

*Charnley et al.*

## **HEALTHY FORESTS, HEALTHY COMMUNITIES: LINKING THE BIOPHYSICAL AND SOCIOECONOMIC GOALS OF THE NORTHWEST FOREST PLAN**

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One component of the socioeconomic monitoring program entailed interviewing community leaders and stakeholders from twelve case communities, most of whom were long-term residents, and asking them about their issues and concerns in relation to federal forest management. The foremost issue of concern that emerged from the interviews was the lack of family-wage jobs in their communities, especially jobs tied to forest resources.

The socioeconomic monitoring team monitored trends in the production of timber, special forest products, grazing, minerals, and recreation opportunities from federal forest lands. We found that the volume of timber offered for sale dropped dramatically between the 1980s and 1990s, and did not meet expectations during the first decade of the Plan; that trends in special forest products sold were mixed but declined for convertible forest products; that grazing declined; that minerals activity for the most part declined; and that some types of recreation opportunities increased, while others decreased. Our findings indicate that overall, commodity uses of federal forests declined during the first decade of the Plan. Recreation uses of Plan-area forests appear to be increasing.

It was not possible to measure jobs and income associated with grazing, mining, and special forest products harvesting on federal forests because of lack of data. In the early 2000s, recreation on Forest Service lands in the Plan area supported about 17,500 direct jobs and 25,500 total jobs. Lack of historic data makes it impossible to know whether recreation-related jobs and income increased during the first decade of the Plan. It is reasonable to believe they have, given regional trends that show an increase in outdoor recreation participation and interviews with agency recreation specialists. In contrast, 30,000 direct timber industry jobs were lost between 1990 and 2000 in the Plan area, about two-thirds of which can be attributed to reductions in federal timber harvest.

The FS and BLM also provide forest-based jobs in rural communities through direct employment and procurement contracting. Between 1993 and 2002, the 17 national forests in the Plan area lost 3,066 full-time equivalent positions or 36 percent of their workforce, and the 5 western Oregon BLM units lost 166 full-time equivalent positions or 13 percent of their workforce. Although no BLM offices closed, a number of FS District Ranger offices consolidated as a result. FS contracting opportunities also diminished during the period.

In interviews many community members commented that the loss of timber industry and agency jobs had caused many former community residents to move away. New residents, drawn in part by the natural amenities associated with federal forests, moved in, especially retirees, remote workers who telecommute, people with second homes, and people who commute to jobs outside the community. A result of this change is that community economic ties to nearby forests have weakened. Some community members still work in the wood products industry. But most former woods workers did not find new forms of forest work locally. Recreation and tourism are one arena that holds potential for building new economic ties between forest communities and federal forests. However, recreation and tourism development are controversial in many communities, and associated jobs in the service sector don't usually pay well. Many forest communities are still seeking ways to develop and diversify. What opportunities are available?

The drop in the number of agency employees coupled with a drop in agency funding to conduct ecosystem management during the first decade created an incentive for the FS and BLM to engage in partnerships with other organizations and pool resources to accomplish forest management work. One of the goals of the Plan was to increase agency-community collaboration in forest management. This suggests that communities have a role to play in contributing to forest stewardship, just as forests have a role to play in contributing to socioeconomic wellbeing in local communities. What is needed to promote partnerships and enhance collaborative relations?

The community forestry literature argues that healthy forests and healthy communities go hand in hand, and that forest ecosystems can only be sustained if forest communities and forest workers are also sustained. One emphasis in community forestry is on achieving forest restoration by providing jobs to local residents that are tied

to forest stewardship goals, thereby contributing to both forest conservation and community wellbeing, and enhancing ties between forests and communities.

Consistent with this vision, the Northwest Forest Plan (the Plan) is one example of a broad-scale federal forest management plan that aimed to achieve both ecological and social objectives, and to link the biophysical and socioeconomic goals of forest management. These links would have to develop in new ways as the emphasis of forest management in the 1990s shifted from timber production to ecosystem management. How did they develop during the first decade of the Plan, and what have we learned that can strengthen these links?

In this presentation we discuss monitoring findings that point to some of the barriers to enhancing the healthy forests – healthy communities relationship, focusing on collaboration in joint forest stewardship and the creation of forest-based jobs in local communities.

### **STATUS & TREND REPORTS CONCURRENT SESSIONS- Socioeconomic Monitoring**

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