

OUR VIEW:

Enjoy the the scenery; it's all you can afford

By Lee Rozen/Moscow-Pullman Daily News

Only two members of the editorial board are native Idahoans; the other three arrived here from elsewhere as many as three decades ago and as few as three years ago.

None of us are in any hurry to leave.

The natural beauty of the land and its seasons, the general congeniality of its people, the lack of traffic jams and air pollution all contribute to our intentions. For some of us it's the hiking, fishing, hunting and skiing that add to the attraction. For others, it's Moscow's specific college-town culture. For all of us, it's family connections.

Still, there is one little thing that's difficult to get used to.

Idaho median annual salaries, you see, are the lowest of all the states.

For once, not even Mississippi beats us, although that's a race we'd all gladly lose.

The Idaho Press Tribune reported that: "Only about a third of Idaho's jobs in 2011 paid \$39,000 or more, enough to support a family of four, according to the Idaho Department of Labor.

"The median annual wage in Idaho, including part time jobs, is barely above \$23,000. The state's median household income of \$48,348 ranks 40th in the nation, according to the U.S. Census Bureau."

We have one of the highest rates in the nation where people work more than one job, labor department spokesman Bob Fick said.

Low-paying service sector jobs in retail and personal services are increasing while good paying industrial jobs in mills, mining and forests aren't. Farm jobs have never paid well. Some jobs in technology, higher education and administration pay well, but there just aren't that many of them, compared to most states.

Without a saltwater port like Seattle or a river port like Portland, the aggregation of industry has been difficult. With a smaller population, Idaho's universities are smaller, too, as are its medical centers.

Much of Idaho is owned by the government and kept in virtual wilderness. So, undeveloped as it is with job-producing industry, it's still beautiful, not overrun with eight-lane freeways and the tons of litter such thoroughfares generate.

Luckily, it doesn't cost much to get out and enjoy that beauty.