



THE STEWARDSHIP CHRONICLE

The newsletter of the Ecosystem Workforce Program

*"Helping communities build quality jobs
in ecosystem management"*

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Assessing Socioeconomic Impacts of Ecosystem Restoration

*By Jeff Oveson, Coordinator
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"Protect the customs, culture, and economic stability of the Grande Ronde Basin to provide for the welfare of the citizens of the Basin, the Nez Perce and Umatilla Tribes, and the citizens of the United States of America"

It doesn't sound like much if you say it fast enough, but taken at heart, this statement from the Grande Ronde Model Watershed Project (GRMWP) charter dictates that GRMWP can no longer plan, fund, and monitor its watershed restoration projects without first having a true understanding of what the socioeconomic impact of those restoration projects may be on the people of the Grande Ronde basin.

Since the inception of the GRMWP, the view that a restoration project, when implemented, might offer economic benefit to a landowner while providing the environmental benefits it was designed to accrue, has been tacitly accepted. It is clear that in many cases, this economic benefit was the incentive that provided the opportunity for enhancement projects: opening the door to the lands owned by neighbors and friends to create economic and environmental benefits.

A general sense that projects generate economic benefits fails to provide enough information to help us fully understand the economic impacts of restoration projects. It is essential to quantify what benefits have really been derived, if any. The primary question within the program becomes, "If we are having an effect on local economics, what is the effect?" Once we make that determination, another question arises, "What can we do to ensure our program has a positive effect on the local economy?"

These are the framing questions of the socioeconomic assessment initiated by a new addition to the Grande Ronde Model Watershed Program staff, RARE participant Michelle Johnson. The assessment will study the role of restoration dollars in the local economy and include projects funded by Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), and Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB). Areas of focus include evaluating available restoration skills to determine training needs, trends in project expenditure of materials, labor, monitoring, and cost-share, and the local watershed restoration contractor market. Because Grande Ronde Model Watershed Program is not the only organization conducting watershed restoration

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Update From the Program Manager

By Charles Spencer, EWP

Looking Back and Looking Forward -

Louise Solliday, Governor's Natural Resources Assistant, frequently reminds restoration advocates and practitioners, "We're spending \$100M on watershed restoration in Oregon, and there are no jobs!" Clearly there are jobs. Yet, we have learned over the past six years that, with the introduction of new kinds of work into a disrupted and transitional marketplace, supply and demand have not been communicating efficiently. The result has been that many skilled workers and capable businesses have left the arena.

In 1998 the EWP addressed this major obstacle by shifting its focus to the "demand side." We concentrated on working with watershed councils and public land management agencies to assist them in assessing the current labor market and redesigning how they configure and procure work to raise the likelihood of quality job outcomes. Though there is much to be accomplished, the EWP and its many partners in communities, the region, and in the national policy arena can see the beginnings of progress toward quality jobs in ecosystem management.

Progress at the Community Level: The most important measure of progress is what happens at the community and watershed level. We have seen significant quality jobs progress in Lake, Tillamook, Wallowa, Union, Jackson, and Coos Counties. Community-based partnerships in these communities have consistently focused on workforce assessments as a first step, and as each partnership gathers and applies the lessons of prior assessments effectiveness steadily improves. This action-research tool has not only yielded a working knowledge of local capacity and the trends in demand but has stimulated new working relationships and networks to develop the sustainable local and regional capacity needed to restore ecological integrity in the long term. Partners in Wallowa and Union Counties have formed the Community Assessment Workgroup to establish common methods for assessment and monitoring for ecosystem workforce and other community socioeconomic indicators. Federal agency leaders in the Blue Mountains Demonstration Area have made quality jobs one of their objectives and are working with community leaders, economic and workforce development practitioners and the Oregon Employment Department to develop strategies to link quality jobs and restoration objectives.

The Willamette Province Workforce Partnership (WPWP), a partnership of the Willamette National Forest and the BLM Eugene and Salem Districts, is now entering its fifth year putting together multi-disciplinary contracts designed to attract and develop a high-skilled workforce in long-duration contracts configured to be accessible to small, rural-based contractors. To date the WPWP has put together 31 contracts, totaling approximately

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Advancing Oregon's Sustainability Agenda

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OWEB Grants Benefit Local Economies

By Mike Hibbard, EWP

In addition to their intended purposes of increasing local resource management capacity and improving environmental conditions on the ground, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) grants to local watershed councils also make an important contribution to local economies. Recipients of OWEB grants have been able to get their assessment, restoration, and related work done while spending most of their grant funding in their local communities, according to a recent study by the Ecosystem Workforce Program (EWP).

EWP conducted an analysis of ninety-two randomly selected projects funded by OWEB during the period 1997-99. These projects totaled approximately \$6.2 million in documented expenditures. Eighty percent of that total – nearly \$5 million – was spent within the county where the grant was made. And ninety-six percent was spent within the state.

In interviews conducted as part of the study, watershed council coordinators and other grantees said that they make a conscious effort to hire local contractors and do business with local firms. At the same time, they also noted that they are bound to hire only qualified contractors and to purchase necessary goods and services, regardless of location of the vendors.

These findings support the belief that skilled workers and contractors can be found in most local communities around the state. This is consistent with the view that so-called conservation-based development has a contribution to make to the local economies of rural areas as the focus shifts from an emphasis on natural resource extraction to long-term ecosystem management. Ecosystem management efforts such as those funded by OWEB not only help restore the health of the natural environment, they also help restore the socio-economic health of local communities.

More broadly, EWP's study of OWEB grants may offer some lessons for ways OWEB and other Oregon natural resource agencies can think about the implications of Governor Kitzhaber's Sustainability Initiative. The OWEB grants have environmental health as their main purpose, but indirectly they have also had important socio-economic benefits. It seems likely that there may be other environmental management activities by state agencies that could produce similar indirect socio-economic benefits.



Transformation of a Ranger District?

*By Linda Duffy, District Ranger
Ashland Ranger District*

The Forest Service, the City of Ashland and Southern Oregon University are working with community and environmental protection partners to explore an exciting model for community-based stewardship. Concerned about the uncertain future of the Ashland Ranger District and the need for robust, collaborative strategies to restore watershed and forest ecosystems, local partners have proposed the creation of the Southern Oregon Institute for Watershed and Citizenship Studies, "a new model to increase agency and community capacity for public land restoration." Southern Oregon University may be a key partner, using a proposed new facility to house its environmental studies program. Ashland Ranger District functions currently housed in leased space would co-locate in the facility.

Forest Visions, the partnership proposing the Learning Institute, suggests a mission to "facilitate the agency mission, 'caring for the land and serving the people,' by linking it to the role of the Learning Institute as a vehicle for promoting a dynamic learning environment in which to test and understand social, economic, and ecological models for natural resource sustainability. [Additionally it would] position the Ashland Ranger District to operate as an active management and monitoring laboratory; [and] Southern Oregon University to serve as the experimental clearing house for developing and testing related resource management curriculums."

Jack Williams, supervisor of the Rogue River and Siskiyou national forests said in an interview with Paul Fattig in the March 4 Medford Mail Tribune: "It's going to be a challenge to make it happen... There's still some uncertainty about how it would work." But Williams says the idea is worth pursuing. "There is a broad recognition that the kinds of solutions or approaches we had in the past aren't adequate for today... People are looking for better way to do things."

Forest Visions member Dominick DellaSala, director of the World Wildlife Fund's Klamath-Siskiyou Regional Program, explains, "We want to make sure the Forest Service stays here... The dominant paradigm was to use the forest to create economic revenue... The paradigm needs to be flipped." DellaSala says the first concern should be the health of the forest, followed by economic concerns.

The EWP is working with Forest Visions members to help craft an ecosystem workforce component for the Learning Institute strategy.



Contract Innovation for Ecosystem Management and Quality Jobs

*By Cassandra Mosley,
Dept. Political Science, University of Florida*

Over the past several years, the Forest Service has been experimenting with new ways of procuring services and construction work. The fiscal year 2000 saw more than a dozen innovative contracts in the Pacific Northwest Region. Over the past several months, I have interviewed 22 contracting officers, contractors, and community residents to evaluate the effects of these new types of contracts for implementing ecosystem management and creating quality jobs. When the interviews and report are complete, the Pacific Northwest Research Station plans to publish this study. Here, I briefly discuss one type of contract innovation: a timber sale embedded in a service contract.

Traditionally, the Forest Service focused attention on stands that were economically viable, often neglecting other stands that needed treatment. Wanting to change this, some contracting officers in California invented the timber sale embedded in the service contract to undertake vegetation management that was not economically viable but included some commercial timber. This mechanism includes a fixed priced timber sale and a service contract. The successful bidder of the service contract is also required to purchase and execute the associated timber sale. Ecologically, this type of contract is important because it allows vegetation management (especially fire hazard reduction) with a single entry. It combines all of the work on a patch of ground into a single contract.

It is too early to evaluate the economic benefits of service contract/timber sale mechanism. However, local logging firms won most of the contracts that I examined. Logging firms have not traditionally won service contracts but the commercial timber combined with non-commercial thinning seems to be appealing to some logging firms. In addition, many of the contract solicitations provided greater credit to firms that were going to make extensive use of the removed material, suggesting that there will be some secondary economic benefit as well.

From my interviews it appears the national forests got better results when they sought general input from contractors about how they would like to have these sorts of contracts put together. For example, in one project, planners met extensively with contractors and learned that they did not like the idea of self-inspections because they feared disagreements with the Forest Service. Instead, the national forest decided to create a monitoring system that involved pre-measured plots unknown to the contracting firm. In addition, the Forest Service got more better-quality bids when the Forest Service provided training in proposal writ-

ing and held pre-bid field trips and meetings that included a thorough discussion of the national forest's expectations.

Forest Service personnel have faced numerous challenges when trying to create these contracts. One serious challenge for agency personnel was disagreement about how to structure the contracts so that they are within the Forest Service's authority. Frequently contracting officers, timber sale planners, and project planners were not familiar each other's requirements and processes. This lack of knowledge sometimes led to disagreement and lost time as people inadvertently worked at cross-purposes.

If these sorts of contract are going to succeed, community organizations and the Forest Service need to understand to capacity of the contracting sector and use this information to structure contracts to ensure adequate bidders and local benefit. In addition, to increase the quality of proposals, the Forest Service or community organizations need to train contractors in proposal development. Finally, the Forest Service needs to train its personnel so that personnel can more efficiently work across sectors of the agency. These three challenges need to be understood and addressed as aspects of an integrated approach. Focusing emphasis on one aspect at the cost of another will delay any progress toward the integration of ecosystem and socioeconomic goals.



Information Clearinghouse Feasibility Study

By Jim Luzzi, EWP

Linking trained ecosystem workers to available work opportunities has been a persistent problem in the ecosystem management industry. In the Spring of 1999, representatives of the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, the Oregon Economic and Community Development Department (OECD) and the Ecosystem Workforce Program (EWP) discussed the idea of an Ecosystem Management Information Clearinghouse. The basic idea was to create a vehicle that would be able to link local workers and contractors to local ecosystem work.

Throughout the Fall of 1999 EWP conducted informal interviews with workers, contractors, private industry foresters, watershed council administrators, and federal contracting officers to gauge support for the idea of statewide information clearinghouse. Support was enthusiastic from workers, contractors and watershed councils. Federal agencies and private industry were less enthusiastic because of their reliance upon existing methods of procurement. All, however, were at least intrigued by the idea.

The results of these informal interviews led to a meeting between EWP and representatives of Organization for Economic Initiatives, the Government Contract Assis-

tance Program, and Rogue Institute for Ecology and Economy. This meeting addressed the possible format of such a Clearinghouse. The question became: *How do we create a resource that is both open and accessible while at the same time limited to the community of workers, contractors, and resource managers committed to the high-skills, high-wage approach to ecosystem management?*

The preliminary vision had many unanswered questions. A feasibility study was initiated to validate the need for and the method of establishing an information clearinghouse. Oregon Economic Initiatives funded the feasibility study through the support of OECD and the work was contracted to the Community Planning Workshop (CPW) at the University of Oregon.

The feasibility study identified the potential users and then conducted focus groups and telephone interviews with workers, contractors, and public and private land managers to ascertain two main issues: to evaluate perception for the need for a clearinghouse, and to assess present and future accessibility of the different clearinghouse alternatives. Four alternatives were evaluated: voicemail, fax-back, e-mail, and an Internet Website. All of the alternatives considered had the potential to become a one-stop resource of contract and work opportunities. In addition, all of the users would be able to post their needs and qualifications for the other users to access. Workers would advertise their skills, contractors could market their physical and technical capacities, and resource managers could search for those individuals and firms most likely to meet their needs for specific projects.

The study used three evaluative criteria to assess the most practical system: cost, effectiveness of the system to provide timely information, and the access that workers, contractors, and resource managers would have to the system. Focus groups were held in Coquille and Ashland. Twenty-five people participated in the focus groups.

Based on the results of the focus groups, the feasibility study did not recommend the immediate implementation of an industry clearinghouse. It did make a number of general recommendations in regard to how to develop the foundation for a clearinghouse to be effective, and how to address those issues raised by the focus groups. The study also recommended specific actions in regard to the design and implementation of a potential clearinghouse.

The study recommended that an analysis of the industry be undertaken to establish the annual total dollar volume of awarded contracts, the number of employers and employees supported by these contracts, and the industry's potential longevity and future. EWP is presently engaged in the industry analysis which, when completed, will provide a

clearer picture of the need for a clearinghouse. If a clearinghouse were to be developed in the future, the CPW study recommended an Internet website as the primary format with a supplementary voicemail system. This system has the greatest potential for successfully linking the many parties in the ecosystem management industry.



Oregon's Ecosystem Taskforce

By Charles Spencer, EWP

Last year Governor Kitzhaber called on the Oregon Community and Economic Development Department (OECD) to convene a task force to explore opportunities for linking sustainable natural resource and sustainable communities objectives. The Task Force convened last fall and has been working with the Governor's office and state natural resource agencies to identify opportunities to enhance quality jobs and other positive socioeconomic impacts resulting from agency contracts, grants and other activity in rural communities. Task Force members include Lynn Beaton, Oregon Economic and Community Development Dept; Jim Beltram, Government Contract Assistance Program; Tony Corcoran, Oregon State Senate; Rick Evans, Organization for Economic Initiatives, Inc.; Valerie Folkema, Economic Development Council of Tillamook County; Cecelia Headley, Contractor; Allison Hensey, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board; Mike Hibbard, Ecosystem Workforce Program; Marcus Kauffman, Sustainable Northwest; Jess McKinley, Oregon Economic and Community Development Dept; Juan Mendoza, WVR, Inc.; Ronald Ochs, USDA Forest Service, Pacific NW Region; Denny Scott, United Brotherhood of Carpenters; Charles Spencer, Ecosystem Workforce Program; Beverly Thacker, Oregon Economic and Community Development Dept

Over the past few months the Task Force has worked with OECD to link its efforts with the Governor's Sustainability Initiative. Initial discussions are focused on opportunities to work with Oregon Department of Forestry, Oregon Department of Transportation, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board and Oregon Department of Agriculture. The Task Force is now working to get funding support to provide needed staff support to make the necessary connections with state agencies, review current policies and activities, and help state agencies identify opportunities for linking sustainable communities and sustainable natural resource objectives.





Federal Hazardous Fuels Funding

Interview with Maia Enzer, HFHCP

Late last year Congress approved a \$1.6 Billion appropriation to undertake reduction of hazardous fuels in the nations forests. The appropriation is a major breakthrough for community-based stewardship in two important areas. First, there are clear guidelines limiting thinning to small diameter trees, raising the likelihood that fuels reduction will actually enhance forest and watershed ecological integrity. Second, there is clear language authorizing federal agencies to plan and procure restoration work in ways that build local workforce and business capacity. We asked Maia Enzer to share some insights on the opportunities and pitfalls associated with the hazardous fuels funding. Maia serves as Sustainable Northwest's Program Officer for the Healthy Forests Healthy Communities Partnership.

EWP: What are the opportunities and pitfalls for sustainable communities and sustainable forest ecosystems in the new appropriations for hazardous fuel reduction?

"For many years we have seen the critical need to invest in forest restoration, and reduction of hazardous fuels is an important part of that need. \$1.6 Billion is a huge national investment and, if we are successful, can lead the way to increased public commitment to restoring our public lands. Unfortunately, it also provides a challenge for federal natural resource agencies and communities to make the best use of these funds. This is a real opportunity to do work on the ground to reduce hazardous fuels as well as to increase a community's fire suppression capacity. The real challenge is to use this opportunity to look beyond fire suppression solely, and integrate restoring ecosystems and communities."

"Congress was very specific about how work should get done with these funds, who does the work and who benefits. New authorities attached to the funds create opportunities for small local businesses, including local-non-profits and youth conservation corps, to be active participants in the process. Federal agencies can use "best value" contract award evaluation criteria that assign value to contractor efforts to provide worker training and hire local workers. Even if outside contractors are awarded contracts, the legislation puts an emphasis on investing in the community through hiring and training."

"Another important opportunity is the emphasis on monitoring. Previous initiatives have not emphasized monitoring, and collaborative stewardship efforts have consistently faced the challenge of assuring ongoing monitoring. Without specific budgeting for monitoring, it is difficult for land management agencies to assure that both implementation and results monitoring get done."

"Funding for fuels treatment is divided into two major parts: impacted areas (those that burned in summer 2000) and high-risk areas (those with high potential to burn). High-risk areas provide a real opportunity to be proactive and think about restoration. Communities can engage in: watershed analysis, workforce assessment and development, and opportunities to build value added manufacturing capacity to process the byproducts of forest restoration."

"The legislation also provides funding to support economic action programs such as the Forest Service Rural Community Assistance program. Over \$5 Million has been allocated to Forest Service and BLM assistance efforts in Oregon and Washington. The economic action programs are essential as delivery mechanisms in three key areas: community participation in planning and monitoring of fire-related projects, workforce development, and development of community capacity for value added manufacturing and marketing of small diameter material. We can help to diversify forest sector employment in small, isolated rural communities and help keep dollar flows in the community by focusing on value added wood products."

"Local and regional non-profits and collaborative partnerships should look for a combined BLM/Forest Service Request for Proposals (RFP), currently planned for release by early April. The RFP will clarify what kinds of community assistance activities may be funded. In addition to the BLM/FS assistance dollars, National Park Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs and US Fish and Wildlife have economic action funding." [Readers may call EWP for information about the planned BLM/FS RFP]

"The legislation provides the opportunity and challenge to coordinate with and leverage funds from other initiatives such as regular fire planning, 'county payments' funding for forest and watershed restoration, the Forest Service Stewardship Pilot Projects and upcoming forest plan revisions. Communities can line up and leverage these separate but related funds to rebuild their economy and restore public lands."

EWP: What are the opportunities for communities to increase quality job opportunities?

"Most of the job potential is in high risk communities, where collaborative strategies can develop projects that reduce fuels by focusing on a broad restoration agenda, contributing to ecological integrity, while expanding opportunities for a multi-skilled workforce. We will also need a high skill, multi-disciplinary workforce to accomplish on-the-ground monitoring, survey, and assessment tasks."

"There's a major opportunity in the appropriations language on contracting. First, the legislation focuses on 'best

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Linking Ecosystem Restoration and Economic Development in Lake County

*By Marcus Kaufmann,
Sustainable Northwest*

When I first set foot in rural Lake County, Barbara Gover of the Lake County Chamber of Commerce took me on a guided tour of the Lakeview. We settled into her well-preserved Cadillac and she motored us through the town's quaint streets toward the open fields on the edge of town. While we drove, Barb explained that community leaders were looking for new ways to provide local employment while taking care of the forest. She told me that local folks have the equipment, they know the land, and they want to stay in their communities. It's your job, she said, to help us make this whole ecosystem thing work.

Getting to know the industry

Any effort to help businesses in a particular sector starts with understanding the industry. The ecosystem management industry is not as visible as other industries. It takes a concerted effort to learn about it. To help understand the market we wanted to influence, last year we conducted an analysis of service and construction contracts on the Fremont National Forest and the Lakeview District BLM (Lake County is 78 percent public land). We also interviewed the owners of 20 local firms that have been participating or were interested in participating in contracts from the federal land management agencies.

We learned that in Lake County, between 1994 and 1999 the two federal agencies contracted over \$1 million per year and about 25 local firms captured 20 percent of all contracts on the Fremont National Forest. Moreover, the study showed that local firms were most successful winning contracts less than \$25,000 compared to larger contracts. We also learned about the characteristics of the local workforce. The local contractors have capacity in heavy equipment and logging, yet do not have capacity in labor-intensive type activities such as pre-commercial thinning. Many contractors told us that they were interested in learning new restoration techniques and pursuing new opportunities.

In addition to analyzing past contracts and characterizing the local workforce, we sought to determine whether some new ideas could help local businesses. We wanted to know if any contractors had signed up with the Historically Underutilized Business Zone (HUB Zone). The program directs federal agencies to set aside contracts for businesses located in impoverished communities. We found that one contractor had signed up to participate and few others had heard of it.

We had heard of the experience of the Willamette Province Workforce Partnership and wanted to know if multi-task

contracts could give a competitive edge to local contractors. We determined that, although local firms were interested in multi-task contracts, few had the diversity of skills necessary to put together a successful bid.

Now, time for some action

With all this new information, what did we do to help local firms capture more contracts on public and private land? First, we wanted to ensure that local firms knew about the opportunities available on public land and that they knew that our office was available to help with training and problem solving. Since this effort coincided with the announcement of the National Fire Plan we also sought ways of keeping some of the fuel hazard reduction work in the community.

The Fire Plan, the HUB Zone, the local preference language, and even the availability of local help were new information to local contractors. We held an introductory workshop to get this information out to contractors and get ideas from them about how to do things differently. Forest Service and the BLM shared their advanced acquisition plans and we discussed the opportunity to use the local preference language from the National Fire Plan. We also explained the HUB Zone Program. It directs federal agencies to designate contracts above \$100,000 as HUB Zone contracts, in which case only certified contractors located in qualified HUB Zones can participate. Areas across the country that experience high levels of poverty and unemployment are designated as HUB Zones.

However, the majority of contracts on the Fremont National Forest fall below the \$100,000 threshold. The Fremont National Forest was hesitant to designate smaller HUB Zone contracts because of fear they would have no bidders or be cost prohibitive. Few local firms would take the time to sign up for a program they did not understand nor expected the agencies to use. Something had to break the impasse. We would sign up contractors if the Fremont National Forest agreed to use their authority to make smaller restoration construction projects available. Thanks to our joint efforts, the Fremont National Forest is offering several small projects and one large one using the HUB Zone authority. To date, we helped seven contractors sign up for HUB Zone certification.

In addition to the HUB Zone we have been collaborating with the Fremont National Forest to design two small thinning contracts scaled to the local workforce. The local preference authority associated with the Fire Plan dollars allows the agencies to direct contracts to local firms to promote local economic development. We needed a couple of starter contracts that would enable local contractors to experiment with the work and decide if they wanted to continue with it.

The Fremont National Forest agreed to develop the

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projects in the Grande Ronde basin, a description of the entire "restoration" economy will need to be developed. By doing so, the context will be set for understanding and assessing the GRMWP's role in the local economy.

The GRMWP is not alone in conducting a socioeconomic assessment in Union and Wallowa counties. A multi-entity meeting convened last November, with participation by the Umatilla National Forest, the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, Malheur National Forest, Wallowa Resources, Regional Services Institute, NEODD, OECD, Blue Mountain Demonstration Area, ODF, Pacific Northwest Research Station, and others. A small working group was organized to develop a framework under which all involved organizations and agencies could consolidate their individual assessments into a larger collaborative assessment. The objective of this working group is to determine protocols for data collection so that data collected by any member of the group would be accessible and useable by all.

This working group currently in the process of designing that framework, consists of Michelle Johnson of GRMWP, Nils Christofferson of Wallowa Resources, Ben Boswell, Wallowa County Commissioner and representative of Regional Services Institute-Eastern Oregon University, and Elaine Kohrmann from the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. Key questions from all organizations in the original group have been compiled and are the basis for a framework of criteria and indicators styled in the manner of the Santiago Agreement*, a group of international criteria and indicators for forested lands. The Agreement defines criteria as "a category of conditions by which sustainability may be assessed," and indicator as "a measurement of an aspect of the criteria." Examples of indicators are "supply and consumption of wood forest products" and "average wage rates and injury rates in major employment categories within the forest sector".

Key questions the GRMWP will be addressing in the individual and collaborative assessments include the following:

- How do investments in watershed restoration impact the socio-economic conditions of Union and Wallowa Counties?
- What opportunities exist or are forthcoming to utilize local skills and businesses to address ecosystem/watershed restoration needs?
- What value-added opportunities exist or are forthcoming for current or new businesses to utilize by-products of ecosystem restoration?

As in any discipline, a baseline must be established before any data can be collected and analyzed to monitor the posi-

tive and negative impacts of a program or initiative. The assessment should provide that baseline. Following the assessment, monitoring of results will be a joint effort between the Ecosystem Workforce program and GRMWP, tentatively planned to track progress over a three-year period.

This ambitious project is underway and may face some challenges. However, this effort to understand the impacts of restoration projects will enable the evolution of the GRMWP into a complete program that addresses environmental, social, and economic needs in the Grande Ronde Basin.

** For more information on the Santiago Agreement check out the following website:*

http://www.fs.fed.us/land/sustain_dev/sustiago.html



Reflections from the Field

*By Deb Houshouer,
Contractor in the South Coast*

My husband and I are construction contractors who have been doing contracted excavation work for the federal government (as well as state, county, and other private agencies) for over 20 years. We've been tree planters and thinners, built progeny site fencing, piled brush, released trees, and done roadside brushing. We've had to reinvent our business as we saw the expenditure of federal dollars change focus again and again. It was 1988 when we did our first "restoration" project and we have been doing in-stream structure work, habitat restoration, road decommissioning, culvert replacement, and bridge installation ever since. We consider ourselves to be environmentally conscious contractors and would like to continue to work in this area. Although we have relied on contractual work to sustain us and provide jobs for our employees over the years, funding has always been tenuous (and seasonal) at best.

When Congress implemented the Jobs in the Woods Program in 1993, BLM and the Forest Service began to solicit for "restoration" contracts. This was a welcome change from the BLM as they employ their own maintenance crews and had been doing most of their own work. The Forest Service had long ago changed that policy and had been putting all their contracts out for bid. Jobs were not plentiful as money was tight with logging down. The Jobs in the Woods program changed all that providing a great financial shot in the arm to our depressed economy of the south coast. In an effort to create jobs for the out of work woods worker, JITW funding released hundreds of thousands of dollars in restoration contracts. We were suddenly able to bid on \$250,000+ contracts that now

allowed us to hire 5 or 6 people earning a good wage. BLM had completed watershed analysis on certain drainages and the work began to restore them. Entire road systems were redone to allow fish passage through culverts previously impassable. Roads were realigned or decommissioned and hundreds of undersized culverts were being replaced. It seemed that the work was everywhere.

BLM and the Forest Service actually held local town meetings to entice out of work loggers with idle equipment to become construction contractors. They came to town to teach people how to bid with the federal government for this new money. Solicitations that usually had 7 or 8 bidders on them now consistently had 14 or 20 bidders. The competition for this limited pot of money grew exponentially. The JITW contracts made every attempt to hire the local unemployed woods worker. Then, within the last few years, this same pot of money was refocused again. Federal agencies decided to redirect this same money to the Watershed Councils. Last year the Coquille Watershed Association was awarded over \$320,350 to do restoration projects with about \$185,000 of that targeted specifically for their JITW training crew. Coos Watershed received slightly less at approximately \$292,915 and the South Coast Watershed was a recipient as well. I am not certain what other watershed councils around the state are receiving similar funds. The Coquille Watershed put a few small contracts out for bid with some of this money. The Watershed Associations hire their own "training" crews to perform the construction contracts from BLM that typically had been going out for bid.

The training program siphons needed funds away from the competitive bidding process. This past summer we saw an abrupt decrease in the number of dollars spent for jobs and an increase in the number of contractors bidding. The need here is for more work, not another source of competition for the same pot of money. The BLM/Watershed Association training program assumes that another ecological workforce is needed. There does not seem to be a structured program set up to train the crews for a defined number of months and then graduates the workers into the competitive workforce. What skills have they learned and are these jobs that they are training for available from contractors in the community? While the people on these crews have been hired with the goal of making a family wage job, money is being taken away from the competitive bidding process in order to do so. The original intent may not have been to displace established contractors in the process, it has in fact done just that. Now that there are displaced ecosystem contractors, will there be a new program to fund us?

The training program sounds good in theory, yet determining where these trained workers will fit into the industry

should be evaluated first. Then determine how the training will be delivered. Cost effective strategies need to be implemented with a source of funding that does not take away needed restoration projects from the private sector. Several years ago, when we began to see this money going to the watershed councils instead of into the open bidding arena, we approached BLM about becoming part of the training process. While they thought the idea had merit, nothing materialized. The projects that agencies have been soliciting from contractors have required specialization in this technical construction field. Contractors have made expensive equipment purchases. We pay expensive bonding, insurance, and licensing fees. And we too hire local workers and train them to fit our own needs, paying them the Davis-Bacon wages required on federal construction contracts. This job market is already highly competitive and very specialized.

It could be argued that the BLM has actually established a cheap workforce for them selves, while limiting bidding opportunities for local contractors. I contend that the money is better spent in the competitive bidding process funding the skilled contractors rather than hiring a select few for a permanent "training program". Training, when the need is established, should be accessible to local contractors and their workers. We need to create a logical, effective strategy for implementing watershed restoration that creates consistent funding opportunities for bid within the local community.



\$1,510,000. In most cases, the award went to small contractors with two to six employees.

Regional and National Progress: Over the past three years, EWP has strengthened relationships with Sustainable Northwest and the Healthy Forests Healthy Communities partnership (HFHC), Region Six of the Forest Service and the Oregon State Office BLM, the Oregon Economic and Community Development Department and the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board at the regional level; and with the National Network of Forest Practitioners, American Forests, Pinchot Institute, Council on Environmental Quality, and the Communities Committee of the Seventh American Forest Congress at the national level. The work of many organizations moving in the same direction has put the high-skill approach to ecosystem management, quality jobs, worker training, and increased opportunities for rural workers and contractors at the center of the developing restoration policy dialogue—most recently into the current Hazardous Fuels and "county payments" ("Secure Rural Schools & Community Self-Determination Act of 2000, PL 106-393) appropriations language. With the assistance of EWP and its regional partners, the Forest Service Regional Office has developed a "Toolkit" to assist resource managers, line officers and procurement personnel in sharpening their focus on management objectives, armed with clarification of existing authorities to link socioeconomic and natural resource objectives. And efforts to increase state natural resource agency focus on quality jobs are under way with the Ecosystem Workforce Task Force. (See article on the Task Force in this newsletter.)

Looking to the Future: The clear direction from our past three years experience is to expand quality jobs partnerships with federal agencies and to initiate related efforts with state natural resource agencies. Continued work with the Task Force provides a solid opportunity to make progress with state agency partners. Experience to date with adaptive watershed and forest ecosystem restoration strategies underscore the central importance of ongoing, multi-party monitoring, to assure ecological integrity objectives are being met, and to assure maximum possible socioeconomic outcomes for rural communities, within the boundaries of managing restoration activity for ecological integrity. EWP is currently seeking three-year funding from public agency and foundation funders to take the next steps toward quality jobs in ecosystem management with watershed council and state and federal agency partners, and to develop a job results monitoring guide for community-based partnerships engaged in restoration activities and monitoring.

More than a year ago we asked our advisory council to work with us to examine our progress to date and clarify

our goals over the next few years. Consistent with the lessons from countless community forestry and collaborative watershed restoration efforts we found that progress is greatest where there is local organizational and staff capacity dedicated to a locally defined quality jobs agenda. This means our continuing work in the "demand side" arena must not only be rooted and community-based efforts, but also be linked to regional partners' capacity to assist in building community capacity.

A call for innovation and progress on two important fronts: Two critical areas of work are beyond the capacity EWP. First, with the demise of the last remaining community-based ecosystem workforce training program in Rogue Valley, there is no continuing capacity for worker and contractor training in ecosystem management. It remains clear to our community and agency partners that training, supported by accepted skill standards, will be needed. The pioneering work of the Rogue Institute for Ecology and Economy and Rogue Community College must be continued by other organizations in the region.

Second, all those committed to healthy watersheds and healthy communities must work hard on the local, regional and national levels to prevent further erosion of the internal workforce in the Forest Service and BLM. Reversing this trend will require the civic will to invest in forest and watershed restoration. But it will also require a fundamental turn-around from the non-stop downsizing mentality. I am not talking about a "return to the good old days." I am talking about civic commitment to maintain the infrastructure, public and private as well, necessary to answer the call to stewardship. Sustainable solutions that lead to ecological integrity and community wellbeing can only work if we have a stable and effective public land management agency infrastructure, dedicated to ecological integrity and community wellbeing. There is now the potential, as well as the critical need, for a broad alliance of community, environmental protection, scientific and labor constituencies to raise a single voice to invest in restoration. Success will depend on strong, effective and adaptive internal *and* external workforce capacity—public and private efforts linked in committed, strategic collaboration!



Continued from page 7 "Linking Ecosystem Restoration and Economic Development in Lake County"

contracts and we agreed to provide training to those interested in participating. The contractors told us that they would be interested if they could get some help developing their bids. In response, we sponsored a training for 12 local contractors about doing business with the federal government, how to bid service contracts, and specifically, how to bid thinning jobs. We plan to follow up the bid training with an on-the-ground session when the snow melts.

Onward and upward

Our efforts in Lake County seek to build a system that links ecosystem stewardship with local economic development. We have chosen to build that system by understanding our market and by making strategic interventions in it. The small steps that we have taken are not sufficient in and of themselves. They will help us achieve our short-term goal of more getting more local contracts to local contractors. As we monitor and evaluate the results of these land management activities we are building a stronger case for new investment in ecosystem management that helps rural communities thrive.

Continued from page 6 "Federal Hazardous Fuels Funding"

value rather than low-bid contract awards. And bid evaluation criteria may acknowledge the benefit to the government of contractor efforts to train and develop local workforce capacity. This emphasis on employment and training takes into account the need for communities to build sustainable economic systems and shows a commitment to training and investment in communities."

"Although these are real opportunities, it will take coordinated effort by communities, local economic and workforce development practitioners, businesses and natural resource agencies to seize the opportunities. It will also be important to make sure efforts to provide opportunities for rural community workers do not exclude the mobile workforce, often hired by regional service contractors. The Latino, Asian and other workers in the mobile workforce are an important part of the capacity we need to be stewards of ecological integrity. We need innovation that links opportunities for local workers and the mobile workforce."

EWP: How can communities take advantage of these opportunities?

"Here's a basic checklist to keep in mind:

- Work with your local state forestry staff.
- Get involved in community-based fire planning in your county.

- Coordinate project planning and development with the forest planning process on National Forest lands in your area. Making this connection may help communities qualify for future funds.
- Communicate with the Governor's Office about your local fire planning and community assistance efforts. Explain the kind of projects communities want to implement. Talk about what kinds of future funding will be needed to achieve long-term objectives.
- Do the work needed to understand past and current trends in your community—economically, ecologically, and socially. Consider activities such as:
 - Assessment of ecological conditions
 - Assessment of current workforce capacity and employment opportunities, including training needs and available training resources.
 - Assessment of value-added, small log manufacturing capacity."

"These activities will help partners understand what is in place and what gaps exist as they move forward to improve conditions in their community—a critical step in any effort to rebuild the social infrastructure needed for communities to move forward."

EWP: How can local and regional natural resource and community development partners help in the process?

"Collaboration is essential to making this all a success! Federal and state natural resource and community economic development agencies need to work together. Sustainable Northwest is committed to working with community partners and public agencies to:

- ensure information sharing;
- provide needed local and regional connections and networks;
- monitor progress in order to communicate with Congress to get continued funding for rebuilding natural and social capital in our rural communities; and
- assist in development of community-based, value-added manufacturing capacity to utilize the by-products of forest restoration as well as build local and regional marketing capacity for those products."



About the Ecosystem Workforce Program...

The University of Oregon's Ecosystem Workforce Program (EWP) was created in 1994 to help lead the transition of the rural Pacific Northwest into the age of ecosystem management – managing for healthy communities and healthy environments. The EWP understands forest ecosystems and human communities to be interdependent. We believe that by creating high quality jobs for local workers we will simultaneously establish a structure and incentives to maintain long term resource stewardship. Our goal is to demonstrate the linkages between a quality workforce, a healthy economy, healthy community, and the effective management for healthy forest environments in the long run.



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