

# North Bonneville and Stevenson, Skamania County, Washington

Conducted by Rebecca J. McLain

## NEAI Projects\*

Year	Applicant	Project	Funding Source**	Amount
1994	City of North Bonneville	Evergreen Building Design	EDA	\$35,000
1997		Water and Sewer Plan	RCAP	44,800
1998		Sewer Improvements	OGDF	84,125
1998		Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Update	RCAP	16,000
2000		Fort Cascades Business Park – Dam Access Design	RCAP OGDF	44,800 33,385
1994	City of Stevenson	Downtown Stevenson Improvement Plan	RCAP	18,000
1997		Water Facility Plan and Rate Analysis	RCAP	15,000
1998		Water Reservoir Engineering Design	RCAP	32,000
1994	Port of Skamania	Recreational Boating Facility Feasibility Study and Environmental Assessment	RCAP	30,000
1995		Water Front Pathway Design [S]	RCAP	53,043
1996		Waterfront Pathway Construction [S]	DNR/ALEA***	75,000
1996		Stevenson Landing Expansion	RCAP	38,560
1997		Waterfront Destination Business Development Plan [S]	RCAP	33,750
1999		Waterfront Access/Boat Launch [S]	RCAP	36,000
1999		Waterfront Pathway Signs [S]	RCAP	14,400
1994		Evergreen Building Construction [NB]	CTED/CERB	390,252
1996		Stevenson Industrial Building Improvements	USDA-RD Rural Business Enterprise Grant	194,000
1997		Stevenson Industrial Building Improvements	RCAP	42,500
2001		Fort Cascades Business Park – Land Acquisition	USDA-RD Community Facilities Grant	200,000
2001		Discovery Building Design [NB]	RCAP	50,000

\* Project funding reflects initial loan and grant totals. Final funding amounts may be different.

\*\* Key to funding sources: EDA = Economic Development Administration, RCAP = Rural Community Assistance Program, DNR/ALEA = Department of Natural Resources/Aquatic Lands Enhancement Grant Program, CTED = Community, Trade, and Economic Development, CERB = Community Economic Revitalization Board, USDA-RD = U.S. Department of Agriculture-Rural Development, Old Growth Diversification Fund.

\*\*\* Unclear if NEAI funds

North Bonneville and Stevenson Southern Skamania County, Washington

<b>Year</b>	<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Amount</b>	
1997	Port of Skamania	Wind River Complex Request for Proposals	OGDF	\$24,000	
2000		Local Fiber Optic Network Needs Assessment	RCAP	12,500	
1996	Skamania County	Rock Creek Comprehensive Plan	RCAP	75,805	
1997		Rock Creek Pathway Signs	RCAP	24,000	
2000		Multi-Use Facility and Rock Creek Park	RCAP	40,000	
1998		Drano Lake Expansion Design and Engineering	RCAP	25,600	
2000		Drano Lake Expansion Construction	RCAP -- earmark	504,700	
1998		County-Owned Land Site Design and Engineering [NB]	RCAP	60,000	
1997		Carson Mill Site Access Improvement	USDA-RBEG	300,000	
1999		Home Valley Water System	RCAP	22,880	
1999		Wind River Nursery Fund	RCAP and OGDF	250,000	
2001		Wind River Nursery Conveyance	RCAP -- earmark	195,600	
1997		Housing Needs Strategy	RCAP	32,000	
2000		County GIS System Technical Assistance	RCAP	15,000	
1994		Economic Development Council	Economic Development Coordinator	EDA	40,000
1998			Leadership Development Project	RCAP	16,000
1994	Skamania County Hospital District	Ambulance Building Remodel	RCAP	9,500	

Year	Applicant	Project	Funding Source	Amount
1994	MCEDD	Planning Grant	EDA	63,000
1994-95		Capacity-Building Grant	EDA	189,472
1996-97		Columbia Gorge Economic Opportunity Study and Industrial Land Inventory	Old Growth Diversification Fund	7,500
1997		Capacity-Building Grant	EDA	175,000
1999		Loan for Revolving Loan Fund	USDA-RD Intermediary Relending Program	1,000,000

## Background Context

### Historical and Geographical Setting

Wedged in between the north bank of the Columbia River and the southern slope of Mount Rainier, and straddling the crest of the Cascades, Skamania County occupies one of southwestern Washington's most rugged and picturesque landscapes. Roughly 9,900 people reside within the 1,656 square miles encompassed by Skamania County's boundaries. The vast majority of residents live in towns and hamlets scattered along the north shore of the Columbia River. The forest, the river, and the mountains are integral parts of most residents' lives, shaping settlement patterns, economic opportunities, and social interactions among county residents and between county residents and outsiders.

From west to east, the major settlements in Skamania County include: Skamania, Prindle, Upper Washougal, Cape Horn, Skye, Mt. Pleasant, North Bonneville, Stevenson, Carson, Home Valley, Stabler, Mill A, Cook Willard, and Underwood. These towns fall into roughly three informal sociopolitical categories: The west end, a central core, and the east end. Many west end residents commute to jobs in Camas, Washougal, Vancouver, and Portland; and their children attend schools in the Washougal area. Residents in the county's east end are more oriented

toward White Salmon and the Dalles. The towns and hamlets along the central part of the county adjoining the Columbia River, including North Bonneville and Stevenson, as well as Carson and Home Valley, constitute Skamania County's political and economic core. Stevenson, with its government offices, shops, schools, and a variety of businesses, serves as the political and economic hub of the central core. The Bridge of the Gods, which connects Stevenson to the city of Cascade Locks on the Oregon side of the Columbia River, provides residents of Skamania's central core with easy access to I-84 and the cities of Hood River, Troutdale, and Portland.

The county's two incorporated cities, North Bonneville and Stevenson, date back to the 1800s. Cascades, the town on whose ruins the city of North Bonneville was relocated to in the late 1970s and early 1980s, was the first county seat when the Washington Territorial Legislature established Skamania County in 1854. At the time, Cascades was the largest town in Washington Territory due to its strategic location as the terminus for the portage railroad that shipped goods and passengers around the Cascade Rapids. A major flood destroyed Cascades in 1894, and the small settlement that remained eventually became the city of North Bonneville in 1935, during the con-

struction of the Bonneville Dam in the 1930s. In the 1970s, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers constructed a second powerhouse for the dam at the original North Bonneville town site. The Corps of Engineers relocated the entire town to a site west of the old town beginning in 1974. The new town of North Bonneville was formally dedicated in 1978. Due to its origins as a pre-planned community, North Bonneville has much more of a homogenous suburban community feel than most rural Washington towns.

Stevenson, the current county seat and the county's largest incorporated town (population 1,200), dates back to 1880 when the George Stevenson family established a dock facility for the sternwheelers that plied the Columbia River. Stevenson became the county seat in 1893. The town of Stevenson was incorporated in 1908, when the SP&S Railroad started operations in the Columbia River Gorge.

Skamania County's economy was initially tied to the river and the transportation opportunities it afforded early Euroamerican settlers. Over time, the county's economic base has diversified, but still remains closely tied to the river, forests, and mountains. As Euroamericans moved into the Gorge from the 1850s and onwards, an industrial-scale fishing industry emerged around the Columbia River's seasonal salmon runs. By the 1880s, however, the fishing industry was already in decline due to overfishing and the degradation of spawning grounds in the watershed. Logging and wood processing also became important industries in the late 1800s, as demand increased for construction materials for buildings and cordwood to fuel the steamboats that plied the Columbia River.

The transportation sector continued to attract workers and engineers to the area who built and maintained the railroads, the steamship docks, and the canals and locks needed for barges and cargo ships. Beginning in the early 1900s, a major road building campaign along both sides of the Gorge, as well as the construction of bridges across the Columbia River at Cascade Locks and Hood River, provided tourists and recreationists with easy access to Skamania County's resorts, hot springs, trails, fishing sites, and other recreational opportunities. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Skamania County's economy was also heavily influenced by the boom and bust cycles associated with

the construction of the Bonneville hydroelectric dam in the 1930s, and the construction of another powerhouse for the dam in the 1970s and early 1980s.

### *Water, Timber, and Tourism*

Skamania County's Economic Pillars: With the Columbia River forming the county's southern boundary, water-related economic activities, including fishing, water-based transportation, power production, and, more recently, water-based recreation, have long constituted one of the three economic pillars of Skamania County. Much of Skamania County is covered with steep, heavily forested mountains, thus most of the land base is poorly suited to agricultural, industrial, and residential development. The abundance of timber and scenic vistas, however, made the area economically attractive to timber and tourism-related industries as early as the 1880s. Timber and tourism continue to make important contributions to the county's economy.

Although wood harvesting and processing have played an important role in Skamania County's economy since the 1850s, it wasn't until the post-World War II housing boom that the timber industry dwarfed all other aspects of the County's economy. From 1946 to the early 1990s, the timber industry and its economic development needs shaped infrastructure investments in the county, as well as the economic opportunities available to county inhabitants. That timber came to play such an important economic role in Skamania County is hardly surprising, given that almost 90 per cent of the county is covered with forest. The U.S. Forest Service is the single biggest land manager in the county, with 78 percent of the county's land (1,672 square miles) under the jurisdiction of the Gifford Pinchot National Forest.

Tourism also has been a feature of the Gorge economy since the late 1880s, when sternwheelers brought wealthy Portland residents upriver to visit local hot springs and waterfalls. A few decades later, the construction of State Highway 14, connecting Vancouver to eastern Washington farms and towns, opened up the north bank of the Gorge to mass tourism on a local and regional scale. Health-related tourism constituted an important, albeit seasonal, economic sector in the county up until the 1930s,

when the depression destroyed the fortunes of many of Portland's wealthy residents who formed the bulk of the health spa visitors. Tourism and recreation in the Gorge picked up again following World War II, aided in part by the construction of logging roads that also provided access into previously inaccessible portions of the county. The completion of a reliable network of roads into the Gorge facilitated residential and industrial development and sparked a national debate over whether the area should be set aside as a protected area. In 1986, these debates culminated in the passage of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act, which restricts the types of growth permitted within the bounds of the National Scenic Area. Roughly 15 percent of Skamania County falls within the boundaries of the National Scenic Area established by the U.S. Congress in 1986.

Skamania County is also home to the Bonneville Dam, the first of many major federal water projects constructed across the West over a 50-year period from 1930-1980. The dam had three purposes: to provide jobs to help individuals and families weather the Great Depression of the 1930s, to supply the region with cheap electrical power, and to expand the capacity of the locks in the lower part of the river so that larger barges could travel between Portland and the upper reaches of the Columbia. Although the dam met all of its objectives, it did so at the expense of wild anadromous fish populations in the Pacific Northwest and the destruction of important Native American fishing and cultural sites. Roughly 100 people work at the Bonneville Lock and Dam, including engineers, powerhouse and lock operators, office administrators, laborers, biologists, and park rangers.

### **NEAI Social and Economic Setting**

During the 1970s and early 1980s, Skamania County's economy prospered. Forest Service timber cutting policies and a nation-wide demand for housing materials, including wood products, supported the continuing demand for good-paying jobs in the timber industry. The Army Corps of Engineer's construction of a second powerhouse for the Bonneville Dam provided additional jobs for construction workers and associated retail services. The availability of alternative employment in the construction indus-

try during the early 1980s helped cushion the county from the negative effects of the timber recession and the subsequent restructuring of the wood products industry.

The county's prosperity was short-lived. With the completion of the dam, the availability of relatively high paid jobs in the construction industry declined sharply. At the same time, the passage of the National Scenic Area Act and the enforcement of restrictions on residential and industrial development meant that construction workers had relatively few alternative sources of employment. Increased mechanization in the wood products and timber harvesting industries, coupled with declines in the volume of wood available for sale on federal timber lands in the late 1980s and early 1990s, added yet another shock to the county's already reeling economy.

The decline of Skamania County's timber-dependent economy began in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when the area's forest products industry was hit hard by a prolonged drop in national housing starts. The number of people working in the forest products industry in the county dropped from 820 in 1979 to 620 in 1988, a decrease of roughly 25 percent. Between 1988-1993, timber jobs decreased even more drastically, moving from a high of 620 in 1988 to a low of 180 in 1993. Of the seven sawmills that operated in the southern end of the county during the 1980s, all but two—Stevenson Co-Ply and WKO Lumber—had closed by 1990.

The WKO mill in Carson continued to operate through the 1990s, with a payroll of roughly 130 employees. In addition, High Cascade Veneer, a subsidiary of WKO, began operating out of the former Stevenson Co-Ply peeler plant in Home Valley. High Cascade Veneer employs 24 people full-time. Roughly 300-400 additional jobs in the county are partly supported through the operations of WKO-HCV. These jobs include log handlers and transporters, environmental engineering and construction subcontractors, and vendors of materials used by the mill operations and products sold by WKO-HCV. The two operations also provide revenues to the county in the form of utility fees, property taxes, sales taxes, and fuel taxes.

As mill after mill closed, Skamania County experienced some of the highest unemployment rates in Washington State during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Unemployment rates reached 18.2 percent in 1992, when the Stevenson Co-Ply mill closed (Employment Security Department 1998:10). The unemployment rate dropped below 12 percent in 1994 with the opening of Skamania Lodge, a high-end lodge and conference facility, and remained between 10-11 percent into the late 1990s (Employment Security Department 1998: 10). A combination of factors contributed to the high unemployment rates of the early and mid-1990s, including the area's reliance on the timber industry, the presence of mills

which failed to modernize and could no longer compete in the changing timber markets of the 1990s, and a marked decrease in timber available from federal lands due to northern spotted owl and other endangered species protections.

As indicated in Figure 1, public service constituted Skamania County's largest economic sector in 1990, providing 36.9 percent of the non-farm employment. The private service sector, including trade, financial services, and a variety of other service-oriented occupations provided 28.4 percent of the non-farm jobs in the county. Manufacturing, which at the time was overwhelmingly forest-product related manufacturing, accounted for 23.7 percent of the county's jobs.

**Figure 1: Employment by Economic Sector**

<b>Economic Sector</b>	<b># Employed (non-farm)</b>	<b>% Total Employed (non-farm)</b>
Natural Resources	66	2.6
Construction and Transport	205	8.2
Manufacturing	595	23.7
Private Services	714	28.4
Government	925	36.9
Total	2505	99.8

Source: U.S. Census [1990] Table CA25

Historically, government employment in the county had been quite stable; this changed in the period from 1992-1996 when 120 government jobs were lost, mostly due to Forest Service downsizings. Government employment in the 1990s was primarily in local (50 percent of the public sector jobs) or federal (45 percent of the public sector jobs) government. In 1999, the major employers in southern Skamania county included: Skamania Lodge with 300 employees; Skamania County with 225 employees; the Stevenson-Carson School District with roughly 154 employees; WKO Lumber with roughly 125 employees; Molded Fiber Glass Northwest with 90 employees; Carson Hot Springs with about 45 employees; and the U.S. Forest Service with 48 employees ([www.skamania.org/statistics.html](http://www.skamania.org/statistics.html)).

Per capita income dropped in Skamania County between 1979 and 1989, falling from \$13,250 to \$11,621 (U.S. Census 1980 and 1990). Median household income also fell during this period, from \$32,691 in 1979 to \$28,778 in 1989 (U.S. Census 1980 and 1990). The drop in average per capita and median household income during this period is largely attributable to the completion of the Bonneville Dam in the mid-1980s, which decreased the number of high paying jobs in engineering and construction in the area. State wage data confirms this decline, with a drop occurring in average real wages from \$25,429 in 1982 to \$20,896 in 1996 (ESD 1998:14).

Despite the fall in real wages and income during the 1980s, the percentages of all persons and families

with below poverty level incomes were roughly comparable to the statewide average (see Figure 2). This pattern also held true for persons and families with children. However, the percentage of persons older than 65 with below-poverty level incomes was substantially higher in Skamania County (13.6 percent) than for the state (9.0 percent). Skamania County residents were somewhat more likely to be on public assistance than the statewide average (8.4 percent vs 6.7 percent) and social security (25.9 percent vs 24 percent), but somewhat less likely to have other retirement income (15.7 percent vs 17.2 percent). Educational levels in Skamania County in 1990 were also somewhat lower than the statewide average; only 77.4 percent of the county's residents had graduated

from high school compared with 83.8 percent of all state residents (U.S. Census 1990).

As indicated in Figure 3, Skamania County experienced a sharp increase in population between 1970 and 1980. The population remained relatively stable from 1980 to 1990, and increased sharply again between 1990 and 2000.

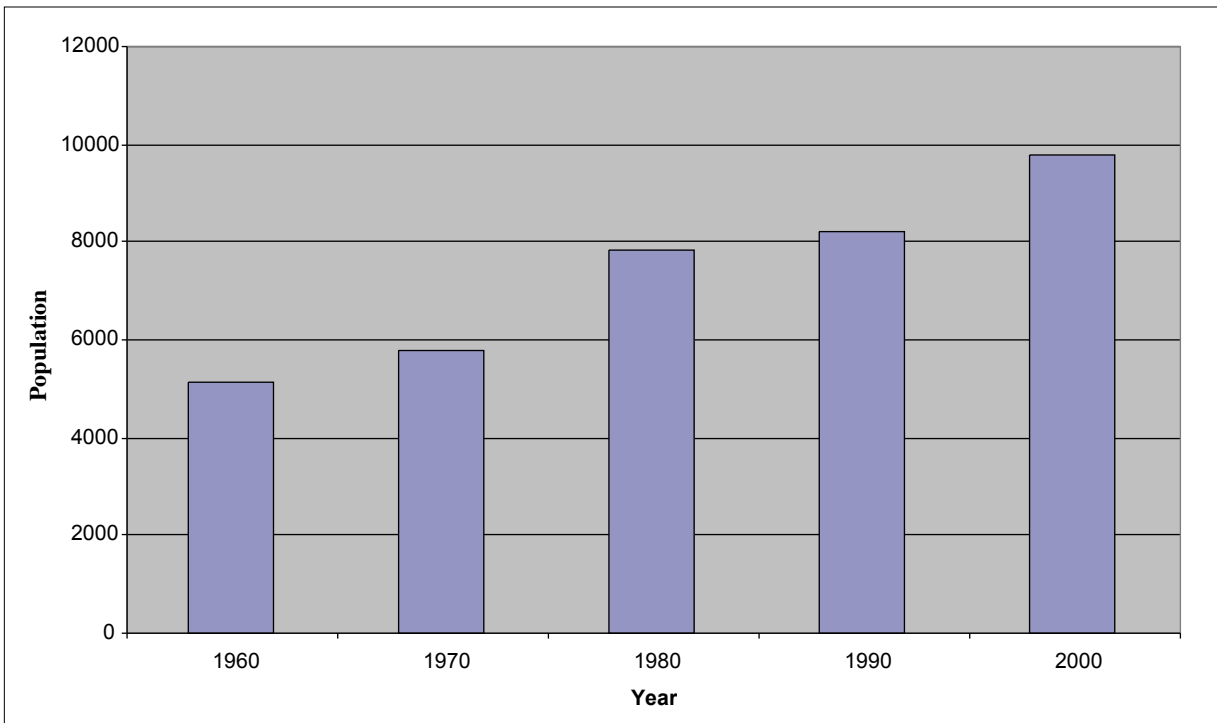
The residents of Skamania County have access to a range of financial, medical, and social services in Stevenson, the county seat. These include a full-service bank, a hospital, the county courthouse, the county library, and the county sheriff's office. The nearest higher education facility is located in Clark County, 40 miles to the west over a steep and winding road in Clark County.

**Figure 2: 1990 Census Data on Poverty and Income Types**

	<b>Skamania County (% of population)</b>	<b>Washington (% of population)</b>
Persons below poverty level	9.4	10.9
Children below poverty level	9.5	9.6
Elderly below poverty level	13.6	9.0
Families below poverty level	7.9	7.8
Families with children below poverty level	12.0	13.5
Income Type Data		
Retirement income	15.7	17.2
Public assistance	8.4	6.7
Social Security Insurance	25.9	24.0

Source: U.S. Census 1990

**Figure 3: Change in Population in Skamania County 1960-2000**



Source: WASHINGTON March 27, 1995. Population of Counties by Decennial Census: 1900 to 1990. Compiled and edited by Richard L. Forstall. Population Division. U.S. Bureau of the Census

### Key Issues in Early 1990s

Several major socioeconomic changes occurred simultaneously during the late 1980s and early 1990s in southern Skamania County, including:

- The restructuring of the region's timber economy and subsequent local mill closures and layoffs in forestry and wood products processing and manufacturing,
- An abrupt decline in the supply of timber available from local national forests as the federal government sought to comply with the provisions of the Endangered Species Act and the Northwest Forest Plan,
- A decline in county revenues as a result of the decrease in Forest Service timber receipts, and
- A restructuring of the area's future property tax base due to restrictions on

residential and industrial development under the provisions of the National Scenic Area Act.

These changes created a number of challenges for Skamania County as it struggled to diversify its economy during the 1990s. The challenges included a rapid collapse in the area's timber economy, a steady decline in the revenues available to the county at a time when demands for services increased, and lack of financial capacity in the private sector to offset the weakened public sector financial capacity, the lack of infrastructure suitable for a more diversified economy, and the disjuncture between the institutional location of technical capacity and institutional control over potential industrial space.

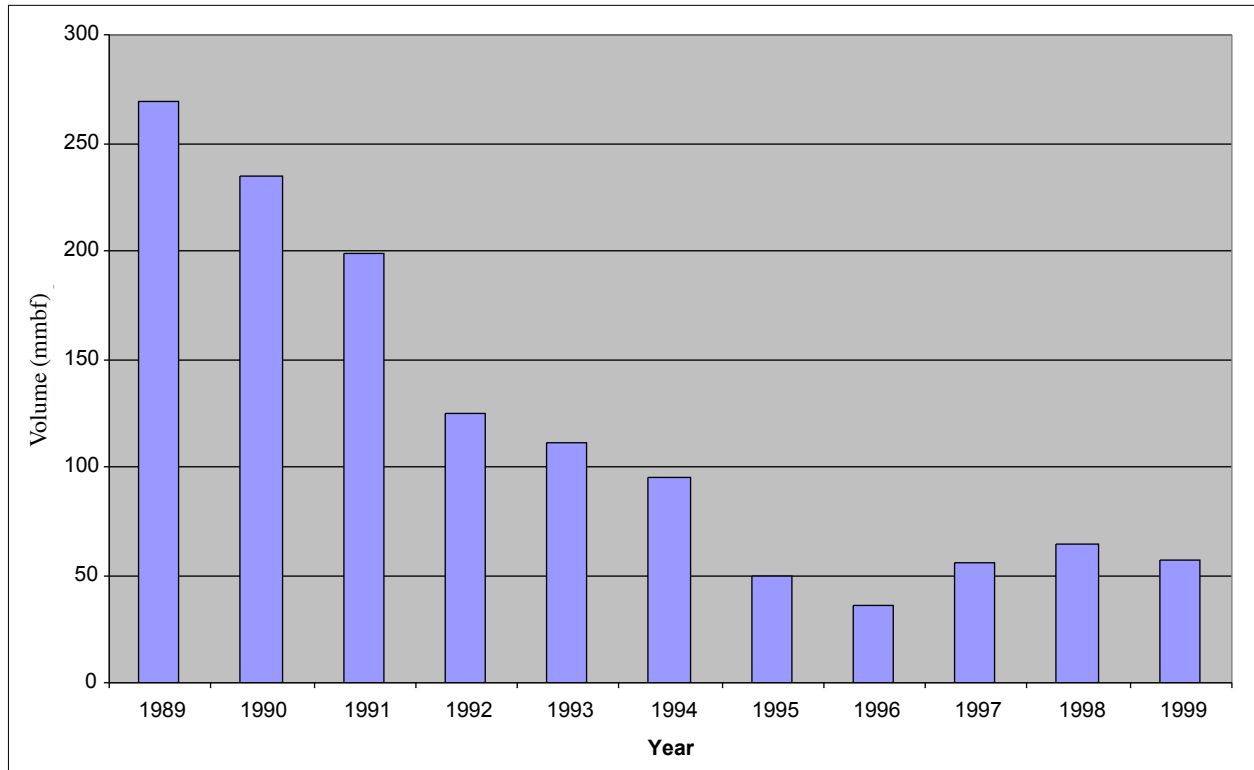
### *Decline of the Timber Economy*

As Figure 4 indicates, the volume of timber harvested in Skamania County fell from 1989 to 1996. The annual harvest dropped from a high of 269.6 mmbf in 1989 to 35.9 mmbf in 1996, with most of the decline due to reductions in cutting on For-

est Service lands. The biggest drop occurred between 1991-92, when the harvest decreased by nearly 50 percent. As noted earlier, the decline in the amount

of timber harvested was accompanied by a series of mill closures and a rise in unemployment between the late 1980s and early 1990s.

**Figure 4: Timber harvested in Skamania County (1989-1999)**



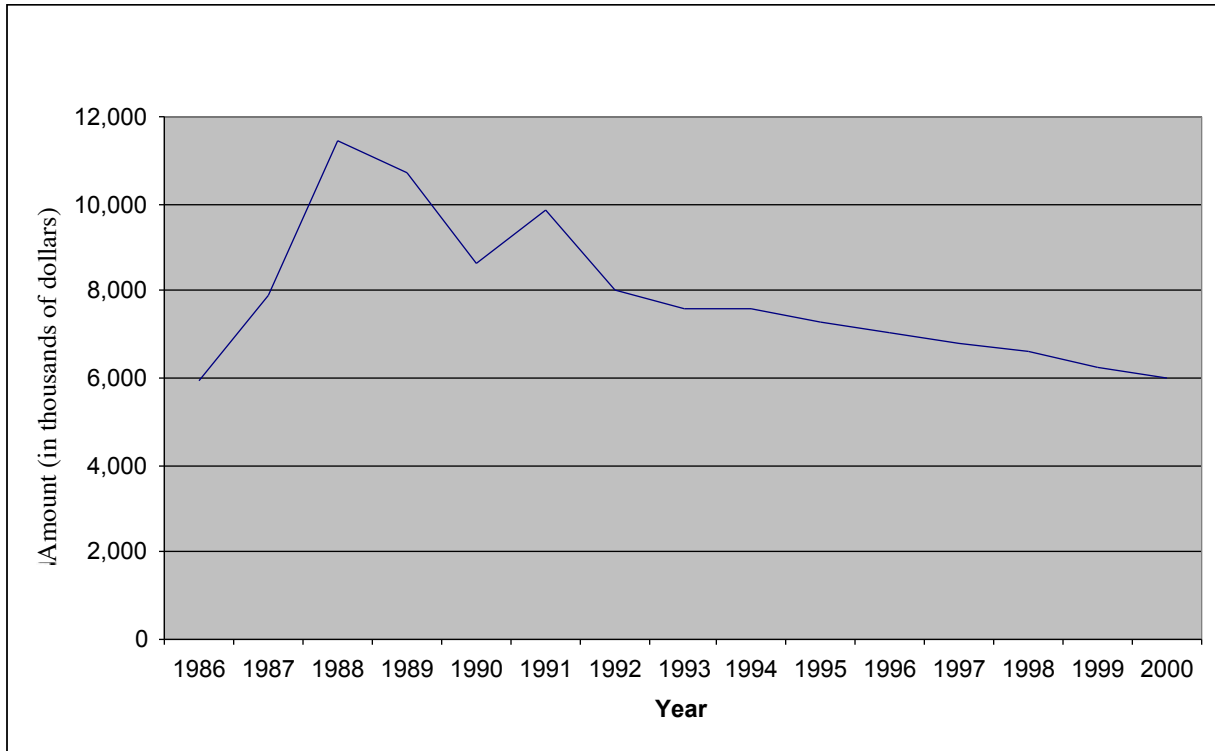
Source: OECD. "Stevenson, Washington: A Case Study for the Inland Northwest Economic Adjustment Strategy." <http://www.econ.state.or.us/INNWSkamania.htm>

#### *Inadequate Supply of Financial Capital*

In the early 1990s, a lack of financial capacity and locale specific economic barriers in both the public and the private sector posed a challenge for Skamania County's efforts to diversify its economy. In the public sector, massive cutbacks in the volume of timber har-

vested on Forest Service lands resulted in a substantial reduction in the timber receipts available to the County compared to the previous decade. Even with a federal subsidy to offset the losses, in a county with a limited property tax base, the fall in timber receipts had a substantial impact on the county's budget.

**Figure 5: USFS 25% Timber Receipts to Skamania County (1986-2000)**



Source: Gifford Pinchot National Forest website  
 (<http://www.fs.fed.us/gpnf/timber/timber99.htm#Timber%20Sale%20Levels>)

The county's share of the Forest Service's timber receipts from the Gifford Pinchot National Forest fell from a high of \$11.4 million in 1988 to \$8 million in 1992, when Stevenson Co-Ply closed. Since 1992, timber receipts to the County have fallen steadily, albeit more gradually. In 2000, the County received \$6 million in timber receipts from the U.S. Forest Service; almost half of what it had received a decade earlier.<sup>1</sup>

The fall in timber revenues to Skamania County coincided with the continued restructuring of the traditional property tax base. The 1986 National Scenic Area Act included provisions for the Forest Service to purchase private lands within the Scenic Area boundaries suitable for inclusion in the Special Management Area category. Such purchases remove private land from the tax rolls, and thus decrease the county's taxable land base. Thus in the early 1990s, the County

was faced with a decline in two of its major sources of revenue. The decline in county revenues coincided with a decrease in the county's population in the 20-45 age group and a large increase in the 45-64 age group. The growing elderly population placed increasing demands on the county's health care system and other services for older people at a time when the county's financial capacity was steadily eroding.

The private sector's financial capacity in the early 1990s was also very limited. According to study informants, most of the businesses in the county were undercapitalized and had difficulty obtaining access to the credit needed to strengthen or expand their operations. The opening of Skamania Lodge in 1993, however, provided an infusion of outside capital that has played an important role in stabilizing the County's economy.

1. Note, however that Skamania County's revenues from timber receipts nearly doubled between 1986 and 1998, and the current level is very close to the revenues received in 1986.

### **Infrastructure Limitations to Diversification**

By the late 1980s, many Skamania County citizens felt that investments in the recreation and tourism sector were the most likely to bring a return to economic prosperity. However, the communities in the County lacked many of the physical capital attributes needed to support recreation and tourism development. For example, all of the southern Skamania County communities' water systems were substandard, constituting a public health hazard, as well as an impediment to business (and residential) expansion. In addition, North Bonneville suffered from very poor drainage, due to the type of fill material the Army Corps of Engineers had used in the construction of the new town site. A severe shortage of suitable industrial space, coupled with the lack of sewer, water, electric power, and telecommunications infrastructure to the limited areas available for industrial development, also limited the County's economic development possibilities.

### *Human Capacity Limitations to Diversification*

Another challenge facing Skamania County in the early 1990s, was the disjuncture between the institutions with control over land suitable for industrial development and the institutions with the skills to develop such sites. For example, the Port of Skamania, which had a staff with the ability to implement an industrial site development program owned only four acres of developable space in 1994. The County, which lacked the level of technical capacity of the Port in site development matters, owned 26 acres. In order to address this issue, the County and the Port established a close partnership over the 1990s.

### **THRIVE and the Skamania County Community Action Plan**

As illustrated above, Skamania County faced several formidable challenges to its ability to diversify its economy in the early and mid-1990s. Working in the community's favor, however, was the presence of an already-existing movement among the community's citizens and leaders to cooperate with each other in economic development efforts. This collaborative movement emerged in response to the passage of the National Scenic Area Act in 1986.

Beginning in 1986, the residents of Skamania County took a proactive approach to adjusting to the new land use constraints imposed by the Act along the Columbia River's north bank. Unlike neighboring Klickitat County to the east, and Hood River County, Oregon to the south, Skamania county embarked on an intensive economic planning process almost as soon as the Act was signed into law. In 1986, 25 community members formed a group called THRIVE to set goals for community development. THRIVE identified four goals: enhancing the diversity of jobs available by encouraging existing and new businesses, getting community members involved in planning, and enhancing and marketing the area's natural environment. In 1987, the County Board of commissioners approved the goals and objectives established by THRIVE. THRIVE also supported the Chamber of Commerce by shifting it more toward tourism.

One of the objectives identified was to develop an inventory of sites suitable for a resort and to market the area to resort developers. When the Gorge Commission released its siting criteria for a resort, Skamania County was already on its way toward site identification and marketing. As a result, residents were in on the conference center siting process from the very beginning. Skamania County's site was selected by the Commission in September, 1990. Plans for the 180-room Skamania Lodge estimated that the facility would provide 200 direct jobs and 180 indirect jobs and generate \$18.9 million dollars of spending in the area. Indeed, retail and service jobs more than doubled between 1986 and 1994, from 270 to 640, with much of the increase attributable to the Lodge's operations.

When the Clinton administration implemented the NEAI in 1994, the county was also moving ahead in other areas, including the building of the Columbia Gorge Interpretive Center (which County citizens had been working on developing since the early 1980s), completion of an up-to-date office and industrial building on Port property in Stevenson in 1992, and establishment of three major annual festivals to attract tourists.

In February, 1992, the Economic Development Council and the newly created Skamania County Planning and Community Development depart-

ment embarked on a county-wide effort to create a grassroots-based community development program. This program was known as Thrive II. Out of the Thrive II process emerged an analysis of the county's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, as well as a list of the community's goals. In 1992, the county adopted the goals as guidelines for prioritizing economic development projects. As with many rural community plans developed at the time, the Skamania County vision statement emphasized the importance of both jobs and quality of life.

In August of the same year, the County supported the formation of a county-wide Community Action Team. The Community Action Team served as an advisory body for the Economic Development Council and the Regional Planning Council; it also fulfilled the functions of an Action Team as elaborated under the Rural Community Assistance Program in the 1990 Farm Bill. As such, the Community Action Team's membership drew from a variety of community institutions, including 15 government entities, 12 business sectors, and six civic organizations.

The County charged this team with the responsibility of updating and transforming the 1992 THRIVE document into a Community Strategic Plan and Annual Work Plan. With such a plan, economic development institutions in the county could qualify for federal funding under various state and federal programs, including the newly-implemented NEAI. The Action Plan supported activities that emphasized economic diversification away from timber and the wood products industry. The Plan identified tourism as the primary diversification strategy, with an emphasis on creating the conditions for Skamania county to become a destination tourist location. The new plan was adopted by the Board of County Commissioners in the fall of 1994. The cities of Stevenson and North Bonneville, the Port of Skamania County, and the Skamania County Economic Development Council formally accepted the plan in October, 1994. The years of hard work on the part of Skamania County's citizens to create a community-based planning and economic development process during the late 1980s and early 1990s greatly enhanced the ability of communities in southern Skamania County to profit from the availability of NEAI funding from 1994-2000.

### **Key Public Sector Economic Development Players**

The federal government plays an extraordinarily strong role in southern Skamania County's economic development arena. The economic development possibilities are further influenced by a variety of other public sector and quasi-public entities. The following section provides a brief overview of the key public sector entities operating at the city, county, and Gorge-wide level. All of these entities played important roles in the implementation of NEAI-funded projects. Two other key players, the Columbia River Gorge Commission and the Washington Investment Board, are described earlier in this case study.

#### *Skamania County*

Three elected county commissioners govern Skamania County. The County also has an elected county prosecutor, sheriff, treasurer, auditor, assessor, and clerk. A full-time county administrator works closely with the Board of County Commissioners to implement county policies and programs. In the year 2000, the County received revenues amounting to \$14.8 million (cite – Skamania county data from Washington State website), of which 41 percent consisted of timber receipts from the U.S. Forest Service.

#### *City of Stevenson*

An elected mayor and five city council members govern the city of Stevenson on a volunteer basis. The City employs a full-time administrator to implement the City's programs and policies.

#### *City of North Bonneville*

An elected mayor and five elected city council members govern the city of North Bonneville on a volunteer basis. The council sets policies for the city, including its economic development priorities and goals. The City owns its own water, sewer, and television services, which it sells to residents and businesses in the area.

#### *Port of Skamania County*

In 1889, the State of Washington took title to all unsold shore lands along navigable waters, including the north bank of the Columbia River. In 1911, the Washington legislature authorized public ownership

and management of these lands. The legislation created public port districts to manage the harbors and ports with a mandate to promote and protect commerce. The legislation also gave the port districts authority to develop and maintain shipping and industrial sites, and to levy taxes and sell bonds. Over the last century, the legislature has expanded port powers and functions to include a wide variety of economic development, transportation, shipping and trade related activities. Ports are governed by a port commission, which can choose to hire a port manager to run the port. Over the years, ports in many parts of coastal Washington and along the Columbia have emerged as significant players in rural economic development. Indeed, the Port of Skamania County is unquestionably one of the most influential economic development organizations in Skamania County.

The Port of Skamania County was formed in 1964 when the Ports of North Bonneville and Wind River merged into one Port responsible for administering Port assets throughout Skamania County. The focus of the port is to create jobs by developing its assets and supporting existing businesses. It places a strong emphasis on collaborating with other economic development and community organizations in planning and implementing projects. Since 1964, the Port has steadily diversified and improved its asset portfolio. Between 1969-1974, the Port used monies from an Industrial Development Fund to turn unused assets into revenue generating properties. For example, the Port constructed the Beacon Rock Golf Course in North Bonneville, which opened in 1974. It also acquired economic development grants in the early 1970s to construct an industrial park, including a large building, on port lands located along the waterfront in Stevenson. It subsequently rented this property out to various tenants.

During the 1980s, the Port constructed additional buildings on lands in North Bonneville, Stevenson, and Carson, as well as a tour boat dock on the Stevenson waterfront. Beginning in the mid-1990s, the Port also invested substantial resources into expanding the Port's asset base so as to provide greater flexibility in terms of revenue production strategies.

The Port works closely with the Skamania County Economic Development Council in plan-

ning and program implementation. It currently manages about 100,000 square feet of industrial and commercial property with a value of roughly \$4.5 million. Over the past decade its tenants have shifted from being primarily wood products related firms to a variety of businesses, including recreational sporting equipment manufacturers, a docking and cruise facility operator, an environmental remediation firm, a law company, a landscaper, a mining company, and a water district. These firms employ roughly 75 workers with varying salary levels.

#### *Skamania County Economic Development Council*

Founded in 1985, the Skamania County Economic Development Council is a private, nonprofit that coordinates many of the county's economic development activities. The Economic Development Council seeks to assist existing local businesses in retention and expansion efforts, as well as to help prospective businesses locate to the county. Its programs include two revolving loan funds (micro-loans) for businesses in the National Scenic Area; it also provides information for businesses regarding taxes, infrastructure, and regulations. The Economic Development Council is governed by a 12-member Board of Directors, which includes representatives from the cities, county, and businesses.

#### *Mid-Columbia Economic Development District*

The Mid-Columbia Economic Development District (MCEDD) operates in two Washington counties (Skamania and Klickitat) and three Oregon counties (Hood River, Wasco, and Sherman). It thus provides economic development coverage for many communities located in the Columbia River Gorge. The District's mission is "to promote the creation of family-wage jobs, the diversification of the economic base, and the growth, development, and retention of business and industry" in the five counties (CGEDA website – Mission Statement Page).

The Mid-Columbia Economic Development District's board of directors is composed of representatives from the port districts, counties, cities, chambers of commerce, and other public and private organizations. MCEDD plays three important roles in the region's economy: 1) It coordinates economic

development efforts throughout the region, 2) it administers a revolving loan fund that provides businesses with low-interest financing and provides other state and federal programs with financing assistance, and 3) it provides technical assistance in the form of planning and grant writing to agencies involved in economic development projects.

*Columbia Gorge Economic Development Association (CGEDA)*

As Gorge communities sought to cope with the economic changes taking place in the early and mid-

1990s, community leaders and economic development staff recognized that it would be more efficient to work together and pool their resources in their effort to retain jobs and generate new employment opportunities in the Gorge. In 1996, the Klickitat County Resource Development Department, the Ports of Klickitat, Skamania County, Hood River, The Dalles, and Cascade Locks, the Skamania County Economic Development Council, and the Mid-Columbia Economic Development District created the Columbia Gorge Economic Development Association in order to initiate a regional business and industrial marketing effort.

## NEAI Projects and Programs

### **WA-CERT and North Bonneville/Stevenson**

The WA-CERT process was created so that federal agencies participating in the Northwest Economic Adjustment Initiative could allocate those funds efficiently to rural communities. The WA-CERT process requires that county and tribal governments serve as the collection points for project proposals emanating from entities based in their jurisdictions. The counties and tribes then prioritize the projects according to the guidelines issued by WA-CERT.

As noted in the previous section, in 1992 Skamania County built upon its experiences with THRIVE to develop a broad-based, county-wide prioritization system for allocating the community's economic development efforts. The Community Action Team created as part of the THRIVE II process took on responsibility for setting grassroots-based priorities for economic development throughout the County. The Community Action Team then submitted the prioritized list to the Board of County Commissioners for discussion and modification, if necessary. Thus far, the County Commissioners have maintained the priorities identified by the Community Action Team. Study informants noted that the lack of disagreement over priorities between the two entities is linked to the active participation of the commissioners in community action team meetings, as well as multiple and frequent points of contact between team members and county commissioners. The community action team meets quarterly to set WA-CERT priori-

ties. The meetings are open to anyone who wishes to attend. Attendance tends to be fairly high, with approximately 40 people attending each meeting.

Study informants expressed very favorable views about the WA-CERT process. As two community leaders note below, the WA-CERT process has played a key role in developing an ongoing culture of collaboration among community stakeholders and of communication between community members and funding agencies at the state and federal level:

WACERT helped us focus our priorities. It got our community action team going and increased the amount of communication and collaboration between the community and the agencies. We would suggest a project and an agency person would say, "we can help with this or that part of the project." It's the communication at the initial stage in the process that is the key.

We work together and that is why WACERT is useful. It gets us together on a quarterly basis. We prioritize as a county. It has worked really well.

Study informants observed that one benefit of the WA-CERT process is that it brings the stakeholders together in one place, thus allowing them to see how different projects could be linked together rather than funded and implemented separately:

We had a really strong WACERT process here. The local community meets to identify the top projects for funding. All the key stakeholders do that together so that we can see the relationships between the different projects. It helps us to synthesize information so we don't get pockets of activities here and there. And that process really works.

Study informants also noted that the WA-CERT process also facilitates their ability to develop and implement big projects in that it brings together agencies who can fund different portions of a long-term project:

Many projects require planning. You need to have that in place before you can put the bigger projects together. The WACERT process helps on that. You can get the design and engineering funded and then it just keeps going. One part of a project builds on another.

The study informants who worked with state and federal economic development programs also viewed the WA-CERT process as an important innovation that has made it easier for them to allocate and coordinate funding to communities such as southern Skamania County.

Both agency and community informants noted that Skamania County and the agency staff working in the area have had to struggle at times to persuade higher level funding authorities that the existence of the National Scenic Area Act funds should not affect the County's eligibility for receiving NEAI funds. As study informants noted, it took many years for Congress to allocate funds for distribution under the Scenic Area Act provisions and even longer for the Washington Investment Board to distribute the funds within the Gorge. Moreover, the National Scenic Area Act funds were meant to mitigate the economic effects of restricting land use within the Gorge, whereas NEAI funds were meant to mitigate the economic effects of the Northwest Forest Plan.

### **NEAI Projects: Description and Analysis**

NEAI-funded projects that have affected or may affect the communities in the Skamania County core

include projects sponsored through the Port of Skamania, the Cities of Stevenson and North Bonneville, Skamania County, the Economic Development Council, the Skamania County Hospital District, and the Skamania County Parks and Recreation Department. In addition, southern Skamania's communities have also been affected directly and indirectly by programs and projects carried out by the Mid-Columbia Economic Development District with Initiative support.

Most of the projects that have affected the county's core communities were implemented within the boundaries of either North Bonneville or Stevenson. However, because the citizens of Skamania County took a tightly integrated county-wide approach to their economic development activities during the NEAI period, it is difficult to analyze the NEAI's impacts without incorporating at least a cursory analysis of all the projects in southern Skamania County. Key projects with clear county-wide impacts that took place beyond the borders of Stevenson and North Bonneville include Skamania County's Columbia River boating facility and water recreation feasibility study, the Drano Lake expansion, and the Wind River Nursery Complex project. The projects funded under NEAI in Skamania County's core communities fall into the following broad investment categories: 1) Enhancement of the county's tourism and recreational sector, 2) creation and improvement of industrial sites, 3) expansion and improvement of the county's basic services infrastructure, and 4) building community capacity to access and efficiently use financial and human resources.

In addition, the JTPA program administered by the Southwest Washington Private Industry Council, but funded in part through NEAI funds, focused on retraining dislocated timber workers residing in Stevenson and North Bonneville.

The U.S. Forest Service also sought to provide more direct assistance to dislocated timber workers through its Jobs-in-the-Woods contract program administered by the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. However, preliminary investigations indicated that the level of funding for Jobs-in-the-Woods in Skamania County was limited. Given the low level of funding for Jobs-in-the-Woods in the case study communities, coupled with the complexity of other programs and

limited project funds, this case study does not address the Jobs-in-the-Woods program.

*Tourism and Recreation Enhancement*

The Community Action Team invested in three key aspects of its tourism and recreation infrastructure: a) Downtown revitalization of Stevenson, the county seat; b) enhancing tourism and recreational facilities along the north bank of the Columbia; and c) improving the recreational facilities in Rock Cove, an important local recreation site. The community acquired an estimated \$969,000 in NEAI funds, which it leveraged to approximately \$1.4 million dollars for tourism and recreation investments.

*Downtown Stevenson Revitalization*

Skamania Lodge opened in 1993, attracting more than 500,000 visitors to the area in its first year of op-

eration. The increase in visitor numbers at the lodge, however, did not quickly translate into increased sales for many of the businesses in downtown Stevenson. In 1994, a working group composed of the Skamania County Community Action Team, the City of Stevenson, the Stevenson Business Association and the Skamania County Chamber of Commerce, concluded that the city’s downtown area lacked “curb appeal.” The business owners suggested that it would be helpful for the Community Action Team to put in a request for funds to bring in a consultant to assist business owners and the city in devising a strategy to make the downtown area more attractive to visitors. This strategy built upon efforts carried out by the City and local businesses to develop a Downtown Revitalization Plan with assistance from the Washington State Department of Community Development in 1990. The project cost \$22,500 to complete, with the Rural

**Figure 6: Tourism and Recreation Projects**

Date	Applicant	Project Name	NEAI Funding	Estimated Total Funding	Sources of NEAI Funding
<b>Downtown Tourism Development</b>					
1994	Stevenson	Downtown Stevenson Improvement Plan	18,000	22,500	RCAP
<b>Water Recreation and Tourism Projects</b>					
1994	Port	Skamania Recreational Boating Facility Feasibility Study	30,000	30,000	RCAP
1998	County	Drano Lake Expansion Design and Engineering Plan	25,600	32,000	RCAP
2000	County	Drano Lake Improvements	504,700	850,000	RCAP-Earmark
1999	Port	Waterfront Access/Boat Launch	36,000	45,000	RCAP
1995	Port	Waterfront Pathway Design	53,043	66,843	RCAP
1996	Port	Waterfront Pathway Construction*	75,000	75,000	DNR/ALEA
1996	Port	Stevenson Landing Expansion	38,560	48,200	RCAP
1997	Port	Waterfront Destination Business Development	33,750	45,000	RCAP
1999	Port	Port Waterfront Signage	14,400	18,000	RCAP
<b>Rock Creek Cove Development (Local Recreation)</b>					
1996	County	Rock Creek Comprehensive Plan	75,805	96,141	RCAP
1997	County	Rock Creek Interpretive Signs	24,000	34,500	RCAP
2000	County	Rock Creek Year-round Multi-Use Facility	40,000	50,000	RCAP

\* It is unclear if these were Initiative funds.

Community Assistance Program providing \$18,000, the City \$3,500 (\$1,000 in-kind and \$2,500 in cash), and the Chamber of Commerce \$1,000 (in-kind).

The city of Stevenson and the Skamania County Chamber of Commerce worked with downtown businesses and the downtown business association to carry out the project. The consultant team also worked with individual business owners to assess the changes needed to enhance curb appeal and to improve the variety of store merchandise and aesthetics. Ten business owners responded immediately for assistance. As one study informant noted, the business community and local leaders saw the project as a first step in implementing improvements that could serve to catalyze more downtown development geared toward the area's emerging tourism and recreation economy: "In the early 1990s, the timber industry was falling apart and we knew we needed to address different needs in the future. We felt that a key step was for us to start re-doing the downtown core."

Since 1994, the project has resulted in a variety of spin-off projects, including re-routing the road system so that trucks no longer pass through the downtown core, putting in new sidewalks, and developing a small community plaza to create a public gathering point. Several new shops and restaurants have been established in the downtown area, bringing more diverse kinds of jobs and businesses into the community.

#### *Waterfront Recreation and Tourism Development*

With the declining importance of the timber economy in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Community Action Team developed a long-range strategy for transforming what had previously been industrial space along the Columbia waterfront into recreation and tourism space. The Team focused project funds on developing or improving two types of recreational space: 1) expanding and improving river and lake access and facilities for sport fishers and watercraft users, and 2) making Stevenson's waterfront more attractive and accessible to tourists.

#### *River Access and Waterfront Facilities*

Planning, Design, and Construction. As a first step in strengthening water-based tourism and recreation industries in Skamania County, the

Community Action Team decided that it would be helpful to have a better understanding of the existing and potential waterfront recreation sites along the county's Columbia River waterfront. The Team acquired Initiative funds in 1994 to conduct a recreational boating facility feasibility study. Using the information gathered from the feasibility study, the Community Action Team directed its waterfront access improvement efforts toward Drano Lake, one of the area's most popular fishing spots, and the design of the Port of Skamania's boat launch facility.

#### *Recreational Boating Facility Feasibility Study*

In 1994, when NEAI funds first became available, the Community Action Team applied for a \$30,000 grant from the Rural Community Assistance Program to hire a consulting firm to conduct a waterfront recreation feasibility study, an alternative site analysis, and an environmental assessment. In addition, the County requested that the firm conduct the preliminary engineering design work for a recreational and boating facility. Skamania County and the city of Stevenson each contributed \$3,750 to the project budget of \$37,500.

The study provided data that clearly supported the belief of county and city staff that tourism and recreation industries were likely to expand in the Gorge. For example, data from the Washington State Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation, suggested that water recreation in particular was one of the fastest growing recreational activities. The study also was useful in that it pinpointed areas where the County and other local government entities could make investments that would be most likely to address the growing demand for water recreation facilities. For example, the study indicated that there is a shortage of public access to the Columbia River waterfront in Skamania County, including the lack of roads, parking, restrooms, boat launches, public tie-ups, and marinas. A survey of marina operators along the Columbia River, however, suggested that public marinas tend to have low profitability in the Columbia River Gorge due to the high capital investment required to construct a marina coupled with high winter vacancy rates and low revenues from transient users. The survey data and market analysis

argued against the idea of constructing a new public marina in the Skamania county area.

In addition to providing important planning information to the communities of southern Skamania County, the Waterfront Recreation Feasibility Project also served as a model for what an under-capitalized and under-staffed community can accomplish through local government collaboration and participatory planning. Community members involved with the project designed it as an experiment for learning how to structure a process that simultaneously encourages inter-institutional collaboration and public participation in the design phase of projects. For example, as part of the feasibility study, the Port of Skamania County took the lead on conducting a survey in 1995 of Skamania County marina facility needs. The Skamania County Public Utility District played an important role by mailing the questionnaires out with its utility bills. The Port staff then analyzed the data and provided it to the consultant for use in the final report. The Port used a similar collaborative process to conduct a survey of boat owners, with Washington Dept. of Licensing providing the names and addresses.

The Port also built into the project a requirement that the consulting firm provide the project advisory committee with a series of interim reports. After reviewing each interim report, the committee then met with the consultant to decide how to adjust the project implementation strategy in light of the interim report findings. Through this iterative participatory process, project advisory board members, Skamania County staff, and Port staff identified four sites out of the 43 included in the feasibility study as priorities for further development work. The decision group selected the Port of Skamania Boat Launch site, located on the north end of the Port's waterfront property in Stevenson, as the site to focus on developing first.

Study informants expressed positive views about the feasibility study. They noted that while it was clear that the demand for recreational boating was strong and likely to continue, the study provided the community with data enabling it to make better decisions about where to focus their investments in the recreational boating sector. For example, the study indicated that the returns to investments from marinas were often low. As a result, the community decided

to focus first on improving other kinds of boating facilities, such as fishing and recreational boating facilities at Drano Lake (see below).

#### *Drano Lake Expansion (Design and Improvement)*

In 1998, Skamania County received \$25,600 from the Rural Community Assistance Program to fund the cost of designing and getting permits for improving the Drano Lake boat launch site located on the Columbia River on the eastern end of Skamania County. The Skamania County Department of Parks and Recreation contributed \$6,400 in matching funds to the project's total cost of \$32,000. Preliminary work on the project had begun several years earlier, but a question over land ownership for the site delayed the project by several years.

The Drano Lake boat launch site is one of the most heavily used boat launches in Skamania County, with roughly 70,000 people using it each year. The site is nationally recognized as a steelhead and salmon fishing spot. Local businesses benefit measurably from the presence of anglers during the fishing season. The Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Management plan lists Drano Lake as one of the priority sites for recreational development. In addition, the Port-sponsored boat access feasibility study conducted in 1994-95 included Drano Lake as one of four priority sites for improvements.

The project consisted of developing a preliminary design for improving the parking area and sanitation facilities, expanding the boat launch area, enhancing fish and wildlife habitat, and making the area suitable for a variety of recreational uses besides fishing, including swimming, windsurfing, and wildlife viewing. In addition, the Drano Lake design funds helped the County pay for the environmental and biological assessments needed to obtain construction permits from the National Marine Fisheries Service and other agencies. The County established a project advisory board, composed of representatives from fishing clubs, environmental groups, private citizens, the Yakama Tribe, Burlington Northern, and a variety of state and federal agencies. The board met frequently with the consulting firm hired to do the design work in order to ensure that the proposed design adequately addressed the community's needs.

Skamania County leveraged the design work funded through the NEAI in 1998-99 to obtain \$504,700 in construction funds for service improvements at Drano Lake from the U.S. Forest Rural Community Assistance Program. The construction funds consisted of congressionally earmarked money to support recreational development under the provisions of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act. The County obtained an additional \$345,300 grant from the Washington State Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation to cover the project's \$850,000 cost. It is too early to determine whether the project has been a success.

#### *Port Boat Launch Design*

In 1999, the Port of Skamania County obtained a \$36,000 grant through the Rural Community Assistance Program to support the costs of designing improvements to the Port's Cascade Avenue boat launch site. The Port contributed \$9,000 in matching funds to the \$45,000 project. As with other projects in the County, the Port Boat Launch Design process incorporated regular meetings between the contractor and the project advisory board, regular interim reports, and Port approval of each project stage before the consultant could begin on the next stage.

The project provided the Port with the information needed to take the project through the permitting, bidding, and building process. In addition, participating in the project provided the Port staff and project committee members with a better understanding of how to apply for recreational grants at the state level.

#### *Stevenson Waterfront Improvements*

In 1993, the Port of Skamania developed a Waterfront Master Plan to transform the Port's properties along the Columbia River in Stevenson into assets supportive of the County's economic diversification objectives. The 1994 watercraft facility feasibility study, discussed earlier in this report, constituted a first step toward accomplishing that transformation. Between 1994 and 1999, the Port obtained approximately \$251,000 in NEAI funds (leveraged to almost \$300,000) to implement portions of the Waterfront Master Plan. Major projects included developing a waterfront pathway, improving Stevenson's boat landing, and creating a waterfront development plan.

#### *Waterfront Pathway (Design, Construction, and Signage)*

The Waterfront Pathway Design and Engineering project constituted the fourth phase in the community's commitment to developing a pedestrian trail and pathway system connecting Skamania Lodge, the Columbia Gorge Interpretive Center, Rock Creek/Rock Cove, and downtown Stevenson to the Columbia River waterfront. The Waterfront Pathway skirts the Columbia River shoreline and links downtown Stevenson to Stevenson Landing, where sternwheelers and cruise ships disembark their passengers for short side trips. Of the \$69,000 budget for the pathway design, the U.S. Forest Service's Rural Community Assistance Program provided \$55,200. The Port of Skamania County contributed \$9,800 toward the project, the City of Stevenson chipped in \$1,500, and private sources contributed \$2,500 (\$1,500 in in-kind contributions and \$1,000 in cash). The Port obtained \$75,000 from the Washington State Department of Natural Resources Aquatic Lands Program to construct the pathway along the Columbia River and to put in a restroom at Stevenson Landing. In 1999, the Port obtained an additional \$14,400 in Rural Community Assistance money to create and install three interpretive signs along the pathway on the Port waterfront property. The Port also contributed \$3,600 in matching funds toward the signage project.

Many study informants observed that the pathway has been successful in the sense that it receives heavy use from tourists and locals alike. Several study informants noted that the local use has been unexpectedly high:

We considered the path a part of our tourism infrastructure. It was expensive, but needed. The most pleasant result is that locals are using it. If you go out there between 5:30 and 9:00 p.m. in the summer, you'll see lots of people out there walking. The community just loves it.

The pathway's been very heavily used. It's been a great thing for the community. It's hard to imagine it not being here. It has strong support within the community. People are pretty possessive of "their" path.



Stevenson Landing Improvements

From the standpoint of its contribution to economic development, however, the success of the pathway is less clear. Several study informants observed that past Lodge managers have not advertised the pathway to guests, since it would draw visitors away from the Lodge restaurant and gift shop. They noted, however, that the new Lodge manager has been more willing to support the community by promoting the pathway to guests.

#### *Stevenson Landing Expansion*

Cruises along the Columbia River constitute one of the region's popular tourist attractions. In the early and mid-1990s, mid-size cruise ships often stopped at Stevenson to provide passengers access to the historic town, as well as nearby sites, such as the Bonneville Dam and Multnomah Falls. In 1994, two larger cruise ships—the 169-passenger *Queen of the West* and the 80-passenger *Spirit of Columbia*—indicated an interest in docking at Stevenson on their upriver run. Together the two cruise ships would bring in roughly 250 visitors five to six times a month over an eight to 10-month season. Unfortunately, Stevenson's docking facilities were too small to handle these ships.

In order to take advantage of this new opportunity to expand the number of visitors to downtown Stevenson, the Skamania County Community Action Team selected the installation of two new docking dolphins that could accommodate the two cruise ships as its number one economic development priority for 1996. Community Action Team and Ste-

venson Business Association members supported the project on the grounds that it would bring new visitors into Stevenson, thereby expanding the customer base for existing and potential businesses. The project required an investment of \$48,200. The U.S. Forest Service's Rural Community Assistance Program contributed \$38,560 toward the project, while the Port contributed \$9,640. The Stevenson Business Association agreed to recruit and train volunteers to meet cruise ship passengers at the landing.

The Port completed installing the new dolphins in time for the spring cruise season in 1997. Both the *Queen of the West* and the *Spirit of the Columbia* began using the landing shortly after completion. In addition, the *Great Rivers II*, a 212-passenger ship committed to docking at the landing three times a week during its cruising season, and a fourth cruise ship company also inquired regarding docking commitments.

#### *Waterfront Destination Development Plan*

The Port owns a substantial portion of the waterfront within Stevenson's city limits. The Community Action Team identified the waterfront area as a key element in accomplishing its economic diversification strategy for the county. In order to understand how to transform the waterfront from its historical use as a site for wood-processing and industrial manufacturing into a site geared toward retail and other commercial enterprises, the Port applied for technical assistance funds from the U.S. Forest Service's Rural Commu-

nity Assistance Program to support an assessment of the waterfront area for its commercial and retail potential. The Port lacked in-house expertise and time to conduct the study with its own staff. The project cost \$45,000, with the Forest Service contributing \$33,750, and the Port contributing \$11,250. The Port hired a consulting firm to carry out the assessment.

Assessment products included a market feasibility study of the Port's waterfront property, a marketing strategy, a development and action plan, and a review of regulatory requirements and permits. The assessment recommended mixed development along the west end of the waterfront, including the construction of residential condos, office space, and lodging for overnight visitors, as well as restaurants and specialty retail shops with a waterfront theme. The assessment suggested that the Port leave the east end of the site in its current industrial use.

With the completed report, the Port now has the ability to implement the plan without additional technical assistance. As with its other projects, the Port provided ample opportunities for public and other local government entities to comment on the study as it progressed. These included providing comment opportunities for citizens at project advisory committee meetings, holding public meetings at key points during plan development, and during Port Commissioner meetings.

#### *Development of Rock Cove Recreational Facilities*

The newly constructed Skamania Lodge attracted several hundreds of thousands of visitors in its first year of operation. However, only a fraction of those

visitors spent significant amounts of money at businesses in Stevenson. The Community Action Team thus worked hard in the mid and late 1990s to implement a series of linked projects that could help the community take full advantage of the economic development potential of the newly constructed Skamania Lodge. As described in the Rock Creek Comprehensive Plan, the Team viewed the Lodge as one element in a set of related economic development elements. The key elements included Skamania Lodge, the Columbia Gorge Interpretive Center, Rock Cove Park, downtown Stevenson, and the Columbia River waterfront in Stevenson. Community prosperity depended upon all of the elements being strong; no one element alone was sufficient in itself: "The Cove, Interpretive Center, Skamania Lodge, Columbia River waterfront, and the commercial core of Stevenson can be thought of as links in a chain. The entire chain is stronger than each individual link (Rock Creek Comprehensive Plan 1997:9)."

In the timber industry's heyday, several dimension lumber mills set up operations at the mouth of Rock Creek. The Bonneville Pool flooded much of the area in the early 1980s when Bonneville Dam's second powerhouse was completed. Once the mills closed, the county took over ownership of the 135-acre site and transformed it into a community center. The County Fairgrounds, Recreation Center, Senior Services, Child Development Center, and the County's Public Works Department now occupy a portion of the former mill sites. Skamania Lodge and the Interpretive Center are located just to the west of the Cove, only a short walk from the Fairgrounds and Recreation Center. Al-



Rock Cove Trail in Stevenson

though far from a pristine environment, Rock Cove provides habitat for wildlife, fish, and a variety of bird species. It is also the most important wintering site for waterfowl on the Washington side of Columbia River Gorge. The Fairgrounds attracts human visitors as well: as Skamania County's central event site it hosts roughly 50,000 visitors every summer.

When the Initiative started, the Rock Creek/Rock Cove area was already zoned for public use and recreation, commercial recreation, and commercial development. Rock Cove also served as an important recreational site for local residents. However, no safe pedestrian pathways connected Rock Cove to either downtown Stevenson or the Interpretive Center and Lodge. In addition, the Fairground facilities needed upgrading in order to serve as a venue for a broad range of community and tourist events. The Community Action Team identified Rock Cove as a critical link in Stevenson's economic development chain, and thus focused attention on improving the area very early on in the Initiative:

In many ways, the Rock Creek Park and Fairgrounds is the key link. It is centrally located, it is what east-bound travelers see first from Highway 14, and it has the facilities and space to accommodate a wide variety of activities that can draw visitors in. If the physical and information connections between the park/fairground facilities are strengthened, they will encourage visitors to explore other links in the chain (Rock Creek Comprehensive Plan 1997:9).

Due to controversy within the southern Skamania County community over the development of the Rock Cove site, the Community Action Team adopted a very open, very participatory planning process. Controversy centered on how to balance the desire of community members' to protect the site's natural features while simultaneously making changes to attract more visitors.

#### *Rock Creek Comprehensive Plan*

As a first step toward developing the Rock Cove Site, in 1996 the Community Action Team commissioned an environmental planning firm to facilitate the development of an environmental evaluation and

comprehensive plan. The purpose of the project was to provide the County with the information needed to undertake future projects on its property in the Rock Creek area, including nature trail construction, construction of a covered auditorium, dredging the Cove, and restoring fish and wildlife habitat in and along Rock Creek.

The County Planning Department provided a large portion of the staff and public meeting costs. An intern from the University of Oregon managed the day-to-day interactions between the consulting firm and the planning staff. The County obtained an \$80,000 Rural Community Assistance Program grant to support the project and provided an additional \$19,543 in matching funds. The University of Oregon provided \$743 for public meeting costs, bringing the project total to \$100,336.

To enhance opportunities for public input during the planning process, and to ensure that the outside consultant adequately took into account the community's needs, the Skamania County Planning Department adopted a participatory research and planning strategy that has since become the trademark of economic development projects in Skamania County. The project design called for the Planning Department to bring interested stakeholders together and create a Rock Creek advisory committee. The Planning Department staff gathered key data, which the consultant then analyzed. The planning staff worked closely with the consultant, meeting on a weekly basis to ensure limited delays. In addition, the Planning Department held periodic public meetings throughout the data gathering, analysis, and options consideration process to keep citizens informed. Project products included a series of maps showing current and anticipated uses and conditions, a series of reports summarizing the impacts of various development options, and a comprehensive plan ready for implementation without further technical assistance.

As a result of the evaluation and planning process, it became clear that residents considered Rock Creek to be a "local place that needs to be upgraded in order to maintain its family-oriented character and function as the site of the County Fair (Rock Creek Comprehensive Plan 1997:10)." In addition, most citizens stated that they would rather have the Planning Department begin by implementing lower-cost, aes-

thetically pleasing, and functionally useful projects in the Cove area, rather than constructing a capital-intensive performing arts center as precursor plans had recommended. As a result of the highly participatory process, the Planning Department amended the Plan to table the performing arts center until it could acquire funds for a feasibility study.

#### *Rock Creek Interpretive Signs*

In 1997, the city of Stevenson worked with the Skamania County Community Events and Recreation Department to acquire funds for interpretive signs to place along the Rock Creek Pathway constructed several years earlier through a joint project between Skamania Lodge, The Port of Skamania County, the city of Stevenson, and Skamania County. Due to a shortfall in funds during the pathway construction phase, the interpretive signs designed to guide walkers from the Lodge to downtown Stevenson were not created during the trail construction phase. To complete the signs, the city of Stevenson and Skamania County obtained a \$24,000 grant from the Rural Community Assistance Program. They also contributed \$5,250 each in matching funds toward the project's total cost of \$34,500.

The City and County established a sign committee composed of county and city staff, a chamber of commerce representative, an Interpretive Center representative, and other interested community volunteers. The interpretive sign committee also drew upon other agencies, including the Washington Department of Wildlife and the Department of Ecology, to assist in developing accurate interpretive materials. The committee hired a professional consultant to review the research material gathered for each sign, develop the text and visuals, put together bid documents for sign construction, and ensure timely delivery of the completed signs for installation. The sign design served as the template for the construction of future signs located elsewhere along the trail and in downtown Stevenson. The project incurred several significant delays, including an unexpectedly prolonged review process by community members and unusually heavy rains that required a six-month postponement on the installation of the signs. It is too soon to evaluate the success of the sign project.

#### *Rock Creek Multi-Use Facility Plan*

In 2000, the Skamania County Parks and Recreation Department took the lead on working toward the construction of a year-round events facility as recommended in the Rock Creek Comprehensive Plan. As the first step in implementation, the Parks director obtained \$40,000 from the Rural Community Assistance Program to support the design and engineering of a multi-use covered recreational facility on the County Fairgrounds. With the additional \$10,000 in County matching funds, the project's total cost is \$50,000.

Although no construction has begun as a result of the facility design process, a number of study informants noted that it had already proved beneficial by providing a realistic assessment of the development costs. During the design process, the consultants noted that a new facility would require a \$450,000 investment in a fire suppression system, which doubled the County's estimated cost for construction. As the planner in charge of the project noted:

It was good to know that [it was going to cost more] even though it was hard to know that. It gave us a reality check. We don't want to incur a huge debt load. The worst case scenario I can imagine is for us to budget for a project and get things underway only to have someone say, "Oh, by the way...." That would be a disaster, the worst case scenario. It would be a public relations disaster.

#### **Industrial Site Development**

Skamania's 1992 Community Action Plan identified the lack of suitable sites for business development as an obstacle to expanding and diversifying Skamania County's economic base. The Community Action Team asked the Port to take the lead in developing and expanding southern Skamania's industrial site capacity during the 1990s. In a feasibility study conducted in 1994, the Port identified the lack of "ready to build" industrial sites as the single biggest obstacle to recruiting new businesses or for persuading existing businesses wishing to expand to stay in the area. Ready to build land consists of property zoned for industrial use, with services, such as water, sewer, power,

and roads provided, unencumbered by environmental protection restrictions, and for which a clear permit review process is established. Between 1994 and 2001, Skamania County acquired roughly \$1.5 million dollars for industrial site development through the NEAI. It leveraged this amount to roughly \$1.8 million.

The Port initially focused its efforts to expand the supply of “ready to build” land to sites locat-

ed within North Bonneville and Stevenson. When the Forest Service decided to shut down the Wind River Nursery in the mid-1990s, the Port expanded its industrial site development efforts to include the Wind River site. The following section provides a brief overview of industrial site development projects funded partially through the NEAI in Stevenson, North Bonneville, and Wind River.

**Figure 7: Industrial Site Development Projects**

Date	Applicant	Project Name	NEAI Funding	Estimated Total Funding	Sources of NEAI Funding
<b>North Bonneville Industrial Site Development</b>					
1994	North Bonneville	Lewis and Clark Business Park – Evergreen Building Design	35,000	35,000	EDA
1995	Port of Skamania	Lewis and Clark Business Park – Evergreen Building Construction	390,252	390,252	CTED/CERB
2001	Port of Skamania	Lewis and Clark Business Park – Discovery Building Design	\$50,000	\$62,500	RCAP
1998	Skamania County	County-Owned Land – Site Design and Engineering	60,000	\$75,000	RCAP
2000	North Bonneville	Fort Cascades Business Park – Dam Access Design	44,800	56,000	RCAP
2001	Port of Skamania	Fort Cascades Business Park – Land Acquisition	\$200,000	\$300,000	USDA-RD Community Facilities Grant
<b>Stevenson Industrial Site Development</b>					
1996	Port of Skamania	Stevenson Industrial Building Improvements	194,000	194,000	USDA-RD/RBEG
1997	Port of Skamania	Stevenson Industrial Building Improvements	42,500	53,261	RCAP
<b>Wind River Nursery Site Development</b>					
1997	Port of Skamania	Wind River Complex Request for Proposals	24,000	30,000	OGDF
1999	Skamania County	Wind River Nursery Fund	250,000	340,000	RCAP (Earmark) OGDF
2001	Skamania County	Wind River Nursery Conveyance	195,600	244,500	RCAP (Earmark)

### *North Bonneville Industrial Site Development*

In the mid-1990s, the Port focused its efforts on developing the industrial site capacity in North Bonneville. Of the 47 businesses that had operated in North Bonneville prior to the powerhouse construction in the 1970s and early 1980s, not one survived the move to the new town site. Encouraging more businesses to locate to North Bonneville thus constituted a county priority.

The Port initially had a very small land base to work with in North Bonneville. Lands suitable for industrial development and owned by local government entities consisted of a 1.5 acre parcel on Evergreen Drive under Port ownership and a 21-acre site under County ownership. The Port purchased an additional two-acre parcel adjacent to its Evergreen parcel in 2001 and 42 acres from the city of North Bonneville in 2000.

### *Lewis and Clark Business Park (Evergreen Drive Site)*

In 1994, the Port, the city of North Bonneville, and Skamania County joined forces to obtain the funds needed to transform the Port-owned parcel into a viable industrial site available for lease. In addition to potentially creating new jobs for the community, the planners also saw the project as an important mechanism for expanding the County's tax base. The Port obtained \$35,000 in NEAI funds from the Economic Development Administration to support the costs for designing an industrial building on the Evergreen Drive parcel. It then acquired \$390,252 from the Community, Trade, and Economic Development Department (Community Economic Revitalization Board funds) for the actual construction of the Evergreen Building. The Port has leased the building to a small environmental firm that employs three to four workers on a regular basis.

In 2000, the owner of LifeTek, a Delaware-based health products manufacturing company, approached the Port to help him locate a suitable site for relocating his company to North Bonneville. The owner had grown up in North Bonneville, and wished to move his business back to his home town. With a bird-in-hand tenant available, the Port moved quickly to acquire a two-acre parcel adjacent to its Evergreen Drive parcel that had become available for purchase. The new 3.5-acre site is known as the Lewis and Clark Indus-

trial Business Park. In March, 2001, the Port obtained \$50,000 from the Rural Community Assistance Program to hire a consultant to develop a site plan, obtain the necessary permits, and develop the preliminary design and engineering for the facility. The Port contributed \$12,500 in matching funds toward the design portion of the project.

In April, 2001, the Port of Skamania obtained \$842,000 (\$342,000 as a loan and \$500,000 as a grant) from the Washington State Community Economic Revitalization Board to fund construction of a building in the newly expanded site. The Washington Investment Board provided an additional \$205,000 grant from the National Scenic Area Economic Development Fund. The Port contributed \$85,000 as a cash match. LifeTek now leases the building and anticipates employing 52 people within three years (CERB News 2001).

### *County-Owned Industrial Land*

In the early 1990s, Skamania County acquired 17 acres of industrial land in North Bonneville with the intention of setting aside a supply of industrially zoned property for future demand. The Community Action Team felt that developing the site into "ready-to-build" property would provide an opportunity for the County to expand the local tax base and stimulate economic growth, and thus placed the improvement of the county site third on its 1998 economic development priority list.

After an initial feasibility study conducted in 1996, the county needed more specific design and engineering for the site, including details concerning fill and grading, service line extensions and connections, road construction, drainage and landscaping, and acquisition of necessary permits. To accomplish this design work, the County worked with the Port, the Economic Development Council, and the city of North Bonneville on a feasibility study for developing the site as an industrial park. In 1998, the County obtained \$60,000 in Rural Community Assistance funds from the U.S. Forest Service to create a comprehensive site development plan, including construction plans, cost schedules, and time lines for funding and implementation. Skamania County contributed \$15,000 in matching funds toward the \$75,000 total project cost. As with other County projects, the County planners

required that the feasibility study be carried out using an interactive participatory planning process, with regular and frequent communication between the consultant and the project advisory committee.

The County identified some major obstacles to its plans for developing the site during the feasibility study. For example, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and the National Marine Fisheries Service expressed concern that construction on the site would negatively affect chum salmon spawning habitat at Hamilton Springs, which are located about a quarter mile east of the site. In addition, the consultant's report indicated that only 10 acres of the site was developable, and those 10 acres are located in a depression. Developing the site would thus require that the County bring the site up to grade by adding fill material, a job that would cost between \$800,000 and \$1.6 million, depending on whether the County had to purchase the fill or could acquire fill at no cost.

#### *Fort Cascades Business Park*

In the late 1900s, the supply of local government-owned land available in North Bonneville tripled when the Army Corps of Engineers transferred 42 acres of land over to the city of North Bonneville. In 2000, the Port purchased the land from the city of North Bonneville with the intention of developing it into a business park. The Port had an immediate need for acquiring and developing the site since one of the tenants on its site in Stevenson wished to expand and no ready-to-build industrial sites big enough for the proposed expansion existed in Skamania County. Faced with the imminent loss of a major tenant and one of the County's largest private employers, the Port joined forces with the city of North Bonneville, Skamania County, and the Economic Development Council to acquire and develop the 42-acre site in North Bonneville. The Port obtained a \$200,000 grant in NEAI funds from the USDA-Rural Development program to defray the costs of acquiring the \$300,000 parcel. The Port provided \$100,000 in matching funds to purchase the land.

The Port is building the business park in two interdependent projects known as the North Bonneville Industrial/Business Park Development and the Dam Access Road Improvements. The 42-acre site is one of

the county's few parcels of land that can be developed for industrial use. In addition, it has the added advantages of having ready access to the highway, existing sewer system, water, electricity, and cable and fiber optics. It is also close to the county's population centers, and is located near North Bonneville's business district and residential districts, both of which have room for expanded development. The Port estimates that businesses at the park will make 100 new jobs available for the local work force over the next five years.

The Port and the city of North Bonneville worked with the Washington State Department of Transportation and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to develop the preliminary design for road improvements. The Army Corps of Engineers provided easements along the two major access roads into the site, so that they can be widened to handle truck traffic. The project includes resurfacing and widening both access roads, providing access from Fisherman Access Road to the park, constructing a pedestrian pathway, and providing additional lands on Highway 14 to accommodate entering and exiting traffic.

The North Bonneville Industrial Park and Dam Access Improvement projects are examples of the partnership strategy that Skamania County economic development institutions have developed over the past decade. The Port and the city of North Bonneville collaborated in the selection and hiring of an engineering firm to do the design and engineering work, including the development of bid-ready plans and specifications. They obtained \$44,800 in funding for the design work from the U.S. Forest Service's Rural Community Assistance Program. The Port contributed an additional \$11,200 in matching funds. USDA-RD provided the Port \$200,000 to acquire the 42-acre parcel; the Washington State Community, Trade, and Economic Development Department contributed a \$75,000 grant from Rural Opportunity and Old Growth Diversification Funds to support the design and engineering.

#### *Stevenson Industrial Site Development*

The Port owns much of Stevenson's waterfront, including several sites with buildings. In 1979, the Port constructed an industrial building (Tichenor Building) on one of its waterfront parcels for a tenant

that manufactured wooden beams. By the mid-1990s, several new tenants had replaced the original tenant. The new tenants, as well as several prospective tenants, wanted access to smaller office and manufacturing spaces and a less dusty working environment than was possible with the site's unpaved access road and parking lot.

After several tenants threatened to move from the site, citing inadequate facilities and dust damage to their equipment as reasons for relocating, the Port embarked on a project to improve the site. The Port estimated that the improvements would cost \$215,951. Unfortunately, the Port was not in a position to fund the project directly as most of the Port's funds at the time were tied up in the development of the North Bonneville industrial building discussed below. When the Port approached a bank for conventional financing, their request was denied. The Port thus submitted a request to USDA-RD for a Rural Business Enterprise Grant for \$194,356. The remaining 10 percent (\$21,595) was obtained from the Port's limited cash reserves.

However, when the Port received the bids for the improvements, the lowest bid was for \$269,212, or roughly \$53,000 more than the Port's available funds. The Port was able to obtain \$42,608 from the U.S. Forest Service's Rural Community Assistance Program to help make up the shortfall. The Port also committed \$10,653 of its own funds to address the shortfall.

Site improvements consisted of upgrading the access road and parking area from dirt and gravel to concrete and asphalt, as well as improving drainage and landscaping. In addition, the Port improved the sewer and water lines and installed security lighting. The Port anticipated that the project would retain a minimum of 23 jobs, and provide facilities that might attract as many as 30-40 new jobs. The project improvements turned out to be very successful from the standpoint of job retention and creation. The tenants remained at the site, and one of the firms continues to provide roughly 30 jobs to community residents. The improvements also made it possible for another tenant to expand his operation, creating 50 new jobs. In addition, a local contractor carried out the improvements, employing 22 people during the length of the project.

#### *Wind River Industrial Site Development*

In 1995, the Forest Service announced that it planned to close the Wind River Nursery on the Gifford Pinchot National Forest, roughly 25 miles northeast of Stevenson. The nursery had served as a major supplier of seedlings for reforestation projects on Forest Service lands in Washington and Oregon since its establishment in 1903 (Wind River Nursery Site and Facility Plan). Approximately 300 seasonal and year-round employees lost their jobs when the nursery finally closed in 1997 (Wind River Nursery Site and Facility Plan).

Skamania County began a campaign to acquire the nursery site in 1994 when the Forest Supervisor at the time confirmed rumors that the Forest Service planned to close down the nursery. In 1997, community leaders entered into negotiations with the Forest Service to exchange county land for the nursery site. The County, working in cooperation with the Port of Skamania County and the Economic Development Council, obtained \$24,000 in Old Growth Diversification Funds from CTED to begin the process of developing a land exchange proposal. The County contributed \$6,000 in matching funds toward the \$30,000 total cost of the Wind River RFP project.

Since the County lacked the land needed to make an equal value exchange, in 1998 the County commissioners lobbied successfully for congressional legislation authorizing the Forest Service to accept an exchange including an in-kind contribution on the part of the County. At the same time, Congress also appropriated \$200,000 for the County to pay for the land conveyance costs, site planning, facilities assessment, and marketing plan. ("USDA Forest Service and Skamania County Wind River Nursery Exchange" <http://www.fs.fed.us/gpnf/press/re118.html>). In 1998, the County obtained the \$200,000 in congressionally earmarked funds through the Forest Service's Rural Community Assistance Program to defray the costs of the conveyance and planning process for the Wind River Nursery Project. The County received an additional \$50,000 in Old Growth Diversification Funds from Washington State. The County contributed \$90,000 in matching funds to the \$340,000 project, as well as an additional \$60,000 of in-kind services over the two-year period it took to complete the project.

The County hired an outside consultant to provide a facility assessment, economic analysis, public participation process, site planning, and marketing expertise. Following its usual pattern, the County put together a project steering committee, known as the Wind River Nursery Team, to spearhead and oversee the project. The team consisted of a county commissioner, the County administrator, the County Planning and Community Development director, the Port's Executive Director, and the Economic Development Council director. In addition, a more broadly based advisory committee also participated in project oversight. Ultimate decisionmaking authority, however, rested with the Board of County Commissioners.

By 2001, the Forest Service and Skamania County had completed the Wind River Nursery exchange. The County acquired 187 acres of the former nursery site in exchange for 159 acres of timberland. In addition, the County had in hand the following planning documents: 1) a site facility assessment, 2) a master site plan with preliminary site zoning recommendations, and 3) a business opportunities and development plan.

The consultant developed three alternative site concept plans. Under Alternative 1 the site would remain in county ownership. It would continue primarily in forestry and agricultural use, with emphasis on the development of a nationally recognized research institute. Alternative 2 also proposes to retain the site in county ownership. However, the County would transform the parcel into a site for nature-based tourism and environmental education. The site would be developed to accommodate an inn with cabins and to offer a variety of educational and recreational activities. Under Alternative 3, the county would sell off a portion of the land, which would be zoned for a single-family housing development. All three alternatives would encompass a variety of uses, including the development of a business campus in the existing office buildings and warehouses, a forest reserve, and a working farm.

In 2001, the County obtained an additional \$195,600 in congressionally earmarked Rural Community Assistance Funds to acquire groundwater rights for the former nursery site, to fulfill National Environmental Policy Act and State Environmental

Policy Act requirements, and to begin implementing the land use plan. The County contributed \$48,900 in matching funds toward the \$244,500 project, which is still in progress.

### **Basic Services Infrastructure**

Between 1994-2000, Skamania County communities obtained roughly \$169,000 in NEAI funds to support needs assessments, facility plan development and rate analyses, and engineering and design work for county and community basic services infrastructure. It leveraged these funds to a total of \$243,000, largely through local matching contributions. The Community Action Team had identified water and sewer improvements as a priority, since existing systems required updating or expansion to meet public health standards and environmental quality regulations. Other priorities in the infrastructure category included expanding the county's ambulance facility and conducting needs assessments for affordable housing and telecommunications.

### **Water and Sewer Infrastructure Development**

The Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area Act concentrated industrial and residential development in central Skamania County into a small number of urban areas, including Stevenson, North Bonneville, Carson, and Home Valley. As a result, demand for sewer and water services within these areas is very likely to increase if economic development efforts prove successful. However, as in many rural communities in Washington during the 1990s, the water and sewer systems in Skamania County's cities and towns did not meet the increasingly more restrictive water quality and safety standards set by the state. Faced with moratoriums on new hook-ups in North Bonneville, Stevenson, and Home Valley, the Skamania County Community Action Team placed water system plan updates and analyses for these communities on its list of priority projects. The following section summarizes the water and sewer projects funded through the NEAI in Skamania County.

#### *North Bonneville Water and Sewer System*

North Bonneville's wastewater system, which dated from the late 1970s, was built to service 210

**Figure 8: Basic Services Infrastructure Projects**

Year	Applicant	Project Name	NEAI Funding	Estimated Total Funding	Source of NEAI Funding
<b>Water and Sewer Infrastructure</b>					
1997	North Bonneville	Water and Sewer Plan and Rate Analysis	44,800	56,000	RCAP
1997	Stevenson	Water Facility Plan and Rate Analysis	15,000	42,750	RCAP
1998	Stevenson	Water Reservoir Engineering Design	32,000	42,000	RCAP
1999	Home Valley	Home Valley Water System Improvements Design	22,880	28,600	RCAP
<b>Other Infrastructure</b>					
1994	Skamania County Hospital District	Ambulance Bldg. Remodel - Engineering Design	9,500	11,875	RCAP
1997	Skamania County	Housing Needs Strategy	32,000	47,040	RCAP
2000	Port of Skamania and Skamania County	Local Fiber Optic Network Needs Assessment	12,500	15,000	RCAP

dwelling units, or 600 people. By 1996, the city’s population had already reached 533, putting the system in danger of exceeding its capacity. In addition, North Bonneville’s sewer system lacked the capacity to handle any increases in industrial demand, yet the majority of the developable industrial land in the county is located within the city’s boundaries. In 1996, the Skamania County Community Action Team placed the development of a water and sewer analysis and capital facilities plan for North Bonneville at the top of its priority list. The planning and analysis project cost \$58,240, with the Rural Community Assistance Program contributing \$44,800 as a grant and the city of North Bonneville \$13,440 in matching funds.

Because North Bonneville has the only developable industrial land in the county, the Port, the County, and the Economic Development Council all had a vested interest in ensuring that North Bonneville met state requirements for having a current water

and sewer analysis and a capital facilities plan. These entities together with the city of North Bonneville formed an oversight committee to develop scope of work and Request for Proposals for the project. The plan included an inventory of system components, assessment of capital needs, forecast of future needs for the capital facilities, estimate of project costs, and a discussion of financing alternatives.

As with other Skamania County projects, the North Bonneville water facility plan and rate analysis project included early and continuous public participation. The oversight committee sponsored two citizen input workshops and held monthly meetings with the consultants. The Department of Health and the Department of Ecology approved the completed plan, which the North Bonneville City Council adopted in September 1998. Since then, the city of North Bonneville has acquired \$84,125 in Old Growth Diversification Funds from the Community,

Trade and Economic Development Department, as well as a matching loan of \$84,125 from the Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area Act Fund, to begin improvements to the water system.

#### *Stevenson Water System*

##### Water System Facility Plan and Rate Analysis

The Skamania County Community Action Team also identified upgrading the City of Stevenson's Water System Plan, which was last updated in 1975, as an important priority. In 1996, the Washington Department of Health issued an inspection report requiring the City to update the plan. Failure to do so would mean that the City could not provide any new service outside the existing area of service, or provide new service for high demand water users, such as commercial and industrial users. Lack of an updated Water System Plan thus weakened the city's capacity to provide basic services for economic development. Shortly after receiving the inspection report, the city of Stevenson set aside \$22,750 for developing a new plan. In addition, the city administrator obtained \$15,000 from the Rural Community Assistance program to supplement its own funds. A local engineering firm provided \$5,000 in in-kind contributions in the form of donated engineer services, bringing the total project cost to \$42,750.

In order to ensure smooth project management, the City formed an oversight committee consisting of the Port, Economic Development Council staff, land developers, City and County planning staff, and elected officials. The committee ensured that the plan was consistent with the community's long-term economic development needs. The City took the lead in administering the contract, providing water system data, performing demographic and land use analysis, and ensuring compliance with Dept of Health standards. The City also hired a certified engineer as a consultant to prepare the plan, in order to fulfill state requirements that a certified engineer complete the plan.

The project resulted in the successful completion of an up-to-date Water System Plan for the city of Stevenson. Among other things, the plan included an evaluation of existing facilities and a set of revised water policies. It also included an assessment of future water demand, identified points where the water

system needs improvement, and provided a cost estimation for proposed modifications to the system. The Washington Department of Health approved the plan, thus bringing the City back into compliance with state regulations and opening up the possibility for the City to provide services to new areas and to high demand water users.

In addition to adopting the water system plan, the City also accomplished several other important tasks that help it function more efficiently as a water provider. Specifically, the City adopted construction standards for the system, revised the City's water utility ordinances to bring them into line with present-day needs and concerns, and created a city water quality monitoring system that would meet the requirements of the Safe Drinking Water Act. As part of the project, the engineer also provided the City Council with an in-depth understanding of utility rate policies and how rate structures are developed. This training enabled the City Council members to explain to their constituents why the rates were increasing.

##### Water Reservoir Engineering Design

Stevenson's new water system plan recommended that the City develop an additional water reservoir in order to meet projected increases in residential and commercial demands for water over the next few decades. In 1998, the city of Stevenson obtained a \$32,000 Rural Community Assistance Program grant to fund the design and engineering blueprints for an additional reservoir. The city of Stevenson contributed \$8,000 in cash and \$2,000 of in-kind services toward the project's total cost of \$42,000. The city had planned to complete the project by late 1999. Due to unexpected demands on the city's small staff and cash reserves for repairs to the city's water plant and the installation of several miles of new waterline for the Skamania Lodge additions, the project had not yet been completed at the time of this study.

##### Home Valley Water System

In the mid-1990s, the Washington Department of Health placed a moratorium on new water hook-ups in the small, unincorporated community of Home Valley in eastern Skamania County. The community's water system dated to 1977, and the long narrow pipe-

lines no longer met state fire protection regulations. In addition, the system no longer met state drinking water quality requirements for lead and copper residues. The Skamania Community Action Team identified water system improvements in Home Valley as its third priority in its 1999 work plan. Later that year, the Home Valley Water District obtained a \$22,880 grant from the Rural Community Assistance Program to hire an engineering firm to provide the design and engineering for improvements that would meet state fire protection and water quality standards. The Home Valley Water District contributed an additional \$4,000 in cash and \$1,720 in in-kind contributions as a match for the grant. As a result of the improvements to the water system, the county is now able to provide water to one of its parks in the area, and local homeowners and businesses now have water available to them.

### **Other Basic Services Infrastructure Improvements**

#### *Ambulance Facility Remodel*

In the mid-1990s, the Skamania County Ambulance facility was barely more than an ambulance garage. Without adequate sleeping and cooking facilities, paid staff members could not be on-site for their entire 24-hour duty shifts. As a result, walk-in patients could only receive care during working hours, and response times for night calls were longer than if the staff could remain on site. To improve the level of emergency response care for county residents, the Community Action Team identified the remodeling of the ambulance building as a priority. The Hospital District obtained a \$9,500 grant from the Rural Community Assistance Program to carry out the improvements, and contributed an additional \$2,375 of its own toward those costs for a total project budget of \$11,875. The remodeling, which included adding new offices, expanding the area available for storage, and constructing sleeping and cooking facilities, was finished in fall 1995. The changes have allowed the ambulance crew to maintain a 24-hour presence at the facility, thus speeding up response times and providing longer service hours for walk-in patients.

#### *Housing Needs Strategy*

The price of single family housing in Skamania County nearly doubled in the period 1991-96 while

median family income rose less than one percent. With a median family income of \$35,000 in 1996, most families paid more than 30 percent of their gross income for housing. A family would need to have an income of \$60,000 to be able to qualify for most home loans in order to buy into much of the area's housing stock. Besides placing a hardship on existing residents, the high price of housing in the county also makes it difficult to recruit new businesses to the area.

In 1999, the Skamania County Community Action Team decided to develop a housing needs strategy as a first step toward addressing the county's lack of affordable housing and potential negative consequences for economic growth. The Community Action Team obtained \$32,000 from the Forest Service's Rural Community Assistance program and \$7,000 from the Washington Investment Board to support the study. In addition, the county contributed \$8,040 in matching funds.

The Community Action Team formed a Housing Opportunities Strategy Team (HOST), consisting of representatives from the county, the two cities, the banks, the business community, the school district, the health district, residents, the Mid-Columbia Housing and the Klickitat-Skamania Development Council. This team worked with a project consultant to gather and analyze housing information.

The project was an outcome of several years of discussion on housing issues among key stakeholders, including the County, the two Cities, the Economic Development Council, local realtors, banks, low income housing providers and the public. It was also a direct response to a request for such a strategy from the Skamania County Economic Council and the Board of County Commissioners. The housing needs strategy project also complemented previous efforts undertaken in the community to create an assisted living facility. Chief project objectives included assessing housing conditions and needs, prioritizing needs and developing strategies to address those needs, developing home buyer capacity-building strategies, identifying funding sources for implementing strategies, and evaluating the potential for establishing a local housing authority to carry out the strategies over the long-term. As with other Skamania County projects, HOST sponsored a series of public

meetings throughout the needs assessment project to encourage public input.

Participants in the HOST and County Commissioners meetings expressed the view that a public supported affordable housing strategy should focus on rehabilitating existing housing rather than on creating new units. The county commissioners also have begun discussing the possibility of forming a regional housing authority with neighboring counties as a means for improving the ability of the community to gain access to funds for rehabilitation of older housing stock and to subsidize homeownership for lower income families.

#### *Local Fiber Optic Network Needs Assessment*

In 2000, the Skamania County Public Utility District joined with 13 other Public Utility Districts in Washington to create the nonprofit Northwest Open Access Network (NoaNet). NoaNet provides broadband services to rural communities at cost. NoaNet established a point of presence in Stevenson in late 2000, and became available to businesses in 2001. In spring 2000, the Economic Development Council obtained a \$20,000 grant from Washington's Rural Opportunity Fund to carry out a feasibility study for extending the fiber optic from the point of presence to the Port's facilities. In 2000, the Community Action Team asked the County to seek additional funds to assess industry needs for fiber optic throughout the county. The U.S. Forest Service's Rural Community Assistance program contributed \$12,000 toward the needs assessment project and the Economic Development Council contributed \$3,000 in the form of in-kind services.

The needs assessment encompassed two types of businesses: home-based businesses that rely on Internet sales and connections to carry out their businesses, and potential telecommuters whose ability to telecommute is presently limited due to the lack of broadband access. The Community Action Team considers the needs assessment as a first step in supporting low impact industries that fit within the intent of the National Scenic Area. Project supporters also note that the presence of a fiber optic network would provide the necessary telecommunications infrastructure for a technology incubator or telecommunications center that could accommodate home-based businesses and

telecommuters. The existence of such a center in Stevenson would have the added advantage of decreasing air pollution in the Gorge by reducing traffic.

### **Social, Human, and Cultural Capital Building**

#### *Leadership Development and Planning*

Between 1994-2000, local governments and economic development organizations in Skamania County obtained approximately \$85,000 in NEAI funds to assist with building local planning, leadership, and economic development capacity. They leveraged this amount to roughly \$109,000, primarily through local matching funds. Institutions benefiting directly from these capacity-building grants included the Economic Development Council, the city of North Bonneville, and Skamania County.

#### *Economic Development Council Capacity-Building Grants*

In 1994, the Economic Development Administration provided a \$40,000 grant to the Economic Development Council to hire a project coordinator to help community agencies identify needs, establish priorities, locate sources of funding, write grants, and coordinate economic development efforts. Since 1997, the Washington Investment Board has provided \$37,000 annually to the Economic Development Council. The Council uses these funds to hire part-time staff to carry out project development activities, such as working with agencies to leverage funds, writing grant and loan applications, and providing training to local governments and economic development institutions on project development.

In 1998, the Community Action Team included improving local leadership capacity among its top 10 priorities. Later that year, the Economic Development Council obtained a \$16,000 grant from the Rural Community Assistance Program to implement a training program designed to enhance local leadership skills. Local businesses and organizations contributed \$3,000 toward matching funds for the project. The Economic Development Council provided \$1,000 in matching funds, and an additional \$1,000 in-kind in the form of administrative support.

Study informants commented that NEAI investments in the Economic Development Council had yielded positive results in terms of enhancing the

**Figure 9: Local Leadership and Planning Capacity Building Projects**

Year	Applicant	Project Name	NEAI Funding	Total Funding	Source of NEAI Funding
1994	Economic Development Council	Economic Development Coordinator	40,000	40,000	EDA
1998	Economic Development Council	Leadership Development Project	16,000	20,000	RCAP
1998	North Bonneville	Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Update	14,400	18,000	RCAP
2000	Skamania County	County GIS System Technical Assistance	15,000	30,500	RCAP

community’s ability to acquire funds. They cited the Council’s backstopping on grant writing and identifying potential funders as particularly useful in a community where local governments are chronically short-staffed:

I have written these grants with EDC as a partner and they have been critical in helping me. Our grant writing ability and knowledge, plus the time we have to do it, is limited. The success of all these grants is that they’ve been done in partnership with the EDC. Funding them was a great investment. It brought millions of dollars into the community.

In addition, study informants also noted that the EDC’s revolving loan fund, which has given out over \$375,000 to small businesses in the communities, has played a critical role in helping under-capitalized firms acquire the resources needed to survive and expand.

**North Bonneville Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Update**

North Bonneville developed a comprehensive town plan in 1974, when the Army Corps of Engineers relocated the city to its new site. In the late 1990s, the city of North Bonneville acquired 70 acres of additional land from the Corps of Engineers. The city council recommended that the city update its comprehensive plan to incorporate these new hold-

ings into the City’s zoning system. In addition, the City Council felt that a new plan would be useful in helping the city develop guidelines for future development in light of the changes that had taken place since 1974. The Skamania County Community Action Team rated the project number six on its priority list. The city of North Bonneville obtained \$14,400 in NEAI funding through the Rural Community Assistance Program to fund the planning process. In addition, the city of North Bonneville contributed \$5,035 in matching funds toward the total cost of \$19,435. North Bonneville’s City Council approved the new plan on June 8, 1999. The Plan has proved useful as an information source and guiding document for the City Council, the Port of Skamania, and Skamania County’s Economic Development Council.

**GIS Technical Assistance**

During the 1990s, a number of public service entities in Skamania County, including several county departments, the Public Utility District, Search and Rescue, the Hospital District, the fire departments, and the cities of North Bonneville and Stevenson, concluded that access to a county-wide Geographic Information System would improve their service delivery programs. In 1999, the Community Action Team decided to put a GIS needs assessment and cost-benefit analysis sixth on the county’s list of economic development priorities. In 2000, the County

obtained \$15,000 in Rural Community Assistance Program funds to supplement its \$15,500 contribution to the \$30,500 project.

The County Planning and Community Development Department, a GIS Task Force, and a GIS consultant are working together to complete the project. The maps produced through a GIS system would be useful in local government day-to-day operations, as well as of value for businesses thinking about moving into the area. The GIS system could also support tourism and recreation by providing potential visitors with quick access to the county's resources. In addition, development of a county-wide GIS system would encourage greater consistency in public record-keeping and reporting. The GIS committee estimates that it would cost roughly \$1 million dollars to implement the system, and would require one or two full-time employees to develop and maintain the system. The community's lack of human and financial resources constitutes a barrier to further work on the system.

### **Mid-Columbia Economic Development District Capacity-Building<sup>23</sup>**

Skamania County also benefited from NEAI funds invested in developing the planning and technical and financial assistance capacity of the Mid-Columbia Economic Development District.

MCEDD obtained roughly \$1.6 million in NEAI funds, of which \$1 million consisted of intermediary relending program funds and the remaining \$600,000 consisted of grants to support MCEDD's ability to engage in Gorge-wide planning efforts.

#### *MCEDD Capacity-Building Grants*

MCEDD received a capacity building grant for \$52,000 in 1994 and a second grant for \$137,472 in 1995. According to study informants, the District used these funds to assist in the development of com-

munity action plans. Having a community action plan meant that the communities could meet the requirements for funding through the USDA-Rural Development agency. The Director at the time noted that these capacity building grants came at a critical time for both MCEDD and the Gorge communities:

NEAI provided a lot of extra capacity. When I got to MCEDD it had been down a while. So I worked on expanding programs and everyone thought we were doing good, getting the Community Action Plans in place. That brought in more money: It had a big ripple effect. Hood River County wasn't organized to take advantage of the NEAI funds. Hood River had no economic action plan so it wasn't as effective. We didn't have a priority process that worked.

As one of the communities that took advantage of the MCEDD capacity-building process, Stevenson was able to tap into NEAI funds quite early on. The monies used to fund these community action plans allowed the communities to gain access to much larger amounts of funding for a variety of economic development projects.

#### *The Columbia Gorge Economic Opportunity Study*

In 1995-96, MCEDD obtained three grants totaling \$154,000 to conduct an economic opportunity study of the Columbia River Gorge. In addition, the Old Growth Diversification Fund administered through Washington State's Office of Trade and Economic Development contributed \$14,000. The study was intended to provide information that could help the Bi-State Advisory Council and Investment Boards decide how to allocate the economic development funds obtained through the Scenic Area Act appropriations. In addition, the study was used to create an action plan for the newly established Columbia Gorge Economic De-

2. We submitted numerous email and telephone requests to the Mid-Columbia Development District for information on these projects. We received no response to our requests. We also received no response to repeated requests to discuss MCEDD's activities with the current director. The following summaries are pieced together from the interview data and documents provided by study informants, including a former MCEDD director and a MCEDD employee. Details are correspondingly sketchy. We were unable to locate any information on two of the grants listed in our database, including a planning grant in 1994 for \$64,000 and a capacity-building grant in 1997 for \$175,000.

3. The CERT process categorized these projects as capacity building projects. In the CERT documents we received for these projects, several projects were entitled "capacity-building" (see chart above). In the economic development community's vernacular, the term "capacity building" is used more narrowly than the concept of capacity that we have adopted for this assessment. The economic development community's concept of capacity-building encompasses human, cultural, and social capital, but does not generally refer to financial or physical capital.

**Figure 10: Gorge-Wide Projects**

<b>Mid Columbia Economic Development District Projects</b>				
<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Project Name</b>	<b>FY</b>	<b>Amount (\$)</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>
MCEDD	Planning grant	1994	63,000	EDA Grant
MCEDD	Capacity-Bldg	1994-95	189,472	Unknown
MCEDD	Columbia Gorge Economic Opportunity Study and Industrial Land Inventory	1995-96	154,000	Old Growth Diversification Funds
MCEDD	Capacity-Bldg	1997	175,000	Unknown
MCEDD	Loan — revolving loan fund	1999	1,000,000	USDA-RD IRP

velopment Association (CGEDA). CGEDA serves as MCEDD’s regional marketing arm, and was established because MCEDD’s members felt that it would be more efficient to market themselves as a region, instead of each entity doing its own marketing. In 1997, MCEDD acquired \$25,000 from the Old Growth Diversification Fund via the Washington State Office of Trade and Economic Development to establish CGEDA.

MCEDD established a study steering committee composed of members from the Columbia Gorge Economic Development Association and the Bi-State Advisory Council in charge of allocating the economic development funds included in the National Scenic Area Act provisions. The steering committee met on a regular basis with the MCEDD staff and outside consultants to ensure widespread applicability of the study and to make sure the work was completed as set out in the guidelines. The study was completed in 1997.

The completed economic opportunity study provided a detailed review of the economic trends and prospects for Hood River, Sherman, Wasco, Klickitat, and Skamania Counties. The report’s Action Agenda outlined regional and community level economic development strategies. CGEDA posted much of the information obtained during the study on the CGEDA website where it is readily accessible to businesses and community members.

*Revolving Loan Fund*

MCEDD has operated a Revolving Loan Fund since 1980, and has lent more than \$2 million dollars through the program. The loans range from \$10,000-\$75,000. As part of the Gorge Act, the Oregon and Washington Investment Boards received funds earmarked for MCEDD’s Revolving Loan Fund. However, as a former director noted, MCEDD had a difficult time lending the Investment Board loan funds:

The Gorge Act had no provision for administering the loan funds. Also there were many extra steps. Those are high cost programs so they aren’t competitive. They occupy a very narrow niche between the long shot and the impractical. But the Gorge commission has resisted attempts to streamline the program.

To address this problem, MCEDD applied for \$1 million in NEAI funds through the USDA-RD’s Intermediary Relending Program. It received these funds in 1999. According to a former MCEDD director, the Intermediary Relending Program funds played a key role in allowing MCEDD to begin lending out the Investment Board funds that were supposed to help underwrite economic development efforts in the National Scenic Area:

The Gorge Management Plan came out in 1991, but nothing happened for four to five years. When I came on the MCEDD staff, we tried to pick up the pieces and get the dollars moving. The RLF-IRP was a part of streamlining that process. Now the monies are finally going out, on more friendly terms than the Investment Board monies. We had one company that pulled out because it took so long to get the monies.

Several businesses in Stevenson received loans through the MCEDD Intermediary Relending Program. The loan officer for the program noted that the flexibility provided through the IRP lending program has allowed MCEDD to be much more flexible with its revolving loan funds, which come from a variety of sources and vary considerably in terms of the lending conditions imposed on borrowers.

The Bi-State Economic Opportunity Study also proved useful for leveraging money from other funding entities. For example, as a former MCEDD director observes in the quote below, the data from the study helped support local demands for a more appropriate revolving loan fund process:

With the economic opportunity study we were trying to look at industrial lands on both sides of the river. It turned out to be useful for trying to drive change to the Gorge Act's funding process. The mitigation dollars were not yet all here. We had a loan program with a loan officer, a desk, a computer, and a phone but no money for administering loans. It took three years to get changes made to that process. That study helped drive the creation of CGEDA, plus we got a significant website out of it. CGEDA is instrumental in coordination among port districts.

Community-based study informants expressed ambivalent views about the success of the NEAI

investments in MCEDD's capacity-building. A widespread perception exists of MCEDD as being more focused on projects in Oregon, and several community leaders noted that their communities rarely received visits from MCEDD staff. Other informants, however, noted that a number of local businesses had benefitted from loans obtained through MCEDD's revolving loan fund.

### **Job Training Partnership Act**

The Southwest Washington Private Industry Council administers the Job Training Partnership Act (now Workforce Investment Act) training and work experience programs in Skamania County. The Southwest Washington Private Industry Council is a nonprofit funded mostly through federal funds from the Job Training Partnership Act. The Council provides job training, employment counseling, and placement assistance in Skamania and Klickitat Counties. The Council contracts out the on-the-ground implementation activities to the Washington State Employment Security Department's Job Service Center based in Bingen. This Center is known as the Columbia Gorge Job Service Center and services Skamania and Klickitat counties, with satellite offices in Stevenson and Goldendale.

The Job Service Center implements a number of programs, some directly targeting laid-off and dislocated timber workers and others aimed at a broader clientele of unemployed youths and adults. Its three major programs include a general unemployment insurance program that provides laid-off workers with unemployment benefits for a period normally limited to 182 days, economic dislocation and worker adjustment assistance, which provides both additional unemployment benefits, training advice, and tuition support for people laid-off when large manufacturing concerns or other businesses close or restructure, and the Jobs, Opportunities, and Basic Skills program which is designed to assist people in getting off public assistance.

## Current Socioeconomic Conditions and Effects of NEAI on Community Well-Being

### Socioeconomic Context in 2000

During the NEAI period, Skamania County experienced two major socioeconomic changes. First, an increasingly larger percentage of residents commuted to other areas for work, transforming the county's southern communities into bedroom communities of Vancouver and Portland. Second, the county's economy transitioned from an economy heavily dependent on forest product harvesting and manufacturing into an economy dominated by the public and private service sectors.

As the economy changed, Skamania's population continued to expand, increasing 19.1 percent between 1990 and 2000 (U.S. Census QuickFacts 2000). In-migration accounted for most of the rise in total population (US Census QuickFacts 2000). Much of this growth took place in North Bonneville (which grew by 11.2 percent) and the County's unincorporated areas. Stevenson experienced a very low growth rate of 4.6 percent, expanding from 1,147 residents in 1990 to 1,200 residents in 2000. The County's population remained predominately white (94 percent), although many study informants stated that they had observed an increase in the number of Hispanic workers commuting into

jobs in Skamania County from communities to the east.

Per capita income rose from \$11,621 in 1990 to \$18,002 in 2000. Median household income also increased from \$28,778 in 1990 to 39,317 in 2000. Unemployment in the civilian labor force remained roughly the same at around 11 percent. However, living costs increased considerably as housing prices and rental rates skyrocketed in the 1990s. Housing prices more than doubled, with the median value of owner-occupied units increasing from \$67,100 in 1990 to \$150,200 in 2000 (U.S. Census 1990 and 2000). Median rental rates more than doubled as well from \$264 in 1990 to \$579 per month in 2000.

The County's poverty rates increased slightly during the decade, with 10 percent of all families having incomes below poverty level in 2000 compared to 7.9 percent in 1990. Poverty rates for families with children under 18 also increased, from 12 percent of all families with children in 1990 to 16.5 percent of families with children in 2000. Poverty rates among the elderly, on the other hand, declined dramatically from 13.6 percent of individuals over 65 having incomes below poverty level in 1990 to only 7.9 percent in 2000.

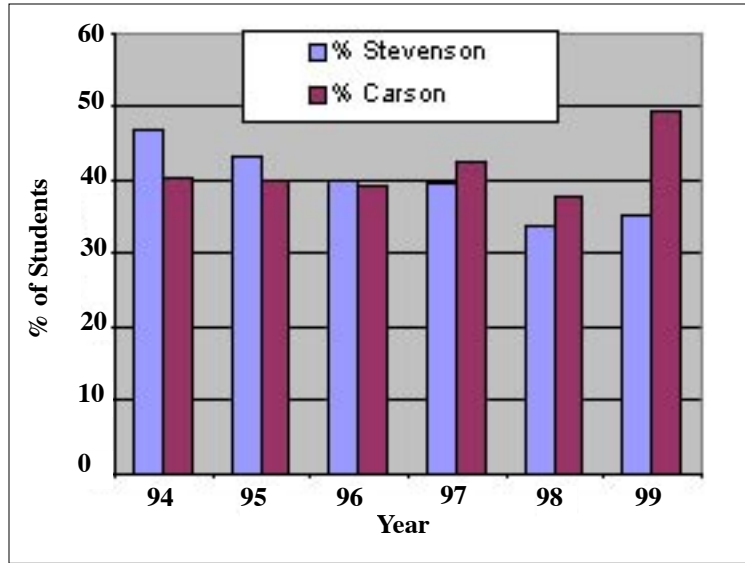
**Figure 11: Employment by Economic Sector**

Economic Sector	# Employed (non-farm)	% Total Employed (non-farm)
Natural Resources	218	5%
Construction and Transport	721	16.6%
Manufacturing	717	16.5%
Private and Public Services	2,684	61.8%*
Total	4340	

Source: U.S. Census 2000

\* Government workers constitute 22.5% of the civilian workforce, primarily concentrated in the services sector.

**Figure 12: Free and Reduced Lunch Program Enrollment**



As indicated in Figure 12, the percentage of children eligible for enrollment in the free and reduced lunch programs in the counties two major elementary schools in Carson and Stevenson during the mid and late 1990s varied between 35 and 50 percent of the total school enrollment. In Stevenson, the percent of free and reduced lunch program enrollment was highest in 1994 (about 45 percent) and tapered off gradually to just over 35 percent by 1999. Free and reduced lunch program enrollment remained fairly steady in Carson at 40 percent, until 1999 when it increased to include nearly half the students at the local public elementary school.

As noted earlier in this report, by 1990 Skamania County's economy had already begun shifting toward a more service-sector dominated economy. Data from the 2000 census indicate that this transformation continued through the 1990s. In 2000, only 16.5 percent of the county's labor force worked in manufacturing compared to 23.7 percent in 1990. The percent of workers in the natural resources sector, however, had nearly doubled from 2.6 percent in 1990 to five percent of the work force in 2000. Likewise, the percentage of workers in construction and transportation had doubled, from 8.2 percent of the workforce in 1990 to 16.6 percent of the workforce in 2000. Together, the public and private service sectors, however, continued to account for the bulk of the jobs (61.8 percent in 2000 compared to 65.3 percent in 1990).

### **Community Capacity**

#### *Financial Capital*

The NEAI brought in a minimum of \$2.7 million dollars directly into the community, primarily in the form of grants and low-interest loans. In addition, Skamania County residents benefitted directly and indirectly from the \$1.6 million dollars MCEDD received through the Initiative. Skamania county economic development entities leveraged an additional \$800,000 (making a total financial investment of 3.5 million), primarily in the form of local matching funds. Although most of the leveraged funds were provided by local entities, the existence of NEAI funds made it possible for the community to make better use of its financial resources. In addition, the NEAI funds channeled to MCEDD freed up that organization's revolving loan funds so that riskier businesses, including several in Stevenson, could receive loans. Additionally, the Port's revenue-generating capacity has increased as a result of the improvements it has made to Port-owned industrial sites.

The Drano Lake project provides a good example of the potential that some of the NEAI-funded projects have to expand local government's financial capacity. The project planner noted that an initial design grant through the Rural Community Assistance Program made it possible for the community to put together a project application that eventually yielded

\$1.3 million dollars in construction funds. Once the project is completed and boat launch fees are instituted, the County will generate \$100,000 in fees every year from the facility.

Rural Community Assistance Program funds provided the community a boost in financial capacity far beyond the dollars expended from the program. As many study informants noted, the Rural Community Assistance Program is one of the few economic development programs that allows funds to be used for designing and planning projects. Yet most rural communities are chronically short on the human and financial resources needed to conduct good quality designs and plans. As a result, their project applications tend to be much less competitive than communities with the wherewithal to hire a variety of experts, either as consultants or as staff members. The RCA funds that the NEAI made available thus proved to be one of the important mechanisms by which Skamania County was able to compete successfully with much better funded communities for project funds. The following quotes from study informants illustrate the importance that community members placed on the availability of Rural Community Assistance Funds:

The RCA dollars are vital. My job will change if they go away. I need those partnerships. With RCAP we can create proposals that work. We don't have to come up with all of the planning and design funds internally. Getting permits alone is expensive. For Drano Lake the permits alone cost us \$45,000. But the project won't go anywhere without those. Doing business in the Gorge is expensive. We have an additional layer of expense and paperwork in the Gorge with the Scenic Area.

RCAP's been really helpful in supporting feasibility studies and market analysis. Once we have those, then we can make a good economic decision about our investment.

We've used RCA funds to develop plans because it increases the likelihood of us getting the grants we apply for. If you have a good plan, you are more likely to get funded.

RCA funds were very instrumental in helping us generate a "fund worthy" project. It allowed us to be a player in the competition process. To do these projects you need good science to support your grant proposal.

Now that they've zeroed out RCAP, it is going to be a problem. I can't go to the IAC without a design already in hand. Their application is so rigorous that you need a professional to put the paperwork together. We don't have the money to hire a consultant to put those kinds of applications together. On Drano Lake for example, we competed successfully for IAC funds because of the EDC and RCAP. We couldn't have been competitive at all without them. Science, engineering and design. You can't get funds without them. And if there are no funds for us to do those things, then it won't get done and the projects will stall.

Moreover, as the example of the Rock Creek Multi-Use Facility illustrates, the ability to invest in good quality design work ultimately allows communities to minimize the potential for getting into a project only to discover too late that they have vastly underestimated the actual costs.

### *Physical Capital*

NEAI funds have also contributed in important ways toward enhancing the physical capital of Skamania County. Community residents used NEAI funds to build up three types of infrastructure: tourism and recreation infrastructure, industrial and commercial infrastructure (in the form of expanding the amount of ready-to-build land and constructing buildings), and basic service system improvements for medical care, water and sewer, and housing.

With the help of NEAI funds, the Port expanded its industrial and commercial land base from less than 10 acres to more than 200 acres. The Port is now in a position where it can begin developing the revenue-generating potential of those properties. NEAI funds also enabled various economic development entities in Skamania County to contribute toward a significant improvement in the area's tourism and

recreation infrastructure. Downtown Stevenson businesses, for example, have benefited and stand to benefit from the transformation of the downtown core into a more pedestrian friendly location. The waterfront pathway has proved an attraction for tourists and locals alike. The expansion of Stevenson's landing has also enhanced the number of visitors to the area, by providing a docking facility suitable for passenger cruise ships.

The water system facility analyses conducted in large part with NEAI funds in North Bonneville, Stevenson, and Home Valley have brought all three communities into compliance with state water quality and fire protection regulations. Aside from the health benefits of these analyses and the associated improvements, these projects have released the communities from new hook-up moratoriums creating the possibility for businesses to locate and expand in the area. Moreover, the communities are now in a position where they have the documents necessary to support project applications for funding major system improvements.

#### *Human Capital*

NEAI funding played a key role in enhancing the community's human capital. Study informants emphasized that the availability of NEAI funding, particularly Rural Community Assistance Program funds, contributed enormously toward providing opportunities for a wide variety of local planning and economic development staff to develop their grant writing and fundraising skills. Informants also stressed that the Rural Community Assistance Program funding played a critical role in helping community members develop their participatory planning and implementation skills:

NEAI provided technical assistance to the EDC, so there's a growing knowledge of people in the community. It provides us with experience, we learn and the knowledge stays with us. So building knowledge and the capacity of the community has been one important contribution. Also, it has been building leadership in our community so we can have a base to work on.

Another study informant noted that NEAI's contribution toward developing and enhancing local leadership, grant writing, and fundraising skills was all the more important because of the loss of precisely those skills with the decline in the timber industry and associated support services (i.e., Forest Service planners, engineers, timber sale administrators, etc.):

We lost the upper sector of our leadership with the fall of timber. It's been hard to replace the private sector leadership. The newer businesses are struggling to get going so it's very difficult for them to be involved in community leadership. That's why losing the Forest Service was so bad, they provided core leadership that isn't there any more. We do have some that stayed, but most of them are commuting and don't have as much time to participate as when they worked here.

NEAI funds also enabled the community to leverage its scarce human capital resources by providing the financial resources needed to bring in outside consultants when internal expertise was lacking.

#### *Social Capital*

The NEAI also played an important role in enhancing southern Skamania's social capital. Study informants pointed out that the community's social capital was high prior to the NEAI, as evidenced by THRIVE's ability to put together a successful bid for the Skamania Lodge and Conference Center. However, they also stressed that the presence of NEAI funds enabled the community to strengthen and expand collaborative networks within and between economic development organizations and communities in the County. As one study informant noted, the Rural Community Assistance Program funds were particularly important because the planning process brought the community together to work on common goals:

Partnerships are the strength of these projects. They aren't isolated projects because there's a high level of partnership. The funds we've gotten through RCAP for planning have brought us together. I didn't

do any of the projects I've worked on in isolation.

The availability of NEAI funds for planning and project implementation provided the impetus for an already-organized community to reach out to groups and communities previously not involved in project planning and implementation. For example, the community action team has recently placed a priority on helping the small unincorporated communities in the outlying edges of the County obtain funding to develop community action plans of their own so that they can establish priorities that mesh with their particular community needs.

As the following quote from an NEAI funding program staff member demonstrates, over the years Skamania County has acquired a reputation among funders as a community that "works together" to get things done:

Skamania County has been very successful in implementing their Community Action Plan. It's by far the most successful of the areas I work in. They are very organized. They're assertive. They know how to work together to get things done. They are very effective, and have learned how to set priorities together. They don't complain. "This is the way it is. How do we change it?" is their approach. Also they're very diversified in their funding sources. They know how to leverage the dollars they get.

The above quote also suggests that Skamania County's successes are due in part to the development of internal social capital (i.e. learning how to work together) and in part to the development of external social capital (i.e. developing connections with a diverse set of funding agencies).

### *Cultural Capital*

NEAI also contributed to the development of cultural capital in southern Skamania County. Study informants describe Skamania County of the mid and late 1980s as a community that had lost its identity as a logging town and as a community in the midst of losing its economic and political leaders as mill after mill closed. Unlike many neighboring communities who

either resisted transformation or struggled internally to work out a new direction, a significant number of Skamania County residents decided to take a proactive role in developing a new cultural identity as a nature-based tourism and recreational community with a broad array of small businesses rather than one dominant industry. To accomplish this transformation, the emerging community leaders opted for a collaborative rather than a competitive approach. One study informant describes the shift that he noticed in the community's planning culture in the decade since he moved into the area: "When I first moved here (in the early 1990s), Stevenson, North Bonneville, and Skamania County didn't work together at all. Gradually we've developed a culture of working together."

Another informant emphasized that the development of a culture of collaboration didn't happen by chance, but rather is something that community members deliberately sought to achieve:

We felt it was important to build the spirit of collaboration. In our situation, you couldn't afford to isolate yourself. There was a shift that took place in the late 1980s and early 1990s in how we look at our economy and our attitudes about working with each other. Also we had some players here who could be less territorial, and a new generation of planners who came with a strong belief in collaboration.

An analysis of NEAI-funded project reports provides ample evidence that the community action team sought to create and strengthen a participatory planning and project implementation culture in southern Skamania County. Every project, from big to small, includes provisions for encouraging widespread community participation. These features include requirements for community based steering committees or task forces to provide input from the design phase onward, multiple and regular opportunities for public input, and multiple and regular meetings between planning staff, steering committees, and consultants (see Figure 12). Over time, community members have come to see these features as normal aspects of economic development projects, rather than approaches that are used primarily for controversial projects.

**Figure 13: Skamania County's Planning and Economic Development Models**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Skamania County's Model for Participatory Economic Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Community Action Team chooses a lead agency or department for the project</li><li>• The lead agency forms a Task Force or Steering Committee made up of representatives from local government entities and assorted stakeholders</li><li>• The lead agency, working with the Task Force, hires a consultant who works closely with the lead agency planner and the Task Force or Steering Committee</li><li>• The lead agency incorporates multiple and regular opportunities for broader public participation in assessing project design and implementation</li></ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Skamania County's Model for Ensuring Project Completion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The lead agency planner sets up frequent and regular meetings with the consultant</li><li>• The lead agency planner together with the Task Force or Steering Committee conducts monthly evaluations of project progress</li><li>• If the project is complicated, controversial or costly, the lead agency planner and the Task Force schedule a public meeting to discuss the project during the early part of the design phase and hold periodic public meetings throughout the project.</li></ul>

### **Patterns and Themes of Successful Interventions**

#### **Obstacles/Barriers**

The major barriers to successful project interventions in Skamania County included: 1) limited local government revenues, 2) small planning and administrative staffs, 3) complex and costly permitting processes, and 4) a high percentage of commuters. A brief discussion of each barrier is provided below.

#### *Limited local government revenues*

Due to the high percentage of land area under public ownership, coupled with a very small population, Skamania County has an extremely limited tax base to draw upon. During the 1970s and 1980s, the County obtained a large percentage of its annual revenue from its share of the Forest Service's timber receipts. With the near-cessation of timber harvesting on the Gifford Pinchot National Forest in the mid

and late 1990s, the County's revenue base has shrunk drastically. Likewise the Port's ability to raise revenues was quite limited until the late 1990s when it began to acquire a portfolio of land and buildings that could be used to generate income. Consequently, southern Skamania County was constantly faced with difficulties in coming up with matching funds for projects. The preponderance of Rural Community Assistance Program funded projects is partially due to program guidelines that set a low match (20 percent) and that will allow communities to provide a portion of the match in-kind rather than in cash.

#### *Small staffs*

The ability of Skamania County to capitalize on the funds available through the NEAI was limited considerably by a chronic shortage of staff to work on

projects. Several minor projects, such as Rock Creek pathway interpretive signs, incurred major delays due to the need for local planning and administrative staff to focus their attention on other, more pressing, projects. In addition, the lack of in-house expertise meant that community economic development organizations had to spend time and money to apply for funds to hire consultants to do the design and engineering work for projects, rather than being able to focus on acquiring project implementation funds.

#### *Complex permitting process*

A number of the projects incurred delays due to the unexpectedly long time needed to acquire permits from a variety of federal and state agencies prior to construction. Typically projects in the Gorge require at a minimum permits from the Department of Environmental Quality, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Environmental assessments, biological assessments, hydrological reports and various other types of studies are required for most construction projects, driving up the costs and time required to initiate and complete projects.

#### *Commuter place*

Study informants repeatedly voiced concern about the negative effects of the county's commuter culture on the long term ability of the community to maintain the participatory planning culture that emerged in the county during the mid and late 1990s. As evidenced in the quote from one study informant below, the commuter culture raises two issues: First, it sometimes detaches potential leadership from close community involvement and second, it makes volunteering more difficult since people spend less time at home and more time on the road:

Upwards of 60 percent of the people here commute to work elsewhere. So it is a bit of a bedroom community. We've got a real limited number of professionals who work here in town. We lost the well-paid professionals and the middle class. Those are the people who had been the volunteers; the Forest Service

employees were very active in the community. They were real integral to our functioning. So when they shut down the nursery and down-sized at the district, the county pool of volunteers grew smaller.

To address the commuter issue, the Community Action Team has continuously supported projects that focus on creating an economic environment conducive to the success of a diverse range of small businesses providing higher paying service sector jobs such as engineering and research.

#### **Factors Contributing to Success**

Factors contributing to the success of project interventions in Skamania County include: 1) Pre-existing high degree of social capital, 2) the presence of collaborative-minded leaders, 3) the creation and regular implementation of model processes for participatory planning and project follow-through, 4) the availability of alternative sources of funds for leveraging, and 5) the presence of supportive and knowledgeable field administrators for the Rural Community Assistance Program.

#### *Pre-existing Planning Process*

The high degree of social capital present in the community prior to the NEAI, which had yielded a community action plan that could be readily modified to meet NEAI guidelines for broad-based community buy-in, enabled Skamania County to acquire NEAI funds very early on. Rather than acquiring monies immediately for one major construction project, the community decided instead to fund the design and engineering needed to make future applications for a broad array of projects more competitive. The early start in acquiring design funds meant that the community was able to complete a number of longer-term projects by the time the NEAI funds disappeared.

#### *Collaborative-Minded Leadership*

The presence of a group of extraordinarily collaboratively minded community planners and leaders was instrumental in Skamania County's success at acquiring and leveraging NEAI funds for a large number of diverse types of economic development

projects. One study informant sums up the critical role that collaborative thinking and action played in the community's ability to get funds and complete projects:

The success here is due to the willingness within the community to collaborate on projects. The port, city, and county often work together. For example, if you take grant writing. We had strong grants because everyone brought their strengths and we took a balanced approach.

Moreover, the collaboration has continued even though NEAI funds are no longer available:

We still have that collaboration in the projects we do, even though the NEAI funding is gone. We don't always agree, but everyone has the same goal, which is to make and keep this place a viable community. The level of territorialism isn't high here. We've learned to be supportive rather than competitive.

As a result, the community continues to acquire and leverage funds to begin new projects and complete projects started with NEAI funding.

#### *Model Processes for Participatory Planning and Project Follow-Through*

A third factor in the success of southern Skamania County projects is the community's development of model processes for ensuring wide-spread and ongoing community input into economic development planning, project design, and project implementation. The community has adapted the process over the years to the point where it has become a normal part of doing business in Skamania County's economic development arena. At the same time, the community also developed a model process for ensuring close and ongoing communication between planners, community members, and outside consultants.

Together these two processes have enabled the community to construct a very powerful project planning and implementation system that allows strong disagreements to surface early on in projects,

provides forums for modifying projects to mesh better with community needs, and ensures that projects actually get completed in a reasonable amount of time. As the following comments by study informants illustrate, community support for many of the projects is high in large part because people are kept informed throughout the process and can see concrete results:

When we do a plan, we follow through. That's where government is not so good, on the follow through. They hire a consultant and don't work on it themselves. There are huge problems where an agency will do a study but won't do the administration needed. We've found that it requires constant management on our part to hire an outside consultant. It requires a commitment from the agencies and oversight. I make us sit down with the plans, and we go through them. There's a need to have "tie-back" into the community as the study progresses.

Once we get the planning done, we frequently get results afterwards. We've not been doing study after study without concrete action. So people see that something happens as a result of the planning and study process. It's a question of accountability. If people can see results they'll support planning. There were a lot of naysayers on the Lodge, but now people have seen that something came out of it. If you can't see results, then you have a problem.

It was a hard sell to persuade people that the pathway would work. But now that we've shown some successes, we don't have to argue so much.

The ability to follow through is doubly important in that Skamania County's reputation as a place where people get things done plays an important role in the willingness of funders to commit large amounts of resources to complex and long-term projects that many communities would have difficulty carrying to a successful completion.

### *Availability of other funds to leverage*

Southern Skamania County also benefitted from the availability of economic development funds that it could use to leverage NEAI monies. The Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area Act Economic Development Program and the U.S. Forest Services National Scenic Area Act Recreation Development Program, for example, provided the community with access to a variety of grant and loan programs to supplement project monies acquired through NEAI. The county also successfully leveraged monies from the Washington State Rural Opportunity Fund, the CERB Rural Economic Vitality Initiative, and a variety of state agency programs funding recreation, transportation, and aquatic lands enhancement projects.

### *Supportive Rural Community Assistance Program Administrators*

Although only one of many NEAI-funded programs, the Forest Service's Rural Community Assistance Program provided support for an extraordinarily large number of diverse projects initiated and completed in Skamania County under the Initiative. The presence of a strongly supportive group of program administrators and field staff for the Rural Community Assistance Program in the Gorge was a key factor in ensuring that southern Skamania County and neighboring communities benefitted from the program as much as possible. Rural Commu-

nity Assistance Program staff participated frequently in community action team meetings, increasing the likelihood that design funds for projects would be forthcoming early on. In addition, as exemplified in the following comment from one Rural Community Assistance Program administrator, program staff viewed the program as a much-needed mechanism for transforming the relationship between the Forest Service and local communities:

Before this program came about our approach to community involvement was very different. You had to do public involvement, but it wasn't something we as an agency wanted to do. So this was an opportunity to change the relationships between the agency and the communities we are next to. The relationship benefits are huge. We have a better understanding of each other and especially in Skamania County we are realizing that we can't work separately any more....One of my goals is to develop relationship building. Hopefully we are helping the communities understand who the Forest Service is and what we do so they will see us differently and in a more positive light. I see it as important for us to build relationships, to build trust and learn how to work together, and the Rural Community Assistance program is one way to do that.

## **Conclusion**

The southern Skamania County case study provides an interesting story of communities and a county trying to reconstruct their identity from being primarily a logging region to a destination tourism and recreation region, mixed with high technology and scientific research. Attaining this new identity has been facilitated by the potential complementarity of these two economic sectors so that providing infrastructure for one means that infrastructure for the other is also at least partially provided. For example, community leaders have been working hard to persuade the National Science Foundation to locate one of 10 projected national ecosystems research

labs at the former Wind River Nursery site. Siting of the lab at Wind River would fill the vacuum that the Forest Service's downsizing and nursery closure has left in the community's professional and technical workforce. At the same time, the lab and its associated research facilities can provide clients for Skamania Lodge and the various hot springs and waterfront business developments taking place in the County.

The southern Skamania County case differs from a number of others covered in this Assessment in that county residents and their community leaders clearly think of the area and its inhabitants as interdependent. More importantly, community leaders have

translated this thinking into actual planning practice. The Port and County provide two key unifying points since their staff reside in many parts of the county. As a result, the interests of the various communities are represented within the day-to-day planning interactions at the Port and County level. The Community Action Team provides another point of unification: It brings local government entities together, creates a space for local government to come into contact with a broad range of community stakeholders, and provides a point of regular contact between local government and state and federal agencies.

Southern Skamania County is also very different from most of the other Assessment communities in that the community leaders carefully and deliberately developed planning and project follow-through processes that would contribute to the emergence of a participatory and collaborative community-based economic development culture.

The following quote from a Rural Community Assistance Program administrator suggests that the County's integrative, collaborative, and participatory approach has had broad-based positive effects on the community as a whole, rather than supporting one or two community or economic sub-sectors as is the case in many of the communities affected by the NEAI:

Every project has helped because even the smaller projects, the port paths, buildings, the fairgrounds, all have helped the community as a whole. Enclosing the horse arena turned out to be a very expensive kind of project, we funded the feasibility study for that so that helped them know what the costs would be and so instead they focused on developing that exhibit hall rather than enclosing the arena. In my view, the diversity of the projects in itself is an advantage. They are all contributing toward bettering the community.

Skamania County thus provides an important model that many other communities may wish to emulate. Emulating this model, however, is no easy task. As many of the people who participated in this study noted, effective collaboration takes time and resources. With no options to turn to, in the late 1980s, Skamania County's leaders and citizens decided that the benefits of collaboration far outweighed the costs. Thus far, that decision has proved justified, bringing millions of dollars and on-the-job training opportunities into a community sorely in need of additional funds and skills.

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### Interviewees

Mike Ferris	Public Affairs Officer, Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area
Anita Gahimer	Port Manager, Port of Skamania
Peggy Bryan	Skamania County Economic Development Council
Su Ripp	Rural Community Assistance Coordinator, Gifford Pinchot National Forest
Steve Schafroth	MCEDD Loan Fund Program Director
Dee McGrath	Workforce Investment Act Program Manager
Ken Cohen	Recreation Planner/Administrator
John Kirk	Mayor, North Bonneville
Mary Ann Cole	Stevenson City Administrator
Marilyn Breckel	Skamania County
Jim McGrath	Former manager, Wind River Nursery
Dave Harlan	Former MCEDD Director,
Martha Bennett	Gorge Commission, Executive Director
Debbie Harper	USDA-RD