

Nev. expects population to keep growing

Given Nevada's current levels of employment and the potential for growth, the projections are for a statewide increase of 528,107 people in the next 20 years.

Broken out by region, Clark County could experience an increase of 328,379 people; Washoe County an increase of 147,422 people; and other northwest counties (Carson City, Churchill, Douglas, Lyon, and Storey Counties) could see population increase of 44,034. The counties along Interstate 80 (Elko, Eureka, Humboldt, Lander and Pershing Counties) could see an increase of 5,854 people and the balance of the state (Esmeralda, Lincoln, Mineral, Nye and White Pine Counties) could see an increase of 2,409 people.

The Nevada State Demographer's Office at UNR released its most recent population projections for Nevada this week.

"Nevada was hit by three major economic factors in the last decade: the housing bubble, the spike in fuel prices and the financial crisis; yet we grew by 35 percent from 2000 to 2010," Jeff Hardcastle, state demographer, said in a statement. "We are recovering and could end up growing by more than 290,000 from 2000 to 2020, which is roughly equal to the last year's estimated population of Boulder City and Henderson."

Models allows Hardcastle to consider the historic relationship between the Nevada economy and demographic composition of the state and how that relates to national changes as well as changes in counties throughout the state.

"In looking at Nevada compared to the rest of the country and surrounding states, Nevada continues to lag behind in job growth, but that is changing," Hardcastle said. "Since the

bottom of employment for Nevada in September 2010, we have regained 58.6 percent of the jobs that had been lost, almost half of that in the past year. Our annual job growth rate has been 2.5 percent since the bottom and is only exceeded by Utah for the states surrounding us. For the period between 2013 and 2020, we expect the annualized rate to be 1.8 percent with a recovery of the number of jobs lost by 2016. The growth in jobs will exceed the growth in the labor force so there may be more opportunity for people looking to reenter the labor force.”

“No matter how we look at it, gaming continues to be the biggest driver for employment in Nevada,” said Hardcastle. “But it is becoming more competitive across the country for the tourist dollar in general.”

Accommodation and food services and arts, entertainment and recreation currently make up more than 353,000 jobs. Hardcastle expects to see gains in manufacturing over the long term, but the other sectors with greater growth will be in construction, administrative and management services. The next two largest sectors, health care and retail combined, equal 279,000 jobs.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report