



## Economic Summary of Recreation in the Northern Red Desert

### The BLM Used Dubious Accounting Practices

When conducting an environmental analysis, the BLM is required to examine the socio-economic impacts that may occur within the study area. Oftentimes the benefits of extractable resources become the main focus, while the value of recreation gets less and sometimes dubious study. For instance, in the JMH/CAP FEIS, the BLM only considered the activities of non-residents (p. A16-9). Yet their previous analysis showed that 65.2% of visitors were Wyoming residents.

Even more, the BLM never adequately analyzed the economic impacts to recreation from mineral development. For example, in discussing Area 3 (the first place drilling would occur) they stated that well completion rates would be high resulting in "...a substantial increase in surface disturbance, noise, and visual intrusion over a relatively short period of time, potentially increasing short-term impacts on the recreation experience" (JMH/CAP FEIS, p.4-107).

This "short-term" timeframe would be 11 years in Area 3 and 20 years in the rest of the analysis area. Instead of measuring the potential decline in recreation expenditures over the "short-term," the BLM claims it is not significant. **No studies have been done to determine how much of the \$23,778,243 would be impacted by mineral development.**

### Northern Red Desert 2006 Expenditures

Camping, backpacking, horseback riding, bicycling, pleasure driving, hiking, nature study, and wildlife viewing are all examples of non-consumptive (non-hunting) uses that people enjoy in the northern Red Desert. Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) riding is also considered non-consumptive, but usually kept separate in economic studies. While the pictures and stories people take from these experiences are well-known, the economic benefits usually go unnoticed.

In the Wyoming Game and Fish Department's (WGFD) 2006 Annual Report it was estimated, based on the 2005 expenditures adjusted for inflation, that \$295,398,065 was spent in Wyoming for 3,924,000 recreation days. Dividing these numbers shows that on average non-consumptive recreation users spent \$75.28 per day in 2005.

Looking at the northern Red Desert, which the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) calls the Jack Morrow Hills (JMH), it was reported in their JMH Coordinated Activity Plan that OHV expenditures were \$124.70 per visitor day (JMH/CAP FEIS, p. A16-13). Since this estimate is from 2004 it can be safely assumed that the value is higher today.

In the JMH/CAP the number of non-consumptive days came from 19% of the total Green River Extensive Recreation Area days found in the Recreation Management Information System (JMH/CAP DEIS, p. 306). The BLM estimated a 2% increase in recreation days during the planning period, with 48,700 non-consumptive recreation days for 1998. Of this number 31,950 (65.6%) were residents and 16,750 (34.4%) were non-residents (JMH/CAP DEIS, p. 306). Using the 2% rate of increase to adjust for current use, the value of resident non-consumptive recreation days for 2006 would be 37,062 while it would be 19,430 for non-residents, thus totaling 56,492 days. Calculating expenditures using the WGFD 2005 value results in \$4,252,717 of non-consumptive recreation expenditures in the JMH analysis area, not including OHV use.

The BLM's 2006 Recreation Management Information System (RMIS) gives details on visitor days for specific areas; for the northern Red Desert there were two areas reported. The White Mountain Petroglyphs had 3,966 visitor days and using the 2005 WGFD average expenditures demonstrates that visitors spent \$298,560. For the Oregon/Mormon Trail South Pass Summit Area there were 3,132 visitor days valued at \$235,777. This means for just these two areas alone, \$534,337 was spent by non-consumptive users.

The Sand Dunes Specialized Sport Site is a popular OHV riding area that generates a large visitor turnout and expenditures. The RMIS reported that there were 156,580 visitor days, which using the agency's estimated value of \$124.70, results in \$19,525,526 total expenditures. Keep in mind this does not include OHV riding in other areas of the northern Red Desert.

**In conclusion, the non-hunting recreation in the northern Red Desert is a place where people spend millions of dollars each year. For 2006, people spent \$23,778,243 with \$4,252,717 coming from recreation other than OHV riding.**

**Table 1. Value of Non-consumptive days in Wyoming 2005.<sup>1</sup>**

Title	Value	Calculated Expenditure
Total non-consumptive recreation days for Wyoming <sup>2</sup>	3,924,000 days	\$75.28 per non-consumptive day
Total non-consumptive expenditures for Wyoming <sup>2</sup>	\$295,398,065	

1. WGFD 2006 Annual Report, p. 188
2. The number of recreation days and expenditures are reflective of those found in the report, *2001 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife Associated Recreation*, issued in 2003. Non-consumptive users' expenditure was calculated from the 2001 survey, with inflation corrected for by using the Consumer Price Index (2001 expenditure x 1.024 = 2002 expenditure, 2001 expenditure x 1.043 = 2003 expenditure, 2001 expenditure x 1.078 = 2004 expenditure, 2001 expenditure x 1.115 = 2005 expenditure).

**Table 2. Numbers and Values of Non-consumptive Visitor Days in the Northern Red Desert for 2006.**

Days <sup>1</sup>	Expenditures <sup>2</sup>
37,062 resident days	\$2,790,027
19,430 non-resident days	\$1,462,690
56,492 total days	\$4,252,717

1. These numbers were calculated based on a 2% increase in the numbers in the JMH/CAP DEIS, p.306 that were measured in 1998. Thus the calculation formula was (number of days in 1998 \*.02 \* 8 + number of days in 1998)
2. These values were calculated using the calculated value in Table 1. Thus the calculation formula was (number of days \* 75.28)

**Table 3. Numbers and Values of Non-consumptive Visitor Days in the White Mountain Petroglyphs and Oregon/Mormon Trail South Pass Summit Area in 2006.**

Area	Number of Visitor Days <sup>1</sup>	Total Expenditures <sup>2</sup>
White Mountain Petroglyphs	3,966	\$298,560
Oregon/Mormon Trail South Pass Summit Area	3,132	\$235,777
Total	7,098	\$534,337

1. Values taken from "Visits and Visitor Days by RMA Fiscal Year Range Oct. 1, 2005 – Sept. 30, 2006 BLM Recreation Management Information System Report #23c." Rock Springs Office, December 2006.
2. Total value formula is (number of days \* calculated value of non-consumptive day taken from Table 1).

**Table 4. OHV Number and Value in the Red Desert Sand Dunes in 2006.**

OHV Visitor Days (Sand Dunes) <sup>1</sup>	OHV value per visitor day <sup>2</sup>	Total Expenditures <sup>3</sup>
156,580	\$124.70	19,525,526

1. Values taken from "Visits and Visitor Days by RMA Fiscal Year Range Oct. 1, 2005 – Sept. 30, 2006 BLM Recreation Management Information System Report #23c." Rock Springs Office, December 2006.
2. Value taken from Table A16-13, "Economic Assumptions for Recreation." JMH/CAP FEIS, 2004, p. A16-13.
3. The calculation formula is (number of days \* value per day). The values are likely higher because the \$124.70 was not adjusted for 2006.

**Friends of the Red Desert is a coalition of citizens, businesses and conservation organizations united to protect Wyoming's magnificent Red Desert. For more information please contact us at:**

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