

SUBLETTE COUNTY

WAGE AND EMPLOYMENT STUDY

July 2006

Prepared For:

The Sublette County Commissioners

The Sublette County Socioeconomic Analysis Advisory Committee

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Tips and Overtime Notice

All yearly salaries contained herein are calculated using a 40hrs/week schedule and do not include overtime or tips. It should be noted that overtime is often calculated using a 80hrs per two-week average.

To add overtime:

- For 10 hrs of overtime per week, add 42% to the yearly salary.
- For 15 hrs of overtime per week, add 56% to the yearly salary.
- For 20 hrs of overtime per week, add 75% to the yearly salary.

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Summary of Wage Survey Findings

In general terms, they survey found:

- The minimum wage in Sublette County for non-skilled, non-labor intensive jobs starts – on average – at approximately \$9/hr or \$19,000/year.
- The minimum wage for non-skilled, labor intensive jobs starts at approximately \$12/hr or \$25,000; while in the gas field it is higher, starting at about \$13-\$14/hr or approximately \$30,000 for roustabouts and about \$24/hr or \$55,000/year for rig hands.
- Jobs in the county government provide *starting wages* that are among the highest of any sector in Sublette County for both skilled and non-skilled workers. However, county government jobs provide less opportunity for wage advancement than do the “non-county government” or “gas field” jobs.
- There was little to no difference in average wages paid between northern and southern Sublette County, although the types of jobs available do differ.
- The lowest paying sector in Sublette County is the “service sector”, while the highest paying sector is the “gas field”, closely followed by “local non-county government” agencies (Schools, Federal and State agencies, etc), and then by “county government”.
- Gas-Field jobs provide significant opportunities for wage advancement, with a nearly unlimited opportunity to gain overtime wages (see “overtime notice”, p.2), which can add significantly to wages earned.
- Overall, wages in Sublette County are much higher than wages statewide, with service industry jobs and county employment having the largest jump over state figures.

Summary of Employment Data Findings

- Sublette County’s seasonal fluctuations in employment and unemployment have effectively stopped; corresponding with natural gas activity in the county.
- Non-labor sources of income have increased during the 1990’s but have decreased since 2000; corresponding with natural gas activity in the county.
- The cost of living in Sublette County is approximately 21% higher than the rest of Wyoming, when Teton County is excluded from the state average. Housing is approximately 35% higher.
- Per capita income in Sublette County continues to increase.

Table of Average Wages by Job Category and Industry

Job Category	Industry	Overall Average Wage	Average Starting Wage	Average Maximum Wage	Benefits	College Education
Waitress	Service	\$13,728	\$11,778	\$15,678	Sometimes	No
Stocking Clerk	Service	\$21,060	\$18,200	\$23,920	No	No
Maid	Service	\$22,360	\$18,720	\$26,000	Sometimes	No
Checker/Cashier	Service	\$22,793	\$19,760	\$25,827	Not Usually	No
Child Care Provider		\$24,093	\$22,907	\$25,280	Usually	No
Food Prep/Cook	Service	\$24,327	\$19,448	\$29,207	Sometimes	No
Sales Associate	Service	\$28,080	\$24,960	\$31,200	Usually	No
Preschool Teacher		\$29,253	\$26,667	\$31,840	Usually	Yes
Secretaries/Office Staff	Service	\$29,276	\$25,189	\$33,363	Usually	Not Usually
Secretaries/Office Staff	Gas Field	\$30,805	\$24,440	\$37,170	Yes	Not Usually
Secretaries/Office Staff	Non-County Gov.	\$31,605	\$25,949	\$37,260	Usually	Not Usually
EMT	Non-County Gov.	\$31,746	\$23,100	\$40,392	Yes	Some
Bus Driver		\$34,752	\$30,805	\$38,698	No	No
Custodian	Service	\$35,696	\$30,978	\$40,414	Usually	No
Laborer	Construction	\$36,053	\$27,733	\$44,373	Sometimes	No
Roustabouts	Gas Field	\$36,585	\$30,490	\$42,680	Usually	No
Maintenance	Construction	\$35,256	\$28,912	\$41,600	Not Usually	No
Paramedic	Non-County Gov.	\$37,434	\$30,804	\$44,064	Yes	Yes
Chief	Service	\$37,749	\$31,165	\$44,332	Usually	No
Landscaping	Construction	\$38,272	\$28,704	\$47,840	Not Usually	No
Plumber	Service	\$38,480	\$29,120	\$47,840	Yes	Sometimes
Electrician	Service	\$38,480	\$29,120	\$47,840	Yes	Sometimes
Custodian	County Government	\$38,824	\$33,492	\$44,156	Yes	No
Mechanic	Service	\$38,865	\$32,628	\$45,101	Yes	Sometimes
Courthouse Deputies	County Government	\$40,365	\$32,426	\$48,303	Yes	Yes
Secretaries/Office Staff	County Government	\$40,365	\$32,426	\$48,303	Yes	Not Usually
Maintenance Manager	Service	\$41,391	\$34,213	\$48,568	Yes	No
Equipment Operator	Gas Field	\$41,747	\$33,600	\$49,893	Yes	Some
Technology Tech.	Non-County Gov.	\$42,210	\$34,993	\$49,427	Yes	Yes
Communications	County Government	\$45,706	\$42,204	\$49,208	Yes	Sometimes
Waste Management	County Government	\$46,289	\$42,023	\$50,555	Yes	No
Road and Bridge	County Government	\$46,289	\$42,023	\$50,555	Yes	No
Medical Clinic Tech.	Non-County Gov.	\$46,095	\$33,481	\$58,709	Yes	Yes
Maintenance Supervisor	County Government	\$47,356	\$42,023	\$52,688	Yes	No
Scientist Tech.	Non-County Gov.	\$47,425	\$41,049	\$53,800	Yes	Usually
Manager	Service	\$48,599	\$45,490	\$51,709	Yes	No
Detentions	County Government	\$48,824	\$46,345	\$51,302	Yes	Yes
Pumpers	Gas Field	\$49,480	\$39,707	\$59,253	Yes	No
Gaugers	Gas Field	\$50,673	\$41,093	\$60,253	Yes	No
School Teacher	Non-County Gov.	\$51,353	\$38,169	\$64,537	Usually	Yes
Rig Hand	Gas Field	\$52,648	\$49,137	\$56,160	Yes	No
Patrol	County Government	\$52,852	\$48,786	\$56,917	Yes	Yes
Mechanic	Gas Field	\$54,775	\$42,000	\$67,550	Usually	Usually
Detectives	County Government	\$54,884	\$52,851	\$56,917	Yes	Yes
Engineer	Non-County Gov.	\$58,123	\$50,541	\$65,704	Yes	Advanced
Scientist	Non-County Gov.	\$58,423	\$50,814	\$66,031	Yes	Yes
Electricians	Gas Field	\$60,000	\$45,000	\$75,000	Yes	Yes
Driller	Gas Field	\$60,306	\$56,826	\$63,787	Yes	No
Advanced Scientist	Non-County Gov.	\$61,985	\$53,919	\$70,051	Yes	Advanced
Administrative	Gas Field	\$64,164	\$49,928	\$78,400	Yes	Usually
Scientist	Gas Field	\$65,000	\$50,000	\$80,000	Yes	Yes
Nurse	Non-County Gov.	\$69,142	\$53,772	\$84,513	Yes	Yes
Administrative	Non-County Gov.	\$70,568	\$58,788	\$82,347	Yes	Yes
Engineer	Gas Field	\$82,650	\$69,800	\$95,500	Usually	Advanced
Field Supervisors	Gas Field	\$82,625	\$64,000	\$101,250	Yes	Sometimes
Tool Pusher	Gas Field	\$91,080	\$67,240	\$114,920	Yes	No
Drilling Foremen	Gas Field	\$157,400	\$130,000	\$184,800	Sometimes	Usually
Doctor	Non-County Gov.	\$186,674	\$135,590	\$237,757	Yes	Advanced

Wage Survey Methodology

The employment and wage statistics that are available from State and Federal agencies for Sublette County are – at best – 3 years old, in addition to being inaccurate in regards to out-of-county workers. Due to Sublette County’s rapidly changing economic and workforce character, it was felt that original data obtained straight from employers would be needed to provide a current description of wages paid in the County.

Thus, a short, voluntary, and anonymous “wage study survey” was drafted and presented to most major and minor employers in Sublette County. The survey was either filled out on the spot, or returned in self-addressed postage-paid envelope that was attached to the survey. In addition, some over-the-telephone surveys were conducted.

Most people who are self-employed and those employed in the agricultural sector *were not* included in the wage study.

All surveys asked the employer to list 1) what industry the business was in, 2) the generalized job titles of people employed there, 3) the number of workers employed under each job title, 4) the average beginning and maximum wage paid for that job title, and 5) whether benefits are typically paid in addition to wages. It should be noted that most respondents did not fill in #3, so those numbers are not included in this study.

All told, about 60 employers provided information for the survey, and wage data on about 50 different job titles was obtained. Some job title categories contained information from only one employer, while other titles contained information across more than 12 employers. Approximately 25 additional employers either did not return the survey or refused to fill it out for a number of reasons.

Expanded Survey Findings

Service Industry:

The service industry in Sublette County generally pays the lowest wages of any sector, as many of the jobs available are unskilled and non-labor intensive. However the wages paid in Sublette County are still often *twice* that of the Federal Minimum Wage, starting at approximately \$9/hr or \$19,000/yr for jobs such as a cashier, attendant, food preparer, or stocking clerk. With only a short amount of experience, wages for these jobs typically increase to over \$12 or \$25,000. These types of jobs typically do not come with benefits, as many of them are part-time in nature. Semi-skilled or semi-labor intensive jobs such as pre-school providers, custodians, or office clerks start at about \$12 or \$25,000 and can easily increase to \$16/hr or \$32,000, and many positions are benefited.

*Statewide Comparison**

Wyoming 2005 statewide wage statistics for service-related industries show a mean starting wage of just above the minimum wage, with starting wages for occupations like cooks, cashiers, coffee servers, dishwashers, and etc. at about \$5.88/hr to \$6.50/hr. The statewide maximum wages offered for these types of jobs ranged between 8-10hr. Food and beverage store clerks reported higher maximum wages of about 12/hr. Statewide day care providers reported an average range of about \$5.50/hr to \$11/hr.

Non-gas field Construction:

Building and road construction in Sublette County generally provides wages for unskilled laborers starting at about \$12/hr or \$25,000/year, although any hard working individual can easily expect to make about \$15/hr or \$31,000 rather quickly, with experienced construction workers making more than \$23/hr or \$48,000 with lots of opportunities for wage advancement through overtime. The average maximum wage paid in the construction industry is difficult to determine because most construction workers become self-employed after a certain amount of experience, and self-employed individuals were not included in this survey.

*Statewide Comparison**

Wyoming 2005 statewide wage data for the construction industry show an average starting wage of about \$10.50/hr with a maximum wage of about \$20/hr.

Non-County Government:

“Non-County Government” (here designed to include State and Federal agencies, Local Schools, the Rural Health Care district, and town governments) has traditionally been and continues to be among the highest-paying sectors in Sublette County. Much of the high paying wages is attributed to the highly-skilled nature of the work performed by those employed by non-county government agencies, which includes scientists, school teachers, nurses, skilled administrators, and etc.

School teachers in Sublette County begin with a salary of about \$38,000, while nurses start out at \$53,777 on average. Scientists can start, on average, anywhere from \$41,000 to \$53,000 depending on level of education and specialty. The high end of wages paid in these agencies, however, makes these positions among the most well paying in the county. In addition, these positions are typically well benefited, however most are salaried and overtime is typically not commonplace.

Lower-paying exceptions may be EMTs, which start at about \$23,000/year, office staff that starts at wage similar to other sectors (about \$25,000/yr), and Preschool Teachers that start at about \$26,000/yr.

* Unless otherwise noted, all 2005 state-wide data used for wage comparisons comes from the Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) Wage Survey, provided by Research & Planning (R&P), a section of the Wyoming Department of Employment, in cooperation with the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). As of August, 2006, data is available at <http://doe.state.wy.us/lmi/200502/TOC000.htm>.

*Statewide Comparison**

Direct comparisons on a statewide basis are difficult for many of the positions contained in the “Non-County Government” Sector. However, it is assumed the salary range for State and Federal positions would be similar to other areas of the state. Statewide workers classified as “Ambulatory Health Care Services” registered a starting wage \$9.26/hr. or about \$19,000/yr. with an average wage of about \$22.25/hr or about \$46,000/yr.

County Government:

In general, the starting wages for county government positions are among the highest in the county, with even relatively unskilled positions starting at over \$15/hr 32,000/yr. County Government secretaries start at almost \$10,000/year above that of other sector averages. However, the maximum wages paid for even highly skilled county positions falls far short of wages available in other sectors, especially non-government and gas-field sectors. For example, the maximum wages paid for a non-elected county position (such as patrolmen or detective) are \$56,917, plus overtime. This is about the same wage paid to an *average* gas-field mechanic, or a *beginning* rig hand. In addition, gas-field mechanics and rig-hands can expect to graduate to exceptionally higher paying jobs with hard work and a few years of additional experience.

*Statewide Comparison**

Statewide Comparisons for county government positions is also somewhat difficult. Statistics for “Public Administration – Local” found that statewide the starting local administration wage is about \$8.62/hr or about \$17,935/yr with an average wage of \$13.84/hr or about \$38,850/yr. However, upon calling several county clerk offices in Wyoming, comparative data from 6 counties was obtained. Several counties could not provide wage information at this time. A table containing this information is available on the next page.

Gas field:

Wages paid in the gas field vary greatly, dependent on type of job performed, level of experience, schedule, etc. However, many gas field wages are among the highest available in the county. For example, an “average” un-skilled roustabout can expect to earn a starting wage of about \$13-\$14/hr or about \$30,490/yr, plus overtime. On the other hand, a relatively unskilled rig hand can expect to start out at \$23/hr or about \$49,000/yr, on average, plus overtime.

Benefits paid in the gas field are typically exceptional, and opportunities to earn overtime wages are extremely prevalent, if not a mandatory part of the scheduling process. It is common in the gas field to work 20 hours of overtime per week, which will increase a salary by about 75%. By doing such, an unskilled, uneducated roustabout can expect to make over \$53,000 a year in starting wages. It should be noted that while overtime is extremely prevalent in the gas field, many companies use 80hrs per two week averages to

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Selected wages for County Government Jobs by Occupation

	Sublette	Albany	Hot Springs	Park	Fremont	Sheridan	Sweetwater
Courthouse Deputies							
Less Experienced	\$32,426	\$43,920	\$25,200				
More Experienced	\$48,303	\$57,600	\$25,200				
Secretaries							
Less Experienced	\$32,426	\$28,800	\$26,005	\$24,557	\$22,320	\$26,400	\$26,746
More Experienced	\$48,303	\$43,200	\$31,657	\$30,336	\$42,000	\$38,400	\$41,993
Waste Management							
Less Experienced	\$42,023						
More Experienced	\$50,555						
Road and Bridge							
Less Experienced	\$42,023	\$40,320	\$29,472	\$21,658		\$33,120	\$35,846
More Experienced	\$50,555	\$40,320	\$29,472	\$27,437		\$45,600	\$44,083
Maintenance (Janitors)							
Less Experienced	\$33,492		\$26,005	\$21,658	\$22,320	\$33,120	\$23,110
More Experienced	\$44,156		\$27,972	\$35,437	\$30,240	\$45,600	\$31,334
Maintenance (Super)							
Less Experienced	\$42,023	\$53,567		\$35,000		\$45,000	
More Experienced	\$52,688	\$53,567		\$40,109		\$51,840	
Detention (Super)							
Less Experienced	\$53,665						
More Experienced	\$56,917	\$53,567				\$59,040	
Patrol							
Less Experienced	\$48,786	\$42,878	\$28,920	\$28,397	\$30,960		\$35,846
More Experienced	\$56,917	\$64,420	\$37,110	\$70,138	\$67,200		\$51,034
Communications							
Less Experienced	\$42,204			\$26,477	\$28,915	\$42,600	\$25,478
More Experienced	\$49,208			\$30,336	\$45,600	\$60,000	\$36,269
Detentions							
Less Experienced	\$46,345	\$43,247	\$30,180		\$28,915	\$39,216	
More Experienced	\$51,302	\$57,258	\$33,330		\$49,200	\$46,998	
Detectives							
Less Experienced	\$52,851						
More Experienced	\$56,917						

Not all positions/categories available for all counties listed.

calculate overtime when workers are working shifts of many consecutive days. For example, rig hands typically work seven 12hr days in a row with the following seven days off, for a total of 84 hrs worked in 7days. However, the industry practice¹ is to break up the first 3 days into “week one” and the next 4 days into “week two” – therefore the rig hand will only receive 8hrs overtime paid for “week two”, instead of 44hrs overtime for the 7-day period.

Employment in the gas field is somewhat unique in that very well paying jobs are available even to workers who are unskilled and uneducated, provided that they work hard and gain experience. For example, gas field jobs such as Tool pusher and Field Supervisor are among the highest paid positions available in Sublette County (with average wages of \$91,080 and \$82,000 plus overtime, respectively), but can be obtained purely through on-the-job experience and lots of hard work. In addition, workers are of such short supply and turnover rates are so high in Sublette County that opportunities for advancement arise very quickly.

¹ According to officials from two different drilling companies operating in the area, contacted via telephone on August 1st 2006.

For example, rig hands have been known to move up to the position of driller (which earns \$60,000/yr plus overtime, on average) with sometimes little more than a year experience. From there, the position of Tool Pusher (which earns about \$91,000/yr plus overtime, on average) can be within reach after another couple of years.

Staff and Salaries per Rig (Drilling Companies Only)

Occupation	# per rig	Avg. Salary per worker (no overtime)	Avg. Salary Paid for all workers
drillers	4	\$60,306	\$241,225
rig hands	20	\$52,648	\$1,052,965
tool pusher	1	\$91,080	\$91,080
			\$1,385,270 in wages per rig per year
			X 55 rigs
			= \$76,189,843 in wages per year on all rigs

The impact of the gas field on wages and income in Sublette County is substantial. Persons employed on the rigs alone (about 2/3rds of the gas field workforce) are paid over \$76 million per year at the current rig count and average wages (see table above), and not counting overtime. These rig workers alone could account for nearly 30% of all income earned in Sublette County. It is interesting to note that overwhelming majority (likely more than 90%) of persons employed on the rigs do not live in the area and likewise spend the overwhelming majority of this \$76million elsewhere.

*Statewide Comparison***

Statewide data for those employed in “Oil and Gas Extraction” showed an average starting wage of \$15.13/hr or \$31,537/yr, an average maximum wage of about \$30/hr or about 63,000/yr, and an overall median wage of \$52,000 per year, plus overtime. These figures generally correspond with wages earned in the natural gas industry in Sublette County. The category of “Support activities for mining” showed a slightly lower pay scale between 12/hr – 23 hr (or 24,000/yr to 48,000/yr) with an overall mean wage of about \$32,000, plus overtime.

* Unless otherwise noted, all 2005 state-wide data used for wage comparisons comes from the Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) Wage Survey, provided by Research & Planning (R&P), a section of the Wyoming Department of Employment, in cooperation with the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). As of August, 2006, data is available at <http://doe.state.wy.us/lmi/200502/TOC000.htm>.

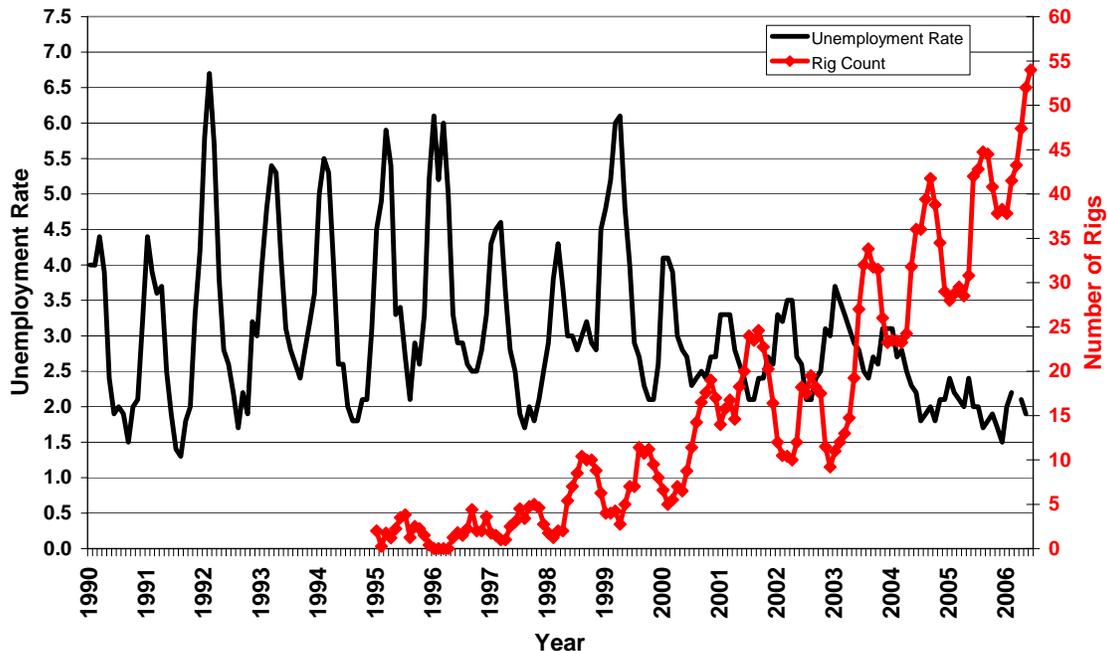
Sublette County Employment Trends

Employment and Unemployment:

Employment in Sublette County has traditionally been dependent on seasonally-based industries such as tourism and agriculture². Summertime unemployment rates have traditionally been extremely low, while wintertime rates have traditionally been high. The two following graphs illustrate the seasonally cyclical nature of: the rates of unemployment (this page) & the numbers of those employed (next page). Since about 2000, however, these seasonal fluctuations began to weaken, with almost no fluctuations taking place after 2004.

Monthly Sublette County Unemployment Rate and Rig Count
01/90 - 05/06

Source: Wyoming Department of Employment, Research & Planning



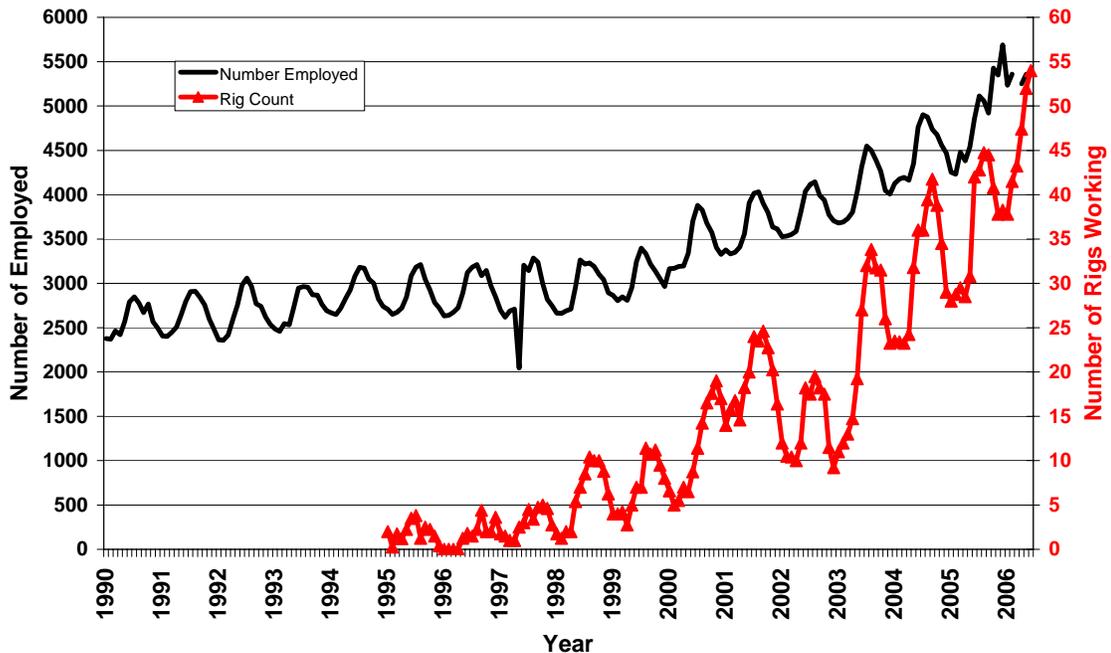
As illustrated in the graphs, these changes in the unemployment rate correspond well with the amount of natural gas activity occurring in Sublette County. Such activity began in earnest around the year 2000, with the largest increases in activity taking place between 2004 and present.

The number of persons employed in Sublette County has undergone similar seasonal fluctuations in the past, with almost no such fluctuations taking place presently. Of note, however, is that the number of employed people continued to increase dramatically since around 2000, but the seasonal fluctuations did not slow or stop until mid-2005.

² For a detailed economic history, see: *Social and Economic Impact Assessment Of Oil and Gas Development In Sublette and Sweetwater Counties* (2005) by Blevins, Jensen, Coburn, and Utz. University of Wyoming – Department of Sociology. Available online: <http://www.sublette-se.org/files/SEPCoUWReport.pdf>.

Monthly Sublette County Employment and Rig Count 01/90 - 05/06

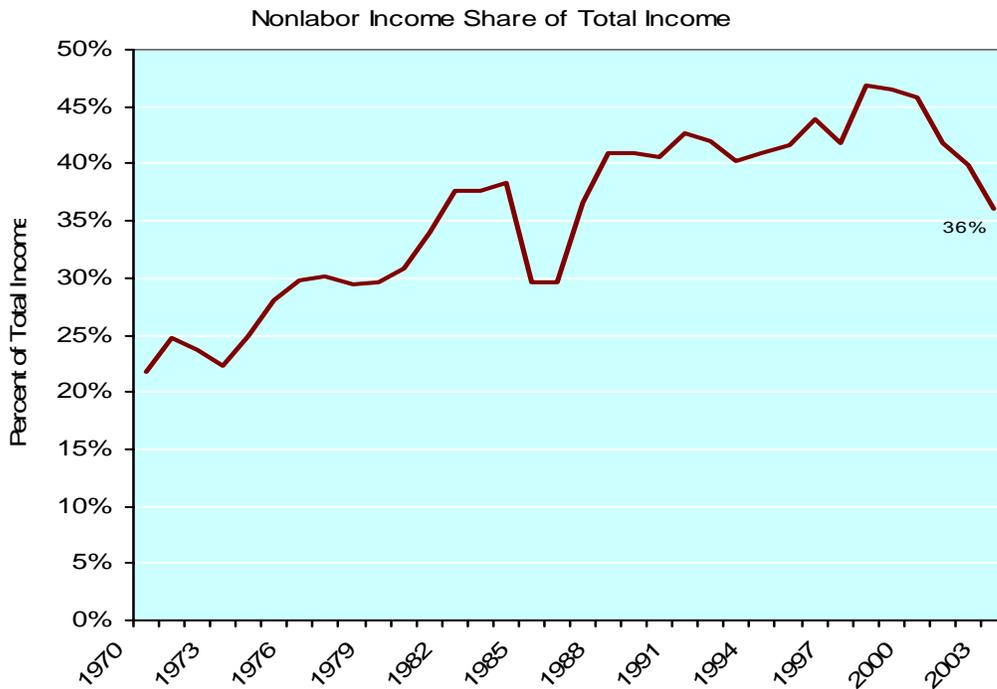
Source: Wyoming Department of Employment, Research & Planning



This also highly correlates with rig activity as rig activity (although increasing) remained highly seasonal in nature until about 2005. Given the discrepancies between unemployment rate and the number of people employed and the fact that only local residents would be represented by the unemployment rate, the data suggests that between 2000 and 2005 local residents were able to find winter work even though the overall workforce remained seasonal in nature.

Labor vs. Investment Income:

To what degree an area's income is derived from labor than from investments can illustrate many aspects of the area's economy and workforce. Sublette County has seen the proportion of non-labor income to labor income rise throughout the 1990's (see graphs, next page). Such an increase in non-labor income typically reflects a population that is becoming older and more wealthy, as younger and poorer people generally rely (almost solely) on labor for their income. The percentage of non-labor income in Sublette County reached its peak in 2000 at about 47%, but has since declined over 10% between 2000-2003 (last year data was available) to levels last seen at about 1989.



This trend of increasing non-labor income since 2000 corresponds with both the increasing numbers of those employed, as well as the levels of natural gas activity. Regardless, the overall amount of per capita income has been increasing in Sublette County, even when adjusted for inflation (see chart below).

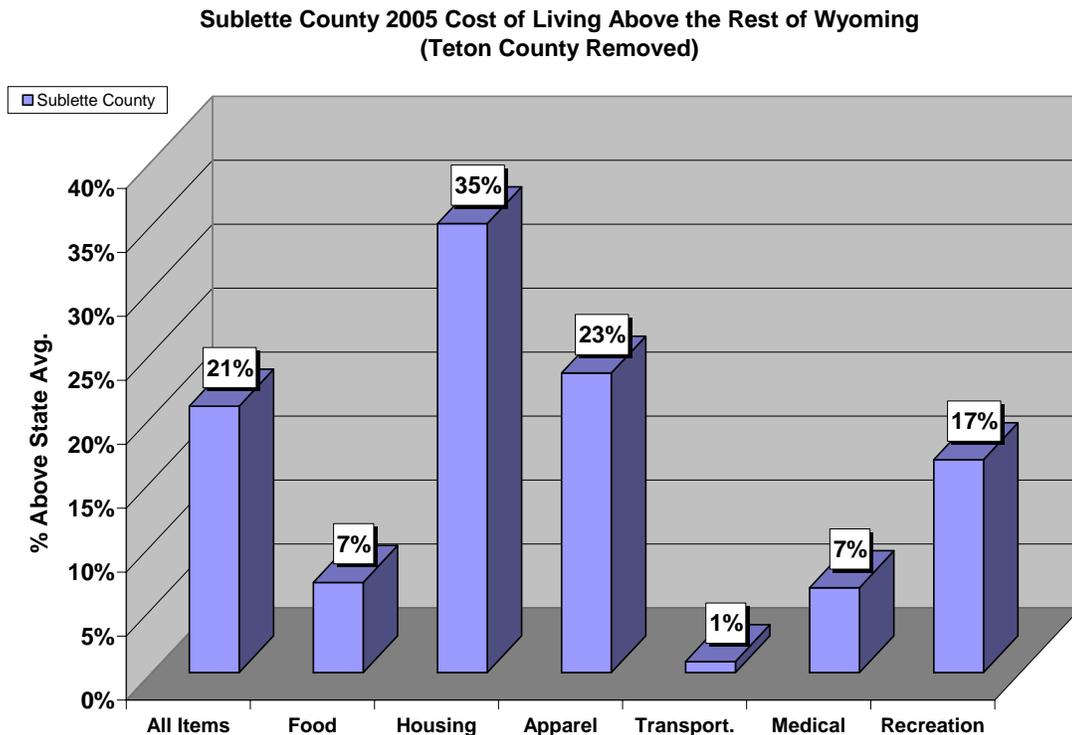
Sublette County Income 1990-2003 -- In 2003 Dollars

Total Resident			
Year	Income	Population	Income per capita
1990	\$128,167,896	4843	\$26,465
1991	\$134,476,711	4964	\$27,090
1992	\$130,183,607	5022	\$25,923
1993	\$141,201,218	5184	\$27,238
1994	\$141,706,073	5409	\$26,198
1995	\$135,629,974	5515	\$24,593
1996	\$136,790,924	5601	\$24,423
1997	\$148,924,212	5684	\$26,201
1998	\$156,458,699	5773	\$27,102
1999	\$166,706,651	5835	\$28,570
2000	\$176,025,598	5952	\$29,574
2001	\$188,458,182	5936	\$31,748
2002	\$198,823,302	6218	\$31,975
2003	\$215,768,000	6352	\$33,969

Income data derived from The Sonoran Institute's Economic Profile System July 2006.
Population data derived from the U.S. Census Bureau population estimates.

Cost of living:

Although wages in Sublette County are typically higher than in other parts of the state, it is important to recognize that the cost of living in Sublette County is also higher than in other parts of the state. In fact, with the exception of Teton County, Sublette is the most expensive county in Wyoming in which to live, with the cost of housing being the priciest cost of living item.



All told, on average, it costs about 21% more to live in Sublette County than the rest of Wyoming (with the exception of Teton County), while the cost of housing alone is 35% more expensive. When Teton County is included, living in Sublette County is approximately 16% more expensive than the state average. In order to maintain a similar quality of life, wages in Sublette County would have to be over 20% above the state averages. It appears that, on average, Sublette County wages are higher than 20% above the state averages. Most entry level positions in Sublette County are 35%-40% above the state averages.

Since cost of living data is not available for years before 2000, it is difficult to say whether the rises in cost of living are correlated with natural gas activity, although natural gas activity must undoubtedly have an effect on areas such as costs of housing. Cost of living figures remained relatively stagnant at about 5% above the state level for the years of 2001 and 2002, and have continued to rise sharply since. The cost of housing has risen in a relatively consistent fashion since 2000, with a brief decline in the second quarter of 2005.

Wyoming Cost of Living & Housing 2000-2005
(Teton County Included)

