

Economic Impacts of Clearcutting

- Continued economic vitality of the county
- Property values
- Maintenance and expansion of desirable businesses, recreational visitors, and residents
- Recognition of importance of tourism, in-migration, and retirees to Sierra counties

Major source cited:

- Sierra Business Council. *Sierra Nevada Wealth Index: Understanding and Tracking our Region's Wealth; 1999-2000 Edition*. 1999

“What defines the Sierra Nevada, more than any fact or figure, is the dramatic beauty and ecological uniqueness of our landscape....These natural wonders are our treasures; they are to California what the Pyramids are to Egypt, the Louvre to Paris, and the Golden Temple to Kyoto.”” (Sierra Business Council, 7)

“[T]he Sierra Nevada’s economic well-being depends on more than just financial capital.” (Sierra Business Council, 6)

“To understand the economy of the Sierra Nevada, it is important to assess and track three types of wealth: 1) social or human capital; 2) natural or natural resource capital; and 3) financial capital. Each must be conserved and increased if the Sierra Nevada economy is to be prosperous, stable, and sustainable. (Sierra Business Council, 8)

“Each form of capital supports the economy, and the diminishment of any one will undermine the others...Deteriorating natural assets, such as polluted streams or marred scenery, reduce property values, drive away new businesses, and undermine the quality of life for current residents.”

“The bottom line is that the Sierra Nevada’s exceptionally high natural and social capital are the magnets holding and attracting financial capital to our region. Our outstanding environmental quality, attractive towns, and good schools are no longer simply nice amenities: they are essential elements for business retention and investment.”

The *Sierra Nevada Wealth Index* “reminds us that **our region’s prosperity depends directly on our willingness to make wise use of our assets and to act swiftly to prevent their diminishment.**” (Sierra Business Council, 6)

“Recent economic research has led to new, more inclusive and useful definitions of wealth. Wealth is not just monetary worth, but the different types of capital that, taken together, sustain a region.

The Sierra Nevada’s wealth will grow only to the extent that public and private decision makers invest resources carefully and wisely to expand that wealth. Wiser decisions are

made when local leaders understand and act on long term trends.” (Sierra Business Council, 8)

“...polls of Sierra Nevada voters and interviews of Sierra Nevada business owners, which demonstrate, time and time again, that **the primary motivation for most people to live in the Sierra Nevada is the region’s outstanding quality of life and exceptional natural environment.**” (Sierra Business Council, 11)

“This diminishment of natural capital, if it continues, will ultimately drive financial capital from our region to places with effective long-term plans to safeguard their natural capital as population increases.” (Sierra Business Council, 11)

Employment in Sierra Nevada counties:

“Business Sectors shifted over last twenty-five years

“In the last twenty-five years, the Sierra Nevada’s economy has changed perceptibly. The percent of people employed in traditional natural resource industries such as timber, mining and agriculture has declined...The growing sectors within the Sierras have been non-timber manufacturing, construction and low wage services.” (Sierra Business Council, 58)

In Calaveras County, the timber industry now accounts for about 1% of county payroll and revenue. **Source: – county government statistics**

“Tourism Accounts for Fifteen Percent of Sierra Nevada’s Payroll

“Tourist spending accounts for 15% of total payroll in the Sierra Nevada, compared to 3% of total payroll in California. The importance of tourism to local wages varies considerably across the Sierra Nevada, [comprising] approximately 28% in the south Central Sierra...

“In 1997, visitor spending accounted for over \$3.3 billion in revenues to Sierra Nevada communities.” Tourist spending: \$880 million/year in South Central Sierra (2nd highest of regions noted) (Sierra Business Council, 64)

“Tourism spending [in Calaveras County] topped \$190 million in 1996, accounting for 31% of total payroll.” (Sierra Business Council, 95) 1996 Tourism spending reached \$110 million, or 12% of the payroll, in Amador County. (Sierra Business Council, 94)

“Why is it important?”

“The multi-billion dollar travel industry is a vital part of the Sierra Nevada’s economy. The industry is represented by retail and service firms, including lodging establishments, restaurants, retail stores, gasoline service stations, outdoor recreation providers, agricultural and cultural tourism businesses, and other types of businesses that sell their products and services to travelers. The travel spending figures included herein are

estimates of destination travel spending; these estimates include all travel spending except for air transportation and travel arrangements.

“Visitors are attracted to places with outstanding natural and social capital. The Sierra Nevada’s blue skies, wide open vistas, rushing streams, healthy forests, and lovely historic towns draw visitors from around the world. These visitors help build the Sierra’s financial capital by supporting local jobs and generating billions of dollars in revenue for the private and public sectors.” (Sierra Business Council, 64)

Tourism Tax Contributes Millions to Local Government”

“Between FY1993-4 and FY1997-98, the total transient occupancy tax (TOT) collected by cities and counties in the Sierra Nevada grew by 31%, from \$25 million to \$33 million. The TOTO collected in each subregion grew at different rates...in the South Central by 23%...Over the five year period, TOT receipts provided an average of \$7 million to local governments in ...the South Central Sierra...

“Most of the growth in TOT receipts was due to increased spending on overnight accommodations, not changes in tax rates.... (Sierra Business Council, 65)

“Why is this important?”

“Transient occupancy tax (TOT) receipts, the taxes collected by cities and counties for overnight lodging, are an indicator of the level and distribution of travel-related economic activity in the Sierra Nevada. Tourism is an important contributor to the Sierra Nevada economy and will continue to play a critical role in the region’s future. The TOT is one way travelers to the Sierra help pay for the public services they require when visiting the region.” (Sierra Business Council, 65)

- **Private property issues**
- **Forest employment**

Clearcutting and employment

Clear-cutting also reduces labor needs compared to uneven-aged management.

Foresters and timber companies often describe clear-cutting as the most efficient way to log a forest because it results in the highest proportion of trees removed per visit. According to John Le Blanc of the University of California at Davis Extension Service, clear-cutting is also easier to administer than selection logging because it does not involve choosing, marking, or cutting individual trees. For these two reasons, clear-cutting reduces the number of workers needed to remove a certain volume of wood. This efficiency benefits only the timber owner, however, not the contractors or employees. (PCL report)

Clearcutting Jobs

The Forest Service and the timber industry claim that logging our public lands is essential for jobs and the economy. But the agency's own documents show that recreation in national forests contributes over 31 times more to

the U.S. economy and creates 38 times more jobs than logging national forests. If we ended all commercial logging on national forests, and redirected the subsidies into timber-community assistance, we could pay each public-lands timber worker more than \$30,000 a year for job retraining or ecological restoration work, and still save taxpayers millions.

From 1979 to 1989—a period of extremely heavy logging on Northwest federal forests—timber employment actually fell by about 20,000. The main cause of job loss was not environmental regulations, as the timber industry would have us believe, but automation and the loss of old-growth forests due to logging itself.

A lot of logging isn't even done by loggers any more. Enormous mechanical monsters known as "feller-bunchers" roam the forest floor. A huge hydraulic clamp grasps the trunk of the tree with startling quickness and massive shears cut through it in one swift motion. The clamp then sets the tree aside and the monster-machine rolls forward through the forest. It is tireless. It never complains about wages or working conditions. Its hunger for our trees knows no limit.

Given this technology, it is not surprising that ten years ago the U.S. General Accounting Office projected that even if logging on national forests increased by 55 percent over the next 50 years, employment in timber extraction and milling would still drop by more than 25 percent. (Hanson, Chad. "Big Timber's Big Lies: A Guide to Industry Propaganda: They'll say whatever it takes to keep the subsidies rolling in." *Sierra*.)

Scenic Highway Information

it's from the USFS's EIS for the
Sierra Nevada Framework for Conservation and Collaboration

Recent national and State visitor survey data found that sightseeing and driving for pleasure are among the most popular outdoor recreation activities. According to the 1994-1995 National Survey for Recreation and the Environment (NSRE), sightseeing has one of the highest participation rates of any recreation activity, with approximately 56.6 percent of the respondents participating (Cordell, et. al. 1997). Results from the 1999-2000 update of the NSRE indicated 63 percent of the respondents participated in driving for pleasure activities during the previous year (USDA Forest Service 2000).

The State of California's 1997 survey found that 68.3 percent of all respondents drove for pleasure, accounting for 48.1 million activity days (California Department of Parks and Recreation 1998).

According to Forest Service data, over eight million visitors enjoyed auto travel within the Sierra Nevada Region in 1996.

Driving for pleasure is a popular recreational activity, accounting for approximately 21 percent of the RVDs on the national forests in 1996 (USDA Forest Service 1996). With the exception of the Plumas National Forest, all of the Sierra Nevada national forests show increases in motorized and mechanized travel between 1987 and 1996. The Stanislaus and Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forests have had the most significant increases in this recreation category (194 and 61 percent, respectively).

Scenic landscapes contribute to the quality of life and economic health of Sierra Nevada communities. The stunning beauty and distinctive landscape character are often the main reason that people live in or visit the Sierra Nevada. Scenic landscapes promote a variety of recreational pursuits such as sightseeing. The economic impact from scenic byways is examined as an example of the value of high quality scenery.

Scenic highways serve both recreational and transportation purposes. The economic advantages of a scenic highway are discussed in a 1990 report by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). This report used five studies to determine the impact of scenic byways on the local economy. The report found that:

- The attractiveness of a highway corridor influences visitors to choose driving as their travel mode.
- Travelers prefer natural scenic landscapes to those characterized by roadside development.
- Travelers prefer and seek out low stress routes such as scenic byways.
- Travelers are looking for educational experiences as well as recreation and leisure.
- Visitors are attracted to officially designated scenic routes because they feel they will be guaranteed quality in their sightseeing experience.
- The number of visitors attracted to a particular scenic route is related to the public awareness of its existence (California Department of Transportation 1996).

The five studies revealed that the average overnight stay for travelers along a scenic highway was 3.6 days with an average daily expenditure of \$174 (Table 5.6.g). Daily spending was the highest in California. The average revenue attributed to scenic highways is \$32,500 per mile.

From: Congressional Research Service Report for Congress

Clearcutting in the National Forests

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July 29, 1992

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Aesthetics and Recreation

Surprisingly little research has documented the effects of the various silvicultural systems on recreation patterns and levels. Research has identified public preferences for various forest conditions. In general, the least preferred conditions include:(26)

- Artificial intrusions, especially: clearcuts, slash, stumps, land] other signs of timber harvesting disturbances.
- Plantations and "monocultures".
- Standing diseased, dead, or dying trees in large numbers.
- Dense "eye-level vegetation or undergrowth; i.e., a thicket with dense sapling stands or dense forest understories over large areas.

In contrast, the most preferred conditions were natural-appearing landscapes, with a diversity of vegetation, large-diameter trees, sparse undergrowth, and natural-appearing openings.

Research has more typically focused on aesthetics, and the effects of silvicultural activities on aesthetics. Visual management is often based on visual quality objectives, ranging from no change to impacts not visible or subordinate to the characteristic landscape to impacts that dominate but are modified to appear natural from various distances.(27) In general, uneven-aged management has less effect on aesthetics than even-aged silvicultural systems. Under an uneven-aged system, "visual impacts of timber management activities may be kept to a minimum; the uneven-aged system is capable of achieving [almost any] . . . visual quality objective in all distance zones if it is properly applied."(28) Uneven-aged management makes it easier to achieve more stringent visual quality objectives. "The advantage of uneven-aged management in these situations results

because it is small scale, . . . random in pattern, and because it leaves the natural appearing forest character intact."(29) In contrast, even-aged silvicultural systems have greater impact on visual quality, with clearcutting being generally less desirable than other even-aged cutting systems. Nonetheless, when even-aged management is "carefully applied, it should be possible to meet [high visual quality objectives] . . . along less sensitive parts of viewsheds."(30)

26. Wayne G. Tlusty and Warren R. Bacon. "Effects of Timber Management Practices on Recreation and Esthetics (Visual Resource)." *The Scientific Basis for Silvicultural and Management Decisions in the National Forest System*. Russell M. Burns, Technical Compiler] USDA Forest Service Gen. Tech. Rept. W0-55. Washington, DC: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., Sept. 1989. p. 139. (Hereafter referred to as Tlusty and Bacon, "Effects of Timber on Esthetics.")

27. Tlusty and Bacon, "Effects of Timber on Esthetics," p. 134.

28. Tlusty and Bacon, "Effects of Timber on Esthetics," p. 140.

29. Tlusty and Bacon, "Effects of Timber on Esthetics," p. 140.

30. Tlusty and Bacon, "Effects of Timber on Esthetics," p. 140.