hunting, and motorized winter recreation because of visitors from these areas.

Mechanized uses such as mountain biking are especially popular on the Dixie NF. The forest expects a rapid increase as some areas (Cedar Mountain, Brian Head, and Red Canyon) are becoming internationally renowned for this use.

In some places, unmanaged dispersed recreation (including dispersed camping, mechanized and off-trail motorized use) threatens resources and other forest uses. Much of this use is clustered adjacent to water resources.

Off-highway vehicle (OHV) use has increased in recent years. As illustration, the following graph displays annual OHV use for the Fishlake National Forest based on two of its popular trail systems: the Paiute and Great Western Trails (2004).



(These numbers are statistical projections based on actual trail count data.)

There is also a noticeable increase in encroachment from OHV use into non-motorized areas of the Forest. The Dixie and Fishlake National Forests are adopting a formal policy of motorized use on designated trails only. Restricting motorized use to designated routes should reduce resource impacts; however increasing use levels are still projected as users ride the available trails.

Non-motorized trail use is also popular on these two Forests. Even on the Fishlake NF (which is known nationally for OHV use on the Paiute and Great Western Trails), monitoring indicates that of the 447,000 Forest visitors, approximately 29% participated in walking or hiking as one of their activities, and 1% participate in horseback riding. It is also likely that many non-motorized users were not counted in this study (National Visitor Use Monitoring Results, 2003).

Given anticipated funding constraints and increased demand for various recreation opportunities, there will be challenges in visitor satisfaction/accessibility. Driving for

pleasure and viewing scenery/wildlife are top visitor activities on both Forests. This is expected to gain importance, given trends in visitor demographics.