

Fremont-Winema Forest Service Resource Advisory Committee and Title III Projects Case Study

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Background Context: Extensive Public Lands, Collapse of Public Timber Harvesting Activity and Associated Socioeconomic Decline, and Community-Based Capacity Building

The Fremont-Winema Forest Service Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) is a two-county RAC that encompasses Klamath and Lake Counties—the two counties which lie in the Fremont and Winema National Forests. These two adjacent counties are located in southeast Oregon. Their southern boundary is shared with the state of California. Klamath County is bordered on the west by Jackson County, on the north by Deschutes County, and on the east by Lake County. To the north and east of Lake County are located Crook and Harney Counties, respectively. More than half of both Klamath and Lake Counties is public land. The Forest Service is the largest public manager, followed by the Bureau of Land Management.

The heavy reliance on timber from public lands in Klamath and Lake Counties rendered the

rural communities of this region particularly vulnerable to the declining federal harvest levels of the 1990s. Figure 1 shows the public and private timber harvest levels for both Klamath and Lake Counties between 1986 and 2003. Timber harvest levels on private (mostly industrial) forestlands have fluctuated, but they have not dropped dramatically. In fact, they rose considerably during the early 1990s, just as federal harvest levels plummeted, presumably to capture the price premium associated with the declining availability of federal timber. Figure 1 shows clearly the dramatic drop in timber harvesting activity on federal lands that began in 1989-90. In the space of just a few years annual harvest levels fell from a high of nearly 500 million board feet to around 50 million board feet, a level at which they continue to this day. The

Fremont-Winema Forests and RAC area

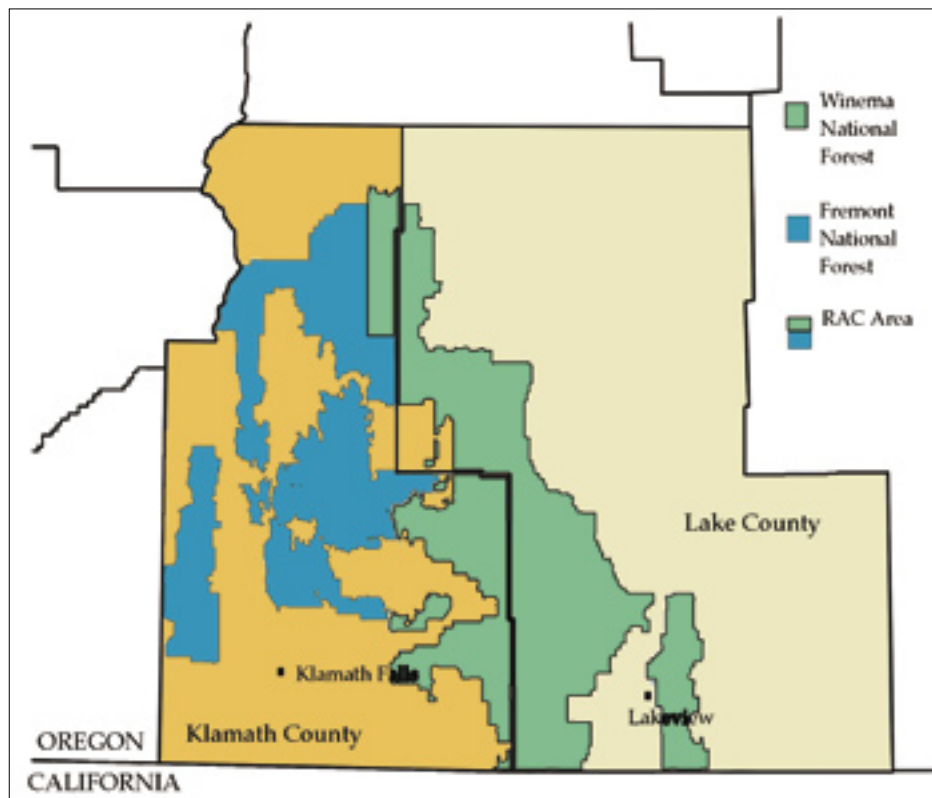
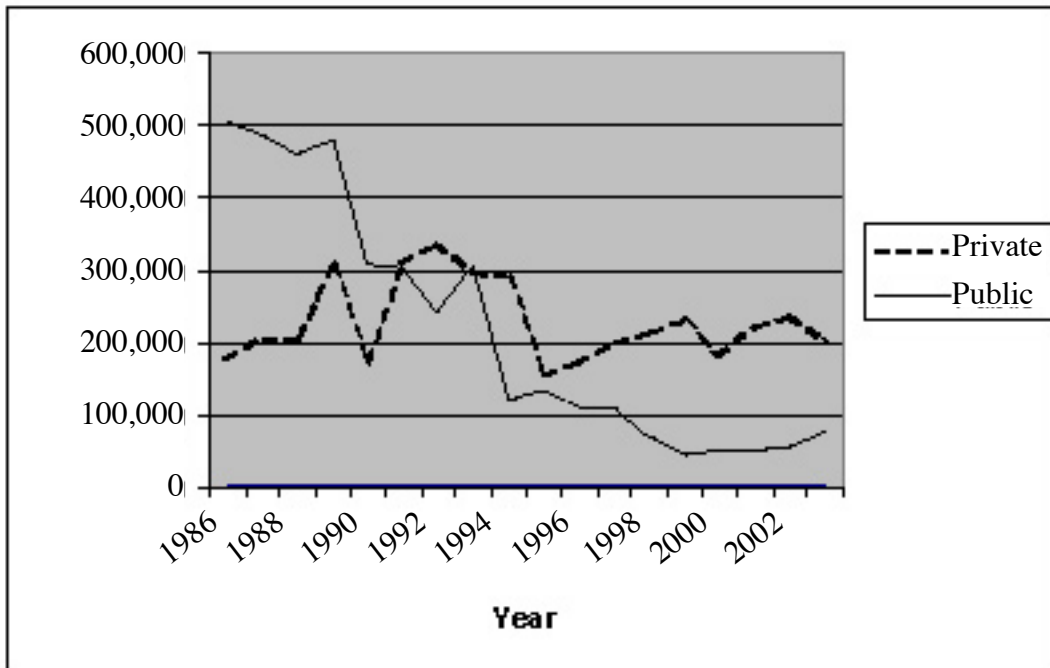


Figure 1. Public and Private Timber Harvest, Klamath and Lake Counties¹



Source: Oregon Department of Forestry, Annual Timber Harvest Reports, 1986-2003.

unsustainably high levels of timber harvest on public lands in the late 1980s were eventually curtailed by a variety of factors including the Northwest Forest Plan, litigation, endangered species listings, and the fact that much of the easily-accessed big timber had been cut.

The precipitous drop in harvesting on both Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management lands that began in the early 1990s has had resounding negative socioeconomic effects, particularly in the small, rural towns of this two-county region. These effects can be traced through a variety of indicators. Population decline reveals part of the story. As mills dependent on public supplies of timber in the small rural communities of this area closed down in the early 1990s, some families were forced to move in search of employment opportunities elsewhere, usually in larger, more economically diverse urban centers. The result has been a slow de-population of rural areas and an increase

in the population of urban areas. For example, the mill in the small town of Paisley was closed down in 1996. Due to the lack of alternative employment opportunities, there has been a corresponding drop in Paisley's population from 343 in 1980 to 247 in 2000 (Table 1). Population decline in the small town of Chiloquin, and even in Lakeview, the county seat of Lake County, illustrates a similar pattern. Declining population in rural small towns appears even more stark when compared against the overall increase in the population of the counties in which they are located. Much of the increase in overall county population is accounted for by the growth of economically diverse urban centers, where robust economic activity, including second home construction and the growth of a new retiree community, mutes the effects of declining federal timber harvest levels. The almost 25% increase in the population of Klamath Falls between 1970 and 2000 illustrates this point.

Table 1. Population Trends in Select Jurisdictions (Towns, Cities, and County Level) in Lake and Klamath Counties

Jurisdiction	1970	1980	1990	2000
Paisley City	260	343	350	247
Chiloquin Town	826	778	673	716
Lakeview Town	2,705	2,770	2,526	2,474
Klamath Falls City	15,775	16,661	17,737	19,462
Lake County	6,343	7,532	7,186	7,422
Klamath County	50,021	59,117	57,702	63,795

Source: Oregon Blue Book, (www.bluebook.state.or.us)

There are other indicators of the socioeconomic context in which the Resource Advisory Committee operates. In 2002, the unemployment rates for both Klamath and Lake Counties were 9.3% , and the poverty rates were 17% and 16% , respectively. Both these sets of indicators are significantly higher than the state-level unemployment rate (7.5%) and poverty rate (12%). Per capita income in 2002 is also much below the state average. For Klamath and Lake Counties it is \$21,913 and \$21,218, respectively, while the state average per capita income is \$28,222. To target assistance to areas in economic distress the state of Oregon has developed a list of distressed areas and an associated index of distress for each area. The index is based on an average of eight measures. The measures are: unemployment rate, per capita personal income, average pay per worker, population change,% age of population receiving unemployment insurance, industrial diversity,% age of families in poverty, and employment change. The statewide index is 1.00; areas with a higher index experience greater distress and areas with an index greater than 1.2 are classified as “distressed” and thereby in need of targeted economic assistance. Perhaps not surprisingly, both Klamath and Lake Counties are ranked as “distressed” counties; their

2002 index of distress is 1.20 and 1.31, respectively.

Of course, the socioeconomic challenges facing these counties are not news to the residents. The life trajectories of many of those who reside in this region comprise the micro-stories that collectively yield the gloomy macro-level socioeconomic snapshots presented above. Displaced timber and mill workers were forced into other sectors (often the service sector) where jobs pay less and often are without benefits; contractors must travel further and further in search of employment; and public school enrollments continue to decline. However, there are also other promising micro-stories not reflected in these statistics. These are the stories of the individuals and groups that have chosen to develop the civic culture and institutional capacity to respond to the changing context of resource management in this area. These individuals and groups have made remarkable progress in charting a course away from the politics of blame and associated policy gridlock that often characterize the contentious debates over public land forest management. Instead, beginning in 1997, they have managed to build bridges and mend fences, socially and institutionally, amongst diverse groups and individuals representing traditional environmental and the more utilitarian-oriented timber

and ranching perspectives. The trust, relationships, and communication skills developed during the years prior to the creation of the Resource Advisory Committee provided the RAC members with the social and institutional capital necessary to effectively work together as a group. The work and accomplishments of the Fremont-Winema RAC is but one part of a larger story, and while the work done under Titles II and III of the payments to states legislation is the focus of this report, only by understanding at least the outlines of this story can the effectiveness and success of the RAC be accounted for.

Much of the capacity building work that preceded the creation of the RAC was associated with community-led efforts to deal with declining harvest levels from the Fremont National Forest and the resulting mill closures in Lakeview and Paisley. This eventually resulted in community-based efforts to re-authorize the Lakeview Sustained Yield Unit. The Lakeview Sustained Yield Unit, established in 1950, is one of six units created under the authorization of the 1944 Sustained Yield Forest Management Act. These units were designed to stabilize rural communities by generating and directing a continuous flow of logs to a designated set of mills. However, for a variety of reasons (including allegations of unfair competition from mills outside the sustained yield units) the units themselves and the notions of community stability that the legislation incorporates were criticized soon after they were formed. As a result, the Forest Service announced in 1957 that no new units would be established. Those units already created would be allowed to continue. As such, the Lakeview Sustained Yield Unit continued to supply logs to the Lake County mills from its portion of the Fremont National Forest up through the 1990s when, as Figure 1 illustrates, the volume of timber offered for sale declined dramatically, a number of local mills closed, and it was generally acknowledged that the area's public forests were in poor ecological health. The Lakeview Sustained Yield Unit, supplying only the one remaining mill in Lakeview, had become nearly moribund.

In 1997, a group of community leaders along with the leadership of the Fremont National Forest,

with the help and eventual financial assistance of the State Economic & Community Development Department, came together to explore ways of addressing the socioeconomic and forest health issues that Lake County and the Fremont National Forest faced. This led to an examination of the possibility of refocusing and reauthorizing the Sustained Yield Unit. Sustainable Northwest, a Portland-based non-profit, was hired with state and local funds to assist the community in moving forward with its collective process and community vision. This committee, which soon enlarged to include representatives of regional and national environmental organizations, as well as members of the local ranching and logging community, called itself the Lakeview Stewardship Group. Through stakeholder dialogues and with the input of a commissioned third-party assessment, the Lakeview Stewardship Group determined that a major shift in management focus was needed on the Sustained Yield Unit. The specific direction of this shift, which focused on restorative forest management and local employment generation, was detailed in a vision and goal statement drafted by the Stewardship Group and incorporated by the Forest Service into the Unit's 10-year reauthorization process. There followed a continuing series of community meetings, relationship-building between diverse stakeholders, on-going collaboration with the Forest Service, congressional field tours, and trips to Washington D.C.. Eventually, in early 2001, the new vision and management direction for the Unit was formally approved by the Chief of the Forest Service, Mike Dombeck, and the Unit's name was changed to the Lakeview Federal Stewardship Unit.

Following the reauthorization and reorientation of the unit, the Lakeview Stewardship Group's attention turned to on-the-ground realization of the group's vision and goals. Recognizing the need for a community-based economic development entity for guiding the actual implementation of the vision, and with the financial backing of the Oregon Economic & Community Development Department and local funding sources, such as the Klamath-Lake Regional Investment Board, a local nonprofit corporation called Lake County Resources Initiative was formed. Since

its inception in June 2001, Lake County Resource Initiative has played a crucial role in the effort to secure living-wage jobs in natural resources management for local contractors and their employees and, through management interventions, to improve and enhance forest health on the Stewardship Unit. It has done this by working extensively with local contractors, facilitating communication across the diverse groups involved with the Stewardship Unit, and overseeing project implementation.

Lake County Resources Initiative (LCRI) continues the collaborative approach to resource management challenges that the Stewardship Group earlier advanced. It continues to work closely with the Stewardship Group and the Forest Service, as well as with various client groups, especially local contractors (to build their capacity to successfully bid on Forest Service and other government contracts). Some of the early high priority projects in which LCRI has been involved include a third-party

monitoring program (developed initially by the Stewardship Group), the redesign and reconstruction of the Paisley town weir on the Chewaucan River, and various watershed restoration projects in the Chewaucan Jakabe Watershed. As noted in the Lakeview Federal Stewardship Unit's 2001-2002 Annual Report, the Resource Advisory Committee is an important source of funding for actually implementing restoration projects and the high-priority monitoring program. The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board is providing the bulk of funds for this project and the Forest Service is doing most of the juniper thinning. The Resource Advisory Committee, which includes some members of the Lakeview Stewardship Group, is providing a significant portion of the financial resources necessary to realize the concrete benefits, both socioeconomic and ecological, of the five years of planning, capacity building, and institutional and policy development that preceded it.

Table 2. Receipts, Elections, and Allocations for P.L.106-393, Klamath and Lake Counties, 2002-2004

County	Year	Full P.L.106-393 Payment Amount	Amount Elected for Titles II/III*	Amount Allocated for Title III*	Amount Allocated for Title II*
Klamath	2002	\$16,239,842	\$3,247,986 (20)	\$1,623,984 (50)	\$1,623,984 (50)
	2003	\$16,434,719	\$3,286,943 (20)	\$657,389 (20)	\$2,629,555 (80)
	2004	\$16,631,934	\$3,326,387 (20)	\$665,277 (20)	\$2,661,109 (80)
Lake	2002	\$5,368,566	\$805,283 (15)	\$32,211 (4)	\$773,072 (96)
	2003	\$5,432,972	\$814,946 (15)	\$32,598 (4)	\$782,348 (96)
	2004	\$5,498,168	\$824,725 (15)	\$106,636 (12.9)	\$718,088 (87.1)

* Numbers in parentheses are % ages. In column four the % age refers to the proportion of the total payment that is elected for Titles II and Titles III. In columns five and six the % age refers to the proportion of the county election allocated to Title III and II, respectively.

County Elections for Titles II and III

Klamath and Lake County both receive relatively large amounts of funding through P.L.106-393, as indicated in Table 2. Because there is only one RAC in Lake County, it receives 100% of the county's Title II allocation. However, in Klamath County there are three Forest Service RACs and one BLM RAC. In addition to the Fremont-Winema RAC, the other two Forest Service RACs are the Deschutes/Ochoco RAC and the Rogue/Umpqua RAC; the Medford BLM RAC includes O&C lands that are west of Hwy 97. Due to the fact that the majority of the area over which the Fremont-Winema RAC has jurisdiction falls within Klamath County, while much smaller proportions of these other three RACs are in Klamath County, county officials have chosen to allocate 80% of the election for the Fremont-Winema RAC while reserving the balance of Title II funds to distribute between the remaining two Forest Service RACs. Table 2 shows how much each county receives through P.L.106-393 and how each has elected to allocate funds across Title II and Title III programs.

Several points are apparent from Table 2. First, both counties receive relatively large amounts from the federal government under P.L.106-393. The differences in total payment between these two counties account for why Klamath County elects to direct 20% of the full payment to Titles II and

III while Lake County directs 15% to Titles II and III (which is the minimum amount as specified in P.L.106-393). It should also be noted that Klamath County is one of the few counties that has elected to allocate more than 15% to Titles II and III. Second, both counties allocate most of their elections to the Title II program. After year one, in which Klamath County split the funds evenly between Titles II and III, the county has subsequently allocated 80% of the total election to the Title II program. Lake County has allocated an even higher percentage to Title II and the RAC: 96%, 96%, and 81%, respectively, for the first three years of the program.

The high percentages of the Title II/III funding that both Klamath and Lake Counties choose to allocate for Title II projects demonstrates the commitment of these counties to the RAC and the projects that the RAC funds. It also reflects the fact that the county officials interviewed for this case would like to fund more on-the-ground restoration-related projects, hard infrastructure projects such as boat ramps, and the acquisition of real property—projects not permitted by Title III. Had the legislation clearly indicated that these were acceptable uses of Title III funds, it is quite likely that Klamath and Lake County administrators and commissioners would have allocated more funding to Title III and less to Title II.

Title III Projects

In this section, we summarize all the Title III projects funded by Klamath and Lake Counties to provide the reader with an overview of the pattern of Title III investments. As of July 2004, a total of 23 Title III projects have been funded by Klamath and Lake Counties. Of these 23 projects, 21 were Klamath County projects and two were Lake County projects. The small number of Lake County Title III projects is not surprising, given the large proportion of the county's elected amount that is allocated for Title II projects.

All proposed Klamath County Title III projects go through the same application process, whether the project is proposed by a county agency or department, or by an organization outside of the county government. There are several steps to the Klamath County Title III application process. The availability of Title III funds is advertised in local newspapers and other public notices, as well as through word-of-mouth by county commissioners in the various meetings they attend. Applications are available year-round from the Department of Public Works. The application

form is somewhat similar to that for Title II projects with, of course, the exception that the project must conform with the purposes of Title III grants, pursuant to P.L.106-393. The completed application forms go through a variety of review steps within the county government. They are reviewed by the county treasurer, the county council, and finally by the county commissioners at one of the commissioner’s regularly scheduled meetings. If approved at all these levels of review, there follows a 45-day public comment period. Assuming that no public objections have been raised against the project, the county then draws up agreements and contracts with the grantee. Payments are made on a reimbursable basis following documentation, usually in the form of invoices of grantee’s expenses.

What kinds of Title III projects have Klamath and Lake Counties approved? Table 3 shows the main project categories, the number of projects in each category, and the amounts funded by category. It is clear that in terms of both absolute dollar amounts and numbers of projects, fire-related projects are the highest priority. Grants in this category have been made to the Oregon Department of Forestry, Chiloquin Agency Lake Fire District, Walker Range Fire Patrol, and the Keno Rural Fire Protection District. These grants have a combination of purposes, including the purchase of materials and supplies needed for developing outreach programs, implementation of homeowner outreach

and education programs, wildfire hazard reduction projects in the wildland urban interface (WUI), Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping of fire-related landscape and infrastructure in fire districts, installation of above-ground fire-fighting water sources (primarily helicopter dip-ponds) in vulnerable areas, establishing demonstration fire-wise interpretive gardens, and creating brochures about fire-resistant species. Overall, these grants demonstrate a high level of inter-agency coordination and integration with other fire-related programs and legislation, especially those related to the National Fire Plan. For example, the \$966,656 grant to the Oregon Department of Forestry for site specific homeowner wildfire hazard assessment is designed to dovetail with and enhance the effectiveness of current fuels reduction projects supported by the National Fire Plan. And the grant to the Chiloquin Agency Lake Fire District to develop a WUI Community Assessment plan and a WUI Mitigation plan is being implemented in close coordination with the Fremont-Winema National Forests, the Oregon Department of Forestry, other fire districts, and Klamath County. In other cases, such as the grants to the Walker Range Fire Patrol, Title III grants that focus on outreach, education, and the development of fire-wise landscaping are explicitly designed to complement the on-the-ground WUI fuels reduction projects funded by the Title II program.

Table 3. Title III Projects by project category, number of projects, and amount.

Type of Project	Number of Projects	Total Amount
Fire Prevention/Planning/Outreach/Education	7	\$1,692,741
Search and Rescue	3	\$715,443
Garden/Arboretums	2	\$329,247
Community Service Work Crews	3	\$306,688
Educational Brochures/Books/Pamphlets	5	\$214,316
Youth Camps	2	\$86,226
“Leave No County Behind”	1	\$10,000

The second largest category of projects concerns county search and rescue efforts on public lands, primarily national forest areas. This category is comprised of two grants to the Klamath County Sheriff and one to the Lake County Sheriff. These grants cover a combination of three activities: the purchase of equipment necessary to effectively conduct search and rescue operations, training of volunteer search and rescue teams, and reimbursement for actual search and rescue efforts. Title III support for equipping, training, and reimbursing county search and rescue efforts is important because it acknowledges the importance of county search and rescue teams to rescue efforts on public forest lands. As one county commissioner described it, "Now it looks like they [county search and rescue teams] have been invited rather than snuck in." Careful auditing of the proportion of search and rescue efforts devoted to searches and rescues on public forest lands ensures that rates and amounts of reimbursement are commensurate with activities on public forest lands.

Two Title III grants are for garden and arboretum development. One grant (\$126,062) is to the Oregon Garden and Association of O&C Counties to develop a Natural Resources Education Center and Rediscovery Forest at the Oregon Garden. The Oregon Garden, located in Silverton, Oregon, is a regional tourist attraction that has received Title III funds from a number of counties and Title II funds from a number of RACs. This facility will use education through seminars, programs, and curriculum to convey to youth the relationship between forest management and forest health. The second grant (\$203,185) to the Klamath Community Forestry Council is for the purpose of completing the planting of trees, shrubs, and groundcover at the Klamath Community Arboretum. The overall purpose of this project is to convey an understanding of landscape design principles and to increase awareness of the diversity of plants suitable for local microclimates.

Three Title III grants are to support community service work crew camps; two are for the Klamath County Community Corrections Department and one to the Lake County Juvenile Department. All

three of these projects provide for supervision of community service work crew camps working on federal lands. As recounted by a Lake County commissioner, without Title III support for providing supervision for the work crew camps, the work crew camps would be closed down. Consequently, people whose sentence includes community service would not be able to fulfill their community service obligations by doing restoration-related work on federal lands. Furthermore, some of the projects that the work camps are implementing are funded by Title II RAC dollars. Thus, there is a direct connection between Titles II and III.

Five Title III grants have been made to prepare various brochures, books, and pamphlets. Three books focus on plant species. One book, prepared by the Klamath County Weed Control Program with a Title III grant in the amount of \$20,000, is a pocket field identification handbook that covers the primary noxious weeds in Klamath County. This project, designed to raise public awareness about noxious weeds, complements the Title II-funded noxious weed control and management projects. A second field guide, prepared by Rabe Consulting with a grant in the amount of \$22,000, identifies the 35 sensitive species in the Klamath County region. The third field guide, to be prepared by the Klamath Basin Native plants Society of Oregon with a grant for \$62,000, will highlight approximately 250 native plant species in the Klamath Basin. The last two projects in this category are more forest-related. A grant to the Klamath Lake Forest Health Partnership for \$68,976 is for the preparation of a forestry education book, organized by the different forest types in the region, that identifies key forestry issues and that will be used in after-school education programs and other contexts. Lastly, a second grant (\$41,340) to the Klamath-Lake Forest Health Partnership is to provide brochures and signage along the Klamath Community Interpretative Forestry Trail in Collier State Park near Klamath Falls.

Two Title III grants support youth camps. One grant, in the amount of \$17,126 to the Oregon State University Extension Service, supports a week-

long watershed education-focused camp in collaboration with the Girl Scouts of Winema Council, the YMCA summer camp program, Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and the Oregon Department of Forestry. The camp, for young women in grades 7-12, combines outdoor recreation with educational programs about watershed functions and ecosystem relations. The second grant, for \$69,100, is to support the Fremont-Winema National Forest's "Resources and People" Camp. This week-long camp program, which targets urban youth and has been in operation since 1992, provides opportunities for people from diverse cultural backgrounds to learn about natural resources and their management, and to critically assess career options in natural resources-related fields.

The last Title III grant listed in Table 2 is Klamath County's contribution to the "Leave No County Behind" program of the Association of Oregon Counties. This program, in support of which many Oregon counties have contributed \$10,000, is designed to educate counties receiving at least \$500,000 under P.L.106-393 but that have not established RACs under Title II of the legislation and to strengthen the National Forest Counties and Schools Coalition. Both county administrators as well as members of the congressional committees and subcommittees that have jurisdiction over reauthorization of P.L.106-393 are targeted by this program. As this project is a multi-RAC effort, it will be discussed further in the institutional section of the final report.

Two recently approved Title III projects also deserve mention. The first is the public access conservation easement on the east side of Lake Ewana in Klamath Falls. The easement would provide a 30-foot green belt approximately one mile long along the edge of the lake that connects to the lakeside Veterans Park. The easement acquisition is part of a larger project concerning lakeside trail access and continued revitalization of that portion of Klamath Falls. The purchase of the conservation

easement with approximately \$300,000 of Title III dollars paves the way for eventual purchase of the property and its management by the Parks and Recreation Department. The second recent Title III project is a Lake County project that accounts for why the most recent Lake County Title II/Title III split allocates slightly more to Title III projects than in the prior two years. The project focuses on mapping, particularly in WUI areas, and fire-hazard reduction and preparedness education and outreach programs. Using a formula prepared by the county assessor, the portion of the mapping project that affects public lands and hence can be funded with Title III funds has been determined. The balance of the mapping project will be supported with other funds. When the project is complete, the county government will have a fully digitized set of maps that will inform planning and building-related decisions, interface with other public agencies at state and federal levels, and will also inform fire planning efforts. The mapping effort will include a public-access terminal so that anyone may access the maps and the information they contain.

A high diversity of projects has been funded with Title III funds. Many of these projects support productive partnerships, as we have seen with the implementation of the fire prevention, education, and outreach projects. Some Title III programs are also explicitly designed to dovetail with related Title II projects, as noted with respect to the support for community service work camps. These productive synergies—made possible in part by the high degree of local involvement in program design and project development—compound the positive effects of individual projects. Value-added effects are also derived when a project either constitutes one piece of a larger initiative—as with the Lake Ewana conservation easement—or when it enables an existing element of community infrastructure to operate more effectively, e.g., the grant to the Forest Health Partnership for signage along the community forestry trail.

Title II Projects

During fiscal years 2002, 2003, 2004, and 2005 the Fremont-Winema RAC approved 147 projects and allocated approximately \$10.2 million for their support. Of these 147 projects, 94 are in Klamath County and 53 are in Lake County. The approved expenditures for projects in each county roughly match the county Title II allocations. Thus, the RAC allocated approximately \$7.1 million in support of Klamath County projects and approximately \$3.1 million in support of Lake County projects. A few projects (approximately five) that were initially approved and then subsequently dropped are not included with the set of 147 projects. Also, some of the RAC's annual grants support multi-year projects—although project proponents must re-apply each year. The great majority of RAC projects are developed by Forest Service personnel from one of the seven Ranger Districts on the Fremont-Winema Forests. Of the 147 approved projects, only 14 are non-Forest Service projects, i.e., projects developed by people other than Forest Service personnel—a prime example of which is the Chewaucan Watershed Monitoring Project (discussed below).

A. Project Solicitation

Each year the Fremont-Winema National Forest distributes a news release notifying the public about the availability of RAC funding and soliciting project proposals that are consistent with the legislation's intent. Given the relatively small number of private sector proposals, this way of collecting project proposals from the general public does not seem to generate much response. Compounding this issue is the fact that the news releases are prepared only a few weeks before proposals are due. For example, on January 18, 2002 a news release was distributed that announced the first meeting of the RAC (January 31 and February 1). The notice stated that the Forest Service staff had generated more than 50 projects for the RAC to consider for funding at that meeting, and noted that projects from the public and other agencies were invited and would

be considered at another meeting later in February (February 25). The news releases for the next two funding rounds ('03 and '04) also provided relatively small windows for individuals interested in submitting proposals to find out about the program and develop a full proposal. In 2003, the public was given less than three weeks notice before applications were due, and in 2004 just over a month's notice was given. Further hurdles potential private sector applicants must confront relate to the fact that RAC members have requested project proponents to provide more and more details about the projects (including maps, photographs, diagrams, etc.) to aid the RAC members in evaluating the proposals. While meeting these information requests may not be too onerous to Forest Service staff who have years of experience in developing project proposals, estimating costs, etc., one can easily imagine how such requests represent a significant disincentive for private parties. The short application windows, information-intensive application process, and minimal level of community outreach all help account for the fact that so few private proposals have been received or funded. Consequently, it is no surprise that, as one RAC member noted, the RAC "really hasn't looked at private projects, [we] haven't had really good proposals from the private sector."

Interestingly, and in contrast to some other RACs, the Forest Service's near-monopoly over RAC funds has not generated much concern. RAC members and others whom we interviewed feel strongly that the Forest Service has continued to offer the RAC a lengthy menu of quality projects from which to choose. And while some private projects have been funded on lands adjacent to the national forest, it is clear to the RAC that the majority of their funds are to directly benefit public lands and that the Forest Service is best positioned to know what projects on the forest are the priority projects whose implementation will meet those goals.

Furthermore, several interviewees noted that in Klamath and Lake Counties the Forest Service enjoys relatively good local relationships and that in general “the [public lands management] agencies are part of the community.” The relatively positive local community-Forest Service relations may contribute to the fact that although the Forest Service receives the lion’s share of RAC funding, this flow of funds does not raise red flags.

Lastly, it should be noted that two of the most prominent RAC projects are multi-year private sector projects. These are the Chewaucan monitoring project and the Paisley Town weir reconstruction project. These projects, discussed below, are unique, important, and have attracted much attention from non-local government agencies and private sector organizations. The prominence of these two private sector RAC projects perhaps mitigates the overall paucity of non-Forest Service RAC projects.

B. Project Review, Prioritization, and Selection

The RAC meets once a year to evaluate and rank project proposals and, based on available funding, to determine which projects will be funded. Well before the RAC meeting, Bill Aney, the Designated Federal Official for the RAC (and the District Ranger for the Paisley District of the Fremont-Winema National Forests), or his staff provide each RAC member binders containing the proposals for the next fiscal year funding cycle. All RAC members are expected to carefully review the 40-60 proposals that are typically submitted for RAC support prior to the meeting.

At its first meeting RAC members settled on a set of criteria for prioritizing projects. These criteria are: “long-term benefits, watershed restoration, innovative but not controversial, meet the legislative intent, provide local jobs, have partnership/cooperative funding, cost-effective and show effectiveness of design, exhibit collaboration, ready-to-go and have NEPA completed” (meeting minutes, 1/31/02). These criteria are used as general guides both to evaluate proposals and to signal to potential applicants what sorts of projects the RAC is likely to approve and fund.

Soon after the RAC was formed it adopted a numeric ranking method that Bill Aney had initially suggested. The RAC continues to use this evaluation and ranking method. The method draws on consensus and interest-based decision-making protocols that have been used on the forest in other contexts and that have been taught in decision-making workshops and trainings. In brief, the process is comprised of several steps. First, each RAC member, after reviewing the applications, ranks them as either High, Medium, or Low. Second, at the RAC meeting each subgroup meets to determine if any project does not have the required subgroup majority (three out of five) to be considered by the full RAC. Third, the entire RAC meets to assign points to each project. Point totals are calculated for each project; 2 points for each “High” ranking, 1 point for each “Medium” ranking, and 0 points for each “Low” ranking. Fourth, the District Rangers from each of the seven districts on the Fremont Winema NF and the proponents of private sector projects answer questions RAC members may have regarding specific projects, usually those that do not have broad support, or whose purpose or methods are unclear. Following this discussion period, RAC members may change their project scoring, if they wish, and the project totals are recalculated and projects are ordered according to the score. RAC members are excused from assigning a score for any project with which they may have a conflict of interest. The final score for such projects is then recalibrated using a weighted formula that compensates for the fact that fewer members are voting for that project. Finally, the RAC, working down the project list from the top, approves for funding all those projects that current funding levels will support. The “line” separating funded from unfunded projects may be adjusted during the subsequent fiscal year depending on the actual amount the RAC receives from the counties and the amount of carry-over funds from the prior year.

C. Approved Projects

What kinds of projects has the RAC funded? In order to answer this question, projects from the first

four funding rounds were characterized according to their primary purpose and amount. This information is presented in Table 3. It is derived primarily from information provided by Bill Aney, the Designated Federal Official, and to a lesser extent from project information available on the “Payments to States” website. There may be some discrepancies between this project classification and the RAC’s own classification. For example, some in-stream projects may have had meadow restoration components and some aspen restoration efforts may have involved juniper removal and hence could have been classi-

fied as juniper control efforts. These classification issues would, of course, also affect the quantitative indicators listed in the table; for example, the acres of juniper removal might be larger if one assumes that some of the aspen restoration work involved juniper control and removal. However, based on the information available, this is a comprehensive break-down of the flows of RAC dollars by project category. While there may be some small discrepancies, the larger patterns and trends are accurate. The following sections discuss these projects by group; key projects are highlighted in the discussion.

Table 4. Approved Fremont-Winema RAC projects for fiscal years 2002-2005.

Type of Project	Amount	No. of Projects	Accomplishments
Fuels Reduction	\$2,888,327	19	23,112 acres treated
Pre-comm. Thinning	1,912,494	16	19,881 acres treated
Vegetation Management	1,035,685	24	2,290 acres meadow restored; 1,695 acres aspen restored; 1,840 acres juniper treated
Culverts	766,100	12	21 culverts and 2 bridges installed
In-stream/Riparian	626,753	23	Project diversity precludes presentation of a single measure. However, projects in this category did treat 17 miles of riparian habitat, among other accomplishments.
Weed Control	597,000	9	26,500 acres surveyed; 7,750 acres treated
Roads	588,129	14	
Monitoring	526,000	5	
Native plants	436,500	7	
Paisley Town Weir	231,078	3	
Post-fire planting	225,000	1	
Campgrounds	198,462	4	
Other	79,529	3	
Wildlife	46,750	2	
Old Growth thinning	22,000	1	
Trails	15,800	1	
Forest Clean-up	12,243	2	
NEPA	10,000	1	
TOTAL	\$10,217,850	147	

1. Fuels Reduction Projects

The single largest category of RAC expenditure is for fuels reduction work. Approximately \$2.9 million, or 28% of total RAC expenditures have been allocated for 19 different fuels reduction projects. These projects have accomplished fuels reduction treatments on over 23,000 acres of national forest land using a variety of techniques including manual, mechanical, and prescribed fire. Given the large acreages of forestlands that are currently overstocked, and the resulting fire hazards, insect vulnerability, and forest health concerns, this is an excellent use of RAC funds. This is especially true in this case because of the efforts that the RAC has made, in concert with the work of the Lake County Resources Initiative, to prioritize the local employment generation potential of these projects—many of these projects have been contracted out to local contractors and some of these contractors have worked with LCRI to develop the various capacities necessary to successfully bid and implement a Forest Service contract. Furthermore, it is clear that this fuels reduction work would not be done were it not for the RAC's support. This is due to the collapse of the timber harvesting program on the Fremont-Winema National Forests, which in the past provided the revenues for these and other forest management activities. However, while 23,000 acres treated is not insignificant, it certainly does not approach a landscape-scale fuels reduction regime. Thus, it has been necessary to prioritize and target strategic areas for fuels reduction efforts.

The Chiloquin Urban Interface fuels reduction project is a good example of the strategic deployment of fuels reduction efforts and funding. The project involves removal, through a combination of mowing, hand piling, and underburning, of hazardous fuels on approximately 2,500 acres of Forest Service land within the wildland urban interface zone of the community of Chiloquin. The project proceeded through a series of different stages. One of the earlier stages (and a separate RAC grant) involved fence removal construction in advance of mechanical fuel treatment operations. This part of the project warrants discussion because the work was performed using a “participating agreement” (as opposed to a regular con-

tract) with a local organization called REACH, Inc. REACH (Rehabilitation, Employment and Housing) is a nonprofit rehabilitation and training organization based in Klamath Falls that has developed an ecosystem workforce training program. In order to provide opportunities for participants in the training program to develop the skills necessary to be certified as an ecosystem manager and at the same time to accomplish ecosystem management and restoration objectives, REACH has entered into a participating agreement with the Forest Service. Under this agreement 10 separate fuels reduction and restoration projects have been accomplished on the Fremont-Winema Forests, including the Chiloquin Community Fuels Removal Part I. Almost all of these projects have been funded by the RAC.

This project is also noteworthy because it is linked with the National Fire Plan, which supported the community fire planning process in Chiloquin. The community fire plan, whose development was spearheaded by the Chiloquin Rural Fire Protection District, identified the areas in the Chiloquin WUI that should be prioritized for fuels reduction efforts. This plan provided the blueprint for the RAC-supported fuels reduction work. It should also be noted that the fire prevention and hazard reduction public education and outreach efforts of the Chiloquin Rural Fire Protection District have been funded by Klamath County through the county's Title III program. Thus, this project demonstrates the productive integration of Title III, Title II, and National Fire Plan funds, goals, and objectives. The fuels reduction project has been a success. As noted by the Chiloquin District Ranger, the completed project now protects the forest from the town and the town from the forest. Its efficacy was demonstrated when, in the summer of 2004, the fire breaks established through the fuels reduction project effectively stopped a wildfire. While not all of the fuels reduction efforts that the RAC has funded have been put to the test in such a dramatic fashion, almost all of them do exhibit the integration of Title II, Title III, and National Fire Plan programs. By reducing dangerously high fuel loadings in high priority areas (often through innovative contracting mechanisms such as participating

agreements and work with local contractors), they accomplish forest health objectives and support local community well-being.

2. Pre-commercial Thinning

The second largest project category is pre-commercial thinning. Almost \$2 million has been allocated by the RAC for 16 pre-commercial thinning projects that cover almost 20,000 acres on the Fremont-Winema Forests. There are at least four salient points to make about this category of projects. The first is that by prioritizing pre-commercial thinning the RAC is clearly signaling its interest in improving forest health conditions by addressing one of the biggest threats to forest ecosystem health—overstocked forest stands. Secondly, the RAC’s interest in thinning projects dovetails with its focus on fuels reduction; both project categories address the interrelated challenges associated with fuels buildup and overstocked forest stands from both a fire hazard and forest health perspective. Thirdly, as with fuels reduction projects, at least some of the pre-commercial thinning projects have been contracted to local organizations, such as REACH, that incorporate job training and local employment generation. In such cases, the thinning projects clearly integrate the twin goals of enhancing forest health and creating local socioeconomic benefit. However, some of the larger pre-commercial thinning projects are implemented through Indefinite Delivery-Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contracts with relatively large, non-local contractors located along the Interstate 5 corridor. Ideally, given the continuing efforts of the Lake County Resources Initiative to build local contractor capacity, and the willingness and flexibility of Forest Service contracting officers to re-tool contracts to increase the likelihood that local contractors will successfully bid on them, more of these sorts of projects can be awarded to local contractors. There are encouraging signs that this is already happening. As one Forest Service District Ranger noted, unlike with replanting projects that often have narrow windows that force contractors to mobilize large crews for short periods of time (something that many local contractors find challenging or impossible), with thinning projects there are fewer

time constraints, and contracts can specify a daily per acre thinning objective that is more consistent with local contractor capacity. The Forest Service was successful in establishing new IDIQ contracts with local contractors in 2004. Fourth, the ability of the RAC to agree to fund pre-commercial thinning projects speaks volumes about the strength of the middle ground that exists within this RAC. While some members who represent environmental groups apparently prefer to call thinning projects “density management,” there is clearly a majority of people on the RAC in all three groups that is willing to support this kind of forest management. This is commendable and most likely is at least partly due to the strong community involvement and trust building processes that preceded the formation of the RAC.

3. Vegetation Management

The RAC has made 24 awards for a combination of projects that primarily focus on meadow and aspen restoration efforts and juniper removal from encroached areas. Approximately \$1 million has been allocated for projects in this category. These projects have restored approximately 2,290 acres of meadow and 1,700 acres of aspen, and removed juniper from an additional 1,840 acres. Both meadow and aspen restoration include removal of encroaching conifers; aspen restoration also sometimes entails juniper removal, and meadow restoration can involve restoration of hydrological flow regimes, especially if these have been disrupted by diking and draining. Some culvert projects (discussed below) also have been designed to restore wet meadows and simultaneously improve riparian conditions and fish habitat. Juniper removal projects dovetail with meadow restoration when junipers are removed from areas that were previously open meadows. Juniper removal efforts are relatively common throughout the basin. It is generally accepted that the current distribution of juniper far exceeds its historic range of variation and that juniper encroachment has contributed to the lowering of the groundwater tables, further compounding the water shortages that afflict the area.

Unlike large-scale pre-commercial thinning projects, most vegetation management projects are

heavy equipment intensive and small to moderate scale. They are thus well suited for local contractors to successfully bid. This is an arena in which the efforts of the Lake County Resource Initiative to help contractors develop the capacity to bid on contracts has borne fruit. In combination with Forest Service contracting officers' willingness to package work in forms that match local contractors' competitive edge, LCRI's work has produced impressive results. Many, if not most of these projects, have been awarded to local contractors.

The Round Meadow restoration project, located in Klamath County on the Chemult Ranger District, is a good example of this class of projects. Acquired from an adjacent private landowner by the Forest Service, the former perennially wet 300-acre meadow had been ditched, drained, and used for grazing livestock. Over time, significant lodgepole pine encroachment had occurred. Using a combination of RAC and other Forest Service appropriated funds, the Forest Service contracted with REACH and a local contractor for different aspects of the restoration project. Klamath County Corrections Department crews also worked on the project. REACH crews cut Lodgepole saplings and small poles and piled them in the drainage channels. They also constructed fences around the meadow. A local contractor, Cornish Forest Contracting, also worked on the slash removal and piling portion of the project. The drained meadow was eventually re-flooded. Over time, the hydrological characteristics, vegetation, habitat and wildlife associated with wet meadows are being re-established. On-going Forest Service monitoring surveys are tracking these changes.

4. Culverts

The RAC has allocated \$766,000 for 12 culvert and bridge projects. These projects have replaced 21 culverts and installed two bridges. Almost without exception, the purpose of these culvert and bridge projects has been related to watershed restoration. Culverts and bridges replace older and undersize culverts vulnerable to blockage, enhance fish passage, and improve hydrologic flow regimes associated with meadows. As with the vegetation manage-

ment projects discussed above, these are relatively discrete, small or medium scale projects that require heavy equipment—just the kinds of work that local contractors can effectively bid. Thus this category of RAC-funded projects effectively advances the twin objectives of watershed restoration and local employment generation.

5. In-stream/Riparian Work

The RAC has allocated \$626,753 for 23 grants for in-stream and riparian restoration work. Most of these projects have focused on work related to channel stabilization, headcut repair, fencing to protect riparian zones, riparian revegetation, and fisheries habitat improvement projects. Due to the diversity of these projects, there is no single unit of measure (or two) that quantitatively captures accomplishments. However, as with other project categories such as roads and culverts, the characteristics of in-stream and riparian work (small to medium scale and heavy equipment intensive) do fit well with the comparative advantages local contractors possess. Hence, a large proportion of these projects has been awarded to local businesses. In addition to contracting, several in-stream and riparian projects have also been implemented through the participatory agreement with REACH.

6. Weed Control

The RAC has allocated almost \$600,000 for the control of noxious weeds on the Fremont-Winema National Forests. Nine grants have been made to the Forest Service for this purpose. These grants have enabled Forest Service staff to contract for 7,750 acres to be treated and for 26,500 acres to be surveyed for future weed removal efforts. With only one exception, each year the RAC allocates one grant each from Klamath and Lake County Title II funds for weed suppression. Almost invariably, the noxious weed control proposals are highly ranked; in more than one instance they have received the highest numeric ranking. RAC-funded weed suppression efforts dovetail nicely with Klamath County's Title III program. The field identification handbook, "Noxious Weeds of Klamath County,"

funded through Title III funds, is a useful pocket handbook that enables the reader to identify common noxious weeds in the region. Landowner and general public education about noxious weeds is a necessary complement to the work of actually surveying and treating them. Significantly, there is substantial local contractor participation in the survey and treatment of noxious weeds. For example, the annual Lake County weed eradication grant has been consistently awarded to a local contractor located in Christmas Valley in the northeast corner of the county. The Klamath County weed suppression grant is used to support a variety of county and state noxious weed control programs.

7. Roads

The RAC has allocated \$588,000 for 14 different projects related to roads. These include road decommissioning, improving road drainage, removing vegetation growing into the roadway (“brushing”), and reconstructing road crossings over streams. Because of the variation among these kinds of projects, it is not possible to identify a single common measure of work accomplished. However, these projects are generally focused on halting the flow of sediment into streams or vegetation removal. This contrasts with the culvert and bridge projects discussed above that address fish passage issues. As with the culvert and bridge projects (and for the same reasons), local contractors are able to successfully bid for these projects. Furthermore, some of this work, especially the roadside brushing projects, has been accomplished through the use of participating agreements with organizations such as REACH.

8. Monitoring

With one exception, all of the money the RAC has allocated towards monitoring (\$526,000) has gone to support the community-based Chewaucan Monitoring project above the town of Paisley in Lake County. Many members of the RAC and interested others consider this to be one of the RAC’s “poster-child” projects because of the innovative ways in which it embodies the principles and benefits of community-based involvement in natural

resources management and monitoring on public lands. It is also noteworthy because of the ways in which the involvement of local youth (primarily local high school students from Lakeview) is central to the project’s approach. The Chewaucan monitoring project (named after the perennial stream that flows through the town of Paisley) is focused on the series of sub-basins above Paisley that comprise the Chewaucan watershed. Begun in 2002, this third-party ecosystem monitoring effort is a realization of one of the goals that came out of the Lakeview Stewardship Working Group’s efforts—to carry out a robust monitoring effort that focuses on restoration-related goals and objectives. This goal has been carried forth by the Lake County Resources Initiative. Thus this project is firmly rooted in the community-based processes that resulted in the reauthorization and renaming of the Lakeview Sustained Yield Unit and the subsequent community-driven efforts to foster a restoration-oriented economy in the area. The project also springs from the sustained efforts of Lakeview science teacher (and first RAC chair) Clair Thomas to develop an applied (and award winning) natural resources science curriculum at Lakeview High School. In myriad ways, this project capitalizes on the community-based processes that preceded the Fremont-Winema RAC and that have contributed to its notable successes.

The Chewaucan monitoring project completed its third field season in August, 2004. For three consecutive summers a paid team of ecosystem monitors, the majority drawn from Lakeview and Paisley High Schools but also including some college students, along with mentors Richard Hart and Clair Thomas, have spent the summer field season gathering data on the condition of the watershed. The foundation of the monitoring effort was laid with the establishment of 145 permanent transects in 2002. For each transect the team collects information on up to 32 indicators per plot. Extensive use is also made of Geographic Information System (spatial mapping) technology and digital photography. The transects were deliberately chosen to reveal comparative information from prescribed burn areas, areas that had been sub-soiled (e.g., ripped by a large tractor to break up the hardpan

that develops after some forms of timber harvesting), streams and culvert replacement areas, and areas that range from highly managed to relatively untouched. The data that each field season yields is analyzed on computers using a relational database management system. Results are posted on the monitoring program's website (<http://www.lcri.org/monitoring/index.html>), and published reports of some of the emerging conclusions are available and have been shared with the Forest Service staff.

Equally important as the published results of the monitoring program are the learning opportunities it provides for the young adults who make up the monitoring teams. As Clair Thomas noted, "at Lakeview, science is a big thing." Since 1991, the Apprentice and Science Engineering (ASE) program has helped place Lakeview High School students with federal resource management agencies during the summer season to learn about resource management from an agency mentor and to participate in regional gatherings with acknowledged experts in various subject areas. When the opportunity to participate in a long term forest health monitoring project developed because of the RAC funding, over 18 high school students, many of whom were former ACE apprentices, jumped at the opportunity to be a part of the Chewaucan monitoring project. Many of these students have subsequently chosen to pursue graduate studies in natural resource management or related fields and they have established a reputation for doing high quality work and possessing excellent critical thinking skills. While many of the outputs of this project are measurable and have begun to inform natural resource management decisions on the forest, in important and ultimately immeasurable ways, the Chewaucan project is also transforming the lives of the young adults who participate in it.

Some criticisms of the program do exist. For example, a few Forest Service staff argued that the kinds of information the monitoring effort has generated are not useful to Forest Service interdisciplinary planning teams and that more useful data could be obtained if the monitoring work was done in-house. This criticism probably stems from the fact that the restoration focus of the monitoring project does not

necessarily dovetail with the information needs of the interdisciplinary teams. While the monitoring project has produced sound quantitative results that could inform management, it is probably also true that increased communication between the Forest Service and the monitoring project staff might enhance the immediate applicability of the project's results. It is also the case that the monitoring project has extremely significant social and community components, especially in terms of the opportunities it provides students who participate in it. Thus the program is about more than providing management-related data. The RAC itself is well aware of the positive social impacts of this kind of project. In fact, some of the Klamath County RAC members would like to replicate this kind of project in high schools in the Klamath Falls area.

9. Native plants

Since its inception, the RAC has supported the collection, storage, and propagation of native plants through yearly grants to support these activities in both Klamath and Lake County. Both hardwood and softwood species' cuttings, cones, and seed are collected through this program. Local nurseries, through cooperative agreements with the Forest Service, propagate the collected native plant material. The goal is to create a native seed bank that can be drawn upon as needed for the revegetation component of restoration projects in the Klamath Basin. Through annual appropriations for these efforts, the RAC has signaled both its support for the development of this native seed bank, and also its understanding that stochastic conditions, e.g., drought, fire, and seed production cycles, limit the types of plant material that can be collected in any one year. Only a sustained effort over time will eventually provide the inventory that a seed bank needs in order to meet the diverse revegetation needs within the Klamath Basin.

10. Paisley Town Weir

The RAC has supported the Paisley Town Weir project with three different grants in 2003, 2004, and 2005. Each subsequent grant has been larger than the prior one. The Paisley Town Weir project is the most

significant private lands project that the RAC has supported. The project itself has developed over a several-year period. The purpose of the project is to redesign and reconstruct the diversion structure and irrigation channels that draw water from the Chewaucan stream just above the town of Paisley. Justification for this project hinges on the fact that the current weir and related structures impede fish passage, are not as water efficient as they could be, contribute to flood vulnerability in the town of Paisley, and are in a general state of disrepair. The private landowners, to whose property the weir provides irrigation water, have embraced the challenges associated with repair of the weir as an opportunity to improve fish passage and generally retool the whole piece of infrastructure. The project has attracted support from a wide variety of state and federal agencies. For example, the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) has contributed significant amounts (more than \$1 million) of funding towards this project and the national office of Trout Unlimited is also supporting the project. Furthermore, the project enjoys the broad support of the community of Paisley. Given the size and significance of this effort, the Paisley Town Weir could easily become the RAC's signature private lands project. This would be appropriate given the ways in which the weir project demonstrates private landowner commitment to conservation, integrates conservation and management objectives, enjoys widespread community support, and entails multi-agency and inter-governmental coordination and cooperation. The project also provides red band trout with access to hundreds of miles of upstream habitat on Forest Service lands.

11. Post-fire planting

The RAC has supported only one tree planting project. In 2005, the highest ranked Lake County project was a Forest Service proposal to replant 1,000 acres of forestland that had burned in the 2002 Toolbox/Silver fire. One Forest Service staff person acknowledged that the RAC generally does not fund planting projects. However, since the Toolbox fire occurred, the RAC has sustained an interest in the post-fire salvage logging and related management

issues. This probably explains its willingness to invest in post-fire planting activities, especially as this project is designed to focus planting efforts in or near wildlife habitat areas that will not be harvested in the future and that are located near Class I riparian zones.

12. Campgrounds

Several RAC members prefer to not support projects that build or reconstruct recreation-related infrastructure. Instead, they would like to see RAC dollars used directly for forest health improvement and restoration-related projects. Perhaps because of this perspective, the RAC has funded only four campground projects. With one exception, these have been relatively small projects focused on infrastructure maintenance activities. The exception is the 2004 grant to the Forest Service in the amount of \$153,375 to reconstruct the Williamson River campground. This project involved extensive collaboration and coordination with the Klamath Tribe, as this is a traditional Native American camping area. The project was a campground reconstruction effort. It involved partially removing a road that was discharging sediment into the river, relocating and installing new toilets, installing a new water system, moving campsites away from the river, and increasing the number of campsites. Cultural resource preservation was also incorporated into the project.

13. Wildlife, Old Growth Thinning, Trails, Forest Clean-up Projects

As Table 3 indicates, the RAC has supported one or two projects in each of these project categories. One of the two wildlife projects involved assessing approximately 10,000 acres in the Sycan watershed to determine the effects of active restoration methods (prescribed fire, pre-fire thinning, and commercial timber harvesting) on the condition of the land, including bird habitat quality. This project, planned and implemented in close coordination with the Nature Conservancy who manages most of the Sycan marsh, is part of a larger research project (the Birds and Burns Network) coordinated by the Rocky Mountain Research Station to determine the effects

of fire on populations and habitats in ponderosa pine forests in the western United States. The assessment follows a rigorous Before, After, Control, Impact (BACI) design model with numerous replications in each of the nine locations in the western United States. The project promises to yield important insights regarding the different ecological benefits of alternative management and restoration prescriptions, especially as they affect wildlife habitat. The project is also notable because of the close coordination it entails with the Nature Conservancy. While this is a fine example of the use of RAC funding to support research, several RAC members are hesitant to fund more research work—they would prefer to see the relatively scarce RAC funding go to on-the-ground projects.

There has been one old growth thinning project. This project involved removal of understory brush and fuel ladders from 60 acres of old growth forest. While this is the only example of a project that involved management of old growth forest, there is a growing recognition among the RAC

members that practicing a “hands-off” approach to old growth stands may well lead to their demise. Threats to old growth stands and forests such as stand-replacing fires and disease require a proactive approach if those areas are to remain as old growth.

There has been only one trails project. This is consistent with the RAC’s stated preference to not spend money on recreation-related projects. This approach to recreation stands in stark contrast to other RACs that support projects involving the revitalization and reconstruction of hiking trails. The Fremont-Winema RAC has funded only one clean-up project. The three projects in the “other” category include a facilities project along the Williamson River to improve water quality, a grant to Lake County to develop a management plan for county-owned land near the town of Lakeview, and a grant to develop a “certificate of advanced mastery” in natural sciences for Paisley Charter School District students that take on natural resource projects and work as part of student resource crews.

RAC Formation, Operation, and Process

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

A. RAC Formation

The Fremont-Winema RAC was formed in November 2001. In addition to public announcements advertising the opportunity to serve on the RAC, both Lake County and Klamath County Commissioners provided names of potential RAC members. Initially, it was hoped that there would

be an even number of members from Klamath and Lake Counties. However, in the initial three-year term there were three more Lake County residents than Klamath County residents on the RAC. Some Klamath County commissioners would have preferred a more equal representation on the RAC. An equal representation has been achieved for the second three-year term. Some RAC members do not live in Lake or Klamath counties. For example, Rick Brown of Defenders of Wildlife is based in Portland, as is Fred Rasmussen, who represents Pacific Power Corporation, a large Forest Service land permit holder in both Klamath and Lake Counties. Mr. Brown was asked to be on the RAC because of his long involvement in the reauthorization of the Sustained Yield Unit and the Lakeview Stewardship Group. His position as representative of a national environmental group, along with the other environmental chamber RAC members, has been crucial in gaining the acceptance

of the larger regional environmental community in Oregon for the sorts of projects that the RAC has approved. Having out-of-county RAC members is unusual for some RACs, yet in this case it has certainly contributed to the RAC's success; both Brown and Rasmussen have been strong contributors to the RAC and are well accepted by other RAC members and the Forest Service.

RAC members elect a chair for approximately a one-year term. At its first meeting, the RAC decided that the position of chair would switch between Klamath and Lake Counties. The first chair (elected in January 2002) was Clair Thomas, science teacher at Lakeview High School. Mr. Thomas held this position until July 2003, when Chuck Wells of the Friends of the Winema in Klamath County was elected. In June 2004, Bill Duke of Lake County Resources Initiative was elected chair and the position reverted back to Lake County (interestingly, all three chairs are members of the Lakeview Stewardship Group). Switching the position of chair between Lake and Klamath Counties is a mechanism to prevent either county from exerting undue influence on the RAC. This, however, was never raised as a concern during the interviews for this case study. The decision to have each chair serve for approximately one year allows the chair to function during a complete cycle of RAC deliberations, funding allocation processes, and field trips. A one-year term helps to ensure that the position of chair actually does carry some authority. This contrasts with other RACs in which (a) frequent rotations of the chair tend to eviscerate the authority of the position, or (b) non-rotating chair positions tend to consolidate authority within one individual.

Except for the Wild Horse and Burro and the Archeological/Historical slots, all the other categories of representation specified in the legislation are appropriately filled on the RAC. The general lack of relevance and interest in this region in these two slots has resulted in their removal from the second-term RAC. In their stead, the RAC and DFO have agreed to add another environmental and industry slot on the RAC. Interestingly, at their first meeting, RAC members stated that they did not want to sit

together in their respective groups, nor have name tags that identify what position they are designated to represent. This seems to have mitigated against faction development and "horse trading" among factions for favored projects—a phenomena that has been observed in other RACs. In this regard the DFO, Bill Aney, remarked that during the course of discussion regarding the relative merits of different projects, RAC members seemed to forget what group they were in and were able to speak to the inherent strengths and weaknesses of the projects under consideration. Thus "grandstanding" is minimized, polarization is transcended, and as Mr. Aney noted, acrimony is nonexistent. The process of determining the composition of the RAC for the second term was made relatively straightforward by the fact that 14 or 15 RAC members asked to continue to serve on the RAC. DFO Bill Aney met with the chairs of both Lake and Klamath county commissions to determine who to recommend to be on the RAC.

B. Operation

The Fremont-Winema RAC meets once a year, usually for two full days. In addition to this meeting, one or two day-long field trips, usually one trip per year to each county, are also organized. The purpose of the field trips is to enable the RAC members to visit projects they have supported, to evaluate project effectiveness, and to discuss issues of general interest in a field setting. The field trips are generally well attended. They have also resulted in some changed perspectives about projects. After visiting some RAC-funded projects, a number of RAC members told us that they probably would have given the project application a lower numerical ranking had they known how it was going to turn out. RAC members use the insights and perspectives obtained through these field trips to improve the evaluation process in subsequent funding rounds.

With respect to the decisions they are charged with making, RAC members are focused on expediency. This emphasis however, must be balanced against minimum requirements for thoroughness. Determining how to allocate more than \$3 million over a two-day period requires that RAC members

do their homework prior to the meeting. It also requires that there be an acceptable and legitimate process for evaluation, ranking, and awarding funding to projects. Both these conditions are met within this RAC. The specific decision-making process used to evaluate and prioritize proposals is discussed in section V.

C. Public, Agency, and Interest Group Relationship Building

The work of building collaborative and effective working relations across interest groups historically at odds with each other, and with public lands management agencies, is an uphill effort. However, as discussed earlier in this report, in Lake County and, to a lesser extent, Klamath County, this process began quite some time before the RAC was established. These efforts, focused on reauthorization and reorientation of the Lakeview Sustained Yield Unit, constitute the institutional and social legacy upon which the RAC has been able to build. This legacy is comprised of collaborative community and agency relationships, group process and decision-making skills, capacity building efforts among local contractors, and associated institutional changes. The fact that all three RAC chairs (and other RAC members as well) are part of the Lakeview Stewardship Group is no accident. By electing these individuals to be chair, the RAC is signaling its understanding of the value of this legacy and its desire to both benefit from and expand it. The RAC benefits from the legacy in terms of the relationships, perspectives, leadership and group process skills, among other talents, these individuals have. The RAC advances and expands the legacy by broadening the community of people that is involved in this transformative process to encompass the other RAC members, the involved county commissioners, and project proponents and implementers. Without exception, the RAC has continued the relationship building work that preceded it and has helped account for its success. As former Lake County commissioner and current RAC member Jane O'Keefe put it, the "RAC further cemented the good relationship[s] between the Forest Service and the community."

The role of Collins Pine Company in the evolution of trust and collaboration among interest groups and stakeholders also deserves some mention. While it is true that the Klamath Falls-based Jeld-Wen Corporation has played a facilitative role in the RAC process by supporting one of its employees to serve on the RAC, several people interviewed for this project emphasized the constructive role that the family-owned Collins Pine Company has also played in Lake and Klamath Counties. Unlike other timber industry corporations in the western United States and elsewhere, Collins Pine seeks to define and occupy the "radical middle ground" between extreme preservation and extraction-oriented perspectives. Thus, it seeks neither to influence political leaders to act in its favor, nor does it demand that workers espouse a "pro-timber" stance on forest management-related issues. Furthermore, being family-owned and therefore less subject to shareholder demands for short-term quarterly returns, the company can adopt a long-term perspective on investment and returns, one that is consonant with rural communities' own planning horizons. All of these characteristics add up to a strong commitment to the rural communities in the region, one that has led Paul Harlan, Vice President of Resources for Collins Pine and a Lakeview resident, to become a central player in the sustained yield unit's reauthorization and the Lakeview Stewardship Group. The company's social commitment is illustrated by Mr. Harlan's comment that while some companies have relationships for business, Collins is in business to have relationships.

D. County-RAC-Forest Service Relations

County commissioners for both Klamath and Lake Counties appreciate and support the RAC and the work it does. From a pragmatic perspective, they feel that the RAC's performance will directly affect the possibilities for reauthorization of P.L.106-393. Thus they are interested in supporting the RAC in the ways that they can. This involves taking a "hands off" approach to the RAC by not influencing what it does and the decisions it makes, as well as being attuned to the desirability

of implementing the Title III program in a manner that meshes with the work the RAC is doing. The commissioners are justified in their statements that they feel that the Fremont-Winema RAC is being run as intended by the legislation. More broadly, as one Klamath County commissioner described, the RAC has helped transform relations between rural communities and public lands in the region. This individual noted that for years the communities in this area have not had a sense of ownership or stake in the public lands that surround them; they have not considered them “ours.” Since the inception of the RAC, this perception has changed. As he noted, “the RAC has been instrumental in redefining that relationship” by providing meaningful opportunities for the community to be involved in public lands decision-making and to fund stewardship-oriented projects.

This rosy assessment is tempered only slightly by criticism and suggestions for improvement. For example, one county commissioner noted that it would be helpful if some of the sideboards governing the legitimate uses of Title III funds could be relaxed to allow for the purchase of real property (as long as the purpose comports with the legislation’s intent) and for the installation of infrastructure, e.g. boat ramps, that could contribute towards current and future recreational activities and associated economic revenues. With regard to the Fremont-Winema RAC, one commissioner felt that both Title II and Title III programs could more proactively address some of the water-related issues that are such a source of tension and concern throughout the basin. For example, a strategic focus on juniper removal from areas where it has encroached could conceivably release measurable quantities of water for use by others in the basin. More than one commissioner noted that there may be other forest management-related projects that the RAC could fund to ameliorate water scarcity in the basin. The last criticism came from a commissioner who believes

that the RAC funding “is county money.” Though the Office of General Counsel at the Department of Agriculture and the Forest Service in Washington have made clear that Title II is not county money, this supervisor feels that the DFO should send the list of proposed projects to the county for review prior to circulating it with the RAC members. Despite these concerns, this individual was nevertheless satisfied with the RAC’s choice of projects to support.

The relationship between the RAC and the Forest Service is professional, productive, and mutually beneficial. With the exception of the county commissioner mentioned in the preceding paragraph, we heard nothing but positive reports about the role of the DFO in facilitating the overall RAC process, and the ways in which Forest Service staff are responsive to (1) the RAC’s priorities for projects to fund and (2) the kinds of information the RAC wants for proposal evaluation and deliberation. We also heard notes of appreciation from RAC members regarding the relatively low overhead that the Forest Service takes for its involvement in Title II. Initially, at the time the RAC was established, the forest supervisor said that the Forest Service would take no overhead out of the Title II allocation. However, the RAC insisted that the Forest Service cover its costs and thereby avoid the possibility of cutting funding from other programs in order to participate in the Title II process. After an analysis of what those actual costs might be, the Forest Service determined that it should charge 3.8% overhead. This percentage has remain unchanged. In 2004, this percentage translated into \$115,000 available to the Forest Service for administering the Title II program. The DFO acknowledged that the initial offer by the forest supervisor and the relatively low overhead rate that was subsequently agreed upon has helped contribute to the good will of the community towards the Forest Service and its operation of the RAC.

Conclusion

Both the Title III program in Klamath and Lake Counties and the Title II Fremont-Winema RAC have effectively advanced the purposes of these programs as described in P.L.106-393. The nature of the Title III projects approved by the county commissioners in these counties, as well as the process for soliciting, reviewing, and awarding Title III dollars, comports with the intent of the legislation and ensures that principles of transparency and accountability are upheld. Appropriately, many Title III projects dovetail with other state and federal programs such as the National Fire plan, local and state fire planning initiatives and programs, and educational and public outreach efforts. Title III support for county search and rescue operations on public lands has been essential. It not only reimburses cash-strapped county governments for the expenses incurred when mounting search and rescue operations in surrounding public lands, but it also validates the legitimacy and importance of the roles county search and rescue teams play in such situations.

A guiding principle of the Fremont-Winema RAC has been to maximize the beneficial on-the-ground effects of the dollars it allocates—both in terms of environmental and socioeconomic benefits. In this respect the RAC has been quite successful. Fully 71% of the dollars the RAC has allocated have gone to on-the-ground projects in the form of fuels reduction, pre-commercial thinning, vegetation management, and stream-related work. This percentage increases to 91% when we add in the support the RAC has provided for weed control, roads, native plant propagation, the Paisley Town weir, planting and old growth thinning. Only eight% of the RAC's budget has been spent on recreation, monitoring and research, trails, and forest clean-up projects. These latter projects have also all been worthy and important. The pattern of investment, however, clearly reveals the RAC's penchant for funding activities that directly affect forest and ecosystem conditions and that have immediate, positive socioeconomic effects.

The RAC has also been successful at promoting local employment generation through the projects it authorizes. This success is consistent with the emphasis on enhancing local socioeconomic conditions through natural resources restoration and management that derives from the work of the Lakeview Stewardship Group and Lake County Resources Initiative. The RAC is particularly successful at promoting local employment for small to medium size, heavy equipment intensive projects. Part of the RAC's success in this area is due to the work of the Lake County Resources Initiative, in terms of enhancing contractor capacity to bid on federal contracts and also to those contracting officers within the Forest Service willing to work with smaller contracts and to prioritize local socioeconomic benefit. Given the size and pattern of the RAC's investments and the environmental and socioeconomic benefits of those investments, it is small wonder that Clair Thomas, Lakeview High School science teacher and the first chair of the RAC, stated that "the RAC has allowed us to fulfill our dreams."

That said, it is also true that there is some room for improvement. Three areas that could be improved upon are strategic planning, taking more steps to promote local employment generation, and better outreach to community organizations to increase the number of non-Forest Service project proposals. A few individuals we interviewed noted that there is a paucity of landscape-scale strategic planning to guide the selection and prioritization of RAC-funded projects. Some argued that the RAC should concentrate its focus on key watersheds or regions and effect measurable improvements in forest health on those areas, rather than scattering RAC dollars across the landscape in a manner that misses the potential advantage of the synergy that results from coordinating the development and implementation of multiple projects. Regardless of which strategy the RAC chooses to follow, it is clear that having landscape-scale information

regarding resource conditions, threats, and potential interventions would better enable the RAC to gauge the relative benefits (direct and indirect) of different patterns of intervention and investment.

With respect to local employment generation, there are also opportunities for improvement. More than one individual noted that quite a few of the larger, labor-intensive projects have been implemented by non-local contractors based along the I-5 corridor and in other regions of Oregon. Furthermore, some Forest Service personnel described a lack of resources to prepare and manage the more numerous and time-consuming contracts that are generally associated with local contracting. Indeed, it was acknowledged that the appeal of using IDIQ contracts for project implementation is that they enable Forest Service staff “to get more money on the ground.” Getting more money on the ground can unfortunately (and perhaps ironically) result in more money flowing out of the area. Thus, in some instances there is a tension between maximizing the environmental and socioeconomic benefits associated with the Title II program. Resolving this tension involves expanding the types of projects local contractors can effec-

tively bid on and the internal agency changes that are needed to facilitate that process. As described in this case study, many of the needed changes have been initiated; they should be continued and expanded.

Lastly, while there was little local criticism about the small number of non-Forest Service proposed or operated projects, it would make for a more successful RAC if more projects came from outside the federal government. Congress hoped that the RAC experiment would spawn innovative projects that communities would become involved in. While there is no lack of innovative and outstanding projects funded by this RAC, more diversity in the nature of those proposing projects and doing the work on the ground would be welcome.

These criticisms notwithstanding, the Title II and Title III programs in Klamath and Lake Counties are models of success. The implementation of both these programs, in terms of process and outcome, contains numerous lessons that other areas currently involved in these programs or contemplating future involvement in them, would be wise to learn from. Distilling those lessons learned and disseminating them widely is a worthwhile endeavor.

Interviewees

Bill Aney, RAC DFO
Mary Baker, RAC member
Craig Bienz, RAC member
Rick Brown, RAC member
Melvin Dick, Lake City Commissioner, new RAC member
Craig Ditman, RAC member
Bill Duke, RAC member
John Elliot, Klamath County Commissioner
Don Gentry, RAC member
Orland Gonzales, District Ranger, Fremont-Winema National Forest
Jane Goodwin, Chemult District Ranger, F-W NF
Paul Harlan, Collins Pine
Carol Howard, USFS Participating Agreements Specialist, F-W NF, Klamath Falls office
Gary Johnson, Fremont Mill of Collins Pine
Mark Kane, Executive Director, REACH
Hank Mroezkowski, RAC member
Jane O'Keefe, RAC member
Sue Paddy, Silverlake Ranger District, F-W NF
Sherm Radke, RAC member
Fred Rasmussen, RAC member
Richard Reagan, Chiloquin District Ranger, F-W NF
Karen Shimomotu, Forest Supervisor, F-W NF
Clair Thomas, Lakeview High School teacher, RAC member
Jim Walls, Lake County Resources Initiative
Anita Ward, RAC member
Chuck Wells, RAC member
Steve West, Klamath County Commissioner, RAC member
Alan Witters, RAC member