

The Association Between Natural Amenities, Rural Population Growth, and Long-Term Residents' Economic Well-Being*

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ABSTRACT Population growth in rural areas characterized by high levels of natural amenities has recently received substantial research attention. A noted concern with amenity-driven rural population growth is its potential to raise local costs-of-living while yielding only low-wage service sector employment for long-term residents. The work presented here empirically models long-term rural residents' economic well-being, making use of longitudinal data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics. In general, the results suggest that long-term rural families residing in high-growth amenity and recreation areas tend to have higher annual incomes than do their counterparts in non-growth amenity/recreation areas, regardless of the sex, race, or age of the family head. However, higher costs-of-living in these areas supplant any relative gains in income. As such, these analyses provide empirical evidence of patterns inferred by earlier anecdotal evidence and case studies.