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Overview Section: The Rockies Region

A Region Continually Defined and Redefined by Resources and Environment

By **Walter E. Hecox Ph.D.**

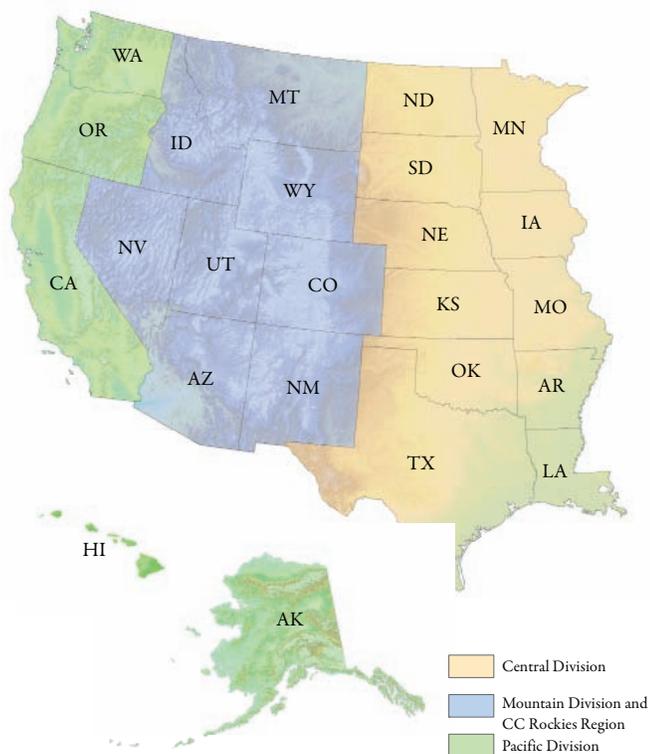
THE 2011 COLORADO COLLEGE STATE OF THE ROCKIES REPORT CARD

Key Findings:

- Over the past 40 years, the Rockies has grown by 157 percent in total population, when compared to the U.S. growth rate of 39 percent.
- Resource-based employment has shrunk nearly everywhere over 18 years, and varies substantially among the Rockies' states, with Wyoming having the highest remaining jobs in this sector in 2008 (12.3 percent) and Nevada having the lowest (2.8 percent).
- The sectors in the Rockies where service-based earnings are above comparison neighboring regions and the U.S. average include: construction (6.4 percent); retail trade (5.3 percent); real estate and rental and leasing (1.6 percent); Administrative and Waste Services (3.3 percent), arts, entertainment and recreation (0.9 percent); and accommodation and food services (3.8 percent). In contrast, "lagging" service sectors in the Rockies incorporate: wholesale trade (3.6 percent); finance and insurance (4.2 percent); professional and technical services (6.8 percent); and health care and social assistance (6.8 percent).
- We see that the Rockies as a whole had more people with a high school education than the national average in 2008.
- Manufacturing jobs in the Rockies and its zones, predictably, stand below the US level of 7.8 percent of employment in 2008, contrasted with 5.1 percent Rockies wide, 3.0 percent in the Eastern Plains, 5.5 percent along the Rockies spine, and 4.8 percent in the Southwest zone
- Average total compensation per job is one overall measure. The Rockies at \$51,413 per average job in 2008 fell below the national average of \$56,116.



Figure 1: Census Divisions of the Western United States



Overview

The Continental Divide literally forms the spine of an eight state region that we refer to at Colorado College as “the Rockies.” Containing 863,242 square miles and 24 percent of the landmass and 7.2 percent of the 2009 population in the United States, it is a region of spectacular natural beauty, harsh climate and soil conditions, huge tracts of sparsely settled lands juxtaposed next to rapidly growing urban areas. These vast open spaces continue to capture the imagination of residents and visitors alike: a suggested promise of rugged individualism, the reality of recreation and solitude that appears endless but in fact is limited and fragile, challenges to extract vital natural resources without damaging the land and thus diminishing its heritage to the future, the responsibility to form patterns of human habitation and resource management to match the grandeur of the scenery.

At first glance perhaps, the view millions receive as they fly “over” the Rockies region on their way to other destinations, the region appears to be a huge empty quarter. In 2004, clusters of dense population made the region 1.4 percent developed (urban or built-up land, including rural transportation corridors), confirming what our eyes told us from afar. Looking more closely, patterns emerge of dense agricultural activity, roads, and clusters of people in towns, cities and large metropolitan areas. Water defines life in the region, historically along streams and in the rich river bottom areas, and increasingly today in areas where water has been pumped from the ground and diverted on the surface to feed agricultural, municipal and industrial demands. Equally defining of the Rockies is the 46 percent of its land publicly owned and managed in a stunning array of types, from BLM

grazing lands, to forests controlled by the Forest Service, to the “crown jewels” of nature and culture under National Park Service and to formal or informal wilderness designation. Some chafe under “absentee” management from Washington D.C., while others look to this same management to preserve the public domain and its health for current and future generations.

So we have a region that is vast, rugged, and at the same time fragile, varied in the density and pattern of population and economic activity, alluring to waves of tourists and migrants wishing to partake of its openness and beauty. For some 14 decades, since the 1870’s and attempts to measure economic activity in the region, boom-bust cycles of human habitation and economic activity have alternated to make life in the Rockies challenging and uncertain. A review of how the Rockies have changed over past decades, when joined to a snapshot of the entire region as it looks today, helps us understand why it has integrity as a physiographic region connected by its Continental Divide spine running along the crest of the Rockies from the Canadian Border in the north to Mexico in the south.

Resources Define Economic Activity

Natural resources and environment historically have both determined and shaped human habitation and economic activity in the Rockies region. Starting in the mid-1800’s a pattern of explorers, then prospectors, followed by Anglo settlers began to take advantage of the region’s vast natural wealth, seemingly there “for the taking.” Only in later decades into and through the twentieth century have the numbers of people and sophistication of technology allowed for ever more significant extraction and use of the land, water, minerals and flora as well as fauna to support patterns of economic activity and human settlement.

A paucity of information on the early decades of Anglo settlement in the Rockies make difficult a complete picture of ways by which the “land” initially supported humans. **Table 1** traces in rough terms the roles of agriculture, forestry and fishing, starting at 32 percent of employment in 1870, remaining near one-third of regional jobs until the 1930’s and the Dust Bowl conditions that began to push these jobs continually down to 10 percent in 1960 and three percent by 2000.

Trade and transportation jobs initially served to support mining, agriculture and forestry as well as the formation of towns and cities, gradually developing a web of roads and commerce spreading its tentacles further into the remote areas of the Rockies. Standing at one-tenth of jobs in 1870, trade and transportation gradually have grown to form one-fourth of regional jobs, standing at 26 percent in 2000.

Mining employment, one of the original “attractors” of people west seeking their fortunes was not measured separately until 1910, after the initial booms in mining. Starting at nine percent of employment in 1910, mineral and energy extraction has gradually shrunk until it represented only one percent of jobs in 2000.

Jobs providing intangible services to employers, residents and visitors formed the remaining portion of employment in the last decades of the 19th century, standing at 26 percent in 1970 and rising to near one in five jobs by 1900.

Table 1:
Historic Employment in the Rockies
1870-2000

	Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing	Mining and Manufacturing	Mineral Extraction	Manufacturing	All Other (Services)	Trade and Transportation	Transportation & Public Utilities	Wholesale and Retail Trade	Construction	Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	Services**	Government	Unreported Industry
1870	32%	32%	0%	0%	0%	10%	0%	0%	0%	0%	26%	0%	0%
1880	21%	35%	0%	0%	0%	13%	0%	0%	0%	0%	31%	0%	0%
1890	26%	28%	0%	0%	0%	17%	0%	0%	0%	0%	29%	0%	0%
1900	29%	27%	0%	0%	0%	18%	0%	0%	0%	0%	26%	0%	0%
1910	32%	29%	9%	20%	0%	19%	10%	9%	0%	0%	18%	2%	0%
1920	34%	26%	7%	18%	0%	19%	9%	10%	0%	0%	19%	2%	0%
1930	32%	24%	6%	18%	0%	20%	9%	11%	0%	0%	22%	2%	0%
1940	26%	15%	6%	8%	0%	26%	8%	17%	5%	2%	19%	5%	2%
1950	18%	14%	4%	10%	68%	30%	10%	20%	8%	3%	20%	6%	2%
1960	10%	16%	4%	13%	74%	28%	8%	20%	8%	4%	24%	7%	3%
1970	7%	13%	3%	10%	80%	25%	5%	20%	5%	7%	20%	23%	0%
1980	4%	13%	3%	10%	83%	26%	5%	21%	6%	8%	23%	19%	0%
1990	4%	11%	2%	9%	86%	26%	5%	21%	5%	8%	29%	17%	0%
2000	3%	8%	1%	7%	89%	26%	5%	21%	7%	9%	32%	14%	0%

Source: U.S. Census and <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/studies/02896>

The twentieth century brought to the Rockies a gradual change in the region’s economy, with manufacturing and services replacing the dwindling role of agriculture, mining and forestry. As shown in **Table 2** the first data that trace this pattern of a more sophisticated, less resource dependent economy start in 1910. Manufacturing activity in the Rockies has always been modest, with the heavy industry located outside the region with transportation bringing finished manufactured goods to the Rockies. Standing at 20 percent in 1910, manufacturing jobs have decreased to 13 percent in 1960 and further declined to seven percent in 2000. Government employment in the early decades was low, starting at two percent in 1910 and growing inexorably to a peak of 23 percent in 1970 and then declining to 14 percent in 2000.

Services in the private sector have remained roughly 1 in 5 jobs from 1910 to 1970, rising to one-third of jobs by 2000. When these private sector service jobs are combined with public sector employment, approximately one out of two jobs in the Rockies are now intangible services, contrasted with possibly one out of two jobs in the 1970-1900 period being in land-based resource cultivation and extraction.

The eight state Rockies region can be viewed through three primary lenses; its people, employment, and income/earnings. Variations within the region by state help provide a glimpse of the similarities and differences across the region’s formal political boundaries. What stands out are the similarities

the Rockies region has across the states and when contrasted with its neighboring multi-state Pacific Coast and central Midwest regions (shown in **Figure 1**).

The Region At A Glance

The People

Over the past 40 years, the Rockies has grown by 157 percent in total population, when compared to the remainder of the county at 33 percent and the U.S. growth rate of 39 percent. People have been flooding into the Rockies in search of the region’s allure, but their location defies the image of a rural Rockies. Urbanization has accompanied this rapid growth, with the Rockies urban population (those living in a city with more than 50,000 people) comprising 75 percent of the people in the Rockies region. In the face of this rapid growth, not all portions of the Rockies have shared in this population boom; **Figure 2** shows counties whose population has increased, stayed steady, and shrunk from 1970 to 2010. This is a stark reminder that dramatic changes in the structure of economic activity and in the demographic profile of the region’s population reinforce the boom-bust nature of regional change.

Table 3 profiles some key demographic indicators for the Rocky Mountains and the comparison regions of the Western U.S. We see that people now living in the Rockies are relatively young (median age 35 years) but with a significant and growing portion above age 65 (12 percent), somewhat diverse in racial-ethnic origin (81 percent Caucasian, 23 percent Latino of any race, three percent Native American and three percent African-American). Seventy-nine percent have lived in the same location for more than one year, but there are significant numbers of people moving into and around the Rockies. Three percent have moved within the same state in the past year while four percent have moved to a different state in the Rockies in the past year. Poverty is present among

Figure 2: Population Growth in the Rockies Region 1970-2010

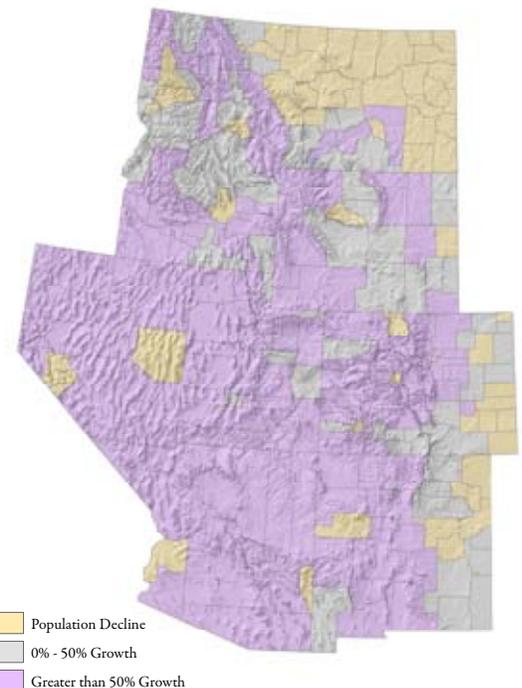
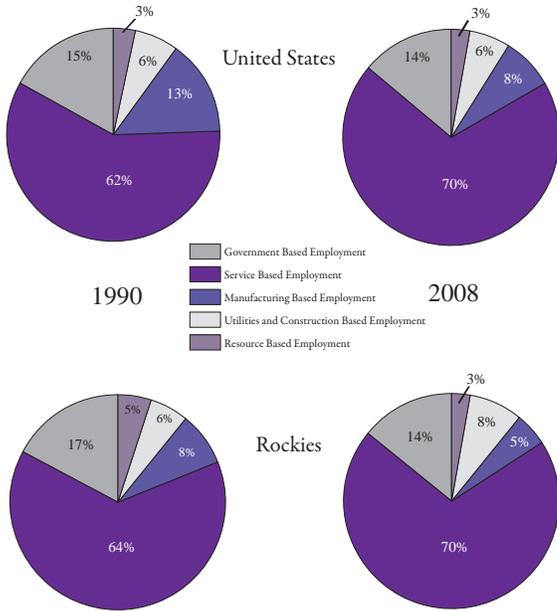


Table 2:
Manufacturing and Service Employment in the Rockies 1910-2000

	Manufacturing (percent of total employment)	Services (percent of total employment)
1910	20	18
1920	18	19
1930	18	22
1940	8	19
1950	10	20
1960	13	24
1970	10	20
1980	10	23
1990	9	29
2000	7	32

Source: US Census and <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/studies/02896>

Figure 3: Employment 1990 and 2008



Source: Regional Economic Information System, Bureau of Economic Analysis, US Department of Commerce

families at the national average while 22 percent of those who are Hispanic are considered in poverty, much higher than the national average.

Employment

The spread of jobs among economic sectors in the Rockies has changed in tandem with population growth and decline as well as major structural changes in the nature of technology, changing characteristics of new goods and services, and global trade flows. **Figure 3** shows changing proportions of employment broken into four major sectors in 1990 and 2008 for the Rockies, neighboring regions, and each Rockies state. Several fundamental trends are clear: resource-based employment has shrunk nearly everywhere over 18 years, and varies substantially among the Rockies' states, with Wyoming having the highest remaining jobs in this sector in 2008 (12.3 percent) and Nevada having the lowest (2.8 percent). Manufacturing has dwindled nationwide, falling from 13.1 percent to 7.8 percent in the U.S. and 9.7 percent to 5.7 percent in the Rockies 1990-2008. Services' based employment has risen throughout the U.S. over these 18 years (62.2 percent to 69.7 percent) while similar trends exist in the Rockies (63.6 percent to 70.3 percent) and each of the region's states. Government employment continues to represent approximately one in seven jobs, declining from 15.3 percent in 1990 to 13.5 percent in 2008 in the U.S. with a similar decline in the Rockies region. New Mexico and Wyoming continue to have proportionately high government employment, in range of one in five jobs, but similar to the rest of the nation experiencing relative declines from 1990 to 2008.

These sector trends can be explored further by looking at a U.S. Census profile of jobs in the Rockies through 2008 U.S. Census data (**Table 4**). Current patterns of employment reflect the profound changes mentioned above that have swept

Table 3: People by Census Region, 2009

	Rockies	Rockies (percent)	Central Regions	Central Regions (percent)	Pacific	Pacific (percent)	Other Regions Combined	Other Regions Combined (percent)
Population Growth 1970-2010	12969112	156.6%	-	-	-	-	-	39% (U.S.)
Population	21,303,294	-	54,736,844	-	48,459,567	-	176,956,313	-
Population under 18	5,609,571	26	14,237,246	26	12,323,660	25	42,011,498	24
Population over 65	2,454,485	12	6,498,713	12	5,450,254	11	23,597,281	13
Native American	665,013	3	630,534	1	529,487	1	597,859	0
Caucasian	17,339,541	81	42,376,665	77	31,484,234	65	133,267,225	75
African American	693,665	3	6,047,346	11	2,590,407	5	27,932,699	16
Latino	4,881,758	23	10,057,688	18	14,268,879	29	16,267,721	9
Lived in same location more than one year	16,804,791	79	44,189,734	81	39,733,001	82	148,541,563	84
Moved within same state in past 12 months	624,235	3	2,328,569	4	1,499,347	3	5,716,267	3
Moved from other state in past 12 months	887,297	4	1,424,622	3	930,362	2	4,283,195	2
Moved from abroad in past 12 months	156,159	1	309,503	1	391,523	1	1,003,622	1
Number of families	5,188,490	24	13,810,707	25	11,355,735	23	44,727,206	25
Families in Poverty	485,631	2	1,556,902	3	1,066,161	2	4,296,579	2
Families in Poverty w/ children 18 or younger	139,747	-	401,856	-	320,947	-	844,186	-
In poverty (white)	1,181,155	6	2,819,480	5	1,970,389	4	8,364,089	5
In poverty (black or African American)	662,718	3	5,756,752	11	2,462,292	5	26,725,990	15
In poverty (hispanic)	4,779,431	22	9,839,107	18	13,991,944	29	15,886,452	9
Housing Units	8,954,938	-	23,165,255	-	18,404,837	-	77,172,981	-
Housing Units Occupied	7,763,761	-	20,411,907	-	16,835,911	-	67,598,894	-
Housing Units Vacant	1,191,179	-	2,753,347	-	1,568,924	-	9,574,090	-
Median Age	35	-	36	-	36	-	37	-

Note: The numbers in this table are estimates from the American Community Survey. The 5 year estimates were used to obtain the greatest accuracy possible. Certain variables were calculated by combining variables from the survey to obtain wanted variables. Due to time constraints involving data release and publication some items were grouped and others omitted from the tables in the 2008 section, resulting in a different table

Source: American Community Survey, 2009, 5 year estimates

through the region: exploding service-based jobs alongside smaller proportions of workers involved in farming and resource extraction. Technology and environmental concerns about how natural resources are managed, alongside a global economy of open borders and easy access to world-sourcing of goods and services combine to reshape the regional economy

Table 4: Employment in the Rockies 2008

	United States	United States Percent	Rockies	Rockies Percent	Pacific	Pacific Percent	Central	Central Percent
Total employment	181,755,100	100.0%	13,176,607	100.0%	28,741,831	100.0%	34,312,105	100.0%
Wage and salary employment	143,013,000	78.7%	10,156,906	77.1%	22,169,371	77.1%	26,674,530	77.7%
Proprietors employment	38,742,100	21.3%	3,019,701	22.9%	6,572,460	22.9%	7,637,575	22.3%
Farm proprietors employment	1,910,000	1.1%	138,585	1.1%	145,610	0.5%	754,305	2.2%
Nonfarm proprietors employment	36,832,100	20.3%	2,881,116	21.9%	6,426,850	22.4%	6,883,270	20.1%
Farm employment	2,642,000	1.5%	199,551	1.5%	384,672	1.3%	900,862	2.6%
Nonfarm employment	179,113,100	98.5%	12,977,056	98.5%	28,357,159	98.7%	33,411,243	97.4%
Private employment	154,536,100	85.0%	11,171,435	84.8%	24,394,061	84.9%	28,666,393	83.5%
Forestry, fishing, and related activities	858,500	0.5%	60,460	0.5%	298,627	1.0%	162,359	0.5%
Mining	1,155,900	0.6%	176,553	1.3%	82,194	0.3%	596,870	1.7%
Utilities	590,700	0.3%	44,073	0.3%	77,216	0.3%	131,126	0.4%
Construction	11,151,000	6.1%	1,005,278	7.6%	1,648,629	5.7%	2,279,871	6.6%
Manufacturing	14,090,900	7.8%	678,436	5.1%	2,079,127	7.2%	2,750,469	8.0%
Wholesale trade	6,570,500	3.6%	419,358	3.2%	1,060,766	3.7%	1,292,972	3.8%
Retail trade	18,862,200	10.4%	1,420,394	10.8%	2,877,962	10.0%	3,563,319	10.4%
Transportation and warehousing	6,019,500	3.3%	391,536	3.0%	875,926	3.0%	1,257,670	3.7%
Information	3,529,800	1.9%	246,969	1.9%	739,108	2.6%	607,009	1.8%
Finance and insurance	9,023,400	5.0%	676,454	5.1%	1,267,174	4.4%	1,718,804	5.0%
Real estate and rental and leasing	8,369,700	4.6%	753,200	5.7%	1,523,171	5.3%	1,351,405	3.9%
Professional, scientific, and technical services	12,347,100	6.8%	899,408	6.8%	2,305,830	8.0%	1,924,364	5.6%
Management of companies and enterprises	1,993,300	1.1%	118,840	0.9%	293,470	1.0%	352,956	1.0%
Administrative and waste services	10,999,200	6.1%	839,476	6.4%	1,741,675	6.1%	1,997,660	5.8%
Educational services	3,877,000	2.1%	210,390	1.6%	564,737	2.0%	552,358	1.6%
Health care and social assistance	18,593,400	10.2%	1,132,050	8.6%	2,571,347	8.9%	3,374,024	9.8%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	3,860,200	2.1%	311,861	2.4%	736,451	2.6%	588,823	1.7%
Accommodation and food services	12,314,700	6.8%	1,138,380	8.6%	1,991,694	6.9%	2,246,984	6.5%
Other services, except public administration	10,329,100	5.7%	648,319	4.9%	1,658,957	5.8%	1,917,350	5.6%
Government and government enterprises	24,577,000	13.5%	1,805,621	13.7%	3,963,098	13.8%	4,744,850	13.8%
Federal, civilian	2,817,000	1.5%	224,757	1.7%	396,500	1.4%	462,651	1.3%
Military	2,079,000	1.1%	150,687	1.1%	399,451	1.4%	421,563	1.2%
State and local	19,681,000	10.8%	1,430,177	10.9%	3,167,147	11.0%	3,860,636	11.3%
State government	5,259,000	2.9%	414,873	3.1%	814,957	2.8%	1,021,653	3.0%
Local government	14,422,000	7.9%	1,015,304	7.7%	2,352,190	8.2%	2,838,983	8.3%

Source: NAICS 2008

and move it closer to neighboring regions' and the U.S.'s mix of employment where jobs in the "natural resource" sectors now account for less than two percent, with the remaining jobs in manufacturing and services represent 98.2 percent. **Table 4** is based upon the new North American Industrial Classification of economic sectors, allowing much more detailed sub-divisions of employment. **Figure 4** displays the differences in 2008 between the Rockies and US sector shares; with the lack of manufacturing and the abundance of accommodation and food services standing out as defining characteristics of employment in the Rockies.

So much for the "myth" that in the "rugged" Rockies people live close to the land in rural settings, wresting their sustenance from the bounty of the land, with more than its share of government workers to manage the public domain!

Income and Earnings

Changes in income for the eight state region mirror the trends in population growth and employment composition affecting the Rockies. **Table 5** shows a 2008 profile of income by place of work and by earnings in each sector. Notable aspects of the region's income include the one percent that comes from farm income and 0.4 percent that arises from farm proprietors' income, as well as the 0.2 percent of earnings in the forestry, fishing, and related activities sector alongside the 1.8 percent of earnings in the mining sector. All confirm the shrunken importance of land and natural resources in the contemporary Rockies economy. Manufacturing earnings in 2008 stood at 5.6 percent, significantly below neighboring regions and the U.S. average (8.1 percent). Rockies government earnings at 13.3 percent are higher than neighboring regions and the U.S.

The sectors where service-based earnings are above comparison neighboring regions and the U.S. average include: construction (6.4 percent); retail trade (5.3 percent); real estate and rental and leasing (1.6 percent); Administrative and Waste Services (3.3 percent), arts, entertainment and recreation (0.9 percent); and accommodation and food services (3.8 percent). In contrast, "lagging" service sectors in the Rockies incorporate: wholesale trade (3.6 percent); finance and insurance (4.2 percent); professional and technical services (6.8 percent); and health care and social assistance (6.8 percent).

Changing sources of income in the Rockies mirror the demographic trends we have reviewed above, including increasing numbers of people who bring significant sources of non-employment income and wealth from outside the region as they seek out "livable" communities for their recreation, relocation, and retirement. **Figure 5** depicting 2008 data shows that there is now a diverse mix of "earned" wage and salary disbursements (53.1 percent) alongside non-wage sources of income: transfer payments (13.8 percent) and

Figure 4 : Rockies Differences from the United States by Shares of Employment in 2008

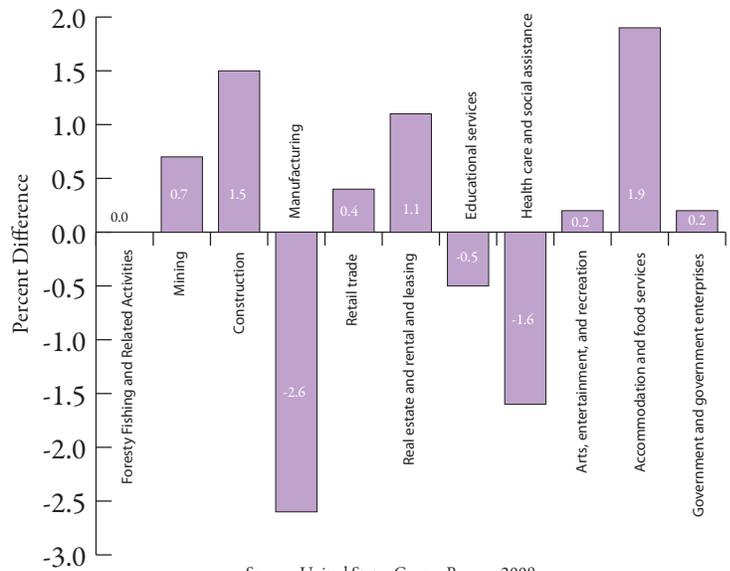


Figure 5: Personal Income Components in the Rockies, 2008 (Percent)

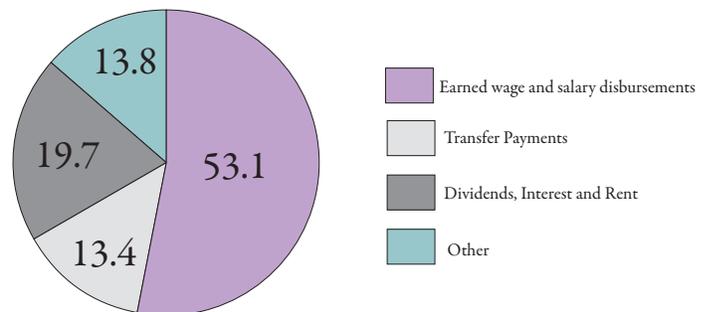


Table 5: Rockies Income Profile 2008

	West and Southern Mountain Amenity Zone	West and Southern Mountain Amenity Zone (Percent)	Continental Divide Spine	Continental Divide Spine (Percent)	Eastern Plains Agricultural Heritage Zone	Eastern Plains Agricultural Heritage Zone (Percent)	The Rockies	The Rockies (Percent)	The United States	The United States (Percent)
Personal Income (\$000)	323,287,795	100%	444,797,458	100%	38,053,420	100%	806,138,673	100%	12,225,589,000	100%
Nonfarm Personal Income (\$000)	322,274,757	99.7%	442,329,387	99.4%	36,486,013	95.9%	801,090,157	99.4%	12,149,246,000	99.4%
Farm Earnings (\$000)	1,013,038	0.3%	2,468,071	0.6%	1,567,407	4.1%	5,048,516	0.6%	76,343,000	0.6%
Net Earnings (\$000)	208,634,981	64.5%	303,293,196	68.2%	24,124,685	63.4%	536,052,862	66.5%	8,146,227,000	66.6%
Transfer Payments (\$000)	47,502,906	14.7%	57,338,196	12.9%	6,683,452	17.6%	111,524,554	13.8%	1,875,588,000	15.3%
Dividends, Interest and Rent (\$000)	67,149,908	20.8%	84,166,066	18.9%	7,245,283	19.0%	158,561,257	19.7%	2,203,774,000	18.0%
Wage and Salary Disbursements (\$000)	171,529,533	53.1%	238,607,931	53.6%	18,321,925	48.1%	428,459,389	53.1%	6,538,004,000	53.5%
Per Capita Personal Income (\$)	36,546	-	37,344	-	36,730	-	36,991	-	40,166	-

Source: Regional Economic Information System, Bureau of Economic Analysis, US Department of Commerce

dividends, interest and rent (19.7 percent). This pattern of non-wage income supplementing "earned" wages and salaries dampens the susceptibility of regions to wild boom-bust cycles in wage-based earnings and introduces many "newcomers"

and “age-diverse” residents who bring additional lifestyles and values to what has become increasingly an “amenity-based” economy in the Rocky Mountain states.

The Rockies Divided: Three Sub-Regions That Make Sense

Introduction

The Rockies Region is NOT homogeneous! We have just looked at overall characteristics of the region, made up by eight states containing 281 counties and this data helps make the case that socio-economic and demographic similarities bind the region together. However, distinct Rockies zones or sub-regions can be identified by evaluating the differences among clusters of counties within the Rockies Region. It is important to focus here on various parts of the entire Rockies Region as unique groups of counties, for a “one-set-of-policies-fits-all” approach to management of resources, the environment, communities, and their infrastructure in the Rockies is as inappropriate as would be a national set of policies that does not take into account the substantial differences between the Rockies vs. the neighboring Pacific and Central Divisions that have integrity within Congress and the Census Bureau.

The Rockies Region is bound together by the Continental Divide “spine,” and clustered to the east and west of the spectacular Rocky Mountains. Our analysis of the counties within the eight state Rockies Region has identified three distinct sub-regions or zones (**Figure 6**):

- The Continental Divide Spine
- The Eastern Plains Agricultural Zone
- The West and Southern Mountain Amenity Zone

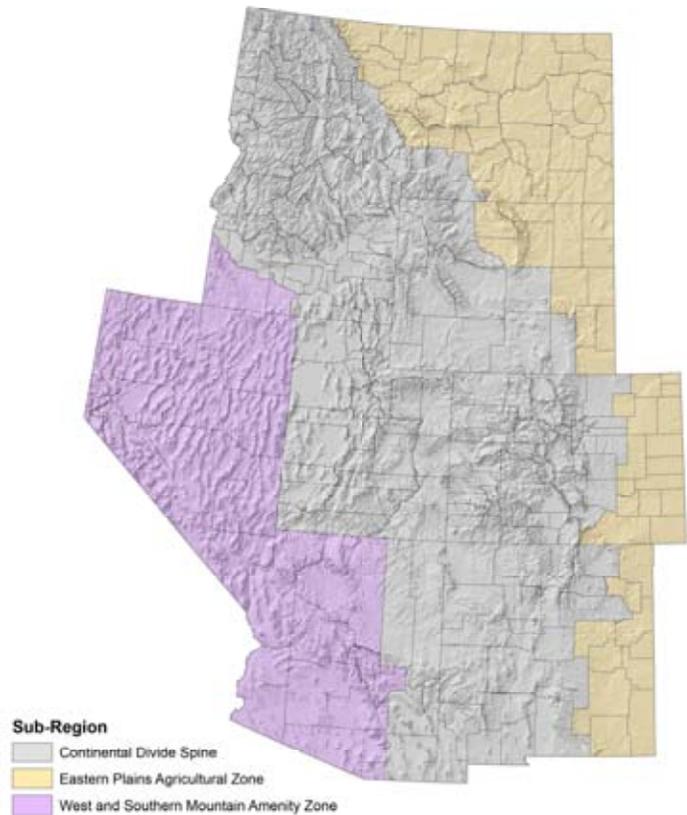
Varying topography, as well as defining characteristics of economic activity and demographics, distinguishes these three sub-regions. Each of these Rockies clusters of counties shares many common characteristics that bind them together and call for different policies and programs of resource management as well as social and economic health.

Here we provide a view of distinguishing characteristics these sub-regions have that bind them together. A comparison is made to comparable data for the entire Rockies eight state region.

The Land

Topography is THE defining characteristic of the Rockies Region. While all who live in the region, whether in communities or rural settings, share either a view of the Rockies “spine” or are comforted that mountains are close-by for recreation and solitude, there are dramatic differences in the “land base” of the sub-regions. **Table 6** makes this abundantly clear. Region-wide 26 percent of the Rockies is forested, but only seven percent of the Eastern Plains Zone has forests vs. 37 percent of the Continental Divide Spine and 21 percent of the West and Southern Mountain Amenity Zone. Similarly, the presence of public lands vary dramatically, standing at 31 percent for the U.S., 46 percent for the Rockies Region, but only 16 percent for the Eastern Plains as compared to 51 percent for the Continental Divide Spine and 66 percent for

Figure 6: Sub-Regions of the Rockies Region



The Land	The United States	The Rockies	West and Southern Mountain Amenity Zone	The Continental Divide Spine	Eastern Plains Agricultural Heritage Zone
Total Acres of Forested Land	736,681,000	143,586,893	27,160,320	107,370,844	8,575,989
% of Total Land Area Forested	32.6%	26.0%	21.2%	37.0%	7.0%
Population Per Square Mile	87	26	45	26	5
Acres of Public Lands	699,000,000	252,963,153	84,624,811	146,564,446	20,246,854
% of Total Land Area Publicly Owned	30.9%	45.8%	66.0%	50.5%	16.4%
Total Acres of Designated Wilderness	105,678,486	22,211,898	5,783,689	15,880,594	343,897
% of Total Land Area Wilderness	4.7%	4.0%	4.5%	5.5%	0.3%
Total Acres of National Park Service Lands	84,000,000	9,972,779	3,328,724	6,125,529	437,049
% National Park Service Owned Lands	3.7%	1.8%	2.6%	2.1%	0.4%
Total Acres of Forest Service Lands	191,000,000	95,022,002	14,562,593	73,948,117	5,528,936
% Forest Service Owned Lands	8.4%	17.2%	11.4%	25.5%	4.5%
Total Acres of BLM Lands	261,000,000	140,110,389	62,683,449	64,222,763	12,742,957
% Bureau of Land Management Lands	11.5%	25.4%	48.9%	22.1%	10.3%
Average USDA Natural Amenity Rank	-	4.9	5.3	5.0	4.1

Source: BLM, USFS, USDA Economic Research, Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute
 Note: This table was taken from the State of the Rockies 2004 Report Card and updated for population per square mile. Some numbers might have slightly changed but were not considered significant. Population was taken from ACS 2009 estimates.

the West and Southern Mountain Amenity Zone. If declared Wilderness and presence of national parks are used as rulers, the Eastern Plains represents a cluster of counties almost totally

Table 7:
People by Rockies Sub-region, 2009

	West and Southern Mountain Amenity Zone	West and Southern Mountain Amenity Zone (percent)	Continental Divide Spine	Continental Divide Spine (percent)	Eastern Plains Agricultural Zone	Eastern Plains Agricultural Zone (percent)	Rockies	Rockies (percent)	Other Regions Combined	Other Regions Combined (percent)
Population Growth 1970-2010	5,454,682	331.3	5,685,655	122.1	119,313	17.8	12969112	156.6%	40,678,963	32.5
Population	8,604,286	-	11,667,867	-	1,031,141	-	21,303,294	-	280,152,734	-
Population under 18	2,253,204	26	3,096,202	27	260,165	25	5,609,571	26	68,572,404	24
Population over 65	1,065,186	12	1,242,906	11	146,393	14	2,454,485	12	35,546,248	13
Native American	208,606	2	405,200	3	51,207	5	665,013	3	1,757,880	1
Caucasian	6,689,747	78	9,785,953	84	863,841	84	17,339,541	81	207,128,124	74
African American	409,980	5	266,229	2	17,456	2	693,665	3	36,570,452	13
Latino	2,466,902	29	2,231,020	19	183,836	18	4,881,758	23	40,594,288	14
Lived in same location more than one year	6,691,844	78	9,280,946	80	832,001	81	16,804,791	79	232,464,298	83
Moved within same state in past 12 months	132,905	2	456,454	4	34,876	3	624,235	3	9,544,183	3
Moved from other state in past 12 months	381,932	4	464,843	4	40,522	4	887,297	4	6,638,179	2
Moved from abroad in past 12 months	72,362	1	79,227	1	4,570	0	156,159	1	1,704,648	1
Have High School Attainment 25+	1,494,049	84	1,877,809	88	219,108	85	3,590,966	86	-	85 (U.S.)
Have Bachelors Degree 25+	888,462	25	1,441,050	31	90,324	20	2,419,836	28	-	28 (U.S.)
Number of families	2,050,808	24	2,868,492	25	269,190	26	5,188,490	24	69,893,648	25
Families in Poverty	194,410	10	261,602	9	29,619	11	485,631	9	6,919,642	9
Families in Poverty w/children 18 or younger	55,568	-	7,6505	-	7,674	-	139,747	-	1,566,989	-
In poverty (white)	430,617	5	694,325	6	56,213	5	1,181,155	6	13,153,958	5
In poverty (black or African American)	394,697	5	253,578	2	14,443	1	662,718	3	3,4945,034	12
In poverty (hispanic)	2,422,542	28	2,180,859	19	176,030	17	4,779,431	22	39,717,503	14
Housing Units	3,622,322	-	4,868,610	-	464,006	-	8,954,938	-	118,743,073	-
Housing Units Occupied	3,107,548	-	4,254,450	-	401,763	-	7,763,761	-	104,846,712	-
Housing Units Vacant	514,776	-	614,160	-	62,243	-	1,191,179	-	13,896,361	-
Median Age	35	-	34	-	38	-	35	-	-	-

Note: The numbers in this table are estimates from the American Community survey. The 5 year estimates were used to obtain the greatest accuracy possible. Certain variables were calculated by combining variables from the survey to obtain wanted variables. Due to time constraints and available data some items were grouped and others omitted from the tables in the 2004 section.
Source: American Community Survey, 2009, 5 year estimates

devoid of these wild lands and their protective designations. Surprisingly, national forests are present even in the Eastern Plains Zone (5 percent), although substantially below the eight percent national level and the 17 percent Rockies Region proportion, with the Continental Divide Zone understandably having the highest proportion of forest lands (26 percent). BLM lands, representing the lower elevation public lands largely suited for grazing, are present in the Eastern Plains Zone at 10 percent, very close to the U.S. proportion (12 percent), but again there are higher proportions of these public lands among the Continental Divide Zone (22 percent) and the Western and Southern Zone (49 percent). Wide-open spaces are not just a buzzword around the Rockies.

We have seen that only 1.4 percent of the Rockies region’s land is devoted to urban or built-up uses, and yet this sparseness of population itself is not evenly distributed. The population density in 2008 for the U.S. stood at 86 persons per square mile and in the Rockies Region 25, matching the “empty-quarter” image of the area. But within the Rockies on the Eastern Plains it stood at only 5 persons per square mile, while for the Continental Divide Spine it was 25 persons and for the West and Southern Mountain Amenity Zone, a rapidly growing region of retirement and quality of life “seekers,” a substantially higher density of 44 persons.

The People

Patterns of human habitation around the Rockies reinforce trends topography and changing economics establish

as seen in **Table 7**. Over 40 years, 1970 to 2010, the total U.S. population grew 39 percent while for the Rockies Region it rose 157 percent. Within the Rockies the West and Southern Mountain Amenity Zone grew an astounding 331 percent and the Continental Divide Spine a buoyant 122 percent, but the Eastern Plains lagged even the U.S. level at 18 percent population growth. In 2009 the proportion of people living in metro-designated counties reinforced the Rockies stereotype with 75 percent of the Rockies living in urban areas (50,000+).

Ages of the Rockies residents provide additional insight into the demographics that help shape available workforces and demands for social services. While

in the Rockies there is a younger population with 26 percent below 18; among the Rockies zones the West and Southern Mountains Zone matches the national average at 26 percent, the Eastern Plains has 25 percent, and the Continental Divide Spine has 27 percent. At the other end of the “dependency” distribution, some 13 percent of the U.S. population is 65+, while for the Rockies it is 12 percent. Within the Rockies the smallest proportion 65+ reside within the Continental Divide Spine (11 percent), with the West and Southern Mountain Zone at 12 percent and the Eastern Plains at 14 percent. Median ages for these regions reflect these proportions of the elderly.

Racial composition around the Rockies highlights both homogeneity and diversity. The proportion identifying themselves as White (one race) stood at 81 percent for the Rockies, and 84 percent for the Eastern Plains Zone, with the Continental Divide Spine at 84 percent and the West and Southern Mountains Zone at 78 percent. Hispanic or Latino identification for the Rockies stood at 23 percent, with the West and Southern Mountain Zone understandably highest with 29 percent.

Mobility likewise reflects the economic and demographic buoyancy of areas. For all parts of the Rockies in 2009 79 percent of the people stayed living in the same location at the previous year, while three percent moved in state and four percent moved from a different state. In the Rockies sub-regions the Eastern Plains Agricultural Zone had the highest percentage with 81 that stayed in the same place for the year, while the West and Southern Amenity Zones had the lowest

with 78 percent. Consistent with national trends, a large proportion of the “moving” between houses occurs within the same state. Likewise the Eastern Plains Agricultural Zone had the lowest percentage move from abroad in the past year.

We see that the Rockies as a whole had more people with a high school/GED than the national average in 2008. In the Rockies this trend is spread across the three sub-regions as the Continental Divide Spine has 88 percent high school/GED rate compared with the West and Southern Amenity

Zone with a region low, 84 percent. The Rockies is right on average with the national statistics for those who have obtained a bachelors degree or higher with the Continental Divide Spine having the greatest percentage of college graduates.

Poverty is distributed unevenly around the Rockies. The entire region in 2009 had a families in poverty level of nine percent comparable to the rest of the United States. Within the Rockies both of the fast growing sub-regions had family poverty levels below the Eastern Plains Agricultural Zone which registered a high of 11 percent. The decline of the Eastern Plains Agricultural Zone is once again witnessed by leading families in poverty in the Rockies region.

Employment

How are workers employed throughout the Rockies? A look at Census data from the 2008 reveals some predictable clusters of employment related to the region’s resource base and demographics, as well as some surprises. Regions like the Rockies with vast proportions of undeveloped land and rich natural, scenic and recreational resources would be expected to have many employed in occupations related to farming, fishing and forestry. But this pattern works only for the Eastern Plains with 6.4 percent in farming contrasted with the US and Rockies combined region level of 1.5 percent. Forestry, fisheries and

Table 8:
Employment in the Rockies Sub-Regions 2008

	Eastern Plains Agricultural Zone	Eastern Plains Agricultural Zone (percent)	Continental Divide Spine	Continental Divide Spine (percent)	The West and Southern Amenity Zone	The West and Southern Amenity Zone (percent)	Rockies	Rockies (percent)	United States	United States (percent)
Total employment	665,275	100.0%	7,536,238	100.0%	4,975,094	100.0%	13,176,607	100.0%	181,755,100	100.0%
Wage and salary employment	498,854	75.0%	5,714,695	75.8%	3,943,357	79.3%	10,156,906	77.1%	143,013,000	78.7%
Proprietors employment	166,421	25.0%	1,821,543	24.2%	1,031,737	20.7%	3,019,701	22.9%	38,742,100	21.3%
Farm proprietors employment	31,456	4.7%	96,581	1.3%	10,548	0.2%	138,585	1.1%	1,910,000	1.1%
Nonfarm proprietors employment	134,965	20.3%	1,724,962	22.9%	1,021,189	20.5%	2,881,116	21.9%	36,832,100	20.3%
Farm employment	42,785	6.4%	132,132	1.8%	24,634	0.5%	199,551	1.5%	2,642,000	1.5%
Nonfarm employment	622,490	93.6%	7,404,106	98.2%	4,950,460	99.5%	12,977,056	98.5%	179,113,100	98.5%
Private employment	508,055	76.4%	6,306,464	83.7%	4,356,916	87.6%	11,171,435	84.8%	154,536,100	85.0%
Forestry, fishing, and related activities	3,251	0.5%	21,942	0.3%	15,897	0.3%	60,460	0.5%	858,500	0.5%
Mining	35,514	5.3%	91,332	1.2%	25,300	0.5%	176,553	1.3%	1,155,900	0.6%
Utilities	2,826	0.4%	16,982	0.2%	16,695	0.3%	44,073	0.3%	590,700	0.3%
Construction	46,846	7.0%	572,077	7.6%	377,457	7.6%	1,005,278	7.6%	11,151,000	6.1%
Manufacturing	20,145	3.0%	416,221	5.5%	241,242	4.8%	678,436	5.1%	14,090,900	7.8%
Wholesale trade	19,898	3.0%	214,316	2.8%	163,226	3.3%	419,358	3.2%	6,570,500	3.6%
Retail trade	71,892	10.8%	796,421	10.6%	550,724	11.1%	1,420,394	10.8%	18,862,200	10.4%
Transportation and warehousing	23,494	3.5%	201,873	2.7%	154,876	3.1%	391,536	3.0%	6,019,500	3.3%
Information	7,733	1.2%	154,404	2.0%	70,777	1.4%	246,969	1.9%	3,529,800	1.9%
Finance and insurance	23,486	3.5%	377,480	5.0%	272,698	5.5%	676,454	5.1%	9,023,400	5.0%
Real estate and rental and leasing	22,838	3.4%	416,289	5.5%	310,983	6.3%	753,200	5.7%	8,369,700	4.6%
Professional, scientific, and technical services	16,828	2.5%	559,851	7.4%	303,467	6.1%	899,408	6.8%	12,347,100	6.8%
Management of companies and enterprises	1,060	0.2%	64,780	0.9%	50,073	1.0%	118,840	0.9%	1,993,300	1.1%
Administrative and waste services	22,361	3.4%	415,230	5.5%	383,318	7.7%	839,476	6.4%	10,999,200	6.1%
Educational services	3,384	0.5%	130,579	1.7%	69,209	1.4%	210,390	1.6%	3,877,000	2.1%
Health care and social assistance	49,501	7.4%	619,020	8.2%	418,354	8.4%	1,132,050	8.6%	18,593,400	10.2%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	10,319	1.6%	177,834	2.4%	119,839	2.4%	311,861	2.4%	3,860,200	2.1%
Accommodation and food services	44,803	6.7%	528,397	7.0%	554,056	11.1%	1,138,380	8.6%	12,314,700	6.8%
Other services, except public administration	33,610	5.1%	374,858	5.0%	235,132	4.7%	648,319	4.9%	10,329,100	5.7%
Government and government enterprises	114,435	17.2%	1,097,642	14.6%	593,544	11.9%	1,805,621	13.7%	24,577,000	13.5%
Federal, civilian	13,769	2.1%	148,955	2.0%	61,974	1.2%	224,757	1.7%	2,817,000	1.5%
Military	12,612	1.9%	93,857	1.2%	44,074	0.9%	150,687	1.1%	2,079,000	1.1%
State and local	87,951	13.2%	854,752	11.3%	487,474	9.8%	1,430,177	10.9%	19,681,000	10.8%
State government	19,386	2.9%	252,493	3.4%	119,311	2.4%	414,873	3.1%	5,259,000	2.9%
Local government	63,683	9.6%	552,299	7.3%	366,883	7.4%	1,015,304	7.7%	14,422,000	7.9%

Source: NAICS 2008

mining occupations stood at 1.8 percent for the entire Rockies vs. 5.8 percent for the Eastern Plains, 1.5 percent for the Rockies Spine and 0.8 percent for the Southwest Zone. Thus, in the rugged Rockies workers are largely employed away from jobs based directly on cultivation of land and extraction of resources.

Manufacturing jobs in the Rockies and its zones, predictably, stand below the US level of 7.8 percent of employment in 2008, contrasted with 5.1 percent Rockies wide, 3.0 percent in the Eastern Plains, 5.5 percent along the Rockies spine, and 4.8 percent in the Southwest zone. Beyond natural resource-based, construction and manufacturing jobs, an astounding 84 percent of jobs are in the service sector in the Rockies, above the US level of 83.5 percent!

The service sector occupational categories in the Rockies outpacing the national averages include: retail trade, finance and insurance, real estate activities, administrative and waste services, arts, entertainment and recreation, accommodation and food services, and government jobs.

Proportions of jobs that employ Rockies workers provide more detail about what is happening as employment activity, reflecting the basic differences in economic activity within each of the Rockies zones. Here are some highlights from **Table 8** by the Rockies regions:

Eastern Plains Agricultural Zone

Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting and mining jobs by industry proportion (at 12.3 percent) are six times higher than the national level and four times higher than the Rockies average. Manufacturing jobs (3 percent) are far below the national average (14 percent) and the Rockies average (7.8 percent). Information jobs, FIRE employment (finance, insurance, real estate, rental and leasing) and work in professional, scientific, management, and administration categories all stand below national and Rockies averages, a total of only 14.2 percent vs. 25.5 percent for the US and 26.8 percent for the Rockies. Jobs in education, health and social services as well as arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services for the Eastern Plains represented 21.3 percent, below the U.S. level of 26.9 percent and Rockies-wide 26.1 percent.

Continental Divide Spine:

Agriculture and natural resource related jobs as well as construction, some 3.3 percent of jobs in 2008, outpace national levels and match Rockies employment proportions. Manufacturing, while significantly higher than the Eastern Plains Zone, stands at 5.5 percent vs. 7.8 percent for the nation. Work in information, finance, insurance, real estate, professional, management, and administration represented 26.4 percent of jobs in 2008, compared to 25.5 percent for the US and 26.8 percent for the combined Rockies, again signaling the highly educated workers inhabiting the string of cities in close proximity to the Continental Divide. Similarly work in professional, scientific, management and administration industries, at 10.2 percent, outpace both the nation (9.3 percent) and the Rockies (9.8 percent).

West and Southern Mountains Amenity Zone:

Defying the seemingly perpetual image of the Rockies as

Table 9: Rockies Income Profile 2008

	West and Southern Mountain Amenity Zone	West and Southern Mountain Amenity Zone (Percent)	Continental Divide Spine	Continental Divide Spine (Percent)	Eastern Plains Agricultural Heritage Zone	Eastern Plains Agricultural Heritage Zone (Percent)	The Rockies	The Rockies (Percent)	The United States	The United States (Percent)
Personal Income (\$000)	323,287,795	100%	444,797,458	100%	38,053,420	100%	806,138,673	100%	12,225,589,000	100%
Nonfarm Personal Income (\$000)	322,274,757	99.7%	442,329,387	99.4%	36,486,013	95.9%	801,090,157	99.4%	12,149,246,000	99.4%
Farm Earnings (\$000)	1,013,038	0.3%	2,468,071	0.6%	1,567,407	4.1%	5,048,516	0.6%	76,343,000	0.6%
Net Earnings (\$000)	208,634,981	64.5%	303,293,196	68.2%	24,124,685	63.4%	536,052,862	66.5%	8,146,227,000	66.6%
Transfer Payments (\$000)	47,502,906	14.7%	57,338,196	12.9%	6,683,452	17.6%	111,524,554	13.8%	1,875,588,000	15.3%
Dividends, Interest and Rent (\$000)	67,149,908	20.8%	84,166,066	18.9%	7,245,283	19.0%	158,561,257	19.7%	2,203,774,000	18.0%
Wage and Salary Disbursements (\$000)	171,529,533	53.1%	238,607,931	53.6%	18,321,925	48.1%	428,459,389	53.1%	6,538,004,000	53.5%
Per Capita Personal Income (\$)	36,546	-	37,344	-	36,730	-	36,991	-	40,166	-

Source: Regional Economic Information System, Bureau of Economic Analysis, US Department of Commerce

a land of ranching, mining and lumbering, agriculture and natural resource related jobs in this fast growing region are at a minimal level of 1.5 percent vs. the nation at 1.9 percent and the Rockies Region at 1.3 percent. Construction jobs, to provide communities and infrastructure for rapid growth, mimicked the Rockies Region average of 7.6 percent. Manufacturing in this Zone (4.8 percent) predictably lags the nation (7.8 percent) and the Rockies (5.1 percent). Jobs in FIRE and related sectors, at 28 percent, exceed the other parts of the Rockies and the national average. Geographical remoteness no longer appears to hinder “white-collar” employment in professional, scientific, management and administrative work: this Zone has one in ten such jobs, exceeding both the Rockies and national averages. Driven by an abundance of environmental, recreational and cultural “amenities,” this sub-region has some one and one-half times the jobs as the nation (13.5 percent vs. 8.9 percent) in the arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services.

Income and Earnings

Wages and salaries are driven by availability of jobs.

Table 10:
Earned vs. Unearned Income 2008

Income: 2008 Profile	West and Southern Mountain Amenity Zone	Percent	Continental Divide Spine	Percent	Eastern Plains Agricultural Heritage Zone	Percent	The Rockies	Percent	The United States	Percent
Personal Income (\$000)	323,287,795	100%	444,797,458	100%	38,053,420	100%	806,138,673	100%	12,225,589,000	100%
Nonfarm Personal Income (\$000)	322,274,757	99.7%	442,329,387	99.4%	36,486,013	95.9%	801,090,157	99.4%	12,149,246,000	99.4%
Farm Earnings (\$000)	1,013,038	0.3%	2,468,071	0.6%	1,567,407	4.1%	5,048,516	0.6%	76,343,000	0.6%
Net Earnings (\$000)	208,634,981	64.5%	303,293,196	68.2%	24,124,685	63.4%	536,052,862	66.5%	8,146,227,000	66.6%
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Per Capita Personal Income (\$)	36,546	-	37,344	-	36,730	-	36,991	-	40,166	-

Source: NAICS 2008

This “earned” portion of personal income, however, is only part of where purchasing power emanates. What can be termed “non-work” sources of income include transfer payments and dividends, interest and rent, with both supplementing a region’s income beyond the employment base. The pattern of income for the Rockies and its sub-regions, shown in **Table 9**, provides a window into how people and their communities survive and thrive “out-west.”

It is “old” news by now that farming and agriculture represent very low proportions of employment even in the Rockies where only 1.4 percent of the land is “developed.” But worse news exists! Farming is too often a losing endeavor, as shown by the extremely low levels of total personal income derived from farming in 2008: a miniscule 0.6 percent for the U.S. and the Rockies. Only the Eastern Plains defied this reality, standing at 4.1 percent while the Continental Divide Spine stood at 0.6 percent and the West and Southern Mountains Zone a mere 0.3 percent. In general “farm” residents must supplement their earnings (and losses) from agriculture increasingly by working other “day” jobs and through non-work sources of income.

Net earnings from employment can serve as a proxy for the proportion of income generated by jobs (the remaining income, after social service taxes, comes from dividends, interest and rent as well as social security type payments. As shown in **Table 10**, the national proportion in 2008 stood at 66.6 percent while the Rockies Region nearly equal at 66.5 percent. Among the Rockies zones the Continental Divide Spine had the highest proportion of net earnings (68.2 percent) followed by the West and Southern Mountain Amenity Zone at 64.5 percent and with the Eastern Plains lagging way behind at only 63.4 percent of “earned” income. Equally informative, therefore, is the proportion of personal income not coming from employment, but rather from what some call “non-labor” sources: interest, rent and dividends as well as income transfer payments. The Southwest zone has the highest income from dividends, interest and rent, at 20.8 percent, while the Eastern Plains has the highest proportion of income from current transfer receipts: 17.6 percent.

Focusing for a moment on income from jobs, how high paying are they in the Rockies? Average total compensation per job is one overall measure. The Rockies at \$51,413 per average job in 2008 fell below the national average of \$56,116. Within the Rockies region, the West and Southern Mountains Zone and Eastern Agricultural Zone underperformed the Rockies average per capita income of \$36,991, while the Continental Divide Spine outperformed the Rockies level with a per capita income of \$37,344.

Transfer payments as well as dividends, interest and rent form the “non-work” sources of income. Children and the elderly in the dependency portions of the population often receive transfer payments either for retirement and/or due to poverty. Many adults both during their working years and into retirement receive substantial income from returns on their assets. Combined, these supplements to job earnings partly insulate communities, counties and regions from the wildest variations of boom-bust cycles of employment. As shown in **Table 10** for 2008, transfer payments in the Rockies exceeded national and regional levels only for the Eastern Plains, where

17.6 percent of income is thus generated. In contrast, the income from dividends, interest and rent outpace the national level of 18.0 percent for the Rockies combined area (19.7 percent) and its sub-regions, with the West and Southern Mountains Zone standing highest at 20.8 percent.

Insights

The Rockies, when dissected as we have done here into three sub-regions that each share distinct characteristics and conditions, become more complex than just a “region with a spine.” Certainly some local, state, regional and even national policies are suitable to all of the 281 counties. These include policies that encourage creation of new jobs, that support healthy and vibrant communities, and that provide appropriate “local” participation in resource and environmental management decisions.

But it is clear now that the Eastern Plains Agricultural Zone is challenged by slow to negative population growth, high dependency levels of the young and elderly, poverty, and diminished prosperity emanating from their shared agricultural land base. In contrast, “boom” conditions exist for the West and Southern Mountain Amenity Zone and, in different patterns, for the Continental Divide Spine. Influxes of newcomers, both seeking jobs and high quality of life in the working and retirement years, generate a different class of challenges: those of rampant growth that often outpace community infrastructure and stress the “traditional” fabric of small communities and even large metro areas.

Future Rockies Report Cards and Conferences will be focused on many of the trends identified here. With the full 2010 census available in the future, more accurate and detailed social statistics will be available to better analyze the Rockies’ people. We won’t be as restricted as to the data available and no longer rely upon estimates. We will explore in depth case studies of communities facing explosive growth vs. dwindling populations and ways to earn a living. We will consider innovative experiments that connect local and regional communities to the management of federal lands and reserves. We will search out those clusters of counties within the Rockies that are taking bold steps to cope with rapid change while retaining the quality of life that acts as the glue holding people to their communities and surrounding lands. In all of this, we welcome suggestions for topics to explore, experts who can enlighten and extend the Rockies Conversation, and ideas for useful Report Card information that is insightful and stimulating.

