

## Utah's Land Regions

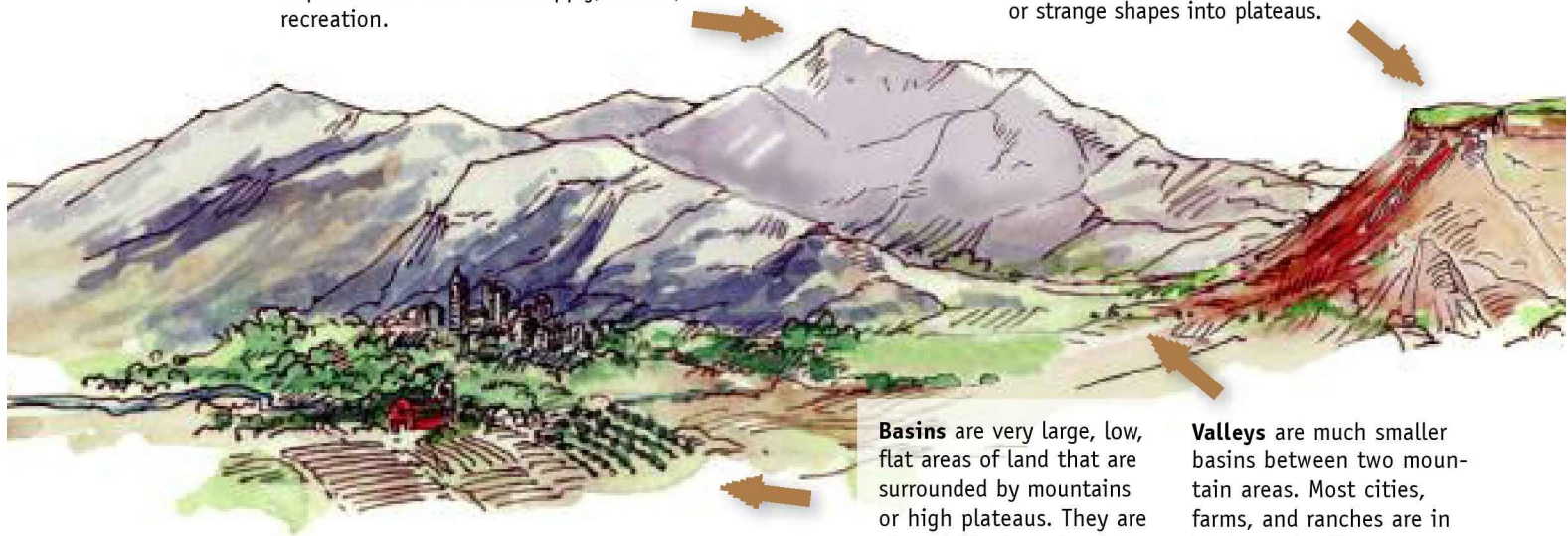
Geographers divide large land areas of the world into smaller parts called regions. A region can be large or small. You can live in many regions at the same time. There are political regions such as voting districts, counties, states, and countries. There are agricultural regions where crops are grown or cattle and sheep graze. There are mining regions.

In Utah, three major landform regions of the western United States meet. The major landforms of the regions are **basins** (wide bowl-shaped areas), **plateaus** (high, wide, flat areas), and mountains. Each region is made up of one main kind of landform but may also contain others. See page 25 for a map of Utah's rivers, mountain ranges, and plateaus.

*A landform is a natural feature of the earth's surface.*

**Mountains** are very high land formations with large bases and small peaks. A long line of mountains is a mountain range. They are very important for our water supply, timber, and recreation.

**Plateaus** are high, wide, flat areas that often end with steep cliffs. They look like tables or wide steps many miles across. Wind and water often cut deep canyons or strange shapes into plateaus.



**Basins** are very large, low, flat areas of land that are surrounded by mountains or high plateaus. They are shaped like huge bowls.

**Valleys** are much smaller basins between two mountain areas. Most cities, farms, and ranches are in basins and valleys.



---

# The Rocky Mountain Region

This region contains the Wasatch and Uinta Mountain Ranges. They are part of the larger Rocky Mountains that run from Alaska to New Mexico.

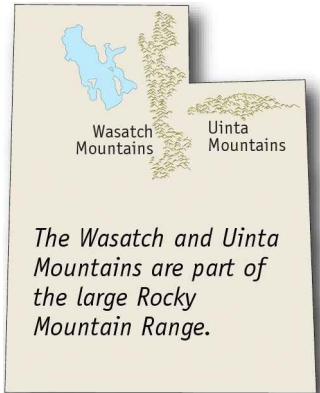
Most of the mountains are covered with forests that shelter wild animals and have hundreds of small lakes, streams, campgrounds, and hiking trails. People backpack in the remote areas of the Uintas. Kings Peak, the state's highest peak, at 13,528 feet, is part of the Uinta Mountains.



Snow in the Wasatch Mountains provides some of the best powder skiing and snowboarding in the world and makes this region a popular tourist destination. The tourists pay for hotel rooms, food, and recreation, which helps Utah's economy.

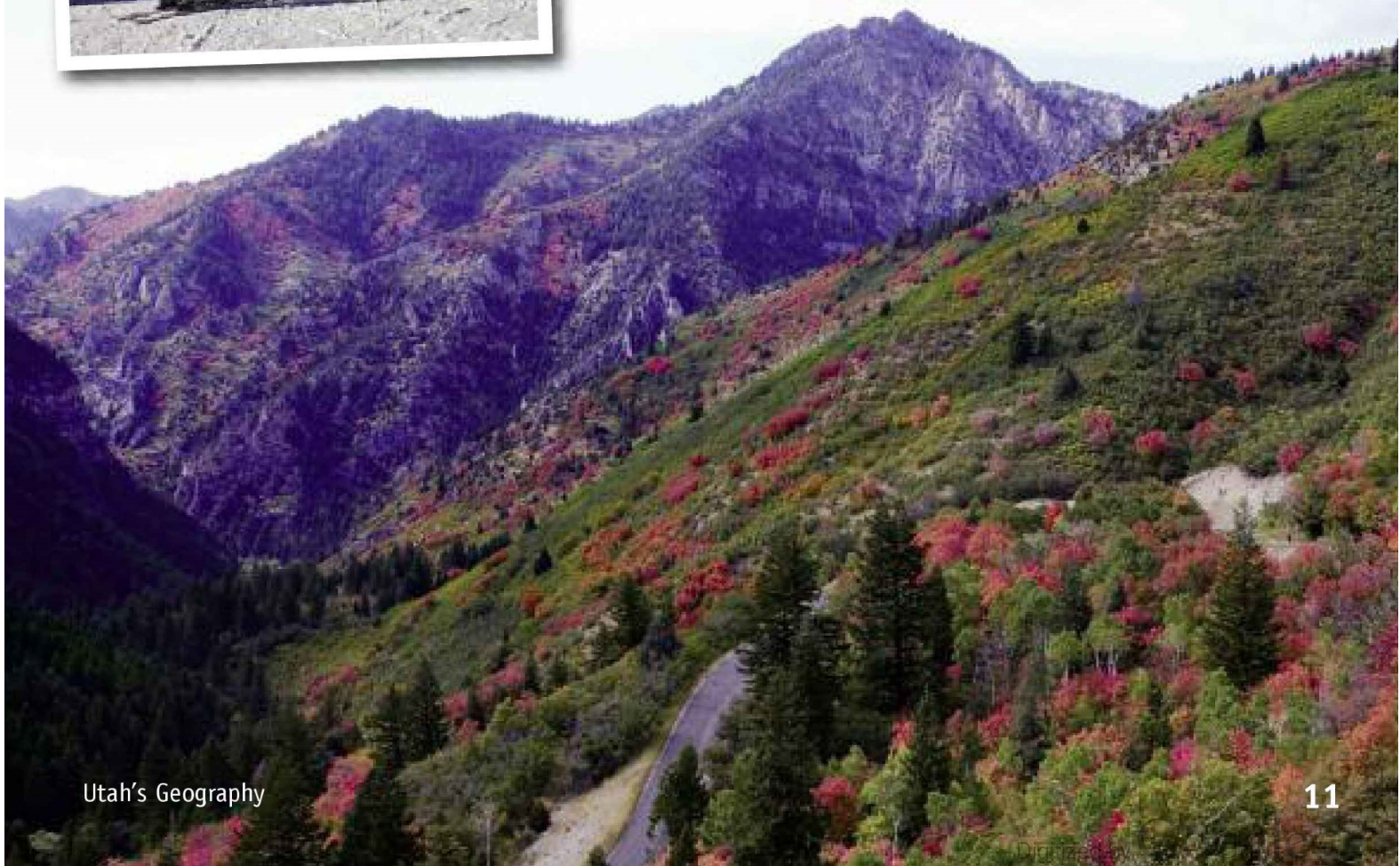
The mountains are the most important water source for cities and farms in the valleys below. Melted snow runs down in streams and is stored in reservoirs and lakes. Some mountain valleys are wide enough for small farming and recreational communities. Ranchers take advantage of the natural plant growth to raise cattle and sheep in the valleys.

There is still a rich supply of coal, copper, silver, gold, and other minerals in Utah's mountains. Mining provides jobs for Utah's people. Our minerals are refined here and sold across the world, helping our economy. Many mountain towns were once mining communities where men came to "strike it rich." After all of the minerals were taken from the ground, many of these towns were turned into ski resorts.



---

*If you watch a weather report on television, you often hear the term "Wasatch Front." This term refers to the communities along the west side of the Wasatch Mountains. A newer term for towns such as Morgan, Coalville, Park City, and Heber City is the "Wasatch Back."*





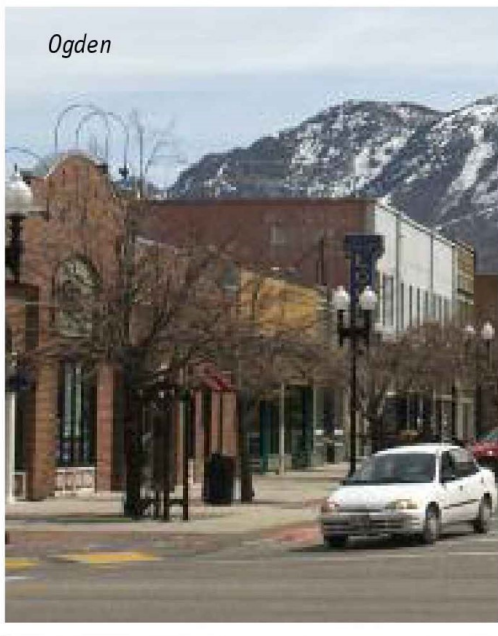


Salt Lake City

## The Great Basin Region

This huge land region is part of America's western dry desert region. The Great Basin is like a large, flat bowl with many small mountain ranges in the bowl. It has no river outlet to the Pacific Ocean. In Utah, streams and rivers from the bordering mountain region run to lower parts of the valley floor and fill them with water, forming Utah Lake and the Great Salt Lake.

Most of Utah's largest cities and towns are in the basin. Why do people live in such a dry desert region? They live on the edge of the flat, fertile basin near the mountains. Outside the towns, farms cover much of the land. Irrigation ditches bring water for crops and animals. Industries in the basin provide jobs and products people need. You will read more about jobs and products in later chapters of this book.



Ogden

*Salt Lake City, Provo, and Ogden, the state's three largest cities, are on the edge of the Great Basin. What physical features do you see in these photographs?*



### Activity | My Kind of Town

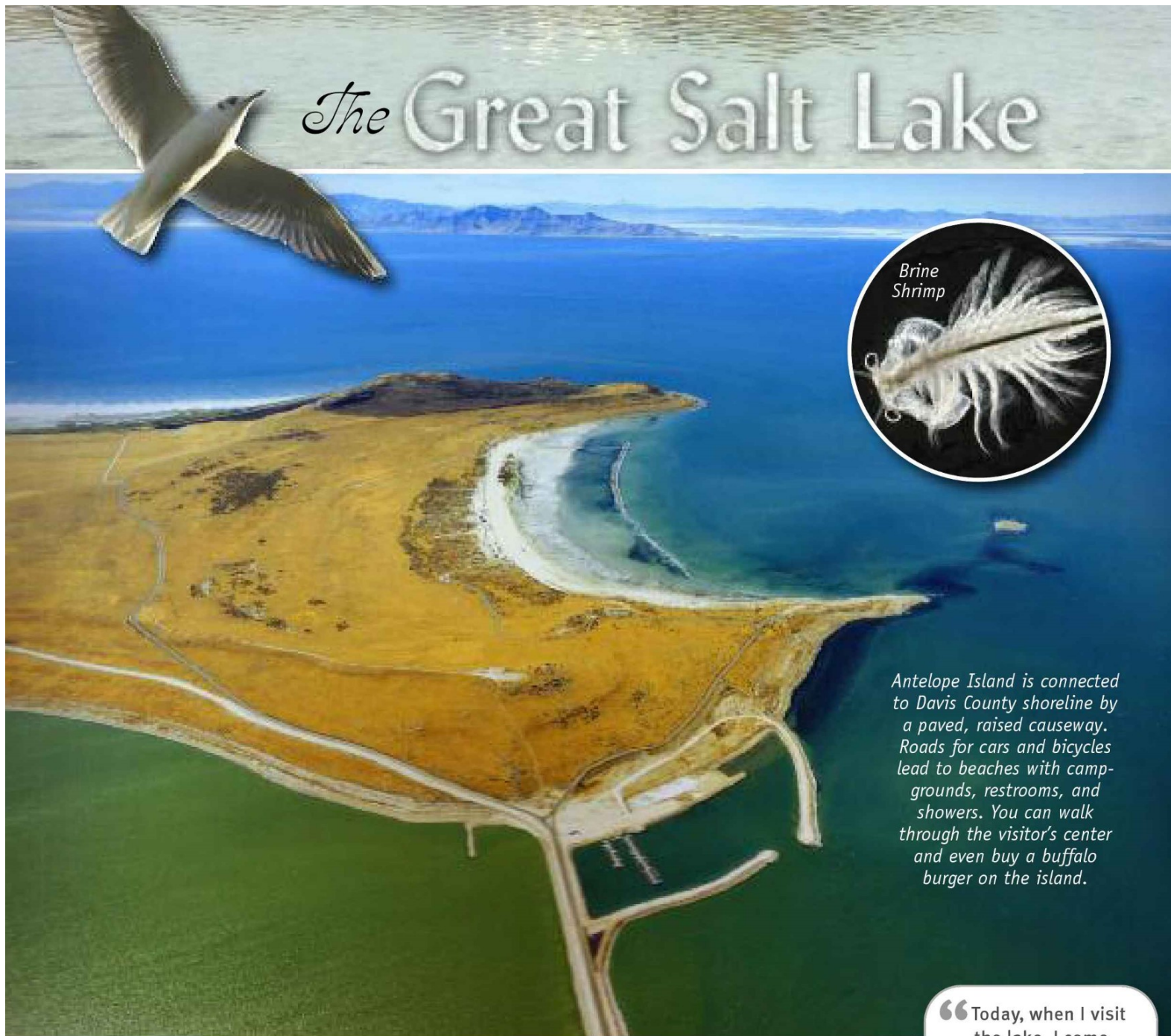
Choose a town or city and learn more about it by writing a letter to the local Chamber of Commerce or researching sources on the Internet or in your town's library. What land features are in or around it? How do people in the town earn a living? How has the town changed in the last 10, 50, or 100 years? Think of an interesting way to present your town to the class.

Provo and Utah Lake.





# *The* Great Salt Lake



Brine Shrimp

*Antelope Island is connected to Davis County shoreline by a paved, raised causeway. Roads for cars and bicycles lead to beaches with campgrounds, restrooms, and showers. You can walk through the visitor's center and even buy a buffalo burger on the island.*

Utah's largest body of water, the Great Salt Lake, is part of the Great Basin Region. It is a very shallow lake. The Weber River (after being joined by the Ogden River) flows directly into the lake. The 500-mile-long Bear River receives water from several **tributaries** before flowing into the lake. The Jordan River flows directly from Utah Lake. It also carries water from many tributaries. These rivers carry in salt and other minerals, but there are no rivers to carry the salt out. That is why the lake is so salty. It is three to six times saltier than

any of the oceans. It is so salty that no fish can live in it—only small brine shrimp.

The Great Salt Lake has always been important to people in Utah. Native Americans lived near the lake to catch the ducks and birds that nested along its shores.

No one lives on the lake's islands today, but a raised road now connects Antelope Island to Davis County. One of Utah's two buffalo herds lives on the island. The island is a great place to wade and float in the water, watch seagulls, hike or bike, and admire a sunset.

“Today, when I visit the lake, I come body, soul and mind intact. And off I go, a happy, skipping vagabond, exploring the mysteries and discovering no end of natural wonders found on the Great Salt Lake. ”

—Ella Sorensen





## The Colorado Plateau Region

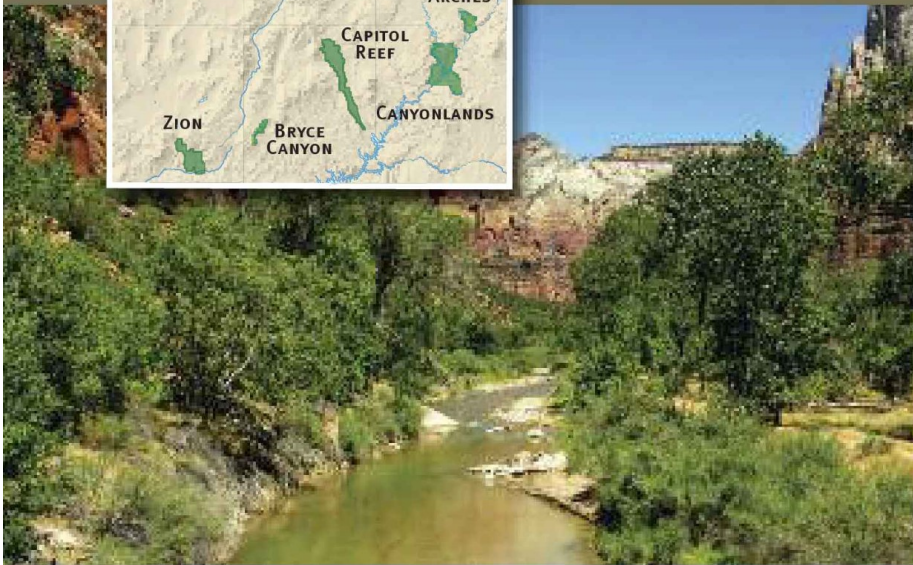
The high, flat lands of the Colorado Plateau cover much of Utah. The land gets little rain. Rivers from the high plateaus flow towards the Green and Colorado Rivers, which then flow into the Gulf of California and then to the Pacific Ocean.

Some of Utah's most famous scenery is found in this region. Wind and rain have carved wonderful formations in the soft *sedimentary rock*. Colorful cliffs rise a thousand feet above the valley floor. All five of Utah's amazing national parks are



Utah's

# National Parks



**Zion National Park** was Utah's first national park, set aside as protected land in 1919. Over thousands of years the Virgin River has flowed through the rock and cut out beautiful canyons. The first people to live there were an American Indian group called the Anasazi. Later, Southern Paiute Indians moved in. They were living there when the early pioneers arrived in Utah.

**Canyonlands National Park** is the largest of Utah's parks. It has deep gorges and huge rock towers. The state's three major rivers run through it—the Green River, the Colorado River, and the San Juan River. Ancient Fremont Indians hunted in Canyonlands. Later the Anasazi farmed there. Many ruins and rock art from these people are found there.



in this region. They are world-famous tourist destinations.

Coal, oil, and natural gas are valuable underground natural resources in the Plateau Region. Much of it is mined, but other deposits of valuable minerals are so hard to get from the ground that they remain where they were formed millions of years ago. You will learn more about these resources in the next chapter.

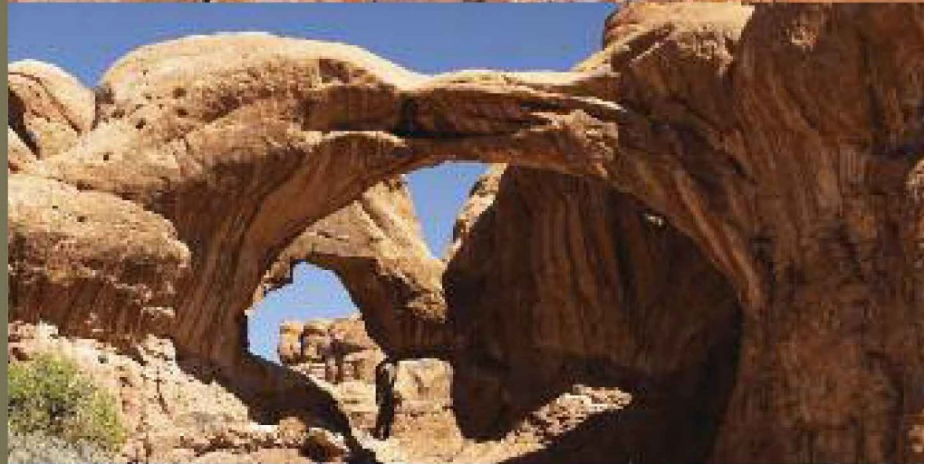


*Trace the routes of the Green and Colorado Rivers. How do they connect Utah to the Pacific Ocean? What happens to water that flows from the mountains of northern Utah into the Great Salt Lake? Does it get to the Pacific Ocean?*

**Bryce Canyon National Park** is the most colorful park in the world. White, yellow, red, orange, and purple rocks blend together. Wind, ice, and water carved the rocks in Bryce Canyon into all kinds of shapes. The park was named after Ebenezer Bryce, an early rancher in the area. Once he looked into the deep canyon and said, “This is no place to lose a cow!”



**Arches National Park** is named for its many stone arches. The rocks are mainly pink sandstone. A stream of water can wear a hole in this kind of soft rock. Blowing sand can also wear a hole through the rock. This happens slowly. It takes thousands and thousands of years, and is still going on. American Indians long ago lived among the arches and painted rock art there.



**Capitol Reef National Park** has beautiful red sandstone cliffs with strange rock formations. They were made by water cutting into them. Rock art shows us that American Indians lived there for many years. Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid used Capitol Reef as a hideout.





# Utah's Public and Private Lands

Our country's national government owns more than 60 percent of Utah's land. (In southern Utah, the national government controls more than 80 percent of the land.) The Utah State government also owns a lot of land. This land includes forests, parks and monuments, wilderness and wildlife areas, and reservoirs that are open for use by everyone in the nation. Private individuals also own land.

## Private Land

It is part of the American dream to own land. Anyone who can afford to pay for it can buy land, build a house or other building on it, or farm it. People can keep their land or sell it.

## Public Land

Who owns the mountains, plateaus, and valleys? The federal government and Utah State government own much of the state. This land is called "public lands." Since the people are the government, the land is owned by the public (that's you) and can be used by the public, with some restrictions. Our state and national parks and monuments are public lands.

## What Is the BLM?

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is a federal government agency that controls part of the government's land. It manages its lands under the mandate of "multiple use." For example, a BLM region can be used for hiking, fishing, hunting, boating, horseback riding, bird-watching, 4-wheeling, camping, and visiting historical and archaeological sites. The land can also be used for animal grazing, timber cutting, mining, and wilderness.

## What Is a Wilderness Area?

Some public land, however, is set aside by Congress to preserve its wild state, including its scenic beauty, solitude, wildlife, geologic features, and features of scientific, educational, or historical value. Wilderness is carved out of public lands.

Walking, hiking, horseback riding, camping, fishing, and hunting are allowed in wilderness regions. Trails may be cleared but not paved.

What activities are not allowed in wilderness regions? Unlike on other public lands, mining, building dams, harvesting trees, paving roads, and constructing buildings are not permitted. Motorized vehicles, including cars and four-wheelers, cannot be used. No one can farm the land. However, if ranch animals were living on the land before it was named as a wilderness region, the animals can continue to graze there.



## Activity | Public Lands and You

What do you think about the various ways Utah's public lands are used? By yourself or with a team of classmates, research the topic more, and then take a side. Present your views in one of the following ways: debate, oral report, written report, art project, display, radio interview, newspaper article, or Power Point presentation.

As you prepare your presentation, consider the following topics related to how Utah's land is used and preserved:

### PHYSICAL

Land features and natural resources.

### SETTLEMENT

Does the land provide enough of what people need to survive if they want to live there?

### LAND USE

How can the land be used? Should land be preserved in its natural state?

### ECONOMY

How could people make money by using the natural resources?



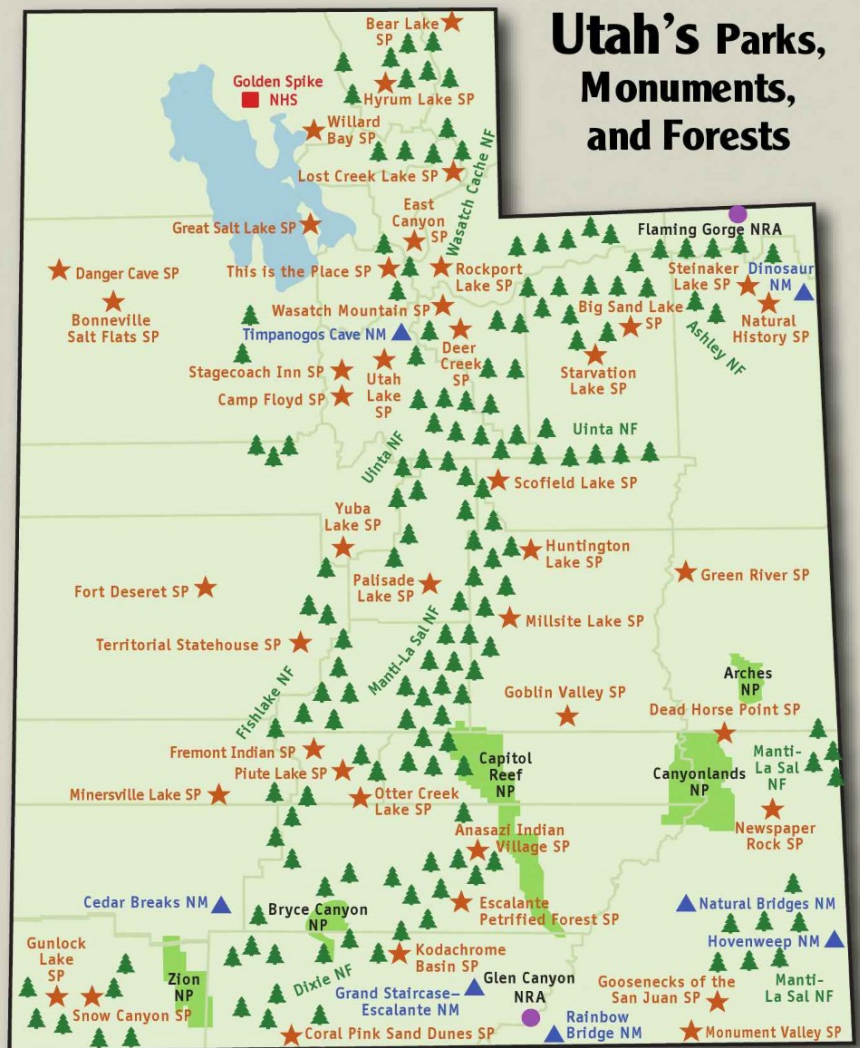
## What Are Utah Trust Lands?

When Utah became a state, the U.S. government gave millions of acres to Utah schools as a resource to make money for education. These lands are called school trust lands. There are almost 4 million acres of school trust land scattered all over Utah. The big tracts of land may be whole mountains, but most are smaller square pieces, one mile on each side. There are trust lands near your town.

How do the lands make money for schools? People pay to use the land in three main ways:

- **Surface.** People pay rent to use the lands for farms, movie sets, industrial sites, and ski resorts. They also pay to graze cattle, cut Christmas trees, and dig sand and gravel on the land.
- **Mineral.** Trust lands may have oil, gas, coal, uranium, and other mineral resources in the ground. Companies pay the trust for the minerals they remove from the land.
- **Sales.** Sometimes trust lands are sold for houses, farms, and ranches. If valuable minerals are discovered on the land, Utah schools will still be paid mineral royalties.

What happens to all that money? The money made from trust lands is never spent. It is put in a savings account to earn interest. Each year millions of dollars of interest money are given to Utah public schools.

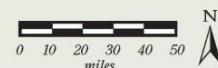


State and national parks and monuments are public land. So are national forests. From studying the map and the map legend, do you think Utah State or the national government own most of our parks, monuments, and forests?

How might this affect Utah's people?

### LEGEND

- ★ State Park (SP)
- National Park (NP)
- National Recreation Area (NRA)
- ▲ National Monument (NM)
- National Historic Site (NHS)
- ▲ National Forest (NF)



Monument Valley State Park, a public land, is located in southern Utah.



## A New Monument

When President Bill Clinton established the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in southern Utah in 1996, some Utah citizens were furious that they would be prevented from mining, grazing, and doing other activities on the huge tract of land. Others were happy that their goals for more protected land were being met. The following quotes show different views about the issue:



*At the entrance of the BLM [Bureau of Land Management] lands in Southern Utah there is a sign that greets visitors: "Entering . . . your Public Lands." It reminds people that it's their land. They can camp in the national forests. But when the federal government designates land as a national park or monument, we are forced to pay fees and follow strict rules on what you can and can't do there. . . . For the people who live in the regions who depend on the use of the land to make a living, this makes life harder. They can't develop businesses there, for instance. More important is the limitation of "rights;" using the land as they had for years is important to the local people.*

—Kai Olsen, U.S. Forest Service employee, Kanab, 1996

## What do you think?

Do you agree with the decisions to make the large land region a protected national monument. Why or why not?

*"President Clinton and the Department of the Interior seem [determined] on taking lands in southeastern Utah."*

*"The federal government pays no attention to the Constitution."*

*These are a few of the statements of San Juan County commissioners, who are [amazed] at the announcement of a possible 1.8 million-acre national monument just across from Lake Powell.*

—The San Juan Record, September 11, 1996

*In this state, it seems that every time a new park is created, some people have to be dragged into it kicking and screaming. The fact is that tourism is the basis of Utah's economy, and this is a landscape that is globally unique. We see the new monument as a down payment for protecting the rest of the state's wild lands.*

—Ken Sleight, the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance





---

## Caring for the Environment

If people and industries are not careful, they can harm the environment. Many years ago, people often did not take care of the land very well. They thought people could never use up all the grass, trees, animals, and other resources. They thought there would always be plenty of forests, rich farmland, minerals, fresh air, and clean water.

Then, about the time Utah became a state, people began to think about using natural resources wisely. They passed laws to make it illegal for people or factories to pollute the soil, air, and water. Within twenty-five years they were setting aside land for state and national parks, national forests, and wildlife refuges.

Later, wilderness regions were set aside so the land would remain in a natural state forever. Visitors must hike in, ride horses, or drive on narrow dirt roads. People must be careful to leave no trace that they have been there. Trees cannot be cut. The land cannot be farmed or changed by humans.

Today, people are working together to keep our state a great place to live. They are working to develop responsible methods of transportation, such as commuter trains and expanded bus service. They are working to balance the need for jobs, fuel, products, and recreational opportunities people want with preserving the natural beauty of the land for future generations.

*Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument is protected. Only one paved road goes through the land. Other small roads are dirt or gravel. Hiking trails cross parts of the majestic scenery.*