

# Outdoor recreation contributes to economic success in many ways.







Best vacation ever!

I can't believe I found this place, it's perfect!

My neighborhood is changing.

I love it here!

I'm going to raise my family here!

When did all these people show up...?

Perfect place to retire

Traffic has gotten so bad!

I'm going to open a business here.

Let's move here before everyone else finds it.

# Amenity-Rich Places

**attract new residents, visitors, and business.**





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# Solutions for the Amenity Trap



**HOUSING**



**INFRASTRUCTURE**



**FISCAL**



**NATURAL  
DISASTERS**



# Supply constraints in amenity towns

## Challenge

- Limited buildable land
- Limited labor supply
- Housing for residents and visitors

## Solutions

- Increase density
- Modular housing manufacturing
- Regulate short-term rentals and incentivize long-term rentals





# Fast growth strains infrastructure

## Challenge

- Seasonal population & fast growth
- Upgrades paid for by residents
- Regional needs, local decisions

## Solutions

- Improve visitor data monitoring
- Reinvest tourism tax revenue
- Coordinate regionally



# Amenity towns are more vulnerable

## Challenge

- Economic dependence on amenity
- Already limited housing
- Critical infrastructure susceptible

## Solutions

- Diversify economy
- Build homes less vulnerable
- Invest in risk-reducing infrastructure



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**Independent Nonpartisan Research**



**Rural Capacity Map Supports Climate Resilience**

Headwaters Economics' new Rural Capacity Map identifies communities where investments in staffing and expertise are needed to support infrastructure and climate resilience projects. The interactive map is the first of its kind and reveals that thousands of rural communities lack the resources needed to compete for federal funds that can help them prepare for climate threats such as flooding and wildfire. [More...](#)



**Mobile Homes Face Higher Flood Risk**

Mobile and manufactured homes are the most common unsubsidized, affordable housing in the United States. They also have disproportionately higher flood risk than other housing types and face unique regulatory barriers. We offer policy solutions and an interactive map showing where mobile homes have high flood risk. [More...](#)

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**Independent Nonpartisan Research**



**The Outdoor Recreation Economy by State**

Using new data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis, Headwaters Economics updated its analysis of the outdoor recreation economy. Interactive maps, charts, and graphs make it easy to see the impacts of the outdoor economy in every state. While this sector declined by 19% from 2019 to 2020, it is still one of the most significant in the U.S. economy. [More...](#)



**Improving Benefit-Cost Analyses for Rural Areas**


Smaller, rural, and lower-income communities are at a disadvantage when it comes to accessing federal funding for climate adaptation. Our latest research explores how FEMA's calculations undervalue mitigation projects in these areas, and suggests steps that might address the inequity. [More...](#)

**DATA CORNER**


**Economic Profile System Now Includes Indigenous Areas**

Headwaters' Economic Profile System (EPS) now includes search options for Indigenous Areas such as reservations and other tribal lands.

This latest update to our popular socioeconomic data tool allows users to quickly search and view data about the population, income, employment, and demographics for Indigenous Areas. Users can also customize reports with more detailed data and compare data across Indigenous Areas, cities, counties, or states.




**Independent Nonpartisan Research**



**The unequal impacts of wildfire**

The 2021 wildfire season has impacted millions of Americans, but marginalized and vulnerable communities have faced some of the deepest challenges. Headwaters Economics has released a new report and data tool that sheds light on the unequal impacts of wildfire across the country. [More...](#)

**Housing price increases affect every state**



It's not just tech-hubs and resort communities that are feeling the pressure of skyrocketing housing costs. Headwaters Economics' new analysis shows these unprecedented trends are impacting every state. We explore



<https://headwaterseconomics.org>



# Five Principles for Equitable Rural Outdoor Recreation Economies



Community   
Strategies Group

 aspen institute







# Community Strategies Group

aspen institute



Practitioner  
Voice

Peer  
Learning

Field  
Development



# Mapping a New Terrain: A Call to Action

## Our Goal

To equip local- and systems-level actors with equity-centered principles that will lead to equitable, healthy, and long-lasting outdoor recreation economies in rural and Indigenous communities.

## Who Contributed

27 rural economic and community development practitioners from a diverse range of rural and Native nation communities.



# Why Equitable Outdoor Recreation?



**Rural Opportunity:** The outdoor recreation economy is one of the largest economic sectors in the United States, estimated at \$374.3 billion in 2020.

**Need for Equity:** The sector has a history of inequitable outcomes.



How can recreation create more jobs and local wealth for people in the community while not loving a place to death with overcrowding, loss of housing, or abuse of natural resources?



**Juan Martinez**

*Senior Program Manager, Aspen  
Institute Forum for Community  
Solutions*





## Movement vs Industry

Equitable rural community development requires the recognition of both “industry” strategies/pressures and “movement” perspectives/demands that place long-term well-being, sustainability and affordability at the center.







# WealthWorks Approach

Explore  
Regional  
Wealth  
Building

Identify a  
Market  
Opportunity

Construct a  
WealthWorks  
Value Chain

Gauge  
Wealth-  
building  
Impact



# Qualities of Hubs



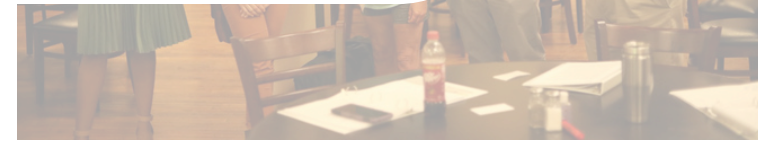
- Collaborate as an essential way of being and doing.
- Are of their region, know their region, and build trust in their region.
- Bridge issues and silos.
- Take and tolerate risk.
- Analyze at the systems level and intentionally address gaps in the systems.





## ULTIMATE OUTCOME

Communities and Native nations across the rural United States are healthy places where each and every person belongs, lives with dignity, and thrives.





# THRIVE RURAL FRAMEWORK

Rural Voice and Power

Equitable Aims and Design

Resources for Productive Action

## Local-Level Building Blocks



Welcome All to the Community



Advance Personal Well-Being



Strengthen Local Ownership and Influence



Build from Current Assets



Balance Development Goals



Design for Everyone to Thrive



Prepare Action-Able Leadership



Organize an Action Infrastructure



Act as a Region



Build Momentum

## Systems-Level Building Blocks



Rural Voice in Design and Action



Aligned Rural Fields and Actors



Accurate Rural Narrative



Balanced Development Outcomes



Cohesive Rural Policy Lens



Valued Rural Stewardship



Rural Stakeholder Equity



Ready Rural Capital Access and Flow



Rural Data for Analysis and Change



Regional Analysis and Action



The Foundational Element requires identifying and dismantling historical and ongoing discriminatory practices that disadvantage rural people and places based on place, race, & class.





Research, Resources, and  
Stories by and about Rural  
People and Places



**ThriveRural.org**



# Principles For Equitable Rural Outdoor Recreation Economies

1

Advance local, equitable, sustainable ownership and control of outdoor recreation assets.

2

Build resilient infrastructure that supports a flourishing community, including diverse outdoor recreation businesses and workers.





# Principles For Equitable Rural Outdoor Recreation Economies

3

Work regionally to build trust, achieve scale, and meet shared outdoor recreation challenges and opportunities.

4

Respect the local landscape, people, and culture in the design and implementation of all development efforts.

5

Design for equitable access to and participation in outdoor recreation activities.





1

Advance local, equitable, sustainable ownership and control of outdoor recreation assets.

**Equitable development prioritizes resources that are owned locally and/or advised by stakeholder community members.**

“

There's going to be a big transition of wealth over the next 15 to 20 years as boomers age out of business ownership. And in a lot of rural communities, sons and daughters are not interested in taking over these companies that are anchors in the community. If there was a model to transition that could create more cooperatives, it would give a new destiny and opportunity to the community as a whole.



**Merald Hollaway**  
*Founder, NC 100*

”



2

Build resilient infrastructure that supports a flourishing community, including diverse outdoor recreation businesses and workers.

**Equitable rural prosperity necessitates an inclusive development process and steps to avert challenges before they become intractable.**

“

Our Chamber of Commerce promoted the National Forest as a place for folks to come up and recreate in the winter. That was great, except our highways and city roads weren't prepared for the traffic. People lined up along the highway out of town and backed up traffic through town, creating hazardous conditions for visitors and people just trying to get through town. It had to be pulled back and rethought with more partners, which took a lot of resources.

”



**Emery Cowan**  
*Program Manager, Rural Voices for  
Conservation Coalition*



3

Work regionally to build trust, achieve scale, and meet shared outdoor recreation challenges and opportunities.

**Regional action allows localities to address shared challenges and opportunities together and achieve outdoor recreation outcomes at a productive scale.**

“

Don't pit small communities against each other. Instead, encourage them to come in together on a grant. Funders shouldn't make it too prescriptive. Every landscape is different. To make it work, a program or grant has to be specific to a rural place, considering its culture, needs, and assets.

”



**Ta Enos**  
*Founder and CEO,  
PA Wilds Center*



4

Respect the local landscape, people, and culture in the design and implementation of all development efforts.

**A balanced, respectful relationship is only possible where all participants enter the relationship voluntarily and with the power to shape the interaction.**

“

Regenerative tourism means shifting from an extractive relationship to investment and reciprocity. It starts with an awareness of belonging, and from that sense of belonging to that place and community grows what we call kuleana (responsibility, seen as a privilege). It means the aloha spirit, the way of welcoming a person to feel a sense of belonging that translates into a deep sense of responsibility to that place.

”



**Janice Ikeda**  
*Executive Director,  
Vibrant Hawai'i*



5

## Design for equitable access to and participation in outdoor recreation activities.

Practitioners expressed fear around engaging with federal funding, given the high stakes involved with potentially making a mistake in project administration or reporting.

“

We need to invest in capacity in the community itself. Thinking about health, kids that get outdoors are much more resilient in the future when they're struggling at home. And so, how do we start doing that in our community? Even these rural youth are not getting outdoors.

”

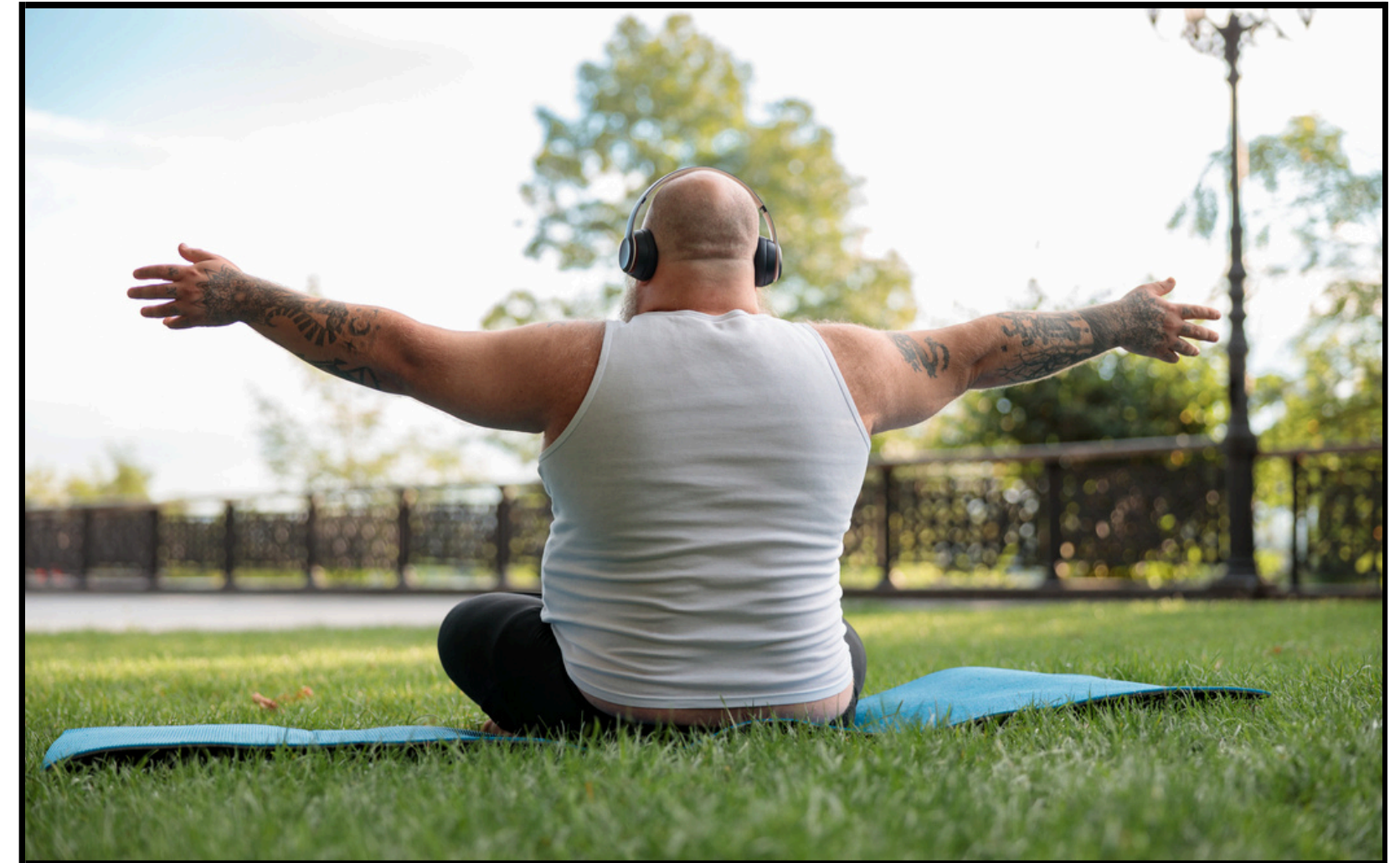


**Oak Rankin**  
*Executive Director,  
Glacier Peak Institute*





**Promote ongoing and deep cultural competency, equity, and justice discussions and workshops throughout communities.**



**Uplift and share stories** of outdoor recreation development done well — in an equitable, resilient, and environmentally sustainable manner.





**Value Indigenous knowledge** and experience in all planning, funding, and implementation processes.

**Consider the work of other types of actors** (e.g., government, philanthropy) to discover potential areas of collaboration and partnership.







**Create learning and sharing networks** among rural communities where solutions and challenges can be elevated and shared.

**Support leadership development** and education to create the next generation of rural outdoor recreation leaders.



**Support system-building** to facilitate collaborative approaches to outdoor recreation challenges.



# Cross-Cutting Recommendations



**Engage everyone** within a community in project development, especially those whose voices are not usually at the center of outdoor recreation efforts.



**Plan early** to address and mitigate the challenges that can come with a successful outdoor recreation economy.



# Community Strategies Group

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 Aspen Institute Community Strategies Group

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