

Emerging Issues and Opportunities in the West



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Four Observations About the Transformation of the Rural West

- The rural **population** is becoming much more diverse
- Rural **economies** are continuing to be transformed (extraction → service, recreation, retirement, etc.)
- Rural population change is bringing **development and the natural environment** into potential conflict
- **New opportunities** are opening up, but rural **disadvantage** persists

Some Considerations Useful for Making Sense of these Trends

1. The principle determinant of rural population redistribution is *migration* and this has been *unpredictable during recent decades*. Adapting to unpredictable fluctuations in population change is a continuing challenge for rural people.
2. Recognizing the severity, complexity, and persistence of rural poverty, and leveling the playing field for the rural poor.

Considerations (cont.)

3. Attracting and retaining an adequate supply of high-quality jobs is a formidable challenge for the new millennium.
4. The rural West needs to strengthen local social relationships that contribute to communities' abilities to secure collective goals.
5. Challenge for local government is to find new role within the decentralized and privatized environment.

Western Issues: Demographic Transitions

- Ethnic restructuring
 - Intermountain West Population 2025
 - U. S. Population in 2050
- New settlers and the changing character of agriculture



Demographic Transitions

The rural West is beginning to look a lot like rural New Mexico

- Increased Ethnic Diversity (no ethnic majority)
- Latina/Latino population – immigration and natural growth
- Disproportionate levels of poverty among non-white ethnic populations
- Average hourly wage of the Hispanic labor force is \$8.50



Demographic Transitions

New Settlers

- The other immigration issue – urbanites looking for the old west (lone eagles and second homes)
- New ranchers and farmers – not dependent on agricultural income
- Ecology issues



Rural Governance in the West: Fiscal Crises

- Fiscal crisis of most rural West counties and municipalities

Health Care, Education, Physical Infrastructure, Public Safety, Social Services

- Decentralization (*Devolution*) of Federal Programs

The Good: making programs more efficient at the local level

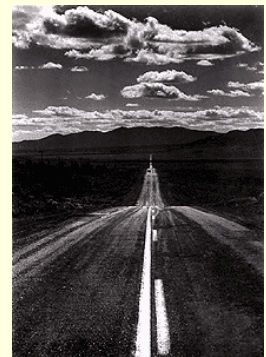
The Bad: fewer financial resources and almost no administrative costs (internalization of costs)

Efforts to Address this Fiscal Crisis

- Privatization of once publicly-funded services
- Inter-county cooperation (to achieve economies of scale)
- New forms of revenue (issue of public lands)
- Rural development through investing in people and social institutions

Emerging Realities of Rural Development

- *Rural development more than investing in roads, high speed internet, and pipes in the ground.*
- *National rural development will focus on physical infrastructure.*
- *States and localities will increasingly focus on investment in the capacity of rural people to develop themselves (economic, social infrastructure, etc.)*



Opportunity Structures for Rural Places

Assumptions: The time has never been riper for small communities to prosper.

- Deregulation of numerous industries
- Ease and affordability of how we communicate
- Small communities have a work ethic
- Many people value small town quality of life
- Better education in small towns
- More affordable housing
- Less crime
- A better environment
- Shortened commute to work

Five Factors Favoring Small Towns

1. Forces of freedom – globalization
2. Ready and willing to labor
3. Lowered costs
4. Improved communications and travel
5. Quality of life – acres per person

Emerging Opportunities

- Green process
- Green products
- Green business – start up as green from scratch and are system-transforming, socially committed and technologically up-to-date breakthrough ventures

Emerging Opportunities (cont.)

- Regional Networks
- Tourism
 - Eco-tourism
 - Agri-tourism
- Niche value added enterprise
- Out-sourcing destination

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