

Business, Economy, and Tourism

Employment rates, availability of vocational education and job training programs; chamber of commerce activities; income levels, numbers of businesses; property value; building permits and tourism rates.

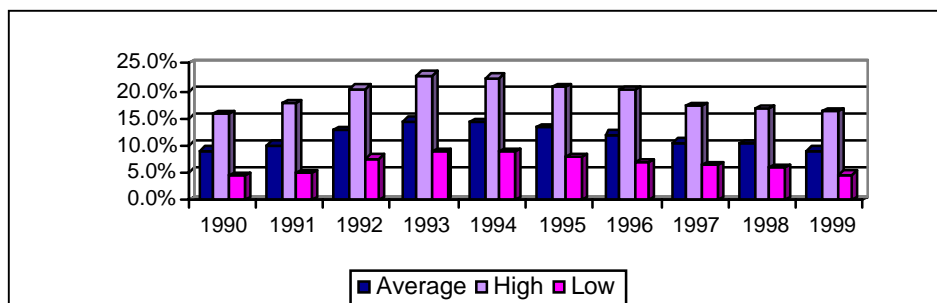
Economic development in the county is a cooperative effort of public and private sector organizations. The County Board of Supervisors supports tourism promotion and economic development through financial support of Plumas Corporation. The Plumas County Community Development Commission is the county's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) operator, providing some housing and infrastructure development throughout the county. The City of Portola is a key partner in this cooperative effort. The Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. is a private nonprofit that administers the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) within Plumas, Lassen and Modoc counties. Feather River Community College provides Associate degrees, various certificate programs and course work in vocational areas. The Regional Occupation Program (through the Plumas Unified School District) provides vocational training and certifications. The four local Chambers of Commerce carry out promotional events and provide other services to members.

A. Employment

Plumas County has historically been dependent on the mining and timber industries. Lying at the northern end of the historic Sierra Nevada gold country, Plumas County maintained a large mining industry in the early part of the twentieth century. Mineral extraction industries still provide a small base of employment but represent only a fraction of their turn of the century size and are not a major factor in the local employment picture. The county also contains the headwaters of the Feather River as well as a complex of hydroelectric facilities. The Feather River provides most of the water to the State Water Project for transport to Southern California via the California Aqueduct.

Plumas County has the highest unemployment rate in the region, due in part to the recession in the timber industry. The problem is compounded by the lack of educational attainment: over 18% of the population over 25 years of age has not completed the twelfth grade. Chart 1 shows the wide range in unemployment in the county throughout the 1990s. Because there is so much seasonal work, unemployment can range from less than 10% to more than 20% in one year.

Chart 1: Unemployment in Plumas County, High, Low & Annual Average, 1990–99



Source: California Employment Development Department, Labor Force Statistics.

More than 20% of the work force is employed in the government and education sectors, approximately 10% is employed by the lumber manufacturing sector, and 20% is employed in service industries. The largest employers in Plumas County in descending order are Plumas Unified School District (400 employees); US Forest Service (359); Plumas County Government (333); Collins Pine Mill (332); Sierra Pacific Industries Mill (209) and Union Pacific Railroad (165). The biggest economic support in Plumas County other than government is the forest industry, even though it is shrinking, and tourism.

The timber industry has experienced declining employment because of labor saving technological changes and reduction in availability of raw materials from public and private timber lands. Recently, the Plumas National Forest has had to ensure that all timber sales meet guidelines designed to maintain the viability of the California Spotted Owl as well as fur bearing animals. Consequently, that, combined with Forest Service policy changes, has led to a reduction of output, resulting in substantially lower harvest levels and reductions in the Plumas National Forest labor force (40%). Timber harvest on federal lands decreased 75% during the 1990s. (1999 Herger-Feinstein Quincy Library Group FEIS.) In addition, there are a number of animals and plants on the endangered and sensitive species, that may cause additional reductions in the federal timber sale programs. Proposed Roadless Area Review Transportation Policy, 219 The region wide Sierra Nevada Environmental Impact Statement from the USFS also will modify forest practices beginning in 2001.

The level of civilian employment has grown from 7,030 in 1993 to 9,150 in 1998, according to the California Employment Development Department (EDD). This represents an employment growth rate (30%) that is slightly higher than the population growth rate (24%). The primary growth sectors have been service producing (45% increase). Key components of these increases have been wholesale trade (60 to 190 employees); retail trade (850 to 1,350 employees); and other services (770 to 910 employees from 1992 to 1997). A good portion of this increase has been in the tourism industry. Government employment has also increased during the fifteen year period (33% increase from 1,650 to 2,340). Declines in federal employment have been more than offset by increases in employment by various local governments. The goods

producing sector (primarily lumber mills) declined overall from 1,300 in 1983 to 880 in 1997. Regionally job growth was projected to be led by correctional officers (57%) between 1993 and 2000. (EDD Report.) This type of employment was projected to be followed by retail and tourism-related occupations, such as retail sales (25%); cashiers (29%), food prep workers (20%), wait staff (20%), stock clerks (40%), and cooks (25%). Mechanics (32%) and truck drivers (19%) were also expected to experience large gains. A few other classifications, such as instructional aides and office clerks, were also predicted to increase. Table 1 below shows the rise in employment in the public sector, offset by a similar decrease in the manufacturing sector.

Table 1: Employment by Sector

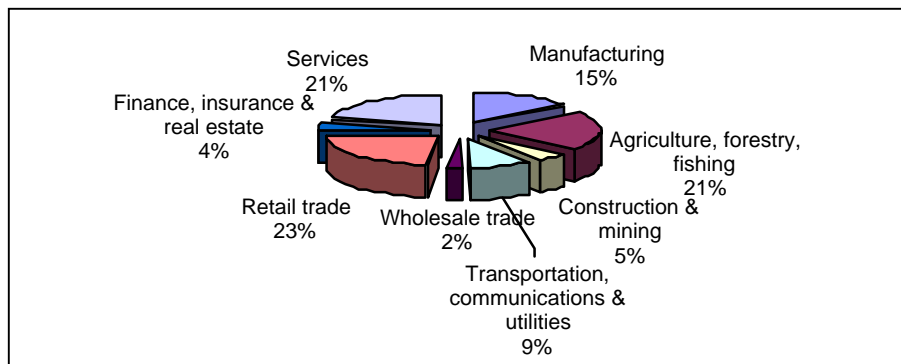
Sector	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Public	2,150	2,090	2,060	2,010	2,000	2,020	2,220	2,280	2,260
Manufacturing	980	850	680	750	740	790	820	880	

Source: Quincy Library Group, Final Environmental Impact Statement, Appendix S.

Industry Projections Information – Plumas County 1995 – 2002, issued by EDD painted a somewhat different picture for Plumas County alone. This 1997 report concurred with the predicted regional growth sectors such as other services, restaurants, and food stores, but also predicted continued growth in wholesale trade and continued recovery in manufacturing. This study predicted a total job growth of 335 in Plumas County between 1997 and 2002. The industries predicted to increase during the period in order of increase are manufacturing, food stores, other services, health services, wholesale trade, local government, communications/public utilities, and restaurants

Chart 1 shows employment by type within the private sector in 1998. Retail trade (23%) and renewable land uses (21%) had almost half of all employment.

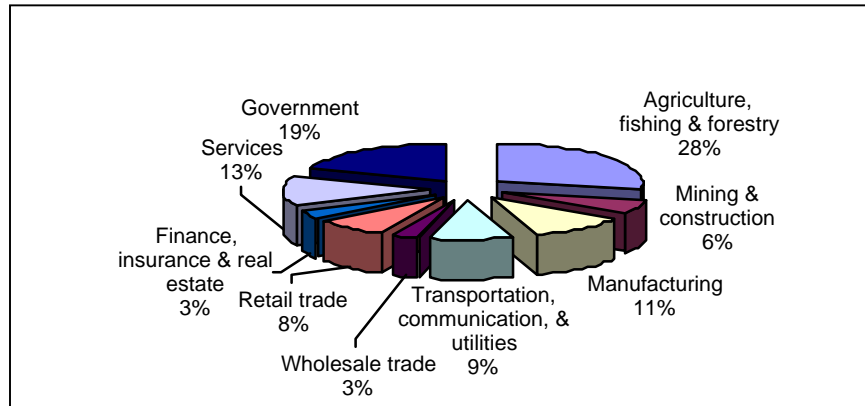
Chart 1: Employment in Private Sector, 1998, by Percent



Source: Quincy Library Group, Final Environmental Impact Statement, Appendix S.

When employment by industry is compared to total income by industry in Chart 2, it is interesting to note that while retail trade employees are 23% of private sector workers, it has only 8% of all income.

Chart 2: Total Income by Industry, 1996, by Percent



Source: Quincy Library Group, Final Environmental Impact Statement, Appendix S.

The quality of the workforce in Plumas County is dependent on the education and experience of the individual workers as well as the collaboration and coordination efforts between the job-training providers, economic development agencies and employers. In acknowledgement of that, Plumas County has a rich collaboration of partners in workforce development. The Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD) is regional nonprofit collaborative providing universal access to a comprehensive array of workforce development services and fostering the enhancement of quality-of-life throughout the county. It is at the core of activity to provide job training and career assessment services to economically disadvantaged people, re-entry adults and workers affected by business closures or downsizing.

AFWD is co-located with partner agencies at the Employment & Training Center, Plumas' One-Stop Center. The center is a collaboration of employment and training programs that are co-located in one location or electronically linked. Emphasis is on providing the customers a mix of services to meet Plumas County workforce needs of job seekers and businesses. Plumas partner agencies include, but are not limited to Employment Development Department, CalWORKS, Feather River College, Department of Mental Health, Plumas Rural Services, Plumas Unified School District and Plumas Office of Education, Computers in Our Future, and Green Thumb. AFWD also provides community coordination services with a focus on increased collaboration between economic development and workforce development programs.

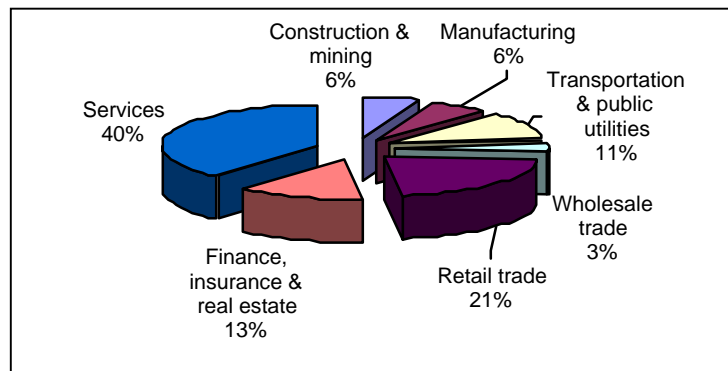
B. Business and Sales

Business. The number of companies has increased by 53% over the past twenty years. There are four Chambers of Commerce representing Chester/Lake Almanor, Indian Valley/Greenville, Eastern Plumas/Portola, and Quincy. The local Chambers work

cooperatively with the Plumas Corporation and the Visitors Bureau focusing their activities on five major areas: tourism promotion, retail promotion, business retention, expansion and attraction, informational services and promoting community activities and services. Each of the Chambers also works closely with the AFD, Small Business Development Center and the EDD in efforts to provide labor market information and business assistance services to members.

Sales. The transportation and services industry sectors are strong, while the wholesale trade and construction industry sectors are relatively weaker, as can be seen in Chart 3. The economy of the area is typical of a consumer-based economy. About 42% of all sales are subject to state sales tax, whereas only about 11% of the state's sales are subject. Sales tax is applied to goods considered non-essential consumer goods. Plumas County had \$157,297 in 1997, an increase of 18% since 1990.

Chart 3: Sales by Industry Sector, Percent of Total Sales, 1998



Source: QLG Appendix S.

The National Forests have a substantial impact on regional sales figures. They bring 6.1 million visitor days to Plumas National Forest, which is popular for camping, summer sports, fishing, and nature study. Nearly all visitors who come to the National Forests in the region spend money.

Agriculture and Forestry. The Department of Agriculture for Plumas and Sierra counties shows a minor increase in the value of agricultural production between 1997 and 1998 in aggregate, with variations across crops, as can be seen in Table 2. The total value of all livestock, field crops and miscellaneous crops was \$15,400,275, up from \$15,392,530 in 1997. Livestock value increased slightly, due entirely to increased price, as the number of head of cattle fell from 1997 to 1998. The amount of acreage devoted to field crops dropped 1,000 from 164,350 acres to 163,350 in 1998. The value of grain hay fell dramatically from \$216,000 to \$108,000, due both to a drop in price and in production. The value of timber products dropped 29%, as the timber harvest dropped by 31%.

Table 2: Value of Agricultural Products, 1997 - 98

	1998	1997	Percent Change
Cattle and Calves	\$ 9,549,475	\$ 9,453,760	1%
Other Livestock	\$ 120,000	\$ 118,000	2%
Total Livestock	\$ 9,669,475	\$ 9,571,760	1%
Field Crops			
Alfalfa Hay	\$ 1,254,000	\$ 1,686,300	-26%
Meadow Hay	\$ 1,179,000	\$ 913,770	29%
Grain Hay	\$ 108,000	\$ 216,000	-50%
Irrigated Pasture	\$ 1,700,000	\$ 1,750,000	-3%
Meadow Pasture	\$ 765,000	\$ 663,000	15%
Range Pasture	\$ 264,800	\$ 231,700	14%
Total Field Crops	\$ 5,270,800	\$ 5,460,770	-3%
Miscellaneous Crops	\$ 460,000	\$ 360,000	28%
Total Crops	\$ 5,730,800	\$ 5,820,770	-2%
Grand Total	\$ 15,400,275	\$ 15,392,530	0%
Timber			
Gross Timber Harvest	\$ 32,528,441	\$ 46,097,875	-29%
Miscellaneous Timber Products	\$ 1,212,474	NA	NA
Total Timber Products	\$ 32,528,441	\$ 47,310,349	-31%

Source: Plumas-Sierra Counties Department of Agriculture, 1998 Annual Crop and Livestock Report.

C. Tourism

Because tourism is such an important aspect of economic activity and the environment within the county, Plumas Corporation has sponsored a number of studies and plans to enhance its effects. Plumas County is teeming with fish and game and recreational opportunities. The county draws a large economic benefit from tourists drawn to these natural attractions. According to the Tourist Action Plan of 1995, a total of \$117,545,000 was spent on tourism in the county in 1992, including a payroll of \$18.1 million, employing 1,800 people, and providing tax receipts of \$1.47 million. According to the Strategic Marketing Plan for Northern California Tourism and Outdoor Recreation: A Sourcebook for Tourism and Recreation Planners, the total spent on tourism increased in 1993 to \$123,396,000 (a 5% increase), with a payroll of \$19.2 million (6% increase), employing 1,957 people (9% increase). Vacation homes were the type of accommodation which had the largest impact on the economy, accounting for one-third of all jobs resulting from tourism. The vacation residents spend more than visitors staying in hotels, motels, bed and breakfast inns, and private campgrounds combined. Ground transportation accounts for the single largest expenditure, followed by eating/drinking establishments, retail outlets, and accommodations.

The Plumas County Visitor's Bureau of Plumas Corporation sponsored a **County of Plumas Tourist Marketing Plan** in 1996. This report, after reviewing previous reports,

analyzing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, and describing the partners, named goals. These include:

1. Strengthen tourism partnerships by identifying common goals and encouraging more communication, cooperation, and coordination.
2. Encourage a climate of hospitality.
3. Continuously improve the tourism product, including infrastructure, facilities, and attractions. Encourage local ownership and management; discourage economic leakage from the county and the region.
4. Maximize the effectiveness of both financial and human resources through targeted marketing strategies.
5. Minimize the extremes of the seasonal cycles of the tourism industry in Plumas County.
6. Diversify the economy, avoid dependence on a single industry.

The 1995 ***Tourism Action Plan for Portola*** developed strategies with six objectives for Community Revitalization, the Railroad Museum, River Development, and Regional Tourism.

Community Revitalization:

Objective 1: Foster a sense of community in which there is a healthy interaction among all segments and a recognition of the interdependency that exists at all levels in Portola and the surrounding region.

Objective 2: Diversify the economy of Portola.

Objective 3: Upgrade Old Town (south of Gulling St. Bridge)

Railroad Museum

Objective 4: Begin the process of transitioning from an all-volunteer museum operation to an organization that can meet the growing demands commensurate with its international reputation.

River Development

Objective 5: Respectfully integrate the Middle Fork into the community.

Regional Tourism

Objective 6: Increase the impact of tourism in Portola by building upon the community's strength.

The ***Master Plan of the Portola Railroad Museum***, developed in October 1999, sponsored by the City of Portola, Plumas Corporation and the US Forest Service, links plans for the physical design of the Museum with funding and action strategies. The Railroad Museum is a star attraction for tourists visiting Plumas County and the City of Portola. The plan preserves and enhances its importance as a tourist attraction, while realizing untapped potential. The study contains an analysis of the existing conditions at the Museum, the organization and strategic weaknesses of the Feather River Rail Society, with a view to improving them; the site is evaluated in terms of potential synergy with the surrounding community; a statement of the current needs and future aspirations is presented in priority order; and a master plan for the physical

development, including an overview of the eventual build-out of the site, a road map for getting there, and a schedule for phasing in development. The plan integrates three major planning priorities: safety and functionality, aesthetics, and enrichment of the visitor experience. A primary concern, echoed in other reports, is to take the step to move from a voluntary staff to a professional museum, and the accompanying costs and investments required to achieve that.

Greenville produced *Visions of the Historic Greenville Railroad Depot* in November 1999. The citizens of Greenville have expressed a great deal of enthusiasm and commitment to restoring the Depot, returning it to productive use after remaining vacant for a number of years. Two community meetings were held in 1999, producing a large range of ideas for uses. These ranged from commercial (restaurant, bar, theatre, fitness center, RV park, equestrian center, depot for tourist train) to community uses (community center, theatre, wedding chapel, fine arts center, art co-op, craft center, youth hostel, youth center, museum, farmer's market, agency offices). The report recommends that the community grow into the building on an incremental basis, as more funding becomes available for reconstruction over time. The overall tenets for phasing the work are to protect the historic portions of the building, render the building useful in the most efficient and quickest means possible, and work realistically within funding and volunteer time limitations.

D. Potential Development

As a result of the county's lower cost of living, unskilled and skilled labor costs make Plumas County a particularly competitive place to locate a business, as does the cost of land and buildings. Transportation costs for items which do not use local natural resources make it prohibitively expensive for companies which produce low value products. On the other hand, small package delivery services are particularly cost effective and are a competitive advantage for businesses which rely on such a service. (1994 Economic Development Plan.)

Plumas Corporation conducted a *Business Retention and Expansion Survey* in 1996. The needs most often identified by those businesses were access to capital, business counseling, improved educational system, streamlined local government, improved quality of labor force, and physical clean-up of area.

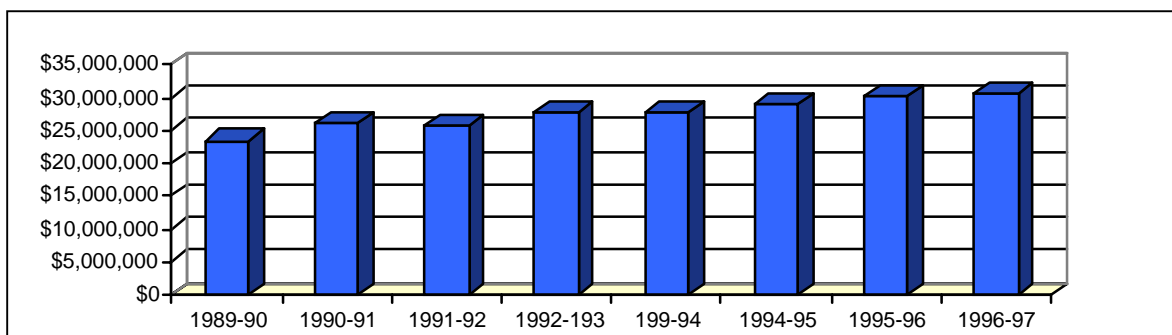
Plumas Corporation also sponsored a *Fiber Optics Feasibility Study* in 1996, to explore the best options for improving fiber optic telecommunication technology in the county, and in so doing, improve the ability to attract new business to the area. The focus was on data communications and job creation. The consultants proposed a phased fourteen step implementation plan starting with the formation of an organized group to pursue improved communications capabilities, chartered to develop a specific plan for the capabilities needed and targets for economic opportunity. The other basic recommendation was to improve the existing system, at a relatively small cost, rather than invest resources without a realistic rate of return.

Plumas Corporation sponsored an **Ethanol Feasibility Study** in 1997, which studied critical issues related to how biomass resources in the forests are used and managed. The Quincy Library Group proposed a plan to strategically thin the forests to reduce fire danger, improve forest health, and restore ecosystem balance. The feasibility study proposed converting biomass to fuel ethanol and cogenerated electricity. A modest sized forest biomass to ethanol demonstration plant would create at least 28 direct jobs at the plant if it is co-located with an existing biomass electricity energy plant. Additional jobs would be created if a biomass electric energy plant was built along with the ethanol manufacturing facility. The production of forest biomass feedstock for this plant would require employment of 63-100 additional employees to gather, process, and transport the cellulose material to the plant. These 91-128 direct jobs would result in an additional 93-122 indirect or multiplier jobs, thus generating between 184-250 total jobs. Plumas Corporation and Collins Pine Company are currently involved in a major (>\$2 million) Research and Development effort, using state, federal and private funds, to determine whether such an ethanol facility should be built in Chester.

E. Public Finance (County Revenues and Expenditures)

Because federal legislation requires that 25% of all forest receipts from public lands be equally divided between roads and schools in the county in which they are generated, timber revenues strongly affect the county budget. The state also supplements county budgets by providing timber yield tax revenue, collected from the harvest of timber on private lands. The region is highly dependent on timber yield and forest reserve revenues, which supply about 5% of the revenues. Transient occupancy tax plays a larger role on the revenues of the region than in the state. As can be seen from the three charts below, total public revenues rose steadily between 1989 – 1997, although timber revenues fluctuated, and started to drop in 1994. However, transient occupancy tax rose until 1996-97, more than enough to make up for the difference. Charts 4 and 5 show public revenue between 1989 and 1997. While total revenue rose consistently, the proportion that came from forest reserve revenues dropped considerably.

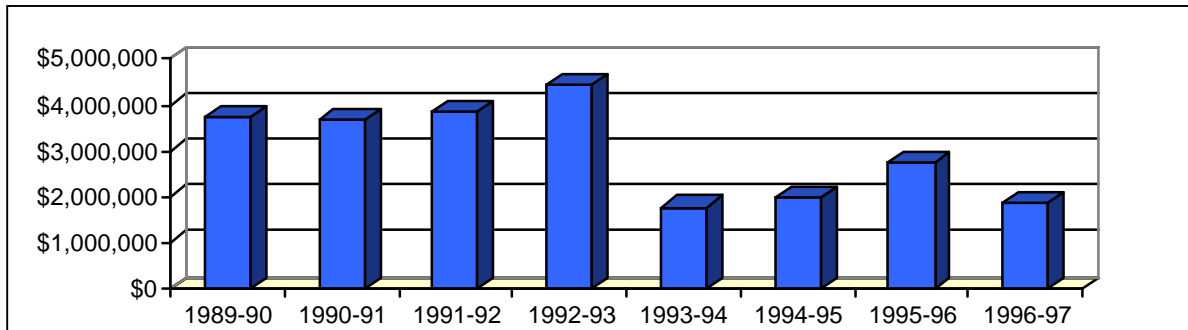
Chart 4: Total County Revenue



Source: QLG, Final Environmental Impact Statement, Appendix S.

Forest reserve revenue dropped by almost 50% between 1989 and 1997, from \$3,75,449 to 1,865,420. This is a smaller decline than in the region as a whole, which lost about 57% of its revenues, but a larger decline than the state as a whole, which lost about 46%.

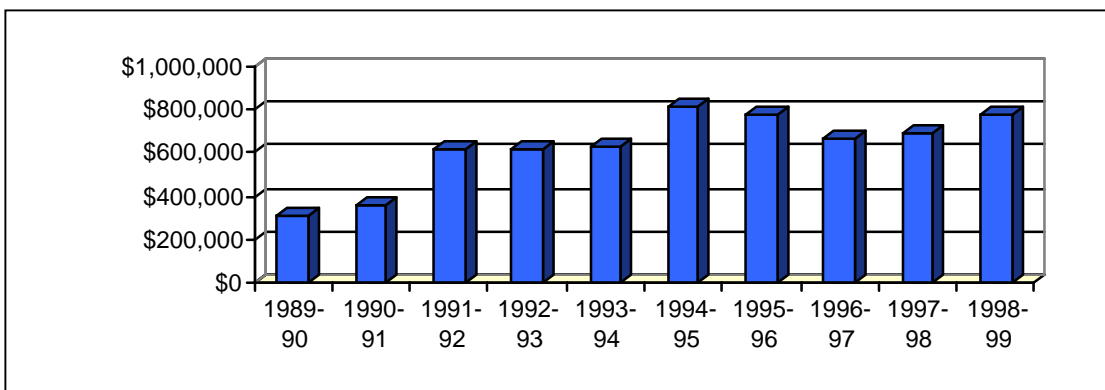
Chart 5: Forest Reserve Revenues, 1989 - 97



Source: QLG, Final Environmental Impact Statement, Appendix S.

Transient Occupancy Tax Revenue. The transient occupancy tax is a levy generated by overnight occupancy income such as hotel and campground fees. Transient occupancy tax is controlled exclusively by the county, with no state requirements or mandates. This tax is a general indicator of tourism activity levels. In Plumas County, the revenue rose from \$316,557 in 1989-90 to \$664,433 in 1996-97. However, the tax income was higher in the early 1990s, as can be seen in Chart 6, showing a possible decline in tourist activity. In 1994-95, tax was imposed on campgrounds, which explains the increase.

Chart 6: Transient Occupancy Revenues, 1989 –97



Source: QLG, Final Environmental Impact Statement, Appendix S.

Public Expenditures. Health and sanitation expenditures include public health, medical care, mental health, drug and alcohol abuse services, and environmental health costs. Fire and police expenditures have increased faster in the region than in the state. Between 1989 and 1997, public health expenditures increased from \$1,885,000 to \$3,936,000, an increase of 109%, about 10% larger increase than the state as a whole.

Public assistance expenditures fluctuated somewhat between 1989 and 1997, although never more than 5%. Over the course of those eight years, it started and ended in almost exactly the same place: \$5,7 million.

Public road maintenance is a problem for most rural areas. Even with 50% of revenue from timber receipts mandated to go to public roadways, rural areas can barely maintain their roads. Thus, in the 1990s, Plumas County spent all of its road funds on maintenance, although these funds can legitimately be spent on amenities such as public transportation, bikeways, and other alternative transportation forms. (QLG.) This insufficiency of road funding propels the county into a continuing search for additional revenue sources. The size and reliance on its natural resources requires the county to allocate additional financial resources to its roadways. Between 1990 and 1998, road expenditures ranged from 16 to 21% of the county budget, more than five times the average for the state. Recent federal legislation will begin to provide additional federal funds to county roads (and schools) beginning in late 2001.

Community Input

Residents of each community in the county participated in community meetings or completed surveys which were tabulated separately for adults and teens. At the community meetings, each participant was asked to name key issues in fourteen areas and then to prioritize their top five local and top three countywide priorities, by using red dots for local and blue dots for countywide priorities. Therefore the number of times an item was mentioned in a community meeting would not match the number of dots. Respondents to the surveys were asked to comment on each of the fourteen areas and to set three priorities for local and countywide improvements. The survey totals show the number of times a topic was commented upon in a survey. Each respondent had several opportunities to comment on each area and generally took that opportunity. The number does not address the range of comments within a topic, for instance, “promote tourism” and “limit tourism” or simply the comment “yes.” The “total” column adds up all the dots, participants and responses from the surveys. Each response was counted and reported in Table 3.

Table 3: Comparison of Input about Business, Economics and Tourism from Community Meetings and Adult and Teen Surveys, by Community

	Community Meetings			Adult Survey	Teen Surveys	Total
	Red	Blue	#			
Chester/Lake Almanor	51	21	98	103	174	447
Indian Valley	17	15	20	70		122
Mohawk Valley	31	6	34	99	7	711
Portola	24	21	46	72	23	186
Quincy	22	3	22	52	612	186

Table 4 shows the number of responses in the subtopics mentioned most frequently in the area of business, tourism and economics, by community and type of input. They are listed in the order of most frequently mentioned, from most frequently to least.

Table 4: Most Frequently Raised Issues within Business, Tourism and Economics, by Community and Type of Input

CM = Community Meetings T = Teen Surveys A = Adult Surveys	Total			Chester/Lake Almanor			Indian Valley			Mohawk Valley			Portola			Quincy		
	CM	A	T	CM	A	T	CM	A	T	CM	A	T	CM	A	T	CM	A	T
More stores	9	71	154	5	1	34				2	27	1	1	39	9	1	4	110
More jobs	12	32	146	7	6	8	0	8	0	2	0	0	2	11	0	1	7	138
Fast food places	17	3	91	17		36						1		3	14			40
Malls	14	7	87	13		54				1	3			3	10		1	23
Restaurants (not fast food)	1	8	78		1	35		1			3		1	2			1	43
More businesses	4	12	68		3	6		3		1	1	2			1	3	5	59
Incentives/Government assistance to business	43	38	0	8	4		8	4		1	9		20	12		6	9	
Promote tourism	24	29	16	3	5		2	4		7	13	2	11	2		1	5	14
High tech/clean industries	32	30	1	11	3		4	11		11	9		2	5		4	2	1
Planning	13	30	2	6						1	18			2		6	10	2
Tourist activities	15	9	22	8	4		1	1		1	1		5	2			1	22
More clothing stores	6	10	24	3		2				1	3		2	4	2		3	20
Clean up/beautification	3	20	11	2	1	5	1	8			4						7	6
Limit tourism	4	10	19	1	4	5		1		1	2			3		2		14
Eco/outdoor tourism	11	16	5	2	3	1	2	3		2			4	7		1	3	4
Chain stores	2	5	25			8					5		2					17
More lodgings	16	12	2	11	3	1		6		2	1		3	1			1	1
No chain stores	10	6	0					2		10	3			1				
Transportation	22	7	1	6	2	1	1	3		1	1		14	1				
Year round economy	6	13	0	5	5					1	1			7				

Detail of categories in Table 4:

Please note that the top named topics were those mentioned most by teens.

- More stores: mention of stores, including grocery stores and markets.
- More jobs: for adults and youth.
- Fast food places: the range of possible fast food places was listed.
- Malls: requests for malls, particularly to decrease driving time.
- Restaurants (not fast food): much of these were to help with tourism.
- More businesses: this included any mention of bringing more business into the County.
- Incentives/Government assistance to business: this included any mention of tax breaks or other assistance government could provide to bring in more business or support existing business.
- Promote tourism: this included print, internet, advertising, enhanced events.
- High tech/clean industries: this included internet and light industry.
- Planning: this related to business specifically. Please see the monograph on Environment and Land Use Planning for more information.
- Tourist activities: this included events, recreation, activities specifically for tourists.
- More clothing stores: this included children and adult clothing.
- Clean up/beautification: this included cleaning up the local areas, regulations to require standards on private lots and in public spaces, architectural suggestions, and general attractiveness of particular areas.
- Limit tourism: this included comments about limiting building up and maintaining services for the year round residents. It also included issues about the need for a year round economy.
- Eco/outdoor tourism: this included comments specifically regarding environmental or outdoor recreation in relation to tourism.
- Chain stores: many teens wanted chain stores, especially naming Wal-mart's.
- More lodgings: this related to hotels, motels, campgrounds, etc.
- No chain stores: these were mainly adults wishing to preserve the culture of the community.
- Transportation: this was primarily in relation to the airport and transportation in and out of the County.
- Year round economy: this overlaps somewhat with the "limit tourism" category, although these comments were not specifically about tourism, rather for the need for the year round economy.

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