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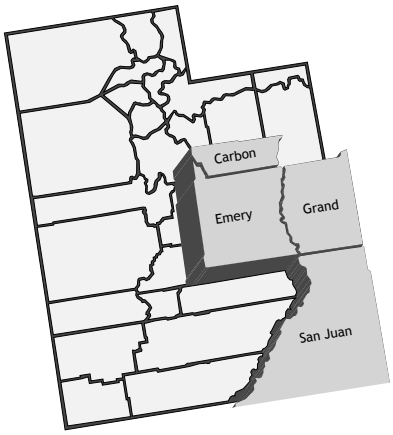
Workforce News

A publication of the Department of Workforce Services

Utah's Job Connection

Southeast Utah: Carbon, Emery, Grand, San Juan **jobs.utah.gov**



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Tourism: The Good, the Bad, and...?

The counties that make up the southeastern corner of the state possess some of the most unique and wonderful landscapes in the world. People from all over the world come and experience these vistas for themselves. In doing so, these tourists demand any number of services from the local economy. So when tourist attractions like Moab's red rock country and San Juan's Monument Valley started attracting ever-greater crowds in the 1990s, it isn't surprising that their economies began to increasingly develop travel-related industries.

However, as tourism has come to the fore, so too have a number of social and economic issues. While some policymakers have placed a lot of

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emphasis on tourism as the basis of the future economy, those who live in travel-dominated communities worry about the consequences of relying too heavily on this particular industry. They are concerned about the abundance of low-wage service jobs and the seasonality of employment. Depending on the location, they also worry about the effect of so-called second-homers moving in and driving up housing costs. Any honest assessment of tourism must give weight to these concerns.

On the other hand, rural travel economies also have some advantages over their non-travel counterparts that may well allow them to compete better in the global economy. Research conducted by the United States Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service shows that, on average, rural tourism economies have higher levels of educational attainment—mainly fueled by in-migration during the 1990s. Their research also indicates that many recreation counties have enjoyed the positive impact of attracting well-off retirees.

Nevertheless, regardless of your personal opinion of travel-related industries, their impact on the area is clear in the data. When comparing 2005 to 1990, employment in the southeastern counties of the state grew by 4,010 positions, with the leisure and hospitality industry accounting for 1,000 of those jobs. To put that into perspective, of the top three industries that added jobs, leisure and hospitality was second behind government with 1,083 jobs, and private educational and health services third with 612 jobs. This doesn't take into account the jobs created in other industries due to the increase in tourism.

In the final analysis, the real story here is as simple as it is complex. It is simple in that the rise of tourism in southeastern Utah has created numerous jobs. However, these numbers belie the varied impacts—good and bad—of this industry. For local policymakers, leveraging the gains brought by tourism into broader economic diversification will be crucial for balancing the demands of local residents and industries with maintaining the quality of the recreation experience desired by visitors.

	1990 Non-farm Employment	2005 Non-farm Employment	Numeric Change	1990-2005 Compound Growth Rate
Carbon	7,644	8,947	1,303	1.0%
Emery	3,627	3,805	178	0.3%
Grand	2,431	4,401	1,970	3.8%
San Juan	3,360	3,919	559	1.0%
Southeast Region	17,062	21,072	4,010	1.3%
Statewide	723,629	1,148,277	424,648	2.9%

Source: Workforce Information Division, Utah Department of Workforce Services

USDA Link:

http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/err7/

County News

Carbon County: Carbon County's fourth quarter 2005 employment situation was dominated by a resurgence of coal mining activity. Overall, the number of jobs in the county was up 6.5 percent over the same quarter of the previous year—an increase of 571 positions. While the mining industry provided 210 of these positions, other industries also got into the act. Construction, manufacturing, and the trade, transportation, and utilities sector all posted strong double-digit year-over growth rates. Professional and business services, accommodation and food services, and the other services industry, yielded to the growth of higher paying jobs in other industries and shed positions.

Emery County: Like its sister county Carbon, Emery County's fourth quarter 2005 employment showing was dominated by gains in the mining industry. Compared with the same quarter of the previous year, employment grew by 3.2 percent, adding a net of 118 jobs. Trade, transportation, and utilities, in addition to the construction industry, also provided positive employment gains over the year. The county's public sector—mainly local government—saw the largest net loss of jobs in the quarter. Gross taxable sales, another important local economic indicator, posted a year-over rise of 28.9 percent in the fourth quarter.

Grand County: Year-over job growth in Grand County reached an impressive 7.1 percent in the fourth quarter of 2005. Unfortunately, this strong showing is a little misleading. A large manufacturing firm was miscoded as being located in Grand County and this had the effect of artificially raising the overall growth rate. However, even after accounting for this adjustment the county's job performance was still positive. Retail trade, healthcare, financial activities, and professional and business services all added jobs over the past year. Accommodation and food services posted a loss over last year, though this is likely due to the increase of higher-paying jobs in the county and not due to weakness in the industry. Gross taxable sales grew 21.0 percent over the same quarter of the previous year.

San Juan County: San Juan County saw year-over employment grow 1.4 percent in the fourth quarter of 2005—a net increase of 55 jobs. The county's job market was characterized by an amount of turmoil as many industries saw significant changes—positive and negative—during the quarter. For example, while manufacturing was up 113 jobs over the same quarter last year, construction was off 32. A 69-job gain in healthcare was largely offset by losses in recreation and government employment. Gross taxable sales jumped 15.1 percent in the fourth quarter. The bulk of this increase was due to solid retail trade sales. Service sales—hotels and lodging, and business services—were also up. However, financial services and wholesale trade purchases were both down.

What's Up?

Work continues on Carbon County's new ambulance garage on Airport Road. The facility will house not only ambulances, but will also serve as a storage facility for the county's electronic voting equipment and have facilities that can fully replace the public safety dispatch center in Price in an emergency. In addition, the building will be able to serve as an emergency operations center.

The Huntington/Cleveland Irrigation Company took a big step toward water conservation with the signing of a contract between Nielson Construction and the HCIC for the construction of pipelines for the new pressurized irrigation system coming to the north end of the county. The total project is estimated to be $64 million. About $48 million will be used for the off-farm systems. These systems deliver the water from the river to the farms. The sprinkling systems for the on-farm portions are estimated at $16 million.

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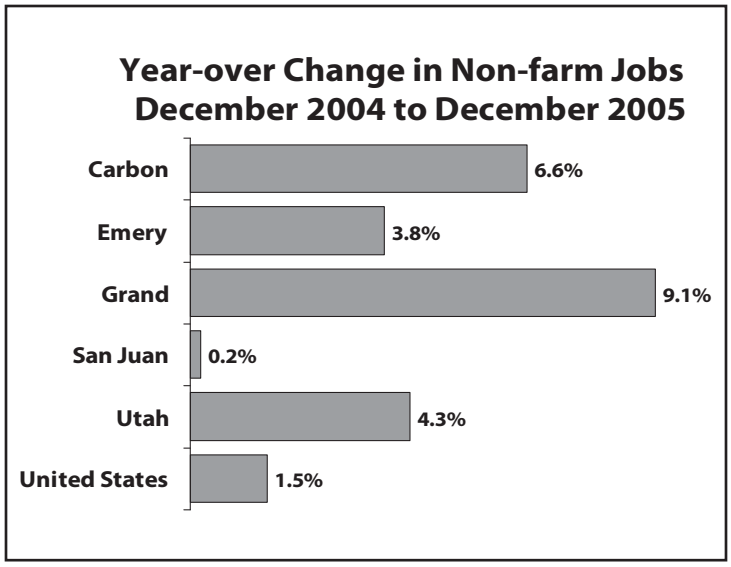

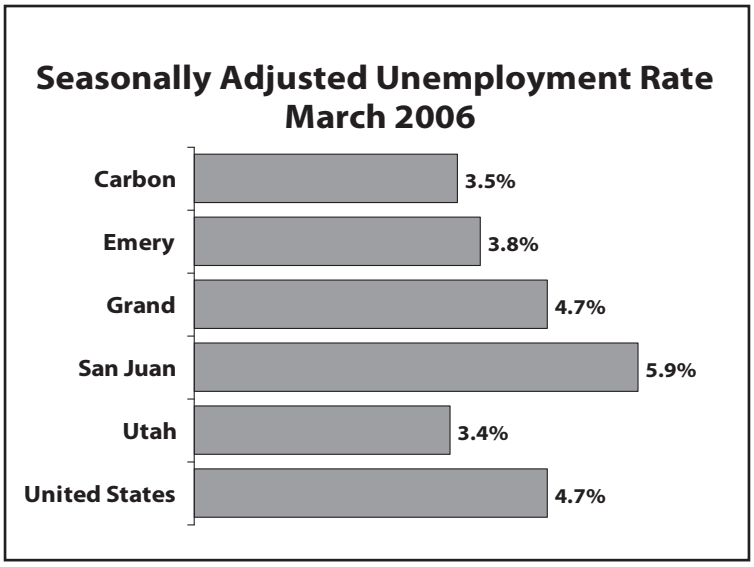

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