

Ute Indian Tribe Profile

Prepared for the:
**Dixie, Fishlake & Manti-La Sal National Forests
Forest Plan Revision
Social and Economic Assessment**

Prepared by:
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with assistance from:
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Utah Division of Indian Affairs



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**December
2003**

UTE INDIAN TRIBE—OVERVIEW



Contacts

Uintah and Ouray Agency
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Governance

Business Committee, with two representatives from each of the three bands.
Constitution and By-Laws established and adopted in 1937.

Current Issues

Economic development
Affordable housing shortage
Growing older population,
decreasing younger population

Tribal Land

Approximately 1,067,000 acres

The home of the Ute Indian Tribe is the Uintah and Ouray (U & O) Reservation, located within a three-county area in Northeastern Utah, known as the Uinta Basin. The vast reservation covers a large portion of western Uintah and eastern Duchesne Counties. The area is a virtual storehouse of hydrocarbon wealth, including oil and gas, tar sands, oil shale and gilsonite, that have been trapped beneath the surface for millions of years and are now being mined. On the surface are large areas of natural forest, fish and game preserves, and farming and grazing lands with considerable water resources.

The Ute Tribe owns slightly less than one million acres, almost one-quarter of the Uinta Basin's total land area. The opening and settlement of the U & O Reservation in 1905 brought with it a checkerboard pattern of ownership and jurisdiction. Today's surface ownership of the Uinta Basin is a mixture of Federal Lands (50.5%), Fee Lands (23.8%) Tribal Trust Lands (17.5%) and State of Utah Lands (8.2%). However, the ownership of the surface does not necessarily mean ownership of the minerals. A large area of land known as the Hill Creek Extension is tribally owned with mineral rights being owned by the Federal Government. Oil and gas production from this land represents 1/4 of the oil and gas produced in Uintah County. This mixed ownership requires numerous jurisdictional clearances, requiring more time, cost and jurisdictional cooperation. Still, this resources production is important to the future development of the entire region.

The Ute Indian Tribe is made up of three bands—the Uintah, the White River, and the Uncompahgre. According to the Tribe's Department of Vital Statistics, the enrolled membership of the Ute Tribe is presently 3120 members. Eight-five percent of members presently live within the boundaries of the Reservation. Like many rural communities, the aging population of the Ute Indian Tribe is growing. Also, a majority of residents fall into the low or very low income category. The statistics indicated are further compounded when the senior citizens of the Ute Tribe are considered. A review of the Ute Indian Housing Authority's waiting list indicates that of the 139 families awaiting some sort of affordable housing, 120 are defined as very low income families, and 10 more are in the low income category.

Like other governmental entities, the tribal agency has established departments to carry out administrative functions, including Legal, Resource Management, Fish and Wildlife Management, Environmental and Cultural Protection, Community and Economic Development, and others. The Tribe also operates several tribal enterprises designed to provide services for the membership and to produce revenue for the Tribe.

A History of Utah American Indians (2000). Ed. Forrest S. Cuch. Utah State University Press, Logan Utah
A History of the Northern Ute People and Ute Indian Tribe, 1997
<http://sage.ubtanet.com/~northernute/>