



Winter Tourism – COVID-19 Impact Analysis of FEMA Region VIII (8) States

December 2020

Region VIII Interagency Recovery Coordination (IRC)



FEMA

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1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose

This Deep Dive Impact Analysis was undertaken by FEMA Region VIII (8) Interagency Recovery Coordination (IRC) cell to assess the state of winter tourism, particularly tourism related to outdoor recreation, in the Region 8 states – Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming. The Region 8 IRC is a regional focal point that leverages the whole community to identify and share state, tribal, and local long-term recovery issues, and to integrate, coordinate, and direct resources, funding, solutions, partnerships, and collaboration to provide whole community solutions to address Region 8 recovery.

Based on this analysis and evidence-based research, many of the Region 8 communities depend heavily on the tourism industry, which is only one of many industries adversely affected by COVID-19. By investigating impacts and best practices, the Region 8 IRC aims to spark further conversation with its partners, creating a forum to problem solve and develop whole community solutions through an integrated and collaborative long-term recovery process.

As such, the results of this analysis may provide stakeholders with a variety of baseline assumptions as they plan and coordinate their long-term recovery efforts, assist with potential resource identification, and raise awareness of ongoing economic impacts associated with winter tourism to the R8 states.

This product was developed by the FEMA Region 8's IRC Data and Analytics team and reviewed by FEMA Headquarters' Data Assessment Working Group (DAWG), Argonne National Labs, and other regional IRC counterpart staff. The FEMA Region 8 IRC cell under the Recovery Division owns the Deep Dive Analysis product and is responsible for future modifications if necessary. For questions related to this product, please reach out to the IRC Data and Analytics team at R8-FEMA-NDRF@fema.dhs.gov.

1.2. Background

FEMA's Region 8 covers portions of the Upper Midwest and the Intermountain West and includes the states of Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming. Located in the interior of the country, many Region 8 communities experience extreme weather. However micro-climates within the region also vary greatly dependent on elevation. Region 8 is home to a diversity of landscapes, industries, and people with varied and unique needs related to disaster mitigation, response, and recovery. This analysis - the R8 Deep Dive- is a periodic white paper focused on specific, disaster-impact topics of interest to Region 8 states. In this edition, we explore the impacts of the COVID-19 epidemic disaster on winter tourism in Region 8.

The COVID 19 epidemic has taken a large toll on the Region 8 states and local communities. As of December 1st, 2020, there has been a total of 33,191 hospitalizations, and 6,835 reported deaths due to COVID-19 in Region 8.¹ Furthermore, the epidemic has wreaked havoc on the national economy, with greater implications for states and local communities. High Gross Domestic Product (GDP) values are generally associated with more economic activity in a region, while lower values are associated with lesser economic activity ². Four out of the six Region 8 states began 2020 with an increase in GDP from 2019:Q4. However, during Quarter 2 of 2020, when much of the nation was under restriction or stay at home order from COVID-19, GDP (in Region 8 states) fell on average, by 24.6%. ³

Table 1. Current-Dollar Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by State and Region – 2019 Q1-2020: Q2 (\$millions)

<i>Location</i>	<i>2019Q1</i>	<i>2020Q1</i>	<i>YoY Change Q1</i>	<i>2019Q2</i>	<i>2020Q2</i>	<i>YoY Change Q2</i>	<i>State GDP -- % of National GDP</i>
United States	21,098,827	21,561,139	462,312	21,340,267	19,520,114	-1,820,153	
Colorado	383,690	400,041	16,351	388,731	365,009	-23,722	1.9%
Montana	51,326	53,285	1,959	51,933	47,721	-4,212	0.2%
North Dakota	56,609	56,417	-192	57,031	49,881	-7,150	0.3%
South Dakota	52,430	56,072	3,642	53,044	50,951	-2,093	0.3%
Utah	184,767	195,594	10,827	187,416	182,895	-4,521	0.9%
Wyoming	39,393	38,680	-713	39,788	33,233	-6,555	0.2%

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis

The next round of data from the Bureau of Economic Affairs (BEA), for Quarter 3, is slated to be released December 22nd, 2020. The early release estimates show an increase of 33.1% across the nation from Quarter 2. These numbers will reflect the change in GDP over the summer and fall months as businesses have re-opened and resumed activities that were postponed during strict COVID-19 lockdowns in the spring. ⁴

According to a model produced in July by the Center for Policy Studies at Victoria University, Melbourne, the tourism industry is projected to be the most affected US industry in both the short and long-term. The implications of these impacts are large and lasting, causing widespread revenue shortfalls, furloughs, and unemployment in the national travel, accommodations, food service, and

1 Source: FEMA. Region 8 COVID Dashboard. Accessed 12/07/2020

2 Source: Argonne National Laboratory. County Economic Impact Index. Accessed: 12/07/20

3 Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis. GDP by State, Quarter 2 2020. Accessed: 12/04/2020

4 Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis. [National Economic Accounts](#). Accessed: 12/7/20

entertainment industries.⁵ This is of concern for many Region 8 communities, which depend on tourism, particularly related to outdoor recreation, to attract customers, create jobs, and support small local businesses. According to a recent article by Pew Charitable Trust, job and revenue loss in tourism will also have severe impacts on tourism dependent state and local government revenue, depending on each locality's tax base structure.⁶

Many Region 8 communities have been surprisingly resilient to the economic downturn over the past several months. Profiting from a spike in Americans' appetite for outdoor recreation and innovative urban policies promoting outdoor dining, cities and small towns alike have fought to keep visitors present and spending money. To maintain activity, while respecting new guidelines and restrictions, many businesses implemented creative strategies over the summer months, including:

- [Yurt Dining in Silverthorne](#) (CO)
- [Lift Gondolas Transformed into Dining Cars, Telluride](#) (CO)
- [Montana Pub Transforms its Patio](#) (MT)

However, many of the resilience strategies that kept these industries afloat over the summer will be less feasible over the winter months, particularly in cold weather states and cities.⁷ This analysis is meant to assess the state of tourism and outdoor recreation in recreation dependent Region 8 communities.

2. Issue

The Travel and Tourism industry is measured “by the real output of goods and services sold directly to visitors,”⁸ or any spending by domestic or international consumers outside of their place of residence. Winter tourism can be roughly divided into three major categories: cultural/holiday related tourism, warm-climate escape tourism, and winter weather/outdoor recreation tourism. In the context of winter tourism in Region 8 states, this analysis is focused on winter tourism related to winter weather and outdoor recreation, as this is a particularly important industry for many communities in Region 8 states.

⁵Source: CISA & Center of Policy Studies, Victoria University, Melbourne. [The effects of COVID-19 on the U.S. macro economy, industries, regions and National Critical Functions](#). Accessed 12/4/20

⁶ Source: Pew Charitable Trust. [Pandemic-Driven Declines in Tourism... Toll on Many States' Revenue](#). Accessed 12/04/20

⁷ Source: Gusto. Impact Winter. [Analyzing the Potential Effects of Winter on Quarantine](#). Accessed: 12/04/20.

⁸ Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis. [U.S. Travel and Tourism Satellite Account 1998-2018](#). Accessed: 12/04/20

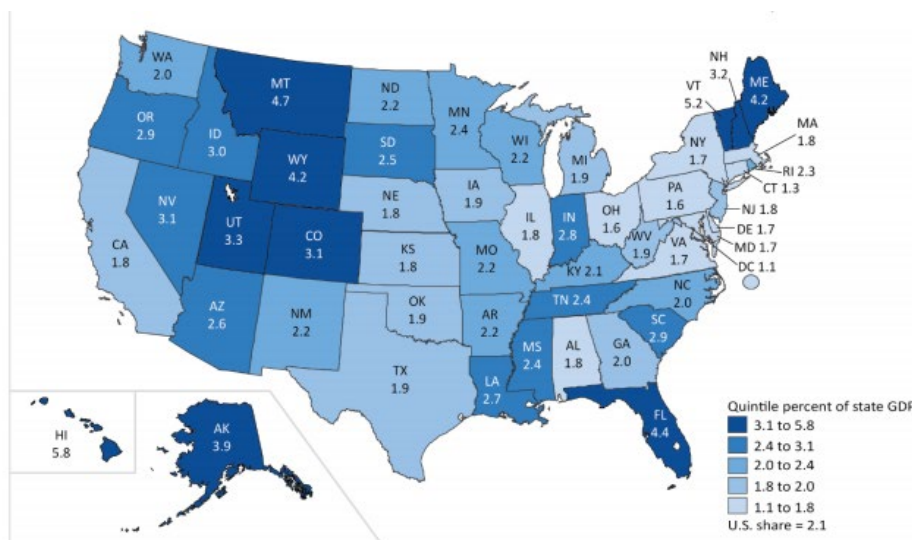


Figure 1. State Outdoor Recreation Value Added as a Percent of State GDP, 2019

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, ORSA

Outdoor recreation is broadly defined by the BEA as “all recreational activities undertaken for pleasure that occur outdoors.” According to the BEA, the outdoor recreation industry makes up greater than 3% of the total GDP for 4 out of 6 of the Region 8 states, ranking them in the top 10 states for outdoor recreation in the nation.

Also, according to the BEA, the outdoor recreation industry accounted for over 320,000 jobs in Region 8 states, and over \$25B in total value added in 2019. The industry includes conventional and non-conventional outdoor recreation, as well as activities that support outdoor recreation, such as retail, wholesale trade, warehousing and transportation, accommodation and food services. The conventional outdoor recreation industry includes fishing/boating, RVing, hunting/trapping, motorcycling, ATVing, equestrian and snow activities. In 2019, snow activities alone made up approximately \$2.6B and around 10% of the total value added from outdoor recreation in Region 8. Additionally, snow activities make up the largest conventional activity in the Outdoor Recreation Industry in three Region 8 states – Colorado, Wyoming, and Utah.

Table 2. State Value Added (GDP) from Outdoor Recreation Activities in 2019 (\$ thousands)

State	Conventional Activities				Non-Conventional Activities			All Other Industries Supporting Outdoor Recreation	Government Expenditure
	Total Outdoor Recreation Activities	Boating/ Fishing	RVing	Snow Activities	Amusement Parks / Water Parks	Festivals/ Sporting Events/ Concerts	Game Areas		
CO	12,242,946	371,539	368,585	1,709,374	136,121	355,292	397,909	5,674,838	781,837
MT	2,498,355	164,490	132,371	63,354	15,612	15,947	90,627	1,234,480	129,603
ND	1,260,609	70,830	75,546	6,405	6,533	5,168	37,250	565,362	138,075
SD	1,346,993	63,014	74,843	14,237	12,486	6,292	45,728	587,471	133,429
UT	6,362,413	278,399	263,398	666,273	97,445	139,301	320,410	2,654,218	464,912
WY	1,686,585	43,148	76,116	147,491	5,020	3,839	40,874	927,398	151,143

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, ORSA

According to the National Ski Area Association (NSAA), 9.2 million Americans (approximately 2.8% of the US population) participated in snow sports in the US during the 2019/2020 season, despite early closures in March due to the pandemic.⁹ Of over 51 million visits to ski resorts nationwide in the 2019/2020 season, over 20 million were in the Rocky Mountain region (Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, Montana, New Mexico).¹⁰

In 2019, approximately 76 ski areas were open in 29 counties throughout Region 8 states. Aside from employment and GDP generated directly from snow activities, spending by tourists attracted to Region 8 states by the ski industry support other industries, particularly the hospitality and service industry. According to the BEA, the top 5 commodities consumed by the tourism industry are: traveler accommodation, food and beverage services, transportation, and recreation, entertainment and shopping.¹¹

The National American Industry Classification System (NAICS) is often used to classify businesses by industry codes. For the purposes of this study, we focused on NAICS codes 71 and 72 to represent the greater “Leisure and Hospitality” industry.¹² NAICS 71 represents the “Art, Entertainment &

⁹ Source: National Ski Area Association. [Estimated Snowsports Participants: U.S. Visitors to U.S. Resorts](#). accessed 11/20/2020

¹⁰ Source: National Ski Area Association. [Skier Visit Detail by Region](#). accessed 11/20/2020

¹¹ Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis. [U.S. Travel and Tourism Satellite Account 1998-2018](#). Accessed: 12/04/20

¹² Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics. [Industries by Supersector & NAICS Code](#). accessed 12/09/20

Recreation” industries, while NAICS 72 represents “Accommodation & Food Services.”¹³ A further breakdown of major groupings is shown in the box to the right.

Leisure and Hospitality NAICS Codes

71-Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation

- 7111-Performing Arts Companies
- 7112-Spectator Sports
- 7113-Promoters of Performing Arts, Sports, and Similar Events
- 7114-Agents and Managers for Artists, Athletes, Entertainers, and Other Public Figures
- 7121-Museums, Historical Sites, and Similar Institutions
- 7131-Amusement Parks and Arcades
- 7132-Gambling Industries
- 7139-Other Amusement and Recreation Industries
-

72-Accommodation and Food Services

- 7211-Traveler Accommodation
- 7212-RV (Recreational Vehicle) Parks and Recreational Camps
- 7213-Rooming and Boarding Houses, Dormitories, and Workers' Camps
- 7223-Special Food Services
- 7224-Drinking Places (Alcoholic Beverages)
- 7225-Restaurants and Other Eating Places

The map in Figure 2 illustrates the proportion of total jobs in NAICS codes 71 and 72 for each county in Region 8. According to the 2018 data from the US Census Bureau, the Leisure and Hospitality industry (NAICS codes 71 and 72) accounts for more than 20% of total employment in 20 of the 49 Region 8 counties hosting ski areas. We looked at the relationship between counties housing ski areas and the percentage of employment in NAICS codes 71&72.

¹³ Source: NAICS Association. [NAICS Descriptions](#). Accessed: 12/7/20

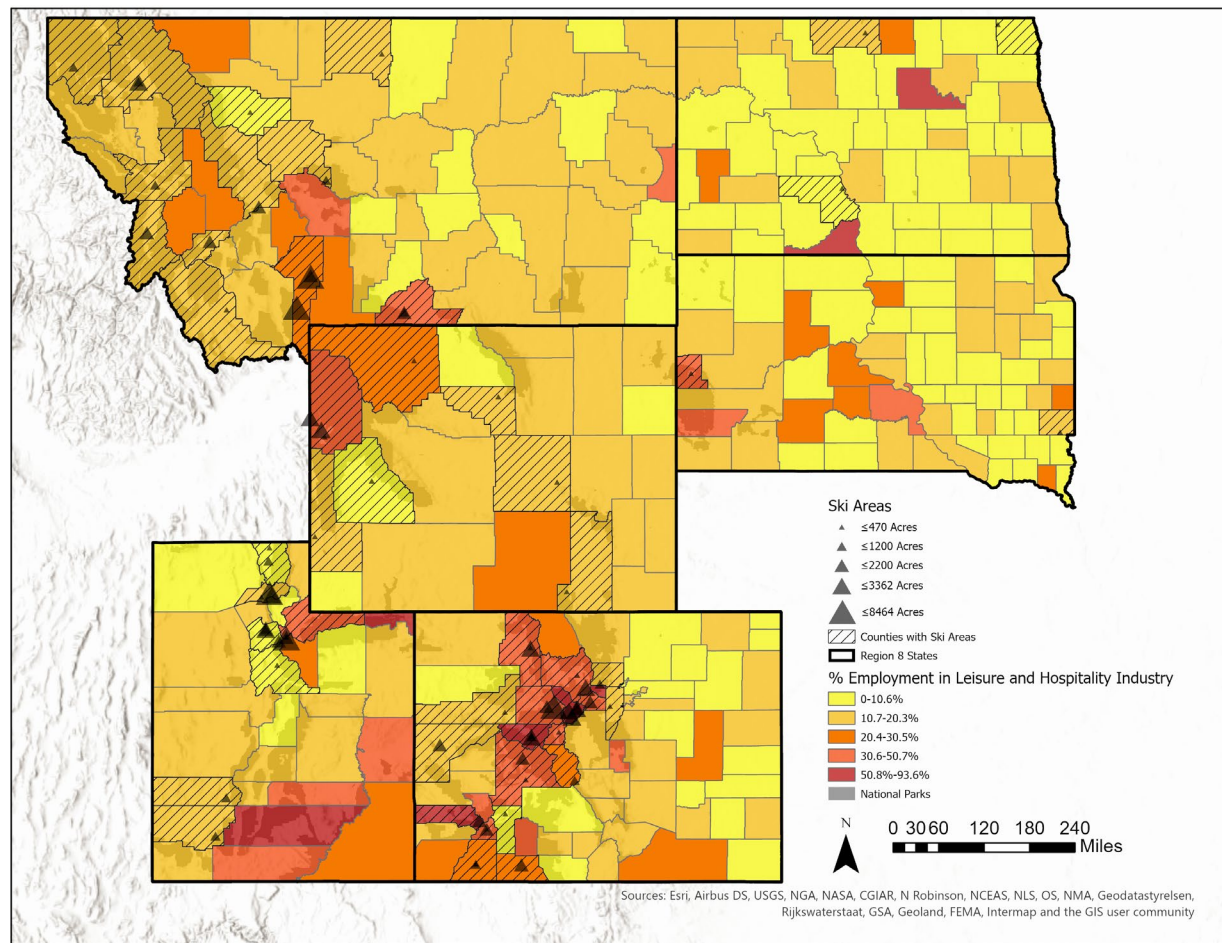


Figure 2. Percent of Employees in Leisure and Hospitality Industry by County

Source: US Census Bureau, County Business Patterns 2018

3. Impacts

Given the travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation industries' importance to many communities in Region 8 states, the following section will explore the impacts of the COVID-19 epidemic on these industries and Region 8 communities in which they play a major role.

3.1. Businesses

A study supported by the NSAA, published in November 2020, found that ski areas in the US suffered approximately \$2 billion in losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes revenue lost in the Spring when 93% of ski areas closed prematurely during COVID-19 lockdowns in March. It also includes lost revenue from cancelled events and bookings during summer 2020.¹⁴

¹⁴ Source: National Ski Area Association. [The Economic Impacts of Skiing and Snowboarding](#). accessed 11/20/2020

However, revenue losses are not limited to only the large resorts; but have caused a cascade of impacts on other parts of the outdoor recreation industry which include gear manufacturers, retail, accommodations restaurants and leisure. An August 2020 survey conducted by the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable with responses from “21 participating national outdoor recreation trade associations, representing over 23,000 businesses with nearly 2 million employees, indicated:

- Of the businesses this survey represents, all are having trouble with production and distribution, with 79 percent experiencing significant impacts.
- 88 percent of these businesses have laid off or furloughed a portion of their workforce
- 94 percent of outdoor industry businesses are experiencing a decrease in sales with about 24 percent seeing a decrease of 50 percent or greater compared to one year ago.
- 95 percent of outdoor industry trade associations are seeing a decrease in revenue with 26 percent seeing a decrease of 50 percent or greater compared to one year ago.¹⁵”

3.2. Economic Indicators

While high level economic indicators cannot tell the entire story of impacts of the COVID-19 epidemic on industries and communities, employment and value-added are important measures of the health of a regional economy.

Nationwide, unemployment rates resulting from the COVID-19 epidemic have been staggering. According to the Congressional Research Service, the national “unemployment rate peaked at an unprecedented level, not seen since data collection started in 1948, in April 2020 (14.7%) before declining to a still-elevated level in November (6.7%).” Local Area Unemployment (LAU) rates in many Region 8 states have followed this trend as well and were even more elevated in counties reliant on outdoor recreation.

For example, unemployment rates in Summit County, CO, Summit County, UT and Teton County, WY, (all deeply reliant on outdoor recreation and tourism) peaked in April at 21.6%, 20.4% and 18.2% respectively. While these unemployment rates have stabilized greatly since April, to 7.9%, 5.4%, and 4.4% respectively in October, two of the three (Summit County, CO and Summit County, UT) remain elevated relative to their respective state’s average unemployment rate.

Figure 3 illustrates the net change in year over year (YoY) unemployment rate for each state and selected county between January and October. As expected, the net change hovered around zero prior to March, and then increased in March and April due to spikes in business closures and

¹⁵ Source: Outdoor Recreation Roundtable. [ORR Member Survey Shows COVID-19 Continues to Impact the Outdoor Economy](#). accessed 11/20/2020

unemployment. While net unemployment change has stabilized significantly, it remains elevated in many tourism dependent counties, including the three selected counties shown in Figure 3.

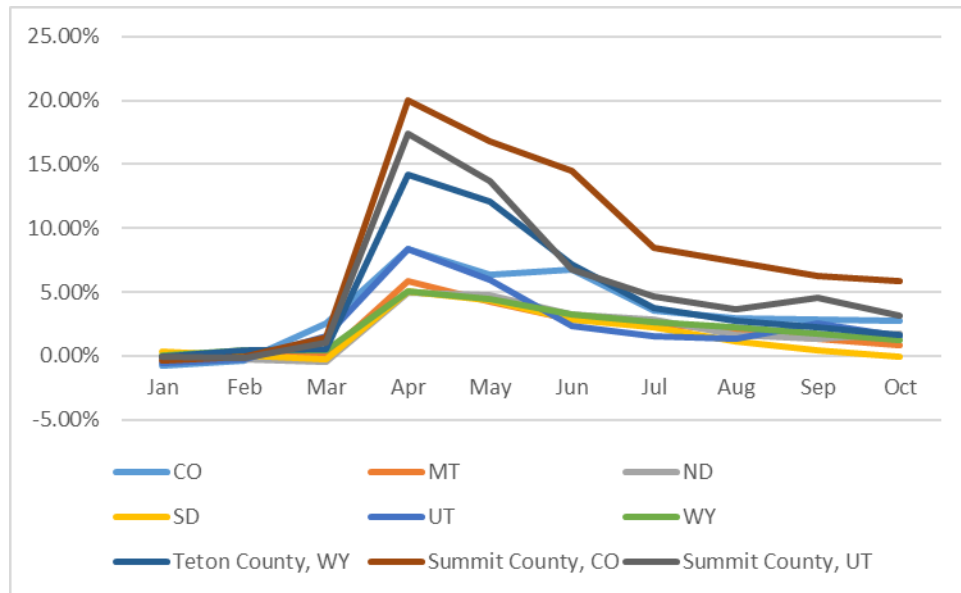


Figure 3. YoY Net Change in Unemployment Rate for Region 8 States and Select Counties

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

3.3. Value Added

While GDP is a common method of measuring economic impact, real GDP data on value added will not be released by the BEA until later this year. As such, we relied on the County Economic Impact Index (CEII) generated by Argonne National Laboratory, to estimate the change in value-added. This index estimates value added using 2018/19 data from the BEA and is adjusted for changes in employment. Argonne assumes that value add is constant relative to employment, to estimate the relative effects of COVID-19 on regions and industries.

The YoY change in value added estimated using Argonne's CEII are presented in Figure 4. As illustrated in Figure 4, average losses (across all Region 8 states) in NAICS codes 71 and 72 are much greater than those experienced by all industries (represented by each state's average). For example, in CO, in April, state value-added fell by around 10% and in the hospitality industry, value-added fell by 44.5%. While Colorado has still taken a loss, as of September, the total value-added, has rebounded by 22% since April.

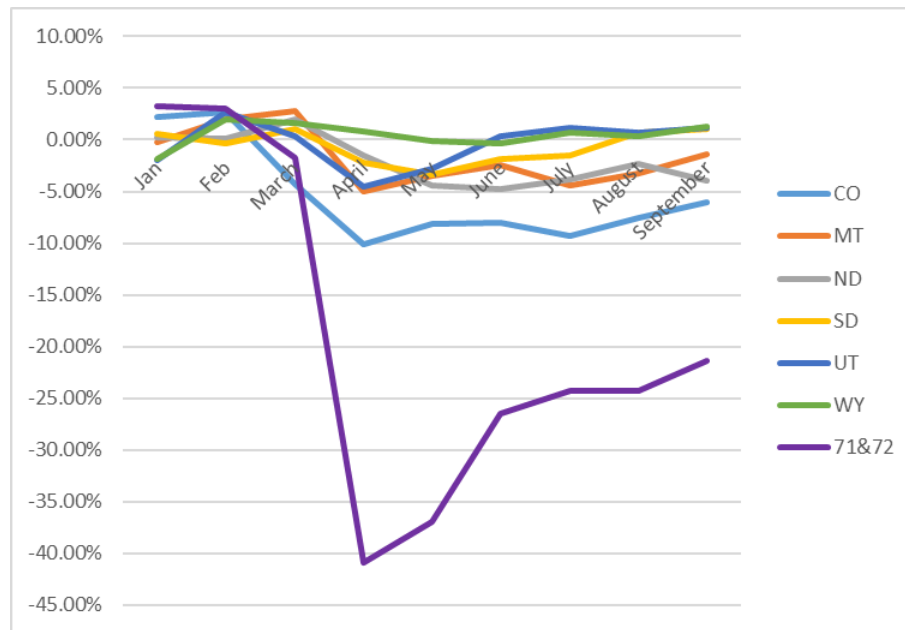


Figure 4. Average % Change in GDP Value Add – YoY Region 8 States and NAICS Codes 71&72

Source: Argonne National Lab

3.4. “Worst Case Scenario” (March/April)

In many ways, the abrupt economic downturn following the initial stay-at-home orders in mid-March represents the “worst case scenario” for many industries, not to exclude the ski industry. As the gravity of the pandemic set in, headlines appeared claiming western ski towns as COVID-19 hotspots, and one by one resort towns closed, along with many other businesses in the US and abroad.

Table 3 illustrates economic indicators for 14 Region 8 counties that we have identified to have high winter sports presence. As the figures in Table 3 demonstrate, these counties are both highly reliant on the leisure and hospitality industry and were badly affected by the initial shock. While many of these indicators have recovered since April, the lasting economic impacts of the pandemic may have implications for the industry in the upcoming winter season and beyond.

Table 3. Selected County Economic Indicators for April 2019 and 2020

State	County	April Value Added YoY % change ^a	% Emp in Hospitality & Leisure ^b	Unemployment Rate ^c			Business Failure Rate ^d		
				Apr-19	Apr-20	Net Change	Apr-19	Apr-20	% change
CO	Summit County	-6.69%	52.34%	1.6	21.6	20.00	0.06	0.07	19.54%
CO	Eagle County	-6.99%	37.12%	2.1	21	18.90	0.07	0.07	6.57%
CO	Pitkin County	-5.79%	51.91%	2.4	23.6	21.20	0.06	0.09	39.06%
CO	Grand County	-8.16%	49.77%	2.2	19.5	17.30	0.06	0.06	-11.67%
CO	Routt County	-7.23%	40.21%	2.3	18.2	15.90	0.07	0.07	11.88%
CO	San Miguel County	-3.25%	51.96%	2.5	22.9	20.40	0.06	0.06	10.67%
MT	Gallatin County	-4.25%	20.72%	2.1	12.3	10.20	0.06	0.13	110.53%
MT	Flathead County	-4.72%	16.21%	5	16.6	11.60	0.08	0.15	83.24%
MT	Carbon County	-2.72%	38.11%	3.3	12.3	9.00	0.08	0.12	54.85%
MT	Deer Lodge County	-8.53%	15.27%	3.2	10.5	7.30	0.07	0.14	101.10%
UT	Weber County	-0.44%	12.72%	2.9	10.7	7.80	0.10	0.14	45.61%
UT	Summit County	-3.49%	44.31%	3	20.4	17.40	0.08	0.13	59.38%
UT	Salt Lake County	-3.52%	10.04%	2.6	11.2	8.60	0.10	0.16	62.87%
WY	Teton County	3.63 %	39.56%	4	18.2	14.20	0.06	0.08	22.83%

Sources: a) Argonne National Lab CEII, b) US Census County Business Patterns ACS 2018, c) BLS LAU, d) Dunn & Bradstreet

3.5. Summer Outdoor Recreation

Despite low expectations for the tourism industry in summer 2020, outdoor recreation tourism was surprisingly successful. Preliminary results from a survey conducted by the Outdoor Industry Association indicate that more Americans are recreating outdoors – hiking increased by 8.4% in April, May and June compared to 2019. Anecdotes from many so-called “gateway towns,” even

preach of record highs for tourism. Copper Mountain, in Summit County, CO, for example, set a record high for visitation to summer attractions.¹⁶

Data from the National Park Service indicates that visits to National Parks, National Historic Sites and National Monuments in Region 8 states was down by over 80% in April and 65% in May. But, for the first time since February 2020, visits in September exceeded those in 2019 by almost 5%. The trend of reduced visits to National Park Service operated lands is likely due in large part to park closures, and precautions taken at the park to reduce potential COVID-19 exposure. Rocky Mountain National Park, for instance, implemented a reservation system in order to stagger visitation throughout the day.¹⁷

Nonetheless, many state parks, who did not close at the height of the pandemic, are reporting record rates of visitation. North Dakota State Parks is reporting a 28% increase in visitation over May, June and July relative to 2019.¹⁸ Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) reported a 25% increase in visitation January through June relative to 2019. Between April and September, Wyoming State Parks had visitation ranging from 100 to 200 percent above their five-year average, despite restrictions on camping and fishing between March and May.¹⁹

Despite an uptick of outdoor recreation, many resort towns struggled to maintain their economies in the summer months. According to their Fiscal 2020 3rd Quarter Results, Vail Resorts Inc. reported \$152.5 million for the third fiscal quarter of 2020, a reduction from the \$292.1 million in the same period in the previous year. The report indicates that the losses occurred primarily as a result of the negative impacts of COVID-19.²⁰ It is worth noting that according to a dataset from Dunn & Bradstreet, Vail Resorts Inc. is in the top 5 employers for 6 out of the 14 counties identified in Table 3 as heavily reliant on outdoor recreation and ski tourism (see Appendix A for top 5 employers in each of the 14 counties above).

4. Influences

The baseline and post-impact economic indicators provide insight into the state of the economies of Region 8 communities. However, there are many outside factors that can influence consumer spending and economic trends. In this section, we will discuss the potential influence of travel and policy on the economic indicators discussed in previous sections.

¹⁶ Source: The Denver Post. [Copper Mountain set new visitation records for summer attractions despite pandemic, giving hope for strong ski season](#). Accessed: 12/09/20

¹⁷ Source: The Denver Post. [Rocky Mountain National Park to Start requiring online reservations during the coronavirus outbreak](#). Accessed: 11/20/2020

¹⁸ Source: US News. [North Dakota State Parks Use Swells Amid Pandemic](#). accessed 11/20/2020

¹⁹ Source: Wyoming News Now. [Wyoming State Parks Sees High Visitation Numbers](#). accessed 11/20/2020

²⁰ Source: Vail Resorts. [Vail Resorts Reports Fiscal 2020 Third Quarter Results](#). Accessed: 12/09/2020

4.1. Travel Trends

In a normal year, outdoor recreation and winter tourism in Region 8 states draws both patrons and employees from not only across the nation, but also the globe. A study completed by the Montana Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research found that approximately 43% of ski resort visitors come from out of state.²¹

In the context of COVID-19, however, the travel landscape in the United States has greatly shifted. The travel industry took major losses between March and May; and while spending has recovered slowly, it remains well-below previous years. This trend can be seen in Figure 5 below. The latest report from US Travel noted a 39% YoY drop in spending for the week ending on November 28th, which coincided with the Thanksgiving holiday.²²

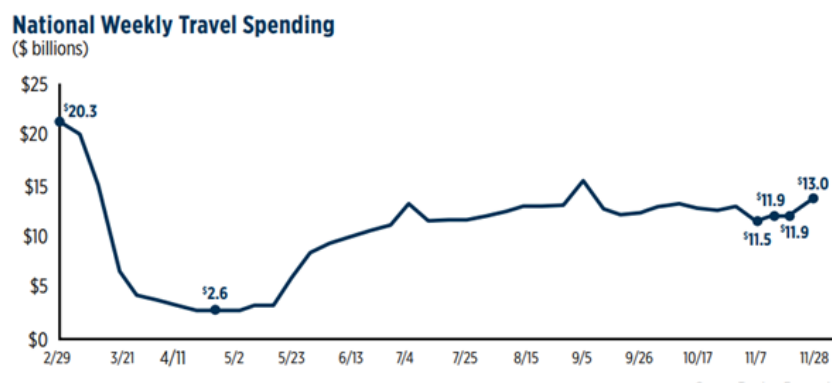


Figure 5. National Weekly Travel Spending

Source: USTravel.org

While overall spending is low, many Region 8 states are performing relatively well. Despite spending being reduced relative to 2019, the US Travel report listed five of the six Region 8 states in the top 10 best markets for the week of the Thanksgiving holiday as seen in Figure 6.

²¹ Source: Montana Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research. [Economics and Characteristics of Alpine Skiing in Montana](#). accessed 11/20/2020

²² US Travel. [Weekly Coronavirus Impact on Travel Expenditures in the US](#). Accessed: 12/11/2020

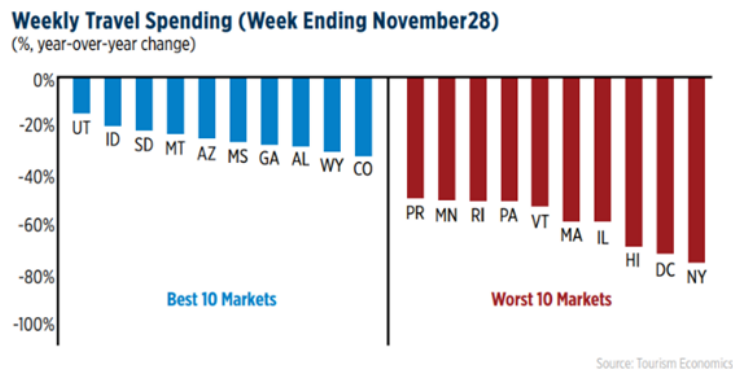


Figure 6: Weekly Travel Spending
Source: USTravel.org

Interstate travel and lodging has also declined on a national scale. That same week ending November 28th, TSA screened 61% fewer travelers than the previous year. While the hotel industry has been badly hurt by the pandemic, occupancy did increase slightly over the summer from -42% YoY in June to -28% in September. However, according to US travel, hotel occupancy over the Thanksgiving holiday was at 35%, which is -38% change over the previous year.²³ Interestingly, an analysis produced by STR showed that those occupying hotels are more likely to drive than they were in the past. As seen in Figure 7, pre-pandemic figures indicated that travelers passing through TSA checkpoints represented roughly 61% of all hotel visitors. The more recent numbers show that figure as reduced to 33% which indicates that for those who are travelling and staying in hotels, a larger proportion are driving.²⁴

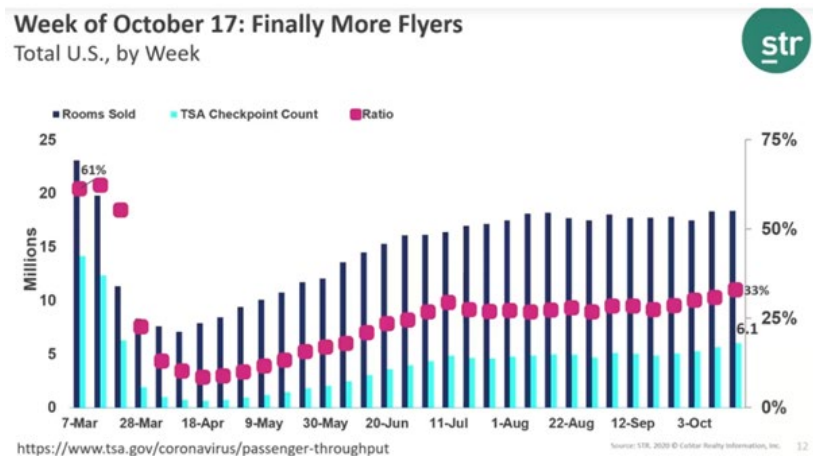


Figure 7: Relationship between hotel occupancy and travelers passing through TSA checkpoints
Source: STR

²³ US Travel. [COVID-19 Travel Industry Research](#). Accessed: 12/11/2020.

²⁴ STR. [Webinar Recording: COVID-19 Impacts on U.S. hotel performance – 27 October](#). Accessed: 12/09/2020

Destination Analysts is a travel and tourism market research firm who were the first to collect and publish data on the impact of the coronavirus on American travel sentiment.²⁵ They have been fielding a weekly survey of 1,200+ American leisure and business travelers representing each region of the U.S.

In the most recent survey (October 7th), Destination Analysts found that 56.9% of travelers with a history of ski/snowboard travel would feel safe taking a ski/snowboard trip this season (winter 2020/21). Also, 40% of Americans responded that they felt comfortable going out for leisure activities in their own community (more than twice the number than in the early stages of the pandemic)²⁶

In an October iteration of the survey, they found that of travelers who have visited a ski/snowboard area in the past, 68.3% say that they are likely to return to their favorite destination for an overnight trip. 51.5% of respondents also stated that their ski/snowboard trip was likely to include air travel, which increased from 48.4% of respondents in a similar survey in August 2020.²⁷

4.2. Policy

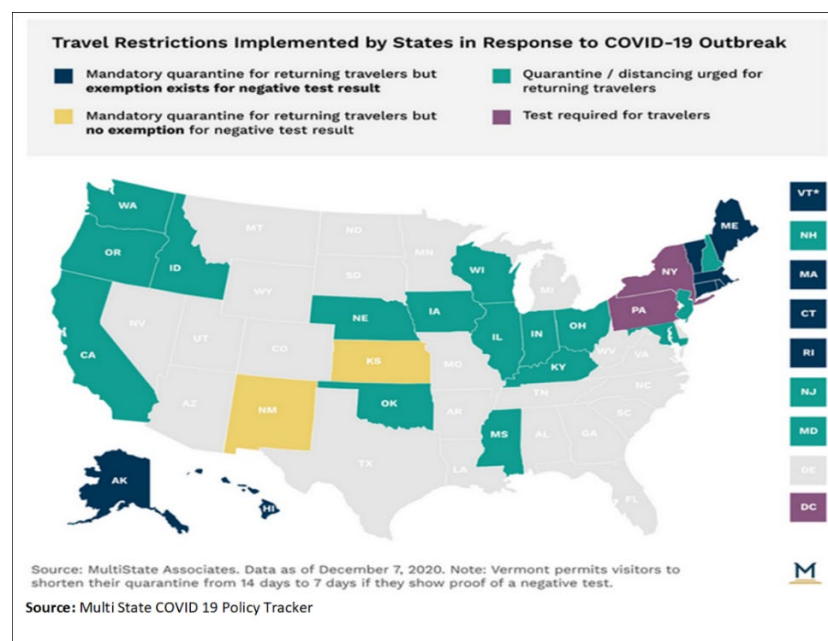


Figure 8. Travel Restriction Implemented by States in Response to COVID-19 Outbreak

Source: Multi State Policy Tracker

²⁵ Source: Destinations Analysts. [Update on American Travel in the Period of Coronavirus – Week of November 30th](#). Accessed: 12/11/2020

²⁶ Source: Destination Analysts. [Update on American Travel in the Period of Coronavirus – Week of November 30th](#). Accessed: 12/11/2020

²⁷ Source: Destinations Analysts. [Update on American Travel in the Period of Coronavirus – Week of October 19th](#). Accessed: 11/20/2020

Policy and precautions to prevent the spread of COVID 19 vary by state and local government and will continue to influence travel across the nation. As of December 7th, 2020, according to Multi State's COVID-19 Policy Tracker²⁸, no Region 8 state has specific travel restrictions, meaning those looking to recreate from out of State can do so without a quarantine mandate.

Many states still have gathering restrictions, business capacity restrictions, mask mandates and require physical and social distancing, all which affect the tourism industry. Table 4 gives a brief overview of travel restrictions and related policies for Region 8 states.

Table 4. Policies across the Region 8 states

<i>Jurisdiction</i>	<i>Travel Restrictions</i>	<i>Mass Gathering Restrictions</i>	<i>Mask Mandates</i>	<i>State Vaccination Plans</i>
Colorado	None	Limit on personal gatherings in all counties to <10 people from <2 HH*	Executive order requiring individuals to wear face masks	Link to State Vaccination Plan
Montana	None	As of 11/25/20, groups limited to <25. Current Restrictions	Requires masks in all public areas in counties.	Link to State Vaccination Plan
North Dakota	None	Guidance issued on 05/15, large gatherings can be 50% of occupancy up to 250	Required. As of 11/14/20, required in indoor businesses and indoor public settings. And outdoor when physical distancing not possible.	Link to State Vaccination Plan
South Dakota	Never prohibited travel.	Resume operations that allow for distancing and sanitation.	Not required, only recommended.	Link to State Vaccination Plan
Utah	None	COVID-19 Transmission Index	Required statewide	Link to State Vaccination Plan
Wyoming	None	Public Health Order as of 11/24, indoor & outdoor gatherings <25, no restrictions. <i>Indoor venues = 25% cap., max 100 people</i> <i>Outdoor venues = 50% cap., max 250</i>	Required inside businesses, government buildings, and medical settings.	Link to State Vaccination Plan

*HH = households, Source: Multi State Policy Tracker

5. Conclusions

As demonstrated in this report, early COVID-19 restrictions took a major toll on tourism dependent industries in Region 8 states, particularly the ski industry and the local economies reliant on the ski

²⁸ Source: [Multi State COVID 19 Policy Tracker](#). accessed 12/08/20

industry. Despite the preliminary downturn, many Region 8 tourism dependent towns were surprisingly successful during the summer months of 2020, as many Americans have opted for outdoor recreation and domestic travel.

With winter approaching, however, public opinion on the safety of travel and tourism is divided. As the state of the pandemic changes, and media reports on rising COVID-19 cases, attitudes and consumer behaviors are in constant flux. As ski areas begin to open, many have taken their own precautions to ensure their adherence to local, state and national COVID-19 guidance. While ski areas approach to mitigating COVID-19 on the slopes vary, below are a few of the common policies being instituted:

- Required reservations for lift tickets
- Parking restrictions and capacity limits
- Advanced no-contact ticket purchasing
- Mask and social distancing requirements
- Lift safety and disinfecting protocols

Sentiment across Region 8 states also varies widely. Following a summer boon, ski resorts in Wyoming are bracing for the uncertainty that COVID-19 will eventually bring to resort towns this winter.²⁹ According to the Salt Lake Tribune, Utah Ski resorts are expecting a surge in popularity in the upcoming season and preparing accordingly.³⁰ Indeed, many smaller resort and gateway towns have faced new challenges in this COVID era, because of increased (rather than decreased) travel, particularly among young remote workers seeking a domestic getaway.³¹ But the increases in domestic travel held up by these domestic vacations has not been great enough to bolster the industry as a whole. In the Vail Resorts Inc. Third Quarter Results, CEO Rob Katz commented:

“We expect that our results in the fourth quarter of fiscal 2020 will be materially negatively impacted by the travel environment and we will see lower visitation to our resort properties. However, we are not able to fully assess that impact at this time and will not be issuing guidance for the fourth quarter or fiscal year. We believe we have developed efficient operating plans to deliver a safe and enjoyable guest experience at our resorts this summer in North America and for the Australian ski season, with the ability to adjust as consumer demand and local guidelines and practices shift.”

²⁹ Source: Gillette News Record. [FROM WYOFIL: Winter with COVID poses next hurdles for Wyo Tourism](#). Accessed: 12/11/2020

³⁰ The Salt Lake Tribune. [Utah ski areas expect a surge in popularity due to COVID-19 this winter](#). Accessed: 12/11/2020

³¹ Fast Company. [‘Zoom Towns’ are exploding in the West](#). Accessed: 12/11/2020

With COVID-19 cases surging, and an economy struggling to recover from unprecedented setbacks, many policy makers, businesses and individuals face the intractable challenge of decision making under the specter of COVID-19, which has loomed over our society since March. While the Spring was marked by strict lockdowns and harsh economic contractions, Summer 2020 saw welcome improvements in employment, revenue, and consumer activity, among many of our Region 8 communities. This Region 8 Deep Dive was developed by the Region 8 FEMA IRC in order to promote problem solving and integrated, community-based solutions as we begin to navigate the long-term recovery process.

Appendix A: Top 5 Employers in 14 Select Region 8 Counties

#1 Employer	EMP	#2 Employer	EMP	#3 Employer	EMP	#4 Employer	EMP	#5 Employer	EMP
Powdr Corp.	1579	Commonspirit Health (CHI)	638	Vail Resorts, Inc. (Vail Resorts)	585	Resortquest International, Inc.	487	Dundee Resort Development LLC	475
Vail Resorts, Inc. (Vail Resorts)	3889	Lowe Enterprises, Inc.	1595	Eagle County School District Re-50 J	950	Ruffalo Noel Levitz, LLC	868	Vail Clinic, Inc.	749
Vail Resorts, Inc. (Vail Resorts)	438	Aspen Skiing Company, L.L.C.	397	Aspen School District RE 1	302	Silvertree Hotel of Snowmass Limited Partnership	250	Village Property Management	250
Winter Park Recreational Association	250	East Grand School District 2 (inc)	194	Resort Management Group, L.L.c	90	YMCA of The Rockies (Estes Park Center)	88	Ferrellgas Partners, L.P. (FERRELLGAS)	88
Peabody Energy Corporation (Peabody)	350	Walmart Inc. (Walmart)	308	Resort Co of Steamboat Springs	300	Marriott International, Inc. (Marriott)	250	Steamboat Springs School District RE 2	214
Tsg Ski & Golf, LLC (Heritage Apparel)	1000	Mountain Village Metropolitan District	140	Telluride School District R-1	120	Vail Resorts, Inc. (Vail Resorts)	102	The Peaks Resort and Spa Management LLC	100
Vista Outdoor Sales LLC	6000	Bozeman Deaconess Health Services	1950	Yellowstone Club Property Owner	1600	Makar Properties, LLC (Makallon La Jolla Properties)	1189	Boyne Usa, Inc. (Boyne Country)	1091
Kalispell Regional Healthcare System	2810	Grg Enterprises, LLC (Mackenzie River Pizza)	2100	Hjm Landscapers, Inc.	1725	Onpoint Products, Inc. (Qwiktrades)	1500	National Flood Services LLC	653
Memorial Hospital Association	115	Red Lodge Grizzly Peak, Inc	109	Red Lodge School District 1	100	Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth Health System, Inc.	94	Kismet Red, LLC (Cedar Wood Villa)	75
Community Hospital of Anaconda	220	Anaconda School District 10 (Anaconda Public Schools)	160	Wilder Resorts Inc	130	A.W.A.R.E., Inc.	91	Jordan Contracting Inc	80
Autoliv, Inc. (Autoliv)	6616	Weber State University (Wsu)	3485	Weber School District	2900	Intermountain Health Care Inc (IHC Health Services)	1874	Wasatch Property Management, Inc.	1500
Hawk Holding Company, LLC	2000	Amazon.com, Inc. (Amazon.Com)	1614	ASC Utah, Inc. (Canyons, The)	1500	Hotel Cleaning Services, Inc.	1370	Vail Resorts, Inc. (Vail Resorts)	969
Intermountain Health Care Inc	17582	The University of Utah	17389	Huntsman Corporation	7742	Granite School District	7565	The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints	6720
Vail Resorts, Inc. (Vail Resorts)	1075	Jackson Hole Mountain Resort Corporation	764	The Kroger Co (Kroger)	579	Fedex Corporation (Fedex)	498	Teton County Hospital District (St. John's Health)	450

Source: Dunn & Bradstreet PULSE Dashboard