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Southern California Socioeconomic Assessment: Sociodemographic Conditions, Projections, and Quality of Life Indices

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Abstract

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This report summarizes findings from the regional and county socioeconomic assessment conducted for southern California. The 26-county region extends from San Diego to the San Francisco Bay Area. A majority of the state's population resides within this region, which surrounds the four southern California National Forests (Angeles, Cleveland, Los Padres, and San Bernardino). Regional and county descriptions, including histories, population sociodemographics and projections, and quality of life indicators are examined. The information is of use to natural resource and area planners concerned with the implications of social change in the region.

Retrieval Terms: socioeconomic assessment, demographic changes, population projections, quality of life indicators, urban growth, southern California

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This report provides a snapshot of the socioeconomic conditions and projected future condition for the region surrounded by the four southern California National Forests (Angeles, Cleveland, Los Padres, and San Bernardino). It is part of the socioeconomic assessment for these forests, designed to address an information gap in the region's biological and ecological assessment completed in December of 1999. The scheduled update of forest plans for these forests increased the need to address social and economic issues in the region.

A variety of regional and county-level indicators are provided. They are designed to capture the complex demographic and environmental changes occurring in the region. While this report is not a decision-making document, it is of relevance to natural resource managers, regional planners, and academicians.

Natural resources planning benefits from this assessment because it provides information on how the population is likely to grow and change over time. Impacts on wildland areas can be better anticipated with this information.

Population growth is forecasted for all counties in the assessment through 2040, with the largest population increase expected in the Central Valley region. This dramatic increase is of concern in part due to the conversion of agricultural land and open space to suburban development.

Increased racial and ethnic diversity, in this already socially diverse region, is also anticipated. In fact, the majority of increase is accounted for among people of color, particularly Hispanics.

A changing age structure is also expected in the region, with variation between racial and ethnic groups, as well as variations by gender. A trend of increasing age is anticipated among American Indian, White, and Black populations. However, the median age structure for Hispanics and Asian/Pacific Islanders is much younger.

An examination of residential and non-residential development reveals the effects of the 1990s recession, and the build-out characteristic of some regions resulting in high percent occupancy of existing residences. Differences in cost of living are revealed in average rents and the value of owner-occupied housing.

Transportation is an issue for many of the counties, where a high percentage of workers are employed outside of the county. This is especially apparent in the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) Region.

A comparison of schools based on the Stanford 9, a statewide indicator of academic achievement, reveals the highest performance in San Diego County, and the lowest among Central Valley counties.

Water and air quality (measured through emissions) are also reviewed in this report, revealing the best water quality ratings in the San Diego region, and the counties within the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) region.

The trends identified in this report highlight the need for land management agencies to involve emerging constituencies. It also emphasizes the need for regional, county, city, and land management agencies to strengthen connections and collaborative efforts. These steps will better equip agencies to address the expected population growth and change occurring within the constraint of finite resources.

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