

Garfield County Profile

Prepared for the:
**Dixie, Fishlake & Manti-La Sal National Forests
Forest Plan Revision
Social and Economic Assessment**

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GARFIELD COUNTY OVERVIEW



County Land Ownership

- 30.4% — Forest Service
- 27.5% — Bureau of Land Mgt.
- 17.2% — BLM-Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument
- 9.2% — Natl. Recreation Area
- 4.3% — Natl. Park
- 4.8% — State Trust Lands
- 5.1% — Private
- 0.7 % — National Monument
- 0.6% — Other
- 0.76 % — Wilderness Areas
- 14.7% — Wilderness Study Area (within BLM total)

source: SITLA, 2003

County Planned Uses

No Zoning provided for report.

This overview contains observations drawn from the maps, economic and demographic trend data, and a review of county plans contained in this profile. In addition, it contains comments and explanations of county leaders and residents, gathered at workshops conducted to review this assessment.

Landscape

Garfield County is the fifth largest county in Utah geographically, yet has the fifth smallest population. Most of the county's 5,000 people are clustered near the high, alpine environment on the west side of the county, where the majority of the water and private land can be found. Irrigated agriculture and grazing here are significant parts of the county's landscape and lifestyle. The maps for Garfield County illustrate the few significant groundwater reserves. Nearly 95% of the county is held in public lands—a substantial portion in the Dixie National Forest, as well portions of as three National Parks and a National Recreation Area, and the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument.

Population

Garfield County is sparsely populated. While the population trend for the last thirty years shows overall growth, many unincorporated areas within the County have seen a small but steady decline in population since the 1950's. Much of the decline has been attributed to an aging agricultural population and limited jobs paying wages to support a family, reducing school-aged populations. Still, the population projected to continue growing. Much of the growth is being attributed to second home ownership or retirees. Many second homes are being built at Panguitch Lake and Mammoth Lake. Participants at the county workshops stated that a large percentage of dropouts after the first six months of college effects educational attainment levels.

Economy

Vast rangelands and some of Utah's largest forest reserves made cattle ranching and lumbering the historical base for settlement in Garfield County. Greater focus on recreation on public lands, especially with the creation of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, has recently fostered a growing tourism and recreation economy, and tourism is now estimated to comprise nearly half of all employment in the county. The service, government, and non-farm proprietor sectors have become a large proportion of recent job

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Current Issues

*watershed protection
 invasive plants
 watershed planning
 employment opportunities
 access to timber and minerals
 management of public lands
 preserving agriculture and
 grazing rights*

growth and are projected to grow more rapidly than more traditional sectors such as agriculture and mining. The County is also looking to tourism for growth and is seeking ways to make small family-based agriculture more viable. Slow job growth and relatively high unemployment are constant concerns. Over the past 30 years, employment in Garfield County has grown at a rate nearly identical to the nation, but slower than the rest of the state. The seasonal nature of many local industries often creates higher unemployment and lower annual wages.

Local business people have often felt that economic development of timber, mining, and energy resources on public land have been discouraged by recent land use policies of public land agencies. While often hard to access, large deposits of natural resources could spur economic growth. The potential to mine uranium and coal has been diminished with the creation of the Monument. Large areas of forest, now infected with the pine beetle, are also possible sources of timber to revive lumber mills that have been in decline. County leaders expressed fear that more wilderness and roadless areas would further diminish opportunities to develop resources.

Planning

Garfield County spends a substantial amount of time and money planning for and managing public lands. They believe there is a strong need for cooperation between land management agencies and the locals who rely on these areas for their culture or industry. Local leaders also seek better relations and decision-making processes to ensure their efforts have an influence on the management of the lands they depend on. The county supports a multiple-use sustained yield management philosophy. County residents have significant concerns with water quality, erosion, noxious weeds, and timber management. The County Plan has a zoning designation that applies to the private land inholdings within USFS lands Planning documents reviewed for this assessment include:

*Garfield County General Plan, 1995
 Five County AOG, County Fact Sheet, 1999
 Utah State Historical Society, Beehive History: Utah Counties. 1988*