

Chapter 21

Upper McKenzie Community Resource Unit

Section One: Baseline Social and Economic Information

A. Community Description

Geographic Features

The Upper McKenzie Community Resource Unit reflects the geography people have in mind when they say "McKenzie River Valley." On the north, the boundary moves east to west from the crest of the Cascades through the Mt. Washington Wilderness, roughly paralleling the Linn-Lane County lines and encompassing the McKenzie River watershed drainage, until it drops south between Vida and Leaburg, marking the western boundary. On the south, the line proceeds south of the Three Sisters Wilderness south of Roaring River Ridge near Box Canyon, over Hiya Ridge and proceeding in a line northwest through Sardine Butte, Pernot Mountain and Goat Point until it ties with the western boundary near Vida. The eastern boundary is the crest of the Cascades. Figure 61 shows a map of the CRU.

A number of residents, when asked about local geography said, "you don't go east of where you live." They meant that residents did not relate uphill as much as down. Moreover, although people related generally with the term "Upper McKenzie", strong affiliations pertained to individual communities, such as Vida, Blue River, and McKenzie Bridge.

Milepost markers are most often used as geographic referents. People say, "Right past mile post 35," and so on to direct others and to reference particular places.

Settlement Patterns

The Upper McKenzie River Valley is an area of dispersed rural homes around nucleated settlements. Vida, Nimrod Blue River, Rainbow, and McKenzie

Figure 61
Map of the Upper McKenzie Community Resource Unit

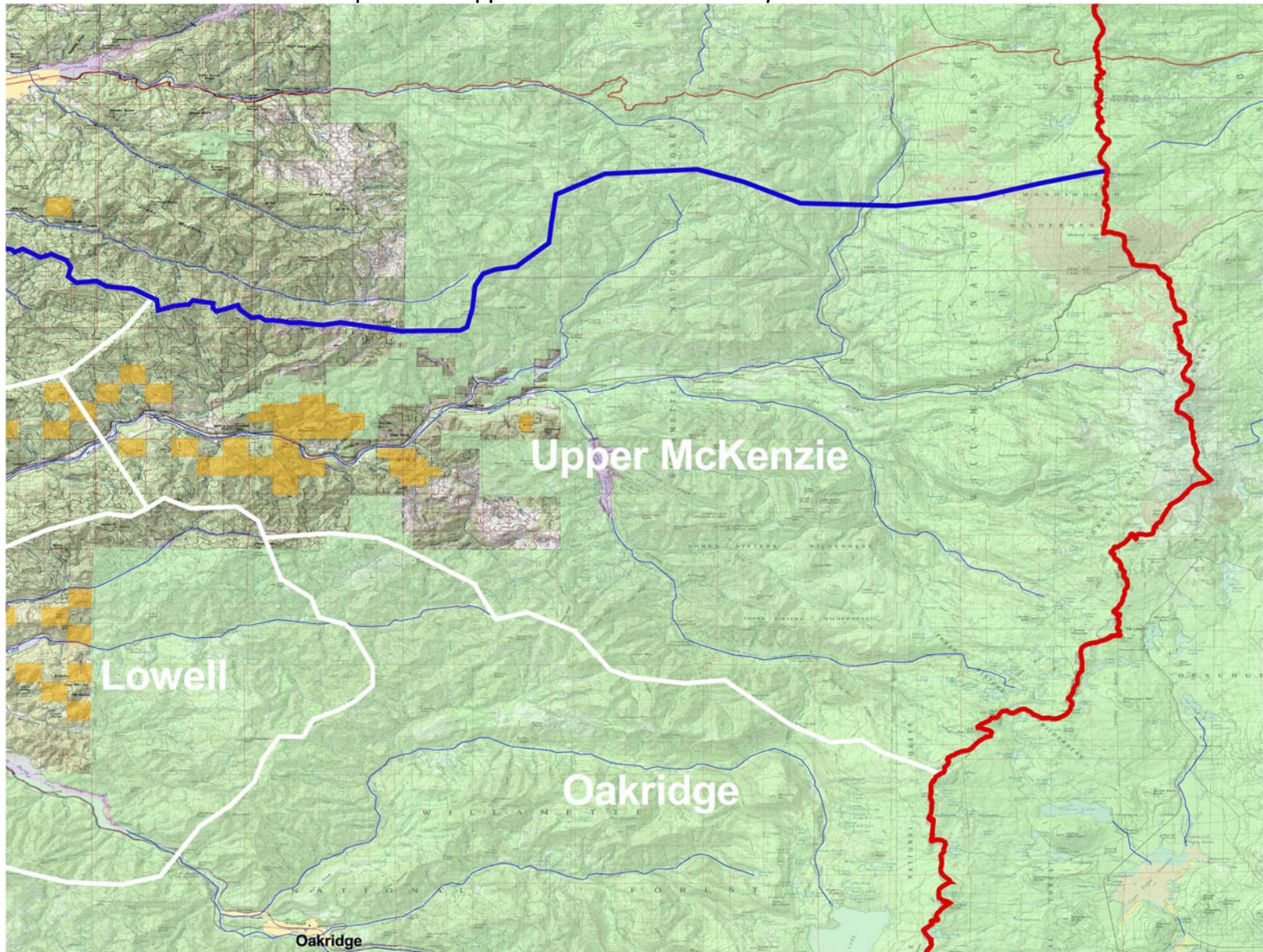


Figure 62
The McKenzie Bridge Ranger Station, Willamette National Forest



Bridge all have residential areas surrounded by dispersed settlement. Above Blue River, public ownership (Forest Service) dominates, leaving settlement pretty much in the narrow river valley and the private lands south of Blue River and Finn Rock. Below Blue River, some BLM lands limit development but by Vida and Leaburg, most lands are private. In these areas, dispersed settlement is the norm. Census data 2000 indicate that the Upper McKenzie, from about Cedar Flats up had 5189 people in 2000, an increase of 5.3% from 1990. McKenzie/Rainbow had 713 people in 1990 and 626 people in 2000, a decline of 14%. Blue River/Nimrod went from 892 to 888 people during the decade, while Vida went from 997 to 1024, an increase of 9% (Lane Council of Governments). The loss of population in McKenzie/Rainbow is largely attributable to Rainbow, where the population includes lots of retired folks who may have died or migrated closer to medical care facilities.

Small homes are scattered throughout the forested lands and private/public ownership is intermingled. Because of this, the area above Blue River and

Rainbow, up to Belknap Springs, has frequent interaction between citizens, county, and state and federal agencies dealing with issues of mutual concern, such as riparian habitat, new development and so on.

The McKenzie Valley attracts fierce loyalty and affection. Despite the turmoil of timber's decline, many families have been in the valley for several generations. A core set of people remains to this day.

"We stay here because of the natural beauty. Over the years, we've had to do different things to survive, but we did."

"I retired here from Portland because my sister and her husband's family live here."

If newcomers buy an existing house, they are absorbed quickly into the community.

"Building another home out here is very much frowned on."

"____ built a huge house that did not fit the local style at all, nor did it fit in with the natural surroundings. But at the same time, people accepted him into the community very quickly because he made a lot of effort to fit in."

"This new guy put a fence in. Beautiful wood showcase house, but a fence around it. It tells us he doesn't want to be connected. And he's seasonal, too. Maybe that's the future."

"Trophy homes are coming in."

Some newcomers have trouble adjusting to winters on the McKenzie and leave again. Residents described a significant turnover of newcomers, related to the weather, the lack of contact with other people, and the long drive into town. Retired people also move out when they desire more extensive medical support.

"Retirees don't last long out here."

"I'm not too bad yet. The only drawback I have is that I cannot drive by myself any distance. I mean, they let me drive around here and they don't say anything, but if I want to go to Springfield, I have to have somebody with me. And I have bus service right to my door if I need it." [Blue River resident]

When residents describe their area, they describe "summer homes" and "year round homes." It reflects the growing importance of the seasonal population in this area. What was occasional couples or individual now is a distinct community pattern. The summer home distinction becomes more pronounced the higher in the valley one goes.

"This family winters in Mexico each year. This family has been in the valley since the late 1800s. This home was built in the last two years and is nearby to one of the original cabins."

Neighborhood Areas

Blue River is a community of a couple hundred that used to be located on the main highway but was bypassed when the highway was improved years ago. It now sits on a loop off the highway that includes the Blue River Ranger Station (which will be closed at the beginning of the new year due to consolidation with the McKenzie Ranger Station), several homes, a community store, a mechanics shop, and a post office.

"A new beer garden is supposed to open up. Thin Rock. That used to be the name of this town."

"It was exciting before the tavern burnt down."

Blue River is struggling as a community. Three events have created negative impacts: 1) the highway bypass first isolated the community; 2) The restaurant that was so popular at the corner of town and the highway burned down. This restaurant was a crucial link, pulling people off the highway into the town; 3) The Forest Service decided to close the Blue River office and consolidate at McKenzie Bridge.

Many people observed that the community was unable to get traction, with some residents blaming the Forest Service. Housing is too expensive, no industrial park or equivalent brings in business, the number of families is decreasing, the schools are declining, and there is no tax base.

"People are saddened by Blue River. No tavern. No café, no gas station."

Blue River has a reputation:

"They are a bunch of hippies and druggies out there. They used to have a tavern that was really shady. It closed down now. They need to improve Blue River."

"I don't let my kids hang in Blue River because of drug problems. Kids are just hanging there. It doesn't seem safe."

Rainbow is a housing area beyond the turn for Cougar Reservoir, between Blue River and McKenzie Bridge. It includes Holiday Farm, a long established, old money resort designed for leisure, quiet, and fly-fishing. Big names and a low profile are associated with it.

"Holiday Farm is the kind of place that locals save all year to go for a night."

Rainbow has a community center that is well used for a variety of purposes, although its recent ban of smoking did not sit well with all parties.

McKenzie Bridge extends from Harbick's store east to the Cascade crest. It includes the small neighborhood areas of North Bank Road, King Road West, and King Road East. People really seem to like living in this area:

"I like my community. It is small and close-knit. I like it the way it is."

Generally, people attribute money and upper middle class status to McKenzie Bridge and poverty and working class status to Blue River.

Publics

Newcomers are retirees, snowbirds and part-time residents. The McKenzie River Valley has always had a recreation economy so tolerance for newcomers is pretty good. However, today they have a reputation of not paying taxes for youth programs and not supporting the local economy. Of course, many newcomers do get involved in the community. If a person makes an effort to get involved, they are well accepted.

More and more retired people are moving into the area. They are often seasonal but they are well connected to the community. They have great relationships with storeowners and workers. Many are from out of state but many others come from Eugene.

"Seasonal residents are a blessing. They offer a lot to the community. They do help out."

Retired people were described as the "saviors" of the community by a number of residents. Rather than be stuck in the answers of the past, these people bring energy, new ideas, and resources to bear on community life that many feel will have lasting, long-term results.

Commuters are not as prevalent in the McKenzie as they are in some other areas like Sweet Home and Mill City. However, it has become an important strategy for a significant portion of the community. What was once a temporary measure for survival during seasonal slow-downs or layoffs has now become a fact of life. In addition, the bus service provided by Lane County Transit is highly valued and allows easy access to the urban areas.

"Commuting is hard, especially for families."

Additional publics are described in other sections of this report. They include long-term families, loggers, business people, and river guides. A strong artists' community contributes in numerous ways to local life.

Networks

See Section Two.

Work Routines

Logging and woods products are still important in the area, both culturally and for a number of families. Timberwork still has an attraction for local people related to the independence and the lifestyle that recreation cannot replace. Logging and forest product work are no longer important economically. Public timber sales are reduced in quantity and type. The District has not offered a clearcut in over 8 years, for example, and its sales are oriented to thinning. Whereas in the 1980s, perhaps 100 families made their living in the industry locally, today it is probably 25 or less.

Logging activity is now related to private lands. Although secondary wood products appear not to be very developed, a few people attempt to make a living making forest products. One logger has a contract with the Forest Service to salvage logs out of slash piles on Forest Service land. He strips the logs and makes furniture, selling it in his shop. He expressed interest in a web page to market his products but was unclear about how to do this.

"There's a new woods business at Leaburg Canal, I hear."

"There are few small logging companies left. Some medium-sized companies are still around—Freres, Swanson."

One person told a story of a family that he considered pretty representative of the struggle of long-time timber families.

"Here's an example of the changes. ____ went to work in the woods right out of high school. He was working for a big company. When timber sales on national forests dried up, he went to work for one of the local loggers and he worked for them for a number of years. He got married, had kids, and then even the fringes of stuff available to small loggers disappeared. So we went to Lane Community College, rode the bus in, got an associates degree in something like landscape management. He worked steadily for a firm in town, but the commute got to be so much, and it was basically a minimum wage job. His wife cleans homes, does a variety of whatever work she can."

Recreation has always been part of the McKenzie Valley picture, but in recent years, recreation, along with retirement is what brings dollars into the area. The lack of year round tourism is difficult for the community because the slow season makes it hard for businesses to make it. However, businesses have the reputation for hanging on forever.

"It generally takes a death in the family to have a business close their doors for good out here."

Trades and services businesses in the valley expressed a steady level of business over the last several years, neither declining nor increasing substantially.

"New business people tend to be involved in the community, but as their business matures, they focus on that instead."

Some observers pointed to diversity as the core of the community, that it has always been oriented to both timber and recreation. People have made it clear that they do not want to rely on recreation as the primary economy. Families have known that they must diversify in order to survive in the valley. One well-known family has been in the area since 1912. The father worked as a logger and helped build the dams. One of the sons works for the Forest Service, one runs the family store, one works in Springfield, and the fourth one is a logger.

The seasonality of the economy has been a fact of life for many generations and it has not lessened in importance. Seasonal workers are local youth, working mothers, and other local people. Youth are hired for the summer by the Forest Service and provided District housing. Having multiple income streams has been a means of survival for many families in an area where long-term, year-round, family-wage jobs have not been very common.

One of the fastest growing enterprises is McKenzie Mist artesian bottled water in Blue River. Once it was linked to the Internet, it has grown very fast. Christmas Treasures also has done better through the Internet.

In the lower reaches of the McKenzie, some practice small-scale agriculture, including organic farming.

The McKenzie Valley experiences what the literature calls "lone eagles" or "modern cowboys." These are people who make their living in the global economy, often but not exclusively through the Internet. They are not tied to the local economy but may use family or neighbor labor during periods of high productivity. Around the U.S. West, these folks are settling in the beautiful spots, saying they only need "UPS and an airport" to make their "virtual office" work. Although the extent of such enterprise in the McKenzie could not be documented, local comments suggest that lone eagle enterprises are growing in importance.

"This guy works, I don't know what he does. I think he's an economist. But he works for the United Nations and operates out of his home. Then he travels out periodically."

Support Services

This is an area run almost entirely through informal networks. Lacking local government units, the area deals with the county on taxes and land use issues, various county-based social service agencies, state agencies especially relative to natural resource management, and the Forest Service. The day-to-day maintenance of community life, the caretaking, and the survival of particular families are handled informally.

"There's no bureaucracy. People come together for things that are important."

"When people need help, they call Sister John. She'll find people money somehow, give out vouchers, or help with rent money for people who are really desperate."

Without city government, the Chamber of Commerce tends to be the public voice on current issues. Its strategy is to support existing businesses, rather than to attract new businesses to the area. The Oregon Tourism Commission facilitated a grant designed to network businesses along the river toward "Quality Service." The focus was to improve local workers' knowledge of other goods, services and activities the area offers, and to network the lodges together.

"At first, this was met with much resistance, but then we all began to see the benefits of helping each other out. We really began to work together on a number of projects."

"Recently, a lodge owner complained to ODOT [Oregon Department of Transportation] about fast traffic at McKenzie Bridge but got no response. When all the lodge owners signed a letter to ODOT, they got a response."

"A hospitality contest involved all the tourism employees. It took over a year and workers were tested on their knowledge of the area. ____ --the waitress at the Vida Café was the winner. She does the morning shift. They held a banquet and gave her a \$500 cash prize."

The schools are the largest source of support and community connection. Once the kids graduate from school, people tend not to have the close network connections they once had. Lane Community College has an extension program out of the McKenzie High School. The McKenzie Christian school in Vida has 70 students who mainly reside below Vida. The opening of this school recently hurt public schools already facing declining enrollment. Blue River Elementary provides a federally funded after school program. Kids live far from each other. They know the woods and the land. They hunt, fish and have animals. A good percentage of kids go on to a four-year college.

Enrollment at McKenzie High School dropped from 486 in 1991 to 285 in 2002. The decline represents an aging of the population—newcomers tend to be without children. At the same time, newcomers are inflating property values by paying higher prices than locals can afford, making it difficult for young people from long-term families to stay in the valley. As it is, young people leave upon graduation.

The school is getting a "juvenile justice officer" next fall through grant money. The officer will teach law enforcement classes and crack down on juvenile offenders. The school also wishes to start an "alternative program" to retain would-be dropouts with job training and classes through Lane Community College. A number of local companies, many of which are forest related, have already agreed to take part in the program.

The McKenzie Bridge Church often organizes community programs.

"There isn't a lot of solidarity."

"No matter how hard you try to be an individual out here, you eventually get sucked up into one club or another."

Meals on Wheels was a successful support program that ran out of the Methodist Church in Walterville. The service was discontinued for some reason, but some people believe it is returning.

St. Benedict's Retreat brings in many people to the community. Although many at the retreat center are not well connected in the community, Sister John is very well known for working with the poor and connecting them with jobs.

"If you need your gutters cleaned, she has a crew of people come out. It's their way of paying back all the food the community has donated. She is 80 years old, but five days a week, she is out delivering food."

Neighborhood Watch is an important program in the area. On the fringe of law enforcement for many years, and with increased and diverse settlement occurring, especially of senior citizens, which has brought vandalism and burglary, citizens have taken it upon themselves to organize Neighborhood Watch. It is composed mainly of people over 40 and the chapter extends from a point between Vida and Blue River east past McKenzie Bridge.

"It brings a lot of folks together."

"I wish it had school people and ranger station people and others. This is their community, too."

Bus service is highly valued by valley residents. It is part of Lane County transit system and it links in direct and daily ways the population with the urban centers of Eugene and Springfield. In the past, this connection has worked the other way also—transients and homeless people reached such

proportions that they lowered the quality of life for local residents in some ways, but that influence has waned in recent years.

A few residents reported a lack of coordination among the communities of the Upper McKenzie.

"Why would McKenzie and Blue River get together? It would be artificial, there's no need."

The health clinic in the valley, drawing mainly from people up from the 35 mile post (above Nimrod), is reportedly running in the red each month, unable to compete effectively when Sacred Heart in Eugene lowered its insurance costs. The clinic has the reputation of being open more than any clinic in Oregon. It now has a half-time social worker who is able to work with youth that do not qualify for services from Services to Children and Family (SCF, a state department). It offers phone cards, bus tokens and bridging to other services.

"The clinic creates a safe place for kids to go if parents are drinking."

Apparently, federal dollars were for start up only and the clinic has had to rely on several private contributions to stay open. Grants often favor development but not operations, making it difficult to fund administrative functions. The Home and Garden Tour cut the clinics deficit by one-third, relying on 250 volunteers.

When the Forest Service computerized its operation by way of a T1 line, one resident said there was a spin-off benefit for others with improved telephone service and Internet accessibility.

Local events discussed by residents included the McKenzie Valley Home and Garden Show, the Leaburg Country Festival, Walterville Country Festival (Lower McKenzie), and the Art Festival. People were proud of their local artists and the Art Festival, although the event was labor intensive, and "we might not do it again." Others include McKenzie Fire and Rescue Fisherman's Breakfast, Big Brother/Big Sister Fishing Derby, and Light up the Valley and Christmas Bazaar.

In addition to the organizations listed in Section Two, other clubs make up social life, among them the Garden Club that unites people up and down the river. EASE, Emergency Action Services, provides ambulance and emergency medical services. The Lions Club for years has provided firewood to the needy but its members are getting too old to continue the service.

Recreational Activities

See Section Three.

B. Trends, Themes and Citizen Issues Related to Community Life

Trends

Cost of living increases, especially homes and property

More seasonal and retired residents

More recreation focus and less timber focus

Continued seasonality with recreation, with attendant social and economic consequences

Citizen Themes

1. "There's a spirit of independence here." People have had to rely on themselves to survive this mountainous area, especially during the winters when fewer people are around and transportation is more difficult.
2. "The fast summer pace and the slow winter pace make our community unique." People have to make many adjustments to these conditions, in the summer tolerating many visitors and in the winter tolerating (and enjoying) the slower pace.
3. "Newcomers must make an effort to become part of the community."

4. "It's turning into Yellowstone, Aspen or Bend." This theme relates to the concerns voiced throughout the community of the future of the McKenzie River Valley in light of existing trends.

"We don't want more development along the McKenzie River."

5. "The communities are run by volunteers, a small group of people trying real hard to get things done. It's a lonely job."

6. "We study and get studied but no one is able to implement." Residents say that the McKenzie Valley has had a plethora of people come in to look their situation over, but little action has resulted. The University of Oregon did a study, the Blue River Community Development Corporation did a strategic plan, and other efforts have been undertaken.

"To do anything in Blue River, you have to buy the town and start from scratch."

"The federal government and the county asked us to create a strategic plan, but there isn't anyone to implement it."

Citizen Issues Related to Community Life

Community Development

"When we first bought our house, it was worth \$17,000. Now it is worth \$300,000. Young families cannot buy into the community."

"With the declining school population and the aging population in the area, there should be some efforts to put together a senior center or something to reunify the communities."

"Homes are getting fixed up. During the last 6 or 7 years, a number of people have purchased homes and restored them. That has stimulated others to do the same."

"We don't have a meeting place anymore since the Blue River Forest Service office closed." [Vida, Blue River]

"Blue River needs a community center now that the Forest Service has pulled out."

"The flood plain status for Blue River should be removed because the dam is in now. Being in a flood plain zone limits development." [513]

"A lot of people moved their older mobiles out here because Eugene passed a law that only newer ones are allowed in city limits. We had no where else to go."

"The clinic is not convenient to get to and they aren't open the hours we need. We don't have a car so we take the bus into Eugene [for health care]."

"EASE [Emergency Action Services] is good to have for ambulance transportation, but it takes 45 minutes to reach them."

"Transportation is hard on the poor. Often cars barely work or only sometimes work."

"Roads in Blue River are bad. The county vacated road maintenance in the town, so now it's up to storeowners and homeowners to raise funds or pay out of pocket to resurface or rock roads. There are huge potholes everywhere."

"We need to be recognized as economically depressed so that we can attract outside resources. The new census should help."

Drugs, Crime and Law Enforcement

Concerns about drug use was probably the most frequent issue voiced in the community. A sampling of comments include:

"The INET task force has cracked down on meth labs in the area."

"Drugs are more of a problem for the parents than the kids. There's basically no law enforcement. Drinking is an issue."

"Blue River has a lot of unemployed youth and ran away kids. It's better since a fee was imposed for the hot springs."

"There's just no law enforcement here. No wonder drugs are bad, although it's gotten better lately."

"We don't try to control drugs anymore. You tend to tolerate things since drugs are always going to be around."

Residents voiced concern about vandalism, burglary, and domestic disturbance in the area.

"Everyone jokes that the police reports are the biggest section of the paper."

"How come more people aren't involved in Neighborhood Watch? Don't these things affect everyone?"

"The lack of law enforcement really hurts the community. People know there are no consequences to criminal behavior. The County Commission does not understand rural life."

"After the school safe was robbed for the second time, people really started talking—the state police, the sheriff station and Neighborhood Watch. We have to figure out how to protect each other." [School official]

Jobs and Economic Development

"The Cougar Dam project should put our people to work, not just bring in workers from Eugene."

"The hydro project is good as long as local people get work. I know a few people in the area that have already found work because of the project."

"A couple of years ago, the Register Guard did an extensive study of the future of the McKenzie Valley. Ninety-five percent of the people said that they did not want to the river to be further developed."

"Some things are deterring growth like tight land use regulations and a lack of land for development. We are a long distance from transportation. Maybe small businesses will come in, but nothing large."

"E-business is growing but because there's no broadband coverage, rural communities are being left behind."

"The Basketball Camp was supposed to hire local people but it hasn't happened."

"We need more restaurants. I hear a new café might open." [common]

"A flea market is being planned to run twice a year in the empty lot where the restaurant used to be."

Section Two: Communication Strategies

A. Informal Networks and Communication

Gathering Places

The golf course, especially for retired people, Eugene elite, and "trophy" homeowners.

McKenzie Bridge Store

Harbick's Country Store

Rainbow community center

Lane Community College at McKenzie High School

The Tea Trader (Lower McKenzie, 41305 McKenzie Highway)

Blue River Market, especially in the mornings

Key Community Contacts

Margaret Harbick, Vida Post Office

Ken and Louise Engleman, newspaper

Anne Raftree, McKenzie Bridge, (541) 822-6001; araftree@hotmail.com.

Anne is a long time resident and teaches school in Blue River. She is well regarded in the community.

Ron Hitchcock, Superintendent and Principal of McKenzie High School, (541) 822-3313.

Clay Robson, Vida, Oregon, (541) 822-3639; clayrobson922@cs.com.

B. Formal Groups and Communication

Figure 63
Organizations With Interest in Public Lands in the Upper McKenzie Area

Organization	Contact Information	Mission
McKenzie River Chamber of Commerce	44643 McKenzie Highway, Leaburg, OR 97489 Rhonda (541) 896-3330 [393]	Not new business but improve existing business
McKenzie Neighborhood Watch	(541) 822-3794	Crime watch
Vida-McKenzie Neighborhood Watch	(541) 896-0474	
Leeburg Community Center	(541) 896-3988	
McKenzie River Trust	532 Olive St. Eugene, Oregon 97401 (541) 345-2799	Purchasing wetland and wildlife area along McKenzie river
Blue River Community Development Corporation	Cookie Swetland (541) 822-3819	Community improvement
McKenzie Watershed Council	Jim Thrailkill P.O. Box 53 Springfield OR 97477 jimt@pond.net	Watershed improvement
Upper McKenzie Community Center	(541) 822-3794	
McKenzie Arts Forum	Sally Metcalf Vida (541) 822-3459	Goals of an arts coop, teach classes, set up gallery and gift shop, community studio
McKenzie Residents Association	Contact through the Chamber of Commerce	
McKenzie River Artist Guild	(541) 726-5094	
McKenzie River Guides Association	(541) 896-3136	

Section Three: Public Lands Perspective

A. Recreation Activities and Orientation to Public Lands

McKenzie River residents are active users of the river and the land. Being outdoors has been part of everyday life from the beginning. In the early days, it was work in the woods but even leisure time was outdoors as well. Although the focus on timber production has declined, the attraction to the out of doors is still the settlement driver for newcomers, for retired and seasonal residents. As in years past, outdoor life for kids and youth today is still strong, although now it is supplemented with more trips to town and "entertainment" oriented activities.

As large number of visitors have become part of community routines, especially in summer, local residents have made their adjustments, breathing sighs of relief when the slow season approaches, protecting their favorite spots from overuse, and continuing to use long term relationships with private landowners to secure access to less crowded places.

This population likes to hunt, fish, and be on the river. One person said that kayaking on the McKenzie River has gotten big in the last several years. Snowmobiling is not big, apparently, because the quality of the snow is not consistent. Workers for Hoodoo Ski Area live in Sisters, even though the facility is on the McKenzie District.

Seniors like to play bingo at the Leaburg community center every 1st and 3rd Saturday of the month. Revolving pinochle in people's homes is popular as well. Belknap Hot springs is one of the favorite local places. From its spa days early in the twentieth century, it had deteriorated through the 1960s until it was purchased by the family that redeveloped it.

The Forest Service downsized the Blue River Ranger Station two years ago, moving most of its staff to a combined district located at McKenzie Bridge. Three to four people still work in Blue River for permitting and information, but the office will soon close completely.

The loss of the Forest Service in Blue River was described as having "cascading consequences." For example, the Blue River office used 15% of the water resources available to the water district, resulting in a significant revenue for the district that is now lost. That will impact the fire station and then the school and so on.

The Blue River Market sells Forest Service permits, maps and outdoor supplies. Their biggest sales are hot springs passes, making 5 cents per permit. They make no money on the maps, buying and selling them at face value. Now that the Forest Service office has relocated to McKenzie Bridge, the owner of the market believes that Forest-related business will significantly increase. This activity already takes a fair amount of clerk time. In the summer, it is expected that many more people will stop at the store asking for information about campground, boat launches, and trails.

A new ranger station was built at McKenzie that was designed as a visitor "portal" for the area. All the magnificent timbers for the building were milled from local trees. The building is a showcase for community art. Over 80 local artists recently showcased their work through the Arts Forum recently, and the Forest Service office was one of five venues. Over 700 visitors came to the office on that Saturday.

Forest Service employees are important community members, serving in a variety of capacities including the school board and the fire department. The District office, of course, has key relationships with river guides, private property owners, recreation people, local businesses and key opinion leaders by virtue of its ongoing management activities.

The agency issues special lease permits for summer homes built in the 1930s and 1940s on national forest land. The district also has about 50 outfitters under permit and these people tend to hire others in the summer. As the permitting agency, the Forest Service ends up being an intermediary between the Eugene Water and Electric Board (EWEB) and residents related to use of utility corridors, water run off problems and so on.

The agency participates as a member of the McKenzie Watershed Council, which is credited with raising awareness of basic watershed conditions. In

some ways, its activities has led to a muting of criticism of the Forest Service because citizens have become aware of the poor quality of many private lands. The voluntary nature of the Council has made it a primary vehicle to foster cooperative relations and joint projects among the various interests along the river. The Forest Service contributes funding for water quality monitoring, provides technical help, and provides staff support for various projects according to the expertise needed. The Forest Service has also contributed grants to improve the Blue River Water District, and has assisted the Blue River Community Development Corporation in town improvements.

The Forest Service is active with the McKenzie School District, with staff on the school board, and being active in natural resource education. An outdoor school reaches all 4th graders. Fire ecology and fire prevention are taught in local forums. The McKenzie District also administers Title One and Title Two monies, although the extent of this contribution to the local economy was not enumerated for this report.

B. Themes and Citizen Issues Related to Natural Resource Management

Themes

1. "We get drawn in." One theme from the Forest Service was the notion that the agency gets drawn into community conflicts because of its role as a decisionmaking agency or because of its expertise. It is a permitting agency for EWEB, for example, so citizens with EWEB issues come to them. Citizens looked to them for support in dealing with Camp Yale, even though as private development, it is administered by the county, because of its expertise in hydrology and riparian management. A third example is the conflicts over the bridge and road near McKenzie Bridge that began way back with the flood of 1964. Residents wanted the road paved, although summer residents did not, and the bridge needed replacement. The County, although it apparently had accepted ownership of the road, did not want to bring it to standards. Again, the Forest Service was in the role of intermediary and finally agreed to be the holder of funds and served other functions to get

agreements implemented. Example four relates to the support role the agency takes with the water district on water rationing.

The positive spin on this theme is that the Forest Service has become an important facilitator to align community interests with the interests of other institutions that serve it. Staff made clear that a "cookie cutter" approach to community concerns does not work, that each situation is unique and requires its own answers. Nevertheless, despite the language of reluctantly being "drawn in" to these conflicts, staff also expressed recognition of their emerging expertise to successfully navigate these waters.

2. "We are a river people." The McKenzie River has been a major draw for settlement, livelihood, and leisure from the beginning of white settlement.

3. "The partnership should be strengthened." The loss of the Blue River Forest Service office has been hard for residents in Blue River and in the larger community. Many residents openly discussed the direct social and economic benefits that have been lost. It is clear that many emotions are involved in this change and the sense of being abandoned is palpable. The leadership vacuum and the morale concerns loom large and could be expected to affect Forest Service/community relations for many years to come. Nevertheless, this theme relates to optimism and expectation that present opportunities will create community-based partnerships in the future.

Citizen Issues Related to Natural Resource Management

Wild and Scenic Designation

"Those homes along the river built 5 or 6 years ago had lots of issues because the river is designated 'Wild and Scenic' and it stipulates certain landscaping to be especially sensitive to riparian habitat."

"A citizens' task force worked well for the Wild and Scenic designation. Citizens worked an alternative that we just put in the Forest Plan as a special interest area. The boundary was changed to meet citizen interests." [Forest Service employee]

Public/Private Woodland Management

"Yale Camp was controversial because they started logging it. It was all wooded and then one of the owners logged his holdings. It didn't seem that they were following the county rules like the rest of us have to. It was a visual issue—this national scenic byway is one that is more primitive and then this county development changes the character of the area."

Community and Economic Development

"These communities should not become dependent on recreation. Recreation is not economically stable."

"The Arts Forum would like a building in Blue River. Is the Forest Service building available?"

"The community really wants to acquire the Blue River Ranger Station. The lower level would be great for the fire station. It would create a benefit out of a loss."

"The Forest Service should not have moved. It helped make this community [Blue River] work. They were part of parties, BBQs, and everyday life. Now all the Forest Service people commute so we lose out on lots of socialization."

"The Forest Service should live in the community where they make decisions so they are aware of their effects."

"I'd like to see the Forest Service continue to support the summer program through the high school. It would be better if their staff would be a permanent part of the local curriculum. If they left Blue River will they also leave the High School?"

Recreation

“They’re [the Forest Service] putting all this money into tourism but not money for garbage cans and toilets. They have to help maintain tourist amenities.”

“What is going to happen with all those people that used to stop in the Blue River Ranger Station in the summer? Where will they get information and assistance? It’s already starting to happen, that we have to answer questions the Forest Service used to answer.” [Blue River Market]

“We don’t have public restrooms and the restrooms at the boat launch are gross. Blue River needs public restrooms.” [Blue River Market]

Eugene Water and Electric Board

“That EWEB proposal on the McKenzie River caused a stir. We have no representatives on their board. They get use of the river, we get nothing.”

C. Management Opportunities

The Forest Service should continue to support the community goal of economic diversification. It makes the remaining forest products work even more important to protect and support, and the needed efforts to create alternate forms of economic activity should be supported as well.

The Forest Service should be deliberate and systematic in its attempts to maximize economic return from forest products. The economic innovators in woods products enterprises should be identified, their issues identified, and strategies undertaken to support and broaden these enterprises. While it may not have to take the lead in this endeavor, the agency could facilitate other leadership, such as the Chamber of Commerce or the Watershed Council, to undertake business incubation and support services. As one example, many of the specialty businesses in the area, including those focused on wood products, could benefit from the niche marketing that the

Internet makes possible. A “yellow pages” on the Internet for these businesses, or individual web pages, would prove immensely beneficial for the valley. In addition, marketing and accounting are typically functions not performed well by small-scale entrepreneurs, but these services spread out over several clients are affordable.

A more systematic look at the lone eagle phenomenon in the McKenzie River Valley could reveal fairly widespread activity. These businesses tend to be invisible since they don't have storefronts. As their presence became known, opportunities for capitalizing on their presence would emerge. Integrating these folks into community life is especially important. In other areas of the West, such as rural Washington State, this activity is becoming an economic engine.

The Forest Service could foster additional cooperation among the various communities of the Upper McKenzie. The Quality Service grant is a good example of the benefits of such cooperation and there would be many more. A regional learning opportunity could be very helpful for residents—for example, the Dallas, Independence, Monmouth communities have done very well in recent years banding together for mutually funded projects. This coordination, and demonstrating regional vision, is very effective in drawing philanthropic and state funding support.

The McKenzie District could foster local capacity in applying for Rural Community Assistance, administered through the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The extent of the kayaking phenomenon could be explored and locals assisted to position for economic benefits.

The Forest Service could be an active supporter of the proposed alternative program in the school, particularly since many of the business supporters of the program are forest related.

The owner of the Blue River market suggests several measures to manage the loss of the Forest Service office, including a kiosk with information near the store, a discount for Forest Service products sold in the store, and lending personnel to the store during peak months. The market should be

made an ally of the Forest Service for information, outreach, and visitor services.

Blue River residents have wanted a sign for years that would announce the proximity of the town, the loop road that eases entry, and the services available. This is an example of the kind of issue that is not the direct responsibility of the Forest Service, yet would yield great dividends if the Forest Service could facilitate, not necessarily direct, its resolution.

The agency could begin a process of what JKA calls "Social Cost Benefit Accounting." Although Forest Service directives support community development efforts, collaboration, and community-based partnerships, little in the agency budget is oriented to supporting staff time for these activities. Nevertheless, many staff do make contributions to the community, both in an official capacity and as members of the community. Also, effective management that fosters local empowerment and avoids disruptive issues creates a huge benefit for society that remains unmeasured. Social Cost Benefit Accounting catalogs the time and activities of these pursuits, assigns dollar values to them, assesses their contribution to the community, and prepares budget processes that are not just commodity driven but driven by a wider set of social and economic indicators. Some examples of the activities on the McKenzie District that would be captured with this method are:

Volunteer ambulance	Blue River CDC
Volunteer fire department	Blue River Water District
School Board	McKenzie Arts Forum
Natural resource education	McKenzie Watershed
Youth Conservation Corps	Council
Scholarship funds	

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