Climate and Tourism in La Plata County
Tourism is La Plata County’s #1 Industry

• Major role in employment, especially in service sector (restaurants, stores, lodging)
• Economic driver for 18% of local jobs
Economic Drivers in La Plata County

This figure depicts the size, relative importance and total employment ratio for La Plata County’s economic drivers in 2006.

La Plata County - Contribution to Total Employment by Economic Driver in 2006
Total Employment = 33,125

- Second Homes - New Construction, Sales Commissions on Existing Homes & Owner Spending 7%
- Fort Lewis College 5%
- New Construction - except for Second Homes 19%
- Household Non-Labor & Commuter Income 15%
- Tourism - Overnight Visitors 16%
- Other Outside Demand for Trade & Services 13%
- Agriculture, Mining, Utilities & Manufacturing 9%
- Federal, State & Tribal Government 10%

*The number in each pie slice is the ratio of direct base jobs to supporting jobs.
So- how can different tourism industries adapt to climate change?

• Snow sports (skiing, snowboarding, snowmobiling, sledding, snowshoeing etc.)
• River sports (rafting, kayaking, water skiing, fishing etc.)
• Mountain sports (hiking, mountain biking, motorcycling, four-wheeling, hunting, wildlife viewing)
• Destination events (train, Mesa Verde, Snowdown, film festival etc.)
Tourism Activities in Southwest Colorado

- rafting/river sports
- snow sports
- biking
- golfing
- tennis
- riding the train
- archaeology
- hiking
- camping
- hunting
- fishing
- eating
- shopping
- canyoneering
- climbing
- mountaineering
- Other ideas?
So, which activities does climate affect?

- All of them!
- Why?
- The World Tourism Organization claims that climatic factors are the “prime motivation for mass leisure travel.”²
Tourism Climatic Index (TCI)

- Measures the suitability of the world’s climates for tourism and recreation based on:
  - maximum daily temperature
  - mean daily temperature
  - minimum daily relative humidity
  - daily relative humidity, precipitation
  - daily duration of sunshine
  - wind speed
- The TCI then rates a given location for a specific activity from "ideal" to "impossible."
La Plata County’s TCI?

• What do you think?
• We don’t have a specific TCI, but based on the prevalence of tourism in La Plata County, it can be inferred that the climate is good for recreation and tourism
• Proxy measure – Sperling’s Best Places “comfort index” rates Durango as a 73/100, while the U.S. average is 44/100.


Websites for Images

Mountain Biker in autumn:  http://www.wildernesstrails.com/wtr-blog/?Tag=mountain%20biking%20durango

Skier at Durango Mountain Resort:
http://www.colorado.com/photo-gallery?activity=All&page=1

Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad – train in winter
http://www.onthesnow.com/photo_guide.html?id=3459877964&text=durango

Rafting the Animas River
http://mountainlifestyles.tripod.com/silverton.html