

Wallowa Resources:
Gaining access
and adding value to
natural resources
on public lands

BY NILS CHRISTOFFERSEN



Communities adjacent to public lands in the United States have suffered from steady declines in economic benefits and opportunities from those lands. Wallowa Resources offers a promising approach that assures **access by local communities to natural resources on public lands**, provides examples of programs that add value and secure community benefits from the resources, and will result in **improved monitoring, restoration, and management** of local ecological systems. These results are supported and reinforced by **community capacity and leadership; and innovative relationships** between public institutions, the community, nonprofit organizations, and donors.

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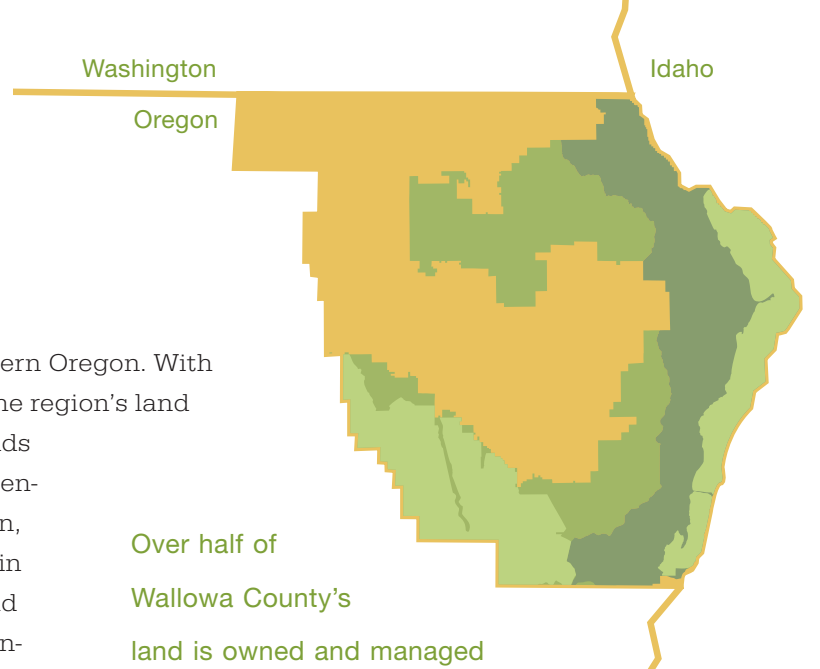
Overview

Wallowa County is located in northeastern Oregon. With evidence of continuous human use of the region's land dating back over 8,000 years,¹ these lands historically provided a broad range of benefits (forest products, grazing, recreation, medicine, and food) to people who live in the region. Over half of the county's land is currently owned by the federal government and managed as the Wallowa Whitman National Forest by the United States Forest Service (USFS).

Demographically, Wallowa County is sparsely populated, featuring scattered communities. Wallowa County used to be in the top 10 counties economically within Oregon. Over the last 15 years, declines in the timber and agricultural industries have weakened the economy, resulting in low per capita income and little job growth. At the same time, the county exhibits an impressive social cohesion with its residents committed to the land and to each other.

Recently, Wallowa County began to experience a steady decline in economic benefits and opportunities from public lands. This decline is part of a general trend throughout the western United States triggered, in part, by an increasing national concern for, and regulation of, environmental values such as endangered species and water quality. While stimulated by historic resource extraction levels, and the cumulative impacts of such extraction, national concern has narrowly focused on increasing the level of "protection" of our public lands and specific species without significant concern for the impacts on adjacent rural communities² or landscape ecology.

Starting in the late 1980s, a series of crises related to the management of public lands fueled an increasingly contentious relationship between the



Over half of Wallowa County's land is owned and managed by the federal government. Declining economic benefits to the county from these public lands, and conflict with the government over their management, led to the formation of Wallowa Resources.

- Wallowa Valley Ranger District
- Hell's Canyon National Recreation Area
- Wilderness areas

¹The county was the home of the Wallowa Band of the Nez Perce people until 1877 when the U.S. government relocated them. Since then, the land has been settled by American pioneers and immigrants.

²The Northwest Structural Adjustment Plan put in place to offset the social and economic impacts of the Northwest Forest Plan in northern California, as well as western Oregon and Washington, is an exception to this trend.

community, the timber industry, federal agencies, and regional and national environmental groups. In response to this period of polarization, leaders within the county initiated a process of visioning and community organizing to try to diffuse the conflict and chart a new course for the future. This led to the organization of Wallowa Resources (WR), a community-based nonprofit serving Wallowa County. Wallowa Resources was incorporated in 1997 to identify and promote a new relationship with the land. The community's vision calls for the generation and maintenance of family-wage jobs and business opportunities from natural resource stewardship.

This case study describes the ecological, socioeconomic, and political conditions within which Wallowa Resources emerged. It presents the progress and lessons from its work over the last seven years on ecological restoration and stewardship projects, job creation and economic development, community capacity building and collaboration.

Background

Wallowa County, Oregon's far northeastern county, shares state boundaries with both Washington and Idaho. The county is mostly mountainous and forms the headwaters of several important tributaries to the Columbia/Snake River system. Nearly three-fifths of the land area in Wallowa County is publicly owned, including lands administered by a variety of federal, state, and local agencies. The USFS administers the Wallowa Whitman National Forest, which accounts for over 90% of the public land and 58% of Wallowa County's land base. Within the Wallowa Whitman National Forest are three wilderness areas, a national recreation area, and lands open to multiple uses, including timber harvest and livestock grazing. The Wallowa Valley lies within these mountainous wilderness areas and is the site of four incorporated cities:

- Wallowa—population 755
- Lostine—population 230
- Enterprise (County Seat)—population 2,010
- Joseph—population 1,190



Nearly 60% of the county's population of 7,200 is based in four cities in Wallowa Valley, a central part of the county surrounded by mountainous wilderness areas.

These four cities account for 58% of the county's population (7,200 persons) with the remaining 42% in small, scattered communities. The total size of the county's population has seen little change in the past 50 years, after hitting a peak of nearly 10,000 persons in the 1920s. However, the composition has recently changed with an increasing influx of retirees and second homeowners. The entire population of Wallowa County is considered rural by national standards (approximately two persons per square mile). During the summer tourist season, Wallowa Lake is a heavily populated unincorporated area attracting over 60,000 visitors.

Culturally, all of Wallowa County was historically Nez Perce Tribal land. The Nez Perce were forced to leave Wallowa County by the U.S. government in 1877, but they retained rights to hunt, gather, and graze livestock on open and unclaimed lands, and the right to fish in all usual and accustomed places in three successive treaties (Treaty of 1855, Treaty of 1863, and Treaty of 1868). Since the early 1960s, there have been increasing efforts to strengthen ties between the community in Wallowa County and the Nez Perce Tribe. The results include an annual Friendship Feast, a traditional competition dance (open to all people), a scholarship program, and the Wallowa Band Nez Perce Interpretive Center.

In 1999 and 2002, the Oregon Progress Board ranked Wallowa County's economy among the weakest in the state. Over the past five years, 14.3% of the county residents have had incomes below the federal poverty level. Per capita incomes are among the lowest in Oregon, as is the net job growth per 1,000 population. The per capita income conditions are actually worse than the weak figures indicate, as Wallowa County's income figures include the highest contribution from dividends, interest, and rent of any in the state. In 1999, for the first time ever, contributions from these transfer payments to county income exceeded those generated by wages.

Despite poor economic conditions, the Oregon Progress Board ranked Wallowa County near the top in several other important categories including:

- health (low infant mortality, high prenatal care, low teenage pregnancy);
- crime (second-lowest crime rate in the state);
- education (top five in percentage of 3rd and 8th graders with established reading and math skills, and lowest high school dropout rates); and
- citizenship (highest registered voter participation in biennial primaries).



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Wood products once represented a major component of Wallowa County employment. Since 1964, however, this component of the economy has declined. Today, one small sawmill operates, and its future is uncertain due to the decline in availability of timber and increasing global competition.

These rankings reflect the continued strong social and cultural cohesion of the county despite economic hardship.

The economy of Wallowa County has traditionally relied on timber and wood products and agriculture, though other sectors such as tourism are growing.

- From the establishment of the Eastern Oregon Lumber Company sawmill in Enterprise in 1915, wood products represented a major component of Wallowa County employment. Beginning with the closure of the J. Herbert Bates mill in Wallowa in 1964 through the closure of the Boise-Cascade mill in Joseph in 1994, the wood product component of the economy has declined. Today, one small sawmill operates, but its future is uncertain due to the decline in availability of timber and increasing global competition. The sawmill has been forced to purchase timber from outside the county, including timber from the Umatilla Reservation in Oregon and the Yakima Reservation in Washington. The average wage and benefit package from the mill is higher than the county average for salaried employees.
- The valley lies at 3,500 feet above sea level and receives an average annual rainfall of 13–18 inches. Despite a short summer growing season punctuated with frost, much of the valley is farmed. Beef is the most important agricultural product though hay, forage crops, and small grains are the principal crops. The quality of Wallowa County's cattle is high, in part because of the nationally known purebred stockbreeders headquartered in the county. Of the county's producing cowherds, more than one-third grazes some part of the year on public lands. Public land grazing is under increasing pressure from environmental regulation and advocacy groups.
- Tourism, based on the natural scenic quality of the county, has grown significantly in recent years. Centered mostly at Wallowa Lake south of Joseph and the alpine Lakes Basin in the center of the Eagle Cap Wilderness Area, tourism is limited by the short summer. The full range of opportunities to extend the season by utilizing the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area have not been pursued. High visitor rates are recorded from July through early September with lower levels of visitors (mostly hunters and fly-fishers) continuing to arrive up to early

December. Winter travel conditions restrict otherwise promising opportunities for winter sports including cross-country and telemark skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, etc.

- Over the past two decades, the business of casting sculptures in bronze has grown. Several bronze foundries are located in the county, serving the casting needs of both local artists and sculptors from all over the world. These foundries have encouraged the emergence of local art galleries and a growing number of serious collectors visit the county to purchase art objects—some of which sell for \$50,000 and more.



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Issues related to public land management in Wallowa County

Ecological health

The poor ecological health of the forested ecosystem in Wallowa County and the greater Blue Mountains area is well documented in federal and scientific reports. Forest ecosystems are considered “unhealthy” because of widespread conifer die-off due to insect and disease epidemics, as well as a cycle of low precipitation. USFS Vegetation Assessments (1993–1998) of the Wallowa Whitman National Forest determined that mortality exceeded new growth by 29%. Assessments of the area highlight “natural process imbalances” attributed to the history of fire exclusion, extensive livestock grazing, and timber management techniques (in particular, overstory removal of early seral species such as ponderosa pine, western larch, and Douglas fir).

Public rangeland areas are in better condition at the start of the twenty-first century than at any time during the previous century. However, the spread of noxious weeds and alien invasive species continues to threaten native grasslands, and the management of isolated riparian areas requires attention.

Riparian areas are a concern due to the significant declines in anadromous salmon populations (i.e., Chinook salmon and steelhead trout), and attention is being given to forestry, farming, and livestock practices that affect riparian

vegetation, stream sedimentation, and water temperature. Improvements in riparian management are being actively pursued in Wallowa County, but local habitat restoration will not necessarily result in the desired increase in threatened salmon populations. Several factors outside of Wallowa County affect these fish populations, including ocean fishery harvest, hydropower dams, and climatic cycles.

Because of the varied natural environment of Wallowa County (from 10,000-foot alpine mountains to North America’s deepest canyon), a great diversity of wildlife species exists in Wallowa County. Thomas (1979) refers to a total of 378 species of wildlife that occur in the Blue Mountains. This includes 10 species of amphibians, 16 species of reptiles, 263 species of birds, and 89 species of mammals. While settlement and excessive hunting resulted in decreased numbers of most of the larger mammals by the early 1900s, subsequent regulation and management have fostered a significant increase in populations of all the larger mammals except the bighorn sheep and pronghorn antelope. The importance of many other species is now being addressed in management plans due to their status as threatened or endangered, and because of increased interest in maintaining resource diversity.

Past timber management practices and fire exclusion have driven a colonization of the forested lands by more shade-tolerant Douglas fir and true firs, and a buildup of timber to a level much greater than that historically found in this area. Since 1976, scientists have been predicting an increase in catastrophic stand-replacing fires (Hall 1976; Hall 1980; Hall 1984; Gast et al. 1991). Between 1986 and 2000, six catastrophic events occurred, compared to two much smaller events in the previous 30 years (Figure 1). Current assessments still rank the risk of catastrophic fire in Wallowa County to be extremely high.

The combined forest management strategies referred to above have also resulted in an “imbalance” in the forest stand structure and species composition distribution throughout the various biophysical environments (Figure 2).

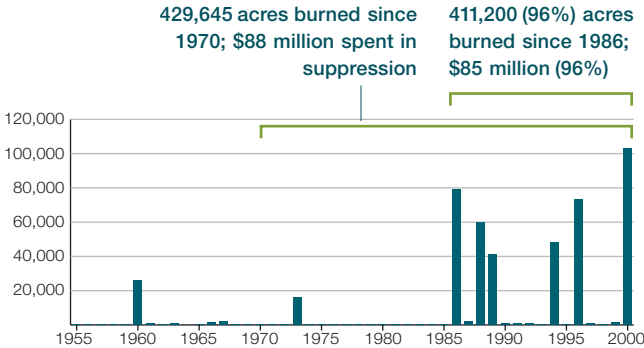


Figure 1: Acres burned in Wallowa Fire Zone.

Because timber management practices have led to a buildup of fuels, scientists since 1976 have been predicting an increase in catastrophic fires—five of which occurred between 1986 and 1996, compared to two much smaller events in the previous 30 years.

Figure 2: Simplification of stand structure and shift in species composition, by biophysical environment, historical versus current. Wallowa Valley Ranger District, Wallowa Whitman National Forest, 1999. ■ Historic ■ Current

Forest stand structures and species showing overall decreases



Forest stand structures and species showing overall increases



The ongoing simplification of stand structure and shift in species composition increase the probability of large-scale fire, insect, and disease disturbances.

These graphs reveal an increasing homogeneity across the forested landscapes of Wallowa County. The underlying data also highlight the loss of early seral species (e.g., ponderosa pine, etc.) and the increasing dominance of mid- and late-seral species (e.g., grand fir). This simplification of stand structure and shift in species composition increase the probability of large-scale fire, insect, and disease disturbances. These data reinforce what is broad agreement that no intervention results in unacceptable consequences to the forest ecosystem.

Decline in public benefits

The implementation of “ecosystem management” in the 1990s as the dominant paradigm guiding public land management in the United States, as well as new Endangered Species Act (ESA) listings, caused dramatic declines in the revenues and economic benefits generated from the Wallowa Whitman National Forest.

- From 1992 to 2001, the range and value of benefits realized by residents of Wallowa County declined by over 75%.³ The decline in timber harvest has had the single greatest impact (Figure 3). From the early 1900s up until 1998, the wood products manufacturing industry was the largest private sector payroll provider in the county—and accounted for 80–90% of all the manufacturing jobs. These jobs were among the highest-paying jobs, with substantial health insurance and retirement benefits. In 1990, there were 408 wood product manufacturing jobs. Today, the sector is struggling to maintain 85 jobs, benefits have been reduced, and temporary layoffs occur regularly due to log shortages and depressed markets.⁴
- The benefits from grazing and recreation on the public lands, as measured in permit receipts, have both experienced 50% declines since the early 1990s. There has been a reduction in allotment-grazing numbers in response to endangered species concerns, and beef prices have stagnated. Hunting activity has historically generated the bulk of the public land recreation benefits. The State of Oregon manages “game” populations (elk, deer, bear, cougar, game birds, etc.) and hunting activity. A state referendum in the mid-1990s prohibiting the hunting of bear and cougar with dogs impacted the market for predator hunting. Predator populations have consequently expanded. Due to increased predation and sustained drought, elk populations have declined. In response, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has significantly reduced the number of hunting permits for this area. The allocation of elk-hunting tags in Wallowa County dropped from 11,170 in 1995 to 4,970 in 2001.
- Since the early 1990s, the total number of nonfarm jobs in the county has increased slightly, but the mix of jobs has been significantly altered. From

³The calculation of the total decline in benefit from public land needs further analysis—this is an illustrative figure based on an initial review from the dominant sectors generating benefits.

⁴The decline in domestic market prices for commodity lumber products due to increasing import competition is an important factor affecting rural communities. However, the decline in log supply (and continuing uncertainty about future USFS supplies) creates disincentives to private sector investment in productivity and marketing strategies that could secure profits even in the current market conditions.

The decline in timber harvest, which once provided some of the county’s highest-paying jobs and 80–90% of all the manufacturing jobs, has had the single greatest impact on the reduction of benefits the county gained from the public land within its borders.

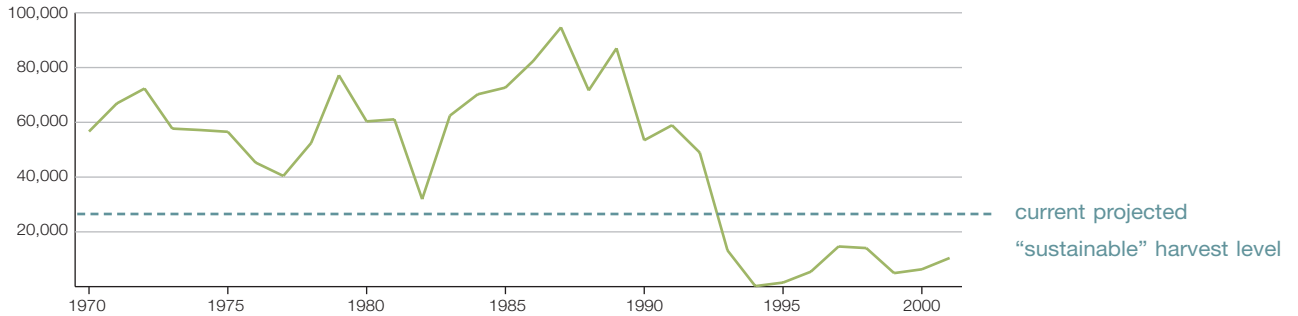
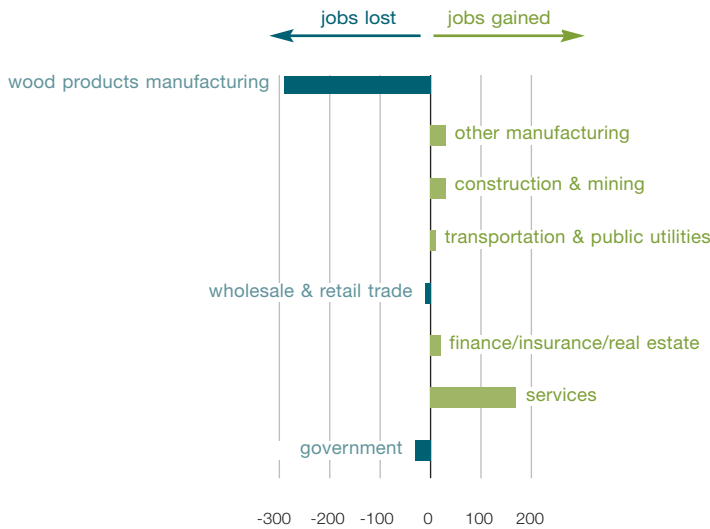


Figure 3: Decline in timber harvest from national forest land in Wallowa County. Volumes in 1,000 board feet. Source: Oregon Department of Forestry, 2003.

1991 to 2001, nearly 300 wood product jobs paying an average salary of \$27,000 (2001 dollars) were lost (Figure 4). The most significant sector of job growth during the same time period has been in service jobs (approximately 190 jobs gained). These jobs are paying an average salary of less than \$16,000 (2001 dollars).



The most significant sector of job growth since the early 1990s has been in service jobs—which pay an average salary of less than \$16,000.

Figure 4: Industrial change in nonfarm payroll employment, 1991–2001. Source: Oregon Employment Department.

Social costs to adjacent communities of changing public land priorities

The reduction in family-wage paying jobs has impacted the demographics of the county, with working-class families moving out in search of better-paying jobs. Many of those who are leaving come from multigenerational families. Their departure disrupts some of the continuity within the community, and the departure of younger families erodes civic capacity. The community is experiencing a real shortage of volunteers, especially to lead youth activities (e.g., Little League coaches, 4-H leaders, etc.).

Their replacement in the labor force has come from older individuals and couples seeking a different lifestyle. Wallowa County has consequently experienced a significant increase in median age (Figure 5), and a 14% decline in school enrollment. The decline in school enrollment directly affects state budget allocations to the school. With reduced funding, all the schools in the county have moved to a four-day school week and reduced the range of extracurricular programs offered. The shortened school week increases demands on the parent(s) in family households, often reducing earnings through a reduction in employment hours or the burden of additional child care costs.⁵

These demographic and employment shifts have other social and economic impacts. The percentage of patients with federal health care coverage at the county hospital increased from 40% to 80% over the 1990s. This shift nearly bankrupted the hospital, since reimbursement rates under federal health care were reduced in the 1997 Balanced Budget Act.⁶

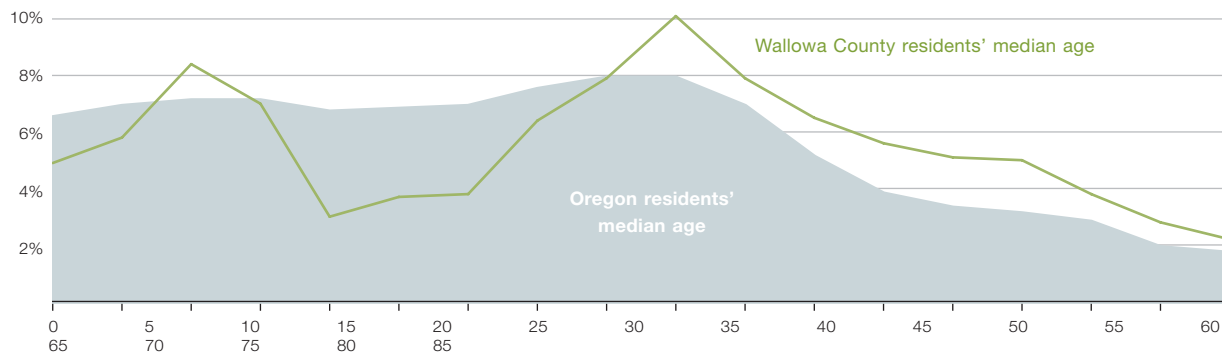


Figure 5: Population by age class in Wallowa County and Oregon, 2000. Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

⁵These pressures are exacerbated by the lack of existing child care facilities, difficulties in licensing and insuring new facilities, and the fear of children being left alone without any form of adult supervision.

From 1990 to 2000, the median house value rose 134%, from \$47,400 to \$111,300, while the median income rose only 32% (Figure 6). This change in the cost of living creates further pressure on working-class families and may accelerate the rate of demographic transition in the future. Across the western United States, late-middle-aged couples are moving to or buying second homes in rural communities adjacent to public lands, especially national parks and wilderness areas. The population in the counties surrounding Yellowstone National Park, for example, has increased 55% from 1970–1999, and residential development has quadrupled during that period. Similar trends exist across the Pacific Northwest, where the population has been increasing faster than the national rate.

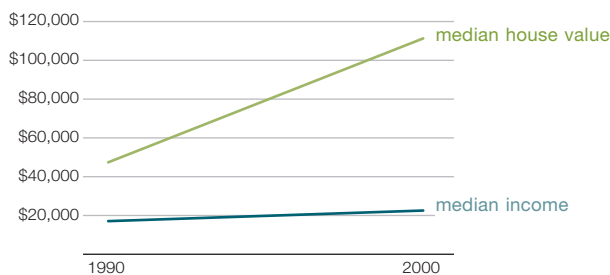


Figure 6: Increase in median income and median house value in Wallowa County, 1990 to 2000. Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

As working-class families moved out in search of better-paying jobs, their replacement in the community came from older individuals and couples seeking retirement or second homes. School enrollment and funding dropped; median income held steady; median house value soared.

These demographic shifts often change local values with respect to natural resource management and land-use issues. They also result in a loss of local management experience and ecological knowledge, as well as a loss in appreciation for the role of active management within ecological processes. Household polls, key informant interviews, and local news coverage already suggest a weakening of support for forestry and agriculture and more pressure to expand residential development and recreation. This correlates with the growth of construction, banking, and health services in the local economy. An increase in population pressure or an expansion of residential development would have significant impacts on the natural systems and biological diversity in Wallowa County—across both public and private lands. The emergence of a conservation economy with family-wage-paying natural resource stewardship jobs would reduce the pressure for residential and industrial development.

⁶The decline in public funding to both the public schools and the county hospitals has led to the creation of local private foundations to support both institutions. Local giving to the education foundations and hospital foundation exceeds \$500,000 per year.



Demographic shifts like those experienced by Wallowa County often change local values with respect to natural resource management and land-use issues. The emergence of a conservation economy with family-wage-paying natural resource stewardship jobs would reduce the pressure for residential and industrial development.

Community relationships

Beginning in the late 1980s, three events sparked what would become an increasingly intense atmosphere of conflict and hostility in Wallowa County.

1989: When a lightning strike started a forest fire near an active harvest operation, local operators offered to put out the fire. The USFS declined the offer, citing the lack of forest fire certification by the operators. Three days later, fire crews finally arrived, but not in time to stop the fire—thousands of acres of timber burned.

1991–1993: In 1990, anticipating the listing of the Chinook salmon under the Endangered Species Act, local landowners, the Nez Perce Tribe, Wallowa County Commissioners, and state and federal agencies undertook a collaborative effort to design a Salmon Rehabilitation Plan prior to the national designation of this fish species as endangered. The county submitted the plan to the National Marine Fisheries Service for review and approval, but never received any response—despite multiple follow-up trips by the county commissioners to Congress and the Department of Commerce. The county had hoped that this progressive local response to a national conservation concern would allow for greater flexibility and site specificity in the design and implementation of restoration measures. Instead, the listing of the salmon, coupled with subsequent appeals from environmental organizations, effectively stopped the timber sale program on the Wallowa Whitman National Forest.

1994–1995: Three sawmills in the county closed due to the decline in timber harvest on public land. Over 10% of the county's workforce lost their jobs, and businesses providing local services experienced a significant loss in revenue. The lost jobs represented 15% of the highest-paying jobs in the community at that time.

The decline in public land timber harvest had a profound and sustained ripple effect throughout the local economy, and on local attitudes toward federal agencies and national and regional environmental groups. While many expressed their disdain by refusing to wave at anyone in a green

The decline in public land timber harvest and a series of missteps by federal agencies had a profound effect on the local economy, and frayed local attitudes toward federal agencies and environmental groups to the point that many expressed their disdain by refusing to wave at anyone in a green vehicle.



vehicle (color of federal agency vehicles), some members of the community joined outside interest groups who hung in effigy the two leading regional environmental leaders and tried to burn down the local USFS offices. Other members, however, realized that with so much unrest and such fear and polarization, no progress would be made.

County Commissioner Ben Boswell began to search for positive solutions to restore the county's economy and social fabric. During this search, Commissioner Boswell met Martin Goebel, President of Sustainable Northwest, a nonprofit based in Portland, Oregon. In 1995, Commissioner Boswell began a series of meetings in the community to try to focus attention on common interests and values and brought Mr. Goebel in as a facilitator.

The meetings were informal sessions, held once a month in the back room of a bakery over coffee and doughnuts. Boswell, however, had cautioned Goebel not to use the word "sustainable" during the course of the meeting. Goebel inadvertently slipped, and the word was on the table. After considerable silence, a soft-spoken community elder named Howard Johnson reacted: "Well, you know, Martin, I'm not sure what's wrong with that word, but after all, that's what we're talking about here." Howard Johnson had attended every meeting, and, like Ben Boswell, enjoyed enormous respect in the community. His response gave permission for everyone to begin to talk about sustainability and community values.

Exploring a community definition of "sustainability" began. The core values that were subsequently identified—safety, quality education, prosperous communities, abundant wildlife, and healthy ecosystems—became common ground for the community and offered a place for the community to regroup.

The breakthrough came in a series of meetings led by community members. The core values identified—safety, quality education, prosperous communities, abundant wildlife, and healthy ecosystems—became common ground and offered a place for the community to regroup.



The community recognized the need to adapt a variety of livelihoods to the opportunities and constraints offered by the surrounding natural system and the prevailing political and economic frameworks. The legacy of past management activity (i.e., high-grade logging, overgrazing, and fire suppression) and the current drought cycle, combined with a decline in federal agency management capacity, provided an opportunity to launch a restoration economy in rural communities, and the evolution of a new culture of stewardship.

The community knew that realizing this opportunity would require strong relationships between various interest groups. These relationships would have to be built on principles of transparency, inclusivity, and democracy. Ultimately, a new social contract between urban and suburban populations and rural communities would have to be constructed. The contract would have to entrust rural communities with the leadership to formulate and implement public land management activities designed to address site-specific conditions.

Opportunities for economic benefits would have to be optimized on appropriate scales (temporal, spatial, and ecological) for long-term sustainability. Domestic consumers would have to reward local producers through the market, and with public and private investment. And finally, local leadership would be needed to maintain broad support from diverse national interests and to generate positive economic and ecological benefits locally. These objectives became the framework for a new organization—Wallowa Resources.

Wallowa Resources: A new vision

Wallowa Resources (WR) was organized in 1996 and formally incorporated in 1997 to build a new community relationship with the land. In 1997, the Wallowa County Board of Commissioners passed a formal resolution designating Wallowa Resources as implementor of the county's Strategic Plan for Economic Development, which sought to promote a natural-resource-based economy. The resolution not only gave Wallowa Resources legitimacy, but it reinforced the coordination between local government and Wallowa Resources.

The mission of Wallowa Resources calls for the empowerment of local people in decision-making processes, development of a conservation economy, and continued fostering of culturally rich stewardship. Wallowa Resources' program seeks to generate economic benefits from restoration projects, and influence the cost and benefits of private landowner conservation. Ultimately, Wallowa Resources wants to maintain working forests and rangelands under best management practices to secure long-term social, ecological, and economic benefits. Private and public sector investments in restoration, stewardship, and continued monitoring are critical to achieving this vision.

Organization

The first two years were spent developing the structure and staffing the organization, while ensuring that the process was open and transparent to community members and future partners. WR began with a volunteer board of representatives from the community.

Wallowa Resources then made two key staff appointments. The organization's first Executive Director, Diane Snyder, was formerly Director of the Land-Use Planning Department. She had been involved in all the workshop sessions and had served initially as co-chair of the initial WR Board. As with Ben Boswell and Howard Johnson, she enjoyed significant respect within the

In 1997, the county designated Wallowa Resources to implement the goal of promoting a natural-resource-based economy. WR began with a volunteer board of representatives from the community and the Wallowa County Commission.



community. As she explained: “I am 4th generation...old blood...[which carried with it] unexplainable trust, respect....[that] had a lot to do with our ability to move forward.” Diane’s initial challenge was to move from conflict to consensus and develop transparency in the organization. Her focus was to get people out of boxes.

The second key staff position was filled by Nils Christoffersen. Nils brought considerable knowledge about nonprofits as well as experience in the field of community-based natural resource management. Diane made an important investment early in Nils’s tenure by having him spend the first few months in the field, creating and building relationships and getting to know the history, issues, and personalities.

Programs

The board and staff of WR determined that the initial focus of the organization had to be on implementing projects that would create and maintain jobs. Opportunities for existing contractors and mills to participate in, and benefit from, forest and watershed restoration projects were prioritized in the development of field programs.

Contract program: WR developed its capacity to serve as a technical partner for public agencies in the design, implementation, and monitoring of projects such as fuel reduction activities, noxious weed control, fencing, irrigation, planting, survey work, resource assessments, and GIS services. WR, to date, has purchased \$2 million in contract labor and supplies from county businesses. Project contracts exceeded \$500,000 in 2002 and 2003, the equivalent of 20 full-time jobs at the prevailing average wage.

Through the implementation of these projects, WR has also demonstrated the value of acting in the role of contract administrator. For some types of projects, agencies are finding more cost efficiencies in contracting with WR, as opposed to managing all projects in-house. WR has the capacity to coordinate projects across private and public lands. WR has demonstrated that pooling state/federal and foundation funds

WR serves as a technical partner for public agencies on projects such as fuel reduction activities, noxious weed control, fencing, irrigation, planting, survey work, resource assessments, and GIS services.



effectively expands the organization's capacity to provide services to local contractors and businesses, by providing modest support for retraining and helping to reduce entry risks for first-time players.

Job maintenance and creation: With the contract program well under way, Wallowa Resources set out to expand job opportunities. Its first initiative was an effort to help marginal sawmills become more profitable. Wallowa Resources made an investment of cash, equipment, and marketing support to Joseph Timber. The Wallowa Resources partnership and investment supported the maintenance of over 40 jobs, helped secure the Chain of Custody Certification, contributed to the development of a new small-log manufacturing capacity, and secured new markets for lumber and log yard residuals. The venture failed for various reasons including a downturn in lumber prices due to increased import supply (especially from Canada), limitations on log supply, and insufficient working capital.

New programs are aimed at creating jobs in the field of higher education and expanding opportunities for outfitters and guides. In the summer of 2004, a pilot teacher training project for grades 5–12 is to be delivered. Other plans include undergraduate field-study programs, and nature and heritage expeditions serviced by local outfitters and guides.

Restoration work program: WR restoration projects were identified and initiated through multiple partnerships, beginning with noncontroversial issues where small-scale improvements were possible. The first restoration investments were made in aspen stands of 5–20 acres, and individual wetlands of

20–30 acres. With success, each of these projects has expanded. Aspen restoration, through exclosure fencing and conifer removal, now exceeds 600 acres. Wetland

(continued on page 167)



To expand job opportunities, Wallowa Resources contributed to the development of a new small-log manufacturing capacity, and later to programs aimed at creating higher education jobs and expanding opportunities for outfitters and guides.

NORTHWEST CONNECTIONS

Northwest Connections (NwC) is located in the Swan Valley of Montana and offers several field-based educational programs for preservice natural resource professionals. Northwest Connections offers courses for high school and college students. These courses involve students in one or more of NwC's monitoring efforts, and employ local residents rich with local knowledge as teachers, guides, speakers, and mentors.

During the fall of each year, Northwest Connections offers a Landscape and Livelihood Field Semester. University students from around the country come for an eight-week intensive course of study in community-based natural resource management.

They begin in what is now the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area learning about the Native American communities that lived on the landscape until only 80 years ago. They then live and work with ranchers in the Blackfoot River Valley and become involved in collaborative stream and rangeland restoration projects.

Next, the students live with loggers near the Canadian border and study innovations in community-based forestry. Last, they work in an apprenticeship with local residents engaged

in rural livelihoods. Many of these students have gone on to be research biologists, management biologists, and land managers in the region and they bring a new, more community-based, approach to their work.

Another of Northwest Connections' educational programs involves Montana teenagers in weekend and summer science-based conservation projects. The program is grant-supported and involves teens from a wide range of social and economic circumstances. The projects are designed to cultivate job-related field skills and to connect local youth with their native land and promote an ethic of environmental stewardship. Many of these students have gone on to pursue careers in hydrology, fire management, forestry, and other resource-related jobs.

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Aspen restoration through enclosure fencing and conifer removal now exceeds 600 acres.

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restoration, through enclosure fencing and the provision of off-site watering sources for livestock and wildlife, has been completed in seven sites. Monitoring and maintenance programs have been designed for each of these programs, with external partners contributing to the scientific quality of monitoring efforts.

Over time, Wallowa Resources has worked to scale up the program to the spatial, temporal, and financial level necessary to counter the significant ecological and economic challenges facing the county. For example, programs in river restoration (improved multilandowner irrigation systems and restoration of channel structure), forest fuel reduction around homes and businesses, and noxious weed management are now being implemented. Restoration investments by Wallowa Resources in Wallowa County exceed the planned 2003 USFS investments in restoration contracts for the entire Wallowa Whitman National Forest. However, this investment still pales in comparison to the reactive spending by the federal government to fight wildfires. The USFS spent over \$2.5 million in 17 days to fight one complex of fires in Wallowa County in late August 2003.⁷ Only a part of wildfire spending is captured locally.

Since 2000, WR has invested considerable resources to facilitate and manage Wallowa County's Community Planning Process, which will identify and implement restoration and stewardship activities and other public service projects in the Upper Joseph Creek Watershed (USGS 5th field).⁸ This watershed

⁷Since 1986, the USFS has spent over \$85 million fighting wildfires in Wallowa County.

⁸This terminology is derived from the United States Geological Survey's (USGS) hydrologic fields. A river basin is 3rd field. A sub-basin is 4th field, and a watershed is 5th field. Each watershed can be broken down into sub-watersheds, drainages, and sites. The assessments from several connected watersheds can be combined to form a composite assessment of a larger basin or *ecoregion*.

was chosen because it ranks high in the Wallowa Whitman Watershed Restoration ranking process, and because there was considerable community interest and readiness to do work in this particular part of the landscape. The Upper Joseph Watershed is approximately 174,000 acres (44% federal, USFS and 56% private).

The Community Planning Process was organized around four subcommittees of the county's Natural Resource Advisory Committee. Each subcommittee is focused on a pressing natural resource issue:

1. forest vegetation conditions
2. rangeland vegetation conditions
3. riparian conditions
4. roads and recreation analysis

The subcommittees consist of a diverse group of citizens and agency representatives under the invitation of Wallowa Resources. The subcommittees gather and analyze information more efficiently while making recommendations to the larger and more diverse representation of stakeholders.

Parallel to the work of the subcommittees, various commissioned reports and workshops were structured to feed in analysis and recommendations on wildlife management and cultural resource issues. The Watershed Assessment will provide the basis for a five- to seven-year program of work, which will generate a range of job and business opportunities. Monitoring, data gaps, and environmental thresholds will be identified to assist project teams in evaluating the cumulative effect across the landscape.

By focusing on scientifically based tools and local knowledge to restore ecosystem health, and through a collaborative process emphasizing principles of inclusion,



By focusing on scientifically based tools and local knowledge to restore ecosystem health and a collaborative process emphasizing principles of inclusion, transparency, and democracy, Wallowa Resources and the county's Natural Resource Advisory Committee are facilitating the development of a community forest stewardship plan.

transparency and democracy, Wallowa Resources and Wallowa County's Natural Resource Advisory Committee are facilitating the development of a community forest stewardship plan. The USFS has representatives on each of the subcommittees, and the Natural Resource Advisory Committee is providing technical support and planning guidelines. A "peer review" process is being established using regional and national scientists and interest groups. If supported by both public and private investment, this strategy should generate a broad range of social, economic, and ecological benefits.

Policy and investment programs: Wallowa Resources is also working on policies and investment programs that will aid private landowner conservation through cost-share programs, conservation easements, and improved revenues from the products of forest and rangeland management. Particular attention is being given to market-based incentives through investments in new businesses and marketing groups.

- Wallowa Resources contributed to local ranch participation in Oregon Country Beef (an organic beef cooperative based in the northwestern United States) and to the formation of a Wallowa Weed-Free Hay Association.
- Wallowa Resources is assessing various business models and opportunities from cooperative log sales by family forest landowners, and is investing directly in the start-up of a new small-diameter roundwood processing company, Community Smallwood Solutions. If successful, this new company will create 6–8 new full-time jobs and significantly improve local markets for small-diameter logs (i.e., 3–6" diameter logs). Research and development is also being conducted on the use of small-diameter logs for construction purposes. A demonstration building using 5" diameter logs was built for the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympics, and new variations of this building are being contracted for the Nez Perce Tribe and the County Fair Grounds.

Wallowa Resources is investing directly in the start-up of a new small-diameter roundwood processing company that, if successful, will significantly improve local markets for small-diameter logs.



Starting in 2000, Wallowa Resources, tribal representatives, environmental groups, and local, state and federal agencies began discussions on how to enhance their collective efforts related to local natural resources and public-land management.



Collaboration: Starting in 2000, county commissioners, the USFS, Wallowa Resources, several state agencies, tribal representatives, environmental group members, and representatives of the local Natural Resource Advisory Committee (NRAC) began discussions on ways to “fit together” and enhance their collective influence over local natural resource issues in general, and the management of public lands in particular. A track record of good communication and project-level collaboration already existed. However, all parties had mutual concerns about the lack of a *shared vision of land stewardship or restoration priorities* across the landscape. A sense of urgency existed about forest-rangeland restoration needs and the employment opportunities that such projects could generate in a county with the highest unemployment rate in Oregon. There was (and continues to be) serious concern about the continuing loss of natural resource management capacity, including the loss of a skilled workforce and the manufacturing equipment and infrastructure, due to the decline in business opportunities and the continued uncertainty about future opportunities. This concern is heightened by declining USFS budget allocations and continual reduction in the federal workforce.

Collectively, the parties agreed to pursue a collaborative and interdisciplinary approach to establishing restoration project priorities and developing initial project proposals. The intent is to generate agreement around the most important places to initiate further restoration and stewardship in Wallowa County, and the best means and strategies to carry this out. In addition, various opportunities to explore efficiencies in the federal planning process are being identified. And, finally, efforts are being made to involve citizens in the management of their public lands through contracting methods and agreements for implementation and monitoring of management plans.

Funding

Wallowa Resources' operating budget grew from \$130,000 in 1998 to \$1.2 million in 2004. Support for the organization comes from a variety of public and private funding. Key components of the organization's support include the following:

1. A United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Community

Assistance Grant provided start-up funds for the organization to cover costs of incorporating, board training, and strategic planning.

2. Grants (primarily from the USFS and private foundations) provide most of the organization's operating funds. While state and federal grants continue to be an important component of the organization's operating budget, they present a cash flow challenge because agency grants are reimbursable. Staff recommend a critical threshold mix of private dollars (up-front cash) representing greater than 50% of contract dollars as one means of addressing cash flow issues. Obtaining a line of credit is another means.

3. Ford Foundation grant: In 1999, WR applied for and was awarded a grant as one of the pilot sites of the Ford Foundation's national Community-Based Forestry Demonstration Program. The grant proposal to Ford requested support for broad programmatic dollars tied to full implementation of WR's mission. A grant of \$735,000 was awarded to support a five-year plan and budget. Distribution of funds was not guaranteed, but proceeded based on progress reports. The Ford grant provided important support in the following ways:

- By providing broad programmatic support, it added important start-up capital, flexibility, and the opportunity to be strategic.
- It leveraged other national, regional, and state public and private dollars.
- It created an operating cushion to cover cash flow issues and to attempt entrepreneurial ventures.

Since the Ford grant ended in 2004, WR is seeking to expand its funding mix in the following areas:

1. Income-generating programs from business enterprises, field studies and educational services, and tourism services.

2. Increase private individual donations from suburban/urban populations. WR has recently expanded its membership base to include nonvoting members and hosted a fundraiser in San Francisco where it presented the social value of the work of WR to a group of individuals interested in social philanthropy.

Lessons learned

■ **Importance of collaboration:** Relationship building from inclusive and collaborative processes is critical to achieving the constituency needed to influence national policy and private sector investment. Such collaborative processes need to be structured and focused at an appropriate ecological scale to find suitable solutions. The benefits of collaboration mean

that no one individual or group is removed from ownership, and everyone shares both the risks and accolades.

Lesson: Relationship building from inclusive and collaborative processes is critical, as is the involvement of key leaders and trusted community members to engage the community and develop confidence and trust in the process and the organization.

Local community-based groups such as Wallowa Resources can play an important role in facilitating such processes at a watershed or county scale. Larger regional and national groups can facilitate and integrate

collaborative problem solving and consensus building at eco-regional and national scales. The facilitation of place-based collaboration is costly, and process funding from public and private sources is scarce.

■ **Critical support:** The involvement of key leaders such as Ben Boswell, and trusted community members such as Howard Johnson and Diane Snyder, was essential to engage the community and develop confidence and trust in the community process and the organization. In addition, the strong networks that were established during the development of the Salmon Restoration Plan demonstrated that different community members and groups could work together.

■ **Importance of linking action/programs to governance structures:** The resolution passed by the Wallowa County Commission, designating WR as an implementing entity for its economic development priority, reinforced WR's authority and established an important vehicle for connection and coordination between WR and the nonprofit and local governing structures.

■ **Deliver local benefits:** Successful programs are ultimately owned and championed by the local communities they affect. Programs must deliver tangible and meaningful benefits to local communities. Long-term economic and ecological sustainability requires local adaptation and innovation. Such change brings significant social and economic costs that need to be offset by new benefit streams.

Lesson: Programs must deliver tangible and meaningful benefits to local communities.

Long-term economic and ecological sustainability requires local adaptation and innovation.

Such change brings social and economic costs that need to be offset by new benefit streams.

■ **Value of outsiders/facilitators:** The participation of outsiders or neutral facilitators often can change the dynamics of and advance a community process. Knowing when to bring someone in, and how to insert them into the process, is based more on instinct than on theory—an instinct that often rests with the respected and trusted community members.

■ **Never stop fundraising:** Smaller, younger organizations often switch between fundraising and implementation. As an organization matures and grows, an ongoing and continuous commitment to fundraising is critical.

■ **Flexible and long-term funding from private philanthropy provides essential support:** The community declined over a 15–20 year period, and it will take at least that long to recover. Long-term support, such as the Ford grant, provides valuable operational support; acts as a powerful leverage for other funding sources; allows the organization and community to experiment, take risks, and learn; and provides a dependable funding stream that reinforces short-term, less predictable project-related funding mechanisms. This long-term support from private philanthropy, however, must be coupled with or matched by increased and long-term investment from public land management agencies.

■ **Identify operating challenges and revise agreements with funding partners:** The cash flow challenge represented by a budget largely supported by contracts from federal agencies helped identify the following needs:

■ Secure sufficient up-front funds (from private grants and individuals) to cover periods when contracts are complete but funds have not yet been received. This argues for a budget that has more than 50% of its income derived from private sources.

■ Work with federal agencies to revise contracts such that at least a portion of the funds are paid up front.

Lesson: An ongoing and continuous commitment to fundraising is critical, as is securing sufficient up-front funds to cover cash flow ups and downs.

Conclusion

The persistent decline in economic benefits and opportunities from public lands by adjacent rural communities is well documented for Wallowa County, and is part of a general trend across the western United States. Increasing national concern for, and regulation of, environmental values such as endangered species and water quality has contributed to this decline.

This protectionist focus fails to appreciate the significant impacts of past management on our ecosystems and critical disturbance processes such as fire. Severely limiting active management of these culturally influenced lands may generate unintended consequences. The simplification of forested landscapes from past management, for example, increases the risk of large-scale disturbance events including fire, insect, and disease epidemics, and the subsequent invasion of noxious weeds.

Several other unintended consequences of this protectionist strategy also need attention—including the social and economic decline in our rural communities, the resulting demographic and residential development trends fueled by this decline, and the expanding gap between federal land (and species) management responsibilities and local federal agency management capacity. Left unchecked these trends will affect the conservation of native species and the habitats they depend on, as well as social and economic conditions in both rural and urban areas.

Public and private investments in a restoration and stewardship work program could stabilize part of the rural work force and contribute to the ecological integrity of our public lands. Parallel investments need to be made directly into the USFS to ensure that this agency has the management capacity to prepare, implement, and monitor the program of work. Furthermore, financial tools and market-based incentives for conservation are essential to maintaining the ecological compatibility of private land management and use adjacent to public lands. The current level and direction of federal action on these issues is inadequate to stem the ongoing demographic and development trends.

Relationship building from inclusive and transparent collaborative processes is critical to achieving the constituency needed to influence national policy and private sector investment. Such collaborative processes need to be structured and focused at an appropriate ecological scale to find suitable solutions. Local community-based groups such as Wallowa Resources can play an important role in facilitating such processes at a watershed or county scale. Larger regional and national groups can facilitate and integrate



Hopefully, indicators of success from a variety of place-based collaborative efforts will broaden understanding of the need for local community leadership to address a variety of social, ecological, and environmental challenges relevant to public land management that are inadequately addressed at national levels today.

collaborative problem solving and consensus building at eco-regional and national scales. However, the facilitation of place-based collaboration is costly, and process funding from public and private sources is scarce.

Hopefully, indicators of success from a variety of place-based collaborative efforts will broaden understanding of the need for local community leadership to address a variety of social, ecological, and environmental challenges relevant to public land management that are inadequately addressed at national levels today. Analysis of such efforts needs to isolate critical leadership factors and values that stimulate creative thinking and decision-making by collaborative groups. Separate analysis and action are required to understand the existing incentives influencing private landowner decision-making, and the various policies and investments that will maintain working landscapes and conservation areas in the face of development pressure.

Beyond Wallowa County, the country is facing an important choice. Either we invest in the potential of place-based collaboratives and critically analyze the comparative value of this type of process, or we fall back into special-interest resource management conflict that has caused suffering to both the land and rural communities. Particular attention should be devoted to mature collaboratives; those that have forged strong relationships across interest groups, have scaled up from small-scale pilots to larger landscape programs, and have begun to develop value-added businesses that complement the restoration and stewardship work. Strong, convincing “success” stories are desperately needed to forge new pathways for sustainable communities and sustainable landscapes.

Comparison study:

The Northwest Research and Harvester Association: Creating a commons

Don Collins is itching to get out to his favorite mushroom patches this year, but he hasn't been able to yet and that frustrates him. The drought is not the only thing keeping him from the income and enjoyment he receives from harvesting mushrooms; he is simply too busy coordinating all the members, landowners, buyers, and researchers that the Northwest Research and Harvester Association (NRHA) interacts with every week. As the unpaid President of the NRHA, Collins spends at least 40 hours per week working with the approximately 30–40 non-timber forest product (NTFP) harvester members who are primarily from Mexico and Central America, the four timber land managers of the private and public lands on which the harvesters work, the three researchers who facilitate research projects with the harvesters of the NRHA, and the dozens of buyers of the NTFPs in the region to which the members sell.

When the good rains come in the fall, Collins will make the time to go pick mushrooms, even as most NRHA harvesters take on the frantic pace of the pre-Christmas evergreen bough-cutting season. It is a busy time, but since about 30% of harvesters' annual income is generated from October to mid-December, it's worth

it. As nearly every dollar a harvester makes is by "piece-rate," rather than hourly wages, the higher prices per pound of white pine, noble fir, Port Orford cedar, and other conifers at this time of year make a big difference. The rest of the year they harvest plants used in floral bouquets like salal, huckleberry, sword fern, and bear grass that grow in the understory of the intensively managed private and public timber lands that blanket the Pacific Northwest of the United States and Canada. Foremost on nearly every harvester's mind is access to land to harvest these products. Members of the NRHA know they will have access to land for at least several years to come; the thousands of other harvesters in the region are not so certain.

Challenges to sustainable livelihoods in Pacific Northwest forests

The NTFP industry in the Pacific Northwest of the United States has been gaining momentum over the last 15–20 years for a variety of reasons related to decreased timber harvests on public lands, increasing global markets for NTFPs, and a dramatically increasing work force in the region.

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Some land managers are turning to NTFPs as an alternative or complement to timber production in their shift from timber to ecosystem management. However, there is another incentive for landowners to pursue NTFP production; products such as edible mushrooms, leafy shrubs used in the floral industry (called floral greens), and medicinals have become a multimillion dollar industry in the states of Washington, Oregon, and parts of northern California.

The influx of large numbers of primarily immigrant harvesters from Latin America and Southeast Asia, the increasing international market demand, and the particular resource characteristics of the Pacific Northwest forests have created a complex web of relationships between resource sustainability, harvest practices, and resource tenure institutions particular to NTFP conservation and management. Harvesters have a strong interest in maintaining the sustainability of the resource, as well as vast knowledge of ecology and natural resource management of NTFPs in a timber production context. Currently, however, misunderstandings about how harvesters understand and respond to various management approaches, and a critical lack of ecological knowledge

about the resource itself, threaten to result in management approaches that put both harvesters and resources at risk.

Creating a “commons” within private and public lands

Local harvesters created the NRHA, which operates in the southeastern Olympic Peninsula of Washington State, to address the variety of ecological, social, and management problems currently affecting resource managers and NRHA members in the region. The harvesters of the NRHA constantly face obstacles to gaining security of access to land. At the same time, land managers often lack experience with managing NTFPs and have few or negative relationships with harvesters.

The philosophy of the NRHA is that to improve harvesting and management practices, ensure sustainable livelihoods for harvesters, and even improve timber management practices, the NRHA must provide secure access to land for harvesters. In terms of benefits to harvesters, the NRHA by-laws state that the NRHA provides harvester members with secure year-round access to land; training on sustainable

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harvest practices, map reading, and monitoring and research skills; and communication with landowners, buyers, and other harvesters.

For the landowners, the NRHA has agreements and contracts with two private timber landowners and the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to manage the understory species on their combined over 40,000 acres of land, in exchange for exclusive access for five years. In addition, part of the NRHA's mission is to help conduct research and monitoring on harvest impacts on the land they manage and, in the long term, determine sustainable harvesting levels. The stated purpose of the agreement with the DNR is "to conduct a cooperative research project within the (two) State Forests in order to:

1. Inventory understory plants and develop management regimes for non-timber forest products (NTFPs);
2. Develop markets for NTFPs to ensure all resources have value and to secure the highest price possible;
3. Integrate NTFP management regimes with timber and stand management regimes; and
4. Develop a workforce of skilled, conscientious harvesters."

The NRHA provides the landowners with 5–10% of the revenue generated by the NTFPs harvested on their land, as well as research and monitoring of the harvest of a variety of NTFPs on their land. This security of long-term access to land is unprecedented in the region for NTFP harvesters, except for a select few who have individual agreements with private landowners.

Before the formation of the NRHA, harvesters without secure access to productive land said they often resorted to heavy-intensity harvesting in order to compete for available product. But since October 2001, when the NRHA made its first agreement with the DNR, harvester members have been trained to diversify the products they pick, and thus may harvest each species with lower intensity and frequency, and demonstrate sustainable management of the resources.

The foresters of the DNR state that they are pleased with the revenue generated by the NRHA, but are especially pleased with the effect of the NRHA members' continual surveillance of the land for thieves, garbage dumping, and fires. In return, the DNR keeps the harvesters informed of timber management activities so that

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maximum NTFP production can be achieved (i.e., harvesting understory plants before a timber clear-cut).

Don Collins, the NRHA president, makes most of the management decisions and negotiates with landowners. He discusses with harvester members where, when, and by whom harvesting for each product should occur. He continually works to build the capacity of the organization to improve overall participation by members.

One of the most challenging activities is the development of a system of monitoring and research on the practices and sustainability of NTFP harvesting. Throughout the region, land managers struggle to accurately document the amount and location of products being removed from public and private forests; the result is that very few landowners know the value of the NTFPs on their land. One of the biggest services the NRHA can offer a landowner, therefore, is accurate monitoring of harvest and its impacts.

Every harvester in the NRHA is trained to fill out a simple but thorough harvest report form, recording the date, location, type, and quantity of product harvested, every day that they pick. This information can be used by both the NRHA and the land manager/

owner to assess timber and stand management regimes, as well as build predictive models of NTFP and timber comanagement yields. Accurate reporting from members remains a challenge because every pound of product they don't report is 5–10% they don't have to pay to the landowner. Mr. Collins's approach is to foster trust and understanding of the NRHA's goals among its members, and to monitor harvesters closely to prevent dishonesty.

With respect to research, as the NRHA increases its capacity through collaborations with ecologists and agencies, harvesters will be trained to collect more detailed ecological and economic data. For example, the NRHA and this author are completing research on the impacts of different harvest intensities on a major floral green, salal (*Gaultheria shallon*), to provide management recommendations and a template for future participatory research processes conducted by the NRHA. This training and data collection will not only further the goals of the harvesters and the landowner, but also provide harvesters with a way to improve their skill set and potential to get field technician jobs in the off-season, or when they can no longer perform the hard labor of harvesting.

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Next steps for NRHA

It is clear that an organization by and for harvesters must have a strong leader with natural resource management and human resource management skills. Harvesters are enthusiastic about participating in the NRHA because Collins is well known, respected, and knowledgeable. He also has extensive experience picking all the commercial NTFPs of the region and working with harvesters of every ethnicity for over 50 years. Without his expertise, ecological and harvesting knowledge, and management skills in working with Latin American, Southeast Asian, and white harvesters from a variety of backgrounds, the NRHA would not be functioning. Collins knows, however, that the organization needs a leader

who more closely represents the primarily Latino harvester members, and is working to build this leadership capacity within the NRHA. The new challenge for the NRHA is to institutionalize the expertise of the President and other members so that the group will be self-sufficient for years to come.

—Heidi Ballard

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