The State Border Data Set

By Thomas J. Holmes (April 30, 1998)

This document discusses some data that I constructed for my paper, "The Effects of State Policies on the Location of Industry: Evidence from State Borders."

State Borders

There exist 109 different state borders (including some that consist of a single point, such as the Arizona-Colorado border). Table 1 is a list of the 109 state borders. It contains the variables BORDINDX (the index of the borders), ST1ST2 (the postal abbreviations of the borders) and LENGTH (the length in miles of the borders).

The geographic coordinates of the line segments that make up the state borders are contained in the ascii file BORDPNTS.ASC. For each state border, I picked one of the endpoints and I call it point 0. I list point 0 first and then list the remaining points in sequence. Imagine that the border is a highway with milemarkers that begin at point 0. The cumulative distance along the highway at each point in the sequence is given by the variable MILEMARK. (Note that for the last point in the sequence, MILEMARK equals the total length of the border). The variables LAT and LONG give the geographic coordinates of each point in the sequence. The variables ST1 and ST2 are the FIPS codes of the two states that comprise the border. The first row has the variable labels.

Counties

I exclude Alaska and Hawaii.

The standard county definitions are those that are defined by the Census. In Virginia the independent cities are organized as separate counties. This is different from all other states where cities are generally in the same county as the surrounding area. The REIS data set (Regional Economic Information System) merges the Virginia independent cities into the counties that surround them. In my data, I use the same county definitions as the REIS data set. In addition to being different in Virginia from the standard Census counties, the REIS counties merge Menominee and Shawano counties in Wisconsin, and two counties in Montana that are part of Yellowstone Park.

The ascii file REISCNTY.ASC is a list of the REIS counties. It is a fixed length file.

1. Cols 1-2. ST (fips code)
2. Cols 4-6. COUNTY (fipscode)
3. Cols 8-54. Name of county

The ascii file MCENREIS.ASC specifies for each Census county, the REIS county that it belongs to. As mentioned above, each Census county corresponds to a single REIS county with the exception of counties in Virginia, Wisconsin, and Montana.

1. Cols 1-2. ST
2. Cols 4-6. CENCNTY (Census county)
3. Cols 8-10. REISCNTY (REIS county)

Distance From Border

For each state border I took the counties in the two bordering states. For each such county, I obtained the geographic coordinates of the county centriod. I determined the minimum distance from this centriod to the state border. The variable MINDIST is this distance. The variable MILEMARK is the milemarker along the state border at which this minimum distance is obtained.

The file CNTYDIST.ASC contains this data. There are 14,928 observations. Note, a particular county will be in the file more than one time if the state it is in borders more than one state. This file is an ascii file in comma separated format. The variables are

1. BORDINDX Index of border
2. ST1ST2 Name of the border
3. ST1 State 1 of the border pair
4. ST2 State 2 of the border pair
5. ST
6. COUNTY
7. MINDIST Minimum distance of county from border.
8. MILEMARK Point along border where minimum is obtained.