

Summary of Economic Study:

Estimating the Potential Economic Value of the Night Skies Above the Colorado Plateau

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This study was completed through a Cooperative Agreement of the Great Rivers CESU. Authors coordinated with NRSS Social Scientists at the beginning of the study. The authors plan to publish the work in a peer-reviewed journal. If that is not done, work should be internally peer-reviewed and published as an NRSS Technical Report. Until then, work should be cited as an unpublished study or circulated only internally.

- “The complementary mutual interactions between dark-sky tourism, existing tourism, and ongoing conservations efforts are an important key to the advantages the Colorado Plateau has for dark-sky tourism. That is, one can view clear dark nights as a globally scarce, high-quality, resource that is found in abundance on the Colorado Plateau. Currently that resource is underutilized. However, exiting policies have helped to preserve it, and there is now an opportunity for a substantial increase in its utilization. A more explicit and coordinated effort to help leverage this resource could make traditional tourists more likely to visit the region and more likely to stay one or more nights.” (page 13)
- In the late 2000s, 65% of visitors to Colorado Plateau parks believed that dark skies were “important” or “very important” to their visit. (page 21)
- “The effect of dark skies on the state economies [in the Colorado Plateau] is quite large. Over the next 10 years, visitors will spend nearly \$2.5 Billion visiting NPS parks in the Dark Sky Cooperative trying to see a dark sky at night... This additional \$2.45 billion in spending creates \$1.68 billion in additional value added for the local state economies. The total effect of all of this additional spending is to create an additional 52,257 jobs that increase wages in the states by over \$1,094 million dollars.” (page 22)
- “The dark skies of the Colorado Plateau can be used, and promoted, as a magnet for tourism. Crucially, from an economic standpoint, the single most important thing about dark-sky tourism is that is necessitates one or more overnight stays. The NPS estimates that the average spending per party per day is about \$90 fro non-local day trips. For parties staying overnight at an NPS lodge, this spending rises to over \$390, for those staying in motels outside the park, the amount is a little over \$270. In other words, inducing visitors to stay overnight can increase spending several fold.” (page 27)
- Promoting dark skies [in the Colorado Plateau] will increase the number of visitors during the off-peak seasons and provide a longer more sustained period of tourism activity. This would provide the park and the local businesses with a steadier source of income. This also allows a more efficient use of park and local community resources.” (page 34)

- We would expect the economic impact of those who rate the night sky as important or very important but who stay overnight outside the park to dwarf the \$2.45 billion figure above and increase the total manifold. Importantly, these figures also do not include the impact of visitors to Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management lands.” (page 35)
- “The reported figures assume simply the continuation of existing trends, with no increase in efforts to promote night sky tourism... This presents the local communities and the parks in the Colorado Plateau with a unique opportunity for partnership.” (page 35)