

Sevier County Profile

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

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SEVIER COUNTY OVERVIEW



County Land Ownership

- 59.4% — Forest Service
- 19.1% — Private
- 16.8% — Bureau of Land Mgt.
- 3.5% — State Trust Lands
- 0.3% — State Wildlife
- 0.4% — Natl. Parks/Monument
- 0.5% — Other
- 0% — Wilderness Areas
- 0% — Wilderness Study Area

source: SITLA, 2003

County Planned Uses

- 47.9% — Agriculture
- 39% — Grazing, Recreation, & Forestry
- 13% — Residential Agriculture

source: Sevier 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

Sevier County is located in the high plateau country of central Utah, with numerous forested mountain ranges. Most of the towns in the county lie in a central valley along the Sevier River surrounded by National Forest lands, which cover more than half of the land area. Large private inholdings are found within these forests. An additional quarter of the land area is owned by other public land agencies and generally, locals believe that public lands strongly affect local businesses. The forests provide the primary water supply for agricultural and culinary uses, and there is local concern for protecting this resource.

Population

Reflecting the same general trends of the statewide booms and recession, Sevier County witnessed a surge in population from 1970 to 1980 and again from 1990 to 2000, but job growth remained consistently slower than the rest of the state and growth in income remained steady. Still, some indicators point to improvement. For example, fewer residents live in poverty and residents pointed out an increase in two-wage earning families. Educational attainment has also improved and the increase in higher education attainment has been attributed to the growth of Southern Utah University.

Economy

Agriculture has historically been an important component of the Sevier County, but has declined since 1980. Agriculture is expected to continue its decline as a share of employment, partly due to productivity increases from improvements in technology. Still, acres in agriculture remains steady and sheep and cattle remain important to the local economy as do dairy products, field crops, and, in recent years, raising turkeys. The largest proportion of jobs in Sevier County today are in trade and manufacturing—including food processing clothing and building products, transportation, and utilities, followed by government. The service, manufacturing, and trade sectors are expected to continue growing. Mining employment in the region has similarly declined historically, but is currently growing slightly and has potential to expand further

SEVIER COUNTY OVERVIEW

Major Current Issues

*harvesting dead wood
 growth in incorporated areas
 job creation
 road issues – RS 2477
 keeping mining viable
 access for extractive industries*

if coal mines and natural gas reserves in the northeast part of the county were tapped for energy production. Numerous residents also commute to Emery County for mining employment. Interstate 70, which crosses the county, encourages such commuting and also poses an economic development opportunity. Growth in law enforcement jobs contributed to the growth in state and local government jobs.

Planning

Preserving, protecting, and promoting increased use of public lands is a fundamental policy of the Sevier County General Plan as local leaders have recognized their potential. Numerous National Parks, Monuments, and trails nearby are attractive to residential and economic growth as they add to their quality of life. The County wishes to preserve the rural lifestyle and to utilize their natural resources as an economic development tool. A major factor in doing this is fostering a productive relationship with federal land management agencies. Comments from the workshops included more forest-specific issues such as encouraging multiple-use, transportation, encouraging the timber industry, and fire management. Planning documents reviewed, which were available at the time of this assessment, include:

Sevier County General Plan, 1998

Sevier County Zoning Ordinance

Creating Our Future, Sevier Economic Development Strategic Plan

Six County AOG, Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, 2000

Utah State Historical Society, Beehive History 14: Utah Counties. 1988