

What is Nature's Value in Bears Ears National Monument?

Bears Ears National Monument, a 1.35 million-acre area in southeastern Utah, provides critical environmental benefits to people known as ecosystem services. These community benefits are valued through well-accepted economic methods. A preliminary literature review finds that natural capital within Bears Ears National Monument could provide over \$1 billion in ecosystem service benefits each year. Impressively, these numbers represent only three benefits out of the many that Bears Ears National Monument provides. If the full suite of ecosystem service benefits were evaluated, we expect the economic benefits of Bears Ears National Monument to be many times larger.

Bears Ears National Monument should be maintained. The full suite of economic benefits provided by Bears Ears National Monument must



be evaluated, including ecosystem services. By viewing the Monument as the economic asset that it is, we create a more complete, accurate understanding that will ultimately reflect and support the area's full value.

If Bears Ears is protected and its natural capital stewarded, people will continue to receive these benefits for free. With resource extraction an ever present threat to public lands, it is important to understand and address the risks to this extremely valuable, irreplaceable asset.

**Bears Ears
Natural Capital Provides
>\$1 billion
in ecosystem goods
and services annually**

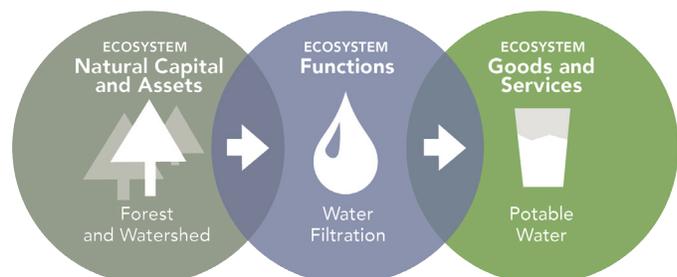


Understanding Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services

Natural capital is any natural resource (including plants, animals, minerals, and ecosystems) that provides functions that produce ecosystem goods and services. The Manti-La Sal National Forest within Bears Ears, for example, filters the water for communities downstream. Any product of an ecosystem function that benefits people is an **ecosystem good or service**.

Goods are tangible things like drinking water, timber, fish, crops, and wildlife. Most goods can only be used or owned by one person, and they are generally easy to value and trade in markets.

Services are intangible, but also immensely valuable. Flood protection, water filtration, recreational value, aesthetic value, and cultural value are a few examples. Ecosystem services often cannot be traded in markets or privately owned, so they are far more difficult to value.



Examples of Community Benefits Provided



Habitat

Animals such as Mexican spotted owls, pronghorn antelopes, mountain lions, and peregrine falcons rely on Bears Ears for habitat.¹ Monument protection ensures that these species and others can continue to contribute to the Bears Ears ecosystems. According to some economic studies on habitats in Utah, the economic benefits of habitat in Bears Ears may amount to almost \$1 billion a year.



Aesthetic Value

People pay a premium to live near beautiful places. Healthy ecosystems positively impact property within the region, but degraded landscapes are associated with lower property values, economic decline, and stagnation.²



Recreation and Tourism

Bears Ears National Monument facilitates recreation activities such as dispersed camping, hunting, hiking, backpacking, mountain biking, river running, and rock climbing. Although no full visitation estimates exist yet for Bears Ears National Monument, over 91 thousand people visit the Natural Bridges National Monument, which is located within the Bears Ears boundary.³ Visitation to Bears Ears National Monument is likely tens or hundreds of thousands of people annually.



Disaster Risk Reduction

Desert monsoons can bring flash flooding, which can worsen when natural capital such as forests and wetlands are degraded.⁴



Soil Retention

Soil serves a vital function in nature, providing a medium and nutrients for plant growth. Healthy soils store water and nutrients, regulate water flow, and neutralize pollutants more efficiently than degraded soils. They also help prevent soil loss from wind, which can negatively impact air quality.



Climate Stability

Ecosystems have the ability to help maintain stable climates both locally and globally. Natural resources can sequester atmospheric carbon and help reduce climate instability. Climate regulation by natural lands within the Bears Ears National Monument could provide approximately \$200 million in economic benefits.



Water Regulation

The Bears Ears provides water capture for rivers and groundwater recharge, snow pack, and water filtration. The Colorado River is short of water. Healthy high elevation forests in the Bears Ears filter water for downstream communities in Utah and Arizona. A study of water capture in Utah shows that this service provided by Bears Ears National Monument could provide benefits of about \$40 million annually.



Jobs and Income

All ecosystem services in Bears Ears National Monument provide benefits to local communities, including jobs and economic activity. Utah is a spectacular outdoor destination. National Parks and National Monuments bring people from all over the world to spend their money locally, which provides income and jobs in rural Utah.

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¹The Wilderness Society, 2017. Photo gallery: Utah's Bears Ears region is a natural & cultural treasure. Web. Accessed 5/22/2017. Available at: <http://wilderness.org/photo-gallery-utahs-bears-ears-region-natural-cultural-treasure>

²Power, T.M., 1996. Lost landscapes and failed economies: The search for a value of place. Island Press, Washington DC.

³Utah State Parks, 2013. 2014 Utah State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. Salt Lake City, UT.

⁴Visit Utah, 2017. Bears Ears National Monument. Web. Accessed 5/22/2017. Available at: <https://www.visitutah.com/places-to-go/state-and-federal-recreation-areas/southern/bears-ears-national-monument/>