



# An Emerging Audience on a Changing Landscape: Arizona's Open Spaces and the New Exurban Clientele

**What:** Workshop  
**When:** Friday, January 20, 2006, 9:30am to 3:00pm  
**Where:** Tucson: University of Arizona Student Union, Level 3, Catalina Room  
**Who:** Project participants and those in Cooperative Extension faced with this challenge.

The Inter-mountain West is experiencing some of the most dramatic population growth and land development in the nation. From 1982 to 1997, the total amount of developed land in the region grew by 2 million acres, or about half an acre per person, through conversion of agricultural land, forest, and natural open space. Arizona is no exception, more than doubling its population and tripling its employment between 1969 and 2003.

Demographic change often is accompanied by new issues and associated educational needs related directly and indirectly to land management. Education programs such as those conducted by Cooperative Extension (serving the Land Grant University mission of translating science-based research into educational programs that address current public needs) are well-established in rural, suburban, and urban settings. In Arizona's open spaces, the traditional model of providing educational services which support profitable and sustainable ranching are now being complimented by programs which promote successful stewardship that are related to lifestyles rather than livelihoods. However, reaching the new "exurban" clientele, though they share some characteristics with suburban populations, has proven challenging.

Please register now as space will be limited. Lunch will be provided and travel expenses covered. To register, please use the attached form or contact Christie Mills 520-621-8586, [cmills@ag.arizona.edu](mailto:cmills@ag.arizona.edu).

This workshop will provide an opportunity to share the preliminary findings of a small Extension research project focused on this challenge as well as updates on related activities in other organizations. Using what has been learned to date combined with your experiences, our objective is to develop ideas for a strategy to extend the reach of natural resource education programs more explicitly into exurban market.

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## Workshop Objective

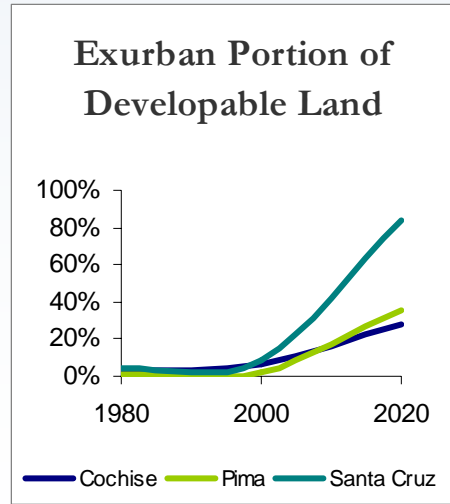
Population growth has an impact on natural resources, particularly in arid lands. But population change has other impacts on local landscapes, lifestyles, economies and social fabric. The “Old West,” centered on exploitation of natural resources (i.e., forestry, livestock grazing, mining and irrigated agriculture) now shares the stage with the “New West,” which exploits the region’s amenities (i.e., climate, scenery, open space, seclusion, independence). The transition from a landscape that directly supports a livelihood to one that offers a lifestyle also results in more landscape fragmentation and divergent management objectives which combine to threaten any kind of “sustainable” future. These rapid changes have sparked efforts to conserve both the ecological and cultural landscapes of the American West and to arrest, direct or contain “exurban” population growth. While these efforts will obviously continue, it is equally obvious that population will continue to grow in the region.

A burgeoning, changing rural population presents a special challenge to the institutions that have been constructed over the past 140 years that are intended to help land managers, including the American land grant university system. The mission of the land grant university in the US is unique in the world. The Morrill Act (1862) created an educational system to provide a broad segment of the population with a practical education that had direct relevance to their daily lives. Over time, this simple mandate has expanded beyond education, to include basic research, and ultimately “extension.” Like land grant, the concept of extension was unique. It was intended to serve,

*“... persons not attending or resident in said colleges in the several communities, and imparting information on said subjects through demonstrations, publications, and otherwise and for the necessary printing and distribution of information in connection with the foregoing.”*

Cooperative Extension is the part of the university that was designed to meet this mission. The challenge today is that the population Cooperative Extension must serve is quickly changing. The ways in which this population might best be reached are still emerging. In addition, the types of problems that confront this new clientele are also changing and may not have much in common with the problems of the preceding generation. The population, the ways in which they might be engaged, or the challenges they face are not well understood. The objective of this workshop is to examine the changes that are occurring from the perspective of Cooperative Extension, focusing on the following questions:

- Who are these people?
- What is happening as a result of their stewardship?
- What help do they need?
- How can they best be served?



Adapted from: Theobald (2005)