

# **Medford Bureau of Land Management Resource Advisory Committee and Title III Projects Case Study**

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## *INTRODUCTION*

This study of the Medford Bureau of Land Management Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) and Jackson and Josephine Counties 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 Managements administered Oregon and California (O&C) lands. In 2000, following many years of declining harvests—the primary revenue producers on much of this land, Congress passed P. L. 106-393 to restore and stabilize county revenue payments from both national forests and the O&C lands. The legislation also was 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 roads and schools payments for six years; and 2) perhaps most unique, it pays for something other than roads and schools (for which virtually all of the previous “receipt payments” were used) 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 also calls 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 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 opportunities—but only if systematic monitoring and assessment are undertaken. Whether it represents a model for the future or not, implementation of the legislation and Title II and Title III projects need 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 is evaluating Title II and Title III of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act. The Sierra Institute is evaluating the legislation by examining Title II and Title III projects and their outcomes in 16 cases across the country. In addition to examining specific project outcomes, the Sierra Institute is assessing if and under what conditions stakeholder collaboration, as structured in the RAC process, leads to innovative approaches that satisfy both social and resource management objectives. Forest Community Research 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 the 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 involving community-based natural resources management, such as the National Fire Plan.

## BACKGROUND

The Medford Bureau of Land Management (BLM) RAC encompasses O&C lands in Jackson, Josephine, Douglas, Klamath, and Curry Counties. Curry County abuts the Pacific Ocean, and to the east lie the counties of Josephine, Jackson, and Klamath, all of which border California. To the north, Douglas County borders Jackson, Josephine, and Klamath Counties. The Medford RAC is associated with the O&C grant lands managed by the BLM. Other federal land in the area lies within the boundaries of the Rogue- Siskiyou, Umpqua, and Fremont-Winema National Forests, and is not part of the Medford RAC or its funding.

Because the largest portion of the O&C lands associated with the Medford RAC is situated in Jackson and Josephine Counties, the focus of this case is on these counties. In the full study of P.L. 106-393 the Sierra Institute has examined RACs and Title III implementation and projects in Douglas, Curry, and Klamath Counties. The reader is referred to other cases for socioeconomic information and Title III projects in those counties.<sup>1</sup>

Since 1990, Jackson and Josephine Counties have experienced significant population growth, higher than the average for Oregon. During the 1990's, Jackson County grew by 23.4%, while Josephine County's population increased by 20.5%. This trend has continued since 2000 with population increases in Jackson and Josephine Counties of 6.1% and 5.3%, respectively, higher than the state's 4.8% increase. Jackson County's population grew to 191,679 and Josephine now has a population of 79,920. Medford, Jackson County's seat of government, is Oregon's seventh largest city and has grown 47.2% since 1990. Between 1990 and 2004, the county also had other rapidly growing cities, some doubling or nearly doubling in size, including Eagle Point (with a 131% increase); Central Point (99%); Shady Cove (91%); Butte Falls (75%); Talent (80%); and Phoenix (41%). Grants Pass, the county seat and largest city in Josephine County, grew by 41.6% during this same period. These rapidly growing cities and towns have made Jackson County the sixth largest in Oregon, and together with Josephine County, the regional population now exceeds 271,000.

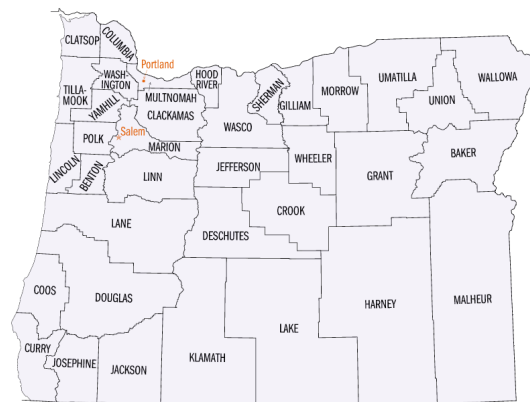


Figure 1. Oregon counties. Source: U.S. Census Bureau

This rapidly growing area of southwest Oregon is home to some deep reserves of “social capital” in the form of grass-roots activism, and community-based collaborations in natural resources

<sup>1</sup> See the Coos Bay case study for more on Coos Bay, Douglas, and Curry Counties; the Fremont-Winema for more on Klamath and Lake Counties; and see Roseburg for more on Douglas County.

management. In the early 1990s, the gridlock and antagonism that came to characterize forest management in the entire Pacific Northwest prompted several local individuals to seek collaboration among farmers, ranchers, agency officials, environmentalists, loggers, and local residents. What emerged from these conversations “across fences” was the Applegate Partnership, now one of the oldest collaborative groups in the west.<sup>2</sup> The group is one of the most prominent examples of the intense local interest in natural resource issues that characterizes southwest Oregon, and as discussed here, a phenomenon that is inescapably topical to the present case study.

***Economy***

Overall, economic conditions in Jackson and Josephine Counties are mixed. Between 1990 and 2003, Jackson County as a whole has grown increasingly prosperous, whereas Josephine County has struggled in the bottom tier of Oregon’s 36 counties (Table 1). Conditions in Jackson County exceed the state averages for a number of socioeconomic indices, whereas Josephine County lags in most. For example, unemployment in Jackson County is now below the statewide average, and is closing the per capita income gap, particularly since 2000. In 1990, the county was ranked eleventh among Oregon counties in per capita income, but by 2003 it had risen to seventh place. In contrast, Josephine County has remained 28<sup>th</sup> in per capita income ranking among Oregon counties since 1990. The county has received a “distressed community” designation from the Oregon Economic and Community Development Department, an indicator that combines unemployment rates, industrial diversification, and other economic data.<sup>3</sup>

Table 1. Unemployment and Per Capita Income for Jackson and Josephine Counties<sup>4</sup>

UNEMPLOYMENT			
Year	Jackson	Josephine	Oregon
1990	6.5%	7.0%	5.4%
2000	5.6%	6.9%	5.2%
2004	7.1%	8.2%	7.4%
PER CAPITA INCOME			
1990	\$16,469	\$14,624	\$18,010
2000	\$24,914	\$21,434	\$28,097
2003	\$26,617	\$22,506	\$29,175

This region has seen a dramatic decline in timber harvest from federal lands since 1990. For example, between 1988 and 2003, Jackson County saw an 86% reduction in timber harvest from BLM lands, and a 93.5% reduction from U.S. Forest Service lands (Table 2). Josephine County experienced a similar reduction in timber harvest with a 90% and 92.5% from BLM and U.S. Forest Service lands, respectively. This decline in federal timber harvest has contributed to unemployment and reduced income for many residents in these counties. The impacts, however,

<sup>2</sup> Applegate Partnership. Retrieved January 27, 2006 from <http://www.redlodgeclearinghouse.org/stories/applegate.html>

<sup>3</sup> Oregon Economic and Community Development Department. Retrieved January 18, 2006 from <http://www.econ.state.or.us/distarea.htm>

<sup>4</sup> Bureau of Economic Analysis and Bureau of Labor Statistics. Retrieved February 24, 2006 from [www.bea.gov](http://www.bea.gov) and [www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov), respectively.

have affected the communities and the counties differently; economic diversification in Josephine County has lagged well behind that of Jackson County.

Table 2. Harvest data for Jackson and Josephine Counties, 1988-2003 (in thousands of board feet)<sup>5</sup>

County	Year	BLM	USFS	GRAND TOTAL
Jackson	1988	98,575	167,422	265,997
	1993	38,644	37,495	76,139
	1998	21,028	10,680	31,708
	2003	13,815	3,323	17,138
TOTAL		172,062	218,920	390,982
Josephine	1988	52,951	92,887	145,838
	1993	23,880	3,993	27,873
	1998	9,903	8,335	18,238
	2003	5,342	4,667	10,009
TOTAL		92,076	109,882	20,1958
GRAND TOTAL	□	264,138	328,802	592,940

The shift away from a timber economy in southwest Oregon has also influenced the mix of largest employers in the two counties<sup>6</sup>. In Jackson County, the largest employers are Bear Creek Corporation (3,300), Asante Health Care (2,700), Providence Health Systems (1,200), the Medford School District (1,171), Jackson County Government (1,078), Boise Cascade (850), the City of Medford government (547), Central Point School District (503), Rogue Valley Manor (senior care, 500), Kodak (420), Lithia Motors (400), Erickson Air Crane (400), and Timber Products Company (350). Only these latter two are directly involved in the timber industry.

In Josephine County, the largest employers are Three Rivers Hospital (750), Three Rivers School District (686), Josephine County government (675), Rogue Community College (672), Grants Pass School District (637), Master Brand Cabinets (360), ESAM (wiring harnesses, 260), and US Forest Products (200).

### *TITLE III OVERVIEW AND ELECTIONS FOR TITLES II AND III*

County elections for Title II and III allocations vary substantially by county and by year. Table 3 depicts allocations between Titles I, II, and III, sums based on historic revenues generated on BLM managed O&C land.<sup>7</sup> The counties, however, lump BLM and Forest Service dollars together to fund county Title III projects. This is discussed further below.

<sup>5</sup> Source: Oregon Department of Forestry. Retrieved September 23, 2005 from [http://www.odf.state.or.us/DIVISIONS/resource\\_policy/resource\\_planning/Annual\\_Reports/info.asp?id=401010205](http://www.odf.state.or.us/DIVISIONS/resource_policy/resource_planning/Annual_Reports/info.asp?id=401010205)

<sup>6</sup> The employment figures presented here are from Southern Oregon Regional Economic Development Inc, Area Employment Community Profiles. Retrieved November 11, 2005 from [www.soredi.org/](http://www.soredi.org/).

<sup>7</sup> Title I funds derived from the Forest Service receipt payments go to roads and school uses, and to county general fund purposes from BLM receipt payments.

The five counties in the Medford BLM RAC each have different approaches to Title II and Title III allocations. For instance, Curry County varies from year to year, whereas Douglas County has maintained the same allocation each year. Jackson County currently elects to split its funds evenly between Title II and Title III, while Josephine County's allocation varies by year. In the first two years, Klamath County elected a 50/50 split, but in the last years chose to increase the proportion allocated to Title II.

Table 3. Allocations for Titles I, II, and III by County and Fiscal Year, Combined National Forest and O&C lands.<sup>8</sup>

County	Year	Title I	% Title I	Title III	% Title III	Title II	% Title II
Curry	FY 01-02	7,830,118	85.0%	1,037,429	11.3%	344,356	3.7%
	FY 02-03	7,892,758	85.0%	612,009	6.6%	780,831	8.4%
	FY 03-04	7,987,472	85.0%	452,613	4.8%	956,940	10.2%
	FY 04-05	8,091,308	85.0%	398,957	4.2%	1,028,921	10.8%
Douglas	FY 01-02	41,316,223	85.0%	2,045,634	4.2%	5,245,464	10.8%
	FY 02-03	41,646,753	85.0%	2,062,000	4.2%	5,287,427	10.8%
	FY 03-04	42,146,515	85.0%	2,086,744	4.2%	5,350,876	10.8%
	FY 04-05	42,566,893	85.0%	2,108,246	4.2%	5,403,559	10.8%
Jackson	FY 01-02	19,599,599	85.0%	1,729,376	7.5%	1,729,376	7.5%
	FY 02-03	19,756,396	85.0%	1,743,211	7.5%	1,743,211	7.5%
	FY 03-04	19,993,473	85.0%	1,764,130	7.5%	1,764,130	7.5%
	FY 04-05	20,253,389	85.0%	1,787,063	7.5%	1,787,063	7.5%
Josephine	FY 01-02	13,602,917	85.0%	1,368,060	8.5%	1,032,455	6.5%
	FY 02-03	13,711,742	85.0%	1,478,304	9.2%	941,416	5.8%
	FY 03-04	13,876,282	85.0%	1,013,687	6.2%	1,435,068	8.8%
	FY 04-05	14,056,674	85.0%	1,026,865	6.2%	1,453,725	8.8%
Klamath	FY 01-02	15,051,441	80.7%	1,801,920	9.7%	1,801,920	9.6%
	□ FY 02-03	15,171,854	80.7%	1,816,335	9.7%	1,816,335	9.6%
	□ FY 03-04	15,353,916	80.7%	735,253	3.9%	2,941,010	15.4%
	□ FY 04-05	15,553,517	80.7%	744,811	3.9%	2,979,244	15.4%

*TITLE III PROJECTS – JOSEPHINE COUNTY*

In the five fiscal years since the beginning of the program (FY 2002 - FY 2006), Josephine County has allocated \$6,727,178 to Title III projects and programs with funding from both the BLM and U.S. Forest Service. It is only in the most recent, fifth fiscal year that Josephine County has developed a formal process for allocating Title III funds and projects. In prior years, no clear Title III project allocation process existed. The county has authorized 64 separate expenditures of Title III funds. Some are identifiable projects while others appear as administrative allocations. With the exception of a few projects administered by outside agencies and organizations, nearly all funds were administered by Josephine County.

<sup>8</sup> Source: Bureau of Land Management; US Forest Service Payments to States website, [http://wwwnotes.fs.fed.us:81/r4/payments\\_to\\_states.nsf](http://wwwnotes.fs.fed.us:81/r4/payments_to_states.nsf)

In fiscal year 2005-2006, the county designated a Title III coordinator in their general services department, and instituted a process whereby commissioners approve or select projects. Notices for project submissions are now sent to the local newspapers, and all project proposals must be submitted on a county approved application form. Public hearings are held by the board of commissioners, after which the RAC receives notification of approved projects with information about carried-over funds available for additional projects. According to Mark Sorensen, Josephine County General Services Coordinator, a proposed project can be submitted in a number of ways, for example, via letters. Projects originating with the commissioners are reviewed by the county's finance and legal departments before being returned to the commissioners for approval and signature.

Josephine County has two priorities for Title III funds: Search, Rescue, and Emergency Services and Fire Prevention and County Planning (Table 4). Over \$5 million, or slightly over 75% of the Title III funds have gone to these two categories. The largest single expenditure of Title III funds, \$760,000, was for a search and rescue building, in FY 03-04. The 2003 Biscuit Fire in southwest Oregon has made fire prevention a major priority of federal, state, and county governments in the area. This is reflected in Title III expenditures of more than \$2 million since 2003 for fire prevention and county planning. Community service work camps have received over \$1 million since 2001. The other two categories specified in the legislation - easement purchases and forest related educational opportunities - have received relatively small shares of Title III funds.

Table 4. Josephine County Title III Allocations.

CATEGORY	FY 01-02	#	FY 02-03	#	FY 03-04	#	FY 04-05	#	FY 05-06	#	TOTAL (\$) (%)	#
Search, rescue, and emergency services (\$)	392,128	3	570,144	9	760,000	1	376,529	5	277,050	3	2,375,851 (35%)*	21
Community service work camps (\$)	78,158	1	91,600	1	328,000	1	259,200	1	266,616	1	1,023,574 (15%)	5
Easement purchases (\$)	263,000	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	107,440	1	370,440 (5.5%)	2
Forest related educational opportunities (\$)	222,559	2	0	0	0	0	9,000	1	15,000	1	246,559 (3.5%)	4
Fire prevention and county planning (\$)	354,161	5	311,000	1	728,856	5	573,391	9	715,346	9	2,682,754 (40%)	29
Other (\$)	7,000	1	7,000	1	7,000	1	7,000	1	0	0	28,000 (1%)	4
TOTAL (\$)	1,317,006	13	979,744	12	1,823,856	8	1,225,120	7	1,381,452	15	6,727,178	65

**Project Profiles**

Since the beginning of the Title III program, Josephine County has allocated \$889,000 for several applications of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology to support fire

prevention and county planning. Projects included GIS/aerial photos; building outlines; the purchase of a large printer; developing digital terrain and fuels models; and expanding GIS capacity.

Jackson and Josephine Counties collaborated in 2005 on a joint regional GIS hazard mapping project of importance to both counties. Each county provided \$50,000 to match a \$250,000 National Fire Plan grant. The project provides continuous vegetation and fuel hazard mapping coverage for both counties, for all lands within the two counties, about 2,850,000 acres. Partners in the project include the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF), Jackson and Josephine Counties, U. S. Forest Service, Rogue River and Siskiyou National Forests, Bureau of Land Management, Medford District, and the Rogue Valley Fire Chiefs Association.

All partners are actively pursuing the completion of the fire hazard and fire management assessments. Acquiring this new data will enhance partners' abilities to complete and update fire plans. It will allow prioritization of on the ground fuel reduction efforts as well as monitoring the effectiveness of treatments. Having up-to-date and reliable data for demonstrations and discussions with the public and partners is a key to developing trust as well as effective short- and long-term strategies for fuels reduction.

One of the few projects operated by a non-county agency is the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) Home Assessment project. This is a three-year, \$300,000 per year project (FY 2004 - FY 2006) that assesses fire risk and defensibility of homes. The program solicits landowner participation through local newspaper advertisements and personal contacts with landowners whose residences adjoin county and BLM fuel reduction projects. Word-of-mouth and contractors also spread information about the program to interested landowners. Advertisements for the program are placed in the local newspapers and those interested in having work done on their homes can contact the county or ODF. The work is performed where people request it and in areas where fuels reduction work is being done. The work is performed by ODF Forest Officers and private contractors. Oregon Department of Forestry checks on the work after it is completed. In the first two quarters of 2005, 217 initial home assessments were completed.

Since 2001, Josephine County has allocated \$1,023,574 to community service work camps. These involve crews of sentenced offenders who perform work on federal, state, and county forest lands. Crews typically work six to eight weeks, with two or three crews working at any given time.

Josephine County's fire prevention and county planning projects have been effective both in terms of on-the-ground accomplishments and through the involvement of key partners. Leveraging additional funds such as the grants received through the National Fire Plan have extended accomplishments. Expenditures in the other Title III categories are not as well-defined. Many Title III expenditures prior to the most recent fiscal year lack good documentation and identifiable project descriptions. The county appears to be working to rectify these problems, along with the process for allocating Title III funds, with the hiring of an employee to manage the program.

*TITLE III PROJECTS – JACKSON COUNTY*

Since the inception of the Title III program (2002 - 2005), Jackson County has funded 83 Title III projects, totaling over \$7.5 million (See Table 5). The current process for granting Title III monies has evolved over the first few years of the program. It is managed by the county’s natural resource coordinator, and begins with public notification through the local newspaper as well as notification through a network of e-mail contacts. Title III applicants complete a project submission form and submit it to the coordinator. The forms resemble those used in the Title II process, and are reviewed initially by an application review committee. The committee includes the natural resources coordinator, one county commissioner, the fiscal planning and facilities director, and may include outside specialists such as staff from the Forest Service, BLM, and Oregon State University Extension Service. Initial applications are followed by formal presentations to this committee from project applicants, and the committee's recommendations for funding are brought to the Board of Commissioners by the coordinator. The results of the board's decisions then are published as a 45-day notice of intention, after which decisions on project grants are finalized.

Table 5. Jackson County Title III Allocations.<sup>9</sup>

CATEGORY	FY 01-02	#	FY 02-03	#	FY 03-04	#	FY 04-05	#	TOTAL (\$) (%)	#
Search, rescue, and emergency services (\$)	87,000	2	87,000	1	87,000	1	319,700	2	580,700 (7.7%)	6
Community service work camps (\$)	332,000	1	348,600	1	721,539	5	772,243	4	2,174,382 (28.8%)	11
Easement purchases (\$)			11,200	1	45,250	3	16,950	1	73,400 (1.0%)	5
Forest related educational opportunities (\$)	151,368	3	710,171	7	630,920	7	669,906	10	2,162,365 (28.7%)	27
Fire prevention and county planning (\$)	559,720	4	623,575	9	689,350	11	448,261	8	2,320,906 (30.8%)	32
Other (\$)	231,500	3							231,500 (3.1%)	3
TOTAL (\$)	1,361,588	13	1,780,546	19	2,174,059	27	2,227,060	25	7,543,253	82

**Overview of Projects**

While the share of federal revenues from P.L. 106-393 dedicated to Title III remained constant, the numbers of Title III projects as well as the amounts granted grew significantly (Table 5) over four years as Jackson County ramped up its awards to equal the dedicated amounts. The three largest areas of Title III commitments are fire prevention and county planning (30.8%), community service work camps (28.8%), and forest related educational opportunities (28.7%). Though the “search and rescue” category received a relatively small amount in the first three years, it is notable that funding increased significantly in year four. The increase was concomitant with a decrease in fire prevention and county planning, reflecting the completion of

<sup>9</sup> These data include payments to Jackson County under Public Law 106-393 associated with lands administered by both the BLM and the US Forest Service.

projects in support of planning efforts, such as fire maps, GIS technology, and other data and tools used to predict and manage the risk of fire in forests (see Project Profiles, below).

Funding for community service work camps increased steadily over the four-year period with a cumulative sum of \$1,499,264 allocated to the *Jackson County Community Justice Forest Camp*. Whereas funding for fire prevention and county planning was distributed to a number of projects, nearly 69% of the total commitments in the community service work camps category has been devoted to this multi-year project administered by Jackson County Community Justice (this is discussed in more detail below).

In its Title project II database, the BLM estimates that some 800 “jobs” (employment in person-years) have been created over the past four fiscal years. As the estimation of job numbers in economically-relevant terms and true full-time equivalents is a notoriously difficult challenge, this figure can only be interpreted in the broadest of terms. At the very least, however, the large sums expended for Title III projects have increased levels of temporary or seasonal employment in the local area, but additional research beyond the scale and scope of this study is needed to accurately identify the true employment benefit.

### ***Project Profiles***

In this section we present a subsample of Jackson County Title III projects that reflect innovation or are representative of the larger population of projects.

#### *Search, rescue, and emergency services*

This category received a large increase in funding in Fiscal Year (FY) 04-05 compared to previous years. In years prior, a consistent \$87,000 per year supported search and rescue largely for the marine patrol of lakes. However, in FY 2004-2005 Title III funding to the sheriff's office was increased to \$319,700 to purchase vehicles and equipment for search and rescue activities on federal lands. The equipment included trucks, vans, snowmobiles, a siren system, and a trailer for a mule.

#### *Community service work camps*

The major recipient of funding for community service work camps has been the multi-year project, *Jackson County Community Justice Forest Camp*. The camp and its crews are part of the Community Justice Work Center, administered by Jackson County Community Justice. The work center is an example of the trend toward “restorative justice,” that includes daily work and cognitive restructuring. The Title III funds provide staff support and supervision for a crew of three to eight men from adult corrections for five days per week in the forest work camp. These outlays were leveraged by Title II grants of \$175,000 in FY 2003-2004 from the Medford BLM RAC and \$122,920 in FY 2002-2003 from the Rogue-Umpqua Forest Service RAC for equipment, a vehicle, and supplies. Until 2005, the camp was located in a remote area of the county in leased barracks owned by the Forest Service. Although now housed in a former jail near Medford, participants are part of the county's limited supervision program and, as such, they are neither incarcerated nor supervised on weekends.

According to the project sponsor (a probation officer with Community Justice), the project and its crews of woods workers occupy an otherwise unfilled economic niche. The work is

concentrated along roads, and includes noxious weed removal and seeding, habitat restoration, culvert replacement, fuel reduction, and trail maintenance. In the years since the project's inception, crews have “brushed” (removed encroaching vegetation from) more than 1,000 miles of Forest Service roads. Crews are trained, and ultimately certified as flaggers, firefighters, and in the operation of equipment (e.g., chain saws, chippers). In 2002, crews from this project participated in fire fighting operations that saved several homes of Jackson County residents during the Timbered Rock fire. The project sponsor also notes that some previous participants in the program are now employed as woods workers by local private contractors.

### *Easement purchases*

Conservation easement purchases in the four fiscal years since Title III have totaled \$73,400 in grants to the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy (SOLC) and the Ashland Woodlands and Trails Association. The SOLC received 84% of these funds, the largest portion of which (\$45,450) facilitated a multi-year negotiation with owners of the 9,000 acre C2 Cattle Company Ranch to create the *Little Butte Creek Forest and Ranch Easement*. The easement involves some 4,000-forested acres that abut lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management, valued at one to two million dollars. According to the SOLC, the owners' rationale for donating the easement is to keep the original parcel intact as a working ranch in this fast-growing region of southern Oregon, and to reduce future estate taxes.

At present, the SOLC has facilitated protection for a total of 2,347 acres in the region, and completion of the current easement would increase that figure by some 4,000 acres.<sup>10</sup> Negotiations for the easement are complex, a multi-year project supported by Title III and other monies. The project fund includes private pledges for a stewardship fund of \$75,000, thereby ensuring that SOLC can conduct long-term annual monitoring and enforcement of the terms of easement. In addition to supporting negotiations to establish the easement, Title III monies have been used to create and implement the monitoring plan, and establish a forest management plan that will be updated periodically with SOLC oversight. Periodic monitoring also allows the SOLC to remain in contact with current and future owners of the protected acreage, an activity with important social and educational aspects.

If successful, the protection of these additional acres would protect the natural habitat, scenic qualities, and private timber base of the ranch. By creating a buffer with adjacent federal lands, wildlife habitat in the area will be enhanced. Creation of the conservation easement also would be a “shot in the arm” for the SOLC, according to its lands committee chair. In his view, however, future funding for easements may be increasingly difficult to obtain, as counties are directing more Title III funds toward other projects. Some commissioners view conservation easements as a threat to the existing or future tax base of the county.

### *Forest related educational opportunities*

The Job Council, a joint public venture between Jackson and Josephine counties, is of particular importance in the area of forest related educational opportunities. The Job Council has an annual budget of approximately six millions dollars, and operates under the federal Workforce

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<sup>10</sup> Southern Oregon Land Conservancy. (n.d.) Locations of protected properties. Retrieved September 29, 2005 from <http://www.landconserve.org/locations.htm>.

Investment Act. Together with other partners, it also operates the Job Opportunity and Basic Skills program for Oregon's Adult and Family Services. The Job Council provides business services, job seeker services, youth programs, and childcare resources.

Since fiscal year 2002-2003, the Job Council has received \$408,056 annually from Jackson County's Title III program for its *Youth Forestry Education and Stewardship Program*. The Juvenile Department and Community Family Court System, as well as other programs and departments, refer youths between 16 and 21 years of age to the program to participate in an orientation workshop of intensive training in forestry, ecology, job-readiness, and work ethics. Successful participants become part of several work crews that receive further forestry education with stipends. In some cases, the stipends are directed towards crime victims as via court-ordered restitution, a key component of restorative justice.

According to a Job Council program analyst, this project represents 60 paying “jobs” per year for youths, though, while impressive, precise relationship of this number to a full time job equivalent is not clear. The on-the-ground work includes maintenance at campgrounds, waysides, and recreation areas, as well as watershed restoration projects and recyclables collection work at campgrounds. In the analyst's words, participants in the program become “real advocates for public lands,” and receive training to qualify as wildland fire fighters on federal lands. Some of the work performed by crews has been in conjunction with private forestry companies such as Lomakatsi, which is also a recipient of Title II funds. Next fiscal year, further Title II leverage will come in the form of an in-house BLM “Youth to Work” (\$10,400) project that provides transportation and support services to trainees in Jackson and Josephine Counties.

While agencies provide on-the-ground monitoring of the project outcomes, the Job Council performs a “before and after” assessment of participants' employability and skills development. Because most youths are enrolled under the Workforce Investment Act, a separate participant data collection and tracking process is maintained for one year. Finally, the Job Council partners with high schools so that the project work experience is counted as one credit in a participant's portfolio.

#### *Fire prevention and county planning*

In fiscal year 2001-2002, Jackson County formed an alliance with scientists from Oregon State University and federal land management agencies to develop a GIS-based computer modeling tool to project the effects of alternative management prescriptions on fire risk and economic costs and benefits in forested landscapes in the county. Over a three-year period, the *Jackson County Small Diameter Utilization* project received a total of \$451,720 to develop and synthesize data on the effects of various forest practices - particularly small diameter wood utilization - on the ecological and economic effects of wildfire. The project's culmination was the development of an educational tool that demonstrates the short- and long-term risks of various federal forest management policies.<sup>11</sup> It has been used, for example, to create maps of priority areas for vegetation treatment to reduce the risk of wildfire. This project reflects but a portion of a larger commitment made by the county, the RAC, and federal agencies to improve area forest and wildfire management at the landscape-level.

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<sup>11</sup> Jackson County Forest Fuels, <http://www.firemaps.org/fuels/>

*Other*

In fiscal year 2001-2002, a total of \$231,500 was awarded to three miscellaneous projects that do not fit within Title III legislative categories. Of this total, Jackson County dedicated \$68,000 to support the creation of a new position, a Title III project coordinator. This is considered an allowable cost under the legislation. In a second project, the U.S. Forest Service received \$13,500 for trail preservation. Finally, the largest amount, \$150,000, was awarded to the Association of O&C Counties for a project entitled, *Eastern Oregon program assistance*, designed to “assist counties that were not direct recipients of HR 2389 [now Public Law 106-393] funds.” The nature of this assistance has never been specified, and according to a county official, the project was never funded.

*TITLE II PROJECTS*

In fiscal years 2002, 2003, 2004, and 2005, the Medford BLM RAC approved 211 projects, allocating some \$11.4 million for their support (Table 6; Figure 2). Expenditures for projects across the five counties reflect approximately the distribution of Title II allocations to these counties. Of the five counties, Jackson and Josephine counties represent 74% of total project expenditures, while Curry County receives less than 3%. Of the 211 Title II projects, 29 originated from organizations outside the BLM, representing \$1.5 million, or just over 13% of total expenditures.

Table 6. Medford BLM RAC Projects. \*

CATEGORY	COUNTY										GRAND TOTAL	
	Curry		Douglas		Jackson		Josephine		Klamath			
Roads, trails, and infrastructure	191,351	6	381,520	7	826,528	16	1,001,815	25	55,000	3	2,456,214 (21.5%)	57
Watershed restoration and maintenance	0	0	17,250	1	552,634	11	509,024	9	160,000	5	1,238,908 (10.9%)	26
Wildlife and fish habitat	4,500	1	553,178	6	542,500	4	608,289	6	392,132	3	2,100,599 (18.4%)	20
Forest ecosystem health	0	0	236,056	3	1,536,500	13	409,713	9	288,000	3	2,470,269 (21.7%)	28
Noxious weeds	0	0	207,063	6	416,967	8	160,340	10	45,825	3	830,195 (7.3%)	27
Native species	0	0	14,500	1	80,000	1	47,104	4	0	0	141,604 (1.2%)	6
Other	113,865	6	231,361	9	1,231,248	16	527,712	15	62,625	1	2,166,811 (19.0%)	47
GRAND TOTAL	309,716	13	1,640,928	33	5,186,377	69	3,263,997	78	1,003,582	18	11,404,600	211

\* Projects assigned to more than one BLM project category (25 of 211) were consolidated into single categories based on project descriptions.

### ***Project Solicitation***

Each year, public service announcements are published in the local newspapers in Grants Pass, Medford, and Klamath Falls announcing the availability of RAC funds, as well as information on the Title II application process. These announcements, together with a Federal Register Notice about upcoming meeting and field trip dates, are handled by the BLM public affairs officer in Medford and released in January and February. All project proposals must be submitted by March 31<sup>st</sup>.

The RAC coordinator and others in the agency also engage informally in outreach activities through their contacts with the public, local government, and with private sector organizations. The BLM has learned that newcomers to the application process often require guidance, hence a substantial amount of discussion takes place. For example, one director of a local non-profit organization in the Illinois Valley hailed a BLM employee who had helped her craft a proposal conforming to the guidelines and expectations of the RAC. As she put it, “You're taking the people who are easiest to kick out of the circle and bringing them in,” referring to those in her community who are the most impoverished.

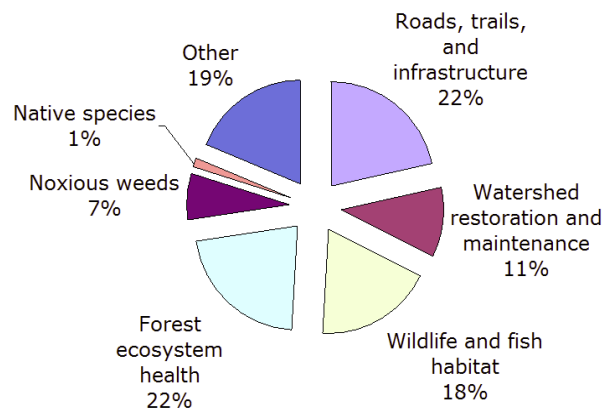
While few interviewees commented on the solicitation process *per se*, the slow increase of private applicants applying for Title II funds in the early years of the RAC may reflect a limited understanding of the program in the early years. However, the proportion of funded Title II projects from non-BLM sources rose from 9% in fiscal year 2003- 2004 to 31% the following year.

### ***Project Review, Prioritization, and Selection***

An initial two-week screening of project proposals by the BLM begins immediately after the March 31<sup>st</sup> submission deadline. In this first phase of screening, projects are reviewed for their legal status under P.L. 106-393 and other statutes. Subsequently, the screening results are presented to the District Leadership Team for prioritization by county. A week later, a summary list of potential projects (without prioritization) is presented to the relevant county commissioners. The counties have roughly one to two weeks in which to provide comments on the list.

In the course of a year, the Medford BLM RAC has two to four official meetings, generally in July and August. Field trips are commonly scheduled in the month prior to the one or two August sessions in which potential grantees make presentations and funding decisions are made. Well before these scheduled meetings - usually in June - RAC members receive from the BLM a binder containing project proposals for the next funding cycle. The binder contains proposals that

**Figure 2. RAC projects by category.**



have been screened for conformity to the intent of P.L. 106-393, and prioritized according to BLM goals and objectives. Reading these project proposals is a formidable challenge for RAC members, given the large number of applicants each year (94, for example, in fiscal year 2005-2006).

While the BLM presents the RAC with its priorities, the RAC has developed a qualitative process for prioritizing proposals based on a set of importance criteria. The three RAC groups vote in a combined process facilitated by the RAC coordinator on project proposals using flashcards of three colors. The BLM RAC coordinator presents each project, and based on their previous reading of the proposal's details, RAC members vote up or down on each project. With each project vote tallied by group, the coordinator keeps a running balance in a spreadsheet "checkbook," an estimate of the remaining unallocated Title II funds for the year. Because the precise amount available Title II monies is not known until November, the RAC typically over-commits to projects by some 20%. In the event that approved project proposals cannot be funded, they are "shelved" for later consideration as unexpended funds or unanticipated revenues become available.

In a final step toward project authorization, the RAC's recommendations are submitted by the BLM to the counties for consideration by commissioners. Their comments are due back on September 23<sup>rd</sup>, at which point the designated federal officer submits the approved projects list to the BLM state director. In a subsequent section, the relationship among counties, the RAC, and the BLM Relations will be discussed, paying particular attention to the project selection and prioritization process vis-à-vis P.L. 106-393.

### ***Approved Projects***

The Medford BLM RAC has funded a diverse number of projects, assigned here to seven categories for purposes of discussion (Table 6). While the majority of projects initially had been assigned by the BLM to single categories, a significant number (25 of the 211) had been assigned to two or three. For the purposes of this report, multi-category projects were consolidated into single categories based on an assessment of their main goals. For example, a project involving a culvert replacement was assigned to the *Wildlife and Fish Habitat* category if its main purpose was to enhance fish passage. However, if reducing sedimentation was the overriding goal, then the project was considered *Watershed Restoration and Maintenance*.

### ***Roads, trails, and infrastructure***

Almost \$2.5 million were awarded in the area of roads, trails, and infrastructure. Of this sum, 5% was devoted to four decommissioning projects, whereas 36 projects focused on road repair, paving, roadside brushing, and crushed rock stockpiles. Often the rationale for improving access to roads is to get access to and manage wildfire. In fiscal year 2003, the city of Jacksonville received \$90,000 for the *Jackson Creek Access Road Reconstruction* to decrease the response time of heavy equipment and personnel for fire suppression. Such projects often have ancillary benefits, in this case access for BLM and private forest managers, access for educational purposes, and reduced erosion.

Trail maintenance projects often have multiple benefits. The *Cathedral Hills Trail Maintenance* project received \$82,900.00 over two fiscal years (2003-2004). On-the-ground work was based

on environmental surveys and planning completed in the *Cathedral Hills Management Plan* (discussed below under Infrastructure and Miscellaneous). Cathedral Hills is a 400-acre BLM parcel leased to Josephine County Parks that is surrounded by dwellings. Primarily a trail design and reconstruction project, the process of planning and implementation had several other anticipated benefits, including reduced soil erosion, reduced fire hazard, and increased access for recreation. The project also improved relations between private landowners and trail users as the BLM engaged local residents and volunteers in the design and execution of the project.

#### *Watershed restoration and maintenance*

In the four fiscal years covered by this study, just over \$1.2 million were directed toward work on watersheds. For example, stream restoration entails cleanups, placement of coarse woody debris to enhance channel morphology, and restoring riparian vegetation. For example, the \$31,200 *Bear Creek Tree Planting* project, sponsored by the Rogue Valley Council of Governments addressed the legacy of a wildfire along a half-mile reach of Bear Creek in Central Point. The project's goals included revegetation of the riparian corridor with native grass and tree species, seeds for which were provided by the BLM (described below). It was a community effort, as the Council enlisted the support of several non-profit agencies, watershed groups, and educators, including site preparation expertise from the Jackson County Youth Authority. Benefits were anticipated for anadromous salmonids in their annual migration to higher-elevation streams on federal lands. The Council is conducting its own monitoring for seedling survival and other site conditions, for which it has budgeted \$11,000.

The Talent Irrigation District received a \$100,000 for a well-conceived, highly-leveraged proposal entitled *Water for Irrigation, Streams, and Economy* (WISE). The aim of the larger WISE Project<sup>12</sup> is to address unreliable irrigation water supplies and degraded water quantity and quality in native anadromous salmonids habitat in the Bear Creek and Little Butte Creek watersheds. In addition to the Talent Irrigation District, WISE partners include the city of Medford, Jackson County, the Medford Water Commission, as well as other irrigation districts in the watershed. Fiscal year 2005 Title II funds were sought to implement an outreach and marketing plan for WISE, developed in 2003 with Title II support. This plan's estimated total budget was \$2,065,100, a figure that speaks to the resourcefulness of its partners. In the course of its NEPA planning process, the WISE Program will consider a number of alternatives to accomplish its economic and ecological goals, including lining and piping irrigation canals, conservation measures, using recycled water for irrigation, and increasing the storage capacity of reservoirs.

Other projects at the watershed and ecosystem level were the *Spring Creek Fish Passage and Sediment Reduction Project* and the *Upper East Fork Road Sediment Reduction Project*, both part of the restoration mission of the Williams Creek Watershed Council. While both projects involve the installation of culverts and other activities that would enhance fish passage and improve fish habitat, the overriding motive of these two projects is to reduce erosion and sedimentation and restore water quality at the watershed level. The projects, funded at \$146,341, complement existing plans and activities of the council, including the recently completed *East Fork Williams Creek Road Inventory and Sediment Analysis*. This study identified Spring Creek

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<sup>12</sup> [www.wiseproject.org](http://www.wiseproject.org)

as a primary source of sediment entering the East Fork Williams Creek system, which reduces salmonid survival.

As roughly half the lands in Williams Creek watershed are administered by the BLM, the Williams Creek Watershed Council has created a partnership with the BLM and landowners to address the many issues that cross ownerships. Because the Williams Creek Watershed Council is technically part of the Applegate River Watershed Council, it is not eligible to apply for grants from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board. Title II funds afford a degree of autonomy from the Applegate River Watershed Council, from which the Williams Creek Watershed Council split.

#### *Wildlife and fish habitat*

By far the most costly projects in this theme involve fish habitat restoration, specifically, the costs of purchasing and installing “fish-friendly” bottomless, arched culverts. For example, the goal of the \$121,450 *McCullough Creek Culvert Replacement* project was to enhance passage for salmon, steelhead, and other aquatic species. While the project was privately sponsored and sited on Superior Lumber Company, its anticipated benefits include improving three miles of upstream habitat for spawning by these two federally-listed endangered species. This project is typical of other culvert replacements, in that replacing old culverts for fish passage is also considered effective, if expensive insurance against future erosion and sedimentation. Hence, this and most other culvert replacements projects are considered beneficial in more than one category.

In the area of wildlife habitat improvement, a \$4,500 BLM project, the *Anaktuvuk Meadow Restoration*, is expected to enhance the presence of native grasses, an area of continuing interest to managers in this BLM District. With an additional \$16,470 from the BLM, the project will contract for the removal of off-site conifers, slash burning, and subsequent reseeding with native vegetation. It is anticipated that the restoration work will also enhance forage for elk and deer, and provide a source of local economic benefit.

#### *Forest ecosystem health*

A large proportion of Title II expenditures, nearly 2.5 million, was directed toward Forest Health Improvement. In the context of this RAC, the term forest health translates almost exclusively to management prescriptions that decrease wildland fire hazard by reducing fuel loads, i.e., trees, shrubs, and dead wood. RAC funds are critical in accomplishing such work, because fuels reduction projects rarely generate sufficient income to pay for themselves. However, they do generate much public interest in southern Oregon given the recent experiences with the half-million acre Biscuit Fire and other wildland fires.

Of the 28 projects that involve fuels reduction, six are administered by non-federal agencies, governments, or private organizations. One notable example of private project sponsorship that coordinates well with agency goals is the *Wagner Creek Fuels Reduction Project*. The project is administered by the Lomakatsi Restoration Project, a non-profit organization “dedicated to the regeneration and rehabilitation of watersheds within the greater Klamath/Siskiyou bio-region of

Southwestern Oregon.”<sup>13</sup> As in previous work, they propose to reduce fire hazard in strategic areas (75 acres) in the wildland-urban interface, complementing adjacent fire mitigation efforts on private and public BLM lands in the area. They have proposed to engage private landowners in the task of reducing hazardous fuels on properties adjacent to public lands. It includes establishing “defensible space” along roadways used for residential and recreational purposes, along single-access and populated residential driveways, and adjacent to home sites.

Lomakatsi brings a unique body of knowledge, skills, and experience to this Title II project. First, it advocates a set of simple ecological principles in forest management - a restoration philosophy - that have garnered respect from a politically diverse set of interests in the community and region. This philosophy is rooted in Traditional Ecological Knowledge, values and beliefs with origins in Native American practices on the land. Second, Lomakatsi has been the recipient of several grants from the National Fire Plan that have contributed to training a local workforce in their ecological principles. At least 35 workers have been trained in their *Multi-Cultural Ecological Workforce Training Program*, of whom 18 to 20 have been retained for project work.

#### *Noxious weeds*

The control of noxious weeds and other invasive species is arguably the least controversial type of project, with a relatively low unit cost (27 projects for \$830,195). Small projects often have large rewards, however. For example, the Forestry Action Committee based in Josephine County proposed the *Illinois Valley Noxious Weed Control* project. The Forest Action Committee is a small, grass-roots, non-profit organization whose mission is to improve the health of the Illinois River Basin and its community through sustainable forestry and restoration activities. The Committee administers two weed “working groups,” the Klamath Siskiyou Bioregion Weed Working Group, and the Bi-County Jackson/Josephine Weed Management Area Partnership, both of which work to improve communication regarding weed control among the entities involved in weed control. In 2005, the organization received \$25,850 to treat approximately 48 acres on BLM and neighboring lands by hand methods. Successful hand-removal of noxious weeds is labor intensive activity requiring some training and much perseverance. The project provides wages and training for part-time work to low-income residents of the Illinois Valley, as well as community education and involvement in noxious weed control on private and public land in the Illinois Valley.

Federal land management agencies may well have an interest in seeing organization such as the Forest Action Committee continue with its activities. The Committee is an offshoot of the Illinois Basin Interest Group, a process that was initiated in the 1990s by then Siskiyou National Forest supervisor, Mike Lunn. The intent of the group was to promote grass-roots actions to build a consensus in favor of improving the health of the Illinois Valley watershed, its communities, and fisheries. Most importantly, it emphasized community-agency cooperation, evidence of which is the location of the organization’s offices in its own small building on the Illinois Valley Ranger District compound. The Illinois Valley Noxious Weed Control project was the third project for which the Committee has succeeded in securing Title II funds. It is evident from project descriptions that the organization offers much-needed services in noxious

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<sup>13</sup> [www.lomakatsi.org](http://www.lomakatsi.org)

weed control and tree planting, restoration activities that will continue to build bridges between federal agencies and the local community.

### *Native species*

The native habitat theme includes the categories of *Wildlife Habitat Restoration* (Category 13) and *Native Species* (Category 10). The BLM administers six Title II projects pertaining to the collection and propagation of native trees, shrubs, grasses, and forbs. Over three years, the district has received \$141,604 in Title II funds to collect seeds and plants for “grow-out” and to create reserves, both for use in future “rehab” projects. Reseeding with native vegetation following wildfire is preferred, if only to mitigate the risk of post-disturbance invasion by noxious weeds. New road construction, cut bank stabilization, road decommissioning, culvert replacements, road ripping, and fuel treatment areas are also activities that will require sources of native plant material from these coordinated projects.

The first in this series of BLM projects (fiscal year 2003) was the \$80,000 *Native Seed Collection and Growout* project that was matched to a \$160,000 federal contribution. This project launched the BLM's efforts to establish sources and reserves of native plant material for future needs, projects like the Bear Creek Tree Planting and the Anaktuvuk Meadow Restoration projects discussed above. One project, the \$12,364 *Middle Rogue Seedling Propagation Project* was part of a multi-year effort to acquire adequate supplies of native conifer and hardwood seedlings for use by the Middle Rogue Watershed Council (MRWC) riparian tree planting project. Over a four-year period, it was anticipated that 120 acres - some 16 miles of riparian corridor - would be planted with the approximately 12,000 seedlings produced on an annual basis.

### *Other*

The final theme that encompasses the BLM project is a diverse one. Of the nearly \$2.2 million that supported 47 Title II projects, the largest portion was linked to planning efforts, in particular, the two-year, \$500,490 *Johns Peak Off-Highway Vehicle Management Plan/EIS* project. Sponsored by the BLM, this project helps create a management plan and facilitates preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement for the Timber Mountain/Johns Peak off-highway vehicle area, an area that enthusiasts have used for the last 50 years. Because it has not been actively managed for this purpose, off-highway vehicle use has resulted in a deterioration of the biological, physical, and social resources of the site.

As mentioned in a previous section of this study, the *Forest Camp* Title II project provided the equipment and supplies needed to launch a related Title III project, *Jackson County Community Justice Forest Camp*. The RAC awarded a total of \$175,000 to Jackson County Community Justice to purchase crew transport vehicles, work clothing, food utensils, specialized power equipment, and other materials needed to run the camp, where twenty low-level offenders reside. Unfortunately, this camp has been closed following a decision by the Forest Service to sell the property and barracks that housed the work crews.

A substantial amount - \$240,000 - was awarded to the BLM and Jackson County in fiscal year 2002 for the *Digital Orthophotos* project, a needed technical upgrade to the county's Geographic Information System (GIS). The project, together with a \$351,000 Title III award in the same

year, provides an essential tool for use in countywide wildfire management analysis and planning, specifically for the analysis of hazards, risks, and values-at-risk across forested landscapes in Jackson County. This GIS capability was also essential to the development of GIS vegetation “layers” for computer modeling of the effects of management on wildfire risks that was proposed in the \$451,720 multi-year Title III project, *Jackson County Small Diameter Utilization*. In addition to this product, Jackson County has made its upgraded GIS information available online to the public as *SmartMap*.<sup>14</sup>

All told, the project has used just over a million dollars of Title II and III funds on this major technological upgrade to improve forest management at the landscape level. While the price may appear steep relative to other projects, it has brought many difficult-to-quantify benefits. The county is particularly concerned about the wildland-urban interface, where the risk to life and property is greatest. Viewing risk from the landscape-level, residents can begin to understand the spatial connections between their property and activities on public lands that surround them. At the same time, the products of these projects allow federal land managers to visualize, plan, and understand risk across multiple ownerships and jurisdictions.

Over the four fiscal years, Title II monies (\$122,758) have continued to support a successful multi-year effort to retain the *Medford Air Tanker Base* via a project by the same name. Five counties - Coos, Curry, Douglas, Jackson, and Josephine - currently contribute substantial funds via Title III for personnel costs and lease of a facility that is critical in rapidly suppressing wildfires. Of the total cost, 33% is provided by Title II projects originating from the Medford BLM RAC as well as the Rogue-Umpqua and Siskiyou RACs. The Forest Service provides administrative support in the form of utilities, supplies, phones, computers, and other equipment. The perceived importance of this tanker base cannot be over-emphasized, as demonstrated by the cooperation among multiple RACs and counties. Rapid aerial fire suppression during extremes of fire weather is seen as critical in limiting the spread of wildfire, a lesson that was driven home by the absence of tanker support in the early phases of the recent Biscuit Fire.

Finally, The Medford BLM RAC awarded the Greater Applegate Community Development Corporation \$12,100 for its *Cantrall-Buckley Park Master Plan* project. Lands in this popular rural destination are administered by Jackson County and the BLM, and are adjacent to U.S. Forest Service lands. This small Title II grant catalyzed an ongoing collaboration within the community, one that saw the Greater Applegate Community Development Corporation assume most of the responsibility for managing the park following its closure by the county in 1997. In this project, Title II funds supported preparation of a master plan for the park's renovation and operation under the leadership of a volunteer board of directors. In the first phase of the project, the organization used donated equipment and volunteer labor to map the buildings, roads, trails, irrigation systems, and other infrastructure. Then, based on a collaborative vision of the park over the next 20 years, a professional landscape designer was contracted to “crystallize” the vision prior to development of the master plan.

This kind of local economic development is the mainstay of the Greater Applegate Community Development Corporation, a small non-profit whose mission is to enhance the livability of this

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<sup>14</sup> [www.smartmap.org](http://www.smartmap.org)

rural part of Jackson and Josephine counties. The organization is a logical counterpart to the better-known Applegate Partnership, a group focused more on the environmental aspects of livability. The Greater Applegate Community Development Corporation has been extremely effective in building and using its social capital in the community, particularly with volunteer in-kind contributions of its members and the public. For instance, another \$25,000 from Oregon State RV registrations was secured to help the organization assume full responsibility for the park's maintenance, an event that has led to the current Title II project.

### *RAC FORMATION, OPERATION, PROCESS AND COMPOSITION*

The Medford BLM RAC, like most of those in the West, was established in late 2001. Public notices of its formation and solicitation for membership were published in the daily newspapers of Medford, Ashland, Grants Pass, Klamath Falls, and Brookings, as well as some smaller weekly newspapers. A similar notice was also posted on the BLM web site. In addition to these notices, the Association of O&C Counties solicited applicants and forwarded names to the BLM. The association also helped Sue Kupillas, then-Jackson County Commissioner, to solicit applicants. The director of the BLM Medford District was consulted about RAC membership and the names of individuals he was willing to recommend to the BLM Washington office for appointment. As one RAC member put it, “the appointments were screened carefully with some names not being forwarded to Washington, D. C.” In general, the counties and the BLM favored politically “moderate” members whose views and actions would not be divisive in the RAC’s operation.

The Medford BLM RAC consists of 15 voting members from the five counties. A large majority of members (11) are from Jackson County. Two are from Josephine County, and one each from Klamath and Curry Counties. Douglas County does not participate except in allocating some money to the RAC for projects implemented in southern Douglas County. There are also six replacement members, five of whom are from Jackson County and one from Klamath County. Some criticism has been levied at the RAC for Josephine County’s lack of adequate representation, particularly as the county’s Title II contribution amounts to one third of the RAC’s budget. In 2005, approximately two-thirds of the RAC membership changed, when the initial three-year terms expired, and only one-third of the members elected to renew. This “new” RAC does not appear to be significantly different in terms of county representation.

The Medford BLM RAC meets most of the requirements for membership of each of the three groups. Most interests are represented and none appears to be over-represented. The “new” RAC includes one county commissioner, John Elliot from Klamath County, who replaces Sue Kupillas, former Jackson County commissioner and RAC chair. Jim Kolen, the Curry County Auditor, is an elected county official who has been on the RAC since its inception.

The RAC currently has no members representing tribal or wild horse and burro interests. The absence of a representative for wild horse and burro interests is common to many RACs, and indicates the difficulty of filling this somewhat obscure category, particularly in areas with limited rangeland. However, the absence of a tribal representative is a more complex issue. On the previous RAC, George Fence, a Cherokee who has been involved in American Indian issues in southern Oregon for over 20 years, represented tribal interests. These interests include both a

federally- and non-federally recognized tribes. At present, the federal government recognizes one group of American Indians associated with the area for which the RAC has been organized, the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians. However, an American Indian group - the Latgawa tribe - based in Medford is now petitioning the federal government for recognition.<sup>15</sup> Further discussions on tribal relations are taken up a subsequent section, Public, Agency, and Interest Group Relationship Building.

The Medford BLM RAC had only one chair during the first three years of its existence, Jackson County Commissioner Sue Kupillas. Kupillas was well respected by the parties involved, including the BLM and other county commissioners. She is given considerable credit for the success of the RAC. Kupillas was defeated in the 2004 elections and stepped down from her RAC position despite requests from RAC members and the BLM that she continue under a different category. Frank Lang, a retired Southern Oregon University professor who assumed her leadership role, will be new to the RAC both as chair and member. Despite the strong qualifications of Lang and other new RAC members, the large turnover and change in leadership complicated the transition process in summer 2005. Awareness of this issue may lie behind the recent decision to hire Sue Kupillas as a group facilitator for the RAC during the transition period.

### ***RAC Operation***

The great majority of those interviewed viewed the Medford BLM RAC as an overall success, a position shared by BLM staff. As mentioned in the section, Project Review, Prioritization, and Selection, the RAC holds two or three meetings in August each year and coordinates two annual field trips for RAC members. These are considered by RAC members to be very helpful.

According to one RAC member, the projects funded by the RAC are not very controversial due to the politically moderate composition of the RAC as well as the so-called “veto” power over Title II projects the county has been afforded (discussed below under County, RAC, and BLM Relations). Of all the approved Title II projects over four fiscal years, the three groups in the RAC have experienced no serious divisions in making project recommendations. This reflects the fact that for the first two years of its existence, the Medford BLM RAC had more money than projects, whereas now the situation is reversed. In the view of one member, this is a new and potentially significant challenge for the RAC, hence, the increased interest among members in coordinating Title II projects with Title III projects and other programs such as the National Fire Plan.

Although there is a generally positive perception of the RAC’s operation, it has not been free of criticism. One successful grantee felt that project funding was not based entirely on merit, but on who submitted the proposal. More than one grantee stated that it took too long for the RAC and the BLM to get the funds to them and to get work on the ground. In addition, some RAC members maintained the counties were too influential in the decision process.

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<sup>15</sup> 2003-05 Oregon Directory of American Indian Resources. Oregon Legislative Commission On Indian Services. Retrieved January 24, 2006 from [www.leg.state.or.us/cis](http://www.leg.state.or.us/cis). Also see <http://confederatedtribes.mind.net>.

There is some concern as well about the future of the RAC given the recent turnover in membership and leadership. New members are hoping for continued cordial relations. The process began last June with a training session for new RAC members that was hosted by the BLM. Previous training sessions have been conducted by Douglas County Commissioner Doug Robertson (member of the national congressional oversight committee for P.L. 106-393) and Rocky McVay (Director of the Association of O&C Counties).

***Public, Agency, and Interest Group Relationship Building***

The RAC appears to have a good working relationship spanning many interest groups. Members emphasized that their decisions are made by consensus and that meetings and project funding decisions go smoothly. There is considerable and increasing local participation from community organizations, watershed councils, and soil and water conservation districts. This surge of Title II project applicants comes in the fourth year of the RAC's operation, an apparent "tipping point" in an otherwise conventional outreach process.

While there does not seem to be a replay on the RAC of the old conflicts between timber and environmental interests, at least one member criticizes the selection process for excluding certain environmental groups. The claim is that representatives of two local organizations, the Kalmiopsis Wilderness Coalition and Headwaters, were excluded from the RAC for their perceived unwillingness to moderate their views in a collaborative context. While such a stance can be labeled political pragmatic, it also can be characterized as risk-averse and lacking confidence in the power of the collaborative process to moderate "extreme" views and advance education and understanding among all groups. The goal of moderation and pragmatism in RAC membership may invite criticism from those who have been left out of the process.

Tribal interests in an area where there are no federally-recognized tribes are also relevant in this discussion of interest groups. In the view of George Fence, former tribal representative on the RAC, too little is known about the cultural resources and historic influences by Native Americans on sites where projects have been implemented by federal agencies, including Title II projects. He asserts that not only are many sites of historic value disturbed by projects, the entire RAC process has not been communicated adequately to local tribal interests. This apparent shortfall in communication and outreach can partly be explained though not necessarily justified by the absence of legal mandates to consult with local tribes not federally recognized. When asked about the absence of tribal representation on the current RAC, the BLM RAC coordinator pointed out that there had been a complete absence of Native American applicants in the recent outreach for new RAC members. He saw compensation for this deficiency in the form of a BLM policy that mandates project-by-project consultation with federally-recognized tribes, one based in laws such as the National Environmental Policy Act and the National Historic Preservation Act. For example, the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians recently asked the BLM to consult on a project-by-project basis in the northern area of the district.

As a final note on building relationships with interest groups, the recent increase in public interest in proposing Title II projects should not be cause for decreased vigilance in outreach activities on the part of RAC members and the BLM, particularly toward new or less familiar players on the scene. It should be recognized that in addition to the availability of Title II funds, there are a number of attributes of the RAC that have the potential to evoke or discourage public

interest. These consist mainly in the processes that have shaped the RAC, including its formation and membership, its relationships with governments, the type of projects it supports, how it selects those projects, and which interest groups it draws to the table. This complex face that the RAC presents to the public is the real outreach process, one that extends well beyond more conventional media outlets and social networks for informing the public.

### ***County, RAC, and BLM Relations***

The counties' support of the RAC has been increasing each year. The RAC went from a \$2,481,911 budget in FY 2001-2002 to a \$3,211,332 budget in FY 2004-2005. Most of the increase derives from a Josephine County allocation that grew from \$516,356 in FY 2002-2003 to \$1,004,908 in FY 2003-2004 and \$1,017,972 in FY 2004-2005. Klamath County also increased its allocation from \$192,351 to \$315,503 in FY 2004-2005.

The other three counties appear content with their roles, with one commissioner from Klamath County and the Curry County Auditor serving as RAC members. Douglas County is not directly involved with operation of this RAC, having five other RACS to interact with. However, there is considerable Title II activity in each of the three counties with \$692,250 in project funds going to Klamath County, \$170,848 to Curry County, and \$1,227,660 to Douglas County over the first four years of the Act.

In Jackson County, Sue Kupillas maintains that the RAC process has improved relations between the county and the BLM. Whereas the pre-legislation relationship was distant, the RAC process has brought the BLM and Jackson County into a closer and more cooperative relationship. This is not the case with Josephine County, however. The 2004 elections brought some new faces to the Board of Commissioners in Josephine County, some of whom question the existing relationship between the county, the RAC, and the BLM. Their perception is that the county has insufficient input into the decision process. In light of their \$1,000,000 annual allocation to the RAC and the lack of proportionate representation on the RAC (only two members out of 15), they are looking for change. Obviously, this is a situation the RAC and the BLM should address if they are to continue to receive large allocations from Josephine County.

It was almost undisputed among those interviewed that many tangible and intangible benefits have emerged out of the pragmatic relationships that have formed between counties, the RAC, and the BLM. The nature of this relationship is not without cause for concern, however. In particular is the privilege of "veto" extended by the BLM and RAC to the counties in their review of Title II project proposals before they are presented to the RAC, and in their review of the list of recommended projects produced by the RAC. While P.L. 106-393 does urge "frequent opportunities for citizens, organizations, tribes, land management agencies, and other interested parties to participate openly and meaningfully" (Sec. 205.4.b.4), it does not intend a specific role for counties in the Title II project approval process (see Sec. 204), except in the form of individual elected county officials serving as members of the RAC.

While it is tempting to view the relations between the counties, the RAC, and the BLM relations solely in a positive light, there are aspects that can be characterized as risky and at odds with the spirit and intent of P.L. 106-393. On one hand, the counties' overt involvement in the process of prioritizing and selecting Title II projects can be viewed as a well-intentioned "collaboration."

On the other hand, it can be seen as an unnecessary accommodation to the perceived power and influence over RAC affairs by county governments. Unnecessary, because although counties hold ultimate power over the amount of RAC funding, they are unlikely to exert that influence unless the values and interests of RAC diverge from those of county governments. The relationship between the counties and the RAC represents a risk in that its current level of functioning stems from a tacit balance of power, consensus, and cordiality that that may be absent in the future. Consensus on key issues and players has been achieved in large part by (1) a careful selection of a RAC membership that may have excluded more contentious and controversial interest groups; (2) strong leadership and knowledge of natural resources issues on the part of Sue Kupillas, former county commissioner and RAC chair; (3) recent “uncharacteristic” wildfire events locally that have led to major policy changes at the state and federal level (e.g., the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003); and (4) a balance of power that is maintained by the perceived willingness of the RAC, in the words of one former member, to put up a “dog fight” in defense of its project recommendations.

### *CONCLUSION*

The Medford BLM RAC is one of the largest in the country, with strengths that relate to a number of factors. First, the RAC’s membership and operation reflects the area’s long history of community-based activism and collaboration. This, coupled with the strong leadership exerted by its former Chair and Jackson County Commissioner Sue Kupillas, has been instrumental in the formation of a RAC with members who are experienced in the politics of collaboration and pragmatism.

Since its inception, the RAC has funded a large and diverse number of projects, many with non-federal sponsorship. Of the \$11.4 million expended for Title II projects over the first four fiscal years, 13.4% was awarded to Jackson County government as well as a host of non-profit agencies and organizations. While this can be attributed to the outreach process of the BLM and RAC, it also reflects the intense local knowledge of, and interest in the science and politics of natural resource management. For the most part, the non-federally sponsored projects had tangible, on-the-ground results that created employment within local communities. Lomakatsi, an Ashland-area non-profit, exemplifies this accomplishment with its programs of training and work in the woods that is an investment in both human and ecological capital.

In Josephine County, accomplishments in the Title III program have been mixed, lagging behind Jackson County both in terms of process and project quality. Recent improvements in the administration of the program, however, do give cause for optimism. However, the Title III program in Jackson County, with its emulation of the RAC granting and decision-making process, deserves praise. Its process of project outreach, solicitation, review, and selection has generated a diversity of creative projects, as well as a number of more mundane, but essential activities. The decision to enhance GIS technology at the start of the Title III program reflects the forward looking nature of the county and its people.

While there appears to be little overt coordination between Title II and Title III projects, there nonetheless are a number of connections that have been established and that link projects. First, the BLM’s priorities for projects are rooted in a science-informed view of forest landscapes, one

predominantly focused on the hazards and risks to resources by wildfire, noxious weeds, and other disturbances. This worldview has shaped an overall consensus among the RAC, county officials, and project sponsors. For example, on the heels of recent “conflagrations” in the area, few question the rationale behind fuel reduction projects. Second, the array of Title III projects reflects an awareness that the fate of counties is indelibly linked - ecologically as well as economically - to the federal lands that surround them. Planning and implementing Title III projects that focus on the risk of wildfire in the wildland-urban interface are common, and the use of cutting-edge GIS technology serves to advance the intergovernmental and interagency cooperation that makes it possible to coordinate Title II and Title III projects.

Third, although the rationale for projects proposed by the general public and approved by the RAC is often articulated in distinctly different worldviews, their proponents nevertheless view the fates of ecosystems, landscapes, and people as connected. The works of Title II project sponsors are often small in scale, but nonetheless have the potential to build community capacity. In short, there is a distinct, but unspoken rationale for the various dump cleanups, crews of woods workers, noxious weed removals, fuel reductions, conservation easements, community fire plans, and high-tech GIS models. Ecosystems and communities can and should be managed together for their increased well-being.

Notwithstanding the notable accomplishments of projects funded under Titles II and III, there remain several areas of concern. For example, there is the difficulty in estimating the type and numbers of jobs created under P.L. 106-393. While some approaches to estimating the effect of programs on job growth can be a quantitative challenge, the goals of monitoring job creation in a project context are more modest. In the future, requirements for both Title II and Title III project monitoring should include a simple accounting method that facilitates aggregated estimates of job creation under these authorities, for example, at the county level.

In the case of the RAC itself, there are two concerns regarding the intent of the authorizing legislation that have been alluded to in previous sections. First, there is the imbalance of representation with respect to Josephine County. Josephine County has few members on the RAC relative to Jackson County, an issue that has prompted its newly-elected commissioners to question their relationship with the RAC. The RAC and the BLM should consider a membership that is more inclusive of Josephine County, particularly if it values the county’s substantial financial contribution. In addition, the exclusion of what are perceived as “bomb throwers” - i.e., certain environmental groups - from the RAC’s collaborative process is somewhat troubling. Although the RAC’s harmonious operation may be the result of intelligent social engineering, it can be argued that this risk-averse approach to inclusiveness represents a loss of unique learning opportunities that collaborations often engender. This aversion to “extreme” political viewpoints may be overblown in light of the generally non-controversial nature of most Title II projects, as well as the moderating influence and spirit of compromise that the RAC voting structure engenders.

With its recent turnover in membership, the Medford BLM RAC now has no member whose role it is to represent Native American interests. This lapse has been partially justified on the basis of the BLM’s tribal consultation process, the local absence of a federally-recognized tribe, and a lack of Native American applicants for RAC membership. Nonetheless, the absence of tribal

representation on the RAC speaks loudly of the wide gulf that separates Native American and Euro-American perspectives on forest management. In our view, tribal representation on the RAC is essential and to be pursued diligently, if only because P.L. 106-393 prescribes it. Beyond the law, there may be much that the BLM, the counties, and the RAC can learn by seeking association with Native Americans and their unique perspective on land management.

Finally, the RAC's relations with county governments exemplify the eternal conflict in American politics between pragmatism and efficiency on one hand, and the ideals of democratic process on the other. In this study, we have cast the issue of county review and "veto" power over Title II projects in terms of risk, specifically, the counter-intuitive notion that collaboration across certain inter-governmental boundaries can be construed as placing at risk the democratic processes of an independent RAC where county governments have already been afforded a distinct voice. The legislation neither requires this level of collaboration, nor does it intend it. In our view, the Medford BLM RAC's notable successes can be attributed to the independent and collaborative spirit that reigns *within* the RAC, one that requires little oversight from either federal or county governments in the recommendations it makes.