

Del Norte County Forest Service Resource Advisory Committee and Title III Projects Case Study

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Introduction

This study of Del Norte County 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 twentieth century, states and communities throughout the United States have received funds through the sharing of receipts from revenue-producing activities on Forest Service lands and 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 replaced 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 roads and school payments for six years; and 2) perhaps most unique, it pays for something other than roads and schools (which virtually all of the previous “receipt payments” were used for) 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 do so. 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 through 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 and Forest Service Research and the U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Sierra Institute is evaluating Title II and Title III of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act. Sierra Institute is evaluating the legislation by examining Title II and III projects and their outcomes in 16 cases across the country. In addition to examining specific project outcomes, Sierra Institute 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. Sierra Institute 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 reauthorization of it. 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 Context: Declining Resource Industries, Extensive Public Lands, and Changing Social/Demographic Characteristics

Del Norte County is located in the northwest corner of California. It is bordered on the north by Curry County, Oregon, on the east and south by Siskiyou County and Humboldt County, California, respectively, and on the west by the Pacific Ocean. Approximately 75 percent of the county's land area is publicly owned, primarily by the USDA Forest Service, National Park Service, and Department of State Parks. Like many counties in this region, logging and commercial fishing were the primary economic activities throughout much of the last century, particularly from World War II through the late 1980s. Also consistent with regional trends, both of these sectors plummeted within the last 25 years. For example, in the Elk Valley area of Crescent City, one mill currently operates where individuals remember there used to be 50. Timber harvest levels in Del Norte County have fallen from a high of 344.1 mmbf in 1978 to only 23.9 mmbf in 2002 (Lammers 1997; State Board of Equalization, Timber Tax Division). Commercial fishing has similarly declined markedly—27 of the approximately 29 commercial fishers who berthed trawlers at Crescent City Harbor sold out during the recent federal buy-back program.

The declines in the timber industry, while consistent with broader regional patterns throughout the Pacific Northwest, were exacerbated by two other factors that continue to significantly shape public perceptions of the federal government and the regional economic effects of its actions. These are 1) the establishment and subsequent (1978) expansion of Redwood State and National Park and 2) the designation of the Smith River as a wild and scenic river and creation in 1990 of the 350,000 acre Smith River National Recreation Area within the Six Rivers National Forest. Both of these actions further reduced the land base available for extractive forms of natural resource management and contributed to on-going declines in logging: between 1993 and 2003, the timber harvest level in Del Norte County fell from 97,414 mbf to 23,829 mbf, and none of the

2003 harvest came from public lands (California State Board of Equalization, 2003). Road closures in these areas, the absence of timber harvesting activity, and the very limited Forest Service funding for maintenance and infrastructure development within the National Recreation Area are continuing sources of friction with some segments of the local community.

Other socioeconomic and demographic changes in the county have blunted the full force of the decline in resource extraction-based employment. For example, the siting of a state prison at Pelican Bay in 1989, although a controversial form of economic development, has provided much needed jobs. Out of a total of approximately 1,500 employees, it was reported that roughly one-third are from the local area. While this comes nowhere near to replacing the 2,500 timber industry jobs that previously existed in the county, it is still a significant shot in the arm for the county, especially given its modest population of 27,850 (California Employment Development Department, 2003).

The fact that the county's population rose 17.3 percent between 1990 and 2000 (a rate that exceeds the state's average population increase by 27 percent for this period), points to a second socioeconomic change factor: the growth of the retirement community within Del Norte County. Drawn by the stunning beauty and outdoor recreational opportunities of the county's coast, redwood forests, and coastal interior, and the area's moderately-priced real estate, Del Norte County has experienced, within the last decade, an unprecedented increase in the number of out-of-area retirees that have chosen to move to Crescent City and surrounding areas. These individuals, as well as others who have moved to Del Norte County within the last several years, often bring with them non-local sources of income, e.g., transfer payments, and they tend to identify more with environmental conservation values than with the more utilitarian values associated with resource extraction and active management.

The Native American community, which constitutes more than 6 percent of the county's population (U.S. Census, 2000), represents a sizeable and increasingly economically powerful segment of the county's population. The Smith River Rancheria, the Elk Valley Rancheria, and the Yurok Tribal Headquarters (and significant land area) are all located in Del Norte County. The Elk Valley Rancheria, in particular, has invested in on- and off-reservation business development and has extensive plans for continuing to do so. These activities will likely have significant economic ramifications, especially within Crescent City.

Despite these more recent patterns of investment and demographic transition, significant numbers of residents are impoverished. For example, the 2000 census reported poverty rates for Crescent City and Del Norte County of 34.6 percent and 20.2 percent, respectively, compared to the state of California's average of 14.2 percent (Lammers 1997). County unemployment rates have hovered between 8 percent and 9.5 percent between 2001 and 2004, down from double-digit rates for most of the 1980s and 1990s.

Service-related employment in the county is approximately 25 percent of total employment (significantly higher than the state average of 6-7 percent) (CED 2003), which has effectively reduced the unemployment rate. However, given that wages in the service sector have long been low and jobs are without benefits, we suspect that many of these workers are part of the working poor. With respect to the public lands in Del Norte County, this general context of persistent poverty and moderate unemployment is compounded by the absence of an active timber harvesting program as well as severe budget cuts within the Forest Service and the Park Service. On-going budget cuts have severely curtailed investments for basic infrastructure maintenance such as roads and the development of new infrastructure for the Smith River National Recreation Area. Thus, as we discuss below, the availability of funding through the RAC, while it may not be able to create many permanent, living wage jobs, is nonetheless an important source of financial support (in an otherwise relatively bleak economic environment) for natural resource-related work.

County Elections for Titles II and III

Del Norte County has elected to divert the maximum allowed under the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act towards Title II and III projects. Approximately \$430,000 is available each year to support Title II and III projects. County administrators have generally followed a 60/40 rule to guide the distribution of funds between the two titles. Thus, in fiscal year 2002 and 2003, approximately \$260,000 was made available for Title II projects and \$170,000 for Title III. In fiscal year 2004, county administrators increased the Title II allocation, partly in order to ensure that the RAC

approved a controversial project concerning the installation of water tanks for fire fighting purposes in the wildland-urban interface, which the county strongly supported. As expressed during interviews with county officials, one of the primary reasons for the 60/40 split is the perception that the performance of the RAC and the quality and effects of the Title II projects it approves will influence reauthorization of Public Law 106-393. Thus, county administrators would like to support the RAC in its efforts, including providing encouragement for innovative and creative projects.

Title III Projects

All Title III Projects are considered and approved or rejected through a formal application process. The application process is the same for private organizations such as the Gasquet Volunteer Fire Department and for branches of the county government who wish to apply for Title III support. Applications are available from the county and may be submitted throughout the year. Each application is reviewed by the head of the County Planning Department to ensure that it is consistent with the intent of the legislation. Following this initial screening there is a 45-day public comment period, after which the Board of Supervisors considers the application at one of their regular meetings. For those projects that the Board approves, detailed payment forms ensure transparency and accountability with respect to the disbursement of Title III funds.

Since the inception of the Title III program in 2002, the county has approved 13 Title III projects that together total \$254,875 (see Appendix II for list of Title III projects). Seven of these projects relate directly to fire preparedness and planning. Three of these seven projects, totaling \$42,527, were grants made to the county's Community Development Department. These grants supported aerial photography for fire planning purposes and the upgrade of McBeth and Ward Fields as strategic elements within the regional fire fighting infrastructure. The \$6,600 allocated by the Board of Supervisors for upgrading McBeth airfield was used to leverage approximately \$65,000 in state funds for implementing the project. McBeth airfield is primarily used by the California Department of Forestry for fire-fighting purposes. Ward airfield played an instrumental role as a base from which helicopters could effectively fight the 2002 Biscuit Fire. It also provided a large flat area on which fire fighters could bivouac and set up camp. Seeing the strategic importance of Ward airfield for fire fighting purposes, the state would like to upgrade the field beyond the level originally envisioned in the Title III proposal. Hence the upgrade of Ward

field is currently on hold pending the acquisition of more funds and the completion of a revised upgrade plan.

Three fire-related Title III grants were made to the Del Norte County Fire Safe Council. One grant (\$2,500) supported the preparation of the fire education newspaper insert that is included in the region's local newspapers prior to the start of the fire season. The second and third grants to the Fire Safe Council (each in the amount of \$30,000) help to pay for the local fire safe council coordinator (whose job description includes holding community meetings regarding fire safety and other forms of community outreach and extension) as well as the development of the county's fire plan. The last fire-related Title III grant was made to the Bar-O-Boys Ranch as reimbursement for emergency fire-fighting services provided during the Biscuit Fire. Clearly, the Board of Supervisors is concerned about issues related to fire safety and planning, and the challenges of minimizing fire-risk. This concern is echoed in some of the RAC Title II projects, such as the fire protection tank project and the purchase of a chipper to be used for reducing hazardous fuels. Both of these latter projects involved the Fire Safe Council as a project proponent; they demonstrate the ways in which Title II and Title III can be used in tandem to obtain complementary outcomes. This cluster of Title III investments will enhance fire preparedness in Del Norte County, both over the short and long-term. Other positive effects include increased coordination among fire-related organizations in the county and the economic values associated with the prioritization of local employment generation for project implementation.

A second cluster of Title III projects support youth programs that combine education and job training with conservation-related work. Three projects fall into this category: two contracts with the California Conservation Corps (totaling \$32,200) for service learning programs, and one with the Bar-O-Boys Ranch (in the amount of \$47,913) for fuels reduction projects. It is likely that fewer con-

tracts will be awarded to the Conservation Corps since the Requa Center has recently closed due to budget cuts, and the nearest center is now at least two hours from potential project locations in Del Norte County. However, the Bar-O-Boys Ranch will likely continue to receive contracts for conservation work projects from both Title II and Title III funding sources.

One of the highest priority Title III projects concerns the planning and purchase of what is referred to as the “Hiouchi Conservation Easement.” Hiouchi is a small community with a few stores located eight miles east of Crescent City. Located behind Hiouchi, on the north side of Highway 199, is a 103-acre parcel of steep, privately owned, densely forested land. This parcel of land constitutes both an important viewshed for much of Hiouchi and the Highway 199 corridor, and it represents a possible way to connect Jediah Smith State Park on the west with the Smith River National Recreation Area (NRA) to the east (presently the park and NRA do not share any boundaries). Thus the purchase of the development rights to this parcel would conserve this significant viewshed and provide an important corridor (recreational and ecological) linking the park with the NRA. Del Norte county administrators and elected officials are very interested in the successful negotiation of this conservation easement, and given the owner’s high level of interest in the idea, they are guardedly optimistic about their chances of success. While a sizeable portion of the currently uncommitted Title III funds are informally earmarked for the purchase of the easement, some Title III funds have already been disbursed as part of this effort. This includes a \$12,000 expenditure that the Board of Supervisors approved for the appraisal (including a timber cruise) of the area being considered for the easement. Interestingly, at least some county administrators view the RAC process as an effective vehicle for both public education concerning the conservation easement and generating support for the idea. Although Title II funds have not been used for this effort, the conservation easement has been discussed at RAC meetings.

The last two Title III projects are a grant (for

\$14,309) to the Sheriff’s Department and one (for \$22,000) to the Gasquet Volunteer Fire Department. The grant to the Sheriff’s Department is to reimburse the department for search and rescue activities on the National Forest. The grant to the Gasquet Volunteer Fire Department is to purchase a Holmatro Rescue Tool (“jaws of life”). State Highway 199 winds through the steep, beautiful, and potentially treacherous Smith River Canyon. The Gasquet Volunteer Fire Department is often first on the scene of the major car accidents that occur in the area. The Holmatro Rescue Tool enables the Volunteer Fire Department to extricate passengers from car wrecks much more quickly and safely. As such, it provides an important component of the Fire Department’s repertoire of rescue equipment.

Three clear thematic areas of emphasis emerge from this discussion of the Title III projects. One dominant theme is fire and emergency preparedness. Approximately 55 percent of the total Title III funds allocated to date focus on this theme. Support for the planning and education efforts of the Del Norte County Fire Safe Council is strong, along with improvements in fire-fighting infrastructure. Such projects certainly comport with the intent of the legislation. When the next fire occurs, they will no doubt facilitate a more effective response. Furthermore, these Title III fire-related projects dovetail nicely with Title II projects such as the water tanks for fire fighting in the wildland-urban interface in the county and the fuels reduction efforts associated with the Title II-supported chipper.

A second thematic area of emphasis is youth-oriented initiatives. Youth service learning programs have received approximately 45 percent of the total Title III allocation amount. Most of this has been used for service learning conservation projects with the California Conservation Corps, the Ameri-corps, and the Bar-O-Boys Ranch. These projects combine conservation-oriented work such as noxious weed management, trail reconstruction and maintenance, and fuels reduction with job training and skill development designed to enhance future

employment options.

The Bar-O-Boys Ranch illustrates the ways in which RAC dollars can advance both social and environmental goals. The Bar-O-Boys Ranch is a county-operated facility for juvenile offenders from throughout the northern California region. In addition to receiving counseling, the 14 to 18 year-old boys are provided opportunities to develop job skills and work experience and training during their average stay of approximately nine months at the facility. According to the director of the Bar-O-Boys Ranch, the opportunity to participate in RAC-funded projects such as noxious weed removal (Title II projects) and fuels reduction efforts around the perimeter of the ranch (a Title III project) has been an important part of the work experience component of the program. Projects in which participants can see the results of their efforts, such as noxious weed removal, engender a sense of accomplishment in the boys and have even led to competitive arrangements to see which crews could accomplish the most work. Partly as a result of the RAC-supported projects the Bar-O-Boys Ranch has implemented, the facility has earned a state-wide reputation for effectively combining counseling and work experience opportunities for juvenile offenders in a supportive social environment.

Despite these positive social benefits, some RAC members do question the effectiveness of the training and skills that are imparted to participants

in programs such as the California Conservation Corps and the Bar-O-Boys Ranch. They argue that instead of contracting with these organizations, RAC dollars could be better spent supporting local private sector crews. As discussed below in the Title II section, this has been tried with respect to noxious weed management, but with limited success. Notwithstanding these concerns from members of the RAC, it is clear that the Board of Supervisors is generally supportive of the social mission of organizations such as the California Conservation Corps and the Bar-O-Boys Ranch and desires to continue to engage with them.

The third primary theme concerns the efforts to preserve the Hiouchi viewshed through a conservation easement. The bulk of the Title III funds is being held in reserve to finance the easement purchase. This is a high priority project for the Board of Supervisors and they are proceeding in a measured fashion. As with the fire preparedness and emergency response projects, both the work with youth-oriented organizations and the conservation easement are entirely consistent with the legislature's intent regarding the purposes to which Title III funds may be applied. None of these projects is governed by either NEPA or CEQA. Also, as has been illustrated in the discussion of the Fire Safe Council projects and the conservation easement, there is an explicit linkage being made at the county level between Title II and Title III projects.

Title II Projects

County Supervisor Martha McClure's membership on the RAC, along with the Community Development Department Director Ernie Perry's attendance at RAC meetings facilitates coordination and communication between Title II and Title III projects. Thus both Title II and III projects provide distinct forms of support, in different kinds of ways, to the county's Fire Safe Council.

During its first three years (2002, 2003, and 2004), the Del Norte RAC approved and allocated a total of \$845,605 for projects. The annual allocation amounts for these three years were \$225,004,

\$260,301, and \$360,300, respectively. In the first and second rounds, the amount available to the RAC followed the 60/40 Title II-Title III proportion discussed above, while in the third round the county supervisors collectively decided to provide the RAC with more funding in order to ensure that the RAC funded a Fire Safe Council proposal to place water tanks at strategic locations within the wildland-urban interface to provide water to fight fires in areas that lack water. During the fourth round, which had not been completed at the time of this writing, the RAC anticipated allocating approximately \$270,000.

Project Solicitation

Each year public service announcements are placed in local newspapers announcing the availability of RAC funds and providing information regarding the application process for Title II projects. The Forest Service DFO and RAC coordinator take responsibility for preparing and arranging these public notices. In 2004, applicants had 30 days to prepare and submit proposals following the initial public service announcements. Some RAC members felt that this was too little time to allow members of the public to develop proposal ideas, take them to their respective organizations for comments, feedback and approval, and develop a detailed and defensible budget. Furthermore, they felt that the timing of the 30-day period (late spring-early summer) was unfortunate as this is the season when many community members are out enjoying the weather: They argued that the window of opportunity for preparing proposals should be longer and timed to span the long winter months when community members typically have more time to devote to proposal development.

The diversity and number of proposals submitted to the RAC is directly related to the extent of public outreach and proposal solicitation. Some RAC members are concerned that the RAC does not receive more non-Forest Service proposals. They feel that specific segments of the community in Del Norte County will not apply for RAC funding unless the RAC makes a concerted effort to reach out to them, including providing assistance for completing the project application process. As is true for most public participatory processes, unless efforts are made to reach out to groups that tend not to participate in public processes or receive public funding, then those groups that are already “in the loop” will benefit the most from such opportunities while those that are not will by default continue to remain outside the circle of project beneficiaries. This concern is related to the perception (and concern) expressed by some RAC members, that the Forest Service has received the majority of the funds that the RAC has allocated. This latter issue is addressed more fully below.

Project Review, Prioritization, and Selection

After reviewing the projects to ensure that they comport with the intent of the legislation, the Designated Federal Officer sends each RAC member a packet containing all the four-page applications received for a particular funding round. The next step is to review and rank individual project proposals. The Del Norte RAC has developed and tried several different ways to prioritize and evaluate project proposals. Initially, the RAC developed explicit criteria for ranking each project and used those criteria to rate individual project proposals prior to their meeting. These ratings then became the basis on which to judge and eventually approve or reject individual proposals during the RAC meeting. During subsequent funding rounds this method was slightly modified; instead of ranking projects individually beforehand and then voting on them, all of the proposed projects were listed on a board. Each RAC member used colored-coded marks to indicate the degree of their support for each project. The prioritization process was loosely based on the ranking criteria that had been collectively developed at earlier meetings, and the visual ranking of projects then provided the basis for considering and deciding whether or not to fund the project.

At the most recent meeting (June 29, 2004), the RAC members agreed to try a new review and prioritization process adapted from a neighboring northern California Forest Service RAC. This process involved the RAC splitting into their category subgroups. Each group then either approved or rejected each of the proposed projects. Then the whole RAC reconvened. A motion was made to approve collectively the projects that all three groups had approved individually, without further discussion. The motion was seconded and passed. Projects that two groups approved were then considered for discussion, with the caveat that the discussion focus as much as possible on the positive aspects of the proposal. This process continued until all available funds had been allocated. It should also be mentioned that a standard operating procedure is to devote one RAC meeting to hearing from project proponents. For example, the RAC had met one week prior to the June 29,

Table 1: RAC-Funded Projects for 2001-2004

Type of Project	Number of Projects	Total Amount
Road Maintenance/Reconstruction	13	\$225,810
“Sweet Smelling” Toilets	3	\$154,500
Exotic Weed Management/ Native species reestablishment	4	\$117,625
Forest Interpretation and Education Programs	5	\$90,113
Fire Safe Council Support and Projects	3	\$71,515
Trail and Campground Maintenance	2	\$76,072
Trail Development (“Coast to Crest/Caves Trail”)	2	\$65,539
NEPA Planning (for multiple projects on Hurdy Gurdy Crk)	1	\$20,051
Forest Clean-up	2	\$16,000
Monitoring (fisheries)	1	\$4,070
Brochure for 4x4 off-road vehicle users	1	\$3,310
Forest Planting	1	\$1,000

Note: A few projects combine multiple purposes, e.g., trail maintenance and exotic species removal. In such cases the project was characterized according to its primary purpose.

2004 meeting. At that meeting project proponents were each given five minutes to present their proposed project and to answer questions from RAC members. During the allocation process, efforts are made to ensure that 50 percent of allocated funds are devoted to roads and watershed restoration work, as stipulated in the legislation.

Approved Projects

What kinds of projects has the RAC funded? In order to answer this question, projects from the first three funding rounds were characterized according to their primary purpose and amount. The resulting characterization differs slightly from the RAC’s own classification of project type in that we categorized projects by their primary purpose and did not also list secondary and tertiary purposes. The following sections discuss these projects. Table 1 shows a breakdown of RAC-funded projects for 2001-2004 by purpose, number of projects, and amount funded for the first three years. The following sections discuss these projects.

1. Road Maintenance and Toilet Installation

The RAC has prioritized spending money on

Forest Service road maintenance and toilets. A total of \$225,810 has been spent on roads and \$154,500 has been spent on “sweet smelling” toilets. These amounts represent 27% and 18% of total RAC allocated funds, respectively – the two largest categories of RAC allocations. Together they represent 45% of the total funds that the RAC has awarded. These projects have all been Forest Service projects. While the fourth round allocations have yet to be finalized, it seems as though the allocation to the two categories—roughly consistent the first three years—will likely continue.

There are several reasons for the high priority given to road maintenance and toilets. In terms of watershed health, it is widely recognized that sediment contributions from roads constitute one of the primary sources of anthropogenic sediment that harms fish-bearing stream habitat. Consistent with this general view, the Six Rivers National Forest hydrologist on the Gasquet Ranger District reportedly informed the engineering branch of the district that it could use all of the 50% quota that the legislation specifies must be allocated for roads and watershed restoration for road-related work. As Table I illustrates, there are more road maintenance

and reconstruction projects than any other category of RAC project. Collectively, these projects have accomplished significant amounts of work. Between 2002 and 2004 approximately 27.5 miles of road have been resurfaced, 4.2 miles have been reconstructed, and 12 miles have been brushed. Additionally, 125 drop inlet covers (structures installed on the inlet end of culverts to reduce the likelihood of blockages) have been purchased and installed.

Clearly, there are compelling ecological reasons for spending so much money on restoring road surfaces (through gravel and rocking), replacing drainage structures, and other deferred road maintenance tasks (no roads have been decommissioned or obliterated). There are also compelling social reasons. A significant proportion of Del Norte County's population is quite critical of the Forest Service road closures and the occasional recreation area closure (i.e., Chimney Flat) that have occurred due to issues such as the spread of Port Orford Cedar root rot and the negative environmental consequences of "overuse" compounded by inadequate Forest Service funding to maintain or improve facilities, roads, etc. Therefore, spending money on deferred road maintenance, especially on access roads commonly used by the recreating public, helps to quell some of this criticism.

There are also compelling reasons for the large amount of RAC funding devoted to funding toilets. It is perhaps astonishing but also true that since the establishment of the Smith River National Recreation Area in 1990, there has been very little funding for basic infrastructure, such as toilets, either on the busy Highway 199 corridor that links the coast with Interstate 5 or at the river access and camping areas that experience the highest recreational use. The lack of proper facilities has created public health concerns about water quality along reaches of the Smith River and some of its tributaries. One high-use area, subsequently closed by the Forest Service, even has the dubious distinction of being called "feces flat." Thus the RAC funding for Sweet Smelling Toilets (which are approximately \$30,000 each) is the only available source of funding for these essential pieces of

infrastructure.

It could be argued (and several RAC members have made this point) that it should not be the RAC's job to fund deferred road maintenance work and toilet installation—that such activities are inconsistent with the legislation's stated intent to foster innovative and creative projects. Some RAC members expressed frustration at being in the situation of having to allocate scarce resources for projects that should be part of the Forest Service's general budget for the district. Despite the frustration felt regarding spending money in this manner, RAC members also acknowledged that these were needed projects and that their concerns were, at some level, philosophical, because other funds are not available for these high priority needs. A few RAC members did cite lingering reservations about some of the roads projects because the individual project proposals were presented to the RAC without being embedded in an overall roads analysis and management plan. Thus, RAC members were unable to understand how a particular road improvement project fit into the District's overall road management plan or other priority roads projects or watershed restoration priorities.

2. Vegetation Management and Forest Interpretation

A second area of emphasis that emerges from an examination of the pattern of RAC spending is the focus on exotic species removal and native species enhancement. During the first three funding rounds, the RAC allocated \$117,625 to these two areas of activity, which together account for approximately 14 percent of total RAC funding. This is clearly an area the RAC has chosen to prioritize and, unlike the road and toilet projects, it is an arena where the RAC has been able to leverage resources from partner organizations, as well as to mobilize volunteer labor. With perhaps one exception, RAC members expressed their satisfaction and enthusiastic support for what has been accomplished through these projects and for continuing to support this as a funding priority. This on-going support is reflected in the fact that during the deliberations concerning the fourth funding round, all three sub-groups within the RAC voted to approve an expenditure

of more than \$72,000 to support the weed removal, trail maintenance, volunteer coordination, and forest interpretation work of the Forest Outreach, Restoration, Education, Stewardship, and Trails (FOREST) Association and the Forest Service. This amount was significantly larger than the amount approved for any other project during the first of two RAC funding meetings for allocating FY05 funds.

The FOREST Association has become a primary vehicle through which the RAC is accomplishing both vegetation management and forest interpretation and outreach objectives. The RAC has allocated a total of \$78,613 (9 percent of total allocations) for forest interpretation related efforts. The great majority of this has gone through the FOREST Association, where it is closely integrated with the Association's noxious weeds and native species work. The FOREST Association grew from an initial RAC grant to the Friends of Del Norte for forest interpretation. This grant involved establishing relationships with local schools, including the provision of educational activities and field trips, developing an Adopt-A-Forest program, organizing community volunteer days, and engaging in community outreach—all in close conjunction with staff from the Smith River National Recreation Area and the Six Rivers National Forest. The first grant proved to be quite successful in both environmental, social, and institutional terms. This success enabled project implementers to leverage significant additional resources, including funding from the California Department of Transportation for weed abatement efforts, labor contributions from the California Conservation Corps and other community volunteers, transportation funding from the Del Norte County School District for field trips, and coordination with other RAC-funded projects such as the Illegal Dumping Abatement program and the Environmental Science Education Program. The project also accomplished significant environmental and social objectives. Some of the specific outcomes of this project include (a) working with 13 schools and more than 700 students who participated in indoor programs, service learning projects, field trips to the Recreation Area, and Forest Service Learning Projects, (b) the cleanup of over 50 miles of roadsides (many

of them within the Recreation Area), (c) abatement of 22 illegal dumpsites, (d) removal of noxious weeds from 33 acres, (e) the coordination/supervision of the community contribution of 2,027 hours of volunteer labor, (f) the development of regular campground and public education programs, and (g) the identification and outreach to local community groups as a part of the Adopt-A-Forest Program.

The success of this initial grant is also reflected in the fact that the coordinator, with broad-based community support, has worked to create the new nonprofit North Coast FOREST Association, and in 2003 received funding to do so from the National Forest Foundation. Additionally, the RAC granted continuing support for the Education/Volunteer Project and provided a Noxious Weed Management grant. Since its inception, the North Coast FOREST Association has continued to expand the work that the initial RAC grant enabled. The Association now manages the Smith River National Recreation Area Volunteer Program and Noxious Weed Management Project, in addition to coordinating with several other closely related projects (several of which are also funded by the RAC), including the Del Norte Solid Waste Management Authority, the Americorps Program, and the local 4x4 off-road vehicle club.

The creation of the Association, with seed money from the RAC, has provided an effective organizational structure through which to institutionalize and enhance the continuation of the various programs with which it is engaged. It also constitutes an effective vehicle for leveraging support from other organizations, and engaging in outreach to other community-based organizations in the area. Since its inception, the Association has continued the work that the initial RAC grant launched. This has included (a) the involvement of approximately another 300 local students in the programs mentioned above, (b) organizing and supervising another 700 hours of volunteer labor for noxious weed, litter, dumpsite, and unofficial shooting range cleanup, and (c) the removal of noxious weeds from another 30 acres in the Smith River NRA, among other activities. The Association has also, in close coordination with Six Rivers National Forest Staff, surveyed and

mapped over 250 miles of roadside within the NRA to identify and prioritize treatment areas for noxious weed removal. This information is being processed by Forest Service staff and will be integrated with a forest-wide noxious weed database. It will be used to prioritize noxious weed removal activities using crew and volunteer labor, and plan for retreatment of areas that have had initial removal.

The Association also works with the Del Norte Solid Waste Management Authority and Redwood National and State Parks to coordinate a combined annual litter cleanup program. It coordinates with Redwood National Park, the California Department of Transportation, some adjacent private landowners, the local schools, and the Humboldt/Del Norte Weed Management Area to achieve noxious weed eradication and management goals. The Association anticipates that the funding it will receive in the fourth round will enable it to retreat 30-50 acres from which weeds have already been removed (i.e. seedling removal), treat 15-20 acres of forestland from which noxious weeds have not yet been removed, coordinate in new ways with the local Americorps staff and program participants (that are supported by a Title III project), continue its school-based education and service learning programs and in so doing reach another 500-700 Del Norte County students, maintain or improve approximately 10-12 miles of trails, and plan and implement minor watershed restoration projects.

The RAC has also supported some education and interpretation programs and weed removal work independent of the North Coast FOREST Association. These include two grants to an individual to prepare a fish characteristics and habitat interpretation display and brochure for the visitor center at the Gasquet Ranger District, and to develop a master interpretation plan for the Smith River National Recreation Area. The first of these two projects is complete. It has been well received by the RAC and is apparently popular with visitors at the NRA Visitor Center. The master interpretative plan is currently being developed. When complete it will be used to both secure funding for interpretation and to prioritize, plan, and guide the implementation of

interpretation projects. The RAC has also provided a grant (\$8,000) to the Forest Service for removing Star Thistle along Highway 199.

The RAC has supported environmental education by providing \$11,500 to the Environmental Science Education Program within the county school district. This amount helped leverage matching funds from the Save the Redwoods League. The project has helped many school-age children participate in field trips that focus on different aspects of environmental science. However, it was reported at the June 22, 2004 RAC meeting that because of the pressure to prepare students for the mandated Star testing, teachers are reluctant to take time away from the classroom for fieldtrips that may not directly relate to the standardized testing program. Thus there are currently unused funds in this project account.

3. Trail Maintenance and Weed Control

Some RAC grants combine weed control with trail maintenance. For example, two grants of \$34,300 and \$33,700, respectively, were provided to the California Conservation Corps for weed removal and trail maintenance, and a grant of \$47,472 was awarded to Americorps for weed removal and trail maintenance. This latter grant was later modified and implemented by the California Conservation Corps because the local Americorps program was defunded. Some of the weed removal and trail maintenance work that these grants supported was accomplished in coordination with related work of the FOREST Association.

Within the RAC there is some debate about the advisability of contracting with organizations such as the California Conservation Corps and the Bar-O-Boys Ranch for noxious weed management and trail maintenance tasks. Some members of the RAC argue that the young adults from these organizations who are employed for these tasks should be learning how to be independent contractors so that they can successfully transition into the private sector. Instead, they argue, youths learn how to follow directions and do manual work, but they do not acquire the crucial business skills they will need if they are to earn a living from this kind of work in

the future. Others have suggested that, rather than contracting with these organizations, individuals and crews from the private sector should be engaged for this kind of work. In fact, the FOREST Association has let numerous small contracts locally for noxious weed-related projects to enhance the employment generation aspect of its work. The results have been decidedly mixed. Crews from the private sector required significantly greater amounts of training and supervision than was anticipated (and much more than CCC and Ranch crews) and in some cases crews defaulted on the work they had contracted to perform. Perhaps not surprisingly, this demonstrates the challenges of finding people willing to work for low pay to do hard physical labor for very short-term contracts.

4. Fire Safe Work

Approximately \$71,515 or 8 percent of RAC funding during the first three funding rounds was dedicated to fire-related projects. These projects included the purchase of a chipper for hazardous fuels reduction and the purchase and installation of fire protection tanks. The chipper, as well as the tanks, are part of the broader planning and fire-preparedness activities of the Fire Safe Council, which are supported by Title III funding. Not only do these efforts demonstrate a productive synergy between Title II and Title III funding, they also reflect the coordination that has evolved among different parties with respect to fire planning and preparedness in Del Norte County and the role of the Title II and III payments in supporting these processes. For example, the chipper, which was authorized by the RAC during the first funding round, is maintained and managed by the Fire Safe Council but available for any trained person or group to use. The Fire Safe Council maintains meticulous records of hours logged by the chipper (160 hours to date) and areas treated. Many diverse groups have used the chipper for fuels reduction efforts. One example of the diverse support for fire-related work is the \$2500 purchase by the Elk Valley Rancheria of safety equipment necessary to operate the chipper.

The installation of the fire protection tanks has

also involved collaboration among diverse entities. This project, proposed and implemented by the Fire Safe Council, involves the purchase (from a local business) of approximately 115 (2,500 gallons each) durable plastic water tanks and their installation in strategic locations within the wildland urban interface. The purpose is to provide water where there are no hydrants or other sources and to help prevent fires from spreading onto the adjacent Smith River NRA. In general, the storage tanks are installed in inconspicuous locations on private property adjacent to public lands. The supplies and labor required for installing each tank are provided by the beneficiary community—those landowners who properties would be served by the tank in the event of a fire. Thus, the process of planning and installing the tanks has involved significant coordination with these communities and with local Volunteer Fire Departments and Six Rivers National Forest staff. One group of tanks has been installed at the Bar-O-Boys Ranch, with the resident youths doing much of the installation work themselves and, according to a project proponent, deriving much satisfaction and pride from the process. Clearly, the tank planning and installation process has provided a good opportunity for building cooperative relations between communities and fire fighting entities. While the effectiveness of the tanks have yet to be tested, it is clear that in the event of a fire the availability of water during the first few minutes strongly influences whether or not the blaze will be extinguished or spread to a larger area.

Despite these positive social and (anticipated) environmental outcomes, the tank project was controversial. The crux of the controversy focused on the advisability of using public dollars to fund fire-fighting infrastructure that would be located on private property and would protect private property values in the event of a fire. Some members of the RAC were adamantly opposed to the use of RAC dollars for a project that would clearly provide benefits to a few private property owners. They argued that homes in the wildland urban interface zone are among the most affluent, and that rather than the RAC spending scarce dollars on water tanks to

protect those homes, the homeowners themselves should each spend a few hundred dollars and organize among themselves for planning and installing water tanks. The majority of the RAC argued that the overarching (and more compelling) purpose of the tanks was to halt the spread of fire onto the adjacent public lands and that this project fit very well within the overall fire safe planning efforts that were underway in the county. These efforts included the Title III projects concerning the upgrade of McBeth and Ward airfields, fire planning aerial photography, and support for the Fire Safe Council. Several of the county supervisors also strongly supported the tank projects. To ensure the successful completion of the project, the supervisors increased the RAC's funding with the understanding that the additional funds would be used for the water tanks. While the RAC eventually did approve the project, some RAC members feel that by allocating "earmarked money" to the RAC, the county infringed on the RAC's authority.

5. Building Bridges with the Community

Some RAC projects have served to create links with segments of the community in Del Norte County that have hitherto been only moderately engaged with the forest in productive and mutually beneficial ways. Examples of these projects include (1) providing funds to the local gun club to purchase and modify a trailer designed to enable the club to remove larger amounts and pieces from the numerous illegal dumpsites on the NRA, (2) supporting the creation and distribution of a brochure by the North Coast Cliffhangers—the local off-road vehicle club—that addresses stewardship-oriented forest use practices for OHV operators, and (3) providing a grant to the Del Norte Solid Waste Management Authority to create a voucher system that allows qualifying households to take appliances and other large items to the dump (instead of the forest) for no charge. Each of these projects, in different ways, attempts to strengthen a stewardship relationship between a group of people or civic organization and the forest. The RAC, as a decision-making entity, wishes to include these groups within its

sphere of activity by providing support to help connect them to the forest in constructive ways, and to foster a greater stewardship ethic among county residents.

6. The Legacy Project

As part of its deliberations, the RAC decided that it would like to support a project that can be referenced in the future as an important legacy for Del Norte County from the RAC. The RAC has decided upon the reconstruction of two historic trails that cross the county from west to east and link it with neighboring Josephine and Siskiyou Counties. This project is known as the Coast-to-Crest and Coast-to-Caves Trails Project because one branch links the coast with the Pacific Crest Trail while the second branch goes to Oregon Caves near Cave Junction, Oregon. The project involves a variety of planning and implementation steps. An initial grant in the amount of \$5,500 was made for the initial scoping and planning of the project. This was followed in the third funding round with a grant for \$60,000 to conduct a feasibility study, including a detailed implementation cost estimate. Several RAC members have hiked existing portions of the trail to identify which sections require reconstruction and/or easements from current landowners. The envisioned project would include extensive historical and environmental interpretation and it is expected that the completed trail system will be popular with both local and visiting hikers. At the July 29, 2004 RAC meeting, an update on this project was provided, indicating that the Redwood Economic Development Institute (REDI) is ready to advertise the Request for Proposals (RFP) for the feasibility study and that it hoped to have a signed contract with a local contractor by mid-summer.

In addition to the groups of project groups discussed above, there are a few single project categories. For example, the RAC has only approved one project whose primary purpose is to fund NEPA-related work. This reflects the RAC's strong resistance to funding Forest Service planning efforts and its focus on actually getting things done "on-the-ground". In this case the RAC sup-

ported the completion of the NEPA work for the Hurdy Gurdy Creek Watershed/Recreation Project because this would then allow implementation of a wide variety of projects in the basin that the RAC

would like to advance (two of which are already RAC-approved projects). The remaining two projects not discussed above are (1) the purchase of a streamflow meter that will be used to calibrate the

RAC Formation, Operation, and Process

staff streamflow gauges that are essential for correlating fish migrations with streamflow throughout the county, and (2) the planting of native conifers on three acres of decommissioned temporary roads and landings.

This section focuses on the institutional dynamics of the RAC. It begins by reviewing the initial formation and operation of the RAC. This leads to a discussion of some of the ways in which the RAC has fostered the development of relationships between and among interest groups, the broader community, and the agency. We then address the RAC's approach to decision making, the relationship between the county and the RAC, and the relationship between the Forest Service and the RAC.

RAC Formation

The Del Norte RAC was formed in 2001 and interested citizens were invited to apply for membership. To ensure the diverse representation mandated in the legislation, the County Board of Supervisors also solicited applications from prominent members of the community who could represent the various community interests the legislation identified. From the pool of applicants the Board of Supervisors nominated a subset to serve on the RAC. As the nominations must be approved by the Secretary of Agriculture (or designee) in Washington, D.C., this process is lengthy and time consuming. Several RAC members noted that not only did this selection procedure delay the start of the RAC, but it also makes the process of finding replacement members for those members who resigned from the RAC cumbersome and lengthy. One outcome has been that, in the interest of expediency, some outgoing RAC members have been replaced by alternates

even though the categories under which they serve on the RAC may not match. Some RAC members questioned whether it would be possible to decentralize the authority for approving RAC membership and membership changes to a lower level, such as the Forest Service region or forest, in order to streamline the process.

The Del Norte RAC is currently in the process of determining who will agree to have their name forwarded for a second three-year term, and working with the county supervisors to identify additional candidates to replace outgoing members. The county and the Designated Federal Officer (DFO) are working together to provide two names for each position on the RAC, including alternates, for a total of 36 potential members. Given the voluntary nature of the position and the quite specific requirements regarding the various interest groups that are (or should be) represented on the RAC, finding that many people to serve is challenging, especially for an area like Del Norte County with its relatively small population from which to draw prospective members.

Not surprisingly, the actual composition of each of the three categories exerts a significant influence on the nature of the projects the RAC approves. The Del Norte RAC has a certain "looseness" between a RAC member's area of expertise and the specific interest, as defined in the legislation, that the member is designated to represent. This looseness, combined with the fact that elected county government office holders sometime solicit individuals to apply to be on the RAC and always recommend RAC members, provides opportunities for influencing the make-up of the three categories specified in the legislature. While elected county government officers in Del Norte do not seem to have exerted undue

influence on the composition of the RAC, some RAC members did raise concerns about the degree of fit between some members' areas of expertise and their official community interest and category designation. This raises issues about the rationale and reasoning behind the decisions about who will serve on the RAC and the challenge of finding good people who fit the designated interest groups in an area with few people. The importance of this issue to the pattern of decisions the RAC makes underscores the care that is needed in nominating the group of people to serve the next three years on the Del Norte RAC.

RAC Operation

The Del Norte RAC meets on weekday evenings for approximately 2.5 hours several times each year. The meeting frequency has tapered off from once a month in 2002 to approximately once a quarter in 2003 and 2004. The fact that all of the RAC members reside in Del Norte County, and thus do not have to commute long distances, makes it possible to meet this frequently. The RAC has chosen to have a revolving chair, partly in order to prevent any one community interest from exerting undue influence on the RAC's deliberations and decisions; thus the position of chair rotates among RAC members every three months. While this organizational feature does mitigate against the concentration of influence, some individuals function better in the role of "chair" than others, and the frequent rotation of this position has shifted some of the responsibility for maintaining the continuity of the RAC and dealing with organizational nuts and bolts to the Forest Service Designated Federal Official (DFO) and the RAC coordinator. On the other hand, the DFO and coordinator are careful to emphasize that the RAC is a community-based forum and that they do not want to play too much of a role in RAC process and decision-making. Thus, other than taking notes and answering specific questions that arise regarding issues such as available funding levels or the interpretation of the legislation, they refrain from actively participating in RAC deliberations unless asked to do so.

Public, Agency, and Interest Group Relationship-Building

Almost without exception, RAC members stated that their participation on the RAC has helped to build their relationships with other RAC members who represent interest groups with divergent and often conflicting perspectives on natural resource and environmental issues. Representatives of both environmental and industry-oriented perspectives stated that the initial atmosphere of mistrust that existed when the RAC was first formed has largely been supplanted by mutual understanding and the evolution of effective working relations. As one RAC member stated, "we've begun to trust each other," while another acknowledged that "maybe we do share more vision than I thought we did."

The relationships among disparate interest groups that have been forged through the RAC process have to some extent spread beyond the RAC itself. RAC members described the ease of communication in non-RAC contexts that now occurs amongst RAC members, even among those historically on opposite sides of heated natural resource-related debates. Examples of this include coordination and resource sharing among RAC members (and their organizations) for civic-oriented activities such as Crescent City's well-known Aleutian Goose Festival and other community events. Several RAC members noted that their participation in the RAC has increased community connections as well as the potential for collaboration among diverse interest groups.

RAC projects have also served to build relationships between the Forest Service, the forest, and various communities within Del Norte County. In addition to the local newspaper articles that have described the RAC and some of its accomplishments, specific projects have initiated the process of (re)building community-forest and community-agency relations. Examples include the grant to the local gun club for the trailer to facilitate forest cleanup activities and the brochure for the 4x4 offroad vehicle users. One RAC member alluded to the relationship-building effects of the grant to the gun club and noted that "I think I saw a buy-in,"—

referring to the club's increased affinity for the Forest Service and the stewardship ethic embedded in the project. Similarly, with regard to the grant to the offroad vehicle association, that same RAC member noted that through the grant "we bridged with that group and the forest." These are just some of the examples of the ways in which the RAC serves as a site not only for building relations among the disparate interest groups represented on the RAC, but also for strengthening linkages among other segments of the community and between these groups and the forest, and the Forest Service.

RAC Decision-Making Processes

Since its inception, the RAC has adopted a variety of different decision making protocols to facilitate the contentious process of bringing together groups with conflicting interests, and asking them to prioritize and agree on what projects to fund. The fact that the RAC is still experimenting with new decision-making protocols suggests that deciding which projects to fund and which to reject continues to be one of the more challenging (and conflict-ridden) aspects of the RAC process. Unlike some other RACs, the Del Norte RAC has chosen not to have a professional facilitator when it meets. And, it is clear that given the limited influence of the chairperson position due its frequent rotation, the chair may not have the leadership authority to provide clear, effective, and unbiased guidance. Instead, and to the credit of the members of the RAC, they seem to rely on the working relationships that have evolved amongst themselves during the last three years to muddle through what invariably turns out to be a somewhat messy and contentious process. That this method works at all is probably due to the frequency with which the RAC previously met; monthly meetings, which in the end proved unsustainable for the group, did provide opportunities for frequent interaction among community members who represent diverse and in some cases, opposing, views to come together around a common task. The frequent RAC meetings provided an opportunity for RAC members to build relationships

among themselves and to develop a group working culture. The result, as described by many RAC members, was the gradual emergence of a greater sense of mutual appreciation of each other's views and, we would add, member commitment to forest stewardship, to the group, and to the task of the RAC. This mutual appreciation, combined with a commitment to what the RAC represents and can achieve, provides the social currency that allows the group to handle contentious issues. However, this is a fragile arrangement, one riven with underlying faults that occasionally fracture abruptly into conflict among members who represent different perspectives. Without a strong chair to moderate the contentious debates, at times the conflict on the Del Norte RAC can become personal and destructive.

In light of these process issues, some RAC members have suggested that perhaps the decision-making structure is too loose and that guidance should be provided to RAC members regarding how to effectively and productively work through contentious issues. An effective decision-making protocol, and providing RAC members with the tools and skills to work through conflict could help the group learn how to make decisions when there are significant differences of opinion among RAC members. While the RAC is able to function and to discuss and debate the merits of different projects, at least some members feel that there is room for substantially improving the process.

County-RAC Relations

The county government plays a supportive but not controlling role within the RAC. The 60/40 Title II-Title III split is indicative of the importance that the county attributes to the RAC, what the RAC does, and the implications of RAC performance for the reauthorization of the "safety net" payments legislation. Furthermore, the lack of county projects funded by the RAC is compelling evidence that the county is not seeking to benefit directly from RAC resources. The only RAC project that has gone to a county agency is the grant to the Del Norte Solid Waste Management Authority for vouchers and fee

waivers that subsidize the cost of disposing appliances and other items for eligible households. As discussed above, one of the areas of RAC engagement that has generated the most (and controversial) involvement from the county government concerns the RAC's involvement with the Fire Safe Council and Fire Safe Council projects. Given the county's support for the Fire Safe Council through its Title III program, supporting the Fire Safe Council is clearly a county priority. However, some RAC members have questioned the extent to which the county influenced the RAC decision-making process regarding the water tanks by increasing the allocation of funds to the Title II program in order to ensure that the water tank project was funded.

Forest Service-RAC Relations

The relationship between the Forest Service and the RAC is, not unexpectedly, significantly more complex than that between the county and the RAC. The Forest Service plays a number of different roles with respect to the RAC and its functioning. Clearly, the Designated Federal Official (DFO) plays an important role in managing the nuts and bolts of the RAC—a role that many on the RAC are quick to acknowledge and express appreciation for. The importance of the work the DFO performs for the RAC is perhaps amplified by the fact that the chair is a relatively weak position; thus some functions for which the RAC might otherwise have taken a leadership role, such as community outreach, tend to fall to the Forest Service DFO. The DFO sets and circulates the agenda, records and distributes meeting minutes, advertises through public service announcements the availability of RAC funds for projects that fit the project criteria, in some cases contacts specific organizations and encourages them to submit proposals, reviews incoming proposals and circulates them to the RAC members, forwards approved proposals to the Forest Supervisor for final authorization, and receives and maintains quarterly and final reports from RAC grant recipients. Given this diverse array of RAC-related tasks the DFO performs, it is clear that the Forest Service is

centrally involved in the operation of this citizen-based forum for allocating public funds that benefit of public lands.

The Forest Service also plays an important role as the recipient of RAC funding for projects on the Smith River National Recreation Area. It is hard to underestimate the importance of RAC funding for some elements of the Forest Service's plan of work in this ranger district. For example, RAC support for road maintenance work constituted 70-80 percent of the district's 2004 roads budget and 40 percent of the 2003 roads budget. Combined with a categorical exclusion for NEPA, a blanket biological assessment, and a multi-year Indefinite Delivery-Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contract with a contractor in Shasta, CA, it is clear that the RAC has enabled the district to accomplish much road-related work that would otherwise not have been done. It is also clear that the RAC has enabled the Forest Service to purchase much-needed toilets, rehabilitate degraded dispersed recreation areas, and perform related site work at popular recreation sites. Indeed, during the first three funding rounds, the Forest Service directly received approximately 55 percent of the total RAC allocation; the great majority of this allocation was for road maintenance and toilets. Without the RAC support, these important, but basic, infrastructure investments would simply not have been made.

In essence, the Del Norte RAC is funding basic infrastructure maintenance work on the Gasquet Ranger District that would otherwise not be funded because of limited congressional funding and competing forest-wide budget priorities on the Six Rivers National Forest. While it is hard to argue against the use of RAC dollars for sweet smelling toilets and rocking roads that reduce sedimentation and provide access to popular recreation sites, it is also a cause of some frustration among RAC members that the RAC is put (unfairly, according to some) in a position of having to spend significant amounts of its funding to support deferred Forest Service road maintenance. While this reflects the Forest Service's overall budget situation, it also reduces the latitude the RAC

has to pursue more creative and innovative ideas and projects. That the Forest Service charges the RAC 10 percent for overhead on in-house Forest Service projects and five percent overhead for contracted out work, further reduces this latitude and has added to the frustration some RAC members feel, especially since the overhead charges were initially not levied against the RAC.

Some RAC members would also like to see more RAC funding go to non-Forest Service projects while maintaining the focus on benefiting public lands. For those projects that are proposed by the Forest Service, they would like to know more about how the individual project fits into an overall road or land management prioritization and planning process. It is clearly more difficult for a non-Forest Service entity to develop and advocate for a project on the Smith River NRA than it is for Forest Service personnel skilled in project preparation and with the resources to develop proposals, particularly given the limited time from the initial call for proposals and when they are due. At least in this respect, the structure of the process tends to favor Forest Service proposals over “external” proposals from non-Forest Service entities. It would require some serious strategizing to “level the playing field” so that others could more easily compete with the Forest Service for RAC funds. Related to

this issue is that all proposed projects must fit within the Forest Service’s plan of work. The plan of work is the forest-wide annual plan that governs how staff allocate their time and efforts and what sorts of projects will be accomplished. A RAC project that falls outside the plan of work may not be supported by the Forest Service DFO or Coordinator, regardless of its other potential merits. While it is possible to modify the plan of work to include such a project, it is a time consuming process. This issue has also caused some consternation among RAC members, and raises additional questions about the openness of the agency to creative and potentially novel projects.

For projects that the Forest Service does propose, some RAC members feel that the RAC should be provided more information about how an individual project, such as road surfacing, fits within an overall roads management plan. Rather than being presented within an array of individual projects from which to choose a sample to support, it would be more helpful if the planning process that led to the choice of a particular set of proposed projects was also described to the RAC. The RAC would like to be informed about the Roads Analysis Process in order to be able to more intelligently evaluate and prioritize individual roads projects.

Conclusion

In Del Norte County, Title II and Title III dollars provided crucial resources for accomplishing high priority projects that would otherwise not have been funded. County-led Title III projects have focused on fire-preparedness—an important issue highlighted by the recent and nearby massive Biscuit Fire—and laid the groundwork for the eventual purchase of the Hiouchi Conservation Easement. Both of these are high priority issue areas that enjoy widespread community and public support. Other Title III projects have focused on youth service learning and conservation-oriented community service work. These focus areas are consistent with the categories specified in the legislation. Furthermore, it is evident that Title

III funds have not been used to backfill other underfunded county budget items; instead they have been used to advance new programs and initiatives that will produce long-term social and environmental benefits.

The Title II program has also made significant accomplishments in a variety of arenas, all of which are consistent with the intent of the legislation. Rather than closing high-use dispersed recreation areas within the Smith River National Recreation Area due to water and environmental contamination from human waste, the installation of sweet smelling toilets has enabled these areas to remain open, enhanced visitor experience, and improved water quality and related issues. Fur-

thermore, completing deferred maintenance on many high-use Forest Service roads has reduced the sediment loading in adjacent fish-bearing streams and mollified a public that is angry at the relatively recent road closures and related restrictions that have curtailed use of “their” forest. Title II funds have also been instrumental in initiating and sustaining an effective and comprehensive noxious weed abatement program. This support has seeded the creation of a new nonprofit organization that has effectively secured further support from other funding sources, leverages resources from other local organizations and agencies, coordinates large numbers of volunteers, and is engaging many local students as well as non-local forest users in forest interpretation and environmental education programs. Title II funding has also been strategically and effectively deployed to build positive relationships with diverse user groups and to connect groups such as the gun club, off road vehicle users, and others to the forest in ways that build stewardship values and practices. In addition to supporting environmental interpretation and youth-oriented conservation programs, Title II projects have also dovetailed synergistically with the county’s emphasis on fire-preparedness. Although monitoring the social and ecological effects of these various efforts is invariably challenging, and attempting to generate living wage jobs with small sums of discontinuous funding is virtually impossible, these Title II projects all seek, in diverse ways, to enhance environmental conditions and benefit the communities that enjoy them.

Appropriately, the county has played a non-intrusive but supportive role in the Title II program, as illustrated by the relatively generous 60/40 Title II-Title III split determined by the county supervisors. Furthermore, the county’s involvement in the RAC has facilitated the coordination and leveraging of several Title II and Title III efforts, namely, the fire preparedness work funded by both programs and some of the youth-oriented conservation service learning work. Significantly, the county has not directly benefited from RAC

projects, nor, with one contentious exception, has it played a dominant role in influencing what projects to support.

The RAC itself is populated by a committed group of individuals who have volunteered a lot of time and who believe in the potential of the RAC to accomplish worthy and significant goals. Again and again RAC members commented on the significance of empowering and funding a citizen-based group to actually solicit, prioritize, and fund projects that will have positive environmental and social effects. Especially within Del Norte County, which many residents feel is the neglected, “orphan” district of the Six Rivers National Forest, the fact that the RAC actually has a budget that must be spent locally is very significant because it is one of the few vehicles for getting money to the ground to accomplish needed and overdue work. It is likely that the faith in the overall purpose of the RAC inspires RAC members to attempt to transcend their deep differences and search for common ground around project prioritization and funding. Faith in the process, rather than in formally structured procedures, is what has kept the RAC members at the table despite the often grueling, contentious, and stressful deliberations in which the RAC engages.

The combination of a relatively unstructured decision-making process (including the rotating chair) and the fact that the RAC constitutes one of the few sources of funding on the district within an overall context of budget retrenchment, has created some of the RAC’s biggest challenges. As in almost any example of competition for scarce resources, it is often the entity with the most influence that successfully garners the majority of the resource. In the case of the Del Norte RAC, the Forest Service has been one of the primary beneficiaries. While this is not inconsistent with the intent of the legislation, a significant number of RAC members feel that more strenuous efforts need to be made to solicit proposals from, and support the work of, non-Forest Service organizations that seek to do work that benefits public lands. The fact that structurally the RAC is a relatively weak

organization dependent on the Forest Service for managing many of its activities makes it particularly challenging to break away from what some might call a relationship of dependency.

A second issue concerns the array of projects that the RAC has chosen to focus on. Of course, what the RAC chooses to fund is largely determined by the initial array of projects that are submitted to and by the Forest Service. While the various issues and concerns surrounding what the RAC has funded have already been discussed, what is also striking is what the RAC has not funded. For example, there is a noticeable absence of projects whose primary purpose is to directly improve forest health. Thus, there have been no pre-commercial or forest fuels thinning projects such as a shaded fuel break, or other stand improvement and fire risk reduction projects. Similarly, there have been no projects whose sole purpose is watershed restoration or fish habitat restoration. Thus, no roads have been decommissioned, no Humboldt crossings removed, no fish passage barriers replaced with fish-friendly culverts or bridges, no trails obliterated, and no instream habitat improvement projects. The lack of fisheries-related projects is a source of concern to community members interested in fisheries restoration. In general, the RAC has focused on relatively

“safe” and noncontroversial projects like deferred road maintenance and toilet installations. While many RAC members expressed interest in supporting these other kinds of projects, few such projects, if any, have been proposed for the RAC to consider. This is partly due to the fact that (1) the RAC has not solicited capable parties to submit these kinds of projects and (2) estimations by groups that are submitting proposals that it was important to first establish a track record of successful work before proposing more “controversial” projects. Part of the reluctance to entertain controversial proposals, it seems, is due to the relatively fragile decision-making process of the RAC, as discussed above. Without an explicit, formalized, and structured process for evaluating, prioritizing, and selecting which projects to fund (as other RACs have established), the RAC will veer away from entertaining more controversial or experimental projects (e.g., projects whose primary purpose is to enhance forest health or restore watersheds and fisheries) out of concern that the group process may collapse or that a project might fail. Despite these two caveats, the Del Norte RAC has accomplished much good work that is consistent with the legislation’s intent and that would not have been accomplished without RAC support.

**Appendix I
Title II Projects for Fiscal Years 2002, 2003, 2004**

#	Name	Proponent	Type ¹	Amount	Project Description
1	Siskiyou Fork Road (17N07) Resurfacing	Smith River NRA - Roads/ Watershed	A,H	\$10,791	Resurface road to improve access to water source and reduce erosion
2	Bear Basin Water Hole Road/Meadow Restoration	Smith River NRA - Roads/ Watershed	A,H	\$7,535	Reshape, rock road, install barricades to protect meadow from OHV use
3	Muslatt Lake Road Access	Smith River NRA - Roads/ Watershed	A,H	\$10,068	Made road accessible to water tender for drafting water from lake
4	17N21 Reconstruction/ Mud Holes	Smith River NRA - Roads/ Watershed	A,H	\$9,830	Improve access to drafting site, protect meadow from OHV access
5	Dispersed Recreation Site River Sanitation	Smith River NRA - Recreation/ Wshed	H	\$50,000	Place toilets at three high use sites to improve sanitation and river conditions
6	17N05 Road Maintenance	Smith River NRA - Roads/ Watershed	A,H	\$2,500	Clean culverts and ditches, blade road surface
7	17N08 Road Maintenance	Smith River NRA - Roads/ Watershed	A,H	\$4,000	Clean culverts and ditches, blade road surface
8	18N11 Road Maintenance	Smith River NRA - Roads/ Watershed	A,H	\$3,500	Reshape road for erosion control
9	Hazardous Fuels Reduction Chipper	Sharol Leavitt/Fire Safe Council	G	\$25,445	Purchase chipper for county-wide use - Del Norte Fire Safe Council
10	North Fork Loop Fire Protection	Sharol Leavitt/Fire Safe Council	G	\$6,070	Fire Safe Council will purchase six water tanks for fire protection
11	Siskiyou Planting	Smith River NRA - Wildlife	G,H	\$1,000	Plant previously ripped temp roads/landings
12	Engine Draft Site Maintenance	Smith River NRA - Fire/ Fuels/Roads	E	\$15,000	Brush vegetation at water fill sites to provide engine access
13	Star Thistle Noxious Weed Removal - Hwy 199	Smith River NRA - Vegetation Mgmt	K	\$8,000	Remove star thistle from along Highway 199
14	Forest Interpretation Project	Gretchen Brooks/ North Coast FOREST Association	M	\$30,000	Interpretation, education, adopt-a-forest program
15	NRA Exotic Plant Removal and Trail Maintenance	Dan Owen	A,K,M	\$34,300	CCC program to train and employ local youths

Project Types: A: Road Maintenance; B: Road Decommission/Obliteration; C: Trail Maintenance; D: Trail Obliteration; E: Other Infrastructure Maintenance; F: Soil Productivity Improvement; G: Forest Health Improvement; H: Watershed Restoration/Maintenance; I: Wildlife Habitat Restoration; J: Fish Habitat Restoration; K: Control of Noxious Weeds; L: Reestablish Native Species; M: Other.

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#	Name	Proponent	Type ¹	Amount	Project Description
16	Environmental Science Education Program	Natalie Schaefer	M	\$11,500	Contribute transportation funds for student field trips
17	Fish Characteristics and Habitat Interpretation	Jeanie Gigstad	M	\$3,000	Revise large display and develop brochures
18	Bear Basin Restoration	Smith River NRA – Fire/Fuels	G	deferred	Burn meadow to reduce alder encroachment and restore vegetation
15	Noxious Weed Removal	California Conservation Corps	K	\$33,700	CCC Crew to remove noxious weeds at various locations on NRA
19	Coast to Crest/Caves Trail	Smith River Rancheria	M	\$5,500	Feasibility Study for reconstruction of two trails
20	Drop Inlet Covers	Smith River NRA - Engineering	A,H	\$5,000	Construct covers for drop inlets
21	17N04 Rocking	Smith River NRA – Engineering	A,H	\$80,531	Purchase crushed rock to be placed on road
22	Mill Creek Fisheries Monitoring	Rural Human Services	J	\$4,070	Purchase stream gauging flow meter for watershed monitoring
24	Forest Cleanup	North Coast Gun Owners Assoc	I,M	\$5,500	Purchase trailer to be used to remove trash from NRA & haul to dump
25	17N22 Road Surfacing ¹	Smith River NRA – Engineering	A,H	\$27,500	Resurface road
26	North Fork Smith Dispersed Recreation River Sanitation ¹	SRNRA - Recreation	H	\$82,500	Install SST, reconstruct road, site camping area to minimize impacts
27	Illegal Dumping Abatement Program	Del Norte Solid Waste	G,H	\$10,500*	Provide vouchers for county dump to prevent illegal dumping on Forest
28	17N41 Road Surfacing and Drainage Improvements	Smith River NRA	A,H	\$5,500	Surface road, correct drainage problems; Germain to brush road.
23	Master Plan for Interpretive Services	Smith River NRA – Recreation	M	\$20,515	Develop master plan for interpretive services on NRA
29	Hurdy Gurdy NEPA	Smith River NRA - Water/Rec	H	\$20,051	Conduct NEPA to address sanitation and dispersed recreation issues

* Of this total amount, \$3,500 was retained by the Forest Service for funding part of the dumping abatement program.

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#	Name	Proponent	Type ¹	Amount	Project Description
30	County Fire Protection Tanks	Del Norte Fire Safe Council	G	\$40,000	Purchase water tanks and install at priority locations in county
31	NRA Noxious Weed Management	North Coast FOREST Assoc.	K	\$41,625	Inventory and remove noxious weeds from priority locations on NRA
32	Education/Volunteer Program ¹	North Coast FOREST Assoc.	H,M	\$25,098	Continue education, interpretation, volunteer coordination program
33	Coast to Caves/Crest Feasibility	RAC	M	\$60,039	Determine feasibility of two trail systems that pass through NRA
34	YouthServe Action Corps	CCC/Americorps	H,K,M	\$47,472	Youth crew to conduct maintain trails, pull noxious weeds, other work
35	Off Road Educational Brochure	North Coast Cliffhangers	M	\$3,310	Education brochure for local OHV riders and groups
36	15N57 Chimney Flat Road Reconstruction	Smith River NRA-Engineering	A,H	\$40,590	Reconstruct road to improve drainage, control traffic
37	16N02A Ship Mountain Access Road Reconstruction	Smith River NRA-Engineering	A,H	\$11,000	Improve unsafe intersection and poor drainage
38	Chimney Flat Day Use Rehab ¹	Smith River NRA – Recreation	H	\$28,600	Rehabilitate dispersed recreation area and install dispersed rec site
39	South Fork Scale Shack River Access Sanitation ¹	Smith River NRA – Recreation	H	\$22,000	Install SST and perform site work at popular river access site

Appendix II
Title III Projects for Fiscal Years 2002, 2003, 2004

Project	Organization	Amount Requested	Total Project Cost	Date of Board Approval
Fire Planning Aerial Photography	Community Development Dept. (CDD)	\$ 32,027	\$ 41,350	9/24/02
Holmatro Rescue Tool	Gasquet Volunteer Fire Dept.	\$ 22,000	\$ 22,000	9/24/02
Fire Facility Upgrade - McBeth Field	CDD	\$ 6,600	\$ 72,600	9/24/02
Fire Facility Upgrade - Ward Field	CDD	\$ 3,900	\$ 42,900	9/24/02
Youth Serve Service Learning	Calif. Conservation Corps	\$ 11,000	\$ 16,000	9/24/02
Fire Education Newspaper Insert	Fire Safe Council	\$ 2,500	\$ 8,000	7/22/03
Americorps Action Team Svc Learning	Calif. Conservation Corps	\$ 21,200	\$ 197,360	7/22/03
Community Service Work	Bar-O Boys Ranch	\$ 47,913	\$ 47,913	7/22/03
Hiouchi Cons. Easement Appraisals	CDD	\$ 12,000	\$ 12,000	9/9/03
Fire Planning & Education	Fire Safe Council	\$ 30,000	\$ 90,218	

People Interviewed

Alphabetized

Phil Bono, U.S. Forest Service
Gretchen Brooks, North Coast F.O.R.E.S.T. Association
Robert Butler, RAC member
Susan Calla, RAC member
Laura Chapman, U.S. Forest Service, DFO
Gerry Cochrane, RAC member
Vickie Dodge, RAC member
Joe Gillespie, RAC member
Kevin Hendrick, Del Norte Solid Waste Management Authority
Chris Howard, RAC member
Sandra Jerabek, RAC member
Zachary Larson, Watershed Restorationist
Dan Leavitt, Del Norte Fire Safe Council
Sharol Leavitt, Del Norte Fire Safe Council
Laura Mayo, RAC member
Mike McCain, U.S. Forest Service
Martha McClure, RAC member
Clark Moore, RAC member
Ernest Perry, Planning Department, County of Del Norte
Don Pass, U.S. Forest Service
Dwayne Reichlin, RAC member
David Rhodes, RAC member
Monte Satern, U.S. Forest Service
Natalie Schaefer, RAC member
Al Smith, Director, Bar-O-Boys Ranch
Dave Smith, Del Norte Gun Club
Sean Smith, RAC member
Mary Kay Vandiver, U.S. Forest Service, RAC coordinator
Jim Waldvogel, RAC member

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