

Public Abstract

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Title:A STUDY OF THE IMPACT NATIONAL FORESTS  
HAVE ON COUNTY POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT

The U.S. National Forest Service owns and manages close to 200 million acres of land and has an annual budget in excess of \$5.5 billion. This study seeks to understand the manner and extent to which national forests influence a region's population and employment densities. This study specifically evaluates changes in national forest timber sales, recreation and natural amenity values. Nearly 75 percent of the Forest Service lands are located in 11 western states. Thus, this study will focus on all 477 counties in those states. National Forest timber harvest reports are available starting in 1977 so the study period starts then and continues through 2007. This study thus captures the period when extractive uses, e.g. timber harvesting decreased and non-extractive uses, e.g. tourism, increased, to become more equal. The Carlino and Mills model was used to track changes in population and employment densities. Several metrics for natural and recreational amenities such as precipitation and skiing facilities were found to be significantly related to population densities. However, changes in timber sales and the amount of land owned by the Forest Service were not found to be significantly related to employment densities.