

Grand County Profile

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

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GRAND COUNTY OVERVIEW



County Land Ownership

65.9% — Bureau of Land Mgt.
 14.9% — State Trust Lands
 8.4% — Tribal
 4.3% — Private
 3.2% — Natl. Park/Monument
 2.4% — Forest Service
 1.2% — Other
 0% — Wilderness Areas
 15.5% — Wilderness Study Area
 (within BLM total)

source: SITLA, 2003

County Planned Uses

98.9% — Range & Grazing
 0.6% — Municipal
 0.4% — Residential
 0.1% — Industrial
 0.06% — Commercial
 0.02% — Special Planning Area

source: Grand County

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

Grand County is situated on the Colorado Plateau, which has been eroded into huge canyons and that make it a rugged but scenically spectacular region. Its remoteness and aridity attracted few settlers, bringing less than 5% of the County's land into private ownership. The maps for Grand County show that the majority of groundwater is found near Moab.

Population

The uranium boom of the 1950s brought the first real population expansion to the area. After the mining economy fell off, recreation began to push the next spurt of growth that is projected to continue. County residents at the workshops were somewhat less optimistic that projected growth could actually occur because of the requisite economic opportunities and infrastructure improvements that would have to be created. The county is becoming a popular retirement and lifestyle relocation region and the number of second homes being built in the county is growing. Grand County demographics have diversified as many new residents move to the region for the growing recreation and service economy. New and different perspectives for how the region should grow have made it difficult for county leaders to accommodate the wishes of all residents.

Economy

The early history of Grand County is of small family farms, orchards and livestock operations, followed by several decades of mining for potash and uranium. After mining peaked in the early 1980's, the population and economy declined. Spectacular scenery and recreation on public lands have put Moab "on the map." The designation of several national parks and monuments began a tourism economy that has grown steadily to become the primary driver of economic growth today. Vacation and retirement homes have closely followed this boom, creating an affordable housing shortage. Tourism has its own booms and busts and often does not sustain families or year-round employment. The county is seeking ways to diversify its economies to address these trends.

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Current Issues

*watershed protection
developing SITLA lands
OHVs & ATVs
affordable housing
open space
economic diversity*

Planning

While National Parks and BLM lands account for much of the recreation use, locals often visit the National Forests as a cool respite. Residents pay close attention to the management of these lands and are particularly concerned with fire management, maintaining access, managing users, building trails while reducing illegal trails, and maintaining the biological health of these lands. They have also struggled with potential development of many SITLA parcels that have previously been open space. The County General Plan discusses a concerted effort to influence decisions made by Federal, State, and Tribal lands.

Water supply and quality is the first priority in such an arid region. County residents also value the rural and small-town character of the area and are interested in preserving agriculture and open space to that end. Grazing is often debated and reflects the struggle of values between many new and old residents. Economic development focuses on maintaining the historic character and lifestyles of Grand County while staying on the leading edge of current trends. Planning documents reviewed, which were available at the time of this assessment, include:

*Grand County General Plan, 1996; General Plan Update, 2003; County Land Use Code, 2003
Grand Water & Sewer Service Agency, Water Management and Conservation Plan, 1999
Moab Travel Council, Marketing Plan, 2003
Utah State Historical Society, Beehive History: Utah Counties. 1988*