

Montrose County Profile

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

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**December
2003**

MONTROSE COUNTY OVERVIEW



County Land Ownership*

43.6% — Bureau of Land Mgt.

31.5% — Private

0.7% — State Trust Lands

22.8% — Forest Service

1.3% — National Park

County Planned Uses

2.6% — Residential

0.6% — Commercial/Industrial

0.2% — Planned Development

96.5% — None

source: Montrose County

This overview contains observations drawn from the maps, economic and demographic trend data, and a review of county plans contained in this profile. In addition, it contains comments and explanations of county leaders and residents, gathered at workshops conducted to review this assessment.

Landscape

Montrose, Colorado is home to the Black Canyon National Park situated in the scenic Uncompahgre Valley of southwestern Colorado. Montrose County is a largely undeveloped area of Colorado. The Manti-La-Sal Forest resides at the far west end of the County, adjacent to the Utah border. The town of Montrose was founded in 1882, a short time after the Ute Indians were removed from the Uncompahgre Valley. At the turn of the century (1900), the Bureau of Reclamation created the project to build a seven-mile long Gunnison Tunnel. The result was irrigation water that turned the valley into fertile lands for many types of agriculture.

Population

The County has witnessed a significant in-migration over the past decade, and this is expected to continue. In fact, the County's population surged in the 1990's, posting a 37% growth rate between 1990-2000. Since 1990, Montrose County has experienced significant growth in the 40-64 age group, and this trend is projected to continue. Most of the County's growth occurred near or within their incorporated areas. Consequently, they don't view second-home ownership as a problem.

Economy

The majority of private lands are used for agriculture, and wildlife-related activities make a significant contribution to the local economy. The County notes that most agriculture is tied to the Uncompahgre forest (not the Manti-La Sal). The County's mining sector has experienced a boom-bust cycle, and has recently experienced growth in its government and service sectors. The plans don't make specific mention of what is contributing to this growth, but it is not directly tied to a significant commercial / industrial development. County leaders state that unpredictability in forest management decisions can make agriculture-related business decisions more risky and difficult.

MONTROSE COUNTY OVERVIEW

Current Issues

*multiple-use, sustained yield
philosophy
transportation
protecting and streamlining
grazing permitting*

The County is aggressively pursuing economic development of clean engineering / manufacturing industries. The County is also struggling to provide services under their current tax / revenue program. The historical “share of employment” shows a stable economy without significant changes to the different sectors since 1980. Tourism is encouraged.

Planning

The west end of the county is lightly populated and other than the Manti-La Sal forest the terrain is more like southern Utah, and is predominantly BLM lands. The Uncompahgre National Forest splits the county in half creating a close destination for camping, hunting, hiking, or OHV for all residents. The west end residents have close proximity to both the Manti-La Sal and Uncompahgre Forests, whereas the east end residents would have to travel approximately 3 hours to reach the Manti-La Sal Forest.

The Plans make reference to the Uncompahgre National Forest, but not the Manti-La Sal. The County is participating in the National Forest County Partnership Restoration Program in order to improve forest participation in local planning.

The County is concerned about the increasing pressures on historic Tribal sites and objects.

Montrose is the transportation gateway for skiers traveling to the Telluride Ski Resort about 65 miles southwest of the City.

*Montrose County Master Plan, 2001
Montrose Economic Development Corporation, (website 2003)
Montrose Visitors and Convention Bureau, (website 2003)
RPI Consulting, Montrose Co. Development Impact Analysis, 2002*