

Reframing Community-Based Conservation:

Public lands advocacy
in a changing cultural landscape

*A guide for
National Conservation Lands
Friends Groups and Advocates*

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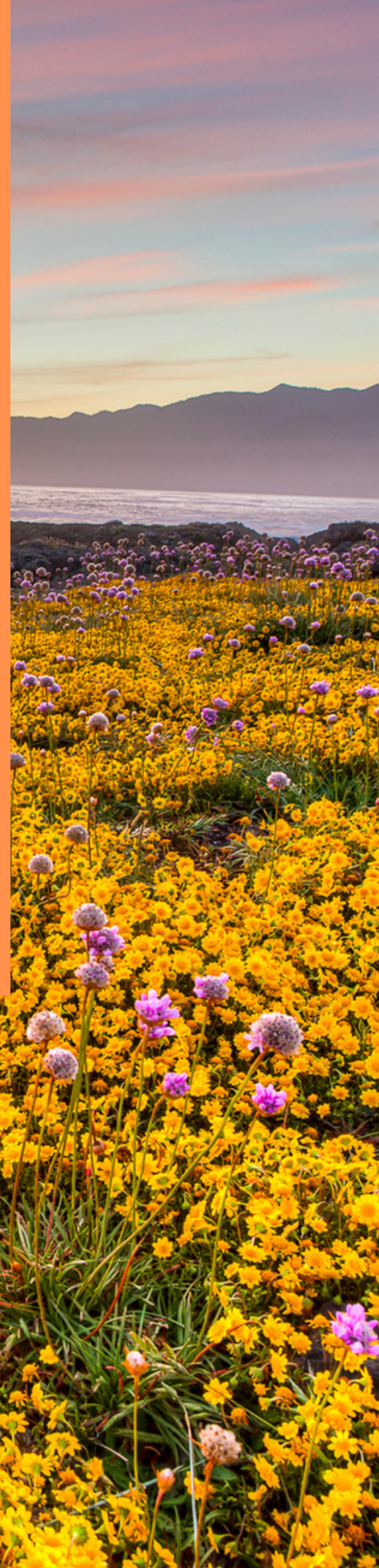


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Abbreviations Used

BLM - Bureau of Land Management

CCA - Colorado Canyons Association (Friends Group)

CLF - Conservations Land Foundation

CSU - Conserve Southwest Utah (Friends Group)

DRBA - Dolores River Boating Advocates (Friends Group)

FGN - Friends Grassroots Network

FOI - Friends of the Inyo (Friends Group)

NCL - National Conservation Area

NLCS - National Landscape Conservation System

NPS - National Park Service

FOMDP - Friends of the Organ Mountains - Desert Peaks

OMDPNM - Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument

RMP- Resource Management Plan

UNDRIP - United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples



Bears Ears National Monument, taken by Bob Wick

Executive Summary

The American West has experienced seismic demographic changes over the last few decades. Conservation Lands Foundations (CLF) commissioned this report to research and develop strategies to assist their Friends Grassroots Network (FGN) in responding to these shifts in the makeup of their communities. The goal of the project is to investigate the ways in which western communities are changing, the impacts that these changes may have on land management priorities, and how local conservation organizations can adapt to continue to fulfill their missions. In sum, this report aims to support broader community representation within Friends Groups, their volunteers, and membership.

The project was completed in several phases. First, census data was collected and analyzed for 58 counties relevant to the FGN. Data on political affiliation and the most prevalent industries in each county was also gathered from other sources. Analysis identified several demographic trends throughout the studied counties. However, recognizing the sovereign status and limited availability of demographic data of Native Nations within the communities in this report, this study does not include analyses of Indigenous populations. Next, a literature review was conducted to collect peer-reviewed research regarding the implications of these trends on the western US. Emphasis was placed on literature that discussed the ways in which land managers and conservation groups have responded to demographic change. Finally, five Friends Groups were selected as case studies to demonstrate and share how individual members of the FGN are experiencing and responding to the identified demographic changes in their communities.

The trends that this study identifies and investigates include increasing diversity, population growth, increasing average age, and political polarization. The literature also identified a number of large-scale issues, such as climate change, Indigenous land stewardship, housing affordability, and labor markets in western communities. While some of these may be out of scope for the work that Friends Groups do on the ground, they are still relevant to the communities and context in which these groups operate. Additionally, Friends Groups are in a strong position to advocate for the consideration of these issues in Bureau of Land Management Resource Management Plans, in local urban planning discussions, and in political campaigns. While these issues are certainly important, they were not the primary purpose of this report, and so are addressed briefly at the outset, but not analyzed in the same depth as demographic shifts.

Case studies were selected to highlight Friends Groups working on land units and in areas experiencing significant demographic change. The groups selected have also all demonstrated effective strategies to deal with the challenges presented by demographic shifts. The groups selected as case studies, the counties and land unit they are associated with, and the relevant trends are:

1. Conserve Southwest Utah
 - a. Washington County, UT; Red Cliffs National Conservation Area
 - b. Population Growth in and around St. George, UT
2. Dolores River Boating Advocates
 - a. Montezuma, Dolores, and San Miguel Counties, CO; Dolores Canyon National Conservation Area (Proposed)
 - b. Enacting conservation policy across political boundaries
3. Colorado Canyons Association
 - a. Mesa County, CO; McInnis Canyon, Domingues-Escalante, and Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Areas
 - b. Enacting conservation policy across political boundaries
4. Friends of Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks
 - a. Dona Ana County, NM; Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument
 - b. Increasing advocacy opportunities for Hispanic population
5. Friends of the Inyo
 - a. Inyo County, CA; Inyo National Forest
 - b. Increasing Spanish-language resources
 - c. Developing relationship with Tribal leaders

Our research reinforced the relevance of trends found in the data, and highlighted several potential responses:

Increasing Racial Diversity: Nearly every county we studied showed increasing racial diversity over the last decade. Historically, the conservation movement has been led by white, affluent, and older populations, often leaving racial minorities out of the picture. The trends identified in the census data and literature review make it clear that working to engage a more diverse base is essential to the continued expansion of the conservation advocacy community. Friends Groups find this challenging for a number of reasons. First, different communities may interact with public lands and use land in unique ways that may not be covered by historical advocacy and community engagement practices. Second, lack of capacity to produce multilingual materials and programming can alienate potentially interested communities. Finally, lack of representation within conservation organizations hampers Friends Groups ability to engage with diverse communities.

Our case studies and literature review identified a number of strategies for connecting with new communities. When possible, increasing representation within organizations is an important step. Making efforts to have Friends Groups' boards and staff representative of the community where they operate can help bring new voices into the space. A result of this are novel outreach efforts that increase diverse engagement. Several groups cited youth programming as instrumental by encouraging students to bring their families along to events. Working with other existing organizations, rather than building new groups and constituencies from scratch, was also noted as an effective way to bring new voices to the table. Finally, to be effective, outreach efforts can go beyond annual events, such as Latino Conservation Week. Although these events are important, Friends Groups can further support the relationships formed during them through programs that foster more consistent and longer term engagement.

Population Growth and Decline: Population growth and decline trends were not uniform across all of the counties that were looked at. However, more counties have growing populations than declining ones. Half of the counties also had population growth greater than the national average for the period between 2010 and 2020. More recently, this trend has become even more pronounced. During the 2020 to 2021 time period the number of counties with populations above the national average rose even more, to account for over two-thirds of the places investigated. This happened in the midst of an unprecedented slow down of the growth rate across the US of only 0.1% from 2020 to 2021.

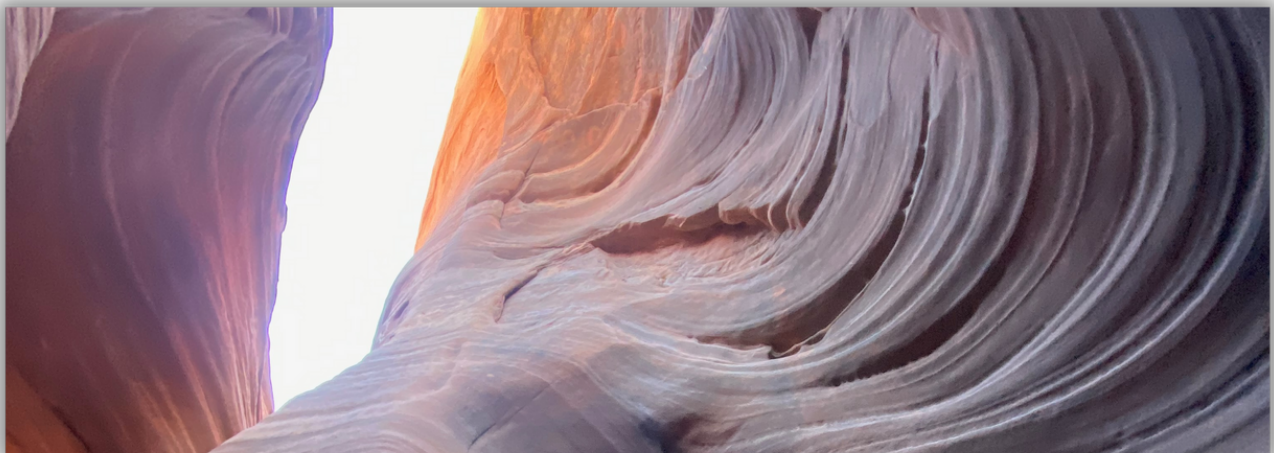
This data shows that people are moving to the West even as populations elsewhere are declining. The literature contextualizes this in the beauty of the region and the seemingly endless opportunities for outdoor recreation as amenities that continue to draw people to the area. For Friends Groups, the impacts of this growth show up in the need for improved infrastructure when the existing systems are not able to handle the influx of people. These tipping points necessitate strategies for investing in roads, housing, and other development, which is why groups like Conserve Southwest Utah advocate for improved urban planning. They call this Smart Growth, an idea that imagines walkable cities where neighborhood communities thrive. Finally, growing populations can also lead to more people utilizing public lands, which in turn leads to greater impacts on these lands. Increased educational programming on conservation values and behavior are therefore needed in these places. Despite these difficulties, growing populations are also an opportunity for Friends Groups to increase their network of volunteers and members.

Aging Population: The aging of the population was an ubiquitous trend across the counties that we looked at. The proportion of the population that is over 65 grew everywhere from 2010 to 2020, while median age also increased in the majority of places. On the other hand, the population of youth in these same counties declined in all but one. The population is growing older because the baby boomer generation has reached retirement age, people are living longer, and fewer babies are being born. In rural places this trend can be exacerbated when young people move away to pursue opportunity elsewhere. In the natural amenity rich West, this phenomena is also influenced by an influx of older retirees. Retirement is the primary reason that Friends Groups gave for why their communities are increasing in age. Although there are concerns that aging populations can lead to negative economic outcomes, a growing population of retirees may also benefit Friends Groups by increasing the number of individuals in an area who fall into the demographic category of those who have traditionally been involved in conservation.

Politics: Bridging political divides is an essential component of Friends Groups' work protecting and expanding National Conservation Lands. In an era of increased political polarization, working across the aisle is only becoming more challenging. Our literature review and case studies highlighted relationship building within communities as a key factor in overcoming political challenges. Essential relationships to be cultivated include community members and leaders from diverse demographics, stakeholders within local organizations, and Federal personnel from local field offices. Strategies for relationship building involve community engagement events, education programs, and community representation within organizational leadership. There is broad support for conservation and stewardship among political liberals, as well as those who hold traditional republican values. Every group we spoke with cited ongoing difficulty engaging the new branch of conservative politics that has grown since the election of Donald Trump in 2016.

* * *

Our work shows the dramatic changes that western communities have experienced and points to the likely continuation of these trends into the future. It also highlights strategies from the literature and case studies for how Friends Groups may navigate these demographic trends. These strategies have been consolidated at the end of this report, followed by an overview of three themes that consistently showed up throughout the research. These themes are Community Advocacy that Meets Community Needs, the Importance of Organizational Representation, and the Cultivation of Relationships with Diverse Stakeholders. These themes offer tangible methods that may assist in harnessing demographic change in a way that contributes to the conservation of public lands. It is also our hope that the consolidation of this information may inform the ways conservation might be reframed so that it can engage the changing population in authentic ways as it becomes more diverse into the future.



Slot canyon in Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument, taken by Elena Wimberger

1. Introduction

Increasing racial diversity, domestic migration, and intensifying political polarization are all remaking the character of western communities. The future of successful public land conservation and stewardship requires that it equitably reflect and meet the needs of this diversifying population. The organizations within Conservation Lands Foundation's (CLF) Friends Grassroots Network (FGN) work to connect communities to their landscapes. Knowing who is in one's community is integral to this effort, especially in light of the shifting demographics of these places. For grassroots movements adapting to these demographic, geographic, and cultural shifts is increasingly important.

At the heart of this effort to increase inclusivity within the conservation movement, is a need to redefine the tenets of conservation advocacy. Rooted in a history steeped in the writings of John Muir, the legislation of Theodore Roosevelt, and the land ethic of Aldo Leopold, the conservation movement developed under a Western philosophy of humanity and nature as separate. In this context, historic federal land management practices aimed to set aside "pristine wilderness" for protection from human development. Since then, land management and conservation strategies have slowly evolved as practitioners realized this narrow style of conservation ignored other ways that land protection may be facilitated and made access to these protected landscapes unachievable for all but a small subset of the population (Morales et al., 2022). As part of a larger social movement, conservation is becoming more intersectional as issues are viewed holistically and multiple identities, especially those of previously marginalized populations, are brought to the table. To incorporate these voices requires a reframing of conservation that validates the differing ways groups engage with the natural world.

The public lands advocacy movement has an opportunity to build a bigger tent through acknowledging, accepting, and legitimizing forms of conservation other than those rooted in western tradition. Engaging historically underrepresented populations also has the potential to increase grassroots support and build nonprofit capacity (Bonta & Jordan). Moreover greater diversity within organizations has been shown to increase innovation (He & Jiang, 2018), as wider perspectives across gender, age, race, and class allow for differing approaches to problems to be proposed. The problems of the 21st century are complex and will require a broad spectrum of human ingenuity to be solved. Issues encountered in public lands conservation are no exception to this. By expanding beyond their organizations' traditional participation and including a broader coalition of people in their work, Friends Groups have the chance to make meaningful progress in the protection of public lands in a way that cultivates the growth of a more holistic conservation movement.

This report aims to assist members of the FGN in gaining insight into the demographic makeup of their communities so that they are able to make meaningful progress towards broader community representation in public lands conservation advocacy. It is our hope that the data and strategies presented here will provide greater insight into who lives adjacent to National Conservation Lands and highlight the perspectives, interests, and needs of these communities. This information can be used to catalyze community engagement in a way that strengthens public lands protection and connects communities to their landscapes.

2. Context

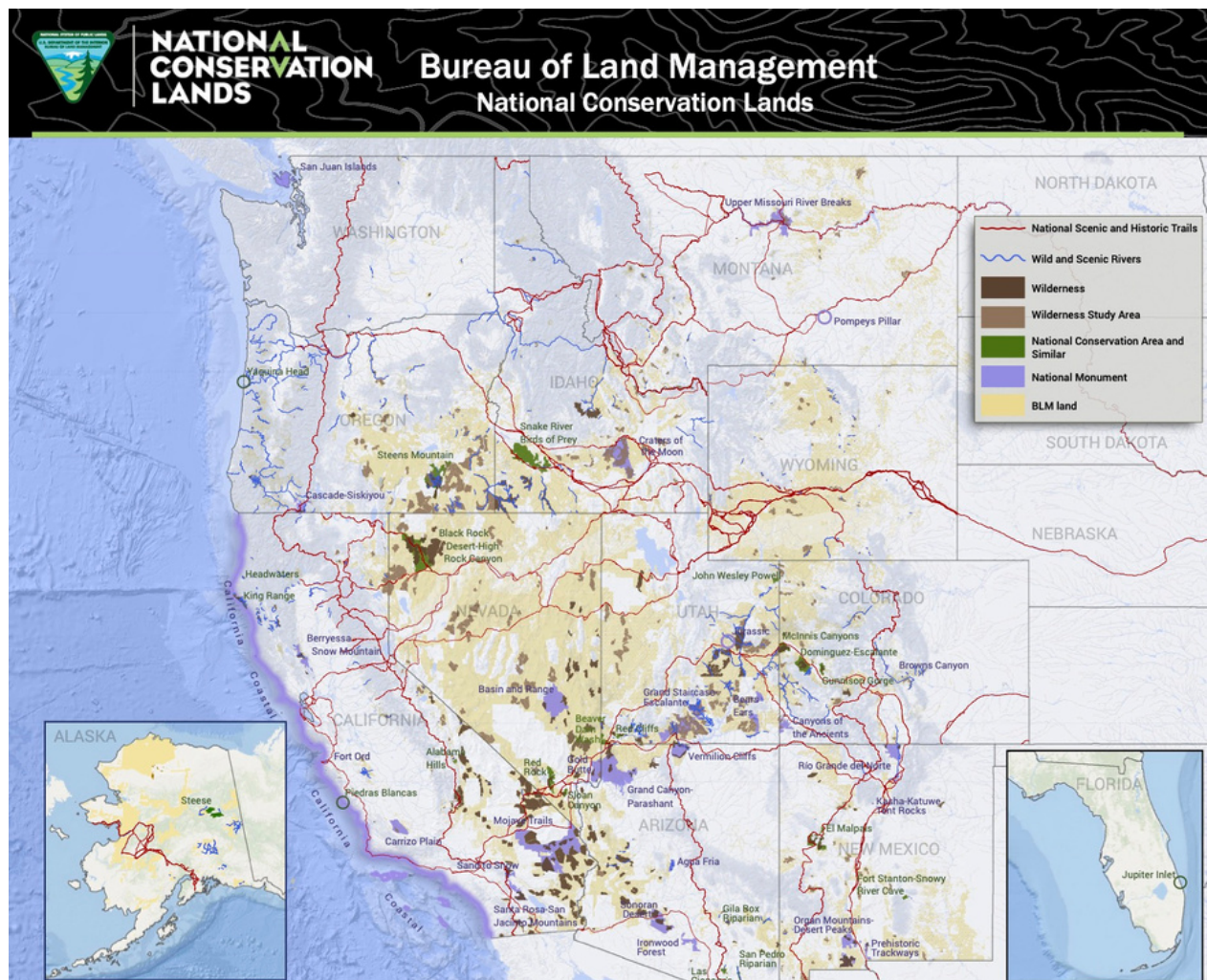
The future of public land conservation and the work that Friends Groups do exist within the complex context of the wider American West. People, policy, a changing climate, the Covid-19 pandemic, and many other factors and events impact conservation efforts. Understanding these contexts is integral to the effective management of public lands. This section provides background information that situates the demographic trends at the center of this report within the larger setting. First, we discuss the history of the National Conservation Land system, some of the characteristics of the system, and the policies that underpin federal land conservation. Second, we present an overview of the on-going shift towards incorporating Indigenous perspectives into land management practices, and how this shift is impacting conservation advocacy. Next, we investigate the ways that climate change is impacting Western landscapes and conservation policy. Warming temperature will have broad impacts on public lands and adjacent communities, and therefore must be accounted for within all advocacy for and management of these landscapes. Finally, we discuss the economic systems of greatest significance to Western public lands, including an overview of industries that may position Friends Groups to implement novel forms of conservation. This section aims to assist public lands advocates by providing them with information that considers the larger picture that their work exists within.

2.1 History of National Conservation Lands

US National Conservation Lands and the Friends Groups that support them, are modern evolutions of United States Public Lands policy and the environmental advocacy movement that sprang up as this policy developed. Following the acquisition of western territories in the 19th Century, the Federal Government passed the Homestead Acts with the aim of distributing these newly acquired lands to individuals and corporations who migrated from the Eastern states. These policies were driven by the colonial ideals of land ownership, and were explicitly designed for the elimination and assimilation of Indigenous peoples (Spence, 1999). This priority of the General Land Office, the primary land management agency at the time, meant that comprehensive land management that accounted for multiple ways land could be used and respected cultural traditions, was basically nonexistent.

During the Progressive Era at the turn of the 20th century, land management began to become more nuanced and site specific with the creation of new Federal agencies that were tasked with managing the natural resources on undeveloped public lands. The US Forest Service and the National Park Service were formed to sustainably manage forests and to protect exceptional areas for public use. Still, much of the land across the West didn't qualify for management under these agencies. Moreover, the rugged terrain of the West meant that much land remained that was unsuitable for effective distribution to homesteaders. This leftover land was managed under a patchwork of laws that allowed individuals and corporations to acquire rights for resource extraction, especially mining, oil production, and livestock grazing. Eventually, management of these lands was consolidated under the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The Bureau's mission is "To sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of America's public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations" (BLM, 2022a). Since its inception in 1946, the BLM has been primarily focused on managing economic uses of public lands, including mining and grazing leases. In theory, the BLM also took over administration of land dispersal to private parties, but in practice most of the land they managed was not eligible for distribution. In 1976, the Federal Lands Policy and Management Act stopped the distribution of federal lands, and tasked the BLM with management of those lands in perpetuity (BLM).

Over the same years, many new laws and policies were created to protect landscapes of great aesthetic, cultural, and scientific importance. The 1906 Antiquities Act allowed the President to designate national monuments, protecting their resources from destruction. The Wilderness Act, Land and Water Conservation Act, and The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act all create new designations for public lands that offer varying levels of protection. These acts built preservation, recreation, and other non-extractive uses into the priority management strategies of the BLM. With those goals in mind, the BLM created the National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS), in 2000, and the system received congressional approval in 2009 (BLM, 2022).

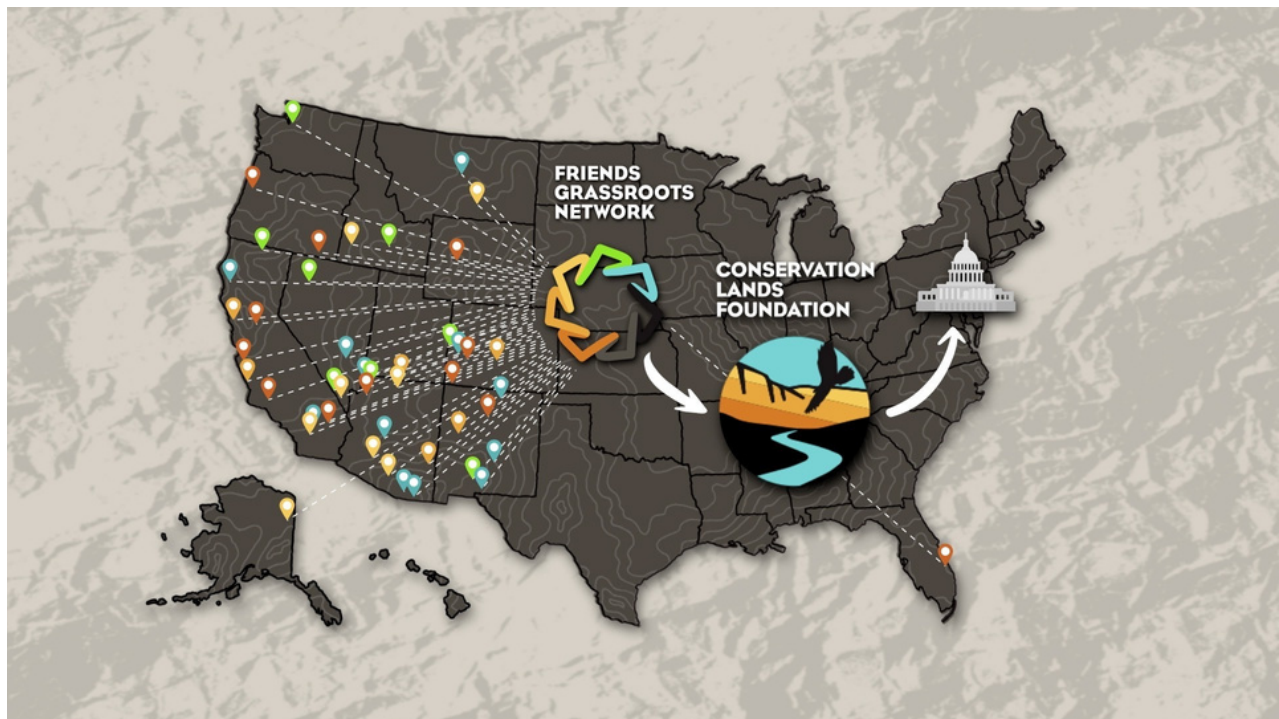


Source: Bureau of Land Management, <https://www.blm.gov/programs/national-conservation-lands/about/maps-data-and-resources>. Retrieved 12/2/22

The NLCS, now known as the National Conservation Lands, are managed by the BLM to “benefit current and future generations, supporting conservation as a part of the BLM’s multiple-use and sustained yield mission” (BLM, 2022). As of this printing, there are approximately 900 landscapes listed under the National Conservation Lands designation, totalling nearly 35 million acres. Units range in size from Pompeys Pillar National Monument in Montana, at only 51 acres, to Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in Utah, which is nearly 1.8 Million acres. Spanning 15 states, the National Conservation Lands system also protects vastly different ecologies, each of which requires unique management strategies. Within this system there are 11 types of designations, including National Monuments, Wilderness Study Areas, National Scenic Trails, and Wild and Scenic Rivers. The National Conservation Lands system represents an acknowledgement by the BLM of the value in preserving

certain tracts of public lands, and shows the Federal Government's commitment to conservation as an important use of those lands (Leshy, 2022).

Conservation Lands Foundation (CLF) was founded in 2007 with the mission of supporting National Conservation Lands through the cultivation of local grassroots advocacy and stewardship. Since its inception, CLF has worked to advocate for the National Conservation Lands and its prioritization of conservation of public lands. In addition to national advocacy campaigns, CLF created the Friends Grassroots Network (FGN) to support the on-the-ground work of local organizations. The FGN now includes over 80 conservation groups across 45 land units. These groups primarily provide stewardship, advocacy, community engagement, and education across these public lands. Some FGN members also provide community support, work to conserve land outside the National Conservation Lands system, and advocate for new additions to the National Conservation Lands.

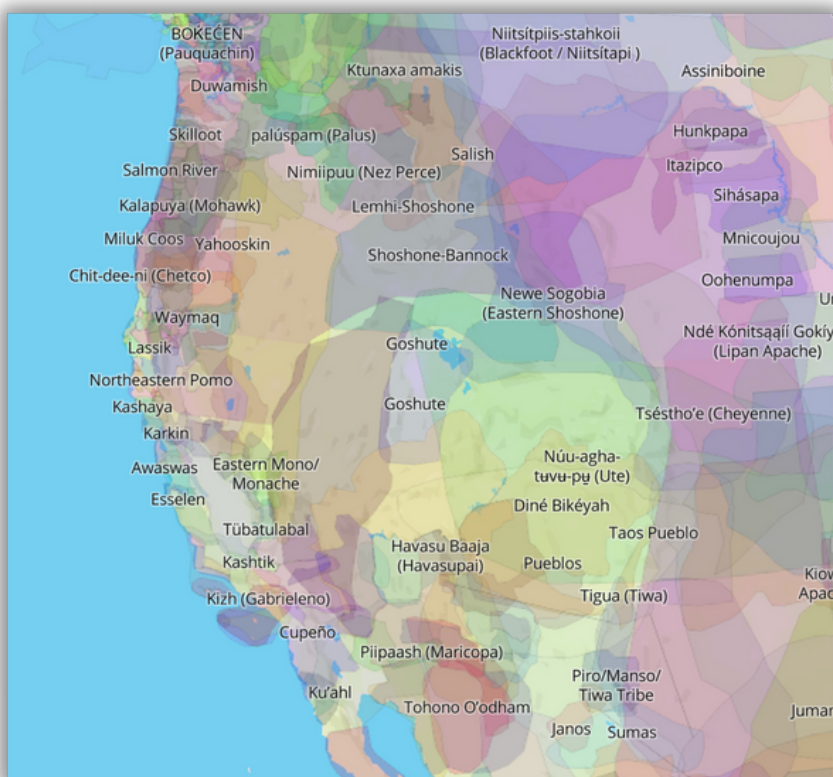


The relationship between CLF, the FGN, and the government. Source: Conservation Lands Foundation

Knowing the history of public lands management is essential to understand the policy context Friends Groups operate within. This history sheds light on the ways conservation advocacy could be done in a more inclusive and holistic way. There is a growing cultural understanding of the connection between the creation of public lands and the associated dispossession and removal of Indigenous people from those lands. In response to this knowledge a global movement to recognize the rights of Indigenous peoples has arisen. This movement has prompted some federal officials to push to include Indigenous groups in the management of their ancestral lands. The next section will explore this movement, its management implications, and the ways that Friends Groups can support it.

2.2 Indigenous Land Stewardship

The ancestral stewards of the National Conservation Lands are as varied and diverse as the lands themselves. Countless Indigenous peoples inhabited the lands we now call our public lands since time immemorial. In many ways, public lands, including the National Conservation Lands units, are artifacts of the dispossession of Native Nations carried out by the US Government. Historically, these tribes were largely ignored and excluded from the stewardship of the lands and their natural resources. However, in recent years more of an effort has been made to bring ancestral practices back to ancestral lands. Though there is a long way to go to achieve appreciable environmental and social justice for tribes, federal, state, and local land managers are beginning to take tribal concerns into consideration and include Tribal leaders and members in the management of their ancestral lands. Friends Groups can also have a role to play in building authentic relationships with Tribes and, upon a Tribe's request, supporting their efforts in the stewardship of these landscapes.



Sources: Nativeland.ca

Nativeland.ca provides information on the original territories of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas. The map is included here to represent the presence of Native Americans before the influence of colonization.

Recognition and Growth of Indigenous Lands Stewardship

In 2007, the United Nations passed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) with 46 different articles, ranging from affirming the right of self determination and identification for Indigenous peoples, to the right of governance, and the right to preserve and strengthen traditional institutions. Initially, the Declaration was Rejected by the US, citing vague language. However, in 2010 the Obama administration announced support for the declaration. One of the primary doctrines in the UNDRIP is the right of Indigenous groups to be free from management actions that impact their land, culture or communities without giving their free, prior, and informed consent (United Nations, 2007). While the US has still not officially adopted the UNDRIP, the signal of support shows a shift in policy from one focused on consultation, to one striving for consent.

There is a long way for the US government to go if it wishes to reach the standards spelled out in the UNDRIP. In 2000, President Bill Clinton signed executive order 13175, which mandates “meaningful consultation and collaboration with tribal officials in the development of Federal policies that have tribal implications” (Exec. Order No. 13175, 2000). The difference between consultation and the free, prior, and informed consent as spelled out in the UNDRIP is significant; consultation simply grants tribes a seat at the table, while consent allows tribes to say no to a project or practice and have that decision respected by the state and national governments (Townsend & Townsend, 2020). Moreover, “meaningful consultation” is not always facilitated by the Federal Government effectively, since the ability to comment on proposed legislation can be contingent upon access to transportation and reliable internet, and requires understanding of jargon-laden language.

However, movement towards consent and meaningful collaboration is beginning. In 2016, President Barack Obama signed a presidential proclamation establishing Bears Ears National Monument in Southern Utah. The proclamation explicitly lays out that this new monument would be co-managed by a coalition of Southwestern Tribes with significant cultural ties to the area (Proc. 9558, 2016). These tribes, which include Hopi, Navajo, Ute Mountain Ute, Ute Indian, and Zuni, were also instrumental to the designation of this monument itself. The Trump Administration then worked to shrink Bears Ears and eliminate the mandate for tribal management. However, in 2022 the Biden Administration and The Bears Ears Intertribal Coalition signed and established a cooperative agreement that acknowledges the area’s cultural values, the tribes rights to continue traditional uses of the area, and the importance of traditional ecological knowledge in land management (Inter-Governmental Cooperative Agreement, 2022)

This most recent update to the Bears Ears story is an innovation in US land management practices, as traditional ecological knowledge has not previously been recognized as legitimate in the management of national monuments and other types of National Conservation Lands. In recent years, scientists have begun to recognize the effectiveness of Indigenous land management practices through an increased amount of research. The clearest example of this is in wildfire management, and especially prescribed burning. Following the removal of many tribes and the establishment of the US Forest Service, the policy of the government was to totally exclude fire from these new public lands (Levy, 2022). However, periodic burning is a natural part of many diverse ecosystems. Before colonization, Native Nations across the continent used fire as a management tool to improve resource harvests, exclude unwanted or invasive species, and improve the landscape for wildlife (Eisenberg et al., 2019). Frequent burning also controls fuel loads so that the catastrophic fires we see today are far less likely (Levy, 2022). Land managers and legislators in California have begun to enact laws that confirm the legitimacy of cultural fire practitioners, and mandate cooperation between CalFire and Tribal communities (Marks-Block & Tripp, 2021). A study identified the restorative effects that Indigenous management practices such as the cultural harvest of resources, historic wildlife reintroduction, and cultural burning, have on ecosystems. The same study recommends collaborative management, the return of public land to tribal control, and oversight on who has access to an area so tribes can continue to maintain traditional ecological knowledge (Long & Lake, 2018).

Indigenous Stewardship for Friends Groups

The move towards inclusion of tribal interests in land management is essential. It shows momentum towards some measure, however small, of reparations for the dispossession and erasure of native peoples in the history of the United States in general, and public lands in particular. Indigenous stewardship supports the goals of conservationist and land management agencies, and is the right thing to do.

Friends Groups have an opportunity to provide support to Tribes that are seeking inclusion, collaboration, and

consent in the preservation of their ancestral lands. Through the Resource Management Plan (RMP) planning process, Friends Groups can support Tribal Government-to-US Government negotiation and can collaborate themselves with local Tribes. Further, through outreach and advocacy, Friends Groups can be instrumental in raising awareness among their supporters of the essential expertise Native Nations bring to stewarding their ancestral lands, these vital landscapes.

A diverse array of voices in the conservation community, including Indigenous voices and resource management practices, will be essential moving into a more uncertain future. At the center of this uncertainty is climate change and the ways that it will affect public lands. In the next section, we will discuss the impacts of climate change and the management strategies that may help in the mitigation of this large-scale threat.

2.3 Climate Change

In this section we will briefly discuss the expected impacts of climate change across western public lands. While large-scale climate mitigation may be out of scope for many Friends Groups, it is the context within which all 21st century land managers must operate. All National Conservation Lands are affected by climate change, and the impacts of rising temperatures should be accounted for in all FGN advocacy work. The specter of climate change looms large over the management of Western Public Lands, and has become the overarching context for public lands and environmental advocacy.

The Southwest is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. This region has already experienced nearly 2 degrees fahrenheit of warming since the turn of the 20th century, and models project another 3.5 to 9.5 degrees fahrenheit of warming by 2100 (USGCRP, 2014). Other parts of the West will also be impacted by warming. Changes to the ecology and geomorphology of the region are expected, which have significant implications for land managers (Clifford et al., 2020). Not only that, but the land management strategies implemented by the BLM can have major impacts on US greenhouse gas emissions. Currently, direct and indirect emissions from use of public lands account for up to 25% of US carbon emissions (Ratledge et al., 2019). This figure includes the emissions from recreational use, the burning of fossil fuels mined from federal leases, and methane emissions from abandoned oil and gas wells, forestry operations, and ranching. The impacts of climate change and the greenhouse gas emissions from public lands must be considered during the BLMs RMP planning process. Friends Groups can be instrumental in advocating for increased consideration of climate change and its impacts in new RMPs.

Climate Impacts

Rising temperatures are worrying in and of themselves, but it is the broader impacts of this warming that will fundamentally change the lands that are preserved as National Conservation Lands (Ellenwood et al., 2012). The most visible and well publicized impact of climate change on public lands has been the explosive increase in wildfire frequency and intensity across the western US. While historic management regimes that unilaterally advocated for fire suppression contribute to this phenomenon, warming driven fuel drying clearly links climate change and wildfire incidence (Jones et al., 2020).

Higher temperatures also impact the reliability of the western water supply. High temperatures cause earlier melting of mountain snowpacks while low soil moisture absorbs a higher proportion of that runoff, keeping water out of rivers and streams (Harpold et al., 2012; Udall & Overpeck, 2017). Higher temperatures also

negatively impact fish stocks since warmer water contains less dissolved oxygen, making it more difficult for fish to survive (Wenger et al., 2011). This impacts human recreation as well, driving recent fishing closures on major western rivers. Unlike mountain runoff and stream temperatures, the impact of climate change on precipitation patterns is less clear. In the Southwest, models disagree on the changes to long term average precipitation (Udall & Overpeck, 2017). However, the timing of precipitation is likely to become more unpredictable, making dry seasons and droughts longer and more severe in the coming decades (MacDonald, 2010).

Climate change will also impact terrestrial ecology across the West, instigating changes to the distribution of plant and animal life. Native ranges for both flora and fauna will shift as species move northward and navigate to higher elevations. Trees moving to higher elevations is one example of this. These shifts allow species to remain in their ideal temperature zone, but also expose them to new habitat conditions, which may suit some new inhabitants better than others (Smithers et al., 2021). This means that some species are at far greater risk from climate change than others. Established and new invasive species are especially well positioned to spread as new niches open within shifting ecosystems (Archer & Pedrick, 2008; Ravi et al., 2021). Given the great variety of landscape types and species found within the West, it is difficult to predict how climate change will affect the diverse ecosystems found within public lands (Kling et al., 2020). This nuance makes the assessment of warming's effects on individual populations of plants and animals all the more important.

Finally, climate change's effects on public lands will also affect the human population. Extended droughts and aridification will strain water supplies, which is already happening within the Colorado River Basin (Udall & Overpeck, 2017). Extreme fire behavior will hamper recreational and industrial uses of forest lands. Decreases in snowpack and streamflows will negatively impact the skiing, rafting, and fishing industries. Conversely, other forms of recreation, including climbing and hiking, have the potential to see higher visitation as earlier melt leads to trails that are open and accessible for more of the year (Hand et al., 2018). More visitation to public lands units has both pros and cons; on the one hand it may boost the regional economy, but more people in a landscape can also exacerbate the climate impacts outlined above. Within specific landscapes, this can result in erosion and other types of ecosystem degradation (Lindley et al., 2018). More broadly, growing populations results in land use change as wildlands are converted to human development, the latter of which has a much higher carbon footprint (Theobald et al., 2013). The relationships between human populations, public lands, and climate change, drives home the need for land management that actively aims to foster a more sustainable environment.

Management Implications

While mitigating climate change will require a national response and although many of the impacts noted above are already happening and not easily reversible, there are mitigation actions that can be taken at the local scale (Clifford et al., 2020). First, it is imperative that local land managers prioritize climate change's causes, impacts, and mitigation practices in RMP updates. As of 2017, only 17 of the 44 RMPs for BLM lands in the intermountain West mentioned climate change in any capacity. Further, many of those that talked about climate change do so only vaguely and do not specify how it is impacting management or what mitigation efforts the BLM is taking (Brice et al., 2020). While individual field offices may not have the resources to quantify their actions' impact on climate, this should not stop them from working to build specific adaptation strategies into their planning.

The first, and most obvious, action that can be taken at the local scale is limiting oil and gas drilling on public lands (Ratledge et al., 2019). This will require more than local management, as lease sales and other energy policy is created at the Federal level, but local land managers do have a role to play in the management and implementation of these policies. Further, local regulations can ensure that abandoned or otherwise unused wells do not continue to leak greenhouse gasses. This matters because local land use policies can impact the efficacy of public lands as carbon sinks. Cattle that graze on land managed by the BLM produce approximately 13.7 million tons of CO₂ annually through biological processes (Kaufmann et al. 2022). Excessive grazing, especially under extreme climate conditions, can also negatively impact land's ability to provide ecosystem services, like biodiversity, water supply, and air quality, and can turn ecosystems that could be net carbon sinks into carbon sources (Brice et al., 2020; Kaufmann et al., 2022). It is not reasonable to want or expect a total cessation of grazing on federal land. However, over the last two decades, various presidents and the Department of the Interior have elevated the importance of the consideration of greenhouse gas emission and climate change in the RMP planning process. These mandates give Friends Groups a place to start working with the BLM to more seriously consider not only the impact of climate change on public lands, but also the potential for public lands to help mitigate climate change.

The impact of climate change on non-agricultural sectors of the economy necessitates changes to management practices as well. For example, recreation sectors such as rafting, fishing, and skiing, are likely to experience shorter seasons, which will require new strategies to mitigate the potential of concentrated impact. Other land units may experience longer seasons in the future. A longer tourist season could mean more visitation, more impact on land unit resources, and a shorter off season to complete trail and infrastructure improvements. These changes will also require changes in land management practices, planning, and investment in infrastructure to handle increased traffic.

Climate Change Action for Friends Groups

Climate change has already impacted public lands in profound ways, and, going forward, no corner of the West will be totally spared. Urban and rural areas alike will face challenges from a dwindling water supply and degraded ecosystems, to economic shifts and increased wildfires. While Friends Groups may not have the resources or desire to work directly on climate mitigation efforts, they are uniquely positioned to assist in the adaptation of management practices necessary to deal with a warming world. As stakeholders in the BLMs future RMP planning process, Friends Groups should work to ensure that climate change, greenhouse gas emissions, and future use impacts are included in those documents. Climate driven changes to the landscape will also make stewardship activities even more crucial. Through education programs, Friends Groups can help limit the impact that human populations have on climate stressed species and ecosystems and teach people to recreate in a way that reduces their contributions to climate change. The organization of volunteer opportunities to do trail maintenance, invasive species treatment, and native species protection and propagation are also areas where Friends Groups can bring resources to bear to assist land managers climate mitigation efforts.

The impacts of climate change are sure to continue to change the dynamics of communities near National Conservation Lands. Perhaps the most visible and apparent changes will be to the economic structures that rely on the land, either through recreation or resource extraction. In the next section, we discuss changes in western economies that appear in the literature and what they may mean for Friends Groups.

2.4 Changing Economies in the West

The communities that Friends Groups work within vary widely, ranging from large cities like Los Angeles and Las Vegas to counties like Inyo in California and Garfield in Utah, which contain fewer than 2 people per square mile. What many of these places have in common though, is that they contain significant human development abutting large areas of undeveloped land (Weber, 2019). The juxtaposition of these two landscapes can lead to unique economic contexts (Rasker et al., 2013), particularly when it occurs in less populated areas which may rely on only a few industries for the vast majority of the available jobs (Weber, 2019).

Traditionally, the economies of the rural West were rooted in extractive industries such as mining, oil and gas, ranching, and timber harvesting. However, growing interest in outdoor recreation, deeper knowledge of ecology, and the need to mitigate climate change have shifted this industrial base, often referred to as the Old West, to a New West where other industries thrive (Weber, 2019). Most notably, the outdoor recreation economy has taken off as more people seek opportunities to do the myriad activities that the landscapes of the West have to offer (Smith et al., 2021). Other industries have also done well within the New West, including the knowledge-service sector, which includes professionals who are able to work remotely (Rasker et al., 2013), and the restoration economy, which is based around creating higher functioning ecosystems (Formosa & Kelly, 2020). These emerging economies offer opportunities for Friends Groups to not only grow and expand, but also provide avenues through which the threats of climate change can be mitigated.

The Old West

With a nickname that alludes to the past, it is no surprise that the Old West is in decline. Many of these communities, where resource extractive industries still dominate, can also be described as “bypassed” (Shumway & Jenson, 2020). This second moniker alludes to both the inability of the economies in these areas to transition towards more modern sectors and the physical remoteness of these areas, which typically have few roads and are far from airports (Weber, 2019). A case study of a Montana coal town paints a clearer picture of the economic considerations that communities which once relied on heavy industry now face. Surveys and a focus group uncovered the sense of urgency felt by many as they witnessed a slowing in economic opportunity. However, there was also hope for the future, and strong community bonds were found to be particularly important for fostering action that could revitalize the local economy (Ward et al., 2020). The hope of this community could be interpreted as for a New West economy, which is marked by population growth and economies based on natural amenities (Weber, 2019).

Unfortunately, this transition is not always possible, since geographic and ecological features which are the foundation of the New West economy cannot be relocated. Since communities are either in the mountains or not, different places do not have the same opportunity to rebrand themselves as outdoor recreation hubs. Some public lands are also inaccessible due to the patchwork of public and private ownership that dot the West. The communities near these unreachable landscapes have been found to have lower economic outcomes (Leonard & Plantinga, 2022), which may be connected to their inability to diversify the economy away from extractive industries. This leads to the boom and bust dynamic that is so often connected to the oil and gas industry. Although most Friends Groups are located in areas that fit into the New West, it is important to consider the impacts of the Old West on communities as it is the historical context of the entire western US.

The Outdoor Recreation Economy and National Conservation Lands

With the decline of resource extractive industries across the West, the outdoor recreation economy has filled the gap in many locations. This is particularly true in areas adjacent to public lands (Mockrin et al., 2018), where natural amenities draw tourists to partake in a variety of outdoor activities. Growth is also more significant in rural counties with recreation than in rural counties without it, which demonstrates the positive effects of outdoor recreation on the economy (Headwater Economics, 2019). Federal protection of a landscape can also bolster this sector. The clearest example of this are National Park designations, which lead to an influx of people and jobs (Cline et al., 2011). Communities adjacent to National Parks tend to see greater economic growth compared to those located near National Monuments. One reason for this is the greater resources for infrastructure that National Parks receive, which makes it easier to accommodate a large number of people (Jakus & Akhundjanov, 2019). National Monument designation does have some effect on the economy though. An increase in the number of businesses, jobs, and economic sectors were found in analysis of 14 communities after nearby National Monument designations (Walls et al., 2020), and the designation of Bears Ears National Monument increased recreation visitation to the area three-fold. However, the greater number of recreationists did not clearly translate to economic growth in the communities near Bears Ears (Smith et al., 2021).

Part of the issue with relying on increased outdoor recreation for meaningful economic growth is that the jobs created within this economy tend to be low-wage (Hunter et al., 2005). For example, while opportunities increased in those 14 monument adjacent areas, the average wage in these places remained the same (Walls et al., 2020). Other research actually found that average wages went down as outdoor recreation grew (Headwater Economics, 2019). These low wages are often accompanied by rising housing costs. This means that even when outdoor recreation economies contribute to higher earnings, the cost-of-living may render these gains obsolete. Demonstrating this, an analysis that compared economic markers for western communities near natural amenities to those further away, showed that families living in high natural amenity areas tend to make \$9,000 more per year. However, these increases in income were offset when housing prices were controlled for (Hunter et al., 2005). More recently, a report by a consortium of Colorado counties with outdoor recreation based economies showed that residents who work in the county have lower wages compared to those who might live in the area but work for an employer outside of the county (Northwest Colorado County of Governments, 2021). This all points to the fact that jobs may be created by outdoor recreation, but these jobs may not pay enough to adequately sustain living in the places where this economy exists.

Many of the people who move to areas with outdoor recreation economies, including those near National Conservation Lands, are older, wealthy retirees. As mentioned earlier, these areas also see an influx of tourists. The number of low-wage jobs grows within these economies to accommodate the needs of these two groups (Mockrin et al., 2018). These jobs typically fall within the service sector, and are primarily held by an hispanic immigrant labor force that has grown in parallel with the influx of wealthy individuals (Nelson et al., 2015). These facts show that although the outdoor recreation industry can help some communities continue to grow after moving away from extractive industry, it is not without its problems and should not be touted as a silver bullet. Instead, the outdoor recreation economy should be carefully implemented within communities so that it can provide growth without contributing to inequality. Friends Groups may be able to contribute to this by advocating for Smart Growth, which proposes sustainable development strategies that support healthy communities and economies within healthy environments (EPA, 2022), and by supporting opportunity within sectors beyond recreation and services.

Opportunities for Friends Groups within Emerging Economies

The West is changing. With this change new economic paradigms are emerging that center the historic, cultural, and scenic amenities that can be found within public lands (Walls et al., 2020), and that provide opportunity in the communities that are near these landscapes. Outdoor recreation is one sector among those that have come to fill the gap left by the extractive industry. Another is knowledge-services, which is defined by white-collar jobs that can be done remotely (Rasker et al., 2013). However, since these workers are often employed in far-flung places, this sector can support an economy by bringing an influx of spending to the area but does not necessarily support the creation of local jobs. Moreover, as remote workers tend to be better paid than their locally employed counterparts, they can contribute to income inequality (Northwest Colorado County of Governments, 2021).

To provide more opportunity to the entire population, a greater variety of local opportunities must be cultivated. Some places have been able to do this by rethinking Old West industries so that they are done in a more sustainable and grassroots oriented way. Within the timber industry, the Ponderosa Pine Forest Partnership in southwestern Colorado and the Greater Flagstaff Forest Partnership in Arizona are both examples of organizations that support responsible timber production; the former employs loggers and trains them in selective cutting and prescribed burns, while the later is concerned with revitalizing local forest ecosystems and reducing the impacts of fires (Wilson, 2006). These examples of transitions within the timber industry can be placed within the restoration economy. This budding industry is concerned with returning degraded ecosystems to a state where they are again able to support a variety of lifeforms. In a world affected by climate change, this requires adaptive management that allows ecosystems to shift. As an industry, the restoration economy is robust because it incorporates many skill sets and job titles (BenDor et al., 2014). Scientists, city planners, conservation advocates, and excavators are just a few of the professionals needed to implement an ecological restoration project.

Because the restoration economy requires such a large cross section of expertise, specific cultural circumstances are needed for it to arise. Humboldt County, California is one place where Friends Groups work that has seen great growth in this sector. Once a county reliant on the timber industry, over the past 40 years groups like the Mattole Salmon Group, the Mattole Restoration Council, and Sanctuary Forest, have worked to educate and connect the larger community to the Mattole River Watershed. In the 1970s, an influx of wealthy and ecologically minded individuals to the area allowed this movement to take root. Today, employment opportunities within the restoration economy draw a new generation. Moreover, the restoration economy engaged multi-generational ranchers and loggers in the local conservation movement, populations that are often at odds with anything overtly environmental (Formosa & Kelly, 2020).

Like these Friends Groups in Humboldt County, other members of the FGN can work within the restoration economy to protect and restore public lands. Moreover, as an evolving economic framework that allows for a place-based approach to ecological management, this economic framework is ideally positioned to deal with the shifting demographic trends being experienced across the Western US. The methods used to analyze trends across the West are detailed in the next section, followed by an overview of the identified trends.

3. Methods Overview

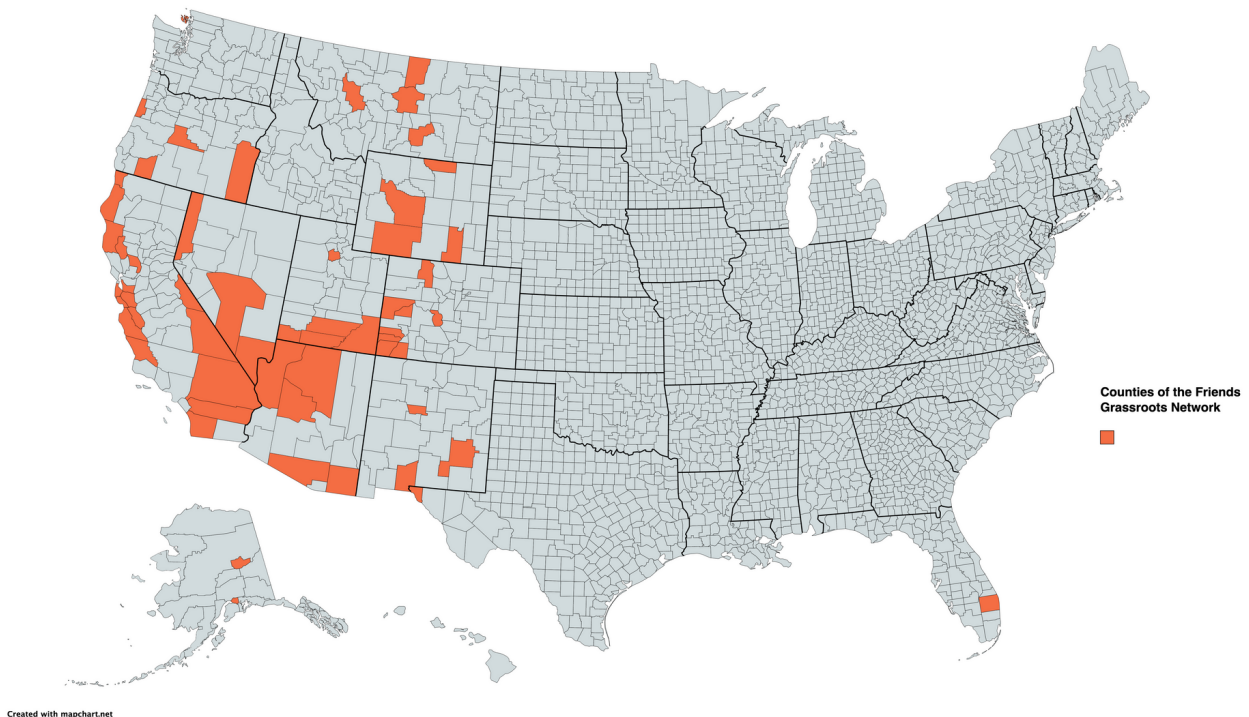
To create this report, we employed three primary methods:

- 1) data collection from the US Census Bureau and other sources
- 2) a review of relevant scientific literature
- 3) interviews conducted with five Friends Groups selected as case-studies.

A brief overview of these methods are given here. A more detailed description can be found in Appendix I.

3.1 Data Collection

We collected county level US census data in areas that Friends Groups operate within to identify significant demographic trends. With 80+ groups in the FGN, many of which work within multiple counties, looking at every relevant county was unfortunately not possible. To account for this, the county where a Friends Group's primary address is listed was used as the closest representation of where these groups work. However, some Friends Groups did not have an address listed and a few others clearly did work outside of their county of residence. In these cases analysis was done to determine which counties should be included as proxies. This method led us to include a total of 58 counties in Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Montana, New Mexico, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Texas, Washington, and Wyoming. Because the Loxahatchee River Historical Society in Palm Beach is also part of the FGN, one county in Florida was included. Due to the location and topical relevance of the western US to the rest of the FGN though, the analysis and discussion in this report concentrates on that region.



The 58 counties identified as relevant to the Friends Groups.

Data on total population, age, median income, and racial demographics were collected from the Decennial Census and the American Community Survey. To gauge change over time, data from 2010 and 2020 was compiled. When available, data from 2021 was also collected. This allowed us to perform comparative analysis that provided insight into which counties have experienced greater changes than others and to look for consistencies in the trends across geographic areas. Voting constituency data for all presidential elections from 2000-2020 was also collected from the MIT Election Lab as a way to look at voting patterns within the counties. Finally, data on the leading economic industry in each county was collected from Data USA, which compiles US census data in an easily accessible location. This information provides insight into the most prevalent and lucrative industries in each county, which can help paint a picture of the economic character of the area.

3.2 Literature Review

The literature review involved multiple iterations, beginning with a comprehensive search of information pertaining to demographics trends in each of the relevant counties. To accomplish this, the name of each county was searched for in conjunction with keywords designed to reveal information on the characteristics and changes to the populations of these communities. The aim here was to gather all relevant peer reviewed research that has been done within the counties being investigated within this report. Once this was done, more topical searches were performed on the specific demographic trends that showed up in the analysis of the data outlined above. This information has lent insight to literature review sections that cover Increasing Racial Diversity, Population Increases & Decreases, Aging, and Politics, concentrating on the Western US.

3.3 Case Studies & Site Visit

We selected five Friends Groups as case-studies to be featured in this report. . These groups were chosen because they work within communities experiencing the demographic trends identified within our data and because each of them have initiated innovative solutions to deal with these trends. We identified case-studies through conversations with individuals at the 2022 FGN Summit, conversations with employees at CLF, and by looking at the census data. To gain insight into the opportunities and challenges faced by each of these organizations in terms of demographic change as well as the strategies that they employ to deal with these changes, we conducted hour-long interviews over Zoom with leaders at each of these organizations.

We conducted one site visit to St. George, Utah. During this site visit, we met with two more individuals who work with Conserve Southwest Utah and toured relevant landscapes including Pioneer Park and Red Cliffs. The purpose of this site visit was to gain an on-the-ground perspective of how the trends from the data show up in communities and to experience some of the incredible landscapes where Friends Groups work for ourselves.

The organizations selected as case studies and the reason why they were selected are addressed in Appendix II. Tables that show the census data for the counties affiliated with these Friends Groups have also been included. These tables provide greater insight into the characteristics of the communities that case study groups work within.

4. Demographic Trends

The methods described above allowed us to identify a number of demographic trends affecting western communities and to explore the impacts of these trends on the ground. This research concentrates on how these trends relate to public lands advocacy and aims to provide information about the demographic makeup of Friends Groups' communities that might be helpful in working towards broader community representation within their conservation work. The following sections outline information from the census data, literature review, and case studies on four demographic trends.

These trends are:

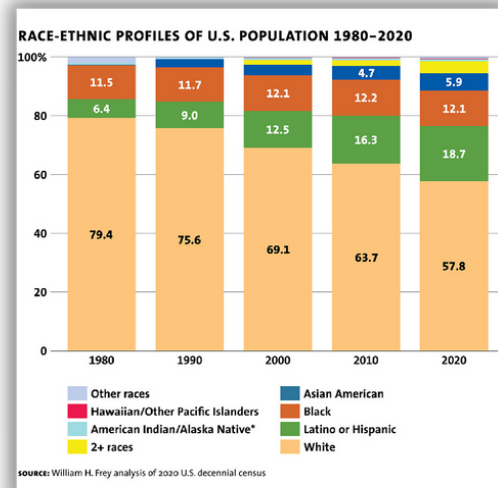
- Increasing racial and ethnic diversity
- Aging populations
- Population growth and decline
- Political polarization

4.1 Racial & Ethnic Diversity

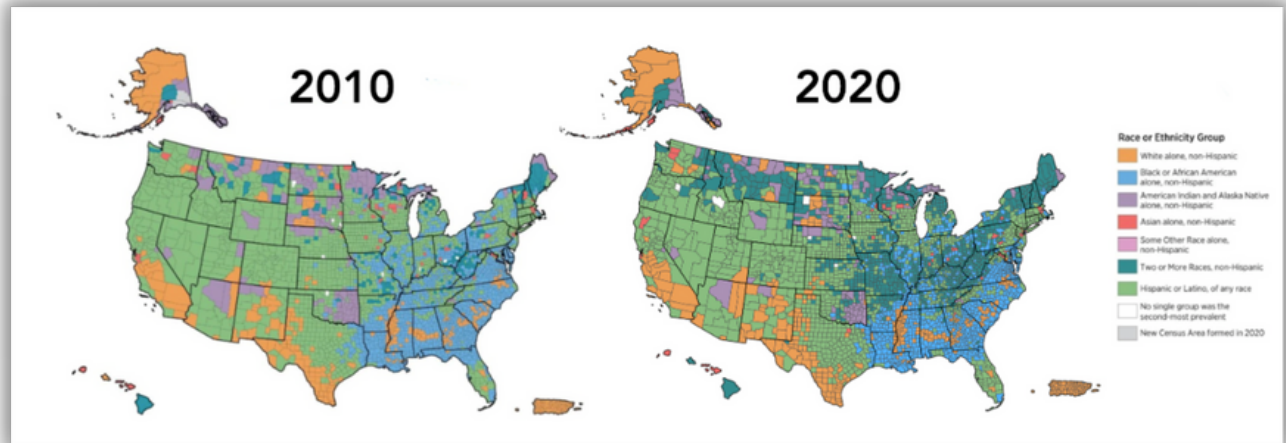
***Trend:* Increasing overall diversity with specific attention to the increasing Hispanic population paired with decreasing proportion of White population**

The United States' population is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse each year. While white people continue to be the most prevalent racial or ethnic group across the US, the 2020 census data shows that about four out of 10 Americans identify with a race or ethnic group other than white. Over the past decade, racial and ethnic minorities have accounted for all of the nation's population growth. Between 2010 and 2019 the US grew by 19.5 million people overall - a growth rate of 6.3%. Within this growth, the Hispanic population grew by 20%, the Asian American population grew by 29%, and the Black population grew by 8.5%, while the white population declined by a fraction of a percent. More specifically, the 2020 census data found that the Hispanic population accounted for 51.1% of the country's population growth, which helped drive US population growth overall. In 2010 Hispanics represented 50.5 million and 16.3% of the national population, while the 2020 census data showed the Hispanic population at 62.1 million and 18.7% of the population. Furthermore, for those under 18, there is no majority racial or ethnic group for the first time in the history of the US Census. This shows increased diversity in the nation's younger population. The overall trends from the 2020 census data signify an increasingly multiracial and ethnically diverse future for the next generations of Americans (Frey, 2018).

America is becoming more racially diverse overall. Hispanic and minority groups have accounted for the nation's population growth. This graph below shows the trend towards increased diversity. The 2020 census marked a diversity milestone in that now more than 42% of Americans now identify as people of color, up from 36% a decade ago.

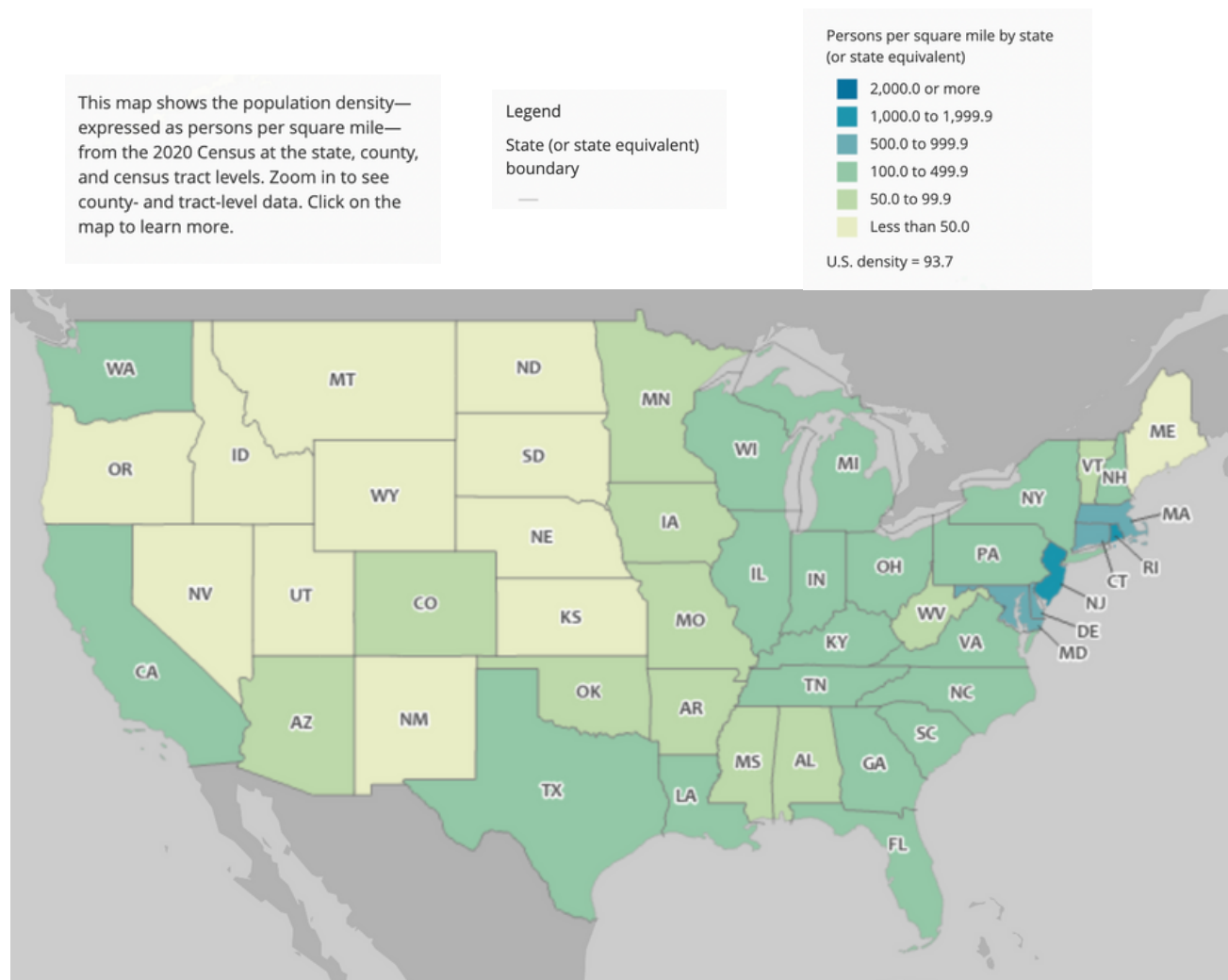


The maps below show the second-most prevalent race in each county (assumed first is White-alone, non-Hispanic unless that demographic is the second-most prevalent). Hispanic populations and residents that identified themselves as two or more races have driven population growth over the last decade.



Sources: The Rural Blog, <https://irjci.blogspot.com/2021/10/census-rural-america-becoming-more.html>

Additionally, the following map shows the prevalence of the Hispanic population in the Southwest according to the 2020 Census.



Sources: United States Census 2020, <https://mtgis-portal.geo.census.gov/arcgis/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=2566121a73de463995ed2b2fd7ff6eb7>

Between the 2010 and 2020 census, the portion of the US population identifying as White Alone decreased by 5.9%, from 63.7% to 57.8%. This is the first decade that a decline in the percentage of those who identify as White has occurred in the history of the Census . This decrease is a significant marker of the declining percentage that the white population takes up within the larger population. Census demographers note that the decrease in the proportion of white population is in part due to the white population shifting to multiracial identities. The number of people who identified as belonging to two or more races went from 9 million people in 2010 to 33.8 million people in 2020, more than tripling over the decade. Those with multiracial identities currently account for 10% of the population (Frey, 2018). The decline in percentage of white population signifies that other racial and ethnic minorities are now responsible for generating national growth.

It is difficult to create a specific narrative regarding racial minorities' relationship with public lands, as it is impossible to generalize across any racial demographic. Each group of people consists of individuals from myriad backgrounds with differing socioeconomic status, political preferences, and educational levels, among many other personal factors. The census data used here illustrates broad trends of increasing diversity across the US, however the trend of increasing diversity is not endemic to areas surrounding public lands. As this national trend continues, it will become increasingly salient to Friends Groups organizations as their communities become more racially and ethnically diverse.

Primary Takeaways

- The US is becoming more diverse across all racial and ethnic demographics
- The Hispanic population is the fastest growing racial demographic and is responsible for population growth in many rural areas
- In some cases, there is a linked migration stream between retiring baby boomers, natural-amenity migrants and Hispanic workers moving to rural areas surrounding National Conservation Lands
- Racial minorities have been historically underrepresented in conservation advocacy and outdoor recreation because of historical structural barriers
- Historically, community involvement in both Friends Group involved in our case-studies has been primarily white and older
- Language access to public lands information and media often excludes non-English speakers
- Representation of the community within organizational leadership matters
- Demographic groups engage with the landscape and conservation in different ways
- Stewardship programs that engage younger ages, i.e. students, can be more inclusive of all races and ethnicities in a community
- Developing and fostering long-term relationships within the community is significant to moving forward
- Outreach to new communities can happen through existing organized groups

Racial & Ethnic Diversity Data in FGN Counties

As racial demographics shift rapidly across the US, it is important to examine if the demographics of who is involved in advocacy, stewardship, and visitation to public lands reflects the communities surrounding those landscapes. To get an idea of the racial demographic makeup of the areas surrounding the Friends Groups, we collected census data from 2010 and 2020 for the eight racial and ethnic categories represented in the census. We

hoped this would help get a sense of the racial diversity within these communities and if it is changing over time. It is important to note that using census data to track changes in racial demographics will have inherent discrepancies due to statistical errors and other political issues, such as undocumented workers disinclined to fill out census surveys. Another significant aspect of the 2020 census is the expanded options to the Hispanic origin question, adding more nuance and inclusivity than the 2010 census. Additionally important is that while American Indian is a racial category on the census, our data does not include complete information from any Native American reservations that might be adjacent to Friends Groups counties or National Conservation lands.

Additionally, we found that many of the largest percentage increases in the Hispanic population are a reflection of the small number of Hispanic residents that were counted in the 2010 census. For example, Dolores, CO saw its' Hispanic population increase by 115%, but this was a result of just 94 new Hispanic residents. Meanwhile, Riverside, CA's increase of 207,038 Hispanic residents reflected a 20% increase overall in the Hispanic population. While nearly all of the FGN counties showed an increase in the Hispanic population, the wide range of county populations makes it difficult to determine in which counties the increase may have been noticeable by the Friends Groups. For this reason, when choosing our case-studies for this demographic trend, we chose two Friends Groups who are located in counties with an already high proportion of Hispanic residents rather than just those with the highest percentage of increase in order to hear from Friends Groups who have experience engaging with a more racially diverse population.

In the census data we collected for the counties surrounding Friends Group, the diversity index - a percentage that measures the probability that two people chosen at random in a given area will be from different race or ethnic groups - increased across all 58 counties. For each respective racial demographic represented in the census, we looked at how the population changed between the 2010 and 2020 census. For all racial and ethnic categories, we ranked the counties from greatest to least change in how a certain population increased or decreased proportional to the whole county's demographic makeup. Every non-white demographic tracked by the Census showed significant growth proportionally in FGN counties between 2010 and 2020. Conversely, the percentage of the population that identifies as White alone decreased in all the counties we looked at. These findings are in line with national census data that White Alone population percentage is decreasing proportionally across the nation as our country becomes more racially diverse. All but two counties showed an increase in the total percentage of Hispanic population signifying that, overall, there has been an increase in Hispanic population over the last decade in FGN counties. This is seen both in raw numbers of Hispanic residents who are moving to these areas and in a clear increase represented in percentage of the overall population.

Racial & Ethnic Diversity Literature Review

The literature regarding changing racial and ethnic demographics in the US is vast. However the research on the relationship between a diversifying population and public lands advocacy is more limited. The literature on racial and ethnic diversity increasing in the United States reflected findings similar to our own data analysis of the 58 counties where CLF Friends Groups operate. As outlined above, the Hispanic, Asian, and multiracial populations contributed more than four-fifths of the nation's population growth since 2010. This trend is predicted to continue and become more pronounced in the future. Demographer William Frey describes the dramatic demographic shifts that are happening in the United States as a "diversity explosion" and qualifies the transformation as a shift away from the predominantly white baby boom culture towards one that is increasingly multiracial (Frey, 2018). 2011 marked a significant demographic shift: it was the first year in US history where

there were more multi-racial babies born than white babies. This signifies movement towards a country in which no racial group is the majority. This trend has been occurring over the last few decades: in 1990, five of the nation's 100 largest metropolitan areas were minority white, in 2000, this number jumped up to 14, and most recently in 2015, the number went up to 24 out of 100 (Frey, 2018). While whites are still considered the most prevalent racial population in the United States, as multiracial marriages become more common and the aging white population begins to decline, the shift to a larger multiracial population is beginning to occur rapidly across the country.

It is difficult to generalize across racial and ethnic demographics in terms of who is moving to areas surrounding public lands. The overall increase in racial diversity observed in the FGN counties is more representative of the nationwide trend rather than distinct racial populations moving to these areas for specific reasons. However, the literature does outline a connection between domestic migration for natural amenities and Hispanic migration streams into non-metropolitan areas. Nelson et al. (2009) identified 75 non-metropolitan counties where these motivations to move somewhere overlap. They found that the increase of amenity migrants in an area, which include retired baby boomers and remote workers, stimulates demand in personal and household services, construction, restaurants, and other service sectors. The study argues that the increasing Hispanic population in these areas is in response to the growing service demands from increased amenity migration. These findings underline the potential socioeconomic distinctions between different racial populations that may be moving to a Friends Group community. While remote workers and retired baby boomers may be moving to natural amenity-rich areas out of desire to live in a beautiful place, the increase in Hispanic populations in these communities may stem from increased opportunity to work in service-industry jobs. In their book *Mexican immigration to the US*, Zuniga and Hernandez-Leon (2005) outline how the growth of Hispanic populations in non-metropolitan areas throughout the 90's contributed to keeping rural population numbers stable and younger. Many of these Hispanic migrants were also low-wage workers. Therefore, when observing the increase in Hispanic population across the FGN counties, it is important to consider the socioeconomic implications of different motives for moving to an area across demographic populations.

While it is relevant to address the reasons for the trend of increasing racial diversity and Hispanic migration to areas surrounding public lands, it is also important to acknowledge that this trend is happening and will continue. The following section of this literature review shifts focus towards the topic of historical underrepresentation of racial minorities in public lands advocacy and outdoor recreation in hopes of addressing barriers to participation and providing insight into how Friends Groups can work towards navigating the nationwide trend of increasing racial diversity. The trend of increasing diversity across the country carries significant implications and opportunities for public lands and conservation advocacy. As law Professor John Leshy outlines in his book, *Our Common Ground*, "For public lands to have a bright future, younger, more diverse generations of people from all walks of life need to engage with them, and with the political system. Good policy doesn't just happen; it comes about because people advocate for it" (Leshy, 2022). This underlines the importance of creating a representative and inclusive coalition of people working to support, protect, and care for public lands at the grassroots level.

A wide range of literature over the last 20 years covers the importance and need of diversifying the conservation movement. Environmental sociologist Dorceta E. Taylor chronicles the development of the American conservation movement from an intersectional lens and shows how racial politics helped shape the movement and how certain non-white demographics have been historically and systematically excluded from participation (Taylor, 2016). In 2002, the Natural Resources Council of America released their first report titled

Opportunities and Actions for Improving Cultural Diversity in Conservation Organizations and Programs (Stanton, 2002). The report addresses the lack of racial representation in conservation programs with a focus on African Americans. It also gives recommendations for improving cultural diversity within organizations and expanding the conservation agenda by supporting environmental justice efforts. More recently, Dr. Taylor compiled a report titled *The State of Diversity in Environmental Organizations*, that surveyed 293 environmental institutions to gather information on the demographic characteristics of their board and staff in order to investigate types of diversity initiatives used across the environment (Taylor, 2014). They acknowledge that while the percentage of ethnic minorities working in environmental organizations has increased over time, the percentage of minorities on the boards or as staff members did not exceed 16% of the environmental institutions studied. This was despite ethnic minorities comprising about 38% of the population at the time of the study. Taylor's study, among others, illustrate an underrepresentation of ethnic minorities in the workforce of environmental institutions.

Many conservation advocates find their connection to the environment through outdoor recreation. Overall, considerable research has been compiled on what racial and ethnic demographics are most prevalent users of the National Park System (RSG & WYSAC, 2019). The National Park Service (NPS) conducted three national surveys on public attitudes and behaviors of visitors to National Parks over a span of 18 years and found visitors to the land units they manage are disproportionately white and non-Hispanic. While minority representation in these NPS studies have been steadily increasing over the past 18 years, the study found that it does not match the rate of increasing racial diversity nationwide. the study found that it does not match the rate of increasing racial diversity nationwide. In 2021 the Outdoor Foundation commissioned an Outdoor Participation Trends Report that found “nearly 75 percent of outdoor participants were white. Participation rates declined 7 percent annually among Asian-Americans for the past three years; stagnated for the last three years among Blacks and grew among Hispanics but remained well below whites” (OIF, 2021). These are two examples of studies that exist in a wide range of literature that documents the underrepresentation of minorities in outdoor recreation.

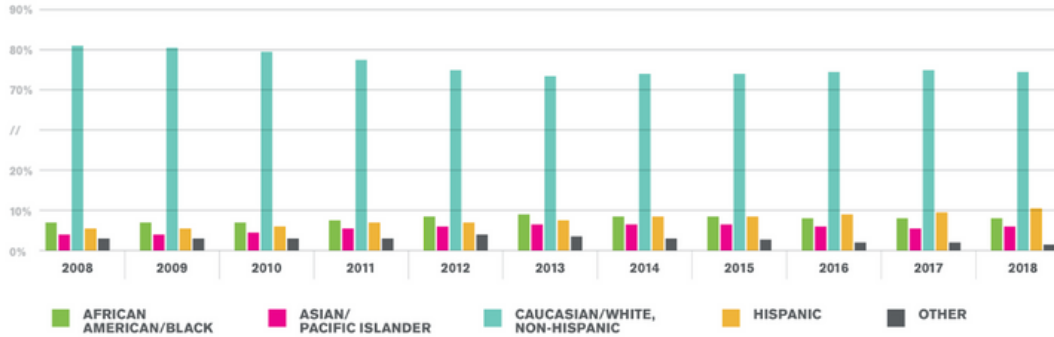
Barriers to participation in outdoor recreation are also covered thoroughly in the literature. The NPS found that commonly cited barriers to national park visitation were related to travel distance, access to transportation, and other expenses associated with travel and entrance fees. These barriers were disproportionately cited by Hispanic and African American respondents who were not able to visit National Parks, as compared to white respondents who also did not visit. Another barrier regularly commented on by minority populations was a “lack of interest or a lack of knowledge regarding national parks” (WYSAC, 2019). These studies have spurred the NPS towards improving access, continuing to raise awareness, and increasing interest for more diverse users of National Parks. Strategies they are using include partnering with organizations to provide transportation assistance, and offering National Park public awareness campaigns in multiple languages. They are also increasing interpretative programming that relates NPS land units to the cultural experiences of specific racial populations, by, for example, acknowledging the ancestral homelands of Native American tribes. America's most well-known type of public lands - the National Park's - acknowledges that “the day is fast approaching when the term ‘minority group’ will lose much of its applicability as a social label in the U.S” and that the great challenge of this decade will be the “ability to accommodate these demographic changes in non-divisive and socially beneficial ways,” therefore the growth of population subgroups that have not traditionally included many park-goers requires the attention of the NPS (WYSAC, 2019).

Other barriers to participation in outdoor recreation for minority groups include historic racial discrimination, socioeconomic factors, and cultural differences (Ghimire et al., 2014). Until about 60 years ago there was institutional legislation in place in the US that discriminated against African Americans and communities of color. For example, prior to the 1964 Civil Rights Act, it was illegal for Black Americans to enter many public spaces, including public lands, such as National Parks. The legacy of the conservation movement grew in the 1900's through predominantly White leadership and ethos with the writings of John Muir, the creation of the National Park System by Theodore Roosevelt and Aldo Leopold's writings on the ethics of modern wilderness preservation. Exclusion based on race or ethnicity in the development of the environmental movement may not have been explicitly intentional from the leaders and activists involved but was reflective of the institutionalized racism that already existed in the country. While myriad laws have been introduced over the last 50 years to dismantle legal segregation, the impacts of over two centuries of institutionalized racist policies and intentional exclusions are still seen today in socioeconomic inequalities and cultural perceptions of activities, including outdoor recreation (Taylor, 2009).

In sum, there is a nationwide demographic trend of accelerating racial and ethnic diversity across the nation including areas adjacent to public lands. This increase in racial diversity is coupled with a lack of representation at both the level of organizational leadership in environmental organizations as well as in participants of outdoor recreation. There is tremendous opportunity here for the conservation movement in all areas of outreach and collaboration to reach an expanded constituency that is currently not being included. The literature suggests ways to expand the racial diversity of those who engage in the environmental movement. These recommendations include seeing strategic partnerships and collaborations within the movement, engaging young people, connecting generations, integrating diversity into organizational leadership, and building relationships (Bonta & Jordan, 2007). Researcher Emily Enderle encompasses the possibility inherent in expanding representation and inclusivity in her report: "the benefits of leveraging diversity can be gained at many scales... Why? Because, at any scale, drawing on all the resources available enhances our ability to fulfill duties true to the missions of our organizations and our movement" (Enderle, 2007).

While minority engagement across all racial and ethnic groups is an important aspect of broadening community representation in public lands grassroots advocacy, in this report we chose to focus on the engagement of the Hispanic population specifically. An overall increase in Hispanic population and higher proportions of Hispanic representation in communities surrounding public lands, are two trends that showed up in our analysis of the FGN communities. Additionally, the Hispanic population is the largest growing minority in the United States and represented in many areas surrounding public lands (Frey, 2019). The 2019 Outdoor Participation Report found that Hispanic involvement in moderate outdoor participation (defined as happening once a month) was the largest increase of any ethnic group: from 5.3% in 2008 to 10.3% in 2018. Additionally, the report found that the Hispanic population went on the most annual outings of any ethnic group and were the second most likely group to deem themselves outdoor "fanatics" (OIA, 2019). A 2020 survey conducted by the Forest Service found that Hispanic communities are expanding engagement in outdoor activities such as overnight backpacking and camping, and the overall findings suggest that there has been a shift in the communities' sense of belonging when visiting federal forests and parks (Flores & Sánchez, 2020). Despite an increase in engagement in outdoor recreation over time, this demographic is still severely underrepresented in the outdoor recreation space which contributes to a lower involvement in public-lands based environmental organizations.

MODERATE PARTICIPATION BY ETHNICITY



Source: Outdoor Industry Foundation, <https://outdoorindustry.org/resource/2019-outdoor-participation-report/>

This graph shows that while there is an overall increase of moderate participation in outdoor recreation by the Hispanic community, this group, along with other minorities are still underrepresented in outdoor recreation.

In the following case-studies we will focus on how three Friends Groups have created programs and strategies to support more inclusion of the Hispanic population within their organizations and communities.

Racial & Ethnic Diversity Case Studies

We chose two Friends Groups that are located in counties that have higher percentages of Hispanic population and have been working on strategies to engage more diverse participation within their organization. We looked at Friends of the Inyo (FOI), located in Inyo and Mono counties in California and Friends of Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks (FOMDP) located in Doña Ana county in New Mexico. Both these counties have a high percentage of Hispanic population. As outlined in the literature review, the Hispanic population is the fastest growing in the US, a demographic shift that is likely going to continue into the future. The counties and areas in which these two Friends Groups operate, as well as the overall mission and goals of the organizations, vary.

Located in the border-town of Las Cruces, New Mexico in Doña Ana County, FOMDP operates in a predominantly Hispanic community and works for the stewardship, education, and future protection of Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument (OMDP NM), which was established in 2014. Their efforts are localized to the area and are generally well-respected by the community as the organization works to connect the community to an already-established designation of protected land.

FOMDP is a vibrant and engaging organization that is creating myriad opportunities to broaden community representation within the organization. The organization puts significant effort into youth programming in the community. In describing the mission of FOMDP, they replied: "I think what we're trying to do is really engage the grassroots community in the issues of public lands, advocacy and protection. I think we focus a lot on leadership development when giving folks opportunities to advocate, build their skill sets around advocacy and engagement in our political process, and public lands policy work. And specifically our youth work too. Right? I think that's about building the next generation of public land stewards." In 2020 they began the Moving Montañas program to get kids outdoors and interacting with the Monument. This program helps increase the amount of students in the community that visit OMDP NM and supports building their confidence and knowledge in this space. Youth that have been exposed to FOMDP from Moving Montañas sometimes bring

their families to other programs offered by the Friends Group. As one FOMDP staff member said, "There's certainly a pipeline between our family hikes and getting folks out for our docent hikes." This shows how creating programs for the younger generation within the community helps build trust and knowledge about public lands and the Friends Group, which can then extend to their families.

FOMDP is also intentional about their community representation on their Board of Directors. When looking for new board members, they prioritize "folks that are engaged in the community" over exclusively those with knowledge about public lands. Currently their board consists of a coalition of folks that have strong connections to, and histories in, the Las Cruces community. Another way that FOMDP engages with their diverse community is through work with other organizations within the community, which increases crossover of participants in organization events. For example, when FOMDP organizes a hike for a different organization, sometimes participants will want to continue to be involved with FOMDP after that initial introduction. Working in collaboration with other groups in the community contributes to reaching a demographic that might not initially be exposed to FOMDP.

Finally, consistent engagement and content creation in social media through Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter has helped increase engagement across demographics and keeps the Friends Group relevant in the community. Recently, Instagram reels have been successful at promoting the organization and increasing engagement and attendance at FOMDP events. Additionally, working with other organizations across social media helps increase engagement and followers. In sum, FOMDP has found success in engaging a wide representation of the Las Cruces community through working with other organizations in the community, strengthening their youth advocacy and engagement programs, creating an intentional board filled with members that are connected and involved within Las Cruces, and expanding their social media engagement to be consistent and relevant while working across platforms with other organizations.

In contrast to FOMDP focus on a single land unit, FOI covers a broad swath of land and a wide variety of public land issues. They are a long-standing organization within the community and are dynamically involved with political advocacy across both Inyo and Mono counties in California. With headquarters located in Bishop, FOI just opened another satellite office in Lone Pine in order to connect with a different community within the two counties and continue to develop their relationship with the local Tribes. Representatives from both FOI and FOMDP spoke about the historically predominantly White engagement with their organization and outlined steps they have taken to expand involvement opportunities to the Hispanic population.

In the most recent census from 2021, Inyo County's population was recorded as 23% hispanic. While this is nearly a fourth of the population, FOI reflects that historically, their volunteer and membership engagement has been predominantly White. FOI acknowledges the importance of working to engage this significant part of the population: "I think it's critical to our continued effectiveness. I think that the Hispanic demographic will continue to grow and if they don't care about the public lands around here, if they don't care about the ecosystems and fighting for them, then bad things are going to start to happen. We are constantly, constantly pushing back against extraction proposals and constantly forcing the agencies to put conservation and healthy ecosystems above recreation development and other priorities and if there's nobody doing that, it's not going to get done. And so I think it's really important for us to engage the whole community to maintain these results that we've achieved for the land." The organization has made efforts to include the Hispanic community within Bishop through opening up language access to non-English speakers through a variety of ways. In 2021, FOI hired their first native Spanish speaker into the role of Communications and Philanthropy Director. With a native

Spanish speaker on staff, FOI has been able to create more Spanish material; the first step in increasing access to conservation advocacy for the Hispanic community in Bishop. FOI has taken out a column in the local Spanish newspaper, *El Sol de la Sierra*, to write about topics in conservation and share public health safety tips, such as how to fire-proof your home. By reaching out to the Hispanic community through avenues already in place, FOI is able to expand their audience to members of the community who may have not been previously aware of their organization. Furthermore, FOI translates many of their own organization's materials to Spanish, including information on how to be involved with the National Environmental Protection Act process. The organization also shares resources that have already been created in Spanish. For example, Cal Fire has many educational materials about fire safety that FOI shares. Additionally, FOI has acted as an advocate for Spanish-language speakers. For example, for a certain type of Environmental Impact Statement in Mono county, there was not an option to submit a public comment in Spanish and FOI brought that to the attention of the Forest Service.

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Another way that FOI is expanding engagement is collaborating with another organization in Bishop that already has established connections with the Hispanic community. Through renting out an office to Farmworker Institute of Education and Leadership Development, which has a program called the Caesar Chavez Environmental Corps, FOI hopes to gain a "better understanding of how to do outreach to [the Hispanic] community." Overall, FOI has increased access to public lands advocacy for the Hispanic community through expanding Spanish language-access initiatives and is invested in collaborating with other organizations in the community to engage a part of the community that has not been historically involved in FOI's work.

CSU was not a case-study that we selected for the trend of significantly increasing Hispanic population in Washington County, UT. The organization is making efforts to be intentionally inclusive of the Hispanic population in St. George. When possible, they hire a student that is a native Spanish speaker to assist in translation during single day events. CSU also made some materials available in Spanish, including a calendar of events. This past year CSU held a Latino Conservation Week and advertised through taking out ads on the local Spanish radio channel as well as reaching out to community hubs that members of the Latino community in St. George already use and feel comfortable in. CSU is working to create outreach that expands past an annual event; however, they have been "fostering really strong personal connections with some of the families that came and participated in

Latino Conservation Week and... inviting them to other events as well." While working in different areas and with organizations that differ in scope and mission, FOMDP, FOI and CSU have found varying levels of success in creating opportunities to reach out to more Hispanic members in their communities.

A theme that came up in our interviews with FOMDP and FOI is the importance of authentic and sustainable relationship building in the community. Whether it is reaching a minority group that has been historically underrepresented in an organization's membership or working towards a productive relationship with one's local land management agency, the importance of fostering those connections was highlighted multiple times. For example, when asked about how FOMDP works with other organizations in the community to support outreach to people who may not be familiar with the Friends Group, they responded:

"I think we do that through our programming, that is a big tool. I also think we have done a good job of developing relationships within the community, and this can be like folks that run after school programs, or folks that just know about the points that are in the Chihuabua desert and want to engage right and getting them engaged in the work that we're doing. It's a lot of one-on-one conversations like building real sustainable relationships with folks, I think that's really what I mean. That's key, right. Having good relationships in any community, I think matters. I think it specifically matters in Southern New Mexico."

This underlines the importance of showing up in a community and working to develop and sustain authentic relationships. Similarly, FOI highlighted the value of relationships in their work in how they are working with the local Tribes on land management issues. They describe how,

"It's really happened very organically developing good relationships with the local tribes, and I don't think that there's been any magic to it. I think that you know we have just made an effort, and, you know, reach out to them. Ask them their opinion, ask them to participate... I think all we're doing to make that happen is to, you know, set up time to be with them, one-on-one, and really listen to what they have to say."

FOI further explain that,

"One of the things that we've done is we don't try to force them to be part of the coalition that is working to, you know, fill in the blank... either defend a mining threat or work for permanent projection. They are not comfortable with that. It is a white construct, I think, to develop these coalitions, make decision-making structures, set up committees, all this stuff. It doesn't work well like that. So we just work with them, one on one."

Both Friends Groups spoke to the importance of listening to members in their community and taking the time to develop and foster authentic relationships rather than assuming they know what a certain population needs or expecting them to ascribe to the version of stewardship or conservation that the Friends Group uses.

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It's a lot of one-on-one
conversations, like building real,
sustainable relationships
with folks.

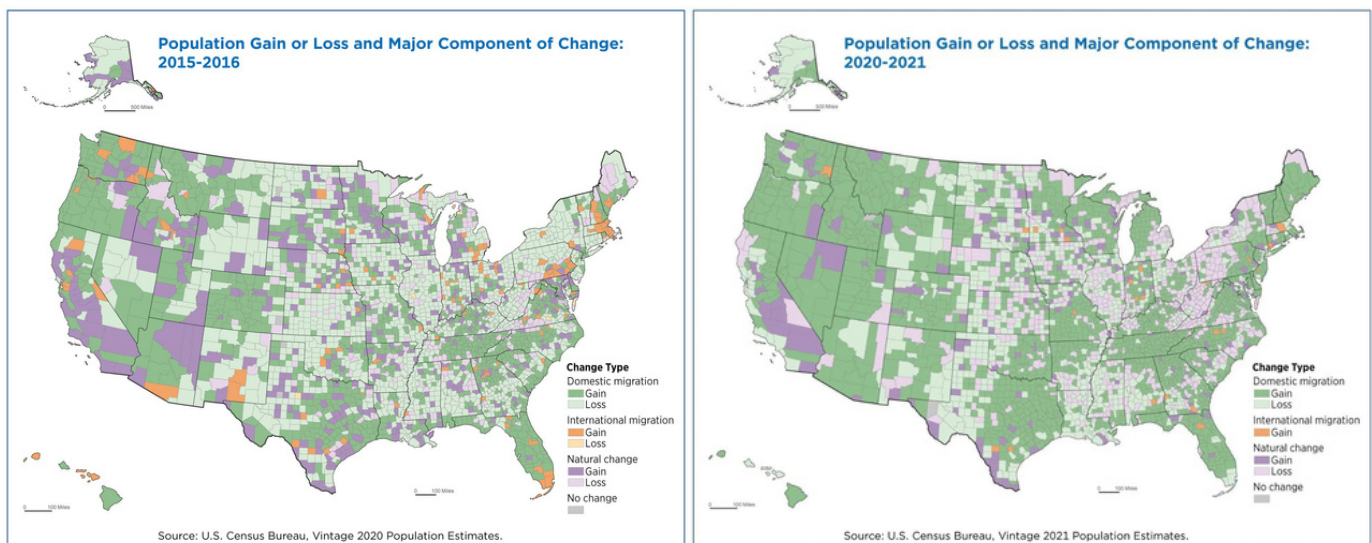
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4.2 Population Growth & Decline

Trend: Population Growth Driven By Amenity Migration

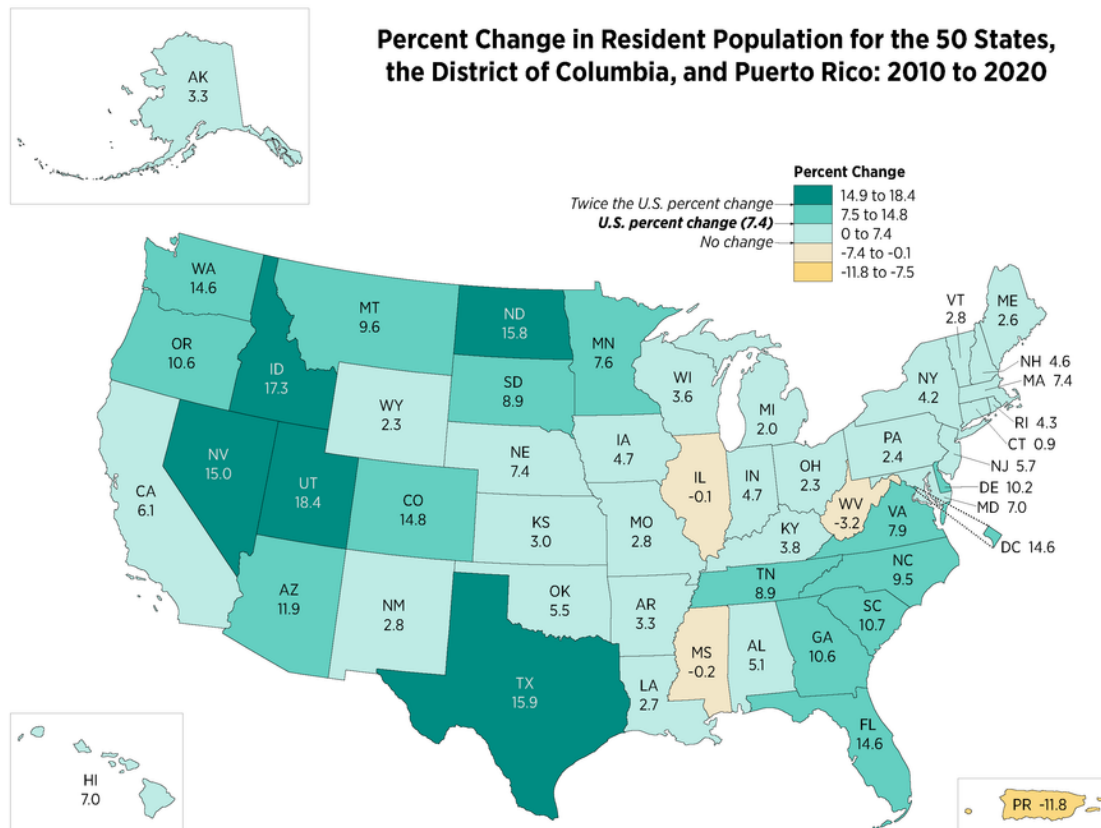
The Western US has been one of the fastest growing areas of the country for multiple decades (Stevens & Kirkpatrick). However, this growth exists in the context of what seems to be a leveling of the population nationally. Between 2010 and 2020, the US grew by 7.4%, which is the second lowest decadal growth rate ever recorded by the Census Bureau. The last few years have seen the national growth rate decline even more steeply. The most recent census data showed a growth rate of a meager 0.1% between 2020-2021. This is the lowest yearly growth rate in US history. The only comparable year was 1918-1919, when the Spanish Influenza led the population to grow by around 0.5%. The COVID-19 pandemic is similarly responsible for some of the recent decline, but does not entirely explain it as the population growth rate in the US has been trending downwards since the 1990s (Frey, 2021).

Nationally, population growth is a metric of natural increases, which is the number of deaths subtracted from the number of births, and international immigration. On a local scale, these two factors influence population as well. However, smaller areas are also impacted by the third variable of domestic migration, which occurs when individuals move from one part of the country to another. Domestic migration is why, despite the almost leveling off of population growth across the country, some areas, including the West, have continued to see increases. Demonstrating this is the fact that between 2020 and 2021, 90% of counties that grew did so primarily because of domestic migration (Rogers & Wilder, 2022). As stated above, the pandemic is one reason for this, as it led to natural decreases in population from COVID-19 deaths and it closed international borders, all but halting international immigration. However, international immigration had already decreased following the implementation of Trump Administration restrictions, and the number of children born in the US has been steadily decreasing for years (Thompson, 2022). Domestic migration is the dominant factor of population growth in the US and was exacerbated by the pandemic. Moreover, as the maps below show, domestic migration is the dominant factor driving population growth in many western states.



Source: United States Census Bureau, <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2022/03/what-has-driven-population-change-in-united-states-counties.html>

The population in the West began to rise in the middle of the 20th century and has continued to do so ever since, so that it remains one of the fastest growing regions of the country (Stevens & Kirkpatrick). In fact, between 2010 and 2020, the four fastest growing states in the US were Utah, Idaho, Nevada, and Texas (US Census Bureau, 2021). One reason this region continues to grow above the national average is the draw of its beautiful landscapes. Those seeking access to scenic vistas and opportunities to recreate in the outdoors move to the West because of the proximity between human development and open spaces. These people want access to natural amenities, which include the recreational, spiritual, and other types of personal enjoyment that natural landscapes can offer. Because of this, many of those moving to the West can be counted as taking part in ‘amenity migration.’



As stewards of the treasured landscapes that make up America’s National Conservation Lands, many Friends Groups operate in areas with high natural amenities, making the concept of amenity migration highly relevant to population growth trends in their communities. This section analyzes this trend more closely by looking at the patterns of population growth and decline across Friends Group counties. Findings are then placed in the context of the larger literature on population growth and decline within the western US and the on-the-ground experiences elucidated in the case-studies. Finally, because population growth is the dominant trend within this region, the effects of growth on a community are delved into more deeply than the ways that places are affected by declines.

Primary Takeaways

- The Western US continues to be one of the fastest growing parts of the country, even while overall population growth has all but stalled
- Between 2020 and 2021 more than two-thirds of FGN counties experienced growth above the national average
- Most FGN counties have populations that are more urban than rural
- Population growth is typically experienced in urban places, while decline is experienced in rural areas, but FGN counties did not always follow this pattern
- Domestic migration spurred by natural amenities likely draws new residents to Friends Group Communities
- Population growth and the aging of the population are linked in FGN communities, as many retirees move to these places and therefore contribute to both trends
- For residents of a place, population growth and decline is difficult to gauge
- Tipping points influence community experience of population growth
- Retirees are driving population growth
- The housing crisis is connected to population growth in some Friends Groups communities
- More people in a landscape contributes to greater impacts on that landscape
- Population growth creates opportunities to engage new residents in conservation advocacy
- Outdoor recreation hubs and places with natural amenities are likely to continue seeing population growth as the workforce becomes more remote

Population Growth & Decline Data in FGN Counties

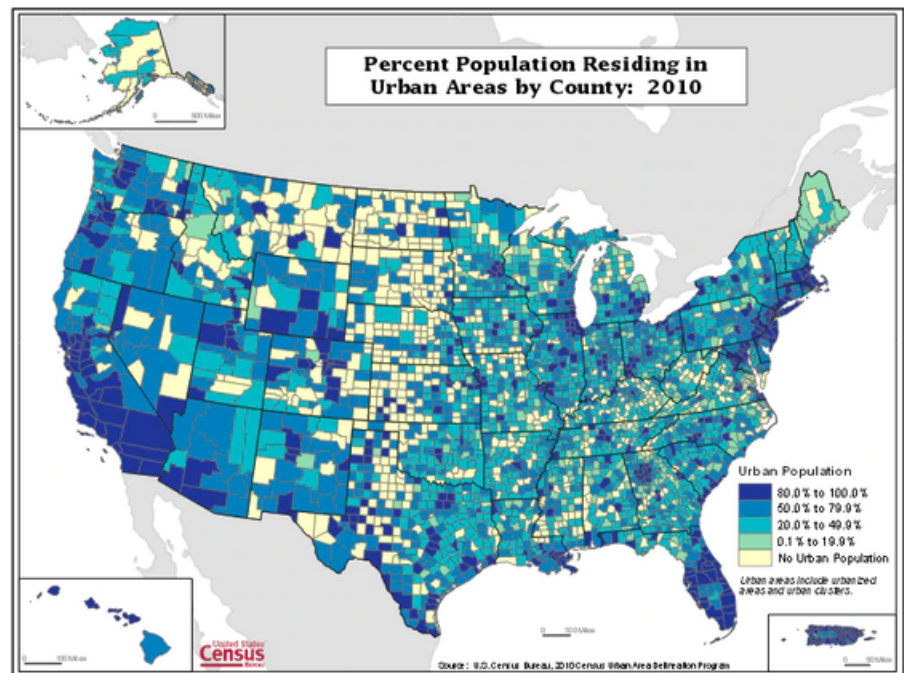
We looked at data on population growth and decline in the selected counties across two time periods. The first is the change to population between 2010 and 2020. The second is the change in population between 2020 and 2021. Looking at both of these periods allowed us to gauge larger population size trends and also to get a snapshot of the trends during more recent history. This second aspect is important because the distribution of people across the US, including the western US, has shifted considerably during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Between 2010 and 2020, 11 of the counties in our cohort saw their populations decline. Of the remaining 47 counties, 26 experienced population growth above the national average of 7.4%. Between 2020 and 2021 more counties saw declines, with a total of 17 counties experiencing a reduction in their populations. However, of the remaining counties, one experienced population growth at the same level as the national average of 0.1%, and the other 40 saw increases in population above the national average. The large increase in the number of counties experiencing growth above the national average indicates that the Western US is continuing to grow, even as the overall population of the country stagnates.

Population growth is typically found in more urban areas, while population decline tends to be a rural phenomenon. To gain insight into whether this divide exists within the relevant counties, the population per square mile of each county was calculated and the urban/rural distribution of the population was collected using census designations from 2010. Due to the immense open landscapes that many of these counties contain, 84%

have populations per square mile that qualify them as rural. However, the number of counties at each percentage of housing density were:

- 80-100% urban: 25 Counties
- 50-79.9% urban: 22 Counties
- 20-49.9% urban: 6 Counties
- 1-19.9% urban: 0 counties
- <1% urban: 5 counties



Source: United States Census Bureau,
https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/2010/geo/ua2010_urban_pop_map.html

Because these numbers are drawn from the 2010 census, they may have shifted at this time (the 2020 county designations were released in Dec, 2022, shortly after this report was completed). Still, they indicate that even though many of the counties examined have large swaths of open land and small populations per square mile, the communities that reside there are densely populated and therefore should be conceptualized as urban rather than rural. Coupled with the knowledge that the West is one of the fastest growing regions of the country, this information makes it less surprising that these counties are made up of such a large proportion of ones with a population growing at a rate above the national average.

Interestingly, the 6 counties that experienced declining populations from 2010 to 2020 followed by population growth from 2020 to 2021 all had small populations per square mile, with 27.93 people per square mile in Del Norte County, CA being the densest. Whether or not the development in these areas is more rural or urban, this indicates that all of these counties contain large areas of undeveloped land. There was a development pattern within these counties, with not a single one falling within the highest level of density, and 4 having populations that are 50.0% to 79.9% urban. These places can therefore be qualified as growing small towns or cities that are adjacent to large, open landscapes. This begins to add credence to the idea that people are moving away from large metropolitan areas to smaller communities that provide easy access to natural amenities. Further backing this assertion up is the fact that 9 out of the 17 counties that experienced population declines between 2020 and 2021 had an urban population of more than 80.0%, while 6 others had populations that are 50.0% to 79.9% urban. San Juan County in Utah was the only place with a predominantly rural population in decline during that period. Without gathering data on more counties throughout the West, it is difficult to say whether this represents a shift in terms of which types of communities are getting larger or smaller. However, this data does seem to indicate that in the places where Friends Groups work, people are opting to live in smaller communities adjacent to public lands rather than large cities.

Population Growth & Decline Literature Review

While many regions in the US are facing stagnation within their populations, the West maintains a multiple decades long trend in growth. Since declines in fertility and international immigration rates are almost universal phenomena across the country, this growth can primarily be attributed to domestic migration (Rogers & Wilder, 2022). Changes to the population in this region also align with the national pattern of growth being concentrated in more urban areas, while rural places tend to experience decline. Analysis of population dynamics within 746 counties across the lower 48 states showed this, as 46% of rural counties were losing population, compared to 26% of urban counties (Johnson & Lichter, 2019). One reason the West is aligned with this overarching trend is that in the 70s and 80s many people moved to “boomtowns” to find work in industries like oil and gas or mining. However, without economic diversity, these places would eventually “bust,” leading many of these rural locations to see stark declines in their population. In contrast to this, Western cities have expanded so that urban swaths like the area around Salt Lake City and the sprawling development between Phoenix and Tucson have, and continue to see, major growth (Weber, 2019). These trends indicate the need to think differently about population size dynamics depending on whether one is in a rural or urban area.

To understand how Friends Group counties fit into these trends of growth and decline, it is important to understand the classification system the Census Bureau uses to define urban and rural areas. First, urbanized areas must have at least 50,000 people or population density of 1,000 people per square mile. Below this designation are urbanized clusters, which are areas that contain more than 2,500 but less than 50,000 people, or have population density of at least 500 people per square mile. Finally, rural areas are all of those that do not fit into any of the above parameters (Ratcliffe et al., 2016). As a metric of both total population and density, these definitions explain why many Friend Groups communities are more urban than rural while also having secluded populations and small numbers of people per square mile across the entire county. In fact, the West is one of the most highly urbanized parts of the country, despite its small percentage of developed land (Theobald et al., 2013). One reason this seemingly contradictory circumstance has arisen is because of the large amount of protected landscapes throughout the region, which may be high in natural resources or amenities but are prohibited from being developed (Weber, 2019). The desire to be close to these natural assets can create conditions where communities cluster in areas adjacent to large swaths of undeveloped land, leading to urbanized development situated within largely empty counties. In this context, the population growth seen in the majority of Friends Groups counties is actually aligned with the trend of urban growth. However, it is also worth noting that many of the Friends Groups communities that qualify as rural have bucked the trend of population decline, a phenomenon that may be attributed to the high-quality natural amenities that these areas are located near.

The outdoors is a draw to many of the people who move to the West, whether they choose to live in San Francisco, St. George, Flagstaff, or Montrose. This type of amenity migration is central to the trends in population growth that have shaped the West in recent decades. The traditional perception of why people move to a new place is to increase their wealth through increased job opportunity (Hjerpe et al., 2020). However, the growth of a “knowledge-service” professional sector that is dominated by jobs which can be performed from anywhere has made it possible for people to perform their work from far-flung locations (Rasker et al., 2013). This has allowed the environment within which one lives to play as large a role in relocation as the pursuit of monetary wealth (Hjerpe et al., 2020) and created a scenario where migration to an area is followed by jobs in contrast to the more traditional phenomena of people moving to where the jobs are (Rasker et al., 2013). Headwater Economics (2019) documented the migration incentives that places with high natural amenities have by looking at the

connection between outdoor recreation economies and increased population. Since the recreation economy is almost ubiquitously associated with proximity to natural amenities, the presence of this industry acts as a proxy for high-quality landscapes. This research found that whether rural or urban, all counties with natural amenities had fewer people move away from them than those without these same resources (Headwater Economics, 2019). This report helps to explain why so many of the counties, including rural ones, that Friends Groups work within continue to see population growth. These places are scenic and often dependent on tourism, both of which are defining characteristics of the rural places that continue to grow into the 21st century (Berman, 2019).

To say that the presence of natural amenities and the outdoor recreation economy contributes to larger populations in the West is interesting, but provides little insight into the actual characteristics of the locations that tend to experience the highest rates of amenity migration. On a more micro level, higher temperatures during winter, lower temperatures during summer, access to infrastructure, and, perhaps most relevant to Friends Groups, the presence of wilderness areas and National Monuments, have all been found to be associated with migration to an area (Hjerpe et al., 2020). Looking more closely at development as a proxy for population growth, it was also found that cool summers in places with mountains, forests, and bodies of water all correlate with more people moving to an area, especially when these amenities were located within large Wilderness Areas or National Monuments (Hjerpe et al., 2022). These findings indicate the positive impact that adding protection to a landscape can have for a place in terms of attracting more people to the area. Designation of a new National Conservation Land unit may lead to increased visitation, economic growth, and an influx of resources and development. Although it is generally considered preferable for a community to be experiencing population growth rather than decline, the impacts that these changes have on a community can be varied.

One issue that may arise in growing western communities is increased pressure on natural resources. The juxtaposition of urban areas against large, undeveloped landscapes in the West can make this issue worse. Arizona dealt with this in the 1980s, when growing cities, including Tucson in Pima County, bought groundwater rights from more rural locations. This increased the animosity between rural and urban areas and led to the implementation of the Groundwater Transportation Act in 1991 (Berman, 2019). Larger populations also utilize more energy, which creates a greater carbon footprint (Khan et al., 2021), and new infrastructure must be created to accommodate more people. As shown in a case study of Collin County, TX, new development in Western states is often sprawling. Instead of building up, communities build out, which necessitates the conversion of natural landscape to human built land cover. Building in this way not only contributes to climate change, but also imperils the natural landscapes that Friend Groups work to protect (Zhang et al., 2022). However, stopping development entirely is not the answer, as housing insecurity is a major concern in growing western communities located near natural amenities (Stoker et al., 2021). Moreover, the lack of housing supply is made worse by an housing affordability crisis that can negate some of the economic benefits brought to communities by increased populations and larger economies (Hunter et al., 2005). These issues with housing have led places like St. George, Utah to publish a Moderate-Income Housing Plan (2019) to strategically analyze the housing needs within their communities. Plans like this one should be created with the surrounding landscape in mind to reduce the impact that housing development might have on natural resources. St. George's plan does include the goal to "Encourage sustainable housing" but could go further in stating the impacts that housing development may have on public lands.

Protected public lands where development is not permitted are also placed at risk by increasing populations. One example of this is the Mount Timpanogos Wilderness Area, located to the southeast of Salt Lake City. Over the past decade, this city has seen population growth of over double the national average, which has also increased the

amount of visitors that this nearby Wilderness Area has received. As this landscape can only handle a certain amount of recreational use, the land managers at Mount Timpanogos must prioritize conservation while trying to minimally impact recreational access because spending time in nature is good for human health and helps instill conservation values (Lindley et al., 2018). Striking a balance between recreation and conservation therefore becomes more important as populations grow, and is something that public officials who work within these landscapes are actively trying to navigate (Stoker et al., 2021). Increased education can be an important component of creating this balance, as knowledge can help new residents who know little about the landscape make choices that lead to better ecological outcomes. The Utah Master Naturalist program is an example of educational curriculum that was specifically created to train a growing population on environmental issues within their new home. Through this work, they are able to train the public on the values of conservation while connecting people to the natural world in a minimally impactful way (Larese-Casanove & Prysby, 2018).

Population growth in natural amenity rich communities is a trend that is likely to continue, especially as more people are able to work remotely (Rasker et al., 2013). The Covid-19 pandemic sped up the transition to a remote workforce as more people were able to move far away from their office. Analysis of counties that saw an increase in cell phone usage between January 2019 and September 2020 showed that places with more natural amenities saw the largest jumps in population (Dimke et al., 2020). The startling increase in population that western communities near public lands experienced during the pandemic is also made clear in The Mountain Migration Report. This 2021 report by the Northwest Colorado Council of Governments, which includes Routt and San Miguel counties, details the housing, economic, and quality of life impacts that pandemic population growth has had on the mountain communities located in this region. As the post-pandemic trends indicate, population growth in these areas is likely to continue. Given the impacts that a rising population can have on public lands, it is important that Friends Groups think proactively about how to navigate this trend.

Population Growth & Decline Case Studies

Conserve Southwest Utah (CSU) and Dolores River Boating Advocate (DRBA) experienced above average population growth during both the 2010 to 2020 and 2020 to 2021 time periods. In particular, Washington County, UT, where CSU is located, has experienced explosive growth over the last decade. Much of this growth is concentrated in the St. George area, and during a site visit to this region we witnessed it first hand. Through this visit and our interviews with individuals at CSU and DRBA, we gained insight into ways the Friends Groups are experiencing population growth on the ground.

When asked to address the population growth that they were experiencing within their county, respondents tended to speak about infrastructure and the effects that more people may have on the natural world, rather than the demographics shifts that may be the result of more people moving to a specific area. When pressed on what demographic shifts may be occurring due to an increase in the population, the primary response was to point to the large number of older, wealthier retirees who have chosen to make natural amenity rich communities, including those surrounding National Conservation Areas, their home. This came up in two of the three interviews conducted with CSU. One interviewee mentioned how there are a lot of older people in the area and they would therefore guess that many of the people moving to St. George are also in this age group. Another interviewee commented on the smaller proportion of youth in the community and how that makes it difficult to make new friends as a young newcomer. DRBA also mentioned that most of their population growth is likely

connected to older individuals moving to the community. As this relates directly to the aging of the population, this idea will be addressed in more depth in the next section of the report.

The way that respondents answered these questions demonstrates how difficult it is to gauge this type of trend, especially in the short term. For example, when asked if they had a sense of the demographics of the growing population, one interviewee responded, “Oh a sense, but I’d look at the data.” Instead, answers spoke to the challenges posed by population growth, including inadequate infrastructure. Someone at CSU said that they see the St. George area nearing a tipping point when it comes to traffic patterns. In the past, traffic was rarely an issue in the area, but more recently back-ups similar to those seen on the outskirts of more developed parts of the West like Seattle and the Colorado Front Range have become more frequent. Urban sprawl that encroaches on the public lands they are trying to protect is another issue for CSU. In these growing parts of the West, sprawling development is the norm and further contributes to the congestion issues raised above, since it necessitates car travel to and from the urban center. This is why CSU is advocating for Smart Growth, which emphasizes density in development and a holistic approach to urban planning. As an advocacy approach, Smart Growth means “advocating for better urban planning, over time.”

“

“The people that are ready to roll up their sleeves
and do work on conservation are always a small
part of the population, and I gotta believe that that
is growing as the population grows.”

”

Advocacy that addresses development practices is important in areas with rising populations, since housing affordability is another issue that these Friends Groups pointed to as inextricably linked to this trend. In fact, when pressed for their perspective on population growth within the St. George area, one CSU respondent stated that housing was their number one concern. They went on to emphasize the difficulty that many people face when trying to put down roots in the area due to unaffordability and a shortage of housing. This may indicate that the people who are able to move to the area tend to have greater financial resources. The interview with Friends of the Inyo drove home these issues with housing, which are being felt across the West, when a respondent anecdotally mentioned their own difficulties in securing housing in the Eastern Sierra region of California. Still, it is likely that people will continue to move to these areas, because, as the respondent from DRBA said,

“A lot of people come here because it’s a beautiful area, where you drive for an hour and you’re in Utah Canyon country. You drive for less than an hour, you’re in the mountains or headed up towards Telluride. It’s a really amazing kind of geographic location, so I think a lot of people come here for that.”

Finally, increased use of public land resources was talked about as something that must be addressed in the face of population growth. One CSU respondent dove into this topic deeply, pointing to erosion and social trails in popular hiking areas within St. George, such as Pioneer Park, as negative side effects of more people getting into these landscapes. We visited Pioneer Park, and saw some of these impacts first hand. Of particular note was the large amount of graffiti in the sandstone. Due to its softness, it is quite easy to carve directly into this type of rock and the area was littered with these carvings.



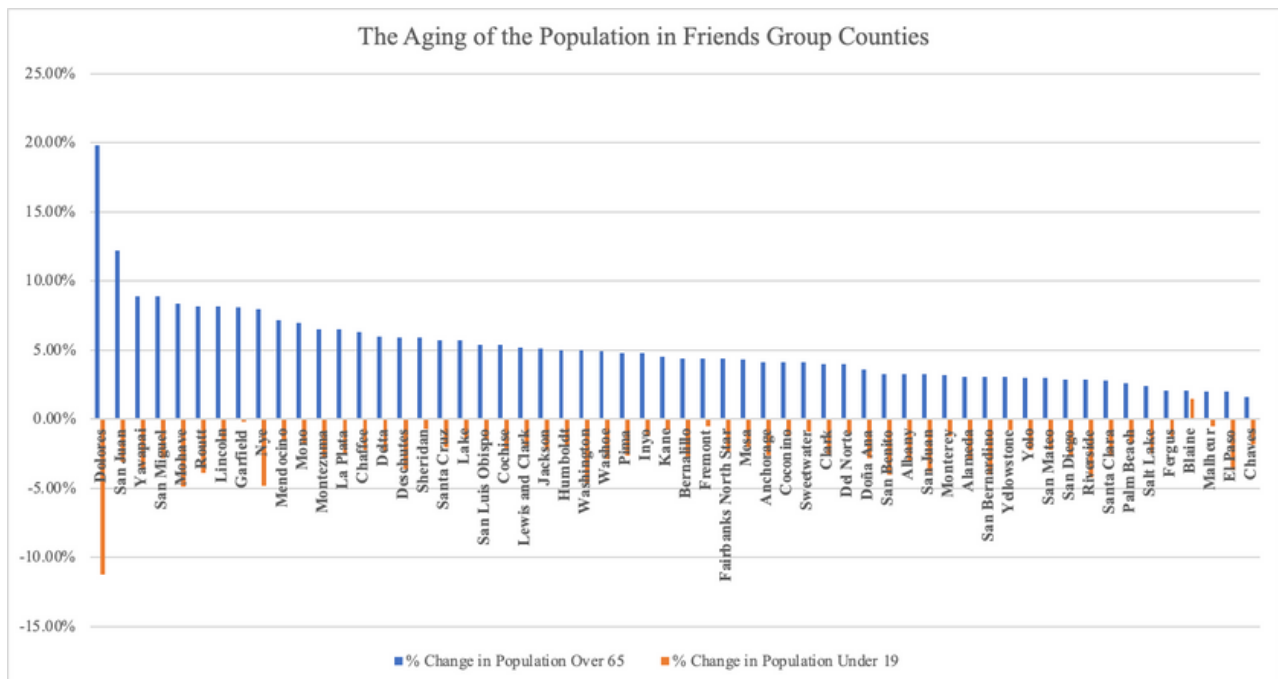
Graffiti carved into the rock at Pioneer Park in St. George, Utah. Photo taken by Hannah O'Reilly

Increasing education is the most impactful action that can be taken to stop the negative outcomes of population growth, as many of these new users do not know that their actions are detrimental to the environment. At CSU they are hoping to increase education for this population through an Adopt-a-Trail Program, which would train volunteers to do trail work and then assign them to oversee a specific trail maintenance project. They would also love to station volunteers at trailheads who can provide education on Leave-No-Trace principles to outdoor recreators. These strategies acknowledge the opportunity that Friends Groups have to engage more members of the public in places with a growing population because, as one respondent so eloquently put it, “The people that are ready to roll up their sleeves and do work on conservation are always a small part of the population, and I gotta believe that that is growing as the population grows.”

4.3 Aging Population

Trend: Aging Through the Relocation of Retirees

Across the United States the population is getting older, and the West is no exception. The aging of the population is a metric of the number of older individuals compared to youth, which is directly influenced by natural growth. Natural growth, which measures the total number of births against the total number of deaths, has been slowing across the US (Rogers & Wilder, 2022). The reasons for this are twofold; women are having fewer babies and having these babies later in life while the large baby boomer generation is aging and people are living longer (Bloom et al., 2011). These trends have tipped the scale so that an increasingly large percentage of the population is of retirement age. During the pandemic these trends were further exacerbated as birth rates declined in what some people are calling a “baby bust” (Lewis, 2021). Moreover, COVID-19 has killed over a million Americans, which contributed to deaths outnumbering births in over 73% of all US counties. Even in states where there was a natural increase in population, the ratio of births to deaths has decreased, in many cases by quite large margins (US Census Bureau, 2022). Through comparison of the proportion of the population who is under 19 to the proportion of the population over 65 in each of the counties that were looked at, it was clear that these trends exist in Friends Group’s communities as well. This trend is likely more extreme in rural areas by the tendency of young people of child-bearing years to leave in search of opportunity elsewhere (Johnson & Lichter, 2019). However, the aging of the population is not just a rural problem and has much larger implications for all types of communities. This section gives an overview of how this trend shows up in the Census data that we collected and provides insight into why this may be occurring, with particular emphasis on declining fertility rates as well as the influx of older retirees to areas with high natural amenities.



This graph, which compares the percentage change of the 65+ population to the percentage of the population under 19 in each county, shows that the older population is growing and the younger population is declining in all but one of the counties we looked at.

Primary Takeaways

- All FGN counties saw the percentage of their 65+ population increase, while most saw the younger population decrease, indicating an aging of the population overall
- The aging of the population is rooted in a variety of factors, including the aging of the large baby boomer generation, the increase of average life expectancy, and the fact that women are having fewer children and they are having them later in life
- In Friends Group communities, aging is exacerbated by an influx of retirees
- No group mentioned experiencing a downturn in the number of children in their area
- As the demographic that most often takes part in conservation, opportunities exist to increase organizational capacity by engaging the older population
- This population can help Friends Groups reach other populations

Aging Population Data in FGN Counties

To analyze the aging of the population across the relevant counties we looked at the change in the median age from 2010 to 2020, the change in the percentage of the population under 19 from 2010 to 2020, and the change in the percentage of the population over 65 from 2010 to 2020. We also collected data on the population under 18 for 2020 and 2021, and compared these numbers to gauge whether the trends that appeared in the data for the ten-year period were continuing.

Overall, our analysis shows a clear aging of the population. Of the 58 counties that we looked at, only 5 had a median age that decreased between 2010 and 2020. In the other 53 counties, the average increase in median age was 2.3 years. Dolores County, CO had the highest increase in median age, with a whopping 14 years, while Mohave and Yavapai Counties, both in AZ, followed, with the median age increasing by 6 years. Two of these counties were also among the top counties with the greatest increase in the percentage of the population over 65. These counties and the amount their over 65 population grew by between 2010 and 2020 are:

- Dolores County, CO - Increase of 65+ population by 19.8%
- San Juan County, WA - Increase of 65+ population by 12.2%
- Yavapai County, AZ - Increase of 65+ population by 8.9%
- San Miguel County, CO - Increase of 65+ population by 8.9%
- Mohave County, AZ - Increase of 65+ population by 8.4%

Four other counties also saw the 65 and over population grow by over 8.0%, and every single county saw this segment of the population grow. Moreover, many counties in this cohort have over a quarter their population in this older age demographic, with an average 18.8% of the population throughout Friends Group counties being over 65. The national average is 16.0%, which indicates that Friends Groups communities tend to trend older than those across the nation as a whole.

Conversely, almost all counties saw a decrease in the percentage of their population under 19 between 2010 and 2020. The only county that did not was Blaine County, MT, which saw an increase of 1.5%. Consistent with the aging trends outlined above, Dolores County, CO saw the greatest dip in this population, with a decline of 11.2%. The other counties that saw the greatest declines were Mohave in Arizona, Nye in Nevada, Washington in Utah, and Riverside in California. Among the 57 counties that saw a decline in the percentage of their populations under 19, the average decrease was 2.49%.

Interestingly, a total of ten counties saw an increase in the percentage of their populations under 18 between 2020 and 2021. Of particular note are Dolores County, CO, with an increase of 4.60% and Kane County, UT, which saw an increase of 1.60%. It is difficult to determine the significance of this data, but it could be reflective of new developing trends in these areas. However, with 48 of the counties continuing to see declines in the youth population during the 2020-2021 period, and the other 8 only seeing marginal increases of under 1.00%, it does seem that younger people becoming a smaller proportion of the population is a continuing trend.

Finally, it is worth noting that the percentage of the population that these age brackets make up were the only data point collected. In places where the population is rising, this percentage could go down while the actual number of people goes up. This means that it is possible for a place to have a growing youth population that is not reflected by this analysis. However, the overall trend is that the older population is making up a greater proportion of the population, which indicates that the population is aging overall. The larger implications of this aging for Friends Groups is discussed below.

Aging Population Literature Review

The aging of the population is not just something that is occurring within the US, but is a worldwide phenomenon (Bloom et al., 2011). Globally, the percentage of people over the age of 60 is projected to increase by a factor of 10 between the years 1950 and 2050, while the total number of people is projected to rise by a factor of 3.7 (United Nations, n.d.). Increased longevity within the exceptionally large baby boomer generation explains part of this trend (Bloom et al., 2011). In natural amenity rich communities, it can also be exacerbated as older, wealthy retirees move to these areas to be closer to high quality natural landscapes. Other side-effects of this influx is increased cost of living and the creation of more service sector jobs (Mockrin et al., 2018). In this way, the aging of the population and the effects of population growth in many Friends Group communities may be inextricably linked, as the relocation of retirees is at the heart of both. This idea is discussed in greater detail in the aging population case study section below, as it was the primary thing that the groups we interviewed pointed to for why their populations are aging.

Longer lives do not tell the full story of aging. Declines in fertility rates are also a major contributing factor, particularly within developed countries like the United States. These trends impact population numbers, as fewer births than deaths may lead to natural decline rather than growth. The fertility rate within the US has been in decline since the Great Recession. Dips in births often occur during economic downturns, so it was expected that fertility would rebound after the recession subsided. This has not been the case and the number of births per woman has continued to fall over the past decade (Munnell et al., 2018). To gain more insight into why this decline may be occurring, Martin (2021) conducted a series of interviews with women spaced four years apart. The study showed that having children has become a nuanced decision that involves personal preference, financial stability, and relationship status, although being in a relationship meant that having children was a discussion and not a given. Some of these shifts in fertility can also be attributed to trends in women having children later in life. However, this does not explain the entirety of the shift (Munnell et al., 2018), a fact made clear by the “baby bust” that occurred during the pandemic as opposed to the “baby boom” that was predicted in the Spring of 2020 (Lewis, 2021).

There are a number of ways that aging populations can negatively impact communities. One is that school districts may be provided with fewer resources for the children that are attending as enrollment numbers decline

(Berman, 2019). This dilemma is currently playing out in Jefferson County, CO, with the proposed closure of 16 elementary schools. The move is deemed necessary for the district, as enrollment numbers continue to decline, but is disruptive to the community and will make life more difficult for local families (Robles, 2022). Although Jefferson County is not among the counties analyzed for this report, what is happening there demonstrates why declines in fertility rates may be important to Friends Groups, since changing resource allocations could reduce programming for outdoor education and environmental science in schools.

The other common concerns connected to the aging population are economic in nature. Of note is the effect that young people moving out of an area can have on its economic viability. This phenomena typically occurs in rural locations, which contributes to aging having particularly detrimental effects on more remote parts of the country. Moreover, this trend can create a feedback loop that makes aging occur more quickly, as many of the people leaving in search of opportunity elsewhere are at the age when a person is likely to start a family. This means that fewer children are being born in the area as well (Johnson & Lichter, 2019). Many also fear that an exodus of young people from an area may also result in a shortage in the workforce and an ensuing downturn in the economy. However, Bloom et al. (2011) negates these concerns, because “The increase in elderly dependents will be more than offset by a decline in youth dependents” (p. 5), and the workforce shortage can be made up by expanding employment across demographics, most notably to women. Turning these fears further on their head, Götmark et al. (2018) make the case for natural declines in population as a good thing. The most relevant features of their argument are that fewer people would make it easier to combat climate change and ecological degradation, that finding a good job and affordable housing could become easier, and that humanity would be better able to utilize the finite resources that we have.

Whether good or bad on a large scale, the aging of the population has impacts on a small scale within local communities. These effects are relevant to Friends Groups because they can impact the economies where they work, especially in terms of the availability of workers. Growth of the older, retired population can also be seen as a net positive for Friends Groups, as this is the population most likely to engage in volunteer opportunities and to donate. Harnessing this growth is therefore an opportunity for members of the FGN to increase capacity within the demographics who have traditionally been involved in conservation.

Aging Population Case Studies

Although Montezuma County, where Dolores River Boating Advocates (DRBA) is headquartered, saw average increases in the percentage of the 65 and older population, and average decreases in the percentage of those under 19, they also work in Dolores County, CO, which topped the list for both of these metrics. Because of this, DBRA was asked if they have noticed an aging of the population in their area. However, even when asked about it directly, the aging of the population was not a major theme within the conversation. The DBRA respondent said that it was not something that stands out to them within their community. However, they then guessed that aging is “more from people retiring and moving here,” as opposed to there being fewer kids. They also mentioned that the area is susceptible to the “younger generations not wanting to stick around and work on the farm kind of scenario,” which can contribute to the out-migration of individuals of prime working and child-rearing age. This scenario for rural population aging was mentioned in the literature, and this provides some evidence that it may be happening in some Friends Group communities as well.

Some at Conserve Southwest Utah (CSU) also attributed the aging trend in their area to an influx of retirees. Of particular note was an explanation of the growth of the older population that pointed to the many “snow-birds” and “sun-birds” who have relocated to St. George. Another CSU interviewee talked about their difficulties as a younger member of the community finding other young people to socialize with. All these aspects of the aging population mentioned by both CSU and DRBA are directly related to domestic migration, and can therefore be easily applied to the trend of increasing population within natural amenity rich communities as well.

An influx of retirees to an area presents an opportunity for conservation groups as this population generally has more free time and available resources to participate in volunteer or stewardship events. . This is rooted in a number of factors, including that these older individuals are also typically whiter and more affluent, which fits them within the demographics that have traditionally been involved in conservation work. Moreover, retirees tend to have more resources, including time, making it more likely that they will have the capacity to volunteer, a fact that was mentioned more than once by one respondent at CSU. FOMDP also talked about the ability of older people to give their time as integral to the docent hikes program that they run. These hikes rely on volunteer guides, the majority of whom are retired. These hikes have helped FOMDP reach a significantly larger percentage of the people in their area. This group has recently noticed a jump in the number of locals utilizing the National Conservation Lands that they are responsible for, and see this increase as clearly linked to the greater outreach they have achieved through the docent hikes. This story highlights how Friends Groups can engage the older members of their community to continue creating conservation advocacy opportunities for the community writ large.



Grand Canyon Parashant, taken by Bob Wick

4.4 Politics

Trend: Increasing Polarization and Shifting Political Priorities

The political discourse surrounding land use and conservation has always been contentious. The lands now protected under the National Conservation Lands system are managed by the BLM, and as a result, were originally set aside by the government for rangeland, mining, and other extractive uses. More recently, the ecological, scenic, and cultural values of these landscapes have begun to be recognized, and the vision for the future of these lands have changed. Local communities' views and desires for the use of public lands vary as widely as the landscapes themselves. Some relish the prospect of conserving land for aesthetic and recreational purposes, while others favor the uses that have supported the regional economy over the last century (Wilson, 2006). Still others advocate for the return of control of public lands to their ancestral stewards, and support traditional uses stretching back to time immemorial.

These differing opinions can create tension that makes it more difficult for actional conservation policy and management plans to be implemented. Within the highly polarized context of modern American politics, these differences are becoming even more pronounced. Collaboration between stakeholders is necessary for the productive management of public lands and resources (Wilson, 2006). As polarization increases, walls go up between groups that makes it hard to build necessary relationships, share information, and otherwise support the collaborative planning process (Schuett et al., 2001). In this section, we look at the trend of political polarization within FGN counties more closely. Of particular note are the case studies of Friends Groups from western Colorado that have been able to build support for public lands within a highly polarized political context, which provide examples of how these divides can be overcome.

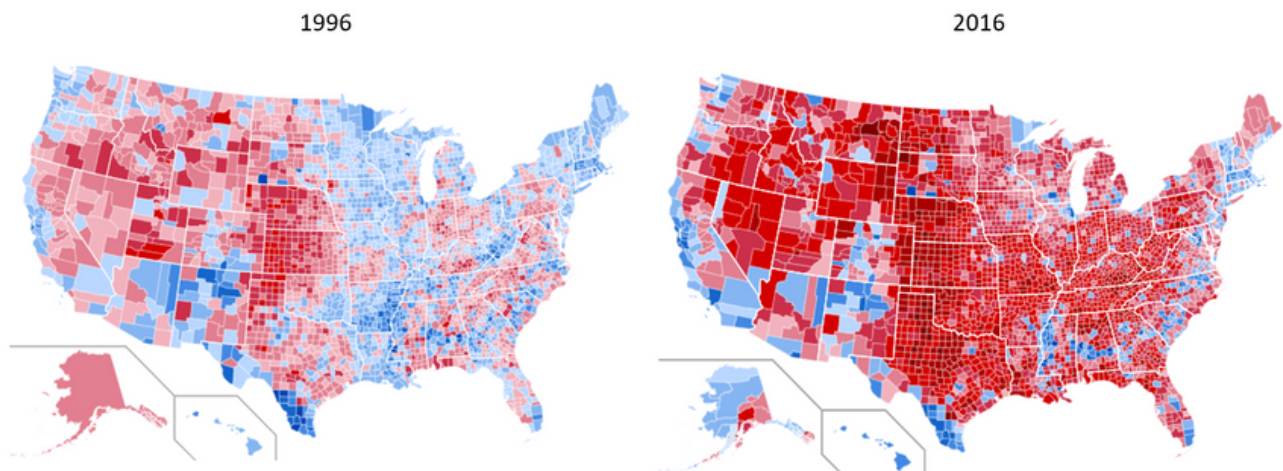
Primary Takeaways:

- Polarization and rural/urban political divide is not as stark in counties adjacent to National Conservation Lands
- Counties whose economies rely on tourism and natural amenities exhibit more liberal voting habits
- Direct risks (like wildfire) and regulation (like wildfire mitigation) can drive pro-environmental voting habits
- Republican rhetoric has widened the gap in environmental concerns between liberals and conservatives
- Relationship building is essential to working across political boundaries
- Diversifying messaging strategies can have a major impact on effectiveness of communication across political boundaries
- Educational programming helps drive pro-environmental behavior and concern
- Building relationships with conservation minded agency personnel helps create stewardship programs
- Community representation within the organization eases engagement with diverse political groups
- Community engagement in stewardship projects drives interest and participation in the organization
- Community events and education programming helps broaden outreach and understanding
- It is difficult to fully engage with more right leaning public land user groups

Politics Data in FGN Counties

Opinions on preferred management priorities vary with the social, political, and cultural makeup of the communities surrounding National Conservation Lands. To gain insight into the political character of these areas, we collected election return data for the six presidential elections from 2000-2020. We hoped this would help visualize trends in how these communities were changing politically. Of course, presidential elections do not show all the intricacies of local politics, and so it is not necessarily representative of the range of attitudes towards land use policy. However, this data can begin to help paint a picture of the political character of a place. Initial findings show that most counties were not shifting politically, with 42 retaining the same political leaning over all six election years. In the counties that did see a shift in their political leanings though, the trend was towards support of the democratic party. 15 counties shifted in that direction, while only one saw marginal movement towards voting republican.

The data we analyzed also showed a pattern seen across the nation; counties containing large urban centers tend to vote strongly Democratic, while rural areas tend to vote Republican (Martin & Webster, 2018). These trends vary from state to state, with rural areas in historically liberal states leaning more Democratic and urban voters in more conservative areas often leaning Republican. Our data showed both the overarching divide between rural and urban voters as well as some of the nuance depending on where in the country these voters reside. Of the 25 highly urban counties looked at, 18 leaned liberal, while seven had more conservative voters. Those in this latter category were in regions that ideologically tend to lean more to the right, including Utah, Wyoming, and Montana. Conversely, of the 9 rural counties looked at, all were conservative leaning except for one. This was San Miguel County, CO, which is where the resort town of Telluride is located.



Source: NYC Data Science Academy, <https://nycdatascience.com/blog/student-works/visualizing-political-polarization-in-the-u-s-with-shiny/>

Country is becoming more politically polarized. This map shows how red counties are becoming redder while blue counties continue to become bluer. Working across political party lines is essential for the future of public lands protection and advocacy.

This last example highlights a notable exception to the typical rural-urban divide; counties whose main population center is reliant on tourism tend to be more liberal. These areas include municipalities with high natural amenities, especially ski resorts, that draw domestic migration of wealthy second home owners. This influx can push the area's politics further to the left. Within the data, this trend primarily showed up within the counties that are 50.0%-79.9% urban according to the 2010 Census. This number describes the density of settlements, and does not necessarily mean that it is a highly populated county. This makes it less surprising that

these counties tended to be right leaning, with 14 predominantly voting conservation and 8 predominantly voting liberal in the last 6 presidential elections.

These counties also showed the tendency of voters in high natural amenity areas to lean more liberal: Coconino County, AZ, Routt County, CO, and Mono County, CA, home to Grand Canyon National Park, Steamboat Springs Ski Resorts, and Mammoth and June Mountain Ski resorts, respectively, all voted overwhelmingly liberal for the past 20 years. These results underscore the need for nuance when trying to navigate the political landscape to engage more people in the conservation cause.

Politics Literature Review

Our literature review revealed the same patterns of rural-urban political divides that are evident in our data, and backed the notion that this trend is happening across the West. In fact, the literature highlights a more dramatic divide than our data for the 2020 presidential election (Johnson & Scala, 2022). Environmental concerns are also highly correlated with political partisanship, with conservative-identifying individuals voting less in favor of policies that protect or support the environment (McCright et al., 2014). Interesting differences between partisan voters that are potentially useful for Friends Groups educational programming were also present.

As stated above, there are marked differences in voting habits between rural and urban populations. However, the size and nature of the gap is not universally consistent. In the 2020 election, Donald Trump won a larger proportion of the rural vote, while Joe Biden picked up larger margins in urban areas (Roman-Alcalá et al., 2021). However, in the counties we studied, 81% saw their proportion of Democratic voters increase between 2016 and 2020. This is a representation of the fact that political dynamics of the United States are not as simple as rural vs. urban, with metro area size and proximity creating more of a “continuum” regarding political beliefs than a dichotomy (Johnson & Scala, 2022). The literature also reflected the phenomenon we saw in the data where areas with high in-migration of wealthier households, typically supported by high natural amenities, fostered more pro-environmental and democratic voting habits (Jones et al., 2003).

Further, support for environmental policy and resource management varies across rural areas, and in many cases defies the political norms. The culture, history, and other geopolitical characteristics of a place have profound impacts on political attitudes, especially environmental politics. Areas with high amenity values and less extraction driven economies tend to look favorably on environmental regulation that limits development. Direct impacts by regulatory decisions also shape local definitions of conservation, and affinity for regulation. Increased fire risks posed by unmanaged forests, for example, can be a driver of pro-environmental voting in rural areas, but the preferred mode of management may differ depending on the specific historical economy of the area (Hamilton et al., 2014). Similarly, distance from a particular intervention, meaning a constituent will not experience direct impact from a policy change, can significantly influence voter preferences. Party affiliation and distance to intervention were primary drivers in how Coloradans voted for Gray Wolf reintroduction in 2021, with democratic voters, who tend to live further away from the impacted area being most likely to vote for reintroduction (Ditmer et al., 2022).

Much of the literature noted the gap in environmental concern between conservative and liberal voters. This gap is a relatively recent phenomenon. Historically, environmental concerns have not been a partisan issue, with widespread support among democrats and republicans through most of the 20th century (McCright, 2008). In

the 80s and 90s, environmental regulation began to be pitched as an unnecessary expense and drain on the economy by Republican politicians, creating animosity towards environmental regulation among their constituents. Over the past three decades, this opinion has been promulgated by the most visible members of the Republican party, which has driven the widening of the partisan gap on climate change and other environmental issues among the rank and file (McCright et al., 2014).

We also found significant literature highlighting the ways environmental messaging speaks to liberal and conservative voters differently. Several papers studied the moral framing of environmental issues and how the messaging strategy impacted voters across the political spectrum. This literature shows that the majority of environmental communications use “individual morality,” which places emphasis on justice, harm, or care, as motivation for action. This moral framing drove high levels of pro-environmental behavior from liberal identified participants, and relatively low levels from conservatives. However, when environmental information is presented within a “binding moral frame” that highlights purity, sanctity, and patriotism, the gap in pro-environmental behavior between liberals and conservatives virtually disappears (Fienberg & Willer, 2012; Wolsko et al., 2016). This suggests that a change in messaging may be an effective intervention to sway public opinion in favor of pro-environmental behavior, and highlights the importance of framing issues in a way that appeals to the audience.

Finally, educational interventions have also been shown to encourage pro-environmental behavior among conservative voters. Much of the antagonism towards environmental policy intervention appears to be primarily due to a lack of belief in the efficacy of those policies or a denial of climate change. For example, one study showed that proximity to a climate-driven disaster, such as a wildfire, increased support for new management policy among liberal voters, but not among conservative voters. The article concluded that the driving factor behind this willingness to act was widespread cultural belief in climate change (Hazlett & Mildemberger, 2020). Effective education regimes have been shown to increase belief in climate change. Those interventions include:

“(1) focusing on personally relevant and meaningful information and (2) using active and engaging teaching methods. Four themes specific to issues such as climate change were also generated: (1) engaging in deliberative discussions, (2) interacting with scientists, (3) addressing misconceptions, and (4) implementing school or community projects” (Monroe et al., 2017, p. 1).

Many of these programs inspired hope and action in the face of global climate change by focusing on community impacts and community interventions. Ultimately, political challenges in rural areas with historically extractive economies may be some of the primary roadblocks for Friends Groups working to encourage conservation. In the next section we will highlight groups on Colorado’s Western Slope that have done exceptional work coalition building for conservation lands in very politically conservative areas.

Politics Case Studies

We identified two Friends Groups, Dolores River Boating Advocates (DBRA) and Colorado Canyons Association (CCA), that operate in an especially challenging political environment. These groups have very different objectives, and therefore different challenges, but they have both learned lessons that are potentially instructive to other Friends Groups facing similar issues.

Both CCA and DRBA are based on Colorado's Western Slope, one of the most politically conservative areas in the state. In many ways, the area is a microcosm of the politics of the country as a whole, with increasing political polarization as more liberals move into the area and the right wing moves further away from traditional conservative values. CCA and DRBA work within Colorado's 3rd Congressional district, whose seat is currently held by conservative firebrand Lauren Boebert. Representatives from both organizations noted the increasing difficulty of coalition building across political boundaries. Previously, public lands advocates could count on support across the aisle, from both Democrats and "hook-and-bullet Republicans." However, in recent years, support for public lands on the right has dwindled in favor of privatization and extractive industry development.

“That's why we're here - to make these landscapes and their designation part of the fabric of the community so that, 100 years from now, we don't have to worry about someone trying to run legislation and overturn those things.”

DRBA was instrumental in the creation of the Dolores River National Conservation Area and Special Management Area Act, which proposes the creation of a new National Conservation Area protecting certain reaches of the Dolores River. The idea for the National Conservation Area began in 2000, after recreationists and water managers began expressing concerns about impacts to the river ecosystem downstream from McPhee Reservoir. Diversions from McPhee total approximately 270,000 acre feet annually, and primarily supply irrigated agriculture in both the Dolores and San Juan Basins. For this reason, water rights and diversions from the river were politically untouchable, and data collection and solutions had to avoid threatening water rights. DRBA and other stakeholders then created the Dolores River Dialogue, to facilitate roundtable discussions about solutions to the problems on the Dolores.

These discussions included conservation advocates and irrigators from across Dolores and San Miguel Counties. Initially, Montezuma County did not participate in the discussions, as the county is more conservative, holds the largest diversion rights from the Dolores, and transports diverted water out of the Dolores Basin. Later in the process, Montezuma county stakeholders were brought into the negotiations. Through repeated interactions between conservation advocates and irrigators, DRBA's representatives were able to bring conflicts to the human level, build relationships with irrigators, and ultimately generate a proposal that could be supported by a majority of stakeholders. One DRBA staff member said of the dialogue,

"You'd sit down with somebody on the complete opposite side of an issue, and we would just talk about it. We would hear each other, and we listened, and friendships came out of it with the most unlikely people... you're an environmentalist, you're a rancher. You're this, you're that, but I also care about the river corridor. On that level we could find common ground, which propelled us to put our hackles down and talk about solutions from a more productive place."

DRBA also points to their stewardship and access initiatives as helping drive more diverse users on the river, increasing understanding between stakeholders, and broadening the reach of conservation initiatives. Ultimately, DRBA credits their success to meaningful relationship building across a diverse range of stakeholders.

CCA was created to support an existing NCA, so do not have the burden of advocating for new public lands protection. As a result, CCA is primarily focused on engagement, stewardship, and getting people out onto their public lands. CCA finds that focusing on stewardship and engagement helps them avoid the political fray of land conservation. This placement in the community lends itself to building a big political tent. To maintain this diverse stakeholder base they work to ensure that their staff and board members are trusted in the Mesa County community, and focus on stewardship projects that allow broad access for lots of different user groups and recreational activities. Still, their membership and volunteer base remains slightly left of Mesa County as a whole, as they have not yet fully engaged with more right leaning public land user groups.

Ultimately, it is more important for CCA to complete projects and work to preserve the land than to fight over sources of funding that may be viewed as partisan. This drives CCA to focus on stewardship projects on the monuments, and to seek funding from local sources. They also develop and deliver education and river programming to engage people with public lands. This can help bridge political divides that often appear in conflicts over land, funding, and conservation. They also credit much of their success to very strong relationships with the NCA managers at the BLM. Admittedly, CCA has been lucky to have local BLM staff who are committed to the conservation piece of the BLM's missions. Still, relationships with specific land managers at local field offices came up in several interviews as an essential part of building successful conservation and stewardship programs. Even in generally uncooperative field offices, Friends Groups reported that finding individuals who were sympathetic to their missions was essential to success. Ultimately, building intentional relationships across their home communities helped both of these groups build coalitions and work for public lands across perceived political boundaries.



Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, taken by Elena Wimberger

5. Primary Takeaways & Key Recommendations

The previous four sections outline significant trends across the West that are relevant to the communities in which Friends Groups operate. Our case-studies illustrate how five different Friends Groups have experienced and navigated these trends, while the data and literature review situate these specific stories within the wider context. The following table that distills the primary takeaways and key recommendations from our research for each trend:

Increasing Racial Diversity: Engaging the Hispanic population	Population Growth	Aging through Amenity Migration of Retirees	Increasing Polarization and Shifting Political Priorities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing Spanish-language resources can increase access opportunities Representation of the community within the organization leadership matters Outreach to new groups can happen through existing organized groups Stewardship programs that engage younger ages, ie. students, can be more inclusive of all races and ethnicities in a community Demographic groups engage with the landscape and organization in different ways Developing and fostering long-term relationships within the community is significant to moving forward 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Population increase expands potential for public land advocates Education regarding minimal landscape impact is key in facilitating the engagement of new populations Education can be facilitated by creating programming that places volunteers within landscapes Smart Growth advocacy can help steer development in a more sustainable way 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The over-65 retired population may have more free time to spend volunteering for a Friends Group in land stewardship activities than the average population Organizational capacity may be increased by working with this population 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversifying messaging strategies can have a major impact on effectiveness of communication across political boundaries Education programming helps drive pro-environmental behavior and concern Building relationships with conservation minded agency personnel helps create stewardship programs Community representation within the organization eases engagement with diverse political groups Community engagement in stewardship projects drives interest and participation in the organization

In our case-study interviews, we heard myriad strategies for working across boundaries of race, age, and politics to foster a more inclusive coalition of public land advocates. The findings provide Friends Groups with actionable recommendations for navigating demographic change. In this section, the recommendations from the case studies are distilled within the context of the wider research.

The census data we collected clearly showed that the West is becoming more racially diverse. The Hispanic population is growing particularly quickly. To support broader inclusion of the Hispanic population in Friends Group's communities, expanding Spanish-language resources is an important first-step in increasing knowledge of and access to events, relevant public lands, and conservation issues. In addition to making Friends Group materials available in Spanish, contributing to local Spanish-language newspapers or radio stations can help expand knowledge of the organization and its work. Providing environmental commentary on relevant public lands issues in Spanish-language publications can build interest in local landscape conservation and the associated Friends Group. Of course, to be able to do this a Friends Group needs a native Spanish speaker on their staff. This can mean hiring a full-time staff member in a leadership position, creating internships for Spanish speaking youth, or other strategies. Having Spanish speakers on a Friends Group staff is an important step in expanding engagement with the Hispanic population in the community. Creating relationships with existing community organizations can also support outreach to more racially diverse members of one's county. Engaging groups that already have support from underrepresented populations can help Friends Groups form relationships across the community. Relationships with schools and youth groups can have a similar effect. Youth stewardship, education, and engagement programs can reach a younger, more diverse population. Several groups we spoke with found that kids who were first exposed to Friends Group programming in school often brought family members to later engagement and stewardship events.

Population growth is another trend driving the changing character of western communities. Population growth is relevant to Friends Groups because of the impact sprawling development and increased use can have on fragile landscapes and their resources. Rapid population growth also impacts the social diversity of the community by driving up the costs of living and changing the political dynamics of the region. While urban development is out of scope for most Friends Group's, some have begun advocating for Smart Growth. Smart Growth incorporates a broad range of strategies including creative urban development that favors density over sprawl, focus on the development of walkable neighborhood communities, and can advocate for more affordable housing options. Friends Groups can be instrumental in fostering community-wide conversation about development and growth practices. Population growth also means there are more potential conservation advocates for Friends Groups to engage with. Reaching out to newcomers makes it possible to create connections with a larger base, which can facilitate more support from the community. To increase awareness, Friends Groups can host events or campaigns such as a Leave-No-Trace education day or Adopt-a-Trail programs to educate new residents and steward public lands where usage is increasing.

Many of the people moving to places across the West with high levels of natural amenities are senior citizens. These new residents are often drawn to these areas by the desire to spend their retirement in beautiful places. As a result, migration of retirees may contribute to the aging of communities that we observed in the Friends Group counties. Friends Groups' work that engages retired folks presents an opportunity to include a population that generally has more time to spend on stewardship activities such as educational hikes or a land clean-up event. Historically, older, more affluent people have been the primary participants in the Western land-protection movement for many reasons outlined in this report, but also simply because they have more time and resources to

spend on environmental advocacy and to enjoy recreating on public lands. Acknowledging the integral role that many individuals in the over-65 demographic have played in the environmental movement over the last 50 years, and welcoming the continued support and ideas this group brings to public lands protection issues is an important aspect of incorporating broad community representation within an organization.

Finally, increasing political polarization is a trend that is reported on heavily in the media, and appears in both the literature and census data. This trend is often defined by population density, with urban places tending to lean more to the left and rural places typically leaning to the right. The data we collected confirmed that this political polarization exists within Friends Group communities as well. This matters, because overcoming these political divides can be integral to building a grassroots coalition that supports the protection of public lands. In our case-studies, we heard repeatedly that working across party lines comes down to creating meaningful relationships across a diverse range of stakeholders and building trust within the community. This can happen through round-table discussions over an issue and bringing conflicts to the human level. Youth stewardship and access initiatives can also build relationships across political boundaries within an unpolarized context. Furthermore, choosing a Board that is reflective of the political make-up of the community has been successful in creating broader support from the community across political boundaries.

Organizational adaptation to demographic changes is unique to one's community and the specific mission and scope of one's Friends' Group. The examples above show strategies that five different Friends Groups are using to navigate four identified demographic trends with the ultimate goal of creating a more inclusive coalition of public land advocates.. The following three broad themes came out of our conversations with Friends Groups and were also apparent in the data we collected.



Steese National Conservation Area, taken by Bureau of Land Management

6. Discussion

CLF's Friends Groups are brought together through the common mission of protecting, advocating for, and stewarding National Conservation Lands. Besides these shared goals, there is incredible variation among the 81 organizations in the FGN. Some are already associated with federally designated National Monuments, some are fighting for protection. Some organizations are focussed on stewardship and education, while others are fierce advocates actively fighting for land protection against extractive industries or continued industrial development. Some Friends Group's have a small staff and Board while others have gained support from corporate donors. The variety and diversity of challenges that Friends Groups face makes it difficult to develop one encompassing toolkit that lays out strategies for broadening community representation. The 81 organizations, while aimed in a similar direction, all experience their work differently depending on what designation of landscape they are representing, the community in which they live, and the resources available to them. However, our research identified specific themes that are broadly applicable to the work of diverse coalition building within public lands advocacy.

Through our case-studies, we spoke with five different Friends Group's about their strategies for adapting to change and authentically engaging broader participation within the community, without compromising their organization's mission. Following is a discussion of three themes we heard echoed through our interviews as impactful experiences, initiatives, and insights towards fostering more inclusive participation within their organization.

Community Engagement that Meets Community Needs

One theme that came up frequently throughout our investigation was the need to adjust engagement tactics depending on the target communities. To connect with communities beyond traditional conservation advocates, Friends Groups should recognize that public lands and conservation may not mean the same things to everyone. This idea can be conceptualized as 'meeting people where they are.' Under this theme, it becomes clear that traditional conservation values and engagement techniques are unlikely to generate long term engagement with all members of a diverse community. Instead, Friends Groups should focus on fostering genuine connection with public lands, which can help steer people towards conservation advocacy on their own terms.

Many of the advocacy recommendations that came up in our study were in service of this goal. The importance of creating spaces for people to engage with the outdoors without the financial or knowledge costs that are often required helped expand interest in Friends Groups and public lands. Youth programming was cited frequently as an especially effective means of outreach that also provides access to groups for whom these costs may have otherwise been prohibitive. Youth engagement does require more organizing, and can be particularly effective in the context of schools or other official programming. But, this extra effort is well worth it because when kids are exposed to the outdoors they will often convince their families of the importance of getting outside and conserving public lands.

Communications strategies should also incorporate the idea of proactively meeting community needs. Creating messaging that is more likely to resonate with new audiences is essential to engaging them in the conservation community. Depending on the audience, this could mean creating bilingual resources and events, or reaching out through new channels, like radio. In communities with large populations who do not speak English, creating outreach and educational materials in their native tongue is critical because it is impossible to reach a community that does not understand the words being said. It is also important to know whether the community being

messaged to will actually be exposed to the messaging, and that if they are, that the content of the message will connect with them. Proper framing can help bridge political divides and broaden the base of conservation advocates.

Finally, it is important to bring an additive approach to these strategy changes. The traditional membership of conservation organizations, which tends to be older, whiter, and more affluent than average, are part of a more diverse future. Broadening the conservation community means maintaining existing relationships, while also striving to reach and represent new audiences.



Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks, taken by Bob Wick

Reflecting Changing Demographics Through Organizational Representation

Formulating new outreach and advocacy strategies can be challenging for groups with limited capacity. Bridging the gap between Friends Groups and a changing community is especially hard when internal staff and leadership do not have personal understanding of the changes that are occurring. Both the literature and our case studies pointed to intentional community representation within their organizations as essential to building understanding between Friends Groups and the communities they serve. This representation is important for engagement of racially diverse communities, across age groups, and in politically divided areas. Community representation should also exist at every level of the organization, from volunteers, to staff to the board of directors.

Representative leadership can bring new voices to help steer the organization in more inclusive and effective directions. As discussed above, different groups of people may connect with public lands in different ways. Figuring out how to reach a specific population requires organizational leadership that shares the perspective of the general population. This is particularly important within racially diverse communities, where some groups may not feel they belong in the outdoors or the conservation movement. Seeing that an organization has staff and board members who look like them can shift this narrative, showing them that many different people belong on public lands and within conservation advocacy work.

Representativeness can also increase the buy-in from members of the community who may otherwise be skeptical of a Friends Group's work. For example, in politically divided communities, having established community leaders who the more conservative population trusts can increase support from this segment of the population. This helps drive buy-in from all kinds of diverse communities, as it is easier to engage with organizations where they see themselves or their needs reflected. Although not as divisive, expanding the age range of staff and board members can bring in new voices and help create conversations between generations. Across the board, these examples show that creating an organization that is more representative of the local community helps increase the legitimacy of the organization's actions and broadens community support.

Cultivating Relationships with Diverse Stakeholders

Cultivating meaningful relationships is critical to responding to the demographic changes occurring across the American West. Building relationships with broad cross-sections of the community assists nearly every aspect of Friends Groups work. Relationships bring conflict down to the human level and help build understanding. This is especially important for negotiating and gaining support for new protections of public lands. Ensuring that all stakeholders feel heard can also help maintain support into the future. Where National Conservation Lands already exist, cultivating personal relationships across the community matters since long-term outreach brings new people to the conservation space, and helps engage people with their public lands and the issues facing them. In other words, these relationships help create a coalition invested in public lands who will continually advocate for these landscapes as threats to them arise.

One way to achieve this community representation is to work with and through existing community organizations. Building a coalition from scratch is incredibly challenging, and leveraging relationships with organizations that already draw membership from, and have the trust of other sectors of the community can be important allies. Building institutional relationships with community groups should be a priority for Friends Groups seeking to diversify their membership and outreach.

Relationships that Friends Groups build with their local land management agencies are equally important. Positive relationships with federal land managers can create an environment for more effective advocacy and stewardship, while negative ones can make conservation work much more difficult, if not impossible to implement. Of course, this relationship is a two way street, meaning that agency personnel must want to collaborate with Friends Groups as well as Friends Groups wanting to collaborate with them. One important way that this collaboration occurs is the support that Friends Groups can provide for projects within National Conservation Lands. Federal agencies are chronically underfunded, and often do not have the capacity to do the trail work, trash clean up, and other projects necessary to maintain the integrity of these landscapes. By organizing volunteers, Friends Groups can make these projects happen, making them indispensable assets within the management of public lands. This also underscores the fact that the cultivation of the relationship between agencies and these groups is just as important to Federal agencies as it is to the members of the FGN.

The increasing population and diversity of the American West presents an unprecedented opportunity for conservation professionals to create a new group of advocates for the long term protection and conservation of National Conservation Lands. Strong, personal relationships are key to achieving this goal.

7. Conclusion

This report aims to address shifting demographic trends in non-indigenous communities adjacent to BLM National Conservation Lands. We hope uncovering and sharing this information with the Friends Groups helps them support broader community representation throughout their organization. Grassroots advocacy is built from the people and passions present within a community and organized around an issue. The more inclusive the coalition, the more powerful the grassroots voice can be.

We touch on the historical development of the American environmental conservation movement as it relates to land protection and the important role it has played in the protection of one of the country's most valuable assets: public lands. The ways in which this movement developed has led to a fairly homogenous coalition of advocates: white, older, and more affluent. There are many historic and current reasons for the lack of diversity in this movement. Myriad systemic and structural barriers have precluded people of color from feeling welcome or safe on public lands, while the extra time it takes to be a part of a grassroots movement might not be available to low-income or working-class folks who are working long hours or multiple jobs. Moreover, many people are drawn to public lands advocacy through the connection they create with landscapes through outdoor recreation, which can be cost-prohibitive. Barriers to participation in public lands enjoyment and advocacy and why certain demographics are or are not represented are well established in the literature. This report looks towards the future of an inclusive movement and coalition of people supported by broad community representation. By taking this perspective, our research illuminates some concrete actions and sociocultural themes that may propel the public lands conservation movement towards greater inclusivity.

Creating a stronger coalition of advocates will require Friends Groups to expand their idea of what it means to be a 'conservationist.' By stepping outside of traditional conservation methods to engage a wider mix of the community, Friends Groups have an unprecedented opportunity to build a strong and diverse group of advocates that spans the boundaries of race, age, and politics. A first step an organization can take is asking who is in their community, and how those different groups connect to the landscapes.

Our main objectives in this report are to provide information on the non-indigenous demographic makeup of counties where Friends Group operate to support greater organizational inclusivity, to assist in identifying where there may be a gap in who has a voice in the conservation conversation, and identifying strategies to close those gaps. Although there were many specific details throughout this report, it is primarily a macro-level look at demographic trends that are occurring across the multi-faceted landscapes of the West. Instead of diving deeply into one topic, we have attempted to paint a picture of shifting communities across this region in a way that is applicable to the entire FGN.

This approach leaves many unanswered questions and future lines of analysis. Within the FGN, it could be interesting to target a specific demographic trend more thoroughly, looking at how a larger percentage of groups are navigating just one change occurring across many communities. Surveys and interviews across the entire network could provide greater insight into the challenges that each group faces and could help illuminate demographic trends that were not analyzed within this report. Widening the lens, consolidating a greater number of census variables could provide different ways to look at the trends analyzed here, while change over shorter timescales could be analyzed using the American Community Survey data published on a yearly basis. Similar research that controls for the weaknesses of census data in representing growth in undocumented and Indigenous communities would also help increase the accuracy of this analysis.

Though no prescriptive recommendation will apply universally, we hope Friends Groups can apply this information within their advocacy and stewardship work. Thinking through how each demographic trend manifests within specific communities and organizations is the first step to addressing any disparities between who lives in a place and who is involved in public lands advocacy. This work is important because communities are likely to continue changing into the 21st century. Racial demographics are rapidly diversifying across the nation, the US will no longer be majority white in the very near future. The aging of the population is also on track to continue across the country. The ways regional population growth and the political polarization will occur across the West are more difficult to predict. Still, this report points to the serious ways that these phenomena can impact the effectiveness of public lands advocacy, and highlights why they must be taken seriously.

As the population continues to grow and change, the meaning and importance of public lands will develop simultaneously. Friends Groups and conservation advocates need to recognize these changes and adapt their strategies accordingly. A diverse and vocal coalition of public lands advocates are essential to protecting America's prized public lands and ensuring a sustainable future for the West. As demographics shift, organizations that reframe how conservation is messaged and managed will be most successful at engaging people who truly represent their community. Localized grassroots engagement is a critical component for the successful mitigation and adaptation to the effects of climate change, and the protection and stewardship of our public lands. Conservation management and advocacy must continue to adapt with the changing demographics of this country as we move into the future.

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Appendix I.

Overview & Explanation of Methods

Friends Grassroots Network Informational and Census Data Spreadsheet

Organization of Spreadsheet

General Info - A list of the organizations within the Friends Grassroots Network (FGN) that includes information on their locations, contact information, and affiliated land units.

FG by County - A list of all of the counties included in our data collection and the FGN organizations associated with them. Some groups can be affiliated with more than one county. Colorado Canyons Association and Conserve Southwest Utah are both listed twice to account for multiple land units where they work.

County Demographics - Population, age, income, and racial demographics, and the diversity index are listed for each of the relevant counties. Data was primarily collected from the Decennial Census and the American Community Survey 5-year Estimates. Simple analysis that measures change over this time period in different ways has also been performed.

Demographics Ranked - Ranks counties by the percentage analyses performed on that previous page. Green represents upward population trends, while red represents downward population trends.

County Constituency Data - Information on the voting patterns of the residents of relevant counties. Includes total number of voters, republican/democrat margin of victory, and percentage of third party votes for each presidential election from 2020-2000. Changes in margins from election to election were also calculated. In the first section of the page, republican margins of victory are highlighted in red, while democrat margins of victory are highlighted in blue. In the second part, the shifts towards the democrats or republicans are noted in the same manner. [Source: MIT Election Data and Science Lab, “County Presidential Election Returns 2000-2020” (Harvard Dataverse, March 18, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/VOQCHQ>.]

Leading Industries by County - Employment information for the counties is listed, including employment rates as of 2019 and information on the leading industry and highest paying industry in each area. Employment trends from 2018-2019 are color coded for upward vs. downward growth and below the data table the number of counties where each industry is relevant is counted. There are a number of counties for which this information still needs to be collected.

FG by Issue - Includes tables that list the FGN groups and corresponding land units by the type of federal designation that the land unit has.

Census Data Collection

Census data was collected to populate the information in the Demographics tab of the spreadsheet. Most of the Census data was collected from data.census.gov. County profiles were located, which provided information on 2020 population from the Decennial Census and square mileage of each county. These pages were also where links to tables that provided information on age, income, and racial demographics were located. These tables were then used to collect data for the years 2010 and 2020.

These Tables were used to collect data on the following variables:

- P2 | HISPANIC OR LATINO, AND NOT HISPANIC OR LATINO BY RACE under Race and Ethnicity data
 - Decennial Census (DEC) Redistricting Data (PL 94-171)
 - Variables: 2010 Total Population; 2010/2020 Hispanic Population; 2010/2020 White Non-Hispanic alone; 2010/2020 Black or African American alone; 2010/2020 American Indian and Alaska Native alone; 2010/2020 Asian alone; 2010/2020 Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone; 2010/2020 Some Other Race alone; 2010/2020 Population of Two or More Races
- DP05 | ACS DEMOGRAPHIC AND HOUSING ESTIMATES under Families and Living Arrangements
 - American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles
 - Variables: 2010/2020 Median Age; 2020 Population Under 18; 2010/2020 Population Under 19; 2010/2020 Population Over 65
- S1901 | INCOME IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS (IN 2020 INFLATION-ADJUSTED DOLLARS) under Income and Poverty data
 - American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables
 - Variables: 2010/2020 Median Household Income

A few other variables were also collected from other Census data tools:

- US Census QuickFacts provided insight into more recent estimates using Vintage Year 2021 (V2021)
 - Variables: 2021 Total Population; 2021 Population Under 18; 2020 Per Capita Income

The Racial and Ethnic Diversity Index number was collected for 2010 and 2020

Comparative Analysis of 2010 and 2020 Data

A number of simple analyses were performed on the data collected within the Demographics tab of the spreadsheet. The results of these equations are listed there as well as within the Demographics Ranked tab. In Demographics Ranked these results are organized by the percentage of change each of these counties have experienced for each variable, so that the county that has experienced the largest amount of positive change is listed first while the county that has experienced the greatest amount of negative change is listed last. Organized by section, the analyses performed on the data in the Demographics tab include the following:

- Population & Size
 - Change in Population 2010 to 2020 Δ
 - The population in 2010 is subtracted from the population in 2020
 - % Population change 2010 to 2020
 - The Change in Population 2010 to 2020 is divided by the population in 2010 and multiplied by 100
- Age Demographics
 - Change in Median Age 2010 to 2020 Δ
 - The median age in 2010 is subtracted from the median age in 2020
 - Change in % of Population Under 19 2010 to 2020 Δ
 - The % of Population Under 19 in 2010 is subtracted from the % of Population Under 19 in 2020
 - Although there is information available on the Population Under 18 for 2020, this information is not available for 2010. Instead, this earlier year gives the percentage of specific age blocks, which typically cover 5 years. The most closely related block to Under 18 provides the % of the population from 15 to 19 years. So that 2010 and 2020 could be compared, this analysis therefore looks at the % of Population Under 19.
 - Change in % of Population Over 65 2010 to 2020 Δ
 - The % of Population Over 65 in 2010 is subtracted from the % of Population Over 65 in 2020

- Income
 - Change in Median Household Income 2010 to 2020 Δ
 - The Median Household Income in 2010 is subtracted from the Median Household Income in 2020
- Racial Demographics
 - Change in [Race] population 2010 to 2020 Δ
 - The population in 2010 is subtracted from the population in 2020
 - % change in [Race] Population 2010 to 2020
 - The Change in Population 2010 to 2020 is divided by the population in 2010 and multiplied by 100
 - Change in % [Race] Population 2010 to 2020 Δ
 - The % of population in 2010 is subtracted from the % of population in 2020
 - Change in Diversity Index 2010 to 2020 Δ
 - The Diversity Index in 2010 is subtracted from the Diversity Index in 2020

Selection of Counties

From a list of 78 groups that are members of the CLF Friends Grassroots Network (FGN), we initially identified 47 counties based on the listed address of each group. For groups that did not have a listed address, the county that most adequately reflects that location of their land unit was selected. The list of counties to be analyzed was then expanded to include 11 more, for a total of 58 counties, because after comparing the official location of some organizations to the location of the landscapes within which they work it became clear that these addresses were not where the most relevant communities resided.

In the list below, the reasoning for why each county was selected is given. Counties that have selection criteria other than having been listed as the location of residents of members of the FGN are **bolded**. Counties are presented by State and appear in the same order in which they are listed on the Demographics tab of the corresponding spreadsheet.

Alaska - 2 Counties

Note - Alaska is divided into Boroughs, Census Areas, and Municipalities rather than Counties

- Fairbanks North Star Borough, Alaska
 - Location of Native Movement.
- Anchorage Municipality, Alaska
 - Location of The Alaska Center.

Arizona - 5 Counties

- Mohave County, Arizona
 - Location of Friends of Arizona Joshua Tree Forest.
- Pima County, Arizona
 - Location of Friends of Ironwood Forest.
- Yavapai County, Arizona
 - Location of Friends of the Agua Fria National Monument.
 - Location of Keep Sedona Beautiful.
- Cochise County, Arizona
 - Location of Friends of the San Pedro River.
- **Coconino County, Arizona**
 - Friends of the Cliffs does not have an address listed, but the Vermilion Cliff NM is located in this county. Moreover, half of Sedona, which is where Keep Sedona Beautiful is located, is in this county as well.

California - 17 Counties

- Inyo County, California
 - Location of Alabama Hills Stewardship Group.
 - Location of Amargosa Conservancy.
 - Location of Friends of Amargosa Basin.
 - Location of Friends of the Inyo.
- Santa Cruz County, California
 - Location of Amah Mutsun Land Trust.
 - Land Trust of Santa Cruz County.
- San Bernardino County, California
 - Location of BLU Education Foundation.
 - Location of Friends of Big Morongo Preserve.
 - Location of Transition Habitat Conservancy.
- Alameda County, California
 - Location of California Wilderness Coalition (CalWild).
- San Luis Obispo County, California
 - Location of Carrizo Plain Conservancy.
 - Friends of the Carrizo Plain does not have an address, but Carrizo Plain NM is located in this county.
 - Location of Piedras Blancas Light Station Association.
- San Diego County, California
 - Location of the Chapparral Lands Conservancy.
- Riverside County, California
 - Location of Council of Mexican Federations in North America (COFEM).
 - Location of Friends of the Desert Mountains.
 - Location of Native American Land Conservancy.
- Monterey County, California
 - Location of FORT Friends.
- Humboldt County, California
 - Friends of Headwaters does not have an official address, but lists Eureka as their general area of operation.
 - Location of Friends of the Lost Coast.
 - King Range Alliance does not have an address, but works in the King Range National Conservation Area in this county.
 - Location of Mattole Restoration Council.
 - Location of Mattole Salmon Group.
 - Location of Trinidad Coastal Land Trust.
 - Location of Sanctuary Forest.
- Mendocino County, California
 - Friends of Point Arena-Stornetta Lands does not have an address, but Point Arena-Stornetta Unit of CC NM is in this county.
 - Location of Mendocino Land Trust.
 - King Range Alliance does not have an address, but works in the King Range National Conservation Area in this county.

- Del Norte County, California
 - Location of Redwoods Parks Conservancy
- Santa Clara County, California
 - Location of Sempervirens Fund
- Yolo County, California
 - Location of Tuleyome
- **Mono County, California**
 - Focus Area for Friends of the Inyo
- **Lake County, California**
 - Focus Area for Tuleyome
- **San Mateo County, California**
 - Focus Area for Amah Mutsun Land Trust
- **San Benito County, California**
 - Focus Area for Amah Mutsun Land Trust

Colorado - 8 Counties

- Mesa County, Colorado
 - Location of Colorado Canyons Association.
- Montezuma County, Colorado
 - Location of Crow Canyon Archaeological Center.
 - Location of Dolores River Boating Advocates
 - Location of Southwest Colorado Canyons Alliance
- Chaffee County, Colorado
 - Location of Friends of Browns Canyon
- Routt County, Colorado
 - Location of Friends of the Yampa
- La Plata County, Colorado
 - Location of San Juan Citizen Alliance
- Delta County, Colorado
 - Location of Western Slope Conservation Center
- **Dolores County, Colorado**
 - Location of Proposed Dolores River NCA
- **San Miguel County, Colorado**
 - Location of Proposed Dolores River NCA

Florida - 1 County

- Palm Beach County, Florida
 - Location of Loxahatchee River Historical Society

Montana - 4 Counties

- Yellowstone County, Montana
 - Location of Friends of Pompeys Pillar
- Lewis and Clark County, Montana
 - Location of Friends of Missouri Breaks Monument
 - Location of Wild Montana

- **Fergus County, Montana**
 - Area adjacent to Missouri Break NM
- **Blaine County, Montana**
 - Area Adjacent to Missouri Breaks NM

New Mexico - 3 Counties

- **Bernalillo County, New Mexico**
 - Location of Ancestral Lands Corp
 - Location of New Mexico Wild
 - Location of New Mexico Wildlife Federation
- **Chaves County, New Mexico**
 - Fort Stanton Cave Study Project - Address of primary BLM Field Office
- **Doña Ana County, New Mexico**
 - Location of Friends of Organ Mountain-Desert Peaks

Nevada - 3 Counties

- **Nye County, Nevada**
 - Friends of Basin and Range National Monument does not have an address. Basin and Range NM is located in two counties, Nye and Lincoln. Nye has a larger population and contains approximately half of the monument, and therefore seemed like the logical choice to represent the community adjacent to this monument.
- **Clark County, Nevada**
 - Location of Friends of Gold Butte.
 - Location of Friends of Red Rock Canyon.
 - Location of Friends of Sloan Canyon.
 - Friends of Walking Box Ranch does not have an address, but Walking Box Ranch is located in this county.
 - Location of Get Outdoors Nevada.
 - Location of Trail Access Project.
 - Location of Save Red Rock.
- **Washoe County, Nevada**
 - Location of Friends of Nevada Wilderness.
 - Location of Friends of the Black Rock High Rock.

Oregon - 4 Counties

- **Deschutes County, Oregon**
 - Location of Friends and Neighbors of the Deschutes Canyon Area - FANS.
- **Jackson County, Oregon**
 - Location of Friends of Cascade- Siskiyou National Monument.
- **Malheur County, Oregon**
 - Location of Friends of the Owyhee.
- **Lincoln County, Oregon**
 - Location of Friends of Yaquina Lighthouses.

Texas - 1 County

- **El Paso County, Texas**
 - Location of Frontera Land Alliance.

Utah - 5 Counties

- Washington County, Utah
 - Location of Conserve Southwest Utah.
- San Juan County, Utah
 - Location of Friends of Cedar Mesa.
- Kane County, Utah
 - Location of Grand Staircase Escalante Partners.
- Salt Lake County, Utah
 - Location of Utah Diné Bikéyah.
- **Garfield County, Utah**
 - Added to complete all Counties in Southern Utah

Washington - 1 County

- San Juan County, Washington
 - Location of Islanders for the San Juan Islands National Monument.

Wyoming - 4 Counties

- Albany County, Wyoming
 - Location of Alliance for Historic Wyoming.
- Fremont County, Wyoming
 - Location of Wyoming Outdoor Council.
- Sheridan County, Wyoming
 - Location of Wyoming Wilderness Association.
- **Sweetwater County, Wyoming**
 - Focus Area for WOC Red Desert Campaign
- **Sublette County**
 - Focus Area for WOC Red Desert Campaign

Appendix II.

Case Study Selection & Data

Conserve Southwest Utah

Conserve Southwest Utah (CSU) works across Southwestern Utah to advocate for the protection of public lands and water, and conducts education, stewardship, and advocacy at Red Cliffs National Conservation Area. Since their founding in 2006 they have also advocated for Smart Growth urban planning in St. George, which places sustainability at the forefront of development. Development rooted in conservation is important in CSU's region, which has seen an explosion in population of over 30% between 2010 and 2020. We selected CSU as a case-study for the organizations' response to, and experience of, living in a community with rapid population growth.

County, Population, Age, and Income							
County: Washington		State: UT		Square Mileage: 2,426.90		Population 2020: 180,279	
% Population Change, 2010 to 2020	% Population Change, 2020 to 2021	Median Age in 2020	Change in Median, 2010 to 2020	% change in Population Under 19, 2010 to 2020	% change in Population Over 65, 2010 to 2020	Median Household Income in USD, 2020	Change in Median Household Income in USD, 2010 to 2020 (inflation adjusted)
+30.53%	+6.07%	37.7	+5.9	-4.60%	+5.0%	\$61,747	+\$11,697
Racial Demographics							
Diversity Index, 2020: 31.70%				Change in Diversity Index, 2010 to 2020: +6.00%			
Change of Population for One Race or Ethnicity, 2010 to 2020							
Hispanic	Non-Hispanic White Alone	Black or African American Alone	American Indian & Alaska Native Alone	Asian Alone	Native Hawaiian Alone	Some Other Race Alone	Two or More Races
+51.88%	+24.67%	+44.46%	+7.26%	+88.89%	+57.24%	+578.49%	+166.06%
Change in Proportion of Total Population of One Race or Ethnicity, 2010 to 2020							
Hispanic	White Alone	Black or African American Alone	American Indian & Alaska Native Alone	Asian Alone	Native Hawaiian Alone	Some Other Race Alone	Two or More Races
+1.60%	-3.84%	0.05%	-0.19%	+0.31%	0.15%	+0.28%	+1.64%

Colorado Canyons Association

Colorado Canyons Association (CCA) was formed in 2006 as Friends of McInnis Canyon, specifically to work with the BLM as stewards of McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area (NCA). Over the years, their purview has expanded with the conservation areas on Colorado's Western Slope, and now includes Dominguez-Escalante NCA and Gunnison Gorge NCA. Because CCA was not involved in advocacy for the designation of the NCA's they work on, their priorities are mainly community engagement, stewardship, and access. They were selected because they are successfully doing conservation work in an area with high political polarization.

County, Population, Age, and Income							
County: Mesa		State: CO		Square Mileage: 3,328.90		Population 2020: 155,703	
% Population Change, 2010 to 2020	% Population Change, 2020 to 2021	Median Age in 2020	Change in Median age, 2010 to 2020	% change in Population Under 19, 2010 to 2020	% change in Population Over 65, 2010 to 2020	Median Household Income in USD, 2020	Change in Median Household Income in USD, 2010 to 2020 (inflation adjusted)
+6.12%	+1.05%	40	+1.90	-2.00%	+4.30%	\$57,157	+\$5,090
Racial Demographics							
Diversity Index, 2020: 37.40%				Change in Diversity Index, 2010 to 2020: +8.30%			
Change of Population for One Race or Ethnicity, 2010 to 2020							
Hispanic	Non-Hispanic White Alone	Black or African American Alone	American Indian & Alaska Native Alone	Asian Alone	Native Hawaiian Alone	Some Other Race Alone	Two or More Races
+19.06%	-0.98%	+31.44%	+4.13%	+52.31%	+25.33%	+568.42%	+217.80%
Change in Proportion of Total Population of One Race or Ethnicity, 2010 to 2020							
Hispanic	White Alone	Black or African American Alone	American Indian & Alaska Native Alone	Asian Alone	Native Hawaiian Alone	Some Other Race Alone	Two or More Races
+1.62%	-5.56%	+0.13%	-0.01%	+0.31%	+0.02%	+0.48%	+3.01%

Dolores River Boating Advocates

Dolores River Boating Advocates (DBRA) formed in 2011 to serve as stewards of and advocates for the Dolores River. DRBA is not directly associated with a National Conservation Lands unit, but have been major advocates of the proposed Dolores Canyon National Conservation Area, introduced by Colorado Senator Michael Bennet in 2022. Their advocacy focuses on protecting stretches of the Dolores for recreation and ecological purposes. DRBA also provides youth programs, education, and stewardship opportunities to the community. They do this work within a highly polarized political climate and have been successful at navigating political divides. This fact is why they were selected as a case study.

County, Population, Age, and Income							
County: Montezuma		State: CO		Square Mileage: 2,029.30		Population 2020: 25,535	
% Population Change, 2010 to 2020	% Population Change, 2020 to 2021	Median Age in 2020	Change in Median, 2010 to 2020	% change in Population Under 19, 2010 to 2020	% change in Population Over 65, 2010 to 2020	Median Household Income in USD, 2020	Change in Median Household Income in USD, 2010 to 2020 (inflation adjusted)
+1.23	+1.26	45.2 years	+3.2 years	-2.70%	+6.50%	\$50,717	+\$6,614
Racial Demographics							
Diversity Index, 2020: 48.20%				Change in Diversity Index, 2010 to 2020: +7.90%			
Change of Population for One Race or Ethnicity, 2010 to 2020							
Hispanic	Non-Hispanic White Alone	Black or African American Alone	American Indian & Alaska Native Alone	Asian Alone	Native Hawaiian Alone	Some Other Race Alone	Two or More Races
+10.33%	-5.91%	+53.19%	+8.31%	+8.47%	+100.00%	+435.00%	+181.59%
Change in Proportion of Total Population of One Race or Ethnicity, 2010 to 2020							
Hispanic	White Alone	Black or African American Alone	American Indian & Alaska Native Alone	Asian Alone	Native Hawaiian Alone	Some Other Race Alone	Two or More Races
+0.99%	-5.30%	+0.09%	+0.80%	+0.03%	+0.05%	+0.34%	+2.99%

Friends of the Inyo

Founded in 1986 as a volunteer organization, Friends of the Inyo (FOI) is one of the longest-standing Friends Groups within the FGN. Their work focuses on the public lands within the Eastern Sierra Nevada mountains including the Inyo National forest, Conglomerate Mesa, Alabama Hills, and Long Valley. FOI is involved in both stewardship and policy work, as the organization engages with a wide range of public land issues that affect Inyo and Mono counties. They were chosen as a case study because of the steady increase of the Hispanic population in their area, and for the strategies that they have used to make public lands advocacy more accessible to this population.

County, Population, Age, and Income							
County: Inyo		State: CA		Square Mileage: 10,180.90		Population 2020: 19,016	
% Population Change, 2010 to 2020	% Population Change, 2020 to 2021	Median Age in 2020	Change in Median, 2010 to 2020	% change in Population Under 19, 2010 to 2020	% change in Population Over 65, 2010 to 2020	Median Household Income in USD, 2020	Change in Median Household Income in USD, 2010 to 2020 (inflation adjusted)
+2.53%	-0.24%	45.3	+0.3	-1.20%	+4.80%	\$59,296	+\$14,488
Racial Demographics							
Diversity Index, 2020: 59.40%				Change in Diversity Index, 2010 to 2020: +8.20%			
Change of Population for One Race or Ethnicity, 2010 to 2020							
Hispanic	Non-Hispanic White Alone	Black or African American Alone	American Indian & Alaska Native Alone	Asian Alone	Native Hawaiian Alone	Some Other Race Alone	Two or More Races
+22.30%	-10.26%	-16.67%	+15.51%	+19.21%	-13.33%	+314.29%	+139.13%
Change in Proportion of Total Population of One Race or Ethnicity, 2010 to 2020							
Hispanic	White Alone	Black or African American Alone	American Indian & Alaska Native Alone	Asian Alone	Native Hawaiian Alone	Some Other Race Alone	Two or More Races
+3.74%	-8.27%	-0.10%	+1.29%	+0.20%	-0.01%	+0.34%	+2.81%

Friends of Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks

Friends of Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks (FOMDP) works to advocate for and connect their community to the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument which was designated in 2014. Their programs include Artists in Residence, docent hikes, and Moving Montañas, which is a youth engagement program. This work exists in the context of an incredibly diverse county, where FOMDP have done an exemplary job of making the staff and board reflective of the demographics of the community where they live. This institutional emphasis on diversity is why they were chosen as a case study.

County, Population, Age, and Income							
County: Doña Ana		State: NM		Size: 3,808.20		Population 2020: 219,561	
% Population Change, 2010 to 2020	% Population Change, 2020 to 2021	Median Age in 2020	Change in Median, 2010 to 2020	% change in Population Under 19, 2010 to 2020	% change in Population Over 65, 2010 to 2020	Median Household Income in USD, 2020	Change in Median Household Income in USD, 2010 to 2020 (inflation adjusted)
+4.49%	+0.89%	33.3	+1.1	-2.80%	+3.6%	\$44,024	+\$7,367
Racial Demographics							
Diversity Index, 2020: 47.30%				Change in Diversity Index, 2010 to 2020: -0.40%			
Change of Population for One Race or Ethnicity, 2010 to 2020							
Hispanic	Non-Hispanic White Alone	Black or African American Alone	American Indian & Alaska Native Alone	Asian Alone	Native Hawaiian Alone	Some Other Race Alone	Two or More Races
+7.39%	-5.15%	+12.28%	-3.81%	+21.14%	-13.00%	+155.02%	+115.99%
Change in Proportion of Total Population of One Race or Ethnicity, 2010 to 2020							
Hispanic	White Alone	Black or African American Alone	American Indian & Alaska Native Alone	Asian Alone	Native Hawaiian Alone	Some Other Race Alone	Two or More Races
+1.53%	-2.89%	+0.09%	-0.06%	+0.15%	-0.01%	+0.22%	+0.96%