



EASTSIDE EDGE

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*Newsletter of the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project—
Evaluating and Implementing Ecosystem Management*

Your Participation Counts

Your input has been important in developing the Eastside Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Beginning in February 1994, you provided input on how you would like to be involved in developing a new strategy for managing public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service in eastern Oregon and Washington. We listened to what you said and developed a number of communication tools to help make your participation easier. Tools like this newsletter, the electronic library, the toll-free information number, the monthly public meetings, were a result of your input.

Your comments and perspectives will soon be sought when the Draft EIS is released in late December or early January. Comments received during the upcoming 90-day comment period will help shape ecosystem management in the future.

Public participants have helped determine the focus, depth, and breadth of the EIS. A brief recap of recent public input follows:

EIS GOALS Over 150 comments from the tribes, state, counties, and the public helped finalize the goals for the development of the EIS alternatives. These comments can be summarized as follows:

1. Most people commented on all seven goals. Most suggested different wording, asked for clarification and definition, or gave their views on the goal in question.

2. A few people suggested combining some of the seven preliminary goals.

3. Very few people recommended eliminating any of the goals.

4. Some people suggested additional goals, that in many cases seemed to be a specific subset of the other goals. Responsibility to future generations was the most common theme to these goals.

Public comment was the catalyst for consolidating and clarifying the final list of five goals. These finalized goals were mailed to you in August.

EIS CONCEPTS Last March, tribes, states, counties, and the public responded to a list of 18 concepts for the development of alternatives. All of these concepts were based on issues raised by the public during EIS scoping meetings. Feedback from the public on the concepts included:

1. People tended to group the concepts in two ways: some called for the restoration and preservation of habitats through reserves, and others favored management to provide goods and services to benefit rural communities.

2. Although there was no clear consensus on one approach or the other, many people believed ecosystem management could accommodate both of these goals.

3. Regardless of which end of this spectrum people were on, most people supported active rather than passive management approaches, supported reducing the risk of large, high-intensity disturbances, and supported the use of public lands to achieve goals.

4. There was little support for Concept E (the No-Action alternative with Rangeland Health, PACFISH, Eastside screens, and the Northwest Forest Plan), Concept O (provide big game habitat to meet state strategic plans for big game populations), Concept Q (manage public lands to meet goals of county comprehensive plans), and Concept R (pay for administrative costs with increased fees).

5. Many people suggested combining similar concepts.

Your continued involvement will be important as we move towards a Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Public participation opportunities and timelines will be finalized in the coming weeks. Watch for announcements in this newsletter.



"We have provided many new avenues for the public to be involved in this project. A critical time for public input is still yet to come, so we invite you to participate."

PATTY BUREL
Communications Team Leader
Interior Columbia Basin
Ecosystem Management Project



The Issues

Many small, rural communities in the interior Columbia River Basin have been concerned about the effects of public land management on local communities. Since the beginning, this has been one of the major concerns being addressed by the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project. A wide variety of comments related to communities were received during the scoping period for the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and also in response to the EIS concepts and goals. Some comments were:

Give priority to providing jobs, products, and stability to the small rural communities which depend on public lands for their way of life.

Your job is to manage public lands, not communities.

Where conflicts occur, sustaining ecosystems must have highest priority because humans and society can adapt.

Long term ecosystem health is the only way to protect the economic viability of rural, resource-dependent communities.

Public lands can provide some amenities and commodities, but it's not the job of federal managers to maximize them.

In developing alternatives for ecosystem management, we have asked ourselves "To what degree will ecosystem-based

management support economic and/or social needs of people, cultures, and communities?"

Social scientists documenting the challenges facing rural communities throughout the country have concluded that stability is just one way to achieve the broader goal of healthy, prosperous, interesting, and vital communities. One social scientist suggested that adaptability (used interchangeably with resiliency) is a different approach:

Community adaptability may be a more useful concept than community stability in assessing which communities will thrive in our rapidly changing world. Levels of human capital, the imagination of community leaders, the ability to assess information, and the availability of a flexible, diverse resource base are variables that will likely affect community adaptability.

The Study

We studied the idea that community adaptability or resiliency is an important component of community viability. Through the University of Idaho, we collected data about the economic bases of 435 small, rural communities in the interior Columbia River Basin. We examined 145 communities that were undergoing major changes to study the types of change present in the Basin and how communities were responding. More-detailed case studies were conducted of ten

communities identified as already having experienced major changes since 1980.

Community self-assessment workshops were another effort. Workshops were held in 198 small, rural communities in the Basin. An average of eight community leaders and other knowledgeable people in each community completed a workbook. We then met with the groups in each community to learn more about the communities and their ability to respond to the changes that might occur, including changes in federal land management policies. Other information such as population size and growth, distance from major transportation routes, and infrastructure was also collected.

What We Found

One of the things we learned was just how economically and socially diverse the communities in the Basin have become. There is certainly no one common formula to achieving community health; many strategies have proven successful. Yet communities that are most resilient tend to have some common characteristics.

Many of the communities in the Basin have traditional associations with extraction resource related industries. The economic viability of communities that are dominated by one industry are susceptible to a variety of financial, economic, political, organizational, and policy

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decisions made elsewhere. Economic diversity is an important component of community resiliency.

The economies of even small communities are complex. Most towns in the Basin are a mix of several industries. We found that about 22% of the communities believed they had no single dominant industry, and another 11% characterized their economy as primarily based on government programs. When workshop participants were asked on which of four industries their community was economically dependent, about 46% indicated farming, 24% timber and wood products, 17% tourism and recreation, and 8% ranching.

We discovered that there is more to a community and its relationship to natural resources than its economic structure. This supports other sociology studies on the importance of quality of employment (satisfaction with and commitment to a job), degree of social cohesion in communities (how well community members work together toward common goals), and the presence of local empowerment (the opportunity and capability of helping to determine one's fate).

Some of the community qualities or conditions that help to make communities more resilient are:

1) *amenity - the attractiveness of*

the community itself and the surrounding region;

2) *civic - the quality of community leadership and attitude toward change;*

3) *economic - a high continuity in a few major industries or a high degree of diversity in the economic base; and*

4) *social cultural - the diversity of cultural values and cohesiveness of the community in collectively agreeing to and working toward certain goals.*

Based on the findings, communities that have been confronted with major social and economic changes tend to have higher levels of resiliency. Many of these had resource processing facilities closed or substantially cut back. There are a number of reasons why this may be true; these communities in close proximity to forests tend to be associated with amenities; they have learned to deal with change; they have become more economically diverse; and they may have access to special programs for economic diversification.

Communities that successfully confronted dramatic social and economic changes developed effective adaptive learning and management strategies. They understood that to survive, the things under their control had to change - their competitive advantage had to be recognized and utilized.

The residents of many small rural communities increasingly feel alienated from a national social system that appears much more vertically linked than in the past - a system where decisions about one's future tend to be made further and further away from home. The data suggests that communities can overcome feelings of powerlessness in the long run if they have the interest and capabilities. Many communities that had been hard hit by corporate and government decisions made outside the community responded successfully. These communities have maintained their vitality and resiliency.

What's Next

The results are continuing to come in and we don't have a final report yet. Even then, we couldn't describe the effects of ecosystem management on each and every community in the Basin. That will depend to a large extent on how ecosystem management is implemented by National Forests and BLM Districts.

The intent of the Project is to specify broad direction, not to rewrite all of the Forest and Resource Area plans from scratch. We wanted to assess the likely effects of each alternative on each group of communities. *What will be the effects on communities that are the least, or the most resilient?* This provides everyone with a broad context that can then serve as a basis for discussions about local communities that appropriately take place at the project scale, and within each community.

Public Meeting to be Held October 26 in Walla Walla

The next public update meeting for the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project will be held at the project office at 112 East Poplar in Walla Walla, Washington. The meeting will begin at 8:30 a.m., on Thursday, October 26.

Project Manager Jeff Blackwood will give an update on how the Project is funded through the Interior Appropriations Bill. He will summarize the direction Congress has provided to the Project.

Tom Quigley, Science Integration Team Leader, will discuss the Integrated Scientific Assessment's preliminary findings. He will also provide an update on the Scientific Framework for Ecosystem Management in the Interior Columbia River Basin.

Environmental Impact Statement Team leaders George Pozzuto and Jeff Walters, will discuss the management alternatives in the two Draft Environmental Impact Statements.

Project Online

An additional communication tool is now being used by the Project. As part of our open process we are releasing Project information to the **Internet**. The Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project Internet homepage address is:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/land/c-basin/wepage.htm>

The type of information shared on the Internet is Project briefing information, Science Integration Team and Environmental Impact Statement Team working sessions and other information, Project newsletters, news releases, and public meeting minutes.

Our primary goal is to reach a range of public interests and accommodate access to information. The Internet communications link is intended to serve as an information resource for a more extensive computer audience than the Project's Electronic Library. The advantage of the homepage system is that non-computer owners may be able to access the Internet through local libraries, colleges, or other public organizations.

As a reminder: the Electronic Library number is (509) 522-4085, modem settings are baud rate up to 9600 (8,1,N). If you have questions please call the Project office at (509) 522-4030.



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A periodic newsletter produced by the

**INTERIOR COLUMBIA BASIN
ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT
PROJECT**

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Please direct any questions or comments to the above address.

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