

YFFReview



Sustaining Rural Communities and Forests

A summary of a forum and workshop exploring the links between rural community viability and sustainable forestry



A Yale Forest Forum Event

November 11 and 12, 2004
Global Institute of Sustainable Forestry



New Haven, Connecticut

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YFF Review

The *YFF Review* joins the GISF Website as an outreach tool to improve the accessibility of information on issues relating to forestland use and conservation. The purpose of the Review is to inform stakeholders about programs and activities sponsored by GISF. We hope that you will find the information in each *YFF Review* useful and stimulating. For more information visit our website at www.yale.edu/gisf.

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Executive Summary



Healthy forested ecosystems provide commodity and non-commodity values for all of us, whether we live in rural, suburban, or urban areas. The viability of the world's rural communities must be ensured if we are to continue enjoying these ecosystem benefits. In 2003, Yale FES student Pete Land, with Professor Chad Oliver, hosted an event designed to bring together rural community leaders to give them a collective voice in the national environmental debate. Participants in the 2003 forum and workshop, entitled "Rural Communities and Forests," addressed ways to achieve viable rural communities in the United States. Prompted by suggestions from that forum's attendees, a follow-up event was held. State foresters and others from around the United States joined community leaders to expand the discussion. Both the conditions of rural communities and the state of U.S. forests were topics of discussion at the forum and workshop entitled "The Link between Rural Communities and Sustaining Forests." The events were held at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies on November 11 and 12, 2004.

Chad Oliver delivered opening remarks at the forum, which was open to the public as well as to interested Yale faculty and students. He provided a social and ecological history of rural communities in the United States, referencing the rural-urban contract designed to supply needed services to both sectors of the population, as well as the steady-state ecological paradigm of that time. Explaining how these trends contributed to the state of the country's forests today, he also related this history to the present condition of rural communities in the United States. A major challenge the country faces is how to provide a rural infrastructure that can maintain and enhance the commodity and non-commodity benefits we receive from our forests. He also mentioned the lack of ecological balance common to many forests throughout the country.

The panel of rural community leaders provided informative and unique perspectives on the challenges facing forested communities. James Hull, State Forester and Director of the Texas Forest Service, began, explaining his vision of the role of government as connecting with people, or "the spirit of American excellence." Nadine Bailey, a member of the

California Senate Field Staff and self-described citizen of a quintessential rural community, described her concerns with the negative perception of forestry and logging around the country. Carol Johnson, Executive Director of the North Olympic Timber Action Committee, spoke about the benefits of the forest cluster program implemented in her hometown of Port Angeles, Washington. Jack Shipley, another west coast panelist and founding board member of the Applegate Partnership in southwestern Oregon's Applegate River watershed, identified challenges for public land managers and suggested that subsidies and reinvestment are two potential solutions that could help address funding problems. Michael Jackson, a co-founder of the Quincy Library Group in Quincy, California and water rights attorney, referenced a need for collaboration between private landowners and public agencies to conserve ecosystems and promote biodiversity.

Panelists from the midwestern United States spoke about their experiences living and working in rural communities. Wendy Sanders, Executive Director of the Great Lakes Forest Alliance, related some successes of organizational partnerships fostered by the Great Lakes Forest Alliance and then posed several questions to the group related to the role of communities in the global forest economy. Richard Bolen, Director of Forestry and Parks for the Gogebic County Forestry and Parks Commission in Bessemer, Michigan, suggested that the most promising option to promote sustainable forestry on a local level is on public land, and that partnerships between the Forest Service and local communities can facilitate good forest management.

Jeff Whiting, Select Board Chair for the Town of Goshen, Vermont, explained some of the challenges of living in a small town in the eastern United States with a large proportion of public land. Steve Stinson, Executive Director of the Family Forest Foundation in Chehalis, Washington, described the contribution of family forest owners to public goods and suggested that the values these landowners provide need quantification. Joel Holtrop, Deputy Chief of State & Private Forestry for the USDA Forest Service, related some of the successes of the Forest Service in addressing the concerns of rural communities, as well as

the importance of understanding globalization issues impacting rural economies.

On the morning of November 12, the group reconvened for a workshop to discuss ideas presented at the forum and opportunities to collaborate on those items needing the most immediate attention. Broadly stated, the most salient points of the discussion are as follows:

Sustaining forests alone does not ensure that rural communities will thrive. Other concerns these communities face include development of rural areas by wealthy urban residents leading to an increase in already-high property costs, and declining infrastructure in rural communities throughout the country.

There is a growing need to assign value to environmental services, those non-commodity benefits primarily provided by rural areas.

Strategic partnerships must be formed to further the agenda of rural communities nationwide.

While many of the rural community leaders related regionally unique experiences, several share similar visions of needs and objectives to ensure both viable rural communities and healthy forests. Rural areas around the country are struggling to maintain an essential infrastructure but face declining local economies with small populations, job cuts, low wages, and increasing costs. The urban-rural divide is not just a concept, but a reality felt by rural communities who provide many of the resources enjoyed by urban and suburban residents. In addition, globalization and product substitution has severely impacted local economies; and timber resources are no longer providing needed revenue to these communities.

During the forum and workshop, rural community leaders often mentioned the role of the federal government in providing services and monetary assistance to rural areas. Nevertheless, most participants

agreed that progress should be initiated on the local level so the message is clear and there is a guarantee that those involved are informed and committed. At the same time, the rural community leaders acknowledged that there are changes they can initiate to make their communities more efficient—such as clustering housing to minimize road and school bus costs.

Many rural community leaders remarked on the need to assign value to non-commodity values and environmental services provided by rural areas that are enjoyed by those living outside of these areas. There was agreement on the need to quantify these benefits, such as water and carbon sequestration, and compensate rural residents for providing them by sustainably managing their forests.

Several of the participants shared examples of effective local, regional, and federal partnerships developed to address concerns about the sustainability of forest management and the forest-based rural economy throughout the country. An emphasis on commonalities between groups and creative coalition-building would allow rural communities to ally themselves with other groups with similar interests, thereby overcoming many of the hurdles they now face.

Generally, this two-day forum and workshop provided participants with perspectives of other rural community leaders around the country, and promoted partnerships and a consolidation of efforts around some common goals. All of the rural community leaders present expressed interest in continuing this dialogue online and at future workshops and forums.

Issue Introduction

Since the Revolutionary War, many scholars and historians have noted perceived or real differences between America's rural and urban communities. Despite these dissimilarities, the interdependence of these two populations is undeniable. Dr. Karl Stauber, former undersecretary in the Department of the Interior, has described a rural-urban contract wherein cross-subsidization occurred between rural and urban communities in an attempt to recognize the needs of both. Outcomes of this contract included tariffs to support industries in domestic cities, regulated transportation to serve small communities, rural electric cooperatives, watershed and reservoir maintenance, and agriculture and forest extension cooperatives.

While the rural-urban contract was being implemented, the Agriculture Revolution from about 1920 to 1960 caused many rural subsistence farmers to abandon their lands and move to the cities. This relocation brought about some problems for urban areas related to crowding and taxing the infrastructure, but the move also promoted forest regrowth on abandoned agriculture and grazing lands. This legacy of the Agriculture Revolution is now apparent in many of our small-diameter, overly crowded forests.

In the late 1970s and 1980s the rural-urban contract was broken, leading to a change in perspective related to the economies of rural areas. Sadly, partnerships that had formed no longer functioned to benefit both rural and urban communities across the country. Since this time, the rural infrastructure of roads, buses, schools, libraries, hospitals, and other services has been the sole responsibility of the rural communities. The rural forest communities are finding it increasingly difficult to maintain this infrastructure in the current economic and ecological environment for three reasons.

First, there is a global surplus of timber. Some of this is because of cheap substitutes such as steel, concrete, and brick, which benefit from inexpensive energy. The United States is not utilizing its own forest resources effectively—allowing many forests to burn. With the strong U.S. dollar, a phenomenon termed the “Dutch Disease” can occur.

With international trade, parts of a nation's economy become very robust, its currency grows strong, and the nation begins trading internationally for many of its products. Unfortunately, other segments of the nation's economy suffer and eventually become economically depressed. The forestry sector in the United States—public, industrial, and non-industrial forest owners—is experiencing this backlash from global trade and is forced to cut costs to remain solvent. Wages are often one cost that is cut and workers in the forestry sector, as well as the rural communities of which they are a part, bear the brunt of these cuts.

Second, much of the urban public is still laboring under the out-dated ecological paradigm of the “steady-state” forest. Predominant among scientists before about 1980, this paradigm assumed that forests remained in a pristine, stable, “old growth” or “climax” condition unless disturbed by people. As long as this paradigm is believed, it is thought that all non-commodity forest values are best provided if people are excluded. Active management is presumed to be needed only to rectify the disruptions caused by timber harvest. Although still popular among lay people, this paradigm has been scientifically discredited. Scientists now recognize that forests are much more dynamic, constantly changing from one condition to another through growth and disturbances (figure 1).

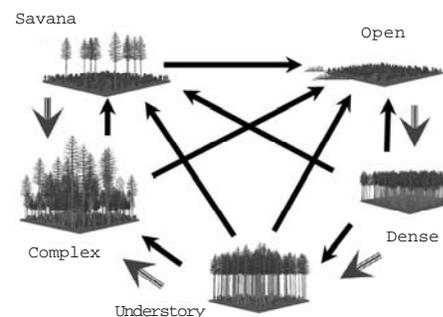


Figure 1. Forests are dynamic, constantly changing among structures with growth and disturbances. Each structure provides habitat for some species as well as other values, so an “ecologically balanced” forest contains all structures.

Different species depend on different conditions—or structures—for their habitat, and different structures have different susceptibilities to fires, insects, and windstorms. A forested landscape used to contain a dynamic mosaic of structures, and in most parts of the world people have helped maintain the balance of structures for tens of thousands of years. Houses and farms have reduced the area of most forests, and past human activities have created an imbalance of stand structures—such as the presently large amounts of stands in the crowded, “dense” structure that have grown following abandonment of subsistence farming and grazing as well as timber harvesting during the last century. Consequently, the forests do not contain an equitable balance of structures, and we can not rely on “Nature” to restore and maintain that balance of our reduced forest area. The new paradigm recognizes that people are a part of Nature, not a force to be excluded.

Third, even where active management is recognized as necessary to provide non-commodity benefits from the forest, commodity management is expected to subsidize other non-commodity benefits of forests, making it more costly to provide timber to global markets. These expectations come through regulations on private lands and rules on public lands that often make any forest management, including timber harvest, prohibitively expensive. When the only monetary value derived from forests is timber, the ability to manage land becomes difficult. Jobs and wages are cut to remain solvent. In fact, the wages of rural resource-dependent jobs are much lower than the national average. With lower paid workers, rural communities are often unable to support adequate tax infrastructure, hospitals, schools, libraries, roads, hotels, banks, and other necessary services. This rural decline is now being seen elsewhere in the world as well.

Through this neglect, the rural forest community infrastructure—and the ability to manage forests to provide commodities and non-commodity services—is depreciating. Increasingly, we are seeing large forest fires, insect epidemics, and habitat losses leading to endangered species because of the imbalance of structures. In addition, access to the

forests for recreation, fire -ighting, restoration, forest management, and timber harvest is becoming more difficult as the roads deteriorate from a lack of funds to maintain them.

Skilled people living in rural communities are needed to maintain the forest so the many commodity and non-commodity values can be provided. To maintain the high standard of living in the United States—especially in urban areas—it will be necessary to stabilize, enhance, and/or restore this infrastructure to provide the water, safety, habitats, recreation, and other values provided by forests. In places in the United States, much of the skilled forest labor has already left the rural areas, and it will need to be restored. In other places, the rural infrastructure needs to be enhanced for people to stay and work in these communities.

The United States now faces the challenges of how to provide necessary environmental services, and the rural infrastructure and labor force needed to do so. The real question is how do the rural landowners and rural communities get compensated for these environmental services. In addition, across the United States, each region requires attention in a slightly different manner. Land ownership and timber production vary greatly. For example, the inland west is largely national forest; the east is mostly private land; the southeast boasts fast growth rates of trees; while the northeast has slower growth rates that lead to differences in wood quality. One characteristic that is shared by all of these regions, however, is that none currently contains an ecological balance of structures. How do we restore ecological balance? How do we restore, enhance, and compensate the rural communities so they can provide environmental values? How do we bridge the rural-urban divide? And finally, what do rural communities need to be able to sustain forests?

The forum and workshop entitled “The Link between Rural Communities and Sustaining Forests,” was held at the Yale University School of Forestry and Environmental Studies on November 11 and 12, 2004, to discuss these questions and to address the importance and viability of rural forested communities.

Presenter Summaries

JAMES B. HULL

State Forester and Director, Texas Forest Service, College Station, Texas

Mr. Hull provided background on the history of federal land management in the United States. He suggested that the federal government has always struggled to define its role in promoting sustained management of private lands. As a result, he explained, most legislation pertains to public land, while the legislation pertaining to private forest lands is mostly uncoordinated.

“Today I think of forestry as so much more than industry and trade,” Mr. Hull said. He then listed several ecological services provided by forests, such as biodiversity, soil, water and air conservation, and ecotourism. Private landowners have historically provided these environmental services, which are increasingly recognized as valuable, for free. Mr. Hull suggested that if the free market could capture the economic value of these services, a ‘common ground’ that links environmentalists, government, and communities, might well be found. Another exciting development he mentioned is the opportunity to enhance the dialogue between government and private landowners at forums like this one and then bring this new information to society as a whole.

Mr. Hull asserted that the role of government is to connect with people, or “the spirit of American excellence.” Government, he explained, can either enhance this spirit or kill it, as has been seen in the past. Mr. Hull concluded by stating that government should be involved in building the capacity of local communities. This role, he said, could be enhanced if government acts as a partner to rural communities and learns how to be credible, respected, and trusted as a reliable source of relevant, real-time, readily available information.



NADINE BAILEY

California Senate Field Staff, Redding, California

Ms. Bailey introduced herself as someone that comes from quintessential rural America. She spoke about the troublesome trend she sees of people from urban areas of the country being unaware of the origin of the resources on which they depend. An additional challenge, she asserted, is battling the public's negative perception of harvesting trees. If many consider logging detrimental to the environment, then the local economy suffers and rural areas dependent on resource extraction are left impoverished. Ms. Bailey suggested the need to continue to encourage the academic community to support forums like this one, and bring the forester's perspective to the dialogue. She concluded that in addition to the sustainability of the forest, the health of rural communities should be addressed, and adequate infrastructure available to residents.

CAROL JOHNSON

Executive Director, North Olympic Timber Action Committee
Port Angeles, Washington

Ms. Johnson provided a perspective on the timber industry in her rural hometown of Port Angeles, Washington. She spoke about the forest cluster program that was implemented in Port Angeles and the positive impacts that resulted from bringing the forest industry back into the town. The forest cluster group promoted economic development, even attracting a profitable alder mill to the area. Local colleges are training a skilled labor force to ensure adequate staffing and provide employment opportunities for residents. Ms. Johnson added that despite these successes, she is concerned that the disconnect between rural and urban populations is promoting misinformation, especially related to urbanites' perception that harvesting timber is degrading the environment. She cited an example of a popular outdoor retailer's advertisement that negatively portrayed the logging industry. Ms. Johnson concluded, "We struggle but we're actually making some headway and I think it's only because of the heart and the tenacity of the people that live in our community that this is happening."

JACK SHIPLEY

Founding Board Member of Applegate Partnership, Grants Pass, Oregon

Mr. Shipley's experience working with private and public land managers in the Applegate, a 500,000-acre watershed in Southwest Oregon and Northern California, has helped him to identify some problems with land management. First, he said, is the lack of institutional memory in government agencies like the Forest Service. Another related problem he identified is the constant turnover of management personnel and change in leadership, which causes communities to tire and lose momentum. Mr. Shipley also noted that the reduction in funding for the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management has led to limited capacity to address ecosystem issues like pests and catastrophic fires. In addition, he mentioned that these funding restrictions have required the delay of many essential projects and promoted an overall lack of planning by federal agencies. The Biscuit Fire was cited as an example of federal land management that was too narrow in scope, focusing primarily on the 500,000 acres affected by the fire to the exclusion of the remaining 2 million acres that are also at risk.

Mr. Shipley then identified several potential solutions to correct these problems. He suggested that it might be necessary to subsidize the management of our public lands to address the lack of federal planning. Revenues generated by public land resources could be reinvested back into land management, which would help meet the funding challenge. Mr. Shipley suggested that key personnel should be promoted within agencies and districts rather than transferred after only a few years.

"I think we need to truly implement ecosystem management," he said, "and the bottom line of ecosystem management is the timber resource." He noted that subsidizing the timber supply might help overall timber production and stated that there is an urgent need for assistance to lessen the fuel load and surplus of biomass on public lands. He concluded, "I think we can get there from here, but we've got to be really creative. We've got to have some really bold people in Congress."

MICHAEL JACKSON

Co-founder of the Quincy Library Group, Quincy, California

Mr. Jackson introduced himself as an environmental attorney specializing in water rights who is concerned that consumption in the United States is being fueled by the depletion of resources in other parts of the world. He stated that it is essential to think about both publicly- and privately-owned forests in the United States, noting that the problems he sees on public lands are common throughout the country and are not just federal problems.

“Today,” Mr. Jackson said, “most people want to take care of the land, but in order to do so effectively, managers need to abandon their fear of loss of control over the land resource.” He added that given the opportunity, most people aren’t apt to take a chainsaw and cut down all of the trees in a given area, but will be good land managers. He noted a need for collaboration between private landowners and public agencies to conserve ecosystems and overall biodiversity. Mr. Jackson also mentioned that environmental leaders and decision-makers in this country are disconnected from the land and often uninformed about the actual consequences of resource extraction.

Mr. Jackson concluded by asking Yale University to reconnect with the people of this country, recognizing that most want to “do the right thing.” He suggested that liberation of communities from federal control of land management could lessen this country’s dependence on resources from other parts of the world.

WENDY SANDERS

Executive Director, Great Lakes Forest Alliance, Hayward, Wisconsin

The Great Lakes Forest Alliance is a public-private partnership authorized by Governors’ Charter to address emerging issues of sustainable forest management that affect Michigan, Minnesota, Ontario, and Wisconsin. Ms. Sanders noted that the manner in which the Alliance does business is similar to the format of this forum, in that both attempt to facilitate a dialogue between stakeholders related to an issue of emerging significance.

The Great Lakes Forest Alliance is concerned with the lack of communication between industry and environmental groups and therefore developed a list of sustainable forestry criteria and indicators applicable to the region. Soon after, the group initiated a forum and handbook, both promoting methods for communities of diverse stakeholders to address these indicators. Ms. Sanders identified several concerns resulting from these conversations, including the movement of the timber industry to other parts of the world. In response, the Governor of Wisconsin signed an agreement to develop a regional center for sustainable forest management. In addition, Ms. Sanders noted that the Alliance is currently exploring certification of private forestlands to promote sustainable management. The group has also formed a regional partnership in the Upper Mississippi River region to address concerns about hypoxia. In response to concerns and misunderstandings surrounding consumption and forest protection, the Alliance has developed some strategies and principles that are available on their website.

Finally, Ms. Sanders suggested some issues for the group assembled to ponder, including the role of government in land management, how to ensure the vital involvement of communities in the global forest dialogue, and the potential role of environmental services to promote sustainable forest management.

RICHARD W. BOLEN

Director of Forestry and Parks for the Gogebic County Forestry and Parks Commission, Bessemer, Michigan

As a former employee of the U.S. Forest Service and later as the Gogebic County Forester, Mr. Bolen related some of his experiences from his 28-year career as a public land manager. One lesson he has learned and one that continues to be reinforced, is not to expect anything from the national or state level that you are not willing to do yourself. Mr. Bolen conveyed the frustration of managing forests on a local level when land ownership is constantly changing but noted that asking for help from the federal government and/or financiers is not the answer. The most promising option to promote sustainable forestry at a local level, he stated, is on public lands. Federal and state lands have been well-managed by wise decision makers for many years. The current problems with land management, he said, relate to land management decisions on the federal, rather than local level.

One challenge, he noted, is the lack of commitment of Forest Service personnel to communities that is accentuated by revolving District Rangers. He pointed out that he has had excellent cooperation with District Rangers over the years, but recently they do not stay long enough to get involved in their respective communities and the local and regional forest community. Mr. Bolen concluded by suggesting a renewed need for cooperation and strong partnerships between the Forest Service and local communities. He also mentioned an opportunity for small landowners to work together in co-ops to become a force in the marketplace and noted their potential role in educating small landowners.

JEFF WHITING

Select Board Chair, Town of Goshen, Vermont

Mr. Whiting presented some of the challenges of his role as Select Board Chair of a small town in rural Vermont that is comprised primarily of national forest land. He stated that the maintenance of town infrastructure with such a small population presents a major challenge due to limited funds generated by the tax base. Funding assistance from FEMA as well as the educational seminars they provide have both helped the town make needed road improvements to reduce future flash flood damages. Mr. Whiting presented some additional challenges with property taxes funding municipal services, noting that the Forest Service pays under three dollars an acre for their nine thousand acres, while private landowners are responsible for between twenty and forty dollars an acre for a tract of undeveloped forestland. Another difficulty Mr. Whiting mentioned is the lack of timber harvested on Green Mountain National Forest land, primarily due to the long drawn out appeal process and the moratorium in cutting caused by the Indiana Bat. He contrasted the costs and time lag in cutting on the national forest vs. the time it took to cut in the municipal forest owned by the Town. Finally, he said that residents have concerns about any plans for additional land acquisition to expand the Green Mountain National Forest due to these discrepancies in property taxes.

STEVE STINSON

Executive Director, Family Forest Foundation, Chehalis, Washington

Mr. Stinson contributed a family forest perspective to the dialogue of the day, defining family forest owners as those that harvest less than two million board feet of timber a year. Unfortunately, he noted, no one is certain how many family forest owners live in the state of Washington nor how much acreage they own. Their contribution to public goods, however, is undeniable. Mr. Stinson explained that this same family forestland is being converted to nonforest uses at a rate of 100 acres per day, threatening these public services. Another challenge for family forest landowners in Washington, Mr. Stinson related, is compliance with increasingly complex regulations. Access to technological tools is therefore critical for family forest owners and is provided by programs like the Rural Technology Initiative, a consortium of Washington universities with valuable educational resources.

As a first step to attempt to quantify the public values that family forest landowners provide, Mr. Stinson suggested the need for data collection on basic demographics. He proposed that the group assembled form a partnership to assess this data and provide a voice for the contributions of under-represented rural communities.

JOEL HOLTROP

Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry Office, USDA Forest Service, Washington Office, Washington D.C.

Mr. Holtrop acknowledged his presence at the forum as a reflection of the Forest Service commitment to rural communities. He then made some general comments related to the status of the Forest Service and public land. First, he stated that there has been some progress made on the procedural gridlock affecting public land management, especially related to passage of the Healthy Forests Initiative. He also noted that natural resource based communities around the country struggle even when they are not associated with public land. "Globalization issues are important for all of us. When a mill in the United States can get its raw material cheaper from Brazil than it can from its own state, that's going to have an impact on our ability to manage public lands, private lands, and other lands and those are issues that we need to pay attention to."

Some opportunities to address issues affecting rural communities exist and should be explored, Mr. Holtrop said. He praised the work of the roundtable on sustainable forests and noted the benefits of the criteria and indicator process delineated in the National Report on the State of the Nation's Forests. He mentioned an opportunity to use the 2007 Farm Bill as a vehicle for furthering the needs of rural communities. Echoing a common theme of the forum, Mr. Holtrop noted that market values of environmental services provide potential for understanding landowners contributions to the public good. He stated the importance of thinking long-term to contribute to sustainable policies and practices.



Workshop Summary

On the morning of November 12th, after the public forum, rural community leaders, state foresters from around the United States, policy leaders, and members of the Yale community met for a workshop. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss several key issues that presenters brought to the fore during the forum and also to provide an environment for further collaboration between community and policy leaders. The discussion was moderated by Chad Oliver and built upon themes that had emerged from the 2003 *Rural Communities and Forests* Yale Forest Forum and workshop. The four most prominent themes that emerged from the 2003 discussions were:

The failure of infrastructure in rural areas across the United States;

The abundance of human energy in rural communities;

An agreement that environment and economy are not forces that act against each other; and,

Rural forestry communities have the potential to create a network that works collaboratively to make these communities viable again.

Participants in this year's workshop revisited these topics as well as some additional themes described below.

SUSTAINING FORESTS ALONE DOES NOT ENSURE THAT RURAL COMMUNITIES WILL THRIVE

Many participants related stories about the threats their own rural communities are facing. Throughout many regions around the country, these challenges are very similar and not always directly related to the forest management sector. Rural community leaders discussed concerns about development of rural areas by wealthy people who are often only seasonal residents of the area. Inadequate zoning laws allow the development of large houses on large lots and many community leaders are concerned about the resulting increase in property values that

make their own communities unaffordable for their children to live in. Some suggested that zoning laws could be a tool to control this type of development while encouraging more favorable land uses. One leader mentioned the “window of opportunity” that exists now as wealthy people are buying large parcels of land in rural areas and “want to do the right thing” such as establishing an easement specifying a desired land use. Another leader referenced concern surrounding the lack of basic infrastructure to ensure clean water for residents of rural areas, as well as the rapid rise in drug use that is affecting the younger citizens of her community. There was general concern about high unemployment rates related to forest products mill shut-downs, especially for on-the-ground, skill-based laborers such as loggers.

There was a general consensus that solving the problems with the forest products industry would not be the sole ingredient necessary to improve the infrastructure in rural communities across the United States. Participants discussed comprehensive opportunities to put forward the agenda of rural communities in legislation such as the Farm Bill and the Biomass Energy Bill. Many believe that community forestry is related to agriculture and should be included in the dialogue surrounding the Farm Bill. Forestry is related to clean drinking water, an issue that certainly sparks federal attention. With the country’s current interest in alternative sources of energy, biomass is a hot topic that rural communities could align themselves with. As a renewable resource that is abundant in this country, more wood could be sourced in rural areas, improving their economies.

The rural community leaders also acknowledged some things they can do to make their communities more competitive, such as clustering houses in villages to reduce the public expenditures on road maintenance, school bus services, and similar infrastructure needs.

THERE IS A GROWING NEED TO ASSIGN VALUE TO ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES, THOSE NON-COMMODITY BENEFITS PRIMARILY PROVIDED BY RURAL AREAS.

Water resources are typically a non-commodity benefit provided by forested upland areas whose high value is not captured in traditional markets. Many rural community leaders asserted that capturing the value of this and other resources is essential and could benefit the economies of rural areas. One participant suggested that non-commodity values such as carbon sequestration and habitat biodiversity could be leased or sold to provide compensation to rural areas providing these benefits.

In addition to the need to assign value to these ecosystem services, the group agreed that alternative forest products should be explored. Could we manage our forests for goods other than timber?

Once the group agreed on the need to value ecosystem services, participants began to address funding issues, specifically, where will the money come from to give to landowners providing these services? Most thought that federal funding is relatively unavailable and likely to remain so in the current political climate. Funding must come from other market sources and some participants noted that people are willing to pay for environmental services. In the south, land is leased to hunters for temporary use. Similarly, some questioned whether land could be leased to environmental groups for habitat value. Recreational use is increasingly popular and urban residents often use land for this purpose. The group wondered whether urban and suburban people could pay higher fees or obtain day-use permits to reflect the use value of rural areas more accurately. Local initiative would be required to implement these types of creative funding ideas.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS MUST BE FORMED TO FURTHER THE AGENDA OF RURAL COMMUNITIES NATIONWIDE.

Several of the rural community leaders affirmed the importance of working cooperatively with private landowners, especially in areas such as the eastern United States where the majority of land is privately owned. Some conveyed frustration with environmental groups who they fault with misrepresenting the forest management sector and causing job losses in that sector. Others noted that dialogue with these groups needs to begin and that now is a good time to network with leadership in the environmental movement, as they are increasingly willing to listen to alternative viewpoints. Commonalities between groups should be emphasized and relationships formed.

Creative coalition building seemed to resonate with all participants as the method most likely to foster essential links between rural communities and sustaining forests. A suggestion was made to assemble members of the group and form a community forestry coalition to build upon the ideas presented at the Forum. One participant suggested the first item on their agenda be using drinking water as a platform to bridge the rural-urban divide. As a start, a list-serve called the Yale Working Group is accessible online for rural community and policy leaders to continue this dialogue and use each other as resources for further discussion and action. To join this list-serve, contact Barbara Ruth at Barbara.ruth@yale.edu or 203-432-5117.



Chad Oliver, Jim Grace, and Stan Adams during workshop discussion.

Resources for More Information

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Applegate River Watershed Council
arwc.org

Communities Committee of the Seventh American Forest Congress
communitiescommittee.org

Environmental and Ecological Consulting Services
eecos.com

Forest Counties Payments Committee
countypayments.gov

Gogebic County Forestry & Parks Commission
www.gogebic.org/forestryandparks.htm

Great Lakes Forest Alliance
lsfa.org

Lake County Resources Initiative
lcri.org

National Network of Forest Practitioners
nnfp.org

Quincy Library Group
qlg.org

Texas Forest Service
txforestservice.tamu.edu

United Nations Forum on Forests
www.un.org/esa/forests

Village of Potsdam, New York
potsdam.ny.us

Yellow Wood Associates
www.yellowwood.org

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