Overcoming Racial & Income Inequality in Trail Access

National Outdoor Recreation Conference
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headwaterseconomics.org
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Headwaters Economics is an independent, nonprofit research group. Our mission is to improve community development and land management decisions in the West.

https://headwaterseconomics.org/
Why the Rural West Matters
SERIES: RURAL WEST INSIGHTS
This essay discusses why the rural West matters, focusing on three areas: the vitality of the region’s landscape, its impact on local, state, and national politics; and the future of the area’s people and communities.

Wildfire Experts’ Paper Informs Effective Policy
Wildfire experts outline key science insights important to inform policy discussions and development while reducing future risks and costs.

Communities at Risk from Closing Coal Plants
This post compares economic and demographic characteristics of communities where coal-fired power plants have recently retired or are scheduled to retire.
Good Data Can Help You:

- Understand how your community is changing
- Identify parts of your community that have disproportionate need for access
- Understand barriers in parts of your community
- Identify new potential partners
- Bolster your case for funders and decision-makers
Today:

- Why trails matter
- The story from Taos
- Tools to take home
Socioeconomic Context: Why Trails & Access Matter
Places with National Monuments Grow

17 National Monuments >10,000 acres & designated in 1982 or later – economy grew in each
Does not imply cause & effect, but proves no decline in economy

The above are examples. To see how each monument performed, see: https://headwaterseconomics.org/dataviz/national-monuments/
National Parks Create Jobs

In the WEST:

104 million visitors spent $6.7 billion
creating 104,000 jobs &
$3.7 billion in labor income

...but tourism is not the whole story
Places with More Federal Land Grow Faster

Percent changes in non-metro western counties in the top 25th and bottom 25th percentiles of proportion of FEDERAL LAND, 1970-2015

- Counties with share of protected federal lands in the top 25th percentile
- Counties with share of protected federal lands in the bottom 25th percentile

Population: 20% vs. 97%
Employment: 51% vs. 157%
Personal Income: 90% vs. 223%
Per Capita Income: 57% vs. 61%

Retirees Migrate to Places with Public Lands

Average Net Migration Rate, 1970 to 2010, by Age, for Western Counties
Based on Protected Public Lands

- **All Seniors (55+):** 5% for counties in the bottom 50% of protected public lands, 11% for counties in the top 50%.
- **Pre-retirees (55-64):** 10% for counties in the bottom 50%, 17% for counties in the top 50%.
- **Retirees (65-74):** 7% for counties in the bottom 50%, 13% for counties in the top 50%.

Outdoor Recreation Adds Jobs and Tax Revenue

- 143 million Americans participate
- $887 billion in consumer spending
- 7.6 million jobs
- $65.3 billion in federal tax revenues
- More people directly employed by hunting and fishing than oil and gas extraction

Access to Trails Can Increase Property Values

- Depends on:
  - Proximity
  - Concurrent construction
  - Neighborhood access

- Price premium: 5-10%

- Greater property tax revenue

Access to Trails Improves Quality of Life

• “Community” trails are extremely popular

• Trails contribute to why people move to or stay in a community

• What residents value about trails:
  • Health
  • Recreation
  • Social connection
  • Community identity
Access to Trails Can Improve Public Health

• Trails associated with greater physical activity

• Gains are greatest:
  • in rural places without other safe places to exercise
  • among most vulnerable: low income, low education, elderly

• Value of avoided health care costs outweigh cost of trail construction

...but benefits only available to those who have access to trails
Taos County, New Mexico

- Do disparities in access exist?
- What groups are underserved?
- What is needed to alleviate disparities?
Methods

• Random mail-back survey
  • 265 responses
• Open-link online survey
  • 99 responses
• +/- 5.1% margin of error
• Results weighted by age and ethnicity for representation

https://headwaterseconomics.org/economic-development/trails-pathways/taos-trails-use/
Overall

- 2/3 used trails in last year
- Summer: almost every day
- Winter: almost every-other day
- 3/4 support expansion of trails
- 2/3 identify proximity to trails as influencing where to live
Percent that used trails in the previous year by income

- Lowest Income: 49%
- Highest Income: 81%
Percent that used trails in the previous year by ethnicity

- Hispanic: 45%
- Non-Hispanic: 87%
Percent that used trails in the previous year by proximity

- Do not have park or trail within 10 min of home: 64%
- Have park or trail within 10 min of home: 78%
Percent that used trails in the previous year by proximity & income

- All respondents
- Lowest income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>All respondents</th>
<th>Lowest income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do not have park or trail within 10 min of home</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have park or trail within 10 min of home</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Larger circles indicate better access to recreational trails.

Predominantly Hispanic Taos Area communities lack access to trails.

Percent Hispanic
- < 50%
- 50 to 80%
- 80 to 100%
Factors increasing use

- Trails closer to where I live: 25% Hispanic, 45% Non-Hispanic
- Doctor-sponsored wellness programs: 14% Hispanic, 36% Non-Hispanic
- Trail-based programs for kids: 11% Hispanic, 29% Non-Hispanic
Purpose for trail use varies

- Hispanic residents use trails for family time

- Indigenous residents use trails for traditional purposes

- Some communities use trails for acequia maintenance
Needs

• Separation from traffic
• More trails in residential areas
• More information about trails
Taos Takeaways

• Non-Hispanic and higher income residents have more access and safer options...
• More access = more frequent use
• But where trails are accessible, lower-income populations use them more than higher-income populations
• Significant support for expanded trail access

https://headwaterseconomics.org/economic-development/trails-pathways/taos-trails-use/
What’s next in Taos

• Build Trails
  • Community trail plan
  • Neighborhoods with most to gain

• Build Programming
  • RX Trail Program with partners
  • Youth-centered programming
Three steps to increasing equity

1. Identify disparities – what & where

2. Understand residents’ use and perceptions of access
   - Surveys
   - Trail counts
   - Listening sessions

3. Integrate with prioritizing investments
   - Infrastructure
   - Outreach
   - Programming
Tools for your community
Trails Benefits Library

- Curated 130+ studies
- Searchable collection
- Overview summaries:
  - Business impacts
  - Quality of life benefits
  - Property value
  - Public health
  - Legal issues

https://headwaterseconomics.org/trail/
Custom Data Tools: Populations at Risk Economic Profile System

- Developed with USFS, BLM, private foundations
- Free, online, easy to use
- Multiple scales (state, county, city, census tract)
- Benchmark against the U.S. or custom region
- Reports in Excel or PDF
- Data for entire U.S., updated continuously
- Data and interpretation provided
- 15 different reports:
  - Populations at risk
  - Demographics
  - Tourism
  - Public Land Amenities
  - Land use
  - Economic sectors
Populations At Risk:
https://headwaterseconomics.org/tools/populations-at-risk/

Economic Profile System:
https://headwaterseconomics.org/tools/economic-profile-system/about/
### Young & Elderly Populations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adams County, WA</th>
<th>U.S.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Population, 2015*</td>
<td>19,018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 5 years old</td>
<td>2,098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 years and older</td>
<td>1,629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80 years and older</td>
<td>364</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Percent of Total, 2015*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Adams County, WA</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 5 years old</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 years and older</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80 years and older</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Change in Percentage Points, 2009*-2015*

For example, if the value is 3% in 2009* and 4.5% in 2015*, the reported change in percentage points is 1.5.

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 5 years old</td>
<td>-0.7</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 years and older</td>
<td>-0.7</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80 years and older</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### High Reliability

Data with coefficients of variation (CVs) > 12% are in black to indicate that the sampling error is relatively small.

#### Medium Reliability

Data with CVs between 12 & 40% are in orange to indicate that the values should be interpreted with caution.

#### Low Reliability

Data with CVs > 40% are displayed in red to indicate that the estimate is considered very unreliable.

### Population by Group, Percent of Total, 2015*

- Adams County, WA has the largest share of people under 5 years old (19.5%).
- The U.S. has the largest share of people 80 years and older (1.9%).

### Population by Group, Change in Percentage Points, 2009*-2015*

- The largest change in the share of people under 5 years old occurred in Adams County, WA, which went from 11.7% to 13.4%.
- The largest change in the share of people 80 years and older occurred in the U.S., which went from 1.7% to 2.0%.

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#### What do we measure on this page?

This page describes the number of people by specific age category.

The "Under 5 years old" category includes individuals younger than 5 years old. The "65 years and older" category includes individuals age 65 and older and the "80 years and older" category includes individuals age 80 and older. The "80 years and older" category is a subset of the "65 years and older" category.

#### Why is it important?

Young children and older adults both are vulnerable segments of the population. Understanding the age profile of a community can help users determine the types of services likely to be needed.1

Children’s developing bodies make them particularly sensitive to health problems and environmental stresses.1

Childhood lays the foundations for lifelong health. Poor health during childhood increases the likelihood of problems throughout adulthood.2

Because so many factors of a child’s life are determined during pregnancy, infancy, and early childhood, children in poverty are an especially vulnerable population. Lack of adequate care through the early phases of life is more prevalent in poor populations.2

Children spend more time outside and have a faster breathing rate than adults, so they are more at risk for respiratory problems related to ground level ozone, airborne particulates, wildfire smoke, and allergens. Allergens are associated with climate change due to changing plant communities and longer pollen seasons.1,4

Because their immune systems are not fully developed, children are more sensitive to infectious diseases. Natural disasters can breach public water supplies, compromise sanitation, and spread illness. Children are more vulnerable to these hazards compared to adults.3

Older adults also are at increased risk of compromised health related to environmental hazards and climate change.

Age is the single greatest risk factor related to illness or death from extreme heat.4

The elderly are more likely to have pre-existing medical conditions or compromised mobility, which reduces their ability to respond to natural disasters.5

The likelihood of chronic disease increases with age.1,4

Older adults are more susceptible to air pollution such as ground level ozone, particulate matter, or dust. Increased dust is associated with drought, wildfires, and high wind events.1,4

Superscript numbers refer to references provided at the end of the report.
Thank you!

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