

# Chapter 28

## Major Findings and Final Recommendations

### Major Findings

This section will summarize major findings related to: 1) The Social and Economic Environment; and 2) The Social and Political Environment of Public Lands Management.

#### A. The Social and Economic Environment

##### 1. Increased economic diversification

This study has reviewed the major ways in which people make a living within the three Human Resource Units studied: Greater Salem, Mid-Valley, and South Willamette. The newly-released census data, economic studies of local areas, plus the observations of residents included in this report, support the assertion that the Willamette regional economy is much more diverse than even ten years ago.

The major employers in the region are:

Medical care facilities	Higher and secondary education
Forest products manufacturing	Government
High technology manufacturing	Trades and services
Recreational vehicle manufacturing	

The economic transition from reliance on timber production to one in which timber production is one of several major economic sectors has been a relatively painless one from a regional perspective. From a local standpoint, the pain has been evident for individuals, families, and communities.

##### 2. A commuting economy

The most widespread theme of what citizens reported is, "We have become a commuting economy." While this appears to be an obvious observation, the frequency of its statement and the detailed descriptions provided by

residents emphasized the profound meaning this change has created. The positive aspect is that workers have been able to adjust to a post-timber world. Many people said, "We used to travel up the mountains for work [in the mills] but now we travel down to the cities for work." The urban labor market has expanded and draws from a much larger area. In many cases, we were told this change has been positive for quality of life and for standard of living. Once past the political rhetoric about whether or not reduced timber production has been appropriate, people indicated that their income often went up and that their life options had expanded. Particularly, the educational and career choices available to young people had expanded, residents reported.

The post-timber commuting economy has had a number of negative consequences as well. People are busier. The commuting time takes a toll on leisure time and family life. Finding positive outlets for children and youth has become a major challenge in small towns and big towns alike. Unsupervised kids for longer hours of the day were a key issue voiced in communities throughout the region. Towns that a generation ago would not have used their resources for kids programs are now developing after-school programs with the schools, skate parks and other facilities.

Significantly, the smaller communities reported a loss of leadership because of the commuting economy. Professional people especially are now commuting to the cities and are less involved in community life and leadership functions in their communities.

Finally, the commuting economy has had an enormous negative impact on the economies of small rural communities. Rather than a "family wage job" at a mill, workers have 2 to 3 lesser paying jobs in recreation and support services. Rather than the seasonality of the timber sector, they deal with the more severe seasonality of the tourism sector. The loss of a timber base has shrunk the number and output of local commercial and retail enterprises, and the loss has been accentuated by the rise of "box stores"—the large commercial stores in the more urban communities. As a result, the small rural towns have experienced tremendous "economic leakage" whereby local residents spend a large and increasingly large proportion of their salary outside their communities. With the establishment of commuting patterns, it has become easy and common to shop for the family as part of the work

routines, thereby further debilitating the ability of the small communities to sustain their local businesses. One person called it "the death of the small business class."

### 3. A growing and aging population

A doubling of the area's population is projected in the next 50 years (Southern Willamette Valley, *A Profile of the Southern Willamette Valley Region, Region 2050* and Lane Council of Governments, April, 2001). In the 1990s for the first time, there are more Oregonians over the age of 70 than there are teenagers (1999 Salem/Oregon Metropolitan Area Community Profile). The senior population will double by 2030 in the state of Oregon (Portland State University, Population Research Center). New residents are urban in outlook, very interested in public lands, active in using public lands, but lacking the knowledge base of earlier generations about the Oregon ecology.

### 4. A population that is re-distributing itself geographically

The population figures from the 1990 and 2000 censuses, included in this report, indicated a common pattern. The urban centers grew from 14-18% generally during the last decade, while the very rural areas lost population or held steady. The very rapid growth happened in the small towns near the urban centers—Aumsville (28%), Dallas (21%), Gervais (47%), Independence (26%), Monmouth (19%), Silverton (21%), Stayton (25%), Sublimity (29%), Woodburn (30%), Philomath (26%), and Tangent (22%).

This phenomenon reflects the rise of the commuting economy and the search for affordable housing in driving distance of the urban labor market. It also reflects what the literature calls "amenity migration." Around the west, people are settling in areas that have high quality of life characteristics. Made possible by the decentralizing nature of our present economy, especially the computer and internet, the literature is showing that, rather than creating jobs that attracts people, people are bringing jobs with them to attractive areas.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Niemi, Ernie, Michelle Gall & Andrew Johnston, *An Economy in Transition: The Klamath-Siskiyou Ecoregion*, ECONorthwest, 1999. Also, Pacific Northwest Economics, *Economic Well-Being and Environmental Protection in the Pacific Northwest. A Consensus Report by Pacific Northwest Economists*, December. Available through Tom

## B. The Social and Political Environment of Public Lands Management

### 1. Orientation to public lands

a. The urban centers are the source of recreational impacts on public lands and reveal a diverse but patterned orientation to public lands. The research revealed numerous patterns in public land use in the urban centers.

1. The Willamette River remains an important boundary in most of the area. West of the river, people relate more to the coast, while east of the river people orient to the Cascades and central Oregon.

2. The primary users of public lands are individuals who are not particularly organized. Salem has its Chemetekans hiking club and Eugene has its Obsidians hiking club, but by and large, urban uses are not organized.

3. The urban centers showed differences in the degree to which citizens are oriented to public lands. Salem, for example, is on the low end of involvement with public lands. Although innumerable boats and RVs were observed in the neighborhoods, the number of stores devoted to recreational uses of public lands seemed far fewer than the other urban centers. Moreover, the language of residents revealed a perception that public lands were too far to be very accessible. While Eugene residents boasted that any number of recreation amenities were "only an hour away," Salem residents said the nearest public land was 45 minutes away and "too far to be worth it." By

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Powers, Economics Department, University of Montana, Missoula, MT 59812, 1995; Also, Fossom, Harold, *Lone Eagle Thrive in the Northwest*. The Changing Northwest, Newsletter of the Northwest Policy Center, University of Washington Graduate School of Public Affairs, Volume 8, Issue 2, October, 1996.

contrast, Albany residents described an active pattern of public land use and long-standing routines related to public lands.

4. The urban areas exhibited strong values for outdoor aesthetics and environmental stewardship, but expressed them closer to home through parks and trails programs, outdoor education, and social programs. The urban governments are very active, even with current budget difficulties, in providing these programs, as well as responding to habitat and species needs in direct ways. Corvallis and Eugene, for example, are responding in the requirements of the Endangered Species Act by conducting a resource inventory of sensitive habitats and in promoting policies that support habitat sustainability. Springfield and Eugene are cooperating to purchase tracts of land for regional parks and open space.

5. Urban leaders described the ties between these urban interests and the federal land management agencies as weak. Leadership expressed active interest in collaboration about mutual environmental concerns such as water quality and species habitat, as well as sharing research and monitoring functions.

6. Urban uses are growing, and will become more organized over time, older in orientation and more specialized. Research revealed a large number of schools, civic and social groups organizing outings on public lands. JKA believes that this is a trend that will accelerate over time.

Retired people will make up a greater proportion of public land users as they come to make up a greater proportion of the total population. Organized tours that incorporate history seem especially popular. We also observed proliferating uses on public lands that were uncommon just a few years ago, such as snowshoeing, kayaking, and tree climbing.

b. Traditional Oregonian, those with long-standing ties to the state and to the economic activities of timber, agriculture and mining, generally expressed regret for the loss of favorite places because of

increased density. An attraction to "secondary" areas is now evident because they are not as crowded. For example, the Sweet Home corridor has become special to traditional people. While Sweet Home leadership wished for highway upgrading for Highway 20 like that of Highway 22 through Mills City and Detroit, it is clear that many people appreciate the area because it is not upgraded. This finding may reveal a possible marketing niche for the natural resource agencies as they respond to different social interests.

c. Citizen issues related to public lands are mainly oriented to recreation and economic development. (Gates, access, road closures, Northwest Forest Pass, grant development, special forest products). The reader is referred to individual chapters for details on citizen issues.

## 2. The Forest Service Mission

a. The Forest Service still has a bank of residual good will from its generations of service to local communities.

b. The Forest Service is currently given good marks by a great number of people who commend it for recreation amenities, information and guidance on enjoying the forest, trail maintenance, community responsiveness, and community development functions (leadership, assistance with programs, knowledge of grant sources, direct grant support).

c. Many question the current mission of the Forest Service if it is not a grower of trees. If it is protection, let it become the National Park Service and acknowledge the change, say the critics. If its grantmaking, let other agencies better equipped do that.

d. Some individuals at either end of the political spectrum, that is, those within the timber industry and within the environmental community, expressed anger, bitterness, and skepticism about federal land management of the last decade and the prospects for the future. They are still waiting for the timber harvest to begin again or, alternately, for the agencies to try big tree timber sales once again.

These individuals, perhaps considered the “entrenched old guard,” tend to still dominate public discourse in some locales and prevent more progressive voices from being heard.

e. The emotionality notwithstanding, many people still believe that a legitimate timber harvest is permissible in the current climate, and desirable from a forest health and community health standpoint. They are waiting for the Forest Service to assert itself that an environmentally responsible timber sale program is possible to what they see as the vocal minority within the environmental community.

f. Other community members are grateful for the leadership and support role the Forest Service has played. Participation in community development efforts, guidance in location of granting opportunities, and direct grant support have been very much appreciated. The support refers to the Rural Community Assistance program, whose funding is currently in jeopardy in the next budget cycle, as well as support to the Watershed Councils and other programs of the agency. This aspect of Forest Service management has been the major, positive alternative to a timber program.

## Final Recommendations

The final recommendations from James Kent Associates are provided in four categories: fundamental, programmatic, immediate, and overarching.

**Fundamental Recommendations:** twin goals of both rural and urban support

1. Sustain the commitment of federal land management agencies for economic transition in communities formerly dependent on timber production. Some communities in which the Forest Service presence is strong have done very well through the relationship—Detroit and McKenzie. Other communities still struggle with the economic transition currently underway—Mill City, Sweet Home, Oakridge, Alsea, and Philomath.

a. Make special efforts to sustain remaining timber sector, especially the last of the family owned, mid-sized companies such as Freres,

Swanson Brothers, etc. These companies not only represent continued competition in an industry dominated by giants, but historically they have contributed substantially in dollars and labor hours to the local communities in which they are located.

b. Support value-added production of material coming off federal lands. Residents appreciated the policy change that prohibited the export of federal logs, and are very interested in maximizing the economic value of forest products.

c. Develop the labor force and the contracting mechanisms necessary for the new kind of forest health projects coming on line. The Forest Service and the BLM have been leaders in this regard, but the changes are too slow.

d. Foster greater knowledge of and responsiveness to emerging economic activities on federal lands. Special forest products and secondary forest products manufacturers deserve special mention. Special forest products people had very specific recommendations to the federal agencies about fire closures, permitting, and other regulatory features that could be done in a way that accomplished agency mission while being sensitive to their needs.

Secondary forest products manufacturers tend to engage at the margins, fitting in new activities amidst multiple strategies for making a living. Consequently, they come and go. Currently, no one seems to be tracking these experiments nor offering technical, financial or business support.

e. The community development efforts of the Forest Service must be extended and strengthened in the next tier of communities, Oakridge, Alsea, Philomath, and Sweet Home. Sweet Home is farther along than others, and efforts have been made in Oakridge and Alsea. It seemed to JKA that agency approaches in these communities need to be more intentional, systematic and sustained. Agency staff mentioned several times that they are not trained for "partnership" work and training would be useful to create "traction" on the ground.



2. Broaden and deepen urban ties in order to enhance the agency mission through "Forest Service Express." JKA propositions related to the urban environment are these:

- a. Small numbers of vested interests in urban zones hold the agency hostage with fixed, extreme positions;
- b. Increasing uses on public lands come from urban zones;
- c. Urban people are crucial partners in managing urban uses. For example, the avid interest expressed by Eugene area mountain bikers in developing and maintaining trails in the Oakridge area is an opportunity to create shared ownership and responsibility for management outcomes. Many, many similar offers would be forthcoming with sufficient agency capacity.
- d. To succeed in its mission, the Forest Service must engage diverse urban publics in order to re-create a moderate middle ground, capable of understanding and supporting agency initiatives.

Forest Service Express refers to small, dispersed satellite offices with low numbers of staff, low maintenance requirements, and in areas of high volume contact, high visibility and familiarity. It is worth quoting a community development person who has had to deal with the negative consequences of dealing with the anarchist movement in Eugene for many years. This person's advice for the federal land management agencies in responding to extreme elements included:

- Publicize projects that have greater public appeal from a green perspective;
- Be assertive in the community by attending Saturday market and other community events;
- Put out storefront displays of Forest Service programs;
- Put out information in a number of different formats;
- Don't wear uniforms because they symbolize authority;
- Connect to the community in a broad sense—teach workshops, co-sponsor green events, assist smaller organizations, "through the use of a truck or anything;"

- Publicize and reinforce the community benefits created by natural resource agencies.

The management challenge in dealing with urban publics is the creation of urban/rural ties, or upland/lowland connections, so that both ecological awareness and a public lands constituency are broadened. Examples of some ways in which an urban presence might be created are drawn from citizen ideas:

- a. Information dissemination; better maps, personal presence;
- b. Education connecting uplands and lowlands; Expand natural resource education from the rural schools to include the urban schools; Raise awareness of forest etiquette but also build a constituency and broaden ties Watershed Councils are a major though not exclusive means;
- c. Foster the creation of hiking and biking trails in the urban zones through technical expertise and access to grants, and so on. Especially focus on trail systems that have potential of linking uplands and lowlands. Structure this action in a way that educates as it is implemented.
- d. A concerted visual public education campaign about the distribution of dollars from Recreation Pass fees;
- e. Improve internal capacity to foster and support citizen-based initiatives. Promote citizen ownership. Give away control to get power. Develop an urban/rural constituency capable of creating middle ground.

These twin, "fundamental" recommendations have to be reviewed in light of the declining budgets within the federal agencies. It is our hope that the criteria for evaluating difficult budget choices includes these twin considerations.

## Programmatic Recommendations

1. Create a systematic and intentional campaign to demonstrate accountability with the revenues of the Recreation Pass fees. Show in a visual way on a site-by-site basis where the dollars have gone. Address the public value of low-income access to public lands in the context of a fee system. Commit to a "one stop shopping" approach that requires people to pay only once, simplifies the procedure, and expands sales outlets.
2. Continue and expand the grant provisions possible through Rural Community Assistance programs. Even though this funding may be at jeopardy with the 2003 budget, these efforts are needed and valued in these communities.
3. Commit to a community-based approach to timber sale development. There is much latent support in both rural and urban communities. Undertake an inclusive process to bring in all relevant voices and to develop sales that reflect a true bio-social approach—responsiveness to both biological and social environments. The NEPA vulnerability remains with the agencies with this strategy, but JKA has witnessed several federal land management units practice with integrating formal and informal strategies in implementing a community-based approach. Informal contact that precedes the Notice of Intent, for example, is useful for disciplining NEPA to real interests. Instead of "issue stacking" which generates controversy, NEPA can be used as a tool to create citizen ownership.<sup>2</sup>
4. The Watershed Councils are the greatest single mechanism to voluntarily link uplands with lowlands, and public lands with private lands. The Forest Service has played a useful role in many of these Councils in leadership, facilitative functions, and grant support. This work should be strengthened.

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<sup>2</sup> Preister, Kevin and James A. Kent, "Using Social Ecology to Meet the Productive Harmony Intent of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)," West-Northwest Journal of Environmental Law and Policy, Volume 7, Issue 3, Spring, Berkeley, CA.: Hastings College of the Law, 2001.

## **Immediate Recommendations**

1. Help the Stayton chamber of commerce become the information center it wants to become for public land information
2. Assist Blue River Market in dealing with information demands in light of the closure of the Blue River Ranger District.
3. Some of the rural communities have made successful regional affiliations, while others have not. Monmouth, Independence, and Dallas have successfully banded together in search of financing to accomplish common objectives, yet Detroit, Gates, Lyons, and Mill City have not. It would not take much effort to facilitate mutual learning across this landscape in order to foster needed regional coordination.

## **Overarching Recommendation**

The need for ongoing citizen consultation will not go away. Public interests are increasingly complex and diverse. Federal land management agencies must continue to commit to the development of applied social science methodologies capable of building citizen ownership of management decisions. This requires not only the means to understand changes in the social environment, but to mobilize constituents for collaborative action around stewardship of community and bio-physical resources. To be successful, this capacity has to be institutionalized within the federal agencies.

In this regard, JKA encourages the federal agencies to consider a Human Geographic Issue Management System (HGIMS)<sup>™</sup>. The GIS product of JKA has created opportunities for an on-going issue management system. The system is in place but no commitment for its implementation has been discussed. Having completed the first phase of an HGIMS, the Discovery Process<sup>™</sup> revealed communication patterns, natural resource issues and opportunities in a wide range of communities. The federal agencies are now in the position of being "dressed up with no place to go." Commitment to implement is the second phase of HGIMS. It involves the following components:

1. Strengthen on-going issue management through management commitment and staff capacity. Training involves mapping the social networks and human geography in order to identify and respond to emerging issues. When emerging citizen issues are integrated with management concerns, a powerful force for collaborative stewardship is created. The applications of an effective Issue Management program are:

Project troubleshooting;  
New initiatives/programs; and,  
Community-based ecosystem stewardship projects.

A number of individuals from the federal agencies participated in the training program in Social Ecology held in conjunction with this project. These nine individuals (listed in Chapter One) engaged in the community fieldwork that made up this report. It is likely that those with the most interest chose to participate. Those that did participate did very well and a few showed exceptional experience and promise in community liaison work.

2. Develop a broader accounting process to capture the social and economic benefits created by BLM and the Forest Service—what JKA calls “Social Cost Benefit Accounting.”

The need for “Social Cost Benefit Accounting” has been growing across the country in light of the new planning efforts by BLM and the Forest Service. The notion is that the benefits of the community support work engaged in by natural resource agencies should be documented so that the budget process is not just commodity oriented but amenity oriented. Specifically, there is little budget support for the collaborative, community-based work that is now being promoted by policy and regulation in both the BLM and the Forest Service. In fact, collaborative work is difficult to justify given the present structure of the budgeting process. As a result, the benefits to local communities from leadership and community development, from grant writing and grant making assistance, from successful efforts to create community-based programs, all should be measured and included in the budget process.

3. Use Social Ecology in the Forest Plan Revisions—a geographic-based, citizen-centered, issue-oriented approach to Land Use Planning. The Discovery Process is used as a method of direct contact until the patterns

of the informal networks and the issues they carry become clear. Communication strategies are developed based on caretakers and culturally-appropriate communication. JKA has found that early resolution of emerging issues is the single best way to encourage and accommodate citizen interest in land use planning.

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