# ECOSYSTEM WORKFORCE

# WORKING PAPERS

## Ecosystem Restoration as Socio-Economic Development? An Assessment of the Possibilities

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**The Ecosystem Workforce Program**

**Institute for a Sustainable Environment, University of Oregon**

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The *Ecosystem Workforce Program Working Papers* series offers in-depth reports on applied research, analysis and findings about a variety of areas associated with the effort to build quality jobs in ecosystem management. The target audience includes policy and administrative leaders, academics, leaders in community forestry, community-based organization leaders, and local community officials.

The devastating socio-economic effects on rural communities of the decline of the primary economy has also opened up an opportunity to restore ecosystem health while rebuilding local communities, through the shift toward "community forestry" or "collaborative stewardship" between land managers and local communities. This entails organizing resource management efforts so that their objectives include not only environmental health but also job and wealth creation and promotion of strong local social institutions. This paper is an assessment of a three-year demonstration project by EWP, to test the possibilities of community forestry for community development. The assessment used a quasi-experimental design, comparing four demonstration communities with two control communities. It begins with a description of the situation of the six study communities and, by extension, that of agricultural and natural resource-based communities in general. We then briefly discuss some of the theoretical underpinnings of collaborative stewardship/community forestry in the context of community development. Next we present the results of our assessment. And finally, we draw conclusions and make recommendations to increase the effectiveness of community development through community forestry.

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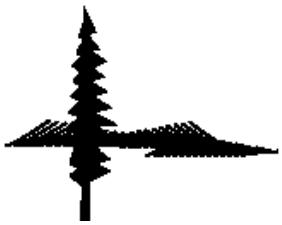

**ECOSYSTEM WORKFORCE PROGRAM**

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## INTRODUCTION

The decline of the primary economy has had devastating socio-economic effects on rural communities and people throughout the United States. However it has also opened up an opportunity to restore ecosystem health while rebuilding local communities, through the shift toward "collaborative stewardship" between land managers and local communities. In the Pacific Northwest, this shift has emerged from the environmental, economic, and political crises over the management of federal timberlands that dominated the early 1990s. Similar cooperative, community-level approaches are emerging with respect to resource management on private lands, such as the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds (the "salmon recovery plan") and the watershed councils that have been instituted by several states including Oregon and Washington.

The rise of the "community forestry" approach has led to a new appreciation of the possibility of resource management as a community socio-economic development strategy. This is done by organizing resource management efforts so that their objectives include not only environmental health but also job and wealth creation and promotion of strong local social institutions. It is an approach that has implications for agricultural and resource-based communities throughout the industrialized world.

This paper is an assessment of a three year demonstration project to test the possibilities of community forestry for community development.[1] The demonstration actively promotes community forestry in four rural Oregon communities. The research question is:

> *To what extent does the community forestry approach to environmental management contribute to enhancing community problem solving capacity?*

[1] The demonstration project was conducted by the Ecosystem Workforce Program of the University of Oregon's Institute for a Sustainable Environment, with funding from the U.S. Forest Service and Oregon Department of Economic and Community Development. The assessment was funded by a grant from the Ford Foundation Asset Building and Community Development Program.

The assessment uses a quasi-experimental design, comparing the four demonstration ("experimental") communities with two control communities. Baseline socio-economic data were collected on all six communities in 1998, and follow-up data in Summer, 2001. Data sources include existing demographic, social, and economic statistics; household surveys; and in-depth interviews.

We begin by describing the situation of our study communities and, by extension, that of agricultural and resource-based communities in general. We then briefly discuss some of the theoretical underpinnings of collaborative stewardship and community forestry in the context of community development. Next we present the results of the demonstration project. And finally, we draw conclusions.

## RESOURCE COMMUNITIES IN TRANSITION

The traditional source of livelihood for small towns and rural areas has been the primary economy – agriculture and natural resource production. However, the forces associated with globalization have uncoupled the primary economy from the larger economy. For example, at the turn of the 20th century farmers made up almost one third of the American population; their income was one fourth of the GNP; and their output was primarily for the domestic market. Additionally, a major part of U.S. industrial output was in the manufacture of agricultural equipment for the domestic market. In stark contrast, today farmers are less than five percent of the population; their output is less than five percent of GNP; and they are a minor market for American manufacturers. All this despite the fact that agricultural output is at record levels and a major portion of that output is for world markets (Hibbard and Römer 1999).

On top of this uncoupling, primary producers have also been faced with a fundamental shift in public expectations. Until the late 20th century, American farmers and natural resource

managers were encouraged to maximize production for the market, in the interest of providing affordable goods for consumers and turning the U. S. into a global economic powerhouse (Hibbard 1999). In the past twenty-five years or so, however, competing expectations have arisen. In addition to maintaining market production, primary producers are also being asked to steward rural lands and resources for future generations and to protect a variety of non-market values and cultural amenities in their land and resource management practices (Hibbard and Madsen 2001).

A prime example of the impact of these twin phenomena is found in the forests and forest communities of the Pacific Northwest. They have been buffeted for the past fifteen to twenty years by changes in markets and technology, changes in environmental values, and changes in public policy related to the management of both private and government lands (Hibbard 1989).

There has been a two-pronged response to these pressures. On the ground it entails a shift from the former emphasis on production for markets to a new "ecosystem management" approach that tries to link ecological, economic, and social objectives. Administratively, it entails a shift from a bureaucratic approach that separates objectives and responsibilities among various organizations to a management approach that combines responsibilities so that multiple objectives can be considered simultaneously (Brick, Snow, and Van de Wetering 2001). These shifts are embodied in the Northwest Forest Plan and Northwest Economic Adjustment Initiative, the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds, the Oregon Sustainability Act, and similar policy initiatives.

A central aim of many of these initiatives is to find ways to simultaneously achieve the environmental goal of healthy and sustainable ecosystems as well as the socio-economic goal of healthy communities. Translating that aim into on-the-ground change has been a major

challenge. Initially it was hoped that the experience, skills, and availability of displaced timber workers living in forest communities could be utilized in restoration work. The intent was that income from that work would supplement or replace income lost from reduced timber harvests, benefiting workers, their families, and communities. Historically, however, most thinning, tree planting, and other restoration work has been carried out by a low-skill, low-wage workforce under least-cost, short duration contracts. A continuation of these contracting practices would turn highly skilled, well-paid loggers and mill workers into low-skill, poorly paid day laborers or force them to abandon the woods, leaving the work to the most desperate and marginalized workers. In either case local communities would be further impoverished.

The alternative is what has been termed the "quality jobs approach" (***America's Choice*** 1990). It involves creating a new industry, the "ecosystem management industry," and a new profession, the "ecosystem management worker" or "applied ecologist." Ecosystem restoration and management would be reorganized, giving workers and their firms responsibility for assessment and monitoring tasks and equipment operation as well as basic labor. These higher-skilled workers would expect higher wages, of course. But the savings from reduced administrative costs and higher quality work should more than make up for increased labor. Additionally, there should be positive impacts on the environment in the form of higher quality work and on local communities because of increased incomes (Brodsky and Hallock 1998).

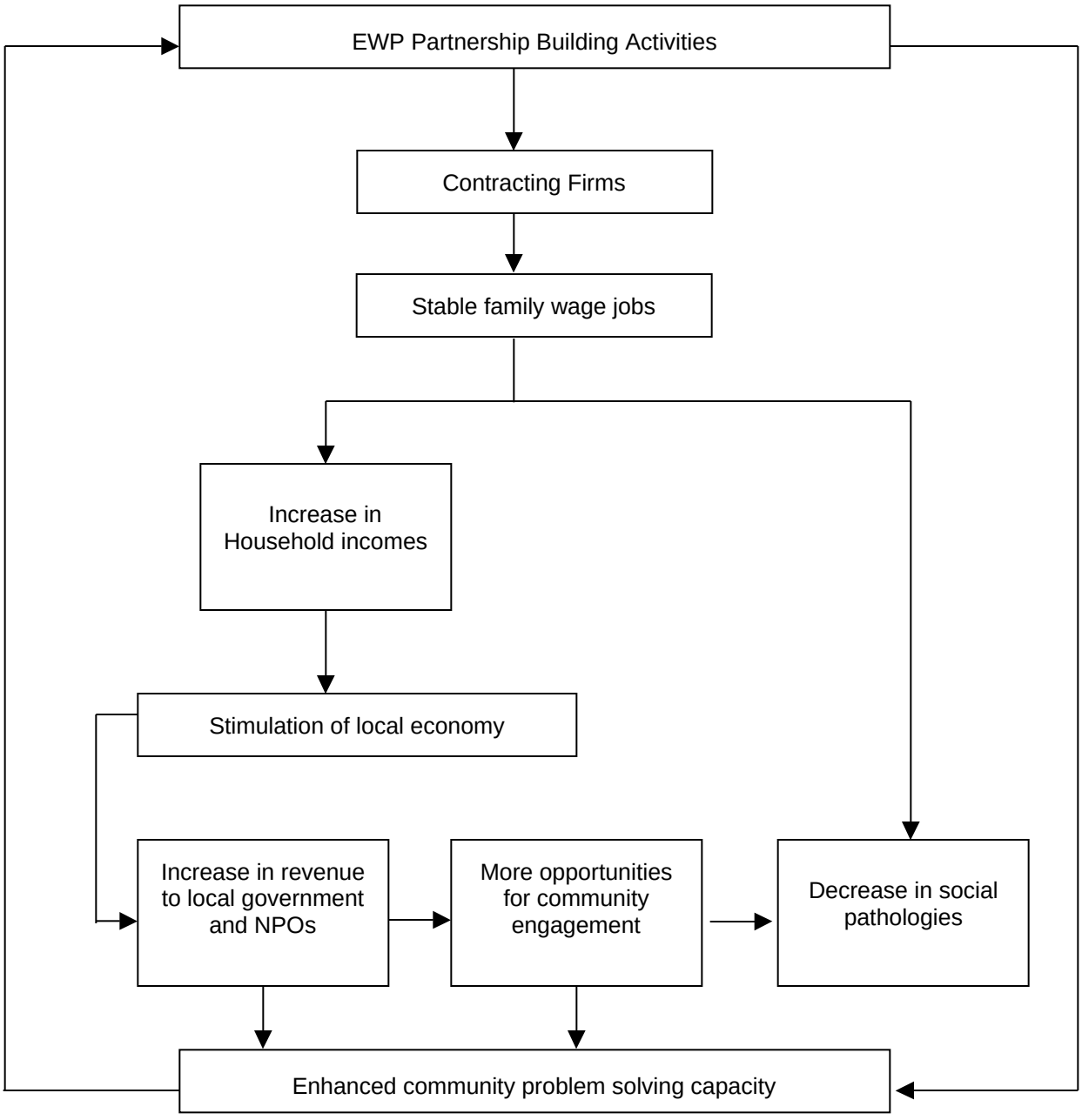
## COLLABORATIVE STEWARDSHIP, COMMUNITY FORESTRY, AND COMMUNITY CAPACITY

The quality jobs approach has received a good deal of support from the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, state agencies, and various other organizations. A three-year demonstration project coordinated by the Ecosystem Workforce Program (EWP) has been testing whether this administrative support can be translated into on-the-ground change. Liaison and technical assistance have been provided to:

- encourage work design and procurement strategies that draw on the emerging ecosystem management industry and applied ecologists to carry out the contracts;
- encourage the creation of community-based ecosystem management firms to take up the contracts and employ local applied ecologists; and
- create networks among land managers and their partners, both at the local level and across the region, to promote cooperation and collaboration in implementing the quality jobs approach.

Behind these immediate goals is a broader community development goal. The relationships and skills developed in partnership-building activities are assumed to carry over into other aspects of community problem solving (Aspen Institute 1996). Stable family wage jobs with community based employers benefit the local community both economically and socially. Taken as a whole, then, the quality jobs approach should lead to healthier communities with increased problem solving capacity. These presumed connections are diagrammed in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**
**Hypothesized Relationship Between EWP Activities and Community Problem Solving Capacity**



The presumed relationships begin with the notion of the small, rural agricultural community as "the model against which agriculture and other resource dependent communities are evaluated" (Kusel and Fortmann 1991, 3). The originator of this line of community studies was Walter Goldschmidt (1946), who found that when small scale family farming forms the economic base of an agricultural community, it has a much higher standard of living and quality of life than when the economic base is corporate agriculture. Specifically, the former have more numerous and better schools, better infrastructure, more (and more varied) social and civic organizations, higher levels of church attendance, a stronger non-farm business sector, and higher levels of engagement in community decision making.

Linda Lobao (1990) provides an excellent review of the many replications and other studies done in the Goldschmidt tradition. She reports that the majority confirm the original findings. Most significantly for the present study, she points out that if the structure of the local economy is central to the creation of local inequality, the capacity of producers and their households to modify the conditions of production are key to reducing inequality (Lobao 1990). And, of course, modifying the conditions of production is exactly the aim of the quality jobs agenda.

A recent study by Tolbert, Lyson, and Irwin (1998) supports the Goldschmidt hypothesis in rural manufacturing based communities. They find that an economic base comprised of a number of small to medium sized firms leads to greater socio-economic well-being than one made up of a few large corporate firms. They also report a strong relationship between economic structure, socio-economic outcomes, and the strength of local civic organizations and involvements – what is sometimes called civil society.[2]

[2] This has important implications for the quality jobs agenda. From a community development perspective, the aim should be to promote numerous small contracting firms in ecosystem management.

There has been renewed interest in recent years in the concept of civil society. In broad terms civil society consists of the social sectors of society including families, neighborhoods, voluntary associations, and civil enterprises (Eberly, 2000). With respect to community well being, civil society enables the creation of local relationships and networks wherein individuals transcend self-interest and act toward common goals or the collective good.

The associations and institutions of civil society have been termed mediating structures (Berger and Neuhaus 1977). Beyond their explicit purpose, mediating structures accomplish three other things, according to Eberly (2000). They mediate between the individual and the large mega-structures of the market and the state. They impart important democratic values and habits. Moreover, they create social capital.

Tying these concepts together, the ability of a community to act toward common goals or the collective good – its capacity to address community problems – depends on a strong civil society with healthy mediating structures. And the research in the Goldschmidt tradition shows how the structure of the local economic base shapes local civil society. Thus, while the direct intent of the quality jobs approach is to reshape the local economy, an indirect outcome is a strengthened civil society.

The Aspen Institute coordinated a capacity building learning cluster consisting of community development professionals from across the United States between 1993 and 1996. According to their work, an essential component of a creating and maintaining healthy, viable communities is the existence of a high level of community capacity. They define community capacity as "*the combined influence of a community's commitment, resources and skills that can be deployed to build on community strengths and address community problems and opportunities*" (Aspen Institute, 1996).

Based upon our research we have modified the Aspen Institute's components of community capacity to include: *resources, human factors, and commitment*. Our experience and research reveal that human factors of individuals engaged in community capacity building activities are an essential component of community capacity and should be assessed as a separate component. These factors can be described as follows[3]:

- **Resources** are the financial, natural and human assets and the means to deploy them intelligently and fairly. It also includes having the information and guidelines that will insure the best use of these resources.
- **Human factors** are the human capacities of the people involved in community development activities. They include:

  *Leadership*—the presence of people in the community who act as catalysts in addressing community issues, who encourage others to join the process, and who can coordinate activities.

  *Skills—includes* all the talents and expertise of individuals and organizations that can be used to address problems, seize opportunities, and to add strength to existing and emerging institutions.

  *Depth*—the presence of a broad base of professionals and volunteers who are actively engaged in the community and committed to the common goal/purpose. In other words, if key people leave the community, are there others who are able and willing to step in?
- **Community commitment** is the community-wide will act, based on a shared awareness of problems, opportunities and workable solutions. It refers also to heightened support in key sectors of the community to address opportunities, solve problems and strengthen community responses.

[3] With the exception of Human Factors, definitions of factors of community capacity are taken directly from the Aspen Institute. Please see References for a full citation.

## FINDINGS FROM DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

The above factors provide a basis from which to assess the community capacity of the demonstration communities we are studying. In order to assess the capacity of each community in each factor, we collected quantitative and qualitative data for each community. In addition, we collected information regarding community capacity activities including strategic planning efforts, visioning exercises, economic development planning, civic activities, natural resource plans, and the like. We also mention the capacity building efforts initiated by EWP. Beyond capacity building efforts, we looked at what types of groups are primarily involved in the activity. In our study communities, we found the primary groups involved in capacity building activities are local governments, community economic development organizations, and the ecosystem management industry.

This section reports the findings from our six case studies. The first two are the comparison communities where EWP has not been involved. EWP has been involved in promoting the quality jobs agenda in the remaining four communities.

### Jefferson County

*Community Description*

Jefferson County is in central Oregon, east of the Cascades. Its economic base is centered in agriculture and forestry. It contains one of the most vigorous secondary wood products economies in the Pacific Northwest – centered on manufactured homes and doors/windows/sashes. Much of the Warm Springs Indian Reservation is in Jefferson County. The county also has a large Latino population, initially attracted by the agricultural industry.

The secondary data indicate an overall low level of socioeconomic well being in Jefferson County. This information supports the qualitative information obtained through interviews and a review of local current events.

The survey responses in Jefferson County help us to better understand the community conditions. In general, Jefferson County respondents have a relatively positive outlook on the economic situation of their community; a mixed perception of the social atmosphere of the community; a somewhat negative perception of the political atmosphere of the community; and a low level of participation in social and civic organizations.

*Discussion*

There is no ecosystem management activity in Jefferson County. EWP has not worked in Jefferson County on any activities. In addition, there do not seem to be any other capacity building activities in Jefferson County. Community and economic development activities occur as a reaction to external factors rather than as community planning efforts.

Our assessment of Jefferson County's capacity to address issues and opportunities follows:

- **Resources—***Low***—**There is no locally based organization focused on improving the community well being through economic and community development in Jefferson County. The people working on local community development issues are basically limited to local officials and the executive director of the Chamber of Commerce. They lack information and guidance (no plans of any kind exist) to make informed decisions that will enhance community well being.

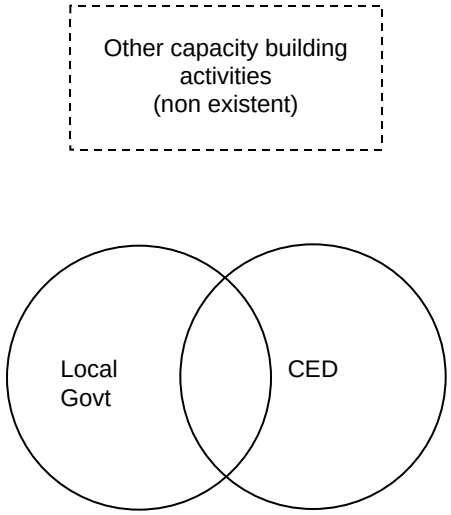
- **Human Factors—***Low*—Controversy in the local government reveals a lack of strong leadership in the community. It is difficult to assess the level of skills of those engaged in activities. Most of the local officials have been recently elected and a planner was recently hired. There does not seem to be depth of leadership within the community.

- **Community commitment—***Low*—Our survey results reveal that there are some indications of a positive social atmosphere, yet there are also indications that there are

many problems in the community. Racial and cultural tensions are apparent and the community is divided regarding the impacts of growth. In addition, secondary data and information from interviews reveal that the community suffers from many social pathologies including: high teen pregnancy rates, high percentage of low birthweight babies born, high crime rates, and existing social services are at capacity.

The lack of community capacity building activities and low ratings in each of the community capacity factors leads to a weak organizational structure for community development. It can be diagramed as follows (Figure 2).

**Figure 2**
**Structure of Community Development Efforts in Jefferson County**




There is some integration between local government and community economic development entities, but it is important to remember that these groups consist of relatively few people. The lack of capacity building activities leads to this weak structure and low level of participation in community economic development activities. This low level of capacity leaves Jefferson County extremely vulnerable in addressing community issues and opportunities. Those involved are unable to address the vast array of issues related to community well being. If any of these leaders leave the community or decide to not continue in their work, it will be even more difficult for Jefferson County to initiate community development activities.

## Upper Willamette Valley

*Community Description*

The Upper Willamette Valley, located on the westside of the Cascade Range in southeastern Lane County, contains the headwaters of the Willamette River as well as several important tributaries. It contains the small communities of Oakridge and Westfir, which were pioneering Oregon timber towns. The area has been the subject of a vigorous community development effort in recent years, but ecosystem restoration work has not been part of the activities.

Secondary data were not available for the Upper Willamette. Survey results, however, provide a good indication of conditions in the community of Oakridge. (Westfir, population 260, was not included in the survey sample). By far, Oakridge respondents have the most negative perception of their economy of the communities surveyed. Respondents in Oakridge are very negative regarding the social conditions of their community. Oakridge respondents have a negative perception of the local political atmosphere. Despite their negative responses, however, respondents to the survey are very involved in community organizations.

*Discussion*

Oakridge has undergone many community development planning efforts over the past 20 years. These have mainly focused on business recruitment and tourism and have not included any strategies regarding ecosystem management. While these planning efforts have created a common vision for the future of Oakridge, the volunteers who carry out these efforts do not have the skills to enable them to move toward reaching their goals.

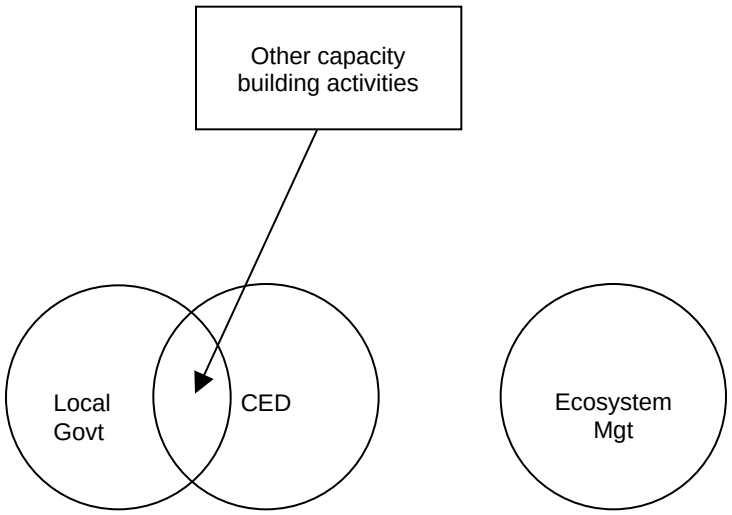
Our results provide an assessment of Oakridge's community capacity:

- **Resources**—*Medium*—Three community organizations are working on local CED efforts. Their efforts are somewhat coordinated, yet could be improved.

- **Human factors**—*Low*—For the most part, these organizations are run by volunteers. They do not have the level of skills needed to initiate and implement successful CED efforts. While there are a few people with adequate skills, they need a broader base and greater depth of community leadership for projects to be successfully implemented.

- **Community commitment**—*Low*—Survey responses show very low levels of community cohesiveness and community pride. While those who responded indicated they were very involved in community activities and groups, they also seemed quite frustrated with community response to problems, local government, and lack of contribution in community affairs from fellow residents.

**Figure 3**
**Structure of Community Development Efforts in Upper Willamette**




Oakridge's community capacity, overall, is *Low*. Capacity building activities have resulted in adequate organizations and adequate plans for the community. Yet, they need more effective leadership from local government and other community members; they need to enhance the skills of current community leaders; and they need to increase community commitment to

engaging in community activities and projects in order to improve community capacity and to see success in project implementation.

**Coos County**

*Community Description*

Coos County, located on the south coast of Oregon, was one of the counties most affected by the decline of the timber industry. Secondary data indicate that Coos County is struggling economically and with social pathologies. The data for Coos County may suggest that while a segment of the population is doing relatively well, there is still a significant proportion of the population that lives in poverty. Surveys were not administered in Coos County.

*Discussion*

To address the effects of the decline of traditional economic activity, entities within Coos County developed a series of economic development plans and strategies throughout the 1980s and 1990s to revitalize the area. Most of the formal plans emphasize industrial recruitment and/or business expansion/retention as a means for economic stability. They also emphasize the region's natural beauty as an asset for tourism as a means to attract both visitors and entrepreneurs to the area. In addition to city plans, local governments and citizen groups have collaborated to form regional economic development plans. These plans are rooted in the industrial recruitment strategies, but some have the added components of environmental protection and human capital development.

An assessment of the capacity of Coos County reveals the following:

- **Resources**—*Medium*—There are a several organizations working in different aspects of community economic development and ecosystem management but these efforts are not coordinated. There are no guidelines in place to ensure community/organizational assets are being used in the best ways possible. The lack of a local community economic development organization has inhibited development community's ability to coordinate projects and achieve results. In addition, watershed

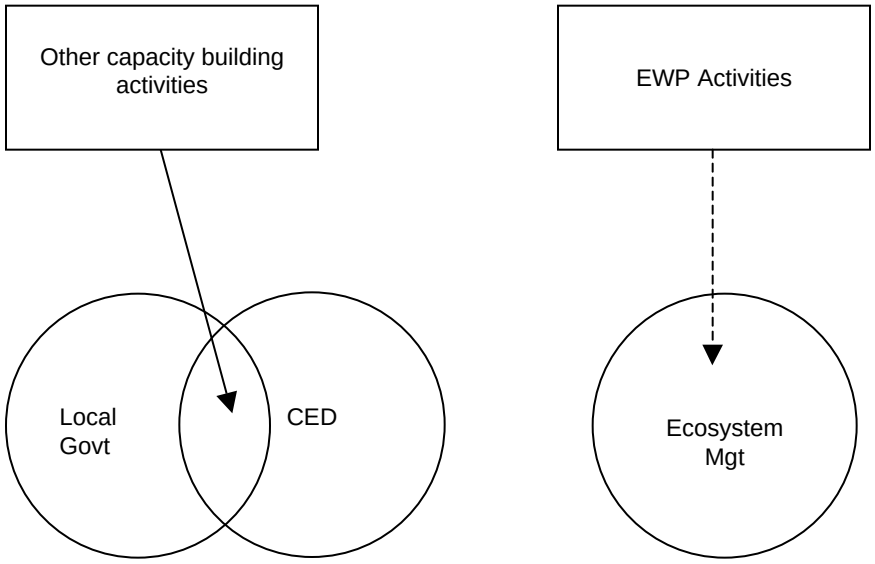
associations working in ecosystem restoration activities are completely disconnected from local economic development activities and players.

- **Human factors**—*Medium*—There are many talented and skilled people working in various areas of community economic development and ecosystem restoration. However, no one seems to have the vision or skills to integrate efforts and assets. Again the depth of leadership in the community is questionable.

- **Community commitment—***Low***—**Although we do not have survey results for Coos County we know from our interviews that there is not a high level of community commitment to addressing issues and problems. Many of the higher skill residents have left the community because of a lack of employment opportunities.

The relatively low ratings in the factors of community capacity have resulted in a disjointed organizational structure of community development and ecosystem restoration activities. Figure 4 illustrates these relationships.

**Figure 4**
**Structure of Community Development Efforts in Coos County**




There is a disconnect between EWP activities and other capacity building activities in Coos County. EWP efforts have mainly focused on working with watershed associations that are

engaged in doing ecosystem management activities. EWP is trying to encourage the watershed associations to connect their restoration efforts with community economic development objectives and connect with community economic development entities. Other community development efforts in Coos County have been initiated by local government community economic development entities and are aimed at promoting 'traditional economic development' and industrial recruitment. These efforts have largely been uncoordinated even within the economic development entities. The recently formed economic development organization may have the potential to take a lead role in coordinating community wide capacity building activities and community development efforts, but at this time it is still working out its mission and goals.

**South Santiam Watershed**

*Community Description*

The South Santiam River flows from the western slope of the Cascade Mountains into the Willamette River, approximately in the middle of the Willamette Valley. The South Santiam watershed encompasses approximately 1,300 square miles. It consists of six rural, timber-and-agriculture communities. Secondary data and survey results are not available.

*Discussion*

Because the focus of this study is the impact of the quality jobs agenda upon community capacity, we will turn our attention to Sweet Home, the community within the South Santiam with the highest potential for ecosystem management activity. Sweet Home's Ames Creek project is the primary capacity building project. It involves local government and parties engaged in ecosystem restoration activities, yet it does not address any potential socioeconomic benefits. Other capacity building activities include a strategic planning process and some

attempts at economic development activities have largely been lead by local government and to some extent the Sweet Home Economic Development Group.

Based on our case study, we assess the community capacity of Sweet Home as follows:

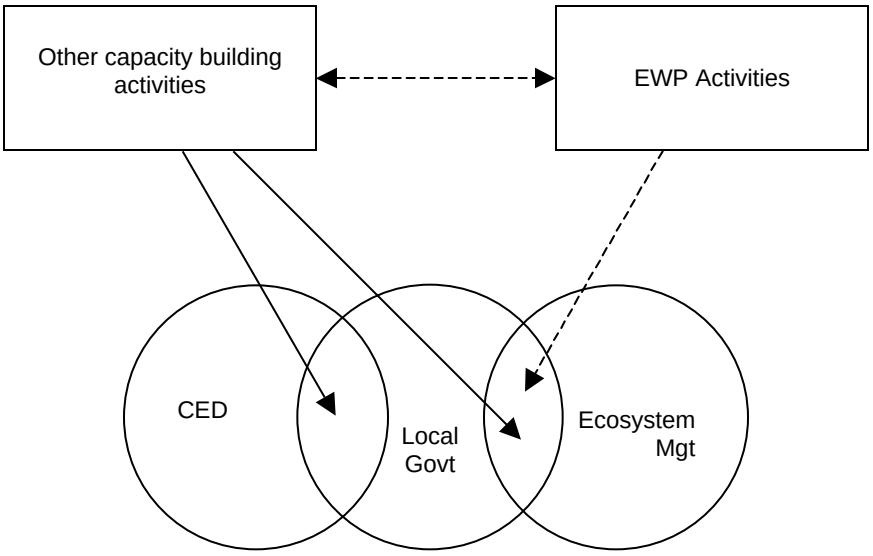
- **Resources**—*Medium*—There are a variety of organizations working on different aspects of community economic development and ecosystem management activities. Absent is an organization with the capability to coordinate efforts among agencies and move projects forward.

- **Human factors**—*Low*—City staff does not have enough resources to dedicate enough time to community economic development efforts, the Sweet Home Economic Development Group has only recently had funding to hire a full time staff person. We don't know the staff person's skills and abilities at this point. The South Santiam Watershed Council has recently mentioned they do not have the staff capacity to meet their mission.

- **Community commitment**—*Medium*—Participants in the 2001 strategic planning process noted the community's "volunteer spirit" as one of the most defining characteristics of Sweet Home (second only to its natural beauty). A variety of civic groups exist and are responsible for many of the identified goals in the plan. The Ames Creek project, initially viewed by some as contentious due to tensions regarding environmental attitudes, is now widely accepted and is supported by a variety of volunteers.

These factors and activities have resulted in the community development organizational structure illustrated in Figure 5.

**Figure 5**
**Structure of Community Development Efforts in Sweet Home**




Local government is involved with both the ecosystem management work, primarily in the Ames Creek project and other with community economic development efforts. Ecosystem management work in the Willamette National Forest, Ames Creek Project, and other projects headed up by the South Santiam Watershed Council (SSWC) are not connected to community economic development goals and objectives or entities involved in community economic development (except for local government staff). There is a weak connection between EWP efforts and other capacity building activities.

**Tillamook County**

*Community Description*

Tillamook County is located on Oregon's north coast. The Tillamook County economy is dominated by tourism, dairy farming, and timber. Cattle outnumber people. Watershed restoration is a key issue for elected county officials and other residents.

Analysis of secondary data suggests a relatively high level of community well being in Tillamook County. Survey results provide more information regarding the economic, social, and political conditions in Tillamook County. Respondents in Tillamook County have a negative outlook on their community's economy, describing it as "depressed". Responses indicate a positive social atmosphere and negative perception of local government.

*Discussion*

Numerous planning exercises involving community economic development and restoration have occurred in Tillamook County over the past several years. These efforts have resulted in the development of several projects aimed at maintaining and protecting the natural environment as well as the rural, small town flavor; protecting agricultural land; and creating more family wage jobs. A constellation of local development groups aims to address these issues: the Economic Development Council of Tillamook County (EDCTC) and the Tillamook Bay National Estuary Project (NEP), the Futures Council, and the Performance Partnership. These organizations have worked extensively with each other. The main challenge to reaching that vision has been inconsistency in support from local government.

EWP has worked primarily with EDCTC, and key public agency partners (BLM Tillamook Area, Oregon Department of Forestry, and Hebo Ranger District, Siuslaw National Forest) to advance the quality jobs agenda.

Based on the information we have collected we assess the capacity of Tillamook County on the scale of *High, Medium, or Low.*

- **Resources**—*Medium*—The Tillamook Performance Partnership, the EDCTC, and Futures Council are all working on a variety of projects in Tillamook County. The strategic planning process has established a common vision and goals. The obstacle to a higher level of resource capacity is the lack of the local government's lack of commitment to these projects.

- **Human Factors—***Medium*—Again, the reason for this rating is the unstable leadership in local government. The EDCTC and Performance Partnership have a high level of skills and leadership capability. The depth of leadership and skills in all entities involved in community development activities is questionable.

- **Community commitment—***Medium*—Results from our survey show mixed results the strength of community commitment. There seems to be a definite rift between those who don't want things to change and newcomers who would like to see more diversity, acceptance, and positive change within the community. Respondents indicate there are high levels of community pride and a good deal of social connections within the community.

Figure 6 illustrates the organization of community development activities and entities involved in those activities in Tillamook County.

**Figure 6**
**Structure of Community Development Efforts in Tillamook County**

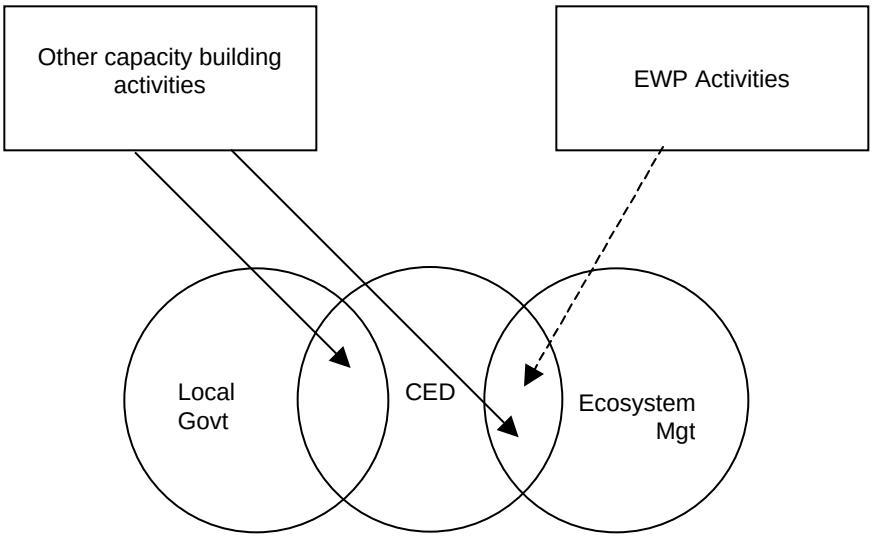



Figure 6 shows a disconnect between EWP activities and other capacity building efforts in Tillamook County. As previously mentioned, EWP has primarily interfaced with the Economic Development Council of Tillamook County (EDCTC). The EDCTC has worked extensively with EWP to promote quality jobs in ecosystem management in Tillamook County,

but these efforts and this relationship has not extended to other entities in Tillamook County. While the goals related to restoration of Tillamook Bay and other estuary restoration have involved ecosystem management considerations, the ecosystem management as an economic development strategy has not been a central theme in the overall community planning process.

**Lake County**

*Community Description*

Lake County is one of a handful of very large counties (7,600 sq. miles) situated in the less noticed, less affluent part of Oregon, east of the Cascade Mountains. The county has roughly 7,500 residents, around 4,500 in the county seat of Lakeview, and the rest scattered in small rural agricultural communities. It is the third largest county in Oregon. Over 78 percent of the land in Lake County is owned and managed by government agencies, mostly the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service.

Secondary data show that Lake County is struggling economically, yet indicators of social pathologies are still quite low. Survey data provide more information regarding the social and economic conditions in Lake County. Overall, Lake County respondents have a bleak outlook on the current and future economic situation of the community. In contrast, respondents indicate a very positive social atmosphere in the community. In general, like the other communities, Lake County respondents seem skeptical of local politics. Compared to the other communities examined, Lake County has a high level of community participation in community organizations. The percent that engage in leadership activities are among the highest of all communities.

*Discussion*

A number of efforts are underway to address the economic downturn in Lake County. They have focused at developing a general capacity to pursue business recruitment and retention, providing infrastructure that will support growth, and supporting community development that will make Lake County an enticing place for businesses to locate and for people to live. The primary community development effort in Lake County over the past several years has been the reauthorization of the Lake Federal Sustained Yield Unit (LFSYU). Sustainable Northwest (SNW), an organization based in Portland, has been the catalyst in this effort.

The Sustained Yield Unit Committee – the local group of elected officials, business people, timber industry representatives, and citizen representatives – that provided local input into the operation of the Unit, has worked for several years to develop a future for the unit. Ultimately, it endorsed fundamentally changing the Unit's function, proposing that an ecosystem-based approach be taken toward the LFSYU's management. That proposal was adopted when the Forest Service reauthorized the SYU in early 2001.

Based on our analysis of secondary data, survey results, and information from interviews and site visits, we can provide an assessment of the community capacity in Lake County:

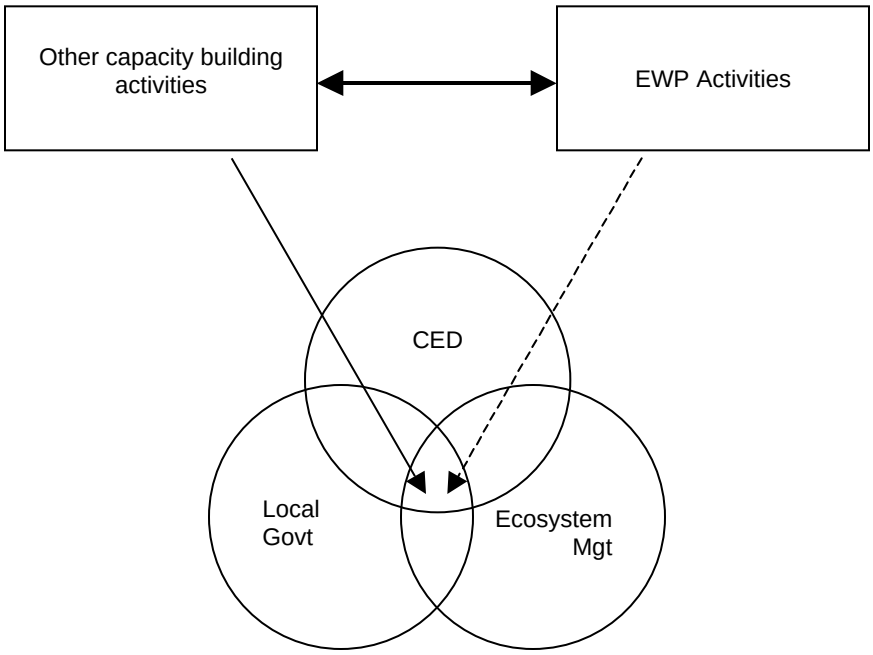
- **Resources—***High*—Throughout the reauthorization process staff from Sustainable Northwest were based in Lake County and engaged in helping to ensure the process moved forward. The staff person was able to access outside resources (like assistance from EWP) to contribute to the process. A great deal of technical information was gathered/analyzed to help understand the issues, challenges, and opportunities facing Lake County, especially regarding workforce issues. Now, a locally based non-profit, with a full time staff member, has been created which will continue work begun by Sustainable Northwest and the Sustained Yield Unit Committee.

- **Human Factors**—*Medium*—People involved in development work in Lake County have the skills to address issues in the community. Local government and other leaders were actively involved in the reauthorization process as well as addressing other issues in the community. The *depth* of human factors is questionable.

- **Community Commitment—***High***—**Results from our survey give us insight into the commitment of the general community to Lake County. Responses reveal a great deal of social connection within the community, dedication to staying in their community despite difficult economic times, and a great deal of community pride. In addition, respondents participate in a variety of community organizations and groups.

These factors of community capacity have lead to the organization of activities aimed at addressing community problems and opportunities illustrated in Figure 7.

**Figure 7**
**Structure of Community Development Efforts in Lake County**




We can see that all entities involved in community development activities are working in a coordinated, integrated manner. The LFSYU reauthorization process has provided a foundation for community collaboration among local government, community economic development, and ecosystem management groups. In addition, the process resulted in helping the community to understand how to link socioeconomic goals and ecosystem health.

In regard to the impacts of EWP efforts, EWP activities and interaction has been highly coordinated with the other capacity building activities and with all entities involved in community development activities. The strong relationship between EWP and other capacity building activities has lead to success in ensuring ecosystem management goals and the quality jobs agenda have a key role in Lake County's planning efforts.

## CONCLUSIONS

Table 1 is a summary of our assessment of community capacity for each of the communities we examined based upon the factors of community capacity described in the beginning of this paper.

**Table 1**
**Summary of Community Capacity**

| | Resources | Human Factors | Community Commitment | Overall Capacity |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Lake County** | High | Medium | High | High |
| **Tillamook County** | Medium | Medium | Medium | Medium |
| **Coos County** | Medium | Medium | Low | Medium |
| **South Santiam** | Medium | Low | Medium | Medium |
| **Jefferson County** | Low | Low | Low | Low |
| **Upper Willamette** | Medium | Low | Low | Low |

Our first key finding is that EWP activities must be coordinated with other community capacity building activities to be most effective in building overall increased community capacity. In other words, for the quality jobs agenda to have a chance of successfully contributing to increased socioeconomic well being, it must be incorporated as a priority in the overall development goals of the community.

Our second key finding is that the relationships among entities involved in community development activities also play an integral role in enhancing community capacity. For a community to successfully address issues and opportunities facing it, all entities involved in community development efforts must be working in a coordinated manner. Adding the quality jobs agenda to the picture, the entities involved in ecosystem management activities must also be collaborating with local government and community economic development organizations in order for it to have the potential to impact overall community capacity.

**Figure 8**
**Optimal Configuration of Community Development Efforts Including the Quality Jobs Agenda**

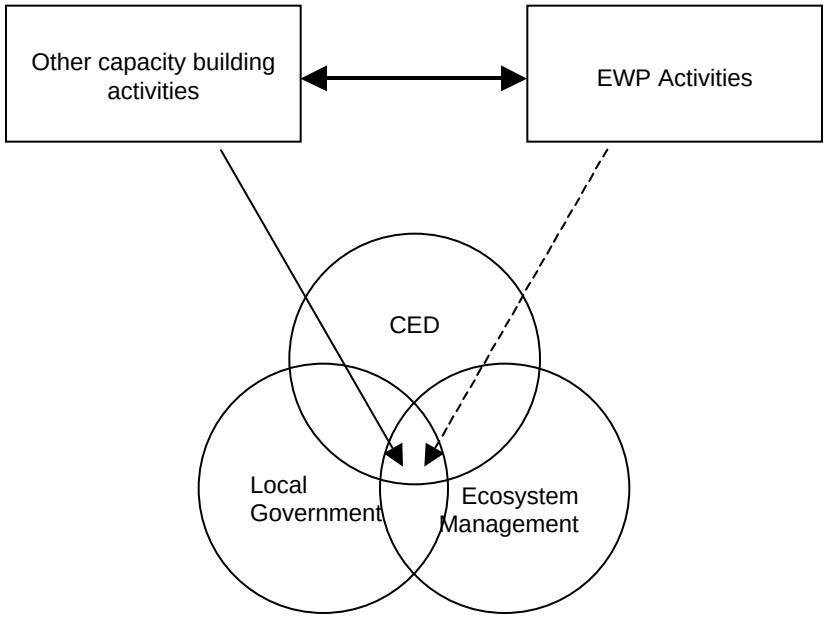



Figure 8 shows the optimal configuration of capacity building activities and community development entities that will contribute to a high level of community capacity. This is also the configuration that is necessary for the quality jobs agenda to impact community capacity and potentially enhance community socioeconomic well being. Again, we cannot say from this research that the quality jobs agenda will enhance community socioeconomic well being, but we

do know that without being incorporated into overall community development efforts as illustrated in Figure 8 above, it will most likely be unsuccessful.

To summarize, our findings suggest that the relationships we hypothesized between EWP activities and increased community capacity (Figure 1) do not accurately describe the situation. Revising the figure to include the relationships between EWP activities and other capacity building activities and the relationships among community level mediating structures we find the following (Figure 9).

**Figure 9**
**Ideal Relationship Between EWP Activities and Community Problem Solving Capacity**

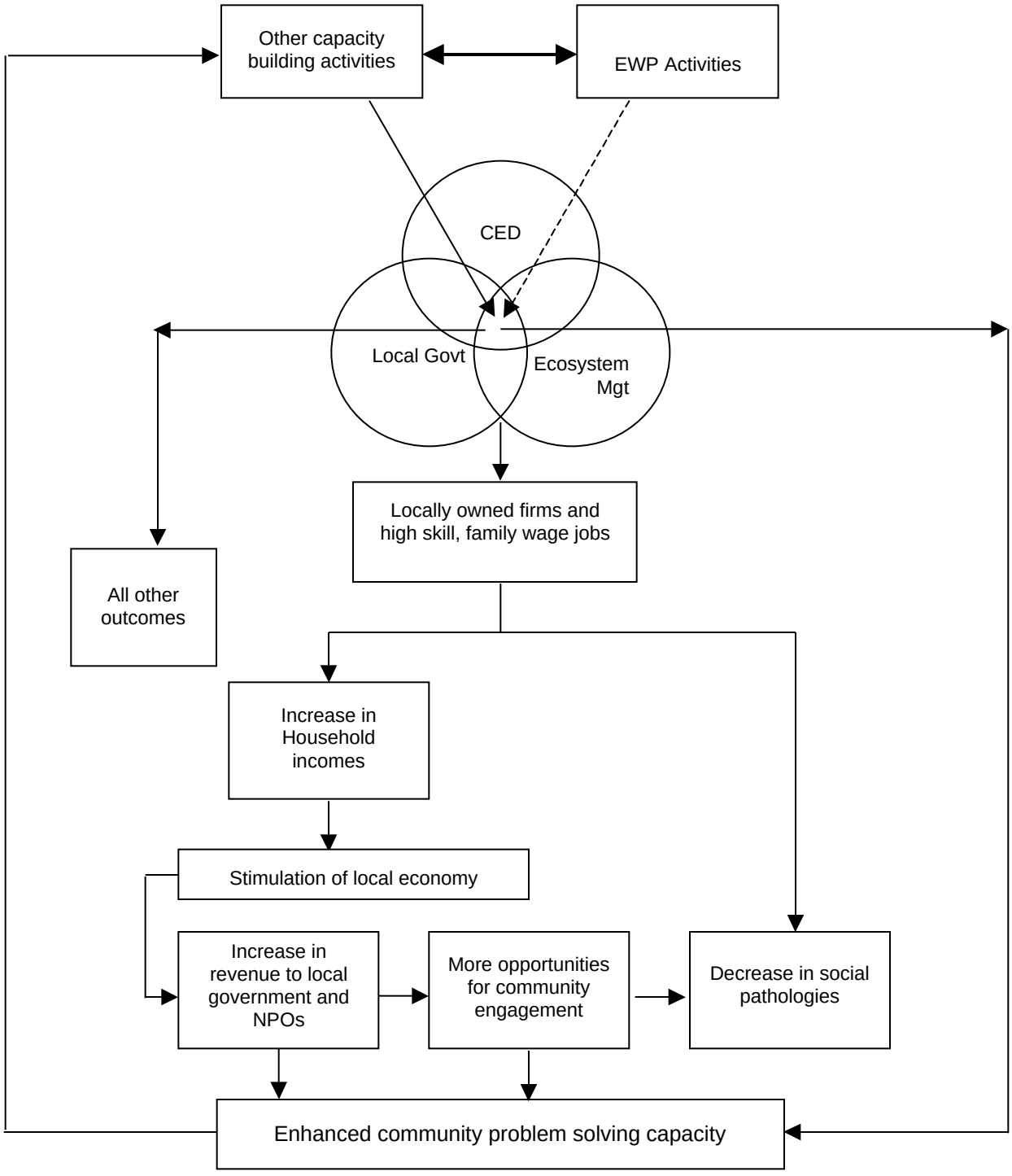


Figure 9 reflects our findings and helps to answer our original research question:

*To what extent does the community forestry approach to environmental management contribute to enhancing community problem solving capacity?*

In order for the community forestry approach to environmental management to successfully improve community problem solving capacity, the efforts of EWP and its partners must be coordinated with other capacity building activities in the community. In addition, the organizations engaged in community building activities must integrate their efforts and work in a collaborative manner.

Generalizing to other communities with their economic base in the primary sectors, this study suggests that job or industry development efforts cannot focus only on advancing their particular agenda. They must pay attention to other community activities. In other words, groups focusing on advancing community forestry, watershed restoration, sustainable agriculture, family farms, community supported agriculture and so on, must broaden their agenda to ensure that their goals are integrated into the overall community development effort. These groups must build partnerships with the various groups engaged in efforts within the community. Without connecting their goals to overall community development goals, it is unlikely that they will successfully contribute to enhancing community problem solving capacity and thus, to improving socio-economic well being.

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