

Coos Bay Bureau of Land Management Resource Advisory Committee and Two-County Title III Case Study

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Introduction

This study of the Coos Bay BLM Resource Advisory Committee and County “Title III” expenditures is part of a larger study of Public Law 106-393, the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act. Since the early 20th Century, states and communities throughout the U.S. have received funds through the sharing of receipts from revenue producing activities on the Forest Service’s national forests and the Bureau of Land Management-administered Oregon and California (O&C) lands. In 2000, following many years of declining timber harvests - the primary revenue producer on much of this land - Congress passed P.L. 106-393 to restore and stabilize county revenue payments from both national forests and O&C lands. The legislation was also to replace the “safety net” county payments in the area of the Northwest Forest Plan.

The Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act is novel legislation for two reasons: 1) it standardizes county payments for six years; and 2) perhaps most unique, it pays for something other than roads, schools, and general fund expenditures through potentially innovative mechanisms. The legislation combines the creation of employment opportunities and maintenance of existing infrastructure with the enhancement and restoration of forest ecosystems and watersheds. The legislation calls also for strengthening cooperative relationships between local people that use and care for the land and the agencies responsible for it, and it establishes mechanisms and money for these groups to collaborate. Direct local involvement is achieved through the establishment of Resource Advisory Committees (RACs) and local governing body involvement in project identification and recommendation. Title II establishes new roles for local stakeholders with the creation of Resource Advisory Committees that recommend projects to fund. Title III in the legislation involves county officials recommending projects to fund.

The Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act calls for monitoring and evaluation. The unique aspects of this legislation offer important learning opportunities – but only if systematic monitoring and assessment efforts are undertaken. Whether it represents a model for the future or not, implementation of the legislation and the Title II and III projects needs to be assessed to determine if funded projects are innovative, achieve desired outcomes, and are genuinely successful.

With support from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service and the U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management, the Sierra Institute for Community and Environment (formerly Forest Community Research) is evaluating Title II and Title III of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act. The Sierra Institute for Community and Environment is examining Title II and III projects and their outcomes in 16 cases across the country. In addition to examining specific project outcomes, the Sierra Institute for Community and Environment is assessing if and under what conditions stakeholder collaboration, as structured by the RAC process, leads to innovative approaches that satisfy both social and resource management objectives. The Sierra Institute for Community and Environment is also evaluating the institutional mechanisms established to implement P.L. 106-393. A fundamental research issue is understanding how effective these mechanisms are for implementing P.L. 106-393, as well as how they might be improved. This assessment will provide valuable information that can enhance the effectiveness of the ongoing implementation of Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination legislation and will contribute to the discussion about its reauthorization. Results of this assessment may also be used to inform broader policy discussions concerning community-based natural resource management approaches, such as the National Fire Plan.

Background

The Coos Bay Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) encompasses portions of the 2.2 million acres the BLM manages in western Oregon. These BLM lands were part of the 1866 land grant to the Oregon and California (O&C) Railroad Company, portions of which were reverted by the federal government in 1916. They are commonly known as O&C lands. The RAC area includes BLM-managed O&C lands in Coos, Curry, and Douglas Counties in the coastal southwest corner of Oregon.

Coos, Curry, and Douglas Counties all participate in multiple RACs. This is because each of these counties contains portions of multiple national forests or BLM districts and each forest and district has established a RAC. Coos and Curry counties each participate in three RACs. The relative importance of different RACs for a particular multi-RAC county is tied to the amount of money each RAC has at its disposal and allocates within the county. The Siskiyou Forest Service RAC is most important to Curry County while in Coos County, the Coos Bay BLM RAC is most important. In Douglas County, which is involved in seven RACs, the Roseburg BLM RAC, the Forest Service Umpqua-Rogue RAC, and the Coos Bay BLM RAC are the most significant.

Like most of rural Oregon, much of the land in these three counties is publicly owned and managed. In addition to land controlled by the U. S. Forest Service or the Bureau of Land Management, other public lands in Coos County include Elliott State Forest, the Coos County Forest, and the forestlands returned to the Coquille Indian Tribe by Congress.

While all three counties gained in population from 1990 to 2000, their increase was well below the state average of nearly 17%. Curry County had an 8.5% population increase, Douglas County 5.6%, and Coos County only 3.9%. There are also significant differences between communities within each county. Timber dependent communities such as North Bend in Coos County and Reedsport

in Douglas County lost population in the decade between 1990 and 2000. According to the Portland State University (PSU) Population Research Center these communities continue to lose population. The coastal resort communities of Bandon in Coos County and Brookings in Curry County gained population and, according to the PSU figures, continue to grow, with Brookings growing at a rate nearly three times the state average.

In coastal southwest Oregon, as with many other rural areas of the Pacific Northwest, forest products and commercial fishing have dramatically declined over the last 20 years. Table 1 shows the reduction in timber harvests over the last 15 years.

As Table 1 shows, timber harvest from public lands declined dramatically between 1988 and 2003, with the most dramatic decline occurring in the late 80s and early 90s. Harvest from private timberlands increased over the last 15 years, but it has not offset the decline on public lands. The total timber harvest declined over 50% in the three counties. The reduction in timber harvests has had a major negative impact on the economies of all three counties. Given that 25% of timber harvest revenues from Forest Service lands are retained by counties for schools and roads, and that 50% of revenues from the O&C lands are retained by counties for general fund and other expenditures, one can only imagine the negative impacts on county services of these reductions.

Against this backdrop of timber industry decline, there are also examples of positive economic change. Increased tourism has fueled growth in both Coos and Curry Counties. For example, in the Bandon area of Coos County, the creation of the Bandon Dunes golf and resort complex has, according to the Oregon Economic and Community Development Department (OECDD), created 300 seasonal and 200 year-around full-time equivalent jobs. Bandon Dunes has revitalized the beach community of Bandon and the surrounding area. In adjacent Curry County, tourism benefits from the tremendous population increase in the nearby Rogue Valley, which has

Table 1. Timber Harvest Levels 1988-2003¹
(volume removed in 1,000's of board feet)

	Public Lands*	Private Lands	Total Harvest
COOS COUNTY			
1988	253,341	261,556	514,897
1993	75,940	266,559	342,499
1998	43,830	197,611	241,441
2003	24,355	301,922	326,277
CURRY COUNTY			
1988	119,365	49,455	168,820
1993	2,300	94,231	96,531
1998	6,465	43,708	50,173
2003	5,579	72,867	78,446
DOUGLAS COUNTY			
1988	952,839	370,540	1,323,379
1993	231,715	427,469	659,184
1998	77,952	356,904	434,856
2003	32,523	432,461	464,984

* Includes federal, state, and county lands.

grown over 20% since 1990.

Other examples of recent economic diversification include the location of a call center operated by Affiliated Computer Services in Coos Bay, which has created 540 new jobs; the decision by American Bridge (a bridge building and construction firm) to locate its Western regional headquarters in Reedsport, Douglas County; and the construction boom in Brookings, Curry County, driven by immigration from California and the Rogue Valley. In Coos County the dramatic increase in the Coquille Indian Tribe's enterprises, including the Mill Hotel and Casino, cranberry growing and distribution operations, and tribal government and health clinic, has also created many new jobs. These enterprises now employ a total of about 800 people in Coos County.²

Despite some diversification, these counties remain economically challenged. All of Coos and Douglas counties are identified as distressed Oregon communities. The Oregon distressed community index is composed of eight factors: unemployment rate, per capita income, average pay per worker, population change, percent of the population receiving unemployment benefits, industrial diversity based on distribution of employment by industry, percentage of families in poverty, and employment change. Areas with an index higher than 1.2 are considered "distressed" and receive priority assistance from the state government. The indices for Douglas and Coos County are 1.21 and 1.22, respectively. Although the index for Curry County recently fell below 1.2, the indices for Port Orford, Gold Beach, and Brookings, the county's

¹ Source: http://egov.oregon.gov/ODF/STATE_FORESTS/FRP/Charts.shtml

² Source: http://www.cedco.net/CEDCO_Tribal_Impact.pdf

largest cities, are still relatively high at 1.62, 1.41, and 1.27, respectively.

As of July 2005, the Oregon unemployment rate was 6.8%, the third highest in the United States.³ At 8.9% and 8.4%, respectively, the unemployment in Douglas and Coos Counties is higher than the state average (annual averages for 2002). At 6.8%, unemployment in Curry County is significantly less than in the other two counties. Per capita income in the three counties also lags behind the state average. In 2002, the state average was \$28,222, while Coos per capita income was \$23,937, Douglas County was \$24,644, and Curry County was \$24,679.⁴ Continuing mill closures exacerbate the unemployment situation. Weyerhaeuser Timber Corporation closed Coos Bay mills in 1989 and 1998, resulting in a loss of 215 jobs. Weyerhaeuser's mill in North Bend, which adjoins Coos Bay, closed in 1995. In Reedsport, just north of Coos Bay, closure of International Paper's sawmill in 1996 and of its paper and pulp mill in 1997, resulted in a loss of 405 jobs and devastated the community.⁵

In recent years there has been a social and political shift in the three counties that both influences

and reflects changing views of the federal government. Since the mid-1990s, the once Democratic-voting counties of Coos and Curry have voted strongly Republican. Douglas County had always been a swing county, but residents there, too, now vote strongly Republican. All three counties once had strong organized labor membership and influence, but that has dramatically declined along with the timber industry, in which it was largely based.

These economic and political shifts are linked with strong criticism of federal public lands management agencies, especially among those who blame the federal government and environmentalists for the decline of the local timber industry and associated job losses. Many of these individuals hope that the federal harvest levels will return to the levels of the 1980s. Some RAC members, as well as some local government officials share this criticism of the BLM. This perspective gives a pro-county/anti-BLM twist to how some RAC members view the Secure County Schools and Community Self-Determination legislation and the RAC process.

County Elections for Titles II AND III

Table 2 shows the annual amounts received from the BLM that the three counties allocate to support Titles III and II, including the Coos Bay BLM RAC. Percentages refer to the proportional distribution between the two titles of the total amount each county elects to use to support them. Because the amounts these three counties receive differ significantly (based on historic federal receipt payments), it follows that their Title II and Title III elections also differ. Douglas County elects between \$4.1 and \$4.2 million annually to support Title II and III programs; Coos County

elects approximately \$1.1 million, and Curry County's annual Title II and III election hovers around \$600,000.

The counties in this RAC differ in terms of how they allocate funds between Title II and Title III. Douglas County, for example, has maintained a steady 25%-75% split between Title III and Title II, respectively, since the passage of this legislation. Its contribution to the Coos Bay RAC has remained stable as well, at slightly more than \$600,000 per year. In contrast to Douglas County, Coos County commissioners regularly allocate more money to

³ Source: United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (<http://www.bls.gov/web/laumstrk.htm>).

⁴ Sources for unemployment and income data are Oregon Employment Department; Center for Population Research & Census, PSU; Bureau of Economic Analysis; Oregon Tourism Commission; Oregon Department of Revenue; Oregon Economic and Community Development Department. Website for this data is: <http://www.econ.state.or.us/stats.htm>.

⁵ Information on mill closures and associated job losses from: http://www.propertyrightsresearch.org/articles4/mill_closures.htm.

Table 2. Allocations of BLM P.L. 106-393 payments, by county⁶

Year	County	Title III (BLM) Total \$ and (%)	Title II (BLM) Total \$ and (%)	Coos Bay BLM RAC \$
2001	Coos	613,572 (55)	508,892 (45)	508,892
	Curry	565,542 (95)	29,765 (5)	14,883
	Douglas	1,026,846 (25)	3,080,536 (75)	616,107
Coos Bay RAC total allocation				1,139,882
2002	Coos	141,883 (13)	949,527 (87)	949,527
	Curry	432,050 (87)	168,020 (28)	84,010
	Douglas	1,035,060 (25)	3,105,180 (75)	620,982
Coos Bay RAC total allocation				1,654,519
2003	Coos	801,362 (73)	303,238 (27)	303,238
	Curry	364,362 (60)	242,908 (40)	201,614
	Douglas	1,047,480 (25)	3,142,442 (75)	628,488
Coos Bay RAC total allocation				1,133,340
2004	Coos	861,575 (78)	242,991 (22)	242,991
	Curry	297,563 (49)	309,708 (51)	154,854
	Douglas	1,047,481 (25)	3,142,442 (75)	628,488
Coos Bay RAC total allocation				1,026,333

Title III than to Title II, with the exception of 2002. For example, in 2003 the commissioners allocated 73% of their funds to Title III and 27% to Title II. In 2004, Title III received even more, 78% compared to 22% for Title II. Compared to the first two years, Coos County's contribution to the Coos Bay BLM RAC has fallen off considerably, from a high of \$949,527 in 2002 to \$242,991 in 2004. In contrast to Coos County, Curry County Commissioners have increased their Title II allocations while decreasing

their Title III allocations. From a low of 5% of their total funds going to Title II and 95% to Title III in 2001, the commissioners progressively increased their Title II contributions so that by 2004 Title II received 51% while Title III was reduced to 49% of their total allocation. In dollars, their support for Title II has increased from a low of \$29,765 in 2001 to a high of \$309,708 in 2004.

Table 2 highlights the different patterns of funding for Title III and Title II programs among the three

⁶ These figures do not include funds received from the Forest Service under P.L. 106-393.

counties. These patterns reflect county commissioners' estimations regarding the relative importance of supporting Title II and Title III programs, as well as each county's respective budgetary condition. Douglas County commissioners have signaled their support for Title II and the Resource Advisory Committee by consistently allocating the majority of their Title II/Title III election to Title II. Douglas County's generous support for Title II and associated Resource Advisory Committees is facilitated by the size of its total O&C and Forest Service Title I payment, which, at approximately \$42 million, is significantly larger than the approximately \$8 million Coos County receives. The allocation of funds to the Coos Bay RAC from the Coos County commissioners indicates that, notwithstanding their stated objective to maximize the flow of funds to Title II, the flows have in fact declined. Over this same period, Curry County commissioners have chosen to increase their allocation to the Coos Bay RAC each year.

The declining contribution by Coos County to

the RAC, despite RAC Chair and Commissioner Griffith's statements regarding the county's strong interest in supporting the RAC, may reflect the exigencies of hard budget times. It may also reflect a desire to keep more of the funds within Title III, where the county – as opposed to the BLM – exerts more control over their disbursement and use. The pro-county sentiment that underlies this perspective surfaced during interviews with several RAC members from Coos County. For example, one RAC member noted that it would be best if all the Title II funds were just given directly to the county because the county “doesn't waste money.” Concerns about the cost-effectiveness of BLM-proposed projects, as well as what some consider excessive charges by the agency for overhead, were some of the criticisms of the BLM that interviewees in Coos County expressed. The fact that one RAC member suggested defunding the RAC on which they serve and instead allocating the money directly to the county suggests the strength of this pro-county sentiment.

Title III Process and Projects

During the first four rounds, Title III allocations totaled \$4.1 million by Douglas County, \$2.4 million by Coos County, and \$1.7 million by Curry County. The following discussion of allocation processes and projects focuses on Coos and Curry Counties. Discussion of Douglas County's Title III program is part of the Roseburg, Oregon BLM case study.

Coos County

In Coos County, the decisions regarding Title III expenditures are folded into the county's annual budget-making process. There is no formal application process or project submission form for either county or private Title III expenditures. County Title III expenditures correspond to four of the authorized use categories specified in the legislation (Search, Rescue, and Emergency Services; Community Service Work Camps; Forest Related Educational Opportunities; and Fire Prevention and County Planning). During the annual budget process, which begins in March and produces an

approved budget by June 30 (the fiscal year end), representatives of county departments whose jurisdiction overlaps these authorized use categories (e.g., Sheriff, Community Service, and County Planning Departments, and the County Noxious Weed Advisory Board), meet with county commissioners to discuss their respective budgetary needs for the coming year. Title III funds along with other revenues are used to meet these needs. Based on reports, previous years' allocations, and anticipated needs for the coming year, county commissioners develop a draft budget. This is a three-month iterative process that involves several meetings; occasionally commissioners request representatives of county departments seeking funding to “sharpen their pencils” and whittle down their requests. Commissioners authorize expenditures from Title III funds to meet the budget needs of relevant county departments as part of this budget-making effort. As Commissioner John Griffith described, Title III funds are used for “charging up the gas tank, not

Table 3. Coos County Title III Expenditures, 2001-2003 (fiscal years 2002-2004)

Category	Expenditures	Recipient	Amount
Search and Rescue	Dunes Patrol Program	Coos County	\$231,735
	Search and Rescue		\$14,405
	Emergency Communications Upgrade		\$394,940
	911 Dispatch Services		\$44,900
Category Subtotal			\$685,980
Community Service	Coos County Community Service Work Crews	Coos County	\$119,161
Category Subtotal			\$119,161
Fire Prevention & County Planning	Coos County Planning Dept.	Coos County	\$113,210
	County Weed Advisory Board Weed Control Program		\$18,459
	Wildfire Certification Program	Coos Forest Protective Assoc.	\$31,000
	5-County Fire Analysis	Jackson County	\$10,000
	Wildlife Services (bear control)	USDA APHIS	\$13,000
	Riley Ranch Land Use Planning	Coos County	\$50,718
	Miscellaneous (e.g., conference attendance, RC&D Dues)		\$1,617
Category Subtotal			\$238,004
Forestry Related Education	Forestry Environmental Science Program	Powers School Dist.	\$119,000
	Woodlot Plan	City of Myrtle Pt.	\$2,000
	Wildfire Certification Program	Coos Forest Protective Assoc.	\$37,004
	Tillamook Forest Center	Oregon Dept. of Forestry	\$20,000
	“Leave No County Behind”	Association of O&C Counties	\$20,000
	Forestry School Program	Oregon State Univ.	\$21,378
Category Subtotal			\$219,382

new projects.”

Title III expenditures for non-county recipients are also considered during the budget process. While public notices advertising the availability of Title III funds were published locally during the first year, the response was “relatively lackluster” (see Table 3 for a list of non-county projects through fiscal year 2004) and notices were not published in subsequent years. Those entities interested in Title III support, such as the Powers School District, Coos County Forest Protective Association, and Oregon State University Cooperative Extension, make presentations at county budget meetings. Although there is not an application form for project submissions, Commissioner Griffith noted that they are asked to “put something in writing” to substantiate their request for support. The decisions regarding whether or not to fund these requests for Title III support, and to what levels, are made during the county budget meetings. After the county budget is finalized it is published and a 45-day comment period begins. Commissioner Griffith observed that in recent years the county has received no comments during this period. Once approved, the budget, including the Title III allocations contained therein, takes effect beginning July 1, the start of their fiscal year. Table 3 shows the Title III expenditures, by category, for fiscal years 2002, 2003, and 2004.

The Title III expenditures listed in Table 3 total \$1,262,527. Of this amount, \$989,145, or 78% of the total Title expenditure, was allocated to various Coos County departments and programs. The balance of \$273,382 was distributed across non-county entities such as the Powers School District, Coos Forest Protective Association, Oregon State University, and Oregon Department of Forestry. Table 2 indicates that, during this period, \$1,556,817 was allocated by Coos County for Title III expenditures. The difference between this allocation and the expenditures listed in Table 3 (\$294,290) is accounted for by a combination of approximately \$70,000 in authorized expenditures that had not been spent by recipients when this data was compiled and approximately \$224,000 in “rollover” funds that were available for

allocating during the subsequent fiscal year.

The largest Title III expenditures fall under the search, rescue and emergency services category. Within this category, the single largest expenditures are associated with the renovation and upgrade of the county’s emergency communication system. This project is designed to reduce emergency response time and improve communication among first responders by upgrading the county’s radio system using an assigned VHF frequency with repeater stations scattered across the county. The project was needed because large portions of the county lacked emergency radio coverage. The second largest expenditure in this category involves increased funding for the county Sheriff’s Department to enable better patrol coverage for the Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area (administered by the U.S. Forest Service) located just north of Coos Bay. In addition to funding equipment, e.g., two outfitted vehicles, the funds enable increased patrolling at the dunes – an important issue given the increased public use and relatively frequent injuries associated with OHV use at the dunes.

The second largest Title III expenditures are associated with fire prevention and county planning. The county planning department receives the largest amount of money within this category for the purposes of reviewing zoning and land development permits for compliance and to reduce fire risk to adjacent federal lands. The funding is also intended to enhance the county’s mapping capacity; it has a public education component built into it. Other Title III expenditures include 1) support for the Coos County Noxious Weed Advisory Board, an innovative, public-private collaborative designed to tackle the county’s extensive invasive weed problem and 2) the Coos Forest Protective Association’s efforts to certify forestlands whose owners have participated/participate in the association’s fuel and fire hazard reduction program, and 3) a relatively large grant to the Coos County Parks Department (some of which also goes to the county planning department) to assess the effects of recreation development on a recently donated piece of property (the Riley Ranch) on adjacent federal lands.

Within the “After-school Forest-related Educa-

tion” Title III category, few would contest the statement that the most important support has been that provided to the Powers School District for their high school forestry and environmental science program. The purpose of the program is to build a native species growing center at Powers High School, which serves the small, isolated, and formerly timber-dependent community of Powers (population 730). The program employs students – some of whom are “at-risk” - to build the center, to collect, propagate and grow species for the Forest Service, and to store these species until they are sufficiently hardy to be planted on National Forest lands. Because of the extensive biology, forestry, and other science curriculum and coursework that is integrated within the program, participants can simultaneously gain high school and college credit. According to Bill Gehling, the Powers High School Principal, students involved in the program were previously at risk of dropping out of school. Because of the opportunities to simultaneously earn money and course credit, build the sense of community and shared ownership in the project, and develop an enhanced sense of self-worth that the program provides, no student participant has dropped out. Because of the project’s success, both in terms of native species propagation and educational and social change, the program has received considerable support and favorable reviews from Coos County and the Forest Service.

Curry County

Curry County requests proposals for Title III projects each January. Proposals are solicited both at commission meetings and in the local newspapers. Past contractors are also notified. There is an April 1st deadline for applying for Title III funding. However, beginning in 2003, the county has held back \$30,000 of Title III money to support special projects requests that might come at other times during the year. The Board of Commissioners determines the split between Title II and III allocations in May of each year. This determines how much money Curry County will return to the BLM for RAC allocation

and Title II projects.

In contrast to Coos County, Title III projects sponsored by Curry County, whether they are proposed by county or non-county entities, must be submitted on a standardized Title III project submission form—this ensures that there is an actual project with a developed project description, as opposed to an administrative allocation of funds to on-going general county budget line items. As with the forms used by many other counties, Curry County’s form requires information such as a project description, how the project fits with the legislation’s intent and how it benefits the community, the ways in which the proposed project will improve cooperative relationships, and a detailed budget. For authorized uses, such as search, rescue, and emergency services and community service work camps, that are funded on a reimbursable basis, the county will approve a fixed amount (e.g., \$50,000 for anticipated search and rescue expenses) and, once approved, will dip into that amount of money to reimburse the Sheriff’s Department for expenses incurred for search, rescue, and emergency services performed on federal lands during the coming year. Table 4 summarizes Curry County Title III expenditures, by authorized expenditure category, for the first three years of the program.

As Table 4 indicates, \$559,947, or 52%, of Title III dollars in Curry County supports non-county entities. This contrasts with the 22% total Coos County allocated to non-county entities.⁷ Another interesting difference between the two counties’ Title III programs is the number of different non-county recipients. Curry County has received and funded proposal requests from 11 different entities (some, like the Agness Community Library and the South Coast Watershed Council, have received multiple grants). Coos County funded proposals from six different non-county entities (see Table 3).

Title III expenditures in Curry County are somewhat more evenly balanced among the authorized use categories described in the legislation than they are in Coos County. Of the \$1.1 million that Curry

⁷ The grant to the Association of O&C Counties is considered a county grant for the purposes of determining the number of non-county Title III beneficiaries.

Table 4. Curry County Title III Expenditures, 2001-2003 (FY 2002-2004)

Category	Entity Funded	Number of Projects	Amount Funded
Search and Rescue	Curry County	3	\$115,000
Community Service	Curry County	1	\$39,602
	Siskiyou National Forest	2	\$43,765
Easements	South Coast Watershed Council	1	\$99,000
	City of Port Orford	1	\$171,000
Fire Prevention & County Planning	Curry County	14	\$296,594
Forest Related Education	Curry County	2	\$25,000
	South Coast Watershed Council	1	\$28,063
	Oregon State University Extension Service	2	\$70,000
	Oregon Garden	1	\$40,090
	Agness Community Library	3	\$12,869
	RAND Outdoor Club	1	\$20,620
	Association of O & C Counties	1	\$20,000
	Northwest Youth Corps	1	\$74,140
	U.S. Forest Service	1	\$400
Total			\$1,071,143*

* This total includes a \$15,000 expenditure to the county commissioners for managing Title III programs.

County has allocated, the top three expenditure categories: easement purchase, after-school forest-related education, and fire prevention and county planning, have received 25%, 27%, and 28%, respectively. Unlike Coos County, which allocated more than half of its Title III dollars to search, rescue, and emergency services, Curry County allocated just slightly more than 10% of its total allocations to this category. Some of this disparity might

be due to differences in how projects are classified, as some projects have elements of both fire prevention and county planning as well as search, rescue, and emergency service provision. Nevertheless, Curry County does not seem to have prioritized search, rescue, and emergency services (a primarily county-oriented allocation) to the extent that Coos County has.

Curry County commissioners have allocated the

most money, 28% or just under \$300,000, to the category of fire prevention and county planning. The 14 funded projects in this category represent a suite of activities that includes a heavy emphasis on mapping and mapping-related work, the development of community fire plans and a regional, five-county fire plan, and education and outreach regarding fire-related issues.

After-school forest related education has also been prioritized for Title III support by the Curry County commissioners. Of the fourteen projects in this category, all except two were proposed by non-county entities. This demonstrates a relatively strong engagement between the county's Title III program and community partners. Some of the project proponents in this category include the Agness Community Library, South Coast Watershed Council, Oregon State University, Curry County Soil and Water Conservation District, and the Forest Service. The range of educational projects includes programs targeted at a wide range of people from grade-school age up through adult education classes for members of the public at large. The largest grant under this category was to the Northwest Youth Corps (\$74,140) for the purpose of employing Curry County youth for a variety of conservation and recreation-oriented forest work projects. The Northwest Youth Corps has a region-wide reputation from its many successes working with and providing training for youth.

Title III funds have also been used to purchase two conservation easements, one to help preserve the city of Port Orford's water supply and the other to protect a sensitive riparian habitat. The first conservation easement covers a 140-acre parcel that mostly abuts the east side of the Port Orford urban growth boundary along Hubbard Creek, Port Orford's pri-

mary water supply. This project involves a diversity of funding sources, including monies from Titles II and III, and the National Fire Plan. The second easement is the Dry Creek conservation easement, a project of the South Coast Watershed Council. With \$99,000 of Title III support, the council will purchase a conservation easement in the riparian area of Dry Creek. Dry Creek is the most productive Chinook salmon stream on the Oregon Coast. The easement is designed to protect riparian values and allow the development of mature trees and canopy cover.

Title III allocations for search, rescue, and emergency services include two grants of \$50,000 each to reimburse the county for expenses associated with search, rescue and emergency services on federal lands. Title III allocations in this category as well as projects listed under fire prevention and county planning also support the county's efforts to upgrade its antiquated emergency communications system. This need was first identified in a 1995 study that identified outdated emergency communication infrastructure and equipment as a key constraint to timely emergency response. The upgrade consists primarily of the installation of seven wireless, self-supporting towers; three on BLM land, two on Forest Service land and one each on state park land and private land. In addition to Title III support, other sources of funding for this project include the Curry County Road Department, the Coos Bay BLM RAC and the Siskiyou RAC, the U. S. Forest Service, and a direct Congressional appropriation. The project benefits federal, state, and private lands in Curry County and improves the county's entire emergency communications system, including its 911 dispatch service.

Title II Projects

Since its inception, the Coos Bay BLM RAC has had between \$1.0 million and \$1.7 million to allocate each year (see Table 2). The relatively large fluctuations in the annual amount available to allocate is primarily due to declining RAC contributions from Coos County and variable contributions from Curry

County. As noted above, Douglas County contributions have remained quite consistent throughout. The different contributions to the RAC that each county makes are well understood by RAC members. As is the case for most multi-county RACs, RAC members are careful to allocate funds to projects in each

county commensurate with each county's respective RAC contribution. This does not preclude multi-county projects, but it does require each county to specify how much it will contribute to a multi-county project.

Project Solicitation

Each year the BLM solicits project applications for the RAC by newspaper ads; e-mail to constituent groups such as watershed councils, tribes, counties, and other project recipients; and internally to BLM staff and RAC members. This solicitation occurs shortly after the first of the calendar year for an April deadline. Projects are submitted to the BLM on a standardized project application form. The form asks for information concerning the projects' goals and objectives; how a proposed project meets the purposes of the legislation; how a project will benefit federal lands/resources; and proposed methods of accomplishment.

The BLM assembles the project proposals and forwards them to the RAC and the counties. As per the RACs recommendation, the BLM does not prioritize the project proposals. Each year more projects are proposed in Douglas and Coos Counties than can be supported given available Title II allocations. This is not the case with Curry County. During the first year, no projects were submitted in Curry County. During the second year, five projects were proposed and four funded. And during the third year, one proposed project in Curry County was rejected and three were funded. Unspent or unallocated funds roll over into the next year.

Project Review, Prioritization, and Selection

After the BLM forwards the projects to the counties and the RAC, county commissioners and RAC members review them. Unlike several of the other RACs examined in this study, Coos Bay RAC members have not developed an explicit list of evaluation criteria nor do they use a formal project prioritization process to determine which projects to support and which to reject. Although the BLM's project coordinator initially did collect and present project rankings from individual RAC members, this was soon

discontinued because these rankings were not used in the meeting setting.

In the absence of explicit ranking criteria or a formal prioritization process, decisions about which projects to accept or reject are made in an informal manner that reflects the RAC members' own views regarding how Title II funds should be used. In RACs that have developed a common set of evaluation criteria, the process of developing those criteria has helped forge a common or shared vision of what types of projects should be supported. Within the Coos Bay RAC such a common vision has not emerged; instead cleavages seem to exist, for example between those RAC members from Coos County and those from Douglas County, in terms of how projects are evaluated. These cleavages become evident when we examine the pattern of RAC spending in these two counties. There appears to be a strong emphasis on utilitarian-oriented projects in Coos County, while in Douglas county a higher priority is given to ecological or restoration-oriented projects.

Coos County Commissioner John Griffith has chaired the RAC since its inception. Commissioner Griffith stated that the RAC prioritizes projects that combine utilitarian and ecological objectives over projects that serve primarily ecological purposes. For example, he noted that RAC funds should not be used to enhance fish passage unless the project also solves an impending road failure problem. The view that the RAC should prioritize utilitarian objectives, e.g. those with direct or primarily human-related benefits over ecological or environmental ones, is shared by most Coos County RAC members. For example, one RAC member from Coos County criticized spending money on riparian habitat enhancement projects and noted that because "nature does a better job repairing herself" the RAC should "let the riparian areas repair themselves." Some Coos County RAC members, also, feel strongly that the funding the county allocates to Title II should primarily benefit the county and private lands, not the BLM or BLM land. This view conditions the project review and selection process for projects within Coos County. It also creates chal-

lenges for RAC members interested in approving less utilitarian-oriented projects, especially because if any one of the three groups within the RAC does not approve a project with a simple majority, then the project must be rejected. This issue is especially relevant within this RAC because at the time the fieldwork for this study was conducted, Coos County residents populated all of the seats in category (1) and three of the seats in category (2). As RAC Chair Griffith noted in his comments on the draft case study, "Coos County RAC members are all land and resource managers, or have considerable experience in land and resource management." The utilitarian orientation associated with resource management is a perspective that is shared, to varying degrees, amongst these RAC members.

The value orientation of the Coos County RAC members affects the flow of Title II funds within Douglas and Curry County to a lesser extent than it does in Coos County. On more than once occasion, RAC members who reside in Douglas County have attempted to insulate Douglas County's Title II contributions from the RAC's utilitarian influence by evaluating proposed Douglas County projects prior to the main RAC meeting. During the actual RAC meeting a member from Douglas County will make a motion to approve the list of priority Douglas County projects. Within a few minutes, with minimal discussion or debate from the rest of the RAC, an expenditure of more than half a million dollars will be approved. Douglas County members concede that this approach is unsatisfactory because projects are not discussed, and not seriously reviewed, by the whole RAC. However, they feel that their pre-meeting deliberations are warranted given the dynamics within the RAC. RAC members who reside in Coos County accept the recommendations of the Douglas County members because they are focused on the flow of funds within their own county.

The Coos County RAC member value orientation expresses itself in the flow of Title II dollars and is discernible if we compare support for watershed restoration and road projects within Coos County and Douglas County.⁸ During the first three years of funding rounds, 55% (\$932,872) of Coos County RAC contributions were allocated for road projects and 23% (\$393,900) for restoration projects. Interestingly, the same RAC allocated almost the exact opposite proportion for projects in Douglas county: 28% (\$524,589) for road projects and 53% (\$996,119) for restoration work. The pro-county orientation is especially visible when we examine who were the project beneficiaries. Of the \$932,872 the RAC allocated for roads work in Coos County, \$710,623 went to the county road department; \$558,348 of this amount was used for road paving. Trends also reveal similar expenditure patterns. Regarding restoration projects located in Coos County, the RAC in FY 2002 approved five of the eleven applications it received. However in FY 2003 the RAC rejected all four restoration project proposals and in FY 2004 it rejected all but one of the five restoration projects it received. A different trend is apparent regarding restoration projects located in Douglas County. In FY 2002 the RAC approved all six restoration proposals it received; it approved 10 of the 15 proposals it received in FY 2003, and in FY 2004 it approved all seven of the restoration project proposals it received.

Approved Projects

During the first three years the RAC funded 61 projects totaling roughly \$3.5 million. Table 5 shows how many different kinds of projects the RAC has supported and the amount it has allocated by project category.

⁸ We acknowledge that classifying a road project as either roads or restoration oriented is challenging as many such projects encompass more than one objective. However, there are distinct differences between a project that primarily addresses fish passage barriers and one that primarily addresses an impending road failure - even though a project might include elements of both objectives. These differences are acknowledged in the RACs classification of the projects it has funded - some culvert projects are categorized as road projects and some are categorized as fish passage enhancement projects. In the following analysis we rely on the RACs own classification of funded projects.

Table 5. Number of approved projects, by category and amount, fiscal years 2002-2004.

Type of Project	Number of Projects	Total Amount
Watershed Restoration: culverts	18	\$1,152,600
Watershed Restoration: habitat and in-stream work	12	\$292,748
Watershed Restoration: evaluation and monitoring	4	\$129,280
Roads: culverts	6	\$1,023,004
Roads: paving/grading	4	\$646,204
Weed Control	7	\$319,108
Recreation (trails)	5	\$165,545
Other (Communication Towers)	1	\$112,500
Other (Education)	4	\$25,100
TOTALS	61	\$3,866,089

Of the 61 projects recommended by the RAC, 16 projects, totaling \$752,102, were undertaken by non-governmental organizations: four projects operated by Northwest Youth Corps cost a total of \$140,545, five projects led by the Umpqua Basin Watershed Council added up to \$88,048, and two projects by both the Coquille Watershed Council and the Smith River Watershed Council totaled \$230,000 and \$60,260, respectively. The Coos Watershed Association, the South Coast Watershed Council, and the Coquille Indian Tribe each directed one project that cost \$203,249, \$8,000, and \$22,000, respectively.

Five of the 61 projects were led by Coos and Curry Counties. These projects, totaling \$943,123 (26% of the RACs total allocation), include a three-part \$558,348 road maintenance and watershed restoration project operated by the Coos County Road Department, two noxious weed control projects for \$120,000 operated solely by Coos County, a road maintenance and rehabilitation project operated by Coos County for \$152,275, and an emergency communications towers project led by Curry County for \$112,500. In contrast to Coos County and Curry County, Douglas County has neither requested nor

received any Title II funding from the RAC. Federal agencies, primarily the BLM, sponsored and implemented the rest of the Title II projects. The following paragraphs provide summary descriptions of the projects shown in Table 5.

Watershed Restoration

This project category has the largest number of projects. It includes culvert replacement projects (whose primary purpose is to improve fish passage), and projects that improve in-stream and riparian habitat, and monitor for restoration purposes.

The RAC has funded 18 culvert replacement projects. The Coquille Watershed Association sponsored the largest restoration-oriented culvert project. Approved in the FY 2002 for \$200,000, the purpose of the project is to improve fish passage and access to 5.5 miles of stream in the Coquille watershed in Coos County. The failing culvert prevented fish passage due to a flat bottom structure. In addition to the \$200,000 RAC funding, \$52,000 of in-kind support was provided by the BLM, Coquille Watershed Association, and the Coos County Road Department.

Although the Coos Bay RAC has funded numerous restoration-oriented culvert projects, mostly on BLM land, there remains significant opposition among some RAC members – especially those residing in Coos County - to funding culvert work unless the project's benefits include improving the quality of the county road system. Some Coos County RAC members feel that the BLM should use other sources of funding for restoration-oriented culvert work on BLM lands. This view is reflected in the fact that after the first funding round (FY 2002) the RAC has not funded one culvert project in Coos County whose primary purpose was to improve fish passage. In contrast, in Douglas County, numerous fish passage-enhancing projects continue to be supported by the RAC.

The RAC funded 12 restoration projects involving in-stream and habitat enhancement work. Totaling \$292,748, these are relatively small projects, with no one project exceeding \$60,000. These projects include in-stream large wood placement, channel stabilization, and other habitat and aquatic restoration work.

One of the most interesting watershed restoration projects is the Black Creek tidegate replacement project, sponsored by the Smith River Watershed Council in Douglas County. This \$44,902 RAC project was done primarily on private land. The aim of the project was to replace a non-functional tide gate with a fish passable design. The property owner, local rancher David Peck, built a fish friendly tidegate of his own design. The tidegate hangs open at slack water to allow fingerlings to move through the creek into the river. Peck built the large, prefabricated concrete sections and the tidegate, which is made of stainless steel fittings. He was required to get the approval of all the other landowners upstream of the tidegate who could be affected by the project. The project improved access to approximately one-half mile of potential juvenile and resident salmonid habitat. Other funding for the project came from \$300 in-kind from the landowner and \$932 from "Jobs in the Woods" program funding from the BLM. This project is a good example of innovative work that demonstrates

local landowner interest and commitment to restoring historic salmon runs.

Four evaluation and monitoring projects were also funded by the RAC. All watershed restoration-oriented, these projects include effectiveness monitoring of prior restoration projects in the Umpqua watershed. The largest of these projects involved salmonid trapping on the West Fork of the Smith River in Douglas County by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. A total of \$54,000 in FY 2003 and \$55,250 in FY 2004 was dedicated to the project. The goal was to monitor the effectiveness of the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds by generating specific data on the life cycle of coastal anadromous salmonids, particularly Coho salmon, to determine population numbers and trends, freshwater and marine survival rates, and habitat relationships.

Roads

The RAC has approved a total of 10 road projects. Six are culvert replacements and four focus on drainage improvement, resurfacing, and road rehabilitation. The six road culvert replacements were funded by the RAC at just over \$1 million, with another \$646,000 allocated for the other four road projects.

The largest road project is a road maintenance project for Coos County. The RAC allocated the county a lump sum of \$558,348 to pave and replace culverts on whichever of three proposed roads was the county's top priority. The project, operated by the Coos County Road Department, in partnership with the BLM, has a suite of goals including improving public access, reducing sediment deliveries, and enhancing fish passage.

Another large road project is the \$203,249 road maintenance and watershed restoration project for Catching Slough Road, sponsored by the Coos Watershed Association. The BLM contributed an additional \$73,477 for this project, part of which includes in-kind services for NEPA/ESA related work. Additional partners in the project include the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, Oregon Fish & Wildlife, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and the Coos County Road Department.

This project involved three primary components: fixing four fill failures along East Catching Road, replacing three culverts under East Catching Road that were field drains, and replacing four culverts to enhance fish passage. These components were packaged together because they treated an entire road system, allowing for an economy of scale for cost reductions, as well as fish habitat and water quality improvements.

Weed Control

There are seven weed control projects. Individual projects totaled \$60,000 or less, though some are linked to other funding and larger multi-year projects. In FY 2002 and 2003 the RAC allocated \$60,000 for weed control to Coos County. A total of \$20,000 of the 2002 grant and \$40,000 of the 2003 grant went directly to the County Road Department for herbicide and related weed abatement costs. This was significant as the department's herbicide budget had fallen to only \$2,000 due to declining federal payments prior to passage of P.L. 106-393. The balance of these grants remained in the county's weed project account. They are allocated by the county commissioners for weed control efforts, as per the recommendations of the Coos County—Noxious Weed Advisory Board. RAC support for noxious weed abatement does not appear to be tied to specific weed control projects, but rather, consists of direct allocations to the county and the Road Department. These disbursements are then used by the county commissioners, the Weed Advisory Board, and the Road Department for their prioritized projects. These RAC funds were matched with \$60,000 Coos County Title III funds. These funds were used to launch noxious weed control efforts along 521 miles of Coos County roads in the Coos and Coquille watersheds.

Coos County, with the assistance of Plum Creek Timber Company employee Steve Wickham and RAC member Amy Peters of the Oregon State University Extension Service, revitalized the Coos County Noxious Weed Advisory Board in 2002. RAC support for weed eradication played a central

role in the Board's revitalization. The purpose of the Weed Advisory Board is to acquire funding for weed abatement, decide which weed projects to fund, conduct landowner education, and develop an integrated weed management strategy for the county. The Weed Advisory Board is composed of seven people from different agencies, organizations, and natural resource industries. Commissioner Griffith is the Board of Commissioners liaison to the Weed Advisory Board. Although estimates of acres treated were unavailable, it is clear that Coos County RAC members, county commissioners, and county staff are satisfied with the Weed Advisory Board's accomplishments and would like to see their work continue and expand.

Trails

There are five trail-related projects that cost \$165,545. All but one were coordinated by the Northwest Youth Corps (NYC), an organization based in Eugene that hires local youth to perform trail maintenance and related activities. In FY 2004, the NYC operated projects in all three counties with RAC support, and an additional \$446,858 in support from other sources. RAC funding helped the NYC leverage some of these additional funds. The NYC is one of the largest organizations in the Pacific Northwest that employs youth for conservation-oriented natural resource projects primarily on public lands. In addition to education, the NYC also has an important job skills and job training component.

Other – Communication Towers

The RAC recommended that \$112,500 be allocated to support Curry County's emergency communications system project. This project is described in more detail within the Title III section of this report. While this project clearly fits with Title III authorized use categories, the fit with Title II categories is less clear. This project had to be brought up for a vote multiple times before the requisite votes necessary for its approval could be mustered. This was because initially the Curry County representative on the RAC opposed the project, despite the support for it by the other two categories of RAC members. It was finally

approved for funding when RAC members asked that it be voted on for a third time.

Other – Education

Four education-oriented projects were funded by the RAC. Two projects provide for the purchase of natural history books for libraries in Douglas and Coos Counties. The other two projects are aerial photos for local governments and watershed councils in Douglas and Coos Counties to be used for fire preparedness and planning purposes.

RAC Formation, Composition, and Operation

RAC Formation

The Coos Bay BLM RAC was formed in 2001. The process for selecting members of the RAC involved recruitment by the BLM, county commissioners and the Association of O & C Counties, public notification, and individual applications. The Association of O & C Counties consists of 18 primarily Western Oregon counties that were the beneficiaries of the O & C land grants. This group's role in the recommendation and appointment of RAC members in Oregon appears to be significant, continuing the prominent role the group played in passage of the legislation. For example, during the process of populating the RACs, the Association prepared a spreadsheet of who had applied that characterized each applicant according to a variety of criteria. This spreadsheet informed the choices that some county commissioners made regarding whom they recommended to be on the RAC.

County commissioners played important roles in determining who would be selected to be on the Coos Bay BLM RAC. In some cases they influenced who was in the applicant pool by soliciting individuals to submit an application. The nature of the commissioner role in these processes differed among the three counties. In Douglas County, the commissioner most involved with this legislation remarked that one of the county's goals in implementing the legislation was "to energize our citizenry." In this regard, he further noted that "the citizens that populate the committee are in charge of the funds." The fact that enough members of the public from Douglas County applied to serve on the RAC so that there was no

need to solicit applications suggests that the citizenry was already "energized." The commissioner from Curry County most involved in Curry County RACs noted that in recommending people from the applicant pool to serve on RACs, she "kept looking for the balance thing," referring to the legislative intent that RACs embody a wide diversity of views and reflect a balance that does not favor one perspective over another.

Seeking a diverse spectrum of people willing and able to serve on the RAC does not seem to have been the criteria that guided Coos County commissioner recruitment of RAC members. Five Coos County RAC members on the RAC when the fieldwork for this case study was conducted were asked to be on the RAC by Commissioner and RAC Chair Griffith. A second Coos County commissioner also serves on the RAC. During interviews with these individuals, it became apparent that they share similar utilitarian and pro-county values and that these values guide their assessment of what projects to fund and who should be the beneficiary of Title II funds. The BLM Designated Federal Official concurred with this view of commissioner involvement in RAC member selection when she noted that the county commissioners "have maintained a substantial and proprietary interest in RAC membership." Of course, commissioner involvement in the determination of who should serve on the RAC is not unusual and is, in fact, to be expected given the origin and purpose of Title II funds. However, such involvement, in order to comport with the legislation's intent, needs to be directed towards assuring balanced and diverse representation of the various interests P.L. 106-393 specifies for the RAC. In the case of this RAC, Commissioner Griffith seems to have asked people with similar, rather than diverse, values to serve on the RAC. The diversity that does exist on the RAC comes either from RAC members from outside of Coos County, or Coos County residents that Commissioner Griffith did not recruit. While county commissioners from all three counties made recommendations regarding who should serve on the RAC, neither Curry nor Douglas County commissioners sought to populate the RAC with mem-

bers with similar pro-county perspectives, as did the Coos County commissioner.

RAC Composition

Ten of the 15 Coos Bay BLM RAC members are from Coos County, four from Douglas, and only one from Curry. This difference in county representation (which partly reflects the distribution of BLM's Coos Bay District across the three counties) has resulted in the RAC being more focused on Coos County projects and issues, even though Douglas County has frequently contributed more money to the RAC than either of the other two counties. In addition to the distribution of the district's lands in the three counties, there seem to be two other reasons for the disparity in membership by residence. Firstly, it is difficult to recruit members from Douglas County for this RAC because of the long distances between most of Douglas County to Coos Bay where the RAC meets. Secondly, Douglas County is involved in six other RACs, two of which are larger and more central to the concerns of most Douglas County citizens than the Coos Bay BLM RAC. It is likely that Douglas County residents are more willing to serve on those RACs. The fact that Curry County is centrally involved in the Siskiyou Forest Service RAC may also explain why there is only one Curry County representative on the Coos Bay BLM RAC, in which Curry County is more peripherally involved.

Like all RACs, projects must be approved by a majority of members from each of the three categories set forth in the statute. However, some RAC members, in their deliberations regarding proposed projects, appear to represent interests that differ from the statutory categories they occupy on the RAC. For example, the two Coos County commissioners on the RAC are formally designated to represent dispersed recreation and archeological and historical interests – positions that they are both eminently qualified to occupy. However, while they may possess more than adequate expertise in those areas, these are not the interests that these individuals predominantly represent while debating which projects to support. This is indicated by the fact that while the RAC has approved only one recreation-related project in Coos

County (a trail and weed abatement project) and no projects related to the archeological and historical interests position, neither of these two individuals expressed a desire to see more projects related to their designated positions approved. Instead, both of these individuals have argued that the RAC should focus on utilitarian-oriented projects. Similarly, the individual representing the organized labor category is neither a union official nor union member, but an Oregon State University livestock and weed specialist who works as a cooperative extension agent. This individual was previously an alternate. She replaced the union president, recruited by Commissioner Griffith, who initially occupied this position but did not attend RAC meetings. Not once did anybody we interviewed mention that it might be better to have someone with labor expertise in this position, nor did we hear of attempts to recruit such a person during the next round of RAC appointments - despite the presence of active central labor councils in the area. While many RACs are unable to replace members that have left the RAC with alternates that have similar areas of expertise and interest, it is perhaps ironic that this individual, again one recruited by the chair, expressed pro-county, anti-BLM views similar to those expressed by other Coos County residents that the chair asked to serve on the RAC. Instead of three RAC members who might argue for diverse types of projects at RAC meetings given their respective designations of dispersed recreation, archeology and history, and labor, these three individuals argue for the same sorts of county and utilitarian oriented and county related projects that other Coos County residents on the RAC seem to favor. Given the pattern of RAC spending in Coos County, it appears that at least some Coos County residents serving on the RAC are there because of their pro-county and use-oriented leanings. While they may (but not in all cases) possess expertise in their designated positions, they do not advocate for projects that advance those interests. Rather, from a functional standpoint, these statutory categories seem more to serve as convenient slots to be filled by members with shared perspectives. Whether intentional or not, having elected public officials in

slots that are not designated for elected officials has the functional effect of preserving these members' right to remain on the RAC should they lose their seats in an election.

As required by the legislation, the Coos Bay BLM RAC has five, non-voting alternates. Alternates are expected to attend meetings, and they contribute to discussions by requesting the floor through a raised hand. However, some alternates have become discouraged because they cannot vote on projects. This is a common criticism among other RACs in this study, and it is clearly an area that should be examined carefully during the reauthorization process. For example, RAC Chair Griffith has suggested that it would be helpful if alternates could vote when one of the three groups does not have at least three members present at a meeting. Under current operating rules, if any one group has less than three members present, then the RAC as a whole cannot vote to recommend or reject a project.

The Coos Bay BLM RAC has had only one chair since its inception, Coos County Commissioner John Griffith. Subsequent to the RACs initial formation annual elections for chair have been held. There are no formal term limits for the chair.

RAC Operation

The Coos Bay BLM RAC meets once a year for one day in Coos Bay/North Bend, with one exception. Prior to the meeting, the BLM project coordinator assembles, evaluates for consistency with the legislation, and sends out to the RAC members all of the project applications that have been received. Under the leadership of RAC Chair John Griffith, the RAC has a reputation for fast and efficient decision-making and process. RAC members never take more than one day to allocate more than \$1 million in project dollars—this expediency is made possible by the RAC's decision to not allow presentations from project proponents. There are divergent opinions among RAC members about the advantages of such a streamlined process. Some RAC members appreciate the RAC's style. As one RAC member proudly stated, "The RAC takes care of business and doesn't waste time." While another noted with satisfaction

that, "Griffith keeps things moving; he's right on top of it [and] doesn't want to see government money wasted; he's good at keeping things moving forward, not dragging out decisions." The ability to make decisions fast and efficiently is especially important for those RAC members from the private sector who take time off from work to uphold RAC commitments.

Others on the RAC question the management style of the chair and expressed concerns about the RAC's decision to not allow project proponents or non-RAC members to speak unless called on. For other RACs, the ability to hear presentations from project proponents and other members of the public provides useful information that facilitates the project ranking process. Within this RAC, project proponents in attendance are not allowed to contribute to discussions about their projects unless called upon to speak, and there reportedly have been instances when proponents who clearly had something to say were not given the floor. The same holds for other non-RAC members in attendance. This means that discussion about a project may be incomplete or otherwise truncated, that not all sides to an issue or proposed project are necessarily discussed, and in some cases, erroneous statements about a project go unchallenged or corrected.

During the RAC meeting, projects in Coos and Curry counties are discussed. As mentioned above, projects in Douglas County are prioritized before the meeting by the Douglas County RAC members and then submitted as a group for approval by the full RAC. The chair determines the order in which Coos County projects are discussed. As the RAC works through the list it decides whether or not to support specific projects until the money runs out. As one RAC member pointed out, this means that projects that are discussed first stand a better chance of being funded than those discussed later. This person also noted that projects are ordered for discussion in such a manner that promotes the choosing of county projects for funding. The flow of funds for projects in Coos County, described above, is consistent with this RAC member's analysis. Clearly, Coos County, through the commissioners and their supporters,

exerts a significant amount of control on the allocation of RAC funds in the county. As one RAC member from outside of the county noted, “The Coos County influence is so strong and obvious that you can even taste it.”

Initially, the BLM tried to play a more active role with this RAC. However, RAC members have generally rejected BLM’s attempts to do so. The BLM tried to offer information and prioritization of projects, but was told not to by the RAC. The project coordinator’s offer to plan and coordinate field trips for the RAC was not embraced by a majority of RAC members, nor did the RAC want the coordinator to prepare visual presentations about past RAC-approved projects, thus limiting the information RAC members have regarding the outcomes of those projects. The RAC’s general “we can do it on our own” attitude is also reflected in its decision to not use a facilitator and instead to rely on the chair to move its agenda.

In short, the BLM DFO and the RAC coordinator have backed off from playing any more active a role than attempting to ensure that the RACs actions satisfy legislative intent. This relatively “hands off” approach to engagement with the RAC was set initially when the BLM State Director told the DFO that RAC money “is the county’s money.” This perspective was reinforced locally when, in an initial meeting between the Coos Bay RAC DFO and Commissioner John Griffith, Griffith threatened to put all the money into Title III (essentially defunding Title II) if the BLM didn’t cooperate with the county and the RAC. After describing how he threatened to withhold Title II funds and not have a RAC, Commissioner Griffith noted the BLM has let the RAC “get on with business.” As a result of this assertion of county authority by Coos County officials, the BLM has adopted a hands-off management attitude regarding RAC functioning.⁹

Apart from the BLM and county government,

watershed councils have been the primary project recipients. The Northwest Youth Corps and the Coquille Indian Tribe have also received support for projects. There seems to have been little effort made by the RAC to reach out beyond this group of high capacity, natural resource management-oriented organizations to solicit project applications.

As is true for most RACs, the BLM charges overhead expenses against the RAC’s budget. During the first two years of RAC operation the RAC agreed to the BLM’s proposal that it charge a flat rate of 8% of the RAC’s operating budget for overhead and administrative expenses (although in the first year less than 8% was actually collected as project allocations had been made before subtracting overhead expenses). Some RAC members suspicious of the BLM’s ability to work in a cost-effective manner have from time to time criticized the BLM for charging overhead. During the third year, one of these individuals, who was concerned that the BLM received more overhead than it actually needed, proposed that the BLM receive a fixed amount rather than a percentage of the RAC’s budget. A flat figure of \$120,000 was proposed to be given the BLM annually, with each member county contributing an amount proportional to its total annual Title II contribution. This was approved by the RAC for a period of three years. This amount is equivalent to 10.5%, 7%, and 10% of the first, second, and third year’s RAC budget, respectively. An account called RAC Operating Expenses is also maintained to which each member county contributes \$1,000 annually. This account is strictly reserved for compensating RAC members for the costs associated with attending RAC meetings such as mileage and hotel expenses. The project coordinator noted that the actual expenses charged against this account have always been substantially less than the counties’ contributions.

There is one case in which the RAC chose to

⁹ In comments regarding the draft version of this case study, John Griffith elaborated on this incident by noting that his intent in threatening to withhold Title II funding was to thwart an attempt by the DFO “to take control of the RAC process and Title II/III money and tell me how things were going to be.” In his comments Griffith also stated that he “had no intention of doing that [putting all of the Titles II and III money into Title III], but simply pointed the legislative fact out to her as a device to incline her to drop her attempted intimidation at the outset of what was supposed to be a six-year partnership.” He also observed that from his perspective the DFO has misunderstood the legislation’s intent regarding the role of the BLM in the overall implementation of P.L. 106-393. Clearly, conflict between the RAC Chair and the DFO has characterized the work of this RAC.

withdraw funding from a project that it had earlier approved. This example is interesting because of what it tells us about RAC process as well as what some consider an omission within the enabling legislation, namely, the absence of recommended operating procedures for de-funding a project. The case involves the use of an innovative organic method of weed eradication called “Waipuna” that involves application of a combination of heat, water, and foam to treat invasive plant species. At its August, 2002 meeting the RAC allocated \$67,500 to the BLM to implement weed control projects using the Waipuna method. Due to lengthy contracting procedures with the New Zealand-based Waipuna Company from whom the machinery would be rented, it took a whole year to arrange and approve the necessary contracts as well as a task order agreement between the BLM and the Coquille Watershed Association to implement the project.

At its August 2003 meeting, a year after the initial project was approved, one RAC member whose specialty is weed control raised concerns about the effectiveness of the Waipuna method of weed control (this RAC member had apparently been absent from the meeting when the project was initially approved). This expression of concern initiated a series of emails and phone calls (and several letters) between and amongst the RAC Chair, BLM DFO and project coordinator, other RAC members, and the Waipuna representative. In short, there was growing concern about whether this method of weed control was effective for the weeds under consideration. This concern was combined with consternation about the slow pace of the project and that fact that the Waipuna machinery that was being rented on a monthly basis was sitting unused on BLM premises because the rainy season had arrived when weeds could not be sprayed. Furthermore, because of the RAC’s stated preference to meet only one time a year, key players, e.g., the RAC Chair, DFO, and project coordinator, sought to resolve the issue without calling a meeting. This forced the deliberations “behind closed doors” and into decision-making spaces that did not include

all RAC members. An additional concern was the legal ramifications of breaking the contract with Waipuna and making statements that could be legally construed as libel.

After extensive deliberations on various alternatives, i.e. downgrading the project to an experimental exercise and doing field tests for RAC members, and in the face of growing concerns by RAC members about the way the matter was being handled without calling a meeting, the RAC Chair and BLM staff finally decided that an emergency RAC meeting was indeed needed. Such a meeting was held February, 2004. At the meeting Chair Griffith called for a vote on whether or not to de-fund the project. Category 1 RAC members voted first and only two members voted to continue the project. This effectively de-funded the project because, in order to be approved, a project must have the support of a majority of members from each category. As a result, no further polling took place and the members of the other two categories did not have an opportunity to vote on this issue. Given the absence of any previous or written process for de-funding, the RAC, on the advice of the BLM, had essentially used the same method for de-funding the project as they had used in deciding which projects to fund.

While it appears from meeting minutes and interviews that a majority of the full RAC supported de-funding the project, some members were angry and opposed to this action. They felt that the RAC did not have enough evidence to make the decision to de-fund. They also objected on procedural grounds to the informal negotiations and smaller meetings that preceded the emergency meeting, to the emergency meeting itself, and to the absence of a well-defined process to de-fund a project. Clearly, the Waipuna issue had brought to the surface concerns about transparency in decision-making, illustrated the difficulties associated with trying to meet only one time annually, and identified the lack of standard operating procedures that govern the mechanics of de-funding a project.

¹⁰ Even for reimbursable projects in these two authorized use categories, the relevant departments in most counties examined in this study prepare separate project descriptions and make formal requests for Title III support.

Conclusions

In the Coos Bay BLM RAC, both Title II and Title III funds have been used to fund projects that benefit federal lands, the counties, and many local public and private organizations and landholders. In the Title III program all three counties have focused on the congressionally mandated authorized use categories. In Coos and Curry Counties most of these funds have gone to county government itself with the notable exceptions in Coos County of the Powers School District, the Coos Forest Protective Association, the Coos County Noxious Weed Advisory Board, and the Port Orford Watershed Conservation Easement in Curry County. Unlike Curry and Douglas counties, Coos County has no formal Title III application process and instead Title III funds are allocated as part of the county's standard budget making process; separate descriptions of projects proposed to be funded with Title III dollars are prepared for some, but not all, Title III expenditures. The absence of individual project descriptions may be less of a concern with respect to reimbursable authorized uses, e.g., search, rescue, and emergency services and community service work camps on federal lands.¹⁰ Other county uses of Title III funds, such as budgetary allocations to the Planning Department, items listed as miscellaneous expenditures, and possibly the support for the Riley Ranch planning effort are also allocations of money made without formal project descriptions. While the purposes to which these funds are applied comport with the list of authorized uses named in Sec. 302, the absence of individual project descriptions that are published in the local record for public review, render opaque what was intended to be a transparent public review process. Even if these expenditure categories appear in the county's budget when it goes out for public review, unless individual project descriptions are included with the budget and the funding source is identified as Title III, this does not constitute a transparent Title III review process.

Several intertwined issues emerge with respect to the Title II program and the Coos Bay BLM

RAC. The first issue concerns the marked difference in the pattern of spending on projects in Douglas and Coos Counties. These differences have been noted and quantified above. The types of projects approved in Douglas County clearly reflect a strong interest in restoration and fish passage enhancement. Furthermore, Douglas County government and departments have received no Title II funding. In contrast to this, projects approved for implementation in Coos County have a much stronger focus on roads; ecological objectives are met to the extent that they can be subsumed within a utilitarian orientation. Furthermore, Coos County government and departments, e.g., Roads Department, Noxious Weed Advisory Board, have clearly benefited directly and substantially from Title II support. It could be perhaps argued—though it might be a stretch—that spending \$558,348 of Coos County's FY 2003 Title II allocation for the Coos County Roads Department to improve county road infrastructure was the best use of those funds in terms of benefiting adjacent federal lands. However, this and similar RAC expenditures that directly benefit the interests of Coos County government, combined with the roles that the two Coos County commissioners play on the RAC and the utilitarian focus of most of the Coos County RAC members, raise questions about the RAC's ability to evaluate and support project proposals that do not advance utilitarian and pro-county goals and objectives.

A second issue concerns RAC allocations to programs such as the Coos County's noxious weed control program. These allocations, which are made to the county and spent on projects recommended by the Coos County Noxious Weed Advisory Board, appear to constitute general support for the county's weed abatement program, which the county commissioners then use to fund individual weed abatement projects and other activities. As with some Title III allocations, this seems more like an administrative allocation that charges up the gas tank of the coun-

ty's weed account, rather than support for a specific project whose description includes elements such as project purpose and link with legislative intent, anticipated duration, anticipated cost, expected outcomes, and monitoring plan as required by the legislation (see SEC. 203.(b)). Because the RAC does not decide specifically how the county commissioners and the Weed Advisory Board will choose to spend the money allocated to it, the RAC cannot exercise the oversight nor ensure the accountability that the legislation intended for Title II funded-projects.

A third issue concerns the extent to which the RAC has functioned to achieve the third purpose of the act, namely "to improve cooperative relationships among the people that use and care for federal lands and the agencies that manage these lands" (SEC. 2.(b)(3)). The legislation sought to maximize the likelihood of promoting cooperation by carefully specifying who could serve on a RAC and by stipulating that there should be "balanced and broad representation from within each category" (SEC. 205(c)(3)). Instead of achieving balanced representation within each RAC membership category, Coos County Commissioner and RAC Chair Griffith asked people to serve on the RAC who share his utilitarian outlook on the use of RAC funds. Many of these individuals also espouse an avowedly pro-county sentiment regarding RAC funds and some expressed strongly worded negative sentiments towards the BLM. This group of people has shown little interest in forging cooperative relations amongst diverse user groups but has instead used their membership on the RAC to advance their shared vision of how best to use Title II funds. Douglas County RAC members, who do not have such a utilitarian outlook, have insulated Douglas County Title II contributions from the effects of this bias by developing a priority list of Douglas County projects prior to the RAC meeting and then submitting their recommendations to the full RAC for approval.

The Coos Bay BLM RAC has also not clearly improved cooperative relations with the BLM — one

of the purposes of the legislation mentioned in the previous paragraph. RAC Chair Griffith noted that there has been increased communication between the agency and the public since passage of P.L. 106-393 and that BLM employees have participated in the planning and implementation of some of the non-BLM-approved RAC projects. Furthermore, he and others on the RAC noted that friendships do exist between BLM employees and members of the local community. However, there are certainly no signs of cooperative relations between the DFO and the RAC chair and some BLM employees are critical of the RAC's pro-county, roads-orientation with respect to projects proposed within Coos County. Anti-BLM sentiment within some segments of the population in this region runs deep and strong, and so it is perhaps no surprise that such a sentiment occasionally surfaces within this RAC.

This RAC has been used to advance a pro-county, utilitarian agenda. This occurred because no countervailing force arose to challenge the county's dominance, and to insist on balanced representation within the RAC. The only entity that had the authority to be that countervailing force was the BLM. We have seen what happened when the BLM tried to assert a stronger role for itself during the initial stages of RAC formation. Coos County won that skirmish and since then the BLM has played a hands-off role. This was clearly a self-conscious decision on the part of the agency. The DFO acknowledged that county control of the RAC was less of a problem because of the relatively limited nature of the RAC's charter and mandate; had the RAC been chartered to advise the BLM more generally, then the agency would have had to address the RAC's county-centeredness more directly. Nevertheless, understanding the rationale for why the BLM chose to follow a hands off policy towards the RAC does not absolve the agency of its responsibility for allowing the RAC to run the course that it has.

Postscript 1

This case study is based on fieldwork conducted in June, 2004. Although fact checking continued through November, 2005, the bulk of the analysis in this case study is based on the first three years of the RACs operation and the Title III programs in Coos and Curry Counties. As is to be expected, the RAC has changed somewhat since the fieldwork was conducted. Some of these changes, brought to our attention through comments received on the draft case study, include: 1) twice-yearly instead of once-yearly meetings, with the first meeting reserved for “housekeeping,” general rule making issues, and possibly, fieldtrips; 2) changes in voting procedures such that the votes from all three categories are now recorded, even if the project does not receive majority approval from the first category that votes; 3) changes in the procedures for discussing the projects (discussion and prioritization of projects are now ordered by county, according to which county has the most money in the RAC account); and 4) an increase, at least in the 2005 funding round, in the number of BLM-sponsored projects that the RAC approved.

Postscript 2

The Sierra Institute for Environment and Community would like to acknowledge and thank the numerous individuals who provided long and detailed comments on the first draft of this case study. Their input has contributed to the study’s accuracy and comprehensiveness. The comments received cleaved into categories, one category that complimented the report’s accuracy and one that contested and rejected the report’s interpretations. The Sierra Institute has carefully considered and responded to all of the comments received.

INTERVIEWEES

Ralph Brown, Curry County Commissioner, RAC Alternate
Ed Cooley, RAC Member, Douglas County
Paul Dailey, Smith River Watershed Council, grant recipient
Helen Franklin, RAC Member, Coos County
Bill Gehling, Powers High School Principal, Title III grant recipient, Coos County
Fred Green, log hauling & timber exporter, RAC Member, Coos County
John Griffith, Coos County Commissioner, RAC Chair
Glenn Harklerood, BLM, RAC Coordinator
Dana Hicks, Lower Rogue Watershed Council Coordinator, Curry County, grant recipient
Harry Hoogesteger, South Coast Watershed Association Coordinator, Curry County, grant recipient
Bob Kinyon, Umpqua Watershed Association Coordinator, RAC Member, Douglas County, grant recipient
Lucy LaBonte, Curry County Commissioner
Penny Lind, Director, Umpqua Watersheds, Inc., RAC Member, Douglas County
Debby Mendenhall, Douglas County Commission Staff, Title III Coordinator
Mike Murphy, Curry County Emergency Communications Director, grant recipient
Ethan Nelson, Northwest Youth Corps, Eugene, grant recipient
Pat Olmstead, BLM, North Bend
David Peck, Smith River Rancher, grant recipient
Amy Peters, Livestock Extension Agent, RAC Member, Coos County
Reg Pullen, BLM, Recreation Manager, North Bend
Sue Richardson, BLM Coos Bay District Manager, RAC DFO
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Gary De Salvatores, RAC Alternative, Coos County
Timm Slater, Weyerhaeuser Manager, RAC Member, Coos County
George Smith, Coquille Tribal Forester, RAC Member, Coos County
Mike Smith, OHV-user, RAC Member, Coos County
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