

Mimbres Peaks National Monument

Projected Economic Impacts



Final Report

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Mimbres Peaks National Monument — Projected Economic Impacts

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Executive Summary

Luna County, New Mexico, is home to some of the Chihuahuan Desert's iconic range and mountain landscapes. These landscapes, mostly on public lands, contain significant prehistoric, historical, geologic, and biological resources. In addition, the lands offer abundant opportunities to participate in a variety of recreation activities, including hiking, mountain biking, rock climbing, hunting, camping, and OHV use on designated routes.

There is interest among community members and leaders of Luna County to seek designation of public lands within the county as the Mimbres Peaks National Monument. Designating land as a national monument would bring a host of significant benefits to the residents of Luna County. It would provide a proven boost to outdoor recreation and tourism, as has been shown in national monuments across the West, generating jobs and economic opportunities for residents.

Designation of a Mimbres Peaks National Monument would also serve as a powerful means of preserving natural and cultural heritage. It would safeguard unique and historically and culturally significant sites as well as noteworthy natural resources including wildlife and plant habitat and geological and paleontological features. Luna County has celebrated history on public lands within the county, including Mimbres cultural sites, the Butterfield Overland Stagecoach National Historic Trail, and World War II training targets used to train troops on the top secret Norden Bombsight. The designation of public land as a national monument reflects a commitment to the long-term health and vitality of the landscapes and the surrounding communities.

This report explores the economic effects of designating public lands within Luna County as the Mimbres Peaks National Monument. The report begins by discussing the value of the national monument brand and continues by describing the study area. The report then explores the economic benefits that monument designation would create in Luna County. We used economic modeling to estimate the impact of increased tourism and visitation in terms of jobs, economic output, and tax revenue under three visitation scenarios (low, medium, and high). The economic benefits for low-income communities are also discussed, in consideration of Luna County's median household income lagging that of New Mexico's by nearly 40 percent. As part of this research, community members and leaders were asked how they thought monument designation would benefit the community.

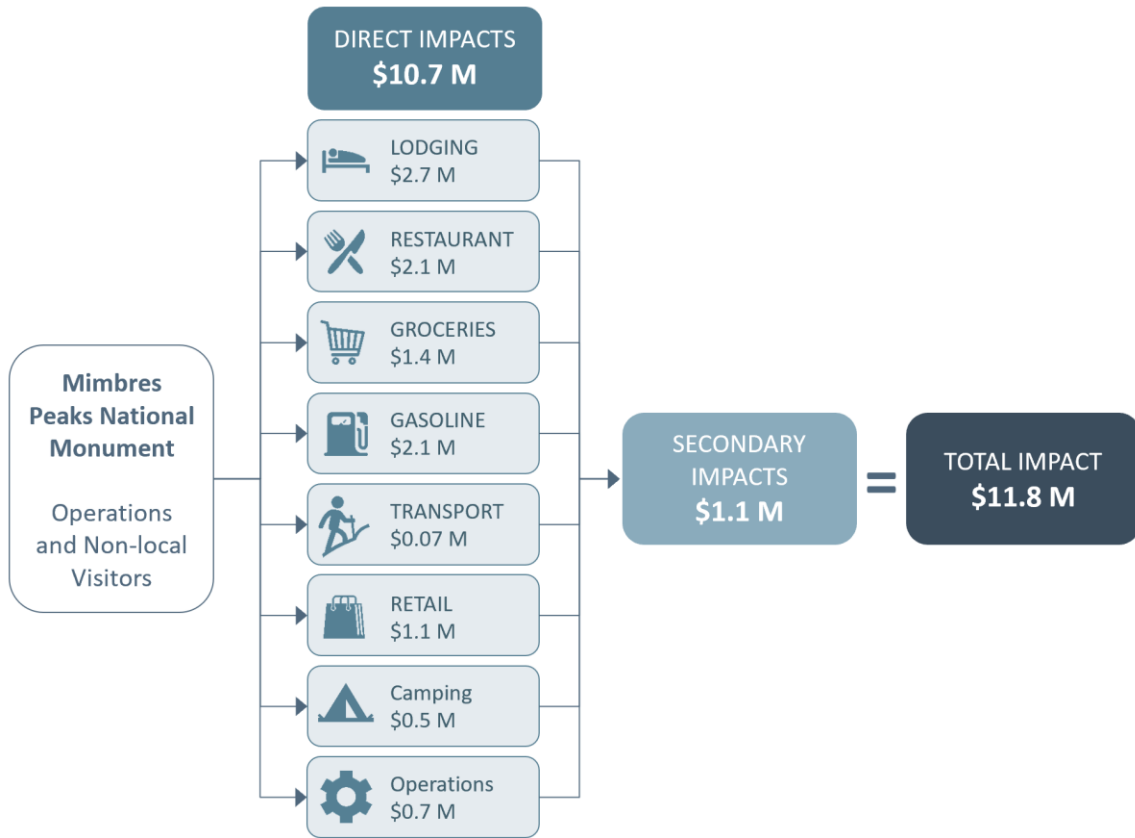
Through the research process outline above, the following observations were made:

- Annual visitation to a Mimbres Peaks National Monument could reach between 122,500 and 220,500 visitors over the next five to ten years, of which between 85,700 to 154,300 would be expected to be new visitors. Of the new visitors, between 77,200 and 138,900 would be expected to come from outside the county.
- Monument visitation depends on a variety of factors including the quality of the monument; the availability of recreation amenities like trails, campgrounds, and visitor centers; the expense of travel; having services available in gateway communities; and other similar factors. Visitation is

also driven by marketing, outreach, and visitor engagement efforts that highlight the opportunities available to visitors.

- New non-local visitors to the national monument would directly spend about \$10.2 million per year under the medium visitation scenario (\$7.3 and \$13.1 million, respectively, under the low and high visitation scenarios) per year on goods and services, creating 88 new jobs under the medium visitation scenario (64 to 113 new jobs respectively, under the low and high visitation scenarios) in tourism and recreation-facing sectors like accommodation, food service, and retail sales.
- The spending of non-local visitors would also support between \$480,000 and \$826,300 in annual tax revenues for state, county, and local governments.
- A national monument would help preserve the local ranching economy by protecting public lands used for livestock grazing. Ranching has continued unabated on BLM-managed national monuments since designation as well as in the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument in Doña Ana County. Proclamations establishing national monuments include language ensuring that BLM's management of ranching is not impacted by the monument designation.
- As shown in Figure 1, under a medium visitation scenario, the Mimbres Peaks National Monument could create an annual economic impact of about \$11.8 million, including direct and secondary impacts. Spending generated by monument operations and non-local visitor expenditures circulates in the local economy, as businesses where visitors spend their money purchase goods and services from other businesses and as workers spend a portion of their earnings on local goods and services. This recirculation of money in the economy is termed a "secondary impact."

Figure 1.
Economic Impacts of Mimbres Peaks National Monument in Luna County, New Mexico Under a Medium Visitation Scenario

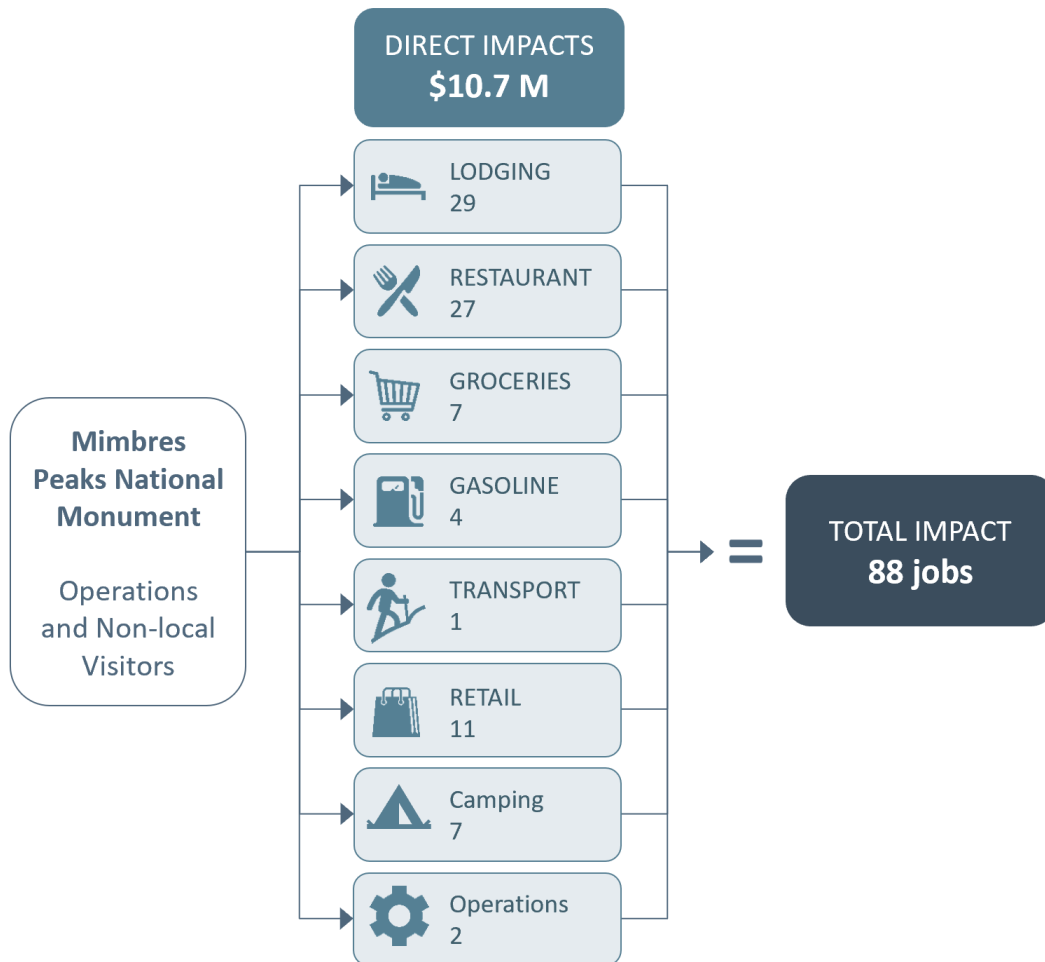


Note: Direct Expenditures reported net of taxes (sales, lodging and excise).

Source: BBC Research & Consulting, based on IMPLAN Regional Input-Output Modeling System.

Figure 2 shows the employment impacts associated with operations and visitor spending under the high visitation scenario. Economic activity generated by monument operations and visitation would support an estimated 88 jobs per year in Luna County.

Figure 2.
Job Impacts of Mimbres Peaks National Monument in Luna County, New Mexico Under a Medium Visitation Scenario



Source: BBC Research & Consulting, based on IMPLAN Regional Input-Output Modeling System.

Feedback from community members and leaders indicated that Luna County is well-positioned to benefit from the Mimbres Peaks National Monument by taking the following actions:

- Luna County can use existing tools (partnership with local tv stations, a new ThisIsLunaCounty.com website) and existing amenities (e.g., cultural history, unique ibex hunting experiences) to promote the Mimbres Peaks National Monument through a wide variety of channels, including local chambers of commerce, economic development organizations, and targeted media/social media channels. This type of outreach would help draw new business to the region.
- Expand and develop new infrastructure related to outdoor recreation to encourage residents to get active and stay active outdoors. Schools and youth can use the monument and outdoor recreation activities as an educational tool as well as a pastime and social activity.
- Provide clear public information to enable broad understanding of the potential monument and how different segments of the community will benefit.

Background and Methods

Luna County, New Mexico is home to some of the Chihuahuan Desert’s iconic range and mountain landscapes. These landscapes, mostly on public lands, contain significant prehistoric, historical, geologic, and biological resources. In addition, the lands offer many opportunities to participate in a variety of recreation activities, including hiking, camping, mountain biking, rock climbing, hunting, and OHV use on designated routes. There is interest among community members and leaders in Luna County to protect the public lands and resources within the county through designation of a Mimbres Peaks National Monument.

This report examines the economic impacts that designating lands as the Mimbres Peaks National Monument could have in Luna County, drawing upon data from nearby Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument (OMDPNM) and other National Monuments in the Southwestern United States. National monuments create economic impact by attracting visitors who spend money at local businesses in ‘gateway’ communities. These communities, which are near national monuments and other protected lands, serve as hubs of culture and services for visitors.

Visitation to national monuments and other similarly designated places depends on a variety of factors, including site attributes, travel costs, the proximity to major population centers, and local infrastructure. As a result, visitation varies significantly between each national monument. Still, experience from OMDPNM and other national monuments show that a national monument designation can lead to a significant increase in visitation and economic activity.¹

This report’s economic analysis combines a range of visitation estimates (low, medium, and high) with visitor spending profiles to estimate three visitor spending scenarios in Luna County. This information is used to examine how creating a Mimbres Peaks National Monument could impact the county’s economy in terms of jobs, income, output, and tax revenue, with a primary focus on Deming.

Throughout the report, analysis and recommendations were informed by input from multiple community members and leaders. Their insight was used to interpret the results of the analysis in practical terms that describe what types of impacts can be expected, who will benefit from them, and how the community can position itself to benefit.

Value of National Monument Brand

National Monuments can be designated by legislation passed by Congress and then signed by the President or by the President using the Antiquities Act of 1906. This Act grants the President the authority to proclaim, by executive order, “historic landmarks, historic and prehistoric structures, and other objects of historic or scientific interest” as national monuments, ensuring their protection.

National monuments are successful engines of economic activity in nearby communities because of the value of the National Monument brand. The National Monument designation signals to visitors that the resources at a site are of significant interest and value to our nation.

¹ BBC Research & Consulting. 2023. A Decade of Opportunity: How the Designation of Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument is Boosting Southern New Mexico’s Economy. Available at: <https://localascruces.com/omdpbizreport2023/>

As Figure 3 shows, National Monuments and National Parks are regarded as the highest indicators of site quality amongst public land designations.

Figure 3.
Public Land Designations, Quality Perceptions, and Value to Visitors

Source:
S.A. Cline et al. 2011. The value of a name: Estimating the economic impact of public land designation.



The National Monument designation raises the profile of the site and as a result, visitors place a higher priority on visiting in addition to being willing to spend more during their visit.

Study Area

The study area for this analysis includes two sub-areas. The first sub-area includes all the lands that would be part of the Mimbres Peaks National Monument. These lands are the attractions that will draw new visitors to Luna County. Understanding where these lands are and the opportunities they create for visitors is important for understanding how visitation may change with monument designation.

The second sub-area is Luna County. The study is interested in how visitors to the county will spend their money. The study also discusses how the economic impacts of visitors spending will benefit communities within Luna County, including low-income communities. Each sub-area is discussed in more detail, below.

Public Lands Considered for National Monument Designation. For the purpose of this economic analysis, we considered the national monument to be comprised of approximately 245,000 acres of public land in Luna County in the Florida Mountains, Cookes Range, Good Sight Mountains, and Tres Hermanas due to the exceptional natural, cultural, and historical resources they contain. These unique areas are part of the Chihuahuan Desert and striking in their topography, projecting as high as 3,600 feet above the enclosed basins of the southern Mimbres and visible from miles away in every direction.

These mountains and surrounding areas provide springs, drainages, and other habitats that support wildlife and plant species adapted to the harsh desert climate. They serve as migratory areas and

provide refugia and cooler temperatures for birds and other wildlife traveling through and living within the Chihuahuan Desert.

These lands also hold a rich Indigenous history that can still be seen in extensive petroglyphs and the remains of residential complexes and other artifacts, and also are of great importance to modern day Tribes and Pueblos. The Butterfield Overland Stagecoach National Historic Trail, World War II training targets used to test top secret aviation technology, Fort Cummings, Civilian Conservation Corps projects, Athison-Topeka and Santa Fe Railway, and other sites each tell a story about the history of Luna County and our nation as well.

Luna County. The public lands included in this economic analysis are all in Luna County. Deming, the Luna County Seat, is a one-hour drive from Las Cruces, and the El Paso International Airport, which handled 3.7 million passengers in 2022, is about two hours away. Deming has a municipal airport, but as of late 2023, the airport did not have any commercial service.

Population and demographics. In 2020, the population of Luna County was 25,427 with a median age similar to the median age of all New Mexico residents (39.8 years compared to 39.2 years throughout the state.² Sixty-six percent of Luna County residents identified as Hispanic or Latino in 2020, compared with 48 percent of all New Mexico residents. Throughout the state, 12 percent of residents identified as American Indian, while 3.2 percent of residents identified as American Indian in Luna County.

Economy and industry. The economy of Luna County is characterized by substantial employment in state and local government as well as a focus on health care and retail & service industries. There were a total of 9,186 jobs in Luna County in 2021, and the largest sectors with disclosed employment figures were government (21 percent), retail trade (12 percent), manufacturing (9 percent), and accommodation and food services (8 percent). Approximately 3 percent of the county's workforce is employed in agriculture and ranching. The most recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) indicate that the median household income in Luna County (\$33,914) lags behind the state's median household income (\$54,020) and the unemployment rate is higher (7.5 percent compared to 6.6 percent statewide).

Visitation and Spending Estimates

Information on annual visitation to areas that would be part of the Mimbres Peaks National Monument is scarce. In response to a data request, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) indicated that visitation data was not available for most of the public lands included in this analysis. The BLM did have visitation data to a sub-area of Cooke's Range (4,300 visitors to Pony Hills) in addition to reporting that 326 hunters visited the Florida Mountains in 2022. The 1,100-acre Rockhound State Park is also near the lands that would be part of the monument. Data from the New Mexico State Parks Division showed that park visitation has averaged about 56,500 visitors per year over the past decade.

Visitation to National Monument Designated Lands. The information above shows that the region's public lands already attract tens of thousands of visitors each year. To estimate how much additional visitation would occur with the designation of a Mimbres Peaks National Monument, information on visitation rates were collected from other national monuments in the Southwestern

² U.S. Census Bureau 2020 Decennial Census, Table DP1.

United States (Figure 4). These data show that visitation rates range from a low of 0.1 visitors per acre (Sonoran Desert National Monument) to more than 1.2 visitors per acre (OMDP National Monument and Rio Grande Del Norte), with an average visitation rate of about 0.7 visitors per acre.

Figure 4.
Annual Visitation Rates Per Acre for Various National Monuments

National Monument	State	Size (Acres)	Visitation (2022)	Visitors Per Acre
Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks	NM	496,330	612,781	1.2
Canyons of the Ancients	CO	176,056	171,713	1.0
Grand Staircase-Escalante	UT	1,870,000	1,300,000	0.7
Rio Grande Del Norte	NM	242,555	288,655	1.2
Carrizo Plain	CA	250,000	90,725	0.4
Ironwood Forest	AZ	129,000	28,000	0.2
Sonoran Desert	AZ	496,400	49,695	0.1
Average		522,906	363,081	0.7

Source: Bureau of Land Management, National Monument Manager’s Reports.

Without national monument designation, the visitation rates to the sites shown in Figure 4 would be substantially lower. Data from OMDPNM showed that visitation increased from 183,900 visits in 2012, two years before monument designation, to more than 612,700 visits in 2022, eight years post-monument designation.³ While some of the additional visitation is due to trends in outdoor recreation participation, monument designation raised the profile of OMDPNM and attracted visitors who would not otherwise have visited the area.

Using the information above, BBC estimated a range of pre- and post-designation visitation scenarios for the potential Mimbres Peaks National Monument (Figure 5). Under a low visitation scenario, BBC assumed that pre-designation visitation would be about 0.15 people per acre, for a total annual visitation of about 36,700 people per year. Post-designation, visitation could increase to about 0.5 people per acre for a total annual visitation of 122,500 people per year. Of this total, approximately 85,700 people would be new visitors assuming the change in visitation follows trends from OMDPNM. The medium and high visitation scenarios assume monument designation will bring about 120,100 and 154,300 additional people per year to Luna County, respectively.

³ BBC Research & Consulting. 2013. Economic Impacts of National Monument Designation: Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks, New Mexico.

Figure 5.
Visitation Scenarios for Mimbres Peaks National Monument in Luna County, New Mexico

Visitation Scenario	Acres Designated	Pre-Monument Designation		Post-Monument Designation		Additional Annual Visitation
		People/Acre	Annual Visitation	People/Acre	Annual Visitation	
Low	245,000	0.15	36,750	0.50	122,500	85,750
Medium	245,000	0.21	51,450	0.70	171,500	120,050
High	245,000	0.27	66,150	0.90	220,500	154,350

Source: BBC Research & Consulting.

Visitor Characteristics. BBC combined the annual visitation scenarios from Figure 5 with results from the OMDPNM Outcomes Focused Management Study to estimate the share of additional visitors that would be expected to originate from outside of Luna County as well as the nature of their visit.⁴ The distinction between local and non-local visitors, and their type of visit, is important because, as described above, the money spent by visitors from outside of Luna County is the source of economic impact. Spending by locals does not create impact because they would have spent their money elsewhere in the County if it had not been spent during their visit to national monument lands. It is also important to estimate what share of non-local visitors come for a day trip, a camping trip on BLM land, or an overnight trip with a motel or hotel stay.

The OMDPNM Outcomes Focused Management Study found that approximately 61 percent of visitors are locals while 39 percent of visitors are non-locals. The high ratio of local to non-local visitors at OMDPNM is likely a result of the relatively large population residing in and around Las Cruces and El Paso, which have a combined population of approximately 800,000 people. In contrast, Luna County's largest city is Deming, which has a population of about 15,000 people. Given Luna County's relatively low population, monument-designated lands would be likely to draw more visitors from outside of the county than from within it. To reflect this, the study assumes that county residents would represent 10 percent of visitors while non-locals represent 90 percent.

The OMDPNM Outcomes Focused Management Study found that about 73 percent of non-local visitors stated that visiting the monument was the primary purpose of their trip, compared to 27 percent who said it was not. Of the primary purpose visitors, about 28 percent visited the Monument as a day trip, compared to 27 percent who camped overnight on BLM land and 45 percent who stayed overnight in other accommodations.

Based on the information and assumptions discussed above, BBC estimated that between 85,700 to 154,300 additional visitors could be attracted to Luna County by the designation of Mimbres Peaks National Monument (Figure 6). Of those visitors, between 77,200 and 138,900 are expected to be non-local visitors. Additionally, between 17,600 and 31,700 non-local visitors would be expected to stay in Luna County for one or more nights.

⁴ Fix, P., Brown, C., Virden, R., Casey, T. 2018. Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument Outcomes Focused Management Study, Spring 2017. Project report for the BLM Las Cruces District Office. BLM PLRRP Report #3. Fairbanks, AK: University of Alaska Fairbanks, School of Natural Resources and Extension, Department of Natural Resources Management.

**Figure 6.
Estimated Visitation
by Scenario:
Mimbres Peaks
National Monument
in Luna County, New
Mexico**

Source: BBC Research & Consulting, 2023; BLM Las Cruces District Office; Fix, P., Brown, C., Virden, R., Casey, T. 2018. Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument Outcomes Focused Management Study, Spring 2017.

Visitor Type	Visitation Scenario		
	High	Medium	Low
Total Additional Visits	154,350	120,050	85,750
Non-Local Visits	138,915	108,045	77,175
Non-Local Primary	101,825	79,197	56,569
Day	70,146	54,558	38,970
BLM Overnight	11,721	9,116	6,512
Other Overnight	19,958	15,523	11,088
Non-Local Non-primary	37,090	28,848	20,606
Local Visits	15,435	12,005	8,575
Day	14,190	11,037	7,884
BLM Overnight	2,809	2,185	1,561
Other Overnight	4,783	3,720	2,657
Total Primary Overnight Trips	39,598	30,799	21,999
Non-local	31,679	24,639	17,599
Local	7,592	5,905	4,218

Visitor Spending. A 2017 USFS study estimated average daily non-local visitor expenditures using data from the National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM) survey. The study estimated spending per-group within 50-miles of the group’s destination.⁵ BBC converted the per-group spending estimates to per-visit estimates by dividing the per-group spending estimates by the average group size to the Lincoln National Forest—located approximately 130 miles northeast of Deming—following guidance on the conversion provided in the 2017 USFS study.

The average daily visitor expenditures from the 2017 USFS study are shown in Figure 7, below. As the figure shows, non-local visitors spend money at a variety of local businesses including motels, campgrounds, grocery stores, restaurants, sporting goods and other retail stores, entertainment establishments, and gas stations. Average daily non-local visitor spending varies between a low of \$26 for day trip visitors to a high of \$157 for non-local overnight visitors (OVN) staying in some type of commercial accommodation. For overnight visitors, lodging, gas, groceries, and restaurants represent the largest portion of their spending.

⁵ White, Eric M. 2017. Spending patterns of outdoor recreation visitors to national forests. Gen. Tech. Rep. PNW-GTR-961. Portland, OR: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Research Station. 70 p.

Figure 7.
Visitor Spending Profiles Used in the Economic Impact Analysis (2023 \$)

Note:

OVN-NF represents overnight visits with stays on public land; OVN represents overnight visits with stays in accommodation off public land.

Source:

BBC Research & Consulting, 2023; White, Eric M. 2017. Spending patterns of outdoor recreation visitors to national forests. Gen. Tech. Rep. PNW-GTR-961. Portland, OR: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Research Station. 70 p.

Spending Categories	Non-Local			Non-Primary
	Day	OVN-NF	OVN	
Motel	\$0.00	\$10.00	\$51.33	\$35.67
Camping	\$0.00	\$10.38	\$7.49	\$4.19
Restaurant	\$5.21	\$9.49	\$32.59	\$29.24
Groceries	\$4.20	\$22.60	\$20.61	\$16.24
Gas	\$12.34	\$24.55	\$28.29	\$22.14
Other transportation	\$0.04	\$0.38	\$0.76	\$0.92
Entry fees	\$1.67	\$4.05	\$2.60	\$2.96
Recreation and entertainment	\$1.26	\$2.25	\$4.61	\$7.06
Sporting goods	\$1.14	\$3.91	\$4.19	\$2.58
Souvenirs and other expenses	\$0.41	\$2.02	\$4.54	\$5.95
Total	\$26.27	\$89.62	\$157.00	\$126.96

BBC combined the spending estimates in Figure 7 with the non-local visitation estimates in Figure 6 to estimate the total annual non-local spending that would occur within Luna County under the three visitation scenarios. Figure 8 presents a cross-tabulation of spending by visit type. Because the economic model focuses on “new” money to the area, the model only used non-local visitor expenditures. As Figure 8 shows, visitor spending under the high visitation scenario would be about \$13.1 million per year compared to \$10.2 million and \$7.3 million under the medium and low visitation scenarios, respectively.

Figure 8.
Non-Local Visitor Spending Estimates (2023 \$ Millions)

Source:

BBC Research & Consulting, 2023.

Spending Categories	Visitation Scenario		
	High (\$, millions)	Medium (\$, millions)	Low (\$, millions)
Motel	\$3.6	\$2.8	\$2.0
Restaurant	\$2.8	\$2.2	\$1.6
Groceries	\$1.8	\$1.4	\$1.0
Gas	\$2.8	\$2.2	\$1.6
Other transportation	\$0.1	\$0.06	\$0.0
Recreation and entertainment	\$0.6	\$0.5	\$0.3
Sporting goods	\$0.3	\$0.3	\$0.2
Souvenirs and other expenses	\$0.6	\$0.5	\$0.3
Camping	\$0.5	\$0.4	\$0.3
Total	\$13.1	\$10.2	\$7.3

Monument Operations Spending. To estimate the change in BLM spending to manage lands designated as a national monument, BBC analyzed the BLM operating budget for OMDPNM for expenses related to staffing, operations, maintenance, and capital investment.⁶ The BLM Las Cruces Field Office employs an average of eight full-time staff to oversee both OMDPNM and Prehistoric Trackways

⁶ Barela, J. et al. 2014 – 2022. Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks Annual Manager’s Report. U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Las Cruces District Office, Las Cruces, New Mexico.

National Monument. In addition to labor, the Monument’s budget also funds facility maintenance and improvements, site studies and inventories, and other non-labor activities. Between 2014 and 2020, the Monument’s operating budget ranged between a low of \$498,000 and a high of \$1.8 million, with an average annual budget of \$1.1 million. This compares to an operating budget of approximately \$200,000 per year prior to designation.⁷

Based on this information, BBC estimated that if the 245,000 acres of land considered for the Mimbres Peaks National Monument were designated, the change in operating budget would be about 50 percent of the operating budget for OMDPNM based on the geographic extent of OMDPNM and Mimbres Peaks National Monument. This would amount to a change in expenditure of approximately \$550,000 compared to existing conditions.

Total Operational and Visitor Spending. Combining annual direct operational spending by the BLM with annual non-local visitor expenditures yields a combined annual direct economic impact of between \$7.8 million and \$13.6 million depending on the visitation scenario. Figure 9 provides a summary table.

Figure 9.
Total Operational and Non-Local Visitor Spending (2023, \$ Millions)

BBC Research & Consulting, 2023.

Spending Categories	Visitation Scenario		
	High (\$, millions)	Medium (\$, millions)	Low (\$, millions)
Non-Local Visitors	\$13.1	\$10.2	\$7.3
Monument Operations	\$0.5	\$0.5	\$0.5
Total	\$13.6	\$10.7	\$7.8

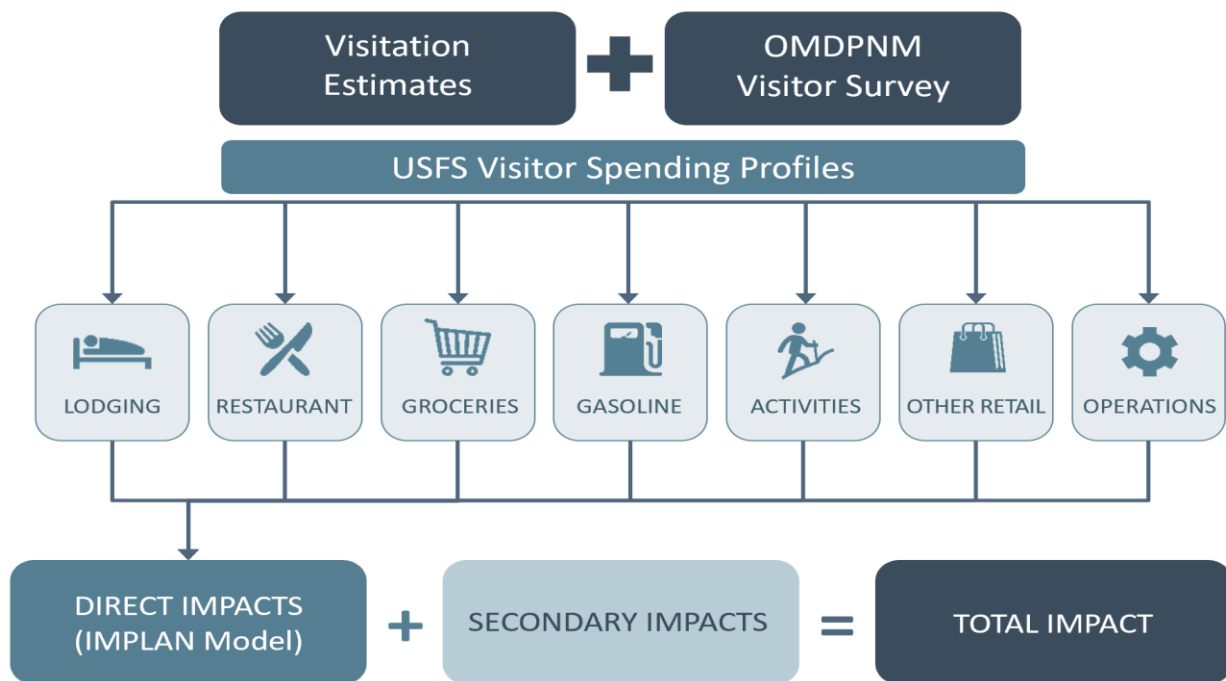
⁷ BBC Research & Consulting. 2013. Economic Impacts of National Monument Designation: Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks, New Mexico.

Spending Flow Model

Spending generated by visitation to Mimbres Peaks National Monument would circulate in the local economy, as businesses where visitors spend their money purchase goods and services from other businesses and as workers spend a portion of their earnings on local goods and services. This recirculation of money in the economy is termed a “secondary impact.” For the purposes of this analysis, BBC defines the local economy as Luna County in New Mexico.

To determine the total economic impact of monument designation (the direct impact plus the secondary impacts), BBC developed a spending flow model—shown in Figure 10—to trace the flow of dollars and associated employment through the economy.

Figure 10.
Spending Flow Model to Estimate Economic Impacts of Mimbres Peaks National Monument in Luna County, New Mexico



Source: BBC Research & Consulting, based on IMPLAN Regional Input-Output Modeling System, 2023.

This model is based on the IMPLAN Regional Input-Output Modeling System. A widely used economic modeling software, IMPLAN estimates secondary economic impacts based on user-supplied direct impacts. BBC used IMPLAN to estimate economic, employment, and state and local tax revenue impacts based on the spending data discussed in the preceding section.⁸

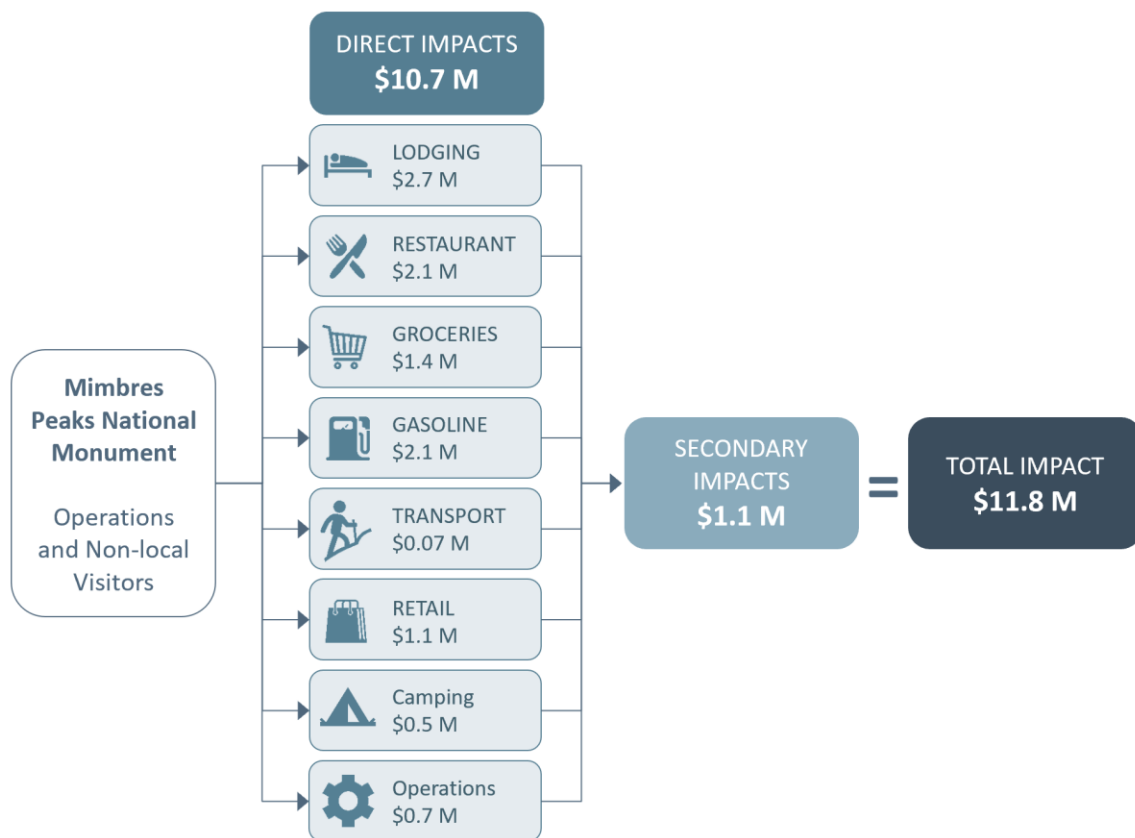
⁸ For more information on IMPLAN, refer to <<http://implan.com/>>

Economic and Fiscal Impact Estimates of the Mimbres Peaks National Monument

Economic Impact Estimates

The economic impacts of the Mimbres Peaks National Monument in Luna County under the medium visitation scenario are shown in Figure 11 and Figure 12. Direct spending by non-local visitors and monument operations of more than \$10.7 million under the medium visitation scenario would result in \$11.8 million per year in total economic benefits when secondary impacts of \$1.1 million are included (Figure 11). This new economic activity would support about 88 jobs annually across a variety of economic sectors (Figure 12). Figure 13 shows the economic impacts under the high, medium, and low visitation scenarios, respectively.

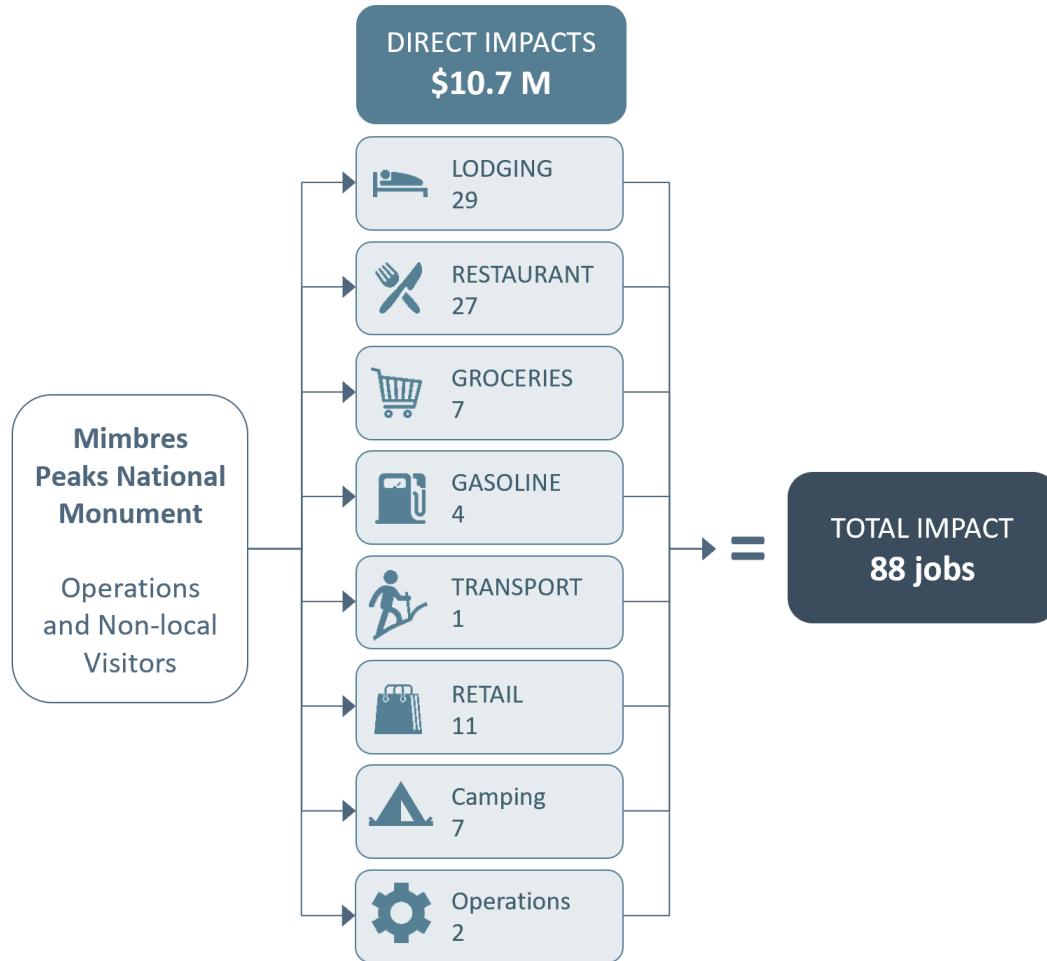
Figure 11.
Economic Impacts of Mimbres Peaks National Monument in Luna County, New Mexico Under Medium Visitation Scenario



Note: Direct Expenditures reported net of taxes (sales, lodging and excise).

Source: BBC Research & Consulting, based on IMPLAN Regional Input-Output Modeling System.

Figure 12.
Employment Impacts of Mimbres Peaks National Monument in Luna County, New Mexico Under Medium Visitation Scenario



Note: Direct Expenditures reported net of taxes (sales, lodging and excise).

Source: BBC Research & Consulting, based on IMPLAN Regional Input-Output Modeling System.

Figure 13 summarizes the economic impacts of all three visitation scenarios. As the figure shows, employment impacts in Luna County range from a low of 64 to a high of 113 under the low and high visitation scenarios, respectively. Similarly, labor income ranges from a low of \$3.8 million to a high of more than \$6.7 million and economic output ranges from a low of \$8.7 million to a high of \$15.0 million.

Figure 13.
Impacts of Mimbres Peaks National Monument in Luna County Under High, Medium, and Low Visitation Scenarios

Visitation Scenario	Employment	Labor Income	Economic Output
High	113	\$6,700,000	\$15,000,000
Medium	88	\$5,300,000	\$11,800,000
Low	64	\$3,800,000	\$8,700,000

BBC Research & Consulting, 2023.

Fiscal Impact Estimates

Visitor spending will generate tax revenues for state, county, and local governments, primarily driven by sales tax on visitor expenditures and income tax on jobs created by visitor spending. Other tax revenue sources include gasoline taxes, property tax, and motor vehicle tax. The IMPLAN economic modeling software package estimates the tax revenue impacts associated with all economic activity occurring in the study area.

Figure 14 summarizes the total estimated state, county, and local tax revenue attributable to visitor spending and operations. As the figure shows, tax revenue generation would be expected to vary between approximately \$480,000 and \$826,300 per year depending on the number of non-local visitors visiting Luna County, with the medium visitation scenario generating about \$653,200 in new tax revenue.

Figure 14.
Fiscal Impact of Visitor Spending and Monument Operations (2023, \$)

Source:
BBC Research & Consulting, 2023.

Tax Authority	Visitation Scenario		
	High	Medium	Low
State	\$618,858	\$489,193	\$359,527
County	\$80,826	\$63,891	\$46,956
Local	\$126,621	\$100,091	\$73,561
Total	\$826,305	\$653,175	\$480,044

Community Benefits and Perspectives

Benefits to Gateway Communities

The recreation and tourism economy of gateway communities is dependent on visitors and their spending patterns. These communities are generally located near the entrances and access points of national monuments, national parks, and other recreation areas, making them the primary locations for providing essential services to visitors like accommodations, food services, and retail sales.

The spending patterns of visitors play a critical role in shaping the economy of gateway communities. Businesses in these areas, such as hotels, restaurants, and outdoor gear shops, rely on the revenue generated by visitors. Additionally, the presence of cultural attractions, guided tours, and outdoor activities can offer additional ways for communities to collect more revenue from visitors. The tourism dollars that visitors inject into the local economy often lead to job creation and business growth, with both seasonal and year-round employment opportunities.

The spending patterns of visitors vary depending on their preferences and the characteristics of each national monument. In some gateway communities, visitors may spend a significant amount of money on accommodations and food services, benefiting local hotels and restaurants. Others may spend more on outdoor recreation activities, like guided tours and equipment rentals. The seasonal aspect of visitation can also impact spending patterns, with colder locations seeing fewer visitors in the winter while warmer locations see fewer visitors in the summer. To reduce the seasonality in their economies, many gateway communities invest in a broad set of amenities to attract visitors year-round.

Visitor spending in Luna County would most likely be concentrated in Deming, which is the County's largest city. Deming is also centrally located near the lands being considered for national monument designation. Additional spending would be expected in the Village of Columbus from visitors going to Tres Hermanas and other local destinations marketed to visitors. The village's tourism economy, which is anchored by visitation to Pancho Villa State Park, could grow to accommodate new visitors to national monument-designated lands.

As shown above, designating public land as a national monument will primarily impact business development and job creation in industries that support tourism and outdoor recreation. Key sectors include accommodation and food services; arts, entertainment, and recreation (including tour operations and paid recreational activities); retail trade; and other industries impacted by tourism, such as transportation. Based on the results above, Luna County could expect monument designation to create between 64 and 113 jobs across different outdoor recreation sectors.

Practically speaking, the benefits translate into the development of new businesses including those providing short term accommodation, food and beverages, outdoor retail and apparel sales, and guiding and sightseeing services. Some existing businesses would hire more employees to serve the additional demand. In the long run, national monument designation can also attract retirees and remote workers, resulting in higher levels of business development and economic impact.⁹ If visitation and in-migration

⁹ <https://headwaterseconomics.org/public-lands>

trends were favorable, industries like home building could also see increased investment in and around Deming.

Benefit to Low-Income Populations and Communities Experiencing Poverty

The designation of the Mimbres Peaks National Monument would provide economic opportunities for low-income populations and communities experiencing poverty. This is particularly important in Luna County, where the median household income is only 60 percent of the statewide median.¹⁰ The designation of a new national monument would spur investment and job creation in the county. As discussed above, the primary job impacts would be in industries that support the outdoor recreation and tourism-related sectors, which would benefit low-income workers and communities experiencing poverty in several ways:

- **Job Opportunities:** As the results show above, designation of a national monument would bring new visitors to Luna County, generating job opportunities for hospitality and restaurant workers, guides and outfitters, and retail workers. These job opportunities can be particularly valuable for low-income workers who may have limited employment options. Business owners will also see an increase in their incomes.
- **Training and Skill Development:** Some jobs may provide opportunities for training and skill development. For example, some guiding and outfitting jobs offer training in customer service, marketing, and wilderness first aid, which could open additional pathways for employment. Workers could also gain experience in fields like natural resource management and outdoor education, which can be valuable for future career opportunities.
- **Economic Diversification:** In places where low-income workers depend on a single industry, investment in the tourism and outdoor recreation sector can help diversify the local economy through investment in businesses like hotels, restaurants, guides and outfitters, and retail shops. Diversification reduces low-income workers' vulnerability to economic downturns by providing more opportunities to earn income.
- **Seasonal and Part-Time Work:** The outdoor recreation economy can create opportunities for seasonal or part-time work, which in turn provides flexibility for workers who may have other responsibilities, such as caregiving or pursuing education. These positions can also offer additional income during peak seasons.
- **Community Development:** The increased economic activity generated by a national monument can support community development efforts. Investments in infrastructure like roads, trails, visitor centers, and facilities. These investments can improve the attractiveness of the area, making it more accessible and appealing to visitors and residents alike.
- **Cultural and Ecological Values:** National monuments frequently focus on preserving and interpreting cultural and historical sites, which can be important for groups with strong cultural ties to the landscape. The creation of a national monument also acknowledges the importance of indigenous community's cultural values, land uses and knowledge, and history. Monument

¹⁰ U.S. Census Bureau ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2021, Table DP03.

designation would also safeguard ecosystems and watersheds and could result in mitigation of environmental hazards. Improved environmental quality also has long-term societal benefits because it supports a healthier and more attractive community.

- Funding and Grants: National monuments may attract new sources of federal and state funding, as well as foundation grants and partnerships with conservation organizations. These financial resources can be used for local community projects, access improvements, job training programs, and environmental restoration initiatives.

Benefits to Ranching of a National Monument

A national monument in Luna County would help preserve the local ranching economy by protecting public lands used for livestock grazing. Throughout the Western United States, ranching has continued unabated on BLM-managed national monuments.

BLM data shows that grazing management has not been impacted by the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument (OMDPNM) designation. Actual grazing increased over 30% in the six years after the monument's designation (2015-2020) compared to the six years before designation (2008-2013). All allotments remain permitted, and in some cases, new permittees took over permits after designation.

Interviews conducted by Friends of Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks of several current OMDPNM grazing permittees in 2023 indicate that the designation of OMDPNM has not changed the BLM's management of grazing allotments within the monument.

The presidential proclamations issued to establish New Mexico's most recent large national monuments, the OMDPNM and Rio Grande del Norte, included the following language to ensure that the BLM's management of ranching is not impacted by the monument's designation: the "laws, regulations, and policies followed by the BLM in issuing and administering grazing permits or leases on lands under its jurisdiction shall continue to apply with regard to the lands in the monument, consistent with the protection of the objects identified" for protection in the proclamation.¹¹

Community Perspectives

BBC contacted residents and community leaders to ask how monument designation would benefit the community economically. The questions and key response themes that emerged from the discussions are summarized below.

- What potential economic opportunities do you see arising from increased visitation and outdoor recreation associated with designating lands as national monument in Luna County?
 - Monument expansion would "put Luna County on the map" as well as create a multi-county attraction for this region of the state. Luna County (and Deming) could become a destination rather than only a place to drive past or to stop for gas.

¹¹ [Federal Register: Establishment of the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument](#), Proclamation 9131 of May 21, 2014.

- Monument expansion would complement ongoing activity in Doña Ana County as well as encourage tourism and related sectors in Deming and Luna County – specifically outdoor recreation businesses (e.g., hiking, mountain biking, tours, hunting), but also hotels, restaurants, gas, and even grocery stores. Luna County’s proximity to the border could mean a potential for increased tourism from Mexico.
- The region has a nearly year-round excellent climate for outdoor recreation, as the weather is mild. Luna County is well positioned to make the most of increased outdoor recreation if they can capitalize on the additional visitation.
- Currently, there are few or no recreation maps, trails, tracks, or formal advice on scenic spots. If you want to hike or bike a trail, you call around and see what spots your friends or community members know about. Tourism development would be a big opportunity if the monument designation were expanded into Luna County.
- How can the expansion of the national monument be leveraged to attract new businesses and investments to the region, and what specific sectors do you believe will benefit the most?
 - Luna County can use existing tools (partnership with KFOX tv, a new ThisIsLunaCounty.com website) and existing amenities (cultural history, unique ibex hunting experiences) to draw new business to the region, along with promoting the monument expansion through a wide variety of channels, including local chambers of commerce, economic development organizations, and targeted media/social media channels.
 - Sectors that can benefit the most are tourism/outdoor recreation; restaurants, coffee shops, and breweries; bike shops; and hotels/motels and RV parks. Also, manufacturing or food processing industries related to outdoor recreation could benefit.
- In what ways can the expanded monument help to enhance the quality of life for residents of the County, and what are other associated social and cultural benefits?
 - There could be many social, health, and community benefits. Increased and developed infrastructure related to outdoor recreation can encourage residents (many of whom are older and retired) to get active and stay active outdoors. The weather in the region is mild and sunny for most of the year, ideal for residents to engage with outdoor amenities and be active and moving within the community.
 - The County struggles with higher rates of poverty and unemployment, which could be positively impacted by the increased economic opportunities attending monument designation and increased tourism to the area. In addition to an increase in job opportunities, tourism-related economic development could create amenities like shops and attractions that benefit local residents and mitigate the current need (real or perceived) for community residents to drive out to Las Cruces or to Silver City for shopping, events, and other leisure activities.

- Schools and youth would be able to use the monument and outdoor recreation activities as an educational tool as well as a pastime and social activity.
- How might the creation of a national monument in Luna County improve the region's reputation and desirability as a place to live, work, and visit?
 - Monument expansion opens up an opportunity for the County/City of Deming to be a full-day or multi-day destination for visitors. The economic activity resulting from increased visitor traffic improves the area's desirability as a place to establish and conduct business.
 - An expansion and improvement of recreational amenities and infrastructure would improve the region's reputation as a suitable place for retirement in an area that encourages staying active and engaged with the outdoors.

Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument Case Study

It can be tempting to view a report offering educated conjectures about the future as simply an exercise in speculation, but the example of OMDPNM shows that national monuments do create substantial benefits for gateway communities. OMDPNM provides an important example of how national monument designation, combined with creative marketing and community support, can drive visitation and create economic opportunities.

OMDPNM was established by presidential proclamation in May 2014 to protect 496,330 acres containing significant prehistoric, historic, geologic, and biologic resources for current and future generations. In addition, the Monument offers abundant opportunities to participate in a variety of recreation activities, including hiking, mountain biking, rock climbing, hunting, OHV use on designated routes, and camping. The site's change to a National Monument in 2014 raised the profile of OMDPNM, leading to an enduring increase in visitation and visitor spending in Doña Ana and Luna Counties that has created significant economic impacts:

- Total cumulative economic impacts since OMDPNM was designated are more than \$234 million, including \$35 million of positive economic impacts in 2022, which supported 305 jobs.
- Since the OMDPNM's designation in 2014, visitation has generated \$12.9 million in increased tax revenue for state, county, and local governments. In 2022, visitation to the Monument generated \$1.9 million in tax revenues, compared to \$0.8 million in 2012 before the Monument's designation.
- Visitation to OMDPNM has more than tripled from 183,900 in 2012, prior to the site's monument designation, to 612,781 in 2022. This exceeds initial predictions that establishing the monument would double visitation. Of non-local visitors, 73 percent said the Monument was the reason for their visit to the area.

There are several important factors that help explain why the OMDPNM has been so successful at generating economic and fiscal impacts in the surrounding region:

- The OMDPNM has been successful at attracting visitors due to the value of the national monument brand, which distinguishes the site's value compared to other public lands. Peer-reviewed studies have found that, after National Parks, National Monuments have the highest perceived value of public land designations.
- Visit Las Cruces, a tourism ambassador program run by the City of Las Cruces, capitalized on the National Monument value with a series of events, including the Monuments to Main Street (M2M) month, started in 2017, to celebrate OMDP becoming a National Monument. The event—which includes Yoga on the Monument, hiking trips, stagecoach rides, flyovers of historic sites, music, and other events—attracts visitors from across the country. Local governmental support of the establishment and promotion of outdoor events and tours has been a powerful engine to help expand the local outdoor economy.

- The monument designation also raised the profile of south-central New Mexico by adding to the existing wealth of attractions in the region. Along with White Sands National Park and Prehistoric Trackways National Monument, which draw visitation and economic activity to the region, the addition of OMDPNM provides visitors with an opportunity to visit multiple protected areas in one visit.
- It is also worth noting that the creation of the Monument inspired the formation of the “Monumental Loop” bikepacking route, and associated competition, the “DangerBird 250,” and new paid outdoor trips to see features of the Monument. These additions have become an important part of the outdoor economy of Doña Ana County, and helped grow the OMDPNM brand.