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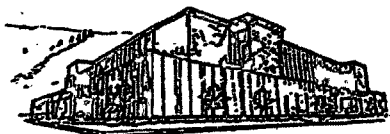
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Factors Affecting Community Well-Being:  
Implications for Social Assessment

by

Becky E. Summer

B.S. Oregon State University, 1999

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Science

The University of Montana

May 2004

Approved by:



Chairperson, Dr. James Andrew Burchfield



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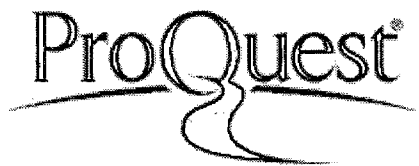


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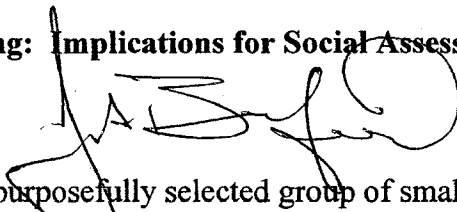
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**Factors Affecting Community Well-Being: Implications for Social Assessment**

**Director: James Andrew Burchfield**



Social assessments were conducted on a purposefully selected group of small and geographically isolated communities with a strong association to national forest lands in the Interior Columbia Basin. The purpose was to evaluate the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project (ICBEMP) social assessment framework and methods for estimating community well-being. The communities studied include Halfway, Oregon, Challis and New Meadows, Idaho, and Eureka and Plains, Montana. A series of key informant interviews revealed that community well-being is perceived by community leaders as containing three components: social capital, including social cohesion and civic leadership dimensions, amenities, and economic structure. The results of this study indicate that those communities that are perceived as having higher resiliency are developing or have a strategic agenda for the future. The study also indicates that the Forest Service needs to play multiple roles in rural communities associated with national forest lands, managing those forests for a diversity of proposals. Some of the distinctions made between the components of resiliency are ambiguous in that they are interrelated and tend to overlap. Communities were evaluated using a modified framework of community well-being. Overall, the ICBEMP social assessment framework is found to have a fairly high degree of utility and that the ranking of the degree of a community's resiliency is relatively stable.

Keywords: community well-being, community resiliency, ICBEMP, social assessment, national forest management

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

In the 1990s, the Forest Service sponsored three major studies; the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP), the Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Management Project (SNEP), and the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project (ICBEMP) to attempt to implement broad-scale ecosystem based management strategy. As part of these studies, the agency examined issues that affect communities adjacent to national forests and how forest management practices affect these rural residents and their livelihoods. Traditional notions of community stability used to explain the relation between national forests and rural communities had proven unsatisfactory and new systems of understanding were necessary to assist management. It has been observed that “western political, social, economic, and demographic landscapes are changing faster than the categories we invent to understand them” (Brick et al. 2000). For this reason, the measures used in prior social assessments may not fully represent the dynamic nature of communities in transition, instead capturing a snapshot picture in time or the static condition of a community in transition.

One way to understand forest based communities and their relations with public land is by examining the many different aspects of a community, such quality of life and economic and social structures (Nadeau 1999). Collectively, these components are referred to as “community well-being.” Prior work by other social scientists such as Kusel and Doak (1992) and Beckley (1995) approach the topic of well-being by assuming that the ability of a community to adapt to changing conditions is the hallmark of well-being. Terms such as community capacity and community resiliency are often used to describe this same capability to adapt, and the research assumes that the terms are

more-or-less interchangeable. “Well-being,” however, provides the most inclusive representation of community-level efficacy, and it may include elements even beyond adaptive capabilities.

This study contributes to the dialog on community change and further identifies important factors affecting well-being in a select group of communities in the Interior Columbia Basin. Five communities previously studied for ICBEMP are revisited: Eureka and Plains, Montana; Challis and New Meadows, Idaho; and Halfway, Oregon. These communities provide a valuable research opportunity because they represent a purposive sample of communities that are considered sensitive to policy changes. These communities are small and geographically isolated; the percentage of surrounding public lands and the association with the Forest Service have created a unique relationship between these particular rural communities and national forests. This relationship has been described as an integrated relationship, or one that is different than what has taken place in communities not embedded in national forest lands (Beckley 1998).

This study examines the factors that affect the sense of well-being among residents of these rural communities 7 years after they were first assessed through ICBEMP. To gain insight to the broadly construed but multifaceted concept of community well-being, this research relies on responses of the residents of these rural communities and compares them to the concept of community resiliency as presented in ICBEMP. This enables residents to articulate and define issues important to them, in their own words. By using the method, it is possible to see if the responses of residents coincide with the framework set forth in the ICBEMP social assessment. It also is a field test, of sorts, to determine if earlier assessments of resiliency accurately predicted

changes that have occurred in these communities since 1994. The factors affecting community well-being will thus be grounded by the perceptions of residents in the selected communities revisited in the study. The voices of residents provide additional depth and contextual detail to the conditions affecting their communities, and their perception of the Forest Service's role in negotiating community change.

### **The Setting**

A feature distinguishing the Interior Columbia Basin (hereafter called the Basin) from the rest of the continental United States is the amount of federal land (Kemmis 2001). The Basin comprises approximately 8 percent of the U.S. land area and contains about 1.2 percent of the nation's population (Quigley et al. 1996) with federal land comprising 53 percent of land within the Basin. The management of these federal lands has far-reaching effects on those who live in or near the Basin. The openness of the landscape creates a low population density of less than one-third the U.S. average. It is a rural region where 31 percent of the population lives in urban areas, compared to the rest of the nation where 77.5 percent of residents live in urban areas (Quigley et al. 1996).

Increasingly the economies of rural communities in the Basin are changing and the role of forests is shifting. The areas near large portions of national forest have become increasingly attractive to new migrants (Swanson 2001). Expanses of national forest lands are now playing a more important role in the economies of rural communities because of the high value attached to the amenities people associate with these lands (Power 1996, Swanson 2001). Like the rest of the United States, rural economies are attempting to diversify and decrease their reliance on traditional national forest practices. Galston (1995) refers to this as economic decoupling. A more contemporary version of

why communities change is growing in place of the narrow view of traditional forest practices and is giving way to a more dynamic approach, employing multiple indicators of community well-being (Beckley 1995).

I selected these five communities from the larger sample previously studied as part of ICBEMP. The communities were chosen based on five criteria largely derived from Reyna (1998) to show potentially strong association with Forest Service lands:

1. Population. All communities chosen were relatively small with populations ranging from 300-1200 people.
2. Isolation. The communities were all geographically isolated and were easy to separate from the influences and impacts of larger population areas.
3. Presence of Forest Service office. All communities had a Forest Service district office.
4. Federal land. All communities were surrounded by a high proportion of federal land, measured by the percentage of federal land in the surrounding county, averaging 65 percent.
5. ICBEMP. All communities were previously studied as part of the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project.

Descriptive statistics for the five communities are given in table 1.

**Table 1: Community Descriptive Statistics**

<b>Community</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Pop 1990</b>	<b>Pop 2000</b>	<b>Forest Service Office</b>	<b>Percent Federal Land</b>	
Challis	Custer	ID	1015	909	Yes	90	Source: USDC Bureau of the Census (1990, 2000).
New Meadows	Adams	ID	620	533	Yes	61	
Halfway	Baker	OR	340	337	Yes	63	
Eureka	Lincoln	MT	1000	1017	Yes	60	
Plains	Sanders	MT	1000	1126	Yes	48	

These small, geographically isolated communities were determined using a “city circle” methodology developed for ICBEMP. This method attempts to use commuting

distance and population to determine the barriers that may “prevent residents of isolated communities from reasonably accessing the economic and social benefits offered by larger cities” (Reyna 1998).

The association and contribution of national forest lands is more complex and, therefore, more difficult to measure than population and isolation. National forest lands and agency contributions are often considered in terms of their economic importance through timber, forage, minerals, and recreation (Reyna 1998). The relation between national forest lands and community well-being may be affected by many factors (budget, harvest levels, numbers of Forest Service employees, jobs created) at any given time. The degree to which a community is affected also depends on the level of local employment within federal agencies and other natural resource industries (Harris et al. 2000, Reyna 1998). The extent to which the agency domain affects these communities is explored through commentaries of the respondents.

**Table 2: Resiliency Scores in 1994 for selected communities**

Community	County	State	Components of well-being				
			Community Resiliency	Civic Lead.	Social Cohesion	Economic Structure	Amenities
Challis	Custer	ID	Med. low	Low Med.	Med. high	Med. high	Med. low
New Meadows	Adams	ID	Med. low	low	Med. low	Med. high	Med. high
Halfway	Baker	OR	High	High Med.	High	Med. high	Med. high
Eureka	Lincoln	MT	Med. high	low Med.	High	Med. high	High
Plains	Sanders	MT	Med. high	low	Med. high	High	Med. high

Med. = medium

Source: Quigley et al. (1996)

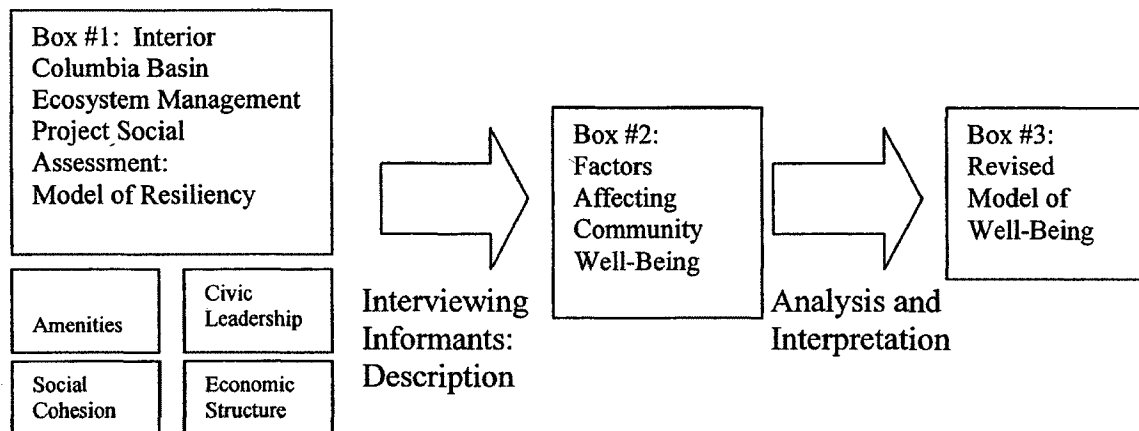
Each rural community in this study is unique, complicating the interpretation and understanding of well-being in each community. Base line data used in ICBEMP ranked communities on a quartile scale based on the 198 communities examined. For each



category, communities were scored relative to the remainder as low (lowest 25%), medium low (second lowest 25%), medium high (second highest 25%), and high (highest 25% of communities ranked in that category) (Harris, 2000). Table 2 summarizes the results from 1994 for the five communities revisited in 2001. Note that there was an aggregate ranking of community resiliency for each community.

This research reexamines these components of well-being put forth by the resiliency framework of Harris and his colleagues: economic structure, social cohesion, civic leadership, and amenities. In addition to data collected via interviews and secondary sources, these components guided this research. I address the following question: Does the Harris framework of community resiliency capture the whole picture of community well-being?

To provide greater clarity and a structural coherence to the study, the comments of respondents will be organized in the same framework provided by the social assessment portion of the ICBEMP. Figure 1 illustrates the framework and components guiding this research.



**Figure 1: Research Approach**

## **Guiding Questions**

In this study, I reevaluate the well-being of selected rural communities that have a strong traditional association with national forest lands to address the following questions:

1. How do residents describe the factors that affect the well-being of their communities in 2001?
2. Are the attributes that community residents deemed important in 1994 the same as reported in 2002?
3. What changes have occurred since the ICBEMP assessment of community resiliency in 1994?
4. How, if at all, is the Forest Service contributing to community well-being in the selected five communities?

An exploration of rural community well-being is useful for two reasons. First, the factors that community leaders identify as important to community well-being may provide insight on how natural resource managers and rural communities may better respond to changes in rural communities during times of transition. Second, an assessment of how the communities are faring relative to where they were pre-ICBEMP might allow for the development of new frameworks for better addressing change.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

Recent public policy discussions have focused on the goals in managing national forest lands. Diverse groups have argued that some of these goals should address the social and economic needs of communities, particularly small, resource dependent communities. For years it was assumed that the economic imperative of these communities could be met by regulating the flow of timber from national forest lands, and that this sustained yield of timber (and in some cases grazing) could sustain local economic activities. An often-made assertion is that there is a unique relation between particular rural communities and national forests. This relation has been theorized as creating community vulnerability (Reyna 1998), or the level of perceived “consequences to communities” of the changes in federal land management policies. Understanding the potential for the effects of changes in federal land uses on communities is a central tenet in the discourse regarding what comprises the well-being of a community with a unique relation to national forest lands.

### **Defining Community**

The difficulty in developing a clear definition of community is a continuous challenge because community has many different meanings which are constantly evolving. For this project, community will assume the more traditional definition of a spatially defined place such as a town (Quigley et al. 1996). This has been found to be an important scale for understanding communities as they are often times the center of focus for people’s social lives. Furthermore, although not all communities are defined territorially, there is a territorial element to most definitions of community (Theodori

2000). In other words, the community is locality oriented but the place itself does not set apart the community (Theodori 2000).

The community constitutes the field of interaction. It is through this interaction that residents are able to express their common interest in the local society (Wilkinson 1991). Wilkinson (1991) argues that territory creates opportunity for interaction, even unplanned interaction, that allows an emergent community identity. Collective action and purposive interaction occur in the community field when an array of social groups come together to interact on matters of the common good (Theodori 2000). Local territory is perceived as a social whole and many communities have multiple social groups, relationships, and institutions. Each of the five selected communities will be considered an independent community unit.

The autonomy of a community is understood as “the degree to which a community is linked economically, socially, and physically to neighboring communities and to the region as a whole” (Harris et al. 2000). For years, rural communities were abandoned as an object of study due to the assumption that “rural” had been absorbed into the mass society by vertical integration and destruction of the horizontal integration that traditionally gave rural communities power against the forces of mass society (Summers 1986). The “vertical linkages” referred to in the literature include access to government at various levels including local, state, and federal; the location of sources of financing; and acquiring knowledge to solve local problems (O’ Brien et al. 1998). Also important to community autonomy are ties between individuals in a community. These ties may help develop organizational capacities, such as local economic and community

development boards that will aid in obtaining outside sources of funding and assistance (O'Brien et al. 1998).

A closer look at the relative autonomy of communities in the context of vertical and horizontal links reveals that increased attention to the macro system does not necessarily imply that local communities are being disregarded (Warren 1978). Vertical ties create dependencies, but they also enable local action. "Community autonomy then refers to the control that a community has over events and activities that occur within its boundaries" (Poplin 1979, from Harris et al. 2000).

### **Assessing Communities**

The frameworks for assessing community well-being have emerged in part due to the need to clarify and broaden the understanding of community relations to federal lands (Haynes et al. 1996, Nadeau 1999). From the passing of the Sustained Yield Act in 1944 through the 1980s, the concept of community stability was advanced as the goal of federal forest management policies, particularly as they relate to the flow of commodities such as timber. Although the concept itself was an important point of reference in recognizing that a relation exists between forests and communities, it was later realized that it did not consider the ways in which rural communities constantly evolve and change (Haynes et al. 1996). As more and more studies began to point out that a sustained yield of timber production did not effectively ensure the stability of forest communities (Nadeau 1999), the need arose for a more complex and dynamic perspective for understanding communities. Furthermore, the concept of community stability has lost integrity over the years because it had been used to defend various proposals, and it relied on employment data alone (Fortmann et al. 1989). A new approach to assess impacts on

communities adopted the use of a more diverse set of indicators by which to measure stability in forest communities (Beckley 1998, Nadeau 1999).

### **Community Well-Being**

Community well-being has been used to describe the various factors that are influenced in relationship to the role of natural resources as engines of change (Haynes et al. 1996). Recent literature reveals no definitive definition for community well-being in the empirical sense. However, social scientists such as Beckley (1998) and Kusel (1996) have focused on community adaptability as a central component of well-being. This parallels (and for the purposes of this study will be considered synonymous) to the previously mentioned concept of resiliency—the ability of a community to respond positively to change. Further, since well-being is such a complex idea, this study focuses on proxies, such as social capital, which are offered in place of an empirical definition. As Nadeau (1999) recognizes, “Community well-being is the most far reaching concept since it assigns importance to role of historical background, quality of life, and concerns about the capacity to adapt to changes. Therefore the notion of well-being is likely to lead to a more comprehensive description of a community”.

Community well-being is an assessment framework that has been used repeatedly in studies examining the viability of forest communities (FEMAT 1993, Harris et al. 2000, Kusel 1996). Evolving from these frameworks is a handful of concepts that are often used interchangeably. “Well-being, resiliency, or capacity for change are concepts used to analyze the resources within communities affected by forest management policies and the capacity of those resources to assist communities in adapting to changing

circumstances, especially those resulting from changes in forest management policies” (Burden 2002).

### **Community Capacity**

Community capacity, the ability to respond to stresses and take advantage of opportunities (Kusel 1996) can be viewed as an essential component of community well-being. The underlying assumption is that communities with higher levels of capacity will more likely experience the consequences of change in a positive way, whereas lower capacity communities may be more negatively affected. The capacity of communities is determined by the presence of attributes of physical and financial infrastructures, human capital, social capital, and environmental capital (Kusel 1996). Many authors have stressed the importance of social capital as the most important component of capacity (Doak and Kusel 1996, Harris et al. 2000).

### **Community Resiliency**

Community capacity has also been recognized as an important component influencing community resiliency (Harris et al. 2000). The working definition of community resiliency used in ICBEMP includes: a community’s ability to respond and adapt to change in the most positive, constructive way possible to help mitigate the impacts of change on the community (Harris et al. 2000). The philosophical basis is similar to what appears in the ecological literature: “That is, a system with higher diversity is less affected by change than a system with lower diversity and the former, therefore, has higher resiliency” (Horne and Haynes 1999). The reflection of this philosophy in the measures chosen for resiliency is vital for effective decisionmaking.

For ICBEMP purposes, resiliency was measured in terms of economic structure, civic leadership, social cohesion, and amenities.

Although in many ways community resilience is similar to the concept of community capacity (in their goal for identifying the adaptability of communities), resiliency has been used to express the propensity of a community to maintain the ability to adapt to change over a long period of time (Harris et al. 1998, Nadeau et al. 1999). For example, once levels of resiliency have been determined, government programs could be better targeted to meet the needs of particular communities (Harris et al. 1998). Harris et al. (1998) found small rural communities in the ICBEMP social assessment were more resilient than originally assumed, especially those timber dependent communities that were “already changing as a result of their amenities, diversifying economies, and shifting populations” (Harris et al. 1998).

Subtle differences exist in the frameworks used to measure well-being, capacity, and resilience. Ultimately, subtle differences were also found in the conclusions drawn from the existing frameworks for assessing communities, but it “remains unclear whether the difference rests on the various aspects studied under the different assessment frameworks or whether it is embedded in the community characteristics themselves” (Nadeau et al. 1999). In addition to moving from concepts of “community stability” to “community well-being,” recent research trends have also shifted from examining “timber dependence” to considering “forest base” and from “economic measures” to “socioeconomic measures of well-being.” All of these transitions are a result of researchers becoming more aware of the increasing complexity of the dynamic nature of communities (Richardson and Christensen 1997).



## **Importance and Context of Community Social Assessment**

From a social assessment standpoint, the importance of studying well-being at the community level stems from the proposition that small rural communities are at the fringe of social change and, therefore, may be vulnerable to larger forces. Community well-being has become increasingly important discussion point for isolated rural communities facing challenging transitions from resource-based economies to more diversified economies. Small geographically isolated communities are often less economically diverse and more likely to be dependent on only a few industries for economic viability (Harris et al. 2000, Reyna 1998). This is often so because isolated rural communities have less access to outside social opportunities and fewer economic choices that may help increase their adaptive capacities. As these resources become more limited, communities may be forced to become more reliant on state and federal governments (Harris et al. 2000, Reyna 1998).

The interconnectedness of economic and community well-being is emphasized throughout the literature. It has been theorized that economic declines lead to declines in community well-being and that rapid economic growth may be disruptive and lead to a decrease in community well-being (Beckley 1995). The economic well-being of a community is defined by the flow of goods and services from the natural and social environment that allow individuals to satisfy their needs and wants. However, the flow of nonmarket goods and services has been found to play an equally important role in local community well-being. These goods and services may include air and water quality, recreational opportunities, beautiful landscapes and freedom from crime and violence (Powers 1996). Successful management integrates environmental, economic,

and social well-being. Even though this study emphasizes those factors that most affect the social dimensions of community well-being, a brief review of the contributions of economic activity is warranted.

It is often difficult to acquire relevant, community-level economic data because economic data are not frequently collected below the county level. However, because respondents talked about economics as being a key attribute in community well-being, narrative commentaries from community respondents about economic conditions are included as contextual descriptions of perceived pressures on the communities.

Social assessment literature has also considered the economic structure of rural communities in terms of economic diversity, resource dependence and community autonomy (FEMAT 1993, Harris et al. 2000, Kusel 1996). Different observers use different, although similar, factors to understand the economies of rural communities. This study will address, in part, how community members understand their local economies.

“The economic diversity of a community is the mix of types of industries and businesses in a community, the variety of those kinds of industries and businesses, and the number and variety of employment opportunities that the mix represents” (Harris et al. 2000). The importance in reporting on the diversity of rural communities stems from the fact that the livelihood of rural communities is often tied to a single industry.

Economic diversity is often closely linked to the notion of resource dependence. Freudenberg (1992) uses “addiction” as a metaphor for the relation that develops between rural communities and natural resource industries. Historically, natural resource industries were seen as key to the economic development of particular communities.

However, as global markets for natural resources change, rural areas are finding that economic diversification is the key to survival. Throughout this downward trend, rural areas have seen short term reversals, giving rural residents mixed signals of the advantages and disadvantages of these industries (Freudenberg 1992). Vulnerable communities are those that are more isolated, where raw materials are abundant with few options to diversify their economies. Furthermore, “vulnerability at the community level is currently limited to identifying isolated timber dependent communities” (Reyna 1998).

It is theorized that the more diverse the economy, the higher the community well-being (Quigley et al. 1996). Access to diverse employment opportunities allows those who are affected by downturns in specific businesses to find other employment. Unemployment rates rise only briefly while displaced workers transition to other more productive sectors of the economy (Powers 1996). Measuring employment diversity to determine the condition of communities is a way of understanding the shifts in the economic structure from those industries that are in long-term decline. Communities that are more dependent on fewer industries may experience more enduring impacts, such as longer periods of unemployment or out-migration rates that remain high for several years. This long-term decline has been found in some agricultural communities in the interior Columbia River Basin (Horne and Haynes 1999).

### **Social Capital**

Communities and groups that are interested in consciously creating autonomy are also concerned with the construction of social capital. Social capital is defined for the SNEP assessment as that “which includes the ability and willingness of residents to work together for community goals” (Kusel 1996). Investing in social capital may enhance

organizational capacity through the development of autonomy and links, which empower the community with the appropriate skills to deal effectively with the issues at hand (Flora 1998). The ICBEMP social assessment refers to this as social cohesion and civic leadership. Social capital can be understood in terms of the ability of a community to work together to meet goals or the ability for residents and local leaders to work together to create and adapt to change.

Social capital has been theorized as a precondition for economic and community well-being.

A community may have number of resident who are quite wealthy, but if they are not involved in the community and desire little to do with it, their financial capital does nothing for the community beyond their self interested concerns. Conversely, a community with little financial capital and high social capital may conduct numerous fund raisers as well as reach outside the community to raise money to address local needs, thereby improving local well-being (Kusel 1996)

The advantage of social capital is it focuses on the community as a whole. The processes to enhance the well-being of communities are the same processes that have been implemented to increase social capital (Brick et al. 2000). Social capital is created “through the development of active relationships, democratic participation, and the strengthening of community ownership and trust” (Lane 1997).

In the original ICBEMP assessment (McCool et al. 1996), civic leadership was referred to as civic responsiveness, such as community leadership, planning operations, and local government effectiveness. For this study, anecdotes from community respondents and personal observations are used in evaluating social capital.

## **Amenities**

Values that people hold often attract them to, and keep them in an area. These values reveal what is at risk when a place or a community changes or is threatening to change. National forests are becoming increasingly important because of these values and the attachment to amenities associated with them (Swanson 2001).

As traditional commodity-producing industries decline in many communities in the Interior Columbia River Basin, environmental amenities and related economic development are fast becoming a new economic base (Harris 2001). As this new economy develops, extractive industries that threaten to degrade the environment are assumed to be incompatible with local community well-being (Powers 1996).

Furthermore, the very characteristics that are assumed to have a positive affect on community well-being may also have disruptive effects through the in- and out-migration of young, well-educated workers who have previous personal experience with migration (Powers 1996). Although it is likely that a higher turnover of residents may disrupt community life, it is also likely that a reservoir of residents with high social and human capital who stay in the community will possess the entrepreneurial energy (Powers 1996) to smooth transitions during change.

In the past, amenities have been measured in terms that apply to scenic quality, such as landscape character and scenic condition (Galliano and Loeffler 2000). Landscape character has been used to describe the overall image of a larger geographic region. In the Interior Columbia Basin most landscapes are forests and shrub-grasslands and scenic conditions are understood in terms of scenic integrity. Most of the basin's

landscapes have a high degree of natural appearance according to past assessment (Galliano and Loeffler 2000).

In this study I use a natural amenities index to assess the communities. The variables representing natural amenities depend on such aspects as the availability of open space, good air quality, pleasant weather, and short commutes (FRAP 2002). The actual natural amenities index developed by the Economic Research Service/USDA was constructed by combining measures of topography, climate, and water area that reflect environmental qualities most people prefer. In addition, amenities are by assessed using anecdotes from community respondents and personal observations.

### **Chapter 3: Methods**

In this study, I use an “ethnographic interview” methodology (Glaser and Strauss 1967). With this method, qualitative data are collected by using an interview protocol that is directed to a purposeful sample of individuals. An ethnographic method is useful because it enables the research to develop a description and analysis of events from the point of view of the persons being studied. Ethnographic research is based on the premise that “people act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them, that the meaning of things arises out of the social interaction one has with one’s fellows and that the meanings of things are handled in and modified through an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he or she encounters” (Patton 2002).

This type of qualitative study is based on phenomenology: understanding human behavior from the actor’s own frame of reference... “For him or her the important reality is what people imagine it to be” (Patton 2002). The data presented here are largely ethnographic; the ethnographic observations, however, are supported by quantitative data from the U.S. Census.

#### **Research Methods**

This study is a purposeful sample of 28 community leaders in five selected communities in the interior Columbia Basin. Using purposeful sampling as a design strategy allows for the selection of information-rich cases to explicate the phenomenon being studied. It does not aim to make empirical generalizations from the sample to the population (Patton 2002).

## **Respondents**

I selected my sample by using a modified snowball, or chain sampling method. This entailed asking well-situated people for the names of others who were also well informed on the topic at hand. Names that are repeatedly mentioned take on special importance and are considered valuable to the study (Patton 2002). In this study, however, I modified the snowball method to select specific community leaders with useful knowledge pertaining to this study.

In most communities, sufficient information was gained through interview with community leaders. Participants in this study were active opinion leaders identified by fellow residents in each community as best representing any of eight previously specified categories of interests, specialties, and perspectives. These categories included elected officials, civic group leaders, business leaders, school and health leaders, historic preservation or environmental group leaders, newcomers, and active liberals and conservatives (Harris et al. 2000). This method of selection was similar to that used for the original social assessment; however, the selection of participants for this study often originated from the original forum participants who participated in the ICBEMP social assessment in 1996, to identify people who were currently active in those specific roles. This selection process produced a diverse sample of informants, although not all eight categories were filled for any one community.

Of the 28 informants interviewed, 7 were elected officials, including 6 mayors and a county commissioner. An additional five informants sat on the city council. Nearly all of the informants were involved in and were in some way leaders of civic groups. These groups included local Lions Clubs, arts councils, "Friends of" groups, and



community planning boards. Many of the informants were also involved in their church. Nearly half of all informants were active in the local school system either through administrative roles such as superintendents (3) or sitting on the school board (6). Other informants were involved in local youth projects such as Boy Scouts. Ten informants were members the Chamber of Commerce or the local Economic Development Corporation. Of these ten, four were presidents. Five informants were active in historic preservation or environmental issues.

Informants had lived in their communities an average of 27 years. However, length of residence ranged from a year and a half to 65 years. Seven of the informants in the study were born and raised in the community in which they lived. Nine informants had lived in the community for less than 10 years. And the remaining 11 informants averaged around 27 years.

### **The Interviews**

Interviews were conducted over a 6-month period from July 2001 to January 2002. Most informants were contacted before traveling to each community. A handful of informants also emerged from further interviewing conducted once in each community and these informants were then contacted for possible interviewing. I introduced myself as a graduate student researcher in Forestry from the University of Montana, and then explained the objectives of my research project.

I used an open-ended interview protocol technique that was prepared before the interviews were conducted (see app. 1). The interview was pre-tested in a set of interviews conducted in Superior, Montana during spring 2001, prior to beginning field work for this study. Clarification and elaboration of the questions was done at that time.

This open-ended interview technique allowed informants to respond to the questions in their own words.

Interview questions were generally asked in the same order except in cases where an informant had already covered the topic of a subsequent question. Probes were also used to help the informant to expand on any particular topic. This was helpful in empowering the informants and letting them feel they were directing the course of the interview. Informants were generally asked 16 to 20 questions. At the end of each interview, I asked each informant for the names of other people they thought would be knowledgeable about the subject.

Twenty-six of the twenty-eight interviews were tape recorded. Two informants declined the use of a tape recorder and detailed notes were taken in its place. I also kept extensive field notes of my observations and impressions of each informant, which I synthesized following each interview. Interviews often ranged in length from 30 minutes to 2.5 hours. The average length was one hour.

### **Social Indicators**

Secondary data revealed key pieces of information pertaining to four main components of community well-being: population trends, including community and household trends; income and equity, including measures of income, unemployment rates, and poverty; education, including measures of school enrollment and educational attainment, and quality of life, which is measured by using the natural amenities index offered by Economic Research Service/USDA. The underlying assumption of this assessment is that higher well-being corresponds with higher levels of income and equity, school enrollment and educational attainment, and quality of life. The use of these social

indicators in this social assessment may complicate the measurements because they are merely proxies for some immeasurable concept (Force and Machlis 1997). Social indicators do not explain why conditions are changing but rather provide a baseline where, overtime, social conditions can be monitored.

Although the assumptions for poverty and unemployment calculations may have changed from 1990 to 2000, making the differences incomparable, comparing the community numbers to both the state and the nation is useful in determining the differences between the two census years.

The variables examined from my secondary sources form a lens to view a particular facet of the community, but in no way reveal its overall shape. Per capita income was chosen as the best estimate of income levels as it captures the potential for individuals to purchase desired goods and services and support local government budgets. However, average values like per capita income do not reveal how many people have very low or very high incomes, or how income relates to the cost of basic goods and services (FRAP 2002). Additionally, higher levels of equity are indicated by lower rates of poverty and greater levels of home ownership. There has been some debate as to whether or not housing tenure is an accurate indicator of the well-being of communities in transition. This statement follows the theory that having housing tenure in a community in decline may not be to the benefit of the owner.

Variables chosen to represent quality of life depend on aspects such as the availability of open space, good air quality, pleasant weather, and short commutes (FRAP 2002). I measure quality of life based on a natural amenities scale of physical characteristics of a county area that enhance the location as a place to live. The index

used here was constructed by combining measures of topography (warm winter, winter sun, temperate summer, low summer humidity, and topographic variation), climate, and water area that reflect environmental qualities most people prefer.

### **Data Analysis**

I transcribed the taped interviews to become further immersed in the qualitative data. I then used Atlas.ti to code the data. The data were coded and recoded and finally organized into relationships, distinctions, and revealed significance. Similar answers to the same questions from the majority of respondents identified the salience of a given perception.

For this research, both qualitative and quantitative strategies were used. This is referred to as triangulation. Triangulation is based on the premise that “no single method ever adequately solves the problem of rival causal factors. Because each method reveals different aspects of empirical reality, multiple methods of observations must be employed” (Patton 2002). Secondary data were collected for basic demographic variables. The data for the selected social indicators came three sources: the 1990 and 2000 censuses and the ICBEMP social assessment. The advantage of the social indicators approach used for this study is its attention to more than just the economics of timber harvest and grazing access on community-forest interactions. However, this approach does not provide detailed descriptive information about specific community structure and processes that affect and are affected by community-forest interactions. By combining census and other secondary socioeconomic data with information about community structure and processes, it is possible address the potential ability of communities to act collectively to identify problems and to mobilize resources to address

these problems (Burden 2002). In this analysis, I also included personal observations made while in each community, perspectives from local and county newspapers, and additional literature.

Community characteristics were evaluated based on the qualitative data which depended both the frequency of responses and the emphasis placed on certain components by particular residents. The interplay between these two techniques was most beneficial in developing insight. Although some community attributes may not be mentioned, it should not be assumed that they did not exist. The community evaluations are subjective and based on the interpretation of the author.

## **Chapter 4: Results**

### **EUREKA, MONTANA**

#### **Community Characteristics**

Eureka, Montana, is located in Tobacco Valley, nestled in the forested, northwest corner of the state 7 miles south of the Canadian border. Local residents have described Eureka as active on the state and national level in bringing attention to the situation of rural timber towns. In May 2001, local mill owner, Jim Hurst, hosted the “Eureka Log Haul” to draw attention to the lack of timber coming out of the national forests. More than 3000 people from 12 states caravanned to Eureka delivering logs from their private lands to the Owens and Hurst mill.

Summer 2001, the Owens and Hurst mill had recently cut back their shifts from 3 to 1. Two other mills in the region, Border Lumber Company and American Timber had also closed. The fire season of 2000 left behind what many community respondents perceived as usable timber. Therefore, community residents perceived the cause for these closures as rooted in an overall change in natural resource policy by the Forest Service that ultimately reduced the levels of resource availability and utilization. However, other mills in the region said that it may be an industry wide decline because of over-supply.

A vision for the valley’s future was published in *GoKootenai*, a local and regional cooperative advertisement in June of 2001; it was completed as the result of a community assessment done by the City of Eureka in 1994 and in 1999. This vision was based on 100 interviews and numerous public meetings. Eureka residents considered the vision statement a 5-year strategic plan.

The desired future condition of Tobacco Valley would be one of a community that places value on its rural setting and family

orientation, while achieving a diverse, economic climate that is socially and environmentally responsible.

Clean air and clean water, open spaces and freedom from major crime are key elements retained from the present and where the timber industry and its heritage are still valued and provide an important portion of the economic base. Diverse employment and careers will be available as well as the opportunity to improve one's lifestyle without leaving the Tobacco Valley. The 5 primary values of the desired future condition of Tobacco Valley are:

- Preserved heritage
- Sustainable healthy local business growth
- Maintained natural beauty
- Improved quality of life
- Enriched personal growth

### Social Indicators

**Table 3: Descriptive statistics for Eureka, Montana**

Year	Population	School	Eureka	MT	U.S.	Eureka	MT	U.S.
		enroll.	unempl.	unempl.	unempl.	poverty	poverty	poverty
----- <i>Percent</i> -----								
1990	1000	23.1	10.2	4.4	4.1	9.7	16.1	13.1
2000	1017	21.7	9.8	4.1	3.7	22.9	15.5	12.4

Source: Eureka Public Schools (1990, 2000), USDC Census (1990, 2000).

The population and household trends in the selected communities characterize the overall growth and decline. Eureka had a relatively stable population 1990 to 2000 (table 3); the average rate of increase is less than 1 percent. During this same period, the population of Lincoln County, home to Eureka, increased by 7.6 percent. Countywide, household size has decreased, indicative of an older population with few children living at home.

Unemployment levels in Eureka were higher than in surrounding Lincoln County and double those in the state and nation in 1990 and 2000 (table 3). That said, unemployment in Eureka declined slightly in that period from 10.2 to 9.8 percent, mirroring the decline statewide and the nation.

The percentage of persons in poverty in Eureka exceeded the county by nearly 4.5 percent and the state by nearly 7.4 percent. (Trends in employment data were inconclusive from 1990 to 2000.) Eureka had a more similar poverty rate to the nation in 1990 but in 2000, it was 10.5 percentage points higher.

Education is also an important issue for families and communities. According to Eureka Public Schools the total number of students enrolled in Eureka is decreasing. From 1990 to 2000, school enrollment declined by 1.4 percent despite the fact that overall population stayed about the same (table 3). As the population in Eureka continues to age and households continue to shrink, school enrollment will likely continue to decline. The health of local community schools is perceived as affecting the overall sense of well-being in Eureka.

The level of formal education among residents of Lincoln County is lower than the state average. In 2000, 80.2 percent of residents 25 years or older had high school degrees in Lincoln County whereas 87.2 percent of state residents did. The breakdown of educational attainment for Lincoln County residents 25 and older in 2000 is as follows: 19.7 percent had not graduated from high school, 38 percent had earned a high school diploma, 23.2 percent had attended some college, and 19 percent had graduated college or pursued graduate or professional degrees.



Per capita income lags the rest of the county and state. Additionally, the percentage of owner-occupied housing in Eureka (65.9 percent) is lower than the rest of Lincoln County (76.6 percent), whereas state housing tenure is 69.1 percent. Home ownership is a measure of the ability of people to secure income commensurate with the cost of living.

Lincoln County was ranked four on the national amenities index, which ranges from 1 to 7, with 7 being the highest amenities value. Lincoln County is 3618 square miles with 5.2 people per square mile.

### **Social Capital**

Community characteristics that residents in Eureka most strongly associated with well-being are the same characteristics that promote an increased capacity to work on common civic activities. This supports the concept of social capital used in the literature developed by Robert Putnam and used by Doak and Kusel (1996) in the Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Management Project. Thus, greater well-being encourages the capability to function cohesively in addressing problems and in dealing with modern community issues. Harris (1996) described the concept in terms of social cohesion and civic leadership. Despite the downfall of the local timber industry in Eureka, residents used terms such as camaraderie and fellowship to describe their overall sense of well-being of their community.

“Eureka has always been a cooperative area. The people gang together when there is a concern or crisis, family. And those people pulling together seem to have helped pull things off.”

“We have a very caring community. (My husband) had a heart attack in February and it is unbelievable the amount of people that helped out, turned out at benefits, firewood, food, stuff like that. It is very touching and I think that is part of the community I love.”

“Probably the camaraderie of one small town resident to another. We all have to survive in this area that is far from transportation and hospitals. In a sense we look out for each other.”

In Eureka, these interactive aspects of social capital were considered to be most important for enhancing their sense of well-being. Furthermore, these aspects include characteristics of civic participation and social cohesion. The level of involvement of those who are considered newcomers to the community is perceived as challenging the existing social and political structures. This is considered a hindrance to achieving overall community well-being. There are several explanations for how Eureka is affected by the role of social capital. For instance, social cohesion may be internal to the long-time residents of the community but not to the changing shape of the entire community.

“I think a lot of people coming in to the community want to become part of it so they try to get involved with things which the old group has a little resentment toward new people coming in and just all of a sudden change things.”

“Well, there is definitely an oh, I don’t know if I would call it an aristocracy but here are the old families... There are families like that that are pretty solid. You know they lived here for a while and they are pretty solid in their opinions. There is a feeling that they are trying to run the place and you can’t get anything done unless they work with you and stuff like that. So there is some of that that goes with newer people coming in and having a harder time getting into the power structure. I think that would exist whether... That is a normal thing. When you are in the school business you can see that... Like here if you started talking about putting up a new school they would not go for it.”

“The local families that have been here for a long time don’t like the idea of new people coming in which is ironic because they were new people when they first came.”

The importance of strategic visioning has moved to the forefront of community concerns due to increased growth and a proposed 600 acre golf course just south of town.

The importance for strategic agenda lies in the capacity for Eureka to address these emerging critical conditions. While the existing social and political structures are perceived as a hindrance to the “slow and progressive growth” desired, the manner in which the growth is occurring is placing additional stress on the community.

“There has been some new stuff built towards the end of town. A lot more places are built out of town than in town.”

The growth occurring around Eureka is contributing to a changing community structure. Over the last 6 years there has been increased discussion in regards to annexing the community area north of Eureka. However, the cost of services would outweigh the revenue generated from such an endeavor, even though Eureka currently serves a large portion of that population.

“A two block area gets our water, the rest has their own water system. But we are working to bring that all into one. That would bring a bunch of stuff but once we start penciling it out as far as street repair, as far as those services go, police and streets are the big ones. It became uncontrollable to us. Roughly we figured the real estate tax that would come in from that general area would be roughly in the neighborhood of \$65,000.00 per year. We felt that adding services to that area like police and fire and roads would be more in the neighborhood of \$140,000.00.”

While Eureka is perceived as receptive to progress, due mainly to the ambition of the chamber of commerce and local economic development council, the lack of formal strategic visioning has strained the ability of Eureka residents to deal with the new proposed development. This negatively affects the perceived community well-being. The perceived problems with these interactive aspects of community social capital may be considered two sides of the same coin. On one side, residents are inclined to resist any type of formal planning, on the other, they recognize its importance.

“The economic development council did an assessment of residents, what do they want. We were trying to create a plan for the community. Essentially they felt we were trying to force zoning on them. What happened was a lot of people got quite angry and almost violent at the meetings. They didn’t want any plan and so the council decided, well, if that is what you want that is what you are going to get. No plan means you take whatever. And so now we have this golf course project coming in and some people are saying, ‘Why haven’t I heard about this? Why didn’t I have something to say about it?’ And so to that opinion I say, well it was coming and you should have known.”

“I guess what I would like to see, my vision for the community, maybe this will help, you can use this, but its slow and progressive growth, not super fast growth. And planned type growth so that we can continue to grow. Eureka is always, it has grown to some extent. Our population base is roughly the same as it was even 20 years ago but the area around it has grown and we need to nurture that along the best we can. Now we have no zoning, no planning and no controls to speak of. There are certain regulations the state puts up as far as septic permits. They do some subdivision reviews, things like that, but as far as zoning, Eureka has no plan at all.”

“The biggest issue for us right now is dealing with the development. We don’t have a planning staff. We don’t have people to review all of these things and so our concerns are to do it right and do it positively and not to affect the environment or our community. To do it in a positive manner so that we all benefit from it.”

“See we tried that (planning) in the early ‘90s maybe even around ‘95 or so. The county actually put together committees to go to different neighborhoods and solicit comments. It got to the point sometimes violent. What they did was to bring examples from the Flathead. They had all these examples and the planning board members were just volunteers and they would sometimes be threatened. Threats were made and it was really scary. You see that in Lincoln County. People are here because they want no controls. Now on the other side of that I can see the need for planning and zoning. Here is an example. A good friend of mine bought a 20 acre plot of land out there. There’re 20’s all around and all of sudden somebody buys this 20 to put in a mud bog track for racing 4 wheelers and there is nothing you can do about it. That would be the only way to control that.”

Social capital has two components: the ability to plan (civic leadership) and cooperation among community residents (social cohesion) (Harris 1994). Eureka was ranked medium low for civic leadership and high for social cohesion. Civic leadership appears to be making concerted efforts, but the population is not ready for regulation in this case. This may be considered a shortcoming of the social capital concept and indicate the importance of distinguishing its two components.

### **Amenities**

This changing community structure has placed these concerns for social capital at the forefront for maintaining and achieving community well-being. The distribution of growth and community settlement is affected by amenities. However, the growth occurring in and around Eureka is perceived as having the potential to completely change the lifestyle here. The character of Eureka is perceived as affected by these factors.

“I have a little saying that I say and it is basically that Eureka is a classless society. I don't mean that in a bad way but I am saying there is one class. You can walk down the street and see me, who in other towns is an elite person who nobody talks to and you can see a bum on the street and you talk to them just like they are everyday people. And I really hope that (the golf course) doesn't bring in an upper class of people. There have been letters to the editor about that.”

These concerns for the changing community structure may also be considered a threat to the social cohesion component of social capital. The concerns in Eureka may be about timber harvests, but also about how people interact with each other, and how people relate to their landscape.

## **Agency Domain**

The surrounding landscape was a factor in perceived community well-being. The presence of the Forest Service office influenced Eureka in terms of the level of involvement and residential development of agency employees. The Forest Service was also perceived as responsible for the revitalization of the economy by maintaining the availability and utilization of forest lands. Over the years, agency domain has faltered because it has not been able to manage the forest very well from a community perspective.

“Their main guise is to be stewards of the land, and to be involved with the public and to educate the public, both timber and environmental sides because I’ll tell you flat out, and I have told other people this, that in the ‘50, ‘60, and ‘70s logging was not an environmentally sound thing. It wasn’t done properly. They have been spanked for that, for lack of a better word, but I think they have gone too far the other way. And the Forest Service has got to be confident of their leadership from the very top down that supports them in what they are trying to do yet has goals and objectives in mind yet still offers the communities like Eureka the ability to make a living right off the land in a responsible way. And that is what I think their role is in a nut shell.”

“There are a lot of anti-government issues up here. Anti-UN. But the actual Forest Service in this area has, within the community, is fairly well respected because this particular district out here, the one out of Eureka, has the ability and has the land out there and has the track record of being able to meet their goals and to get the timber for the mills to work, where other ones around the state have seemed to have fallen short of meeting their quotas.”

“Maintain the forests so that it is viable to the community that has been using the forests and also to communicate with the residents.”

## **Narrative Economic Data**

Economic conditions are just as important to Eureka residents as social capital. This has also been considered one of the pillars of community well-being as explained in the community capacity literature by Doak and Kusel (1996).

“Well there are not a lot of resources here as far as financial type assistance and economic development type projects. You know there are grants and loans and things like that. I find that capital money, capital investment money is not readily available for this area. We can’t come up with a small sum to attract a large sum.”

Economic development in the community was also perceived as hindered by Montana tax law and affected by other societal state level factors.

“As long as I have been here they (Economic Development Council) have been trying to get a light industry here in the valley and yet that is very difficult because we don’t have the infrastructure for that type of business and Montana just doesn’t have a very health tax break. I feel like we are in a Catch 22 situation.”

## **PLAINS, MONTANA**

### **Community Characteristics**

Plains is 77 miles northeast of Missoula in Sanders County. Plains has the potential to become a bedroom community to Missoula. The residential development in the area has been underway for several decades, and access to Plains is improving as Hwy 200 leading to and from the area becomes a four lane fast track, increasing traffic and decreasing commuting time.

The increasing residential development in Plains has become the center of controversy over the years and is captured on a popular bumper sticker : “Cows Not Condos.” Based on the Plains school records for the notification of subdivision, the height of residential development occurred over 6 to 8 years in the 1990’s. By summer 2001, residents interviewed perceived that construction was slowing down. However, the lack of corresponding economic development in Plains has meant that as households in Plains continue to increase, school enrollment has continued to drop.

The timber industry in Sanders County has dwindled over the years. At the time of the original ICBEMP social assessment in 1994, the lumber company, Crown Pacific, had already closed. Furthermore, those industries associated with road building, for example, have decreased. However, at the time of this study, Thompson River Lumber in Thompson Falls, and Tricon in St. Regis were still active mills in the area. The amount of extraction by private corporations was perceived as increasing. Plum Creek Timber Co. has been fairly aggressive in the area, for instance.



## Social Indicators

**Table 4: Descriptive statistics for Plains, Montana**

Year	Pop.	School Enroll.	Plains Unempl.	Montana Unempl.	U.S. Unempl.	Plains Poverty	Montana Poverty	U.S. Poverty
-----Percent-----								
<b>1990</b>	992	21.7	8.5	4.4	4.1	19.8	16.1	13.1
<b>2000</b>	1126	20.1	4.7	4.1	3.7	20.3	15.5	12.4

Source: USDC Census (1990, 2000), Plains Public Schools (2001).

The population of Plains increased 13.5 percent from 1990 to 2000 at an average rate of 1.3 percent. During this same period the population of Sanders County increased by 18 percent. The number of households has increased slightly more rapidly than population; 2.1 percent compared to 1.7 percent. Additionally, the census data show a smaller average household size, reflecting a slightly older population, similar to Lincoln County. Approximately 22.5 percent of the population of Plains is 65 and over in 2000 compared to 21.4 percent in 1990. This exceeds the rest of Sanders County where only 16.9 percent of the population is 65 and over in 2000.

Sanders County borders Lincoln County to the southeast and has similar demographic characteristics. As in Lincoln County, poverty and unemployment rates in Sanders County were higher than the state's (table 4). The percentage of persons in poverty in Plains (20.3 percent) was slightly higher than found countywide (19.8 percent). The unemployment rate, however, was lower in Plains (4.7 percent) than in Sanders County (5.2 percent) and only slightly higher than the state average (4.1 percent).

Similar to Eureka and the rest of Lincoln County, per capita income lagged the rest of the county and the state (see app. 2). Additionally, percentage of owner-occupied

housing in Plains (70.6 percent) was lower than the rest of Sanders County (76.4 percent). Both Plains and Eureka had lower rates of owner-occupied housing than found in other parts of northwestern Montana but higher rates than the state of Montana overall.

Like Eureka, the total number of students enrolled in Plains Public Schools is decreasing. From 1990 to 2000, Sanders County school enrollment dropped 1.6 percent. As in Lincoln County, the educational attainment for persons 25 years or older was lower in Sanders County (81.2 percent of residents had a high school degree) than the state average in 2000 (87.2 percent of residents had high school degree): Sanders County residents 25 years or older had the following educational background in 2000: 13.7 percent had not graduated from high school, 29.9 percent had earned a high school diploma, 22.8 percent had attended some college, and 21.1 percent had graduated college or pursued graduate or professional degrees.

Sanders County was ranked four on the natural amenities index which ranges from one to seven with seven being the highest amenities value. Sanders County encompasses 2762 square miles with 3.7 people living per square mile. The size of these counties (Lincoln and Sanders) and low population density are an indication of the rural setting for Eureka and Plains.

Data analyses across censuses do not tell the story behind change in a community but by revealing where change has occurred, often signals there is story waiting to be heard. Here again it is useful to examine how poverty and unemployment calculations may have changed over the 10-year period from 1990 to 2000, comparing the community numbers to both the state and the nation. Like Eureka and Plains, Montana population grew (12 percent) but school enrollment dropped (1.6 percent). And like Eureka,

unemployment went down but poverty remained higher than the national average. The gap between unemployment rates in Plains, and nation narrowed from 4.4 percentage points in 1990 to 1 percentage point in 2000. However, poverty rates increased in both Eureka and Plains while decreasing in the state and nation.

### **Social Capital**

As in Eureka, community well-being in Plains may be closely associated to the types of interaction people have with each other. Interactions that promoted fellowship or social cohesion (Harris 1996) were important to Plains residents.

“The people here are very generous and they are community-minded individuals, really get involved in projects and really try to help out wherever they can.”

“Oh, I think it is the small community and its, the economy is not the best and the wages are not the best in the area but it’s a good place to raise kids.”

However, there was a great deal of concern for the level of resourcefulness that is required to be able to live in Plains. The loss of working families was perceived as a major drawback to the current economic condition. Tough times created by a tight economy make resourcefulness an even more valuable asset, enabling families to “get by.” Furthermore, the loss of working families was perceived as negatively affecting community participation and overall community well-being. Community participation is a frequently used indicator of well-being because it is reasoned that greater participation increases ability of individuals and leaders to make well-reasoned decisions about a community’s present and future, and the ability to work together to meet goals leads to a greater sense of well-being.

“Probably the biggest problem, well two things, most of the people moving in are not community minded, thus they do not get involved in community groups or activities or whatever. They also, a lot of them, don’t necessarily support the local merchant because we are just a little town, and they think it is bigger and better in the big city. And that is a down side to some of the growth; people just don’t understand the need to support the little town and the small business.”

“The community has to have leaders. We have leaders, but the leaders are getting worn out. They are folks that have been in the area for a long time. They are actually the people who came who were the mill owners and some of the folks who have always been leaders in the community. They were industrialists in their time. And most are in their 70s and 80s now, and our generation who is coming in behind them, we’re too involved in making money for ourselves and it’s the baby boom, me generation.”

“Folks are inward and not outward and there’s a whole different perspective on community involvement, and it’s difficult; it’s not easy to work 12 hours a day on your job and afterwards you’re thinking you’re gonna go over and do large scale planning for a community. That is a whole other job in its self.”

“When you have people who move in and immediately want to change everything. They moved here because they didn’t like the way things were where they came from, and the first thing they do when they get here is want to change everything here to the way it was where they left. Which I don’t understand why people want to do that. And so that is not well received in the community.”

“Well it’s funny that most of the people moving in are actually living in the country or out in the trees. That is where the biggest growth is.”

“The population of the valley is about 2200-2300 and out of that about half is the town of Plains. I believe their number is 1100-1200. So about half of the people live outside of the city limits as do live in the city limits in the Plains Valley.”

External factors are affecting social capital in Plains. New residents are perceived as negatively affecting the level of social cohesion in the community, a major component of social capital. Structural changes in the community are demanding more from civic

leadership. When reacting to growth in the community, residents recognize the change but are resistance to growth management policies. However, as in Eureka, community structural changes have emphasized the need for a strategic agenda.

“One interesting thing seems to be a migration outside of the original consolidated communities. Platted town sites appear to be dwindling in size and there is a higher number of homes for sale within the platted town sites, and the result is a reduction of quality housing within the platted town sites. The sites themselves are moving more toward trailer park, single wide environments, rentals, a fairly mobile work force in and out. People who think they can come here and live find that they cannot afford to live here because of the lack of jobs.”

“I think the folks who have been here for a long time, having had a chance to talk with them, you know they shake their head and say, ‘I wish it was like it used to be,’ but the reality is they recognize change has to occur. They tolerate it. What’s interesting though is you talk to a lot of people and they say they still like the rural atmosphere and they want to keep it, and they want to maintain the farm land appearance and the open space appearance, but when you actually come along and try to impose management such as zoning or land use planning there is a real concern that it is taking away their rights to use their land.”

“I think the willingness of the people willing to look further into the future than where we are now. We are all caught in the day-to-day existence to a certain extent. People are willing to plan up to the point that they know where they are going to go tomorrow and the next couple of weeks or the next couple of months. There doesn’t seem to be a real strong vision for the future of the community should be going like what it should look like.”

“The county has been working on a comprehensive plan and it has been under a lot of debate and the planning board that was put together has through a lot of controversy.”

This desire for rural stability in the face of change is a common contradiction.

Neither Eureka nor Plains has professional planners to help them manage growth and ensure that new development does not harm the community. This may be considered a limitation of the civic leadership component in generating a vision for the future.

“What seems to be a limitation are the funds, the pay for well qualified long-term people who can actually provide some guidance for that vision process. And stay long enough, be attracted to stay in the area long enough so they can stick with it. ‘Cause planning is a dirty word and it takes a long time to make it happen.”

As the community structure of Plains changes, some residents saw the need for increased services while others thought they were unnecessary.

“Because you think, you got a broader tax base but apparently unless that tax base is a big industry or something, just homes. You have to have more roads. Plains right now has 3 full time police officers. Thirty years ago we had one that kind of putted around for a while and then went home. And 3 are not enough. It’s all the market will bear right now but 3 are not enough. The sheriff’s department is stretched to the max all the time fiscally. People don’t know it but there are a lot of hours a day when there is no police coverage in the county.”

The capacity for Plains to adapt to changes was perceived as being highly dependent on the foresight of the business community. Communities that are perceived by its residents as more willing to take chances and try new things are also perceived as having more successful and innovative business leadership. This is perceived as increasing the overall sense of well-being. Because Plains had adapted in the past, it may make it easier to do so in the future.

“Well I think Plains is a unique community and over all the years Plains has always adapted to the situation. When the mill went down and put 165 people out of work. At that point they diversified and they didn’t put all of their eggs in the timber industry bucket. They went into other things and that was part of the reason that Plains is a unique group of people who have a lot of foresight in being very optimistic for the future, investing money back into the community.”

“I think the key to it for Plains or any small community is to have a lot of little cottage industries a lot of smaller businesses so that if you add or subtract any one of them from the equation it is not going to overall affect the picture. You know Plains learned its

lesson with that saw mill and they never went back to being so dependent on one employer.”

Civic leadership and social cohesion, Harris’s social capital components, did not change considerably from 1994 to 2000. Plains ranked low for civic leadership and medium high for social cohesion. Like Eureka, civic leadership in Plains appeared to be making concerted efforts, but the population did not appear receptive to regulation.

### **Amenities**

Like Eureka, the concerns in Plains were about more than timber harvest and were closely associated with how people related to their landscape. The well-being of Plains was perceived by residents as associated with “natural beauty” and a “small town atmosphere.” The natural amenities in and surrounding the community of Plains were repeatedly mentioned as treasured aspects of the residents who have chosen to live there.

“The people here and it’s quiet compared to the city, very quiet. Oh, there are so many things it is hard to pick which is the most. Oh, being able to look out your front window and see five deer walk across to the park and munch on your neighbors trees.” (laughs)

“Well, I like the rural atmosphere of the community. It’s quickly dwindling but I like the scenery here and the environment and probably the lower population density.”

### **Agency Domain**

While Plains residents recognized the declining timber industry was a risky investment, many local residents still perceived the industry as a vital part of the community economy. The timber industry was often understood as out of the community’s control, while the Forest Service was often still charged with supplying resources to feed the industry.

“Well if they could control it, obviously keeping the timber sales alive and being able to keep the timber industry alive in Western Montana. Obviously those decisions aren’t made locally necessarily but if they could continue to make land available for logging because that is still one of the cornerstones of our businesses and a lot of economies depend on logging and timber. Although it is on its way out there are still a log of logging trucks, lot of loggers, a lot of people in other businesses that sell products to the timber people.”

“That base (timber) has been disappearing rapidly. I see two reasons, one is that the timber industry is voracious and it has now way, even if it wanted to have, it has no way of controlling the cut. If there is a market it will play to the market. If it’s a world wide market, it will play to that market. So, for instance we have an area between here and Thompson Falls called Thompson River and its 50 miles north to south roughly that many miles east to west. Maybe not quite, maybe 30. So 1500 square miles. When I came here in the ‘70s, the boast was that, and a lot of that is checkerboard, private, state, and then the higher land is federal property. And the boast was that there were 150 truck loads a day of virgin timber coming out of there. You couldn’t get 150 truck loads a year now. It was cleaned out in 15 years or so. So that is one reason there is no economic base. The timber did it to itself. Now the other reason is that under the Clinton Administration, the environmental restrictions have been promoted to the point that, and I personally think it had to be but the fact is they have been taken precedence over. Industry used to have its way and it doesn’t anymore.”

The Forest Service was also viewed as having a responsibility to the local community in terms of active participation in community projects, although controversy still surrounds the land management agency within the community.

“The current and past Forest Service rangers have made conscious efforts to be good community members; I will say that, for PR purposes. But if you take a timber community that can’t get at the timber then the perception is going to be that the agency is not fulfilling its responsibility. More specifically that is that anti-government feeling and I think there is a lot of that. At least amongst the older population who felt that the Forest Service’s primary role was to make the timber available.”



“I think the Forest Service needs to first of all be able to explain and justify some of the national policies at the local level and help the community understand where some of these larger policies are coming from and really to a large part the community understands that local agency representatives don’t always have that much control over the bigger policies that come down.”

### **Narrative Economic Data**

Residents often expressed concern about the lack of local jobs for community youth. Residents wanted the local economy to create opportunities for residents rather than force to look for opportunity elsewhere. Schools in Plains were often considered the focal point in the social lives of the residents in the community. And, the schools were perceived as suffering from lower enrollment due to declining job opportunities, which lowered the perceived well-being of the community.

“Almost I would say 80 to 90 percent of kids who graduate high school here either go on to college or find a job but they certainly leave Plains if not Montana and that is a sad, sad thing. And that is why there is no new growth or younger people, new blood coming in because everybody is forced to leave the state or leave the area because the number of jobs.”

“For the school the enrollment has been dropping. It dropped another 50 in the grade school this year. Long-term, the 10-year out projection has shown a constant decrease. There is just nothing here to attract young people with families. I think that trend is going to continue unless, I don’t know, something happens. And the cost of living here is fairly low but there just are no high paying jobs to support families is the problem.”

“My gut feeling is it’s still Sanders County, Montana. People survive however they can. They put something together. I can tell you from school demographics actually we are losing enrollment. We are actually losing enrollment like much of Montana primarily in the elementary schools. High school is still as big as it’s ever been. My theory is that if you are just starting out you cannot survive in Plains. Largely in Sanders County. People who are your age and maybe have one or two little kids it’s hard to make a

start unless you are a professional person and came here for a professional position you are not going to make it here.”

“The other point would be that as our community grows older and we don’t get new blood moving in our schools are going to suffer financially from not increased enrollment and that is not good.”

## **CHALLIS, IDAHO**

### **Community Characteristics**

*“To say the path has been rocky is an understatement.”*

- The Challis Messenger

Challis is located in central Idaho on Highway 93 and is the county seat for Custer County. A banner hung across Main Street reads, “We are what America once was.” Vacant buildings and gaping holes where businesses once stood provide good visual evidence of economic decline in Challis.

The history of Challis is closely associated with mining. Two major mines, Thomson Creek and Grouse Creek have played significant roles in Challis. Grouse Creek mine went into formal closure in 2000, and since then Thompson Creek Mine has experienced numerous lay offs. The consistent closing and reopening of Thompson Creek Mine has left many residents feeling hopeful and dependent on this boom and bust industry. This behavior has been characterized as learned helplessness.

In 1981 when the development of Thompson Creek Mine was first proposed, molybdenum, primarily used as a hardening agent for steel, was worth around \$17 per pound. Its current price is roughly \$2.75 per pound. An operation that once employed 500 employees dwindled to 200 and is currently operated by 70 employees. The significant decrease in the market for molybdenum and increased environmental restrictions are seen as two catalysts for increased community change and decline.

## Social Indicators

**Table 5: Challis, Idaho: Descriptive Statistics**

Year	Pop.	School Enroll.	Challis Unempl.	Idaho Unempl.	U.S. Unempl.	Chalis Poverty	Idaho Poverty	U.S. Pov.
-----Percent-----								
1990	1073	23.3	7	6.1	4.1	12	13.3	13.1
2000	909	21.9	2.8	3.8	3.7	12.7	13	12.4

Source: USDC Bureau of the Censes (1990, 2000)

The population of Challis decreased by 15.3 percent from 1990 to 2000. During this same period, the population of Custer County increased by 3.8 percent. Meanwhile, average household size decreased by .36 percent. The population is aging in Challis as 19.5 percent of residents were 65 years or older in 2000 compared to 13.7 percent in 1990. This exceeds the rest of Custer County where only 14.5 percent of the population was 65 years or more in 2000.

The percentage of people living in poverty in Challis was about the same as the state and national averages (table 5). Challis had the lowest unemployment rate among the communities in this study, which in 2000, was about 1 percentage point higher than the rate in Custer County and the state. The per capita income in Challis was also comparable to the county but lagged behind the state's average (see app. 2). The percentage of owner-occupied housing in Challis (69.3 percent) was lower than the rest of Custer County (74.9 percent) and the state (72.4 percent). If home ownership is an indicator of the ability of people to secure income commensurate with the cost of living, Challis, like Plains and Eureka, does not meet this need.

Like Eureka and Plains, the enrollment in Challis Public Schools is decreasing. From 1990 to 2000, Custer County school enrollment dropped by 1.4 percent. Furthermore, as the population in Challis continues to age and households continue to shrink, the declining trend in enrollment is likely to continue. As in Eureka and Plains, the health of local community schools is perceived as affecting well-being in Challis.

The educational attainment (persons 25 years and older with high school degrees) in Custer County (84.5%) is comparable to the state average (84.7%). Custer County residents age 25 and older had the following educational background in 2000: 10.4 percent had not graduated from high school, 37.5 percent had earned a high school diploma, 24.5 percent had attended some college, and 22.4 percent had graduated college or pursued graduate or advanced degrees.

Custer County was ranked four on the natural amenities index which ranges from one to seven with seven being the highest amenities value. Custer County is 4925 square miles and contains portions of the Sawtooth, Salmon River, White Cloud, Pioneer, Lost River, and White Knob Mountains. The population density is .9 persons per mile.

### **Social Capital**

Human relations in Challis are plagued by what one community resident considered the community “hobby horse.” The community reacts to the contentious issue of the moment with little proactive strategic visioning. Community civic participation is perceived as greatly affected by community history (for example, the boom and bust of Thompson Creek Mine). These legacy issues are perceived as teaching crisis management (as opposed to proactive

strategic visioning). An underlying desire to return to the past is evident in Challis.

“If you can get a board together that has some potential for growth in mind, they work really well together. But it is crisis management. When Cypress shut down we had a committee and we all got together and we sat down and we did a community plan. We had a very good community plan and it is long reaching and can be very long-term if it is used. Because the community got together in a face of crisis when the Cypress Mine was going to shut down. What can we do, Cypress is shutting down, what can we do to keep this a viable area? And the ranchers and the miners and the environmentalists and the Forest Service and the community all got together. And they said, ‘Hey let’s look at health, maybe we can build a health facility. Maybe we can do this.’ Had a lot of really good ideas but it is back to crisis management because they all went back to work, they all got their jobs back. Same thing with grazing and ranching. If they just let us go one more year or we are off the hook let’s not worry about diversity because all of a sudden we are OK. It is all crisis management.”

“There was some group from the grade school writing letters to the owners or maybe the Chamber of Commerce, something about the new Cobalt mine. There is a little town due north of here. Right on the edge of the Frank Church. A little town called Cobalt. There is still apparently a whole bunch of Cobalt in the ground. The Panther Creek that the mine was on is sterile. Has been sterile since the ‘50s from what that mine did to the creek. Now there is a Canadian outfit that wants to go back in there and get more Cobalt. And the whole place, Challis and Salmon are just gagagoogoo over it. For the employment, for the money. You know it will come for 3 to 5 years and then be gone again. It doesn’t work. They can’t get it through their heads. All of these little kids wrote letters hoping that the mine would come here.”

The lack of social capital in Challis is perceived as moving the community further into dependence, relying more on what Wilkinson (1999) termed paternalistic solutions, “those that may lack support necessary for continued empowerment and profits special interests at the expense of the common good.”

“I think another problem is we keep moving further in to dependence. Look at us, every time we have a problem we look at the federal government and say, ‘Why don’t you do something?’ We go to the city government and say, ‘Why can’t you do something? You’ve got to do something.’ Well it has got to go from you and them and them to us. We have got to take the first step.”

“I think they need maybe an outside source to come in and we could look at some alternative jobs, outside industries.”

Because of the lack of social interaction within Challis, problems seem apocalyptic. January 2002, during my fieldwork, the community “hobby horse” was centered on the Salmon River Electric Co-op (SREC).

“You know Salmon River Electric, that is the hobby house right now. Tomorrow it could be the city council or something else.”

This controversy in Challis centered on a potential increase in monthly rates due to failed investments made by the SREC board of directors. The community of Challis voted on January 14, 2002 to either keep or oust the board of directors.

“The issue of trust came up and the directors were criticized for not fully disclosing their intent.”

“I think a lot of it is based on personal agendas but you talk to other people and they say something different. And the action that was taken over this thing was so radical. It is like why would you want to throw out 7 people and bring in 7 new ones because you didn’t like this little piece of the pie. You can’t just take a snapshot and say this is the problem right there. Some people say there could have been a little more communication. But to throw out a whole board over the issue?”

The motion to remove the board failed by 60 votes. In an even tighter election, the current mayor remained in office by only 1 vote. Most problems in Challis resulted from inadequate communication between community leaders and

community residents, and the inability for community members to see the big picture, focusing on just one piece of the issue at hand.

“As long as there isn’t any contention everything runs smoothly, but when somebody comes up with a controversial idea... It is like the Attorney General said, the only people making a living in Custer County right now are the Challis Newspaper. (laughs) People like to air their dirty laundry in the newspaper every time something happens. It is a way of informing if it used properly.”

Overall, the most prevalent barrier for community well-being in Challis was perceived as attitude toward change. The reluctance for change has affected well-being by decreasing civic involvement, hampering strategic visioning. Both civic leadership and social cohesion are negatively affecting the community’s ability to deal with change.

“I guess it is kind of natural for people to be reluctant to change. But here it seems to be almost more difficult than most places. And maybe it is because I am not used to a small community and you know I am not brought up with small town politics and certain key families. And you know you might be in one organization and having been involved in the chamber and in certain aspects you feel like you are swimming up stream. You are bumping into these little road blocks. You find out this guy got this guy ticked off 12 years ago or whatever. I think in some cases some people have resented the mine for even being here.”

“Attitude. The old versus the new, really. Because what I see is the people who have lived here for many years like it here. They liked what they saw and they stayed in the area and they found ways to stay in the area. Other people that would come in liked what they saw, and they moved in and they wanted to change things.”

“People’s willingness to change. People’s willingness to recognize what these kinds of conflicts ultimately do to a community. I think we just start beating ourselves up from within. It just can’t be healthy. I mean we can disagree without being disagreeable.”

“Independent. The people here are very independent here and independent minded and a lot of people, a lot of people here have



worked for themselves or have worked for small business and with the infrastructure being land based and with other industries coming in here that are commodity involved, like you said, tangible, it scares them. Because number one, they do not understand and because they do not understand they don't want it and because the kids have stayed here they have the same mindset as their parents."

"You have the good ol' boys who don't want change and then you have got the people who say, 'Hey we really want to make something happen.' You have got to change your attitude. And that is probably the biggest barrier that there is."

"They are reactionary. They don't look ahead. What is the little sign here at the end of the street. Challis is the way we used to be or something like that. (laughs) It is a wonderful place to live. The weather is great. It is a wonderful place to fish but we use computers now instead of horse and buggies."

### **Amenities**

Like Eureka and Plains, Montana, Challis residents described their community well-being as affected by characteristics relating to scenic beauty and small town atmosphere.

"It was funny when I moved here one of my friends, he couldn't remember what the name of the town was that we were moving to because his wife had asked him and he says all I know is he says it is 150 miles from everywhere. And so he got out the map and says are you moving to Challis. He figured it out for himself."

A great deal of emphasis is placed on these natural amenities for the purposes of an alternative economic development strategy. However, the barriers thus far seem to be outweighing progress. The barriers are perceived as stemming from both internal and external change.

"There really isn't anything recreation-wise other than hunting and, of course, the boating is starting to get bigger. Challis, itself, and Custer County, their recreational part of the economy was in the salmon fishing and the steelhead fishing. It was amazing the amount of people who came here to fish. The river was just

swarming. And that was part of the economy that really dropped when the salmon didn't return. And of course a lot of the comments during the Columbia River Basin adjudication and all of that stuff was, we have a motel and no guests. We have the environment for the salmon but they are not getting up here. We have everything the salmon can use to survive because they did for years up here and not much has changed."

However, residents in Challis view the economic development that accompanies recreation as being less adequate than other possible economic development strategies.

"There is a lot of emphasis being put on recreation. In all of Idaho. And I really think we are trying to put all of our eggs in one basket with recreation. The industry itself is probably good; however, in this area most of the recreationists have become self contained with RV's or trailers. And they really don't bring in as much to the economy as people think."

"Since we are losing our grazing abilities. Since we are losing the cattle ranch type stuff. Since we are losing the mining. The only other thing we can fall back on is recreation. That will not change here. But with that come the menial, the service jobs. The big money isn't there in service jobs. And the recreation is seasonal. So, mostly summer and some spring. But winters are terrible up here."

"We don't have the timber industry anymore. We don't have the ranching. Nobody wants to get into ranching because it is too risky. And tourism, the bad thing about tourism is in the summer it is a good thing, and in the winter when Banner Summit closes to Boise we just don't get that much traffic. We have some people during the hunting season come up from Idaho Falls. A lot of people come here from out of state. But to come into town to do business in town in the winter months is limited. It is hard for people to count on that."

Challis was considered to have low civic leadership and medium high social cohesion in the ICBEMP assessment in 1994. This implied that while Challis lacked many of the attributes comprising civic leadership, such as a flexible, creative, and visionary leadership, it was able to work together to

accomplish goals, and residents were committed to the community. However, through a series of events, Challis has become increasingly polarized on numerous issues within the community. Leadership remains poor and social cohesion seems also to have suffered.

### **Agency Domain**

One of the concerns noted as affecting community well-being was the changing nature of the Forest Service. The agency was once composed of individuals who had the power and were willing to work “on-the-ground” with residents and now is seen as overly bureaucratic, incapable of listening or acting on the needs of residents. Forest Service employees in Challis were often perceived as using that particular community as a “stepping stone” to higher positions elsewhere, for instance.

“And I am talking about a lot of the recent past. Because the people that worked for the Forest Service, and I use the Forest Service because they are the biggest employer in this community and they still are. They were proactive in the community. They were friends and neighbors of ranchers and you know and they got involved. You don’t see that anymore. Whether it is because of the stance that the federal government has taken on the resources or whether it is because rural communities like Challis are stepping stones to further their career and they are not here long enough to really get involved.”

“The Forest Service used to push the Forest Service family concept. Let’s have you, your grandkids and everybody else and they got involved in the community and be a family. And you don’t see that anymore. That is a lost part.”

Often times the national positions will differ from the local community positions.

“I don’t think they can meet all the needs of the community but they have to adapt to some of the issues within the community.

You know since I have been here I have been hearing about these wolves. You talk to everybody around here and they didn't want the wolves but somehow the wolves got here and now they are talking about the grizzly bears, and people don't want the grizzly bears but they feel it is going to be hoisted upon them."

However, overall, both the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management were seen as major employers in the community, attracting a well-educated work force.

"The Challis Supervisors office used to be here and then they sucked all of those jobs into Salmon and the ones here disappeared, and so you know you probably lost easily half of the population of the Forest Service employees that they had in 1996, and when they combined the forest they also lost, they did away with those extra positions. And with that you get, it is pretty much expected of us to contribute to the communities so you get the volunteer fire department, and you get the people who know how to get grants, and the ones that have more education. I am not saying that government employees are the saviors, but it definitely adds a component of steady employment, good paying jobs, educated folks really."

"I mean they even moved the Forest Service out of town. Nobody said a word when they moved all of the supervisors' offices to Salmon. Nobody said a word. A stable, educated economy. Gone. And nobody really went out of their way to welcome to BLM here. Apparently the BLM is moving here with 20 or 30 employees. They help, an educated, stable economy."

In addition, the role of the Forest Service was perceived as moving from the management of national forest lands to aiding in the diversification of the community economy and for the management of scenic amenities.

"Well it is a land-based community and the management of the land maybe beyond hope at this point with all of the changes with federal laws and things like that. And the grazing and the ranching is a big major change. The recreationist probably the management of recreation might be a big thing for some of the merchants, for some of the business people when they are looking at being a recreation based business. I don't think we should put all of our eggs in one basket. I think there needs to be something besides

recreation. And really the land management I don't know if they can help us with that. In terms of trying to diversify and trying to get some other type of industry here.”

### **Narrative Economic Data**

The impression among community informants concerning business opportunities is that more and more people are just trying to hang on to their businesses. Overall, Challis was perceived as having the ability to and the desire for only doing things on a small scale. Diversifying the community without losing rural character was identified repeatedly as the main goal for addressing change.

## **NEW MEADOWS, IDAHO**

### **Community Characteristics**

New Meadows, Idaho is located at the south end of Adams County in a mountain valley with outstanding scenic attributes. Although the community appears somewhat distressed, it possesses a small town charm, with only a single paved street within the city limits. New Meadows is 120 miles north of Boise, Idaho.

Nestled in the foothills of Meadows Valley is a large expanse of residential development. Fall 2001, developers had about 14 subdivisions under construction in Meadows Valley. The development is hidden from the road, however; only a well-informed eye can spot the massiveness of the subdivisions in New Meadows.

Many of these new houses are second homes and the owners, consequently, are part-time residents. Because much of the growth is occurring outside formal municipal boundaries, it is likely not enumerated by the census. As development in Adams County continues, secondary data have begun to mask what has been perceived by New Meadows residents as “the haves and the have nots.” As wealthy residents continue to move into the area, the per capita income rises but does not adequately represent those who are struggling.

Economic hardship within the traditional and formal municipal boundaries of New Meadows is perceived as resulting from the closure of the nearby Cascade mill as well as the downsizing of the local JR Morgan Co. and Tamarack mills. Ultimately, the potential for community development is perceived as limited by this decline in base industry and the restraints placed on growth by the inadequate transportation and communication systems in New Meadows. The isolation is perceived as limiting the

local market to the surrounding growing metropolises of Boise and Lewiston. New Meadows residents predict their community will only grow at the rate of these surrounding communities.

### Social Indicators

**Table 6: New Meadows, Idaho: Descriptive Statistics**

Year	Pop.	School Enroll.	Comm. Unempl.	Idaho Unempl.	U.S. Unempl.	Comm. Poverty	Idaho Poverty	U.S. Pov.
-----Percent-----								
1990	534	21.2	21	6.1	4.1	NA	13.3	13.1
2000	533	20.6	10.8	3.8	3.7	16.4	13	12.4

Source: USDC Bureau of the Census (1990, 2000) and New Meadows Public Schools (2001).

NA = not available.

Like Eureka, New Meadows has had a stable population from 1990 to 2000. Between 1990 and 2000, the population decreased by one person from 534 to 533 people (table 6). During this same period, the population of Adams County increased by 5.1 percent. The number of households within New Meadows formal municipal boundaries was stable over the 10-year period. In 1990, the average household size was 2.58. This decreased only slightly in 2000 to 2.56. Approximately 9.9 percent of the population of New Meadows is 65 and older in 2000. This is much smaller than the rest of Adams County where 14.5 percent of the population is 65 and older. Overall, the secondary data show little change in the community of New Meadows over 10 years.

Poverty and unemployment levels in New Meadows were higher than in the rest of Adams County and the state. The percentage of persons in poverty in New Meadows exceeds the county by 1.8 percentage points and the state by nearly 3.4 percentage points.

Unemployment rates in New Meadows exceed the county and state by 6.6 percentage points and 7 percentage points, respectively. Unfortunately, the 1990 census did not report poverty statistics for New Meadows, but the unemployment figures provide some insight to economic activity in the community during that period. Between 1990 and 2000, the unemployment rate in New Meadows fell by 10.2 percent. Unemployment rates have remained higher than the rest of the state and the nation but have decreased at similar rates over the 10-year period (table 6).

Per capita income lags the rest of the county and state (app. 2). Additionally, percent of owner-occupied housing in New Meadows (65.4 percent) is lower than the rest of Adams County (79.1 percent). State housing tenure is 72.4 percent.

According to New Meadows Public Schools, the total number of students enrolled in New Meadows is decreasing. Between 1990 and 2000, Adams County school enrollment dropped .6 percent. Although the population of New Meadows remained constant, school enrollment continued to drop. Additionally, the educational attainment (persons 25 years and older with high school degrees) in Adams County (80.0 percent) was lower than the state average (84.7 percent). Adams County residents 25 and older had the following educational background in 2000: 14.5 percent had not graduated from high school, 37.4 percent had earned a high school diploma, 23.4 percent had attended some college, and 20 percent had graduated college or pursued graduate or professional degrees.

Adams County ranked five on the natural amenities index which ranges from one to seven with seven being the highest amenities value. Adams County is 1365 square miles with 2.5 people per square mile.



## **Social Capital**

Like other rural communities throughout the inland West, community well-being in New Meadows is characterized by social cohesion and civic leadership. These components of social capital seem to be affected by the unique characteristics and interactions of the rural residents that compose its population. When asked what they liked best about their town, respondents offered the following:

“Generosity of so many people. And I think a lot of people that are local to this area, second, third generation don’t have any idea how generous they really are. I mean somebody has always donated a building or it is just unbelievable. This recycling center, the library, the fire station. I mean it is just endless generosity.”

“I think it is very attractive. You know it is funky and it is eclectic and it is kind of run down but I like that. If I wanted to be in Aspen I would be in Aspen. It is just kind of cool and bizarre.”

“When one of our own gets injured, burned, whatever, we hold funerals in the school because hundreds of people show up. They come long distances. We all have that western attitude of self-sufficiency and independence and no interference.”

“Well it is a beautiful place to live and I love the seasons. Spring is a short one but I love the falls and I like snow for Christmas. We really enjoy the seasonal changes. We like not being around big populations.”

“I think the vitality of this community comes from the fact that people want to live here, they chose to live here and I think that is where it all is and why people come back.”

Summer 2001, some individuals from the New Meadows Chamber of Commerce agreed to participate in a research project sponsored by a group of University of Idaho business students. The project entailed a series of interviews with industry segments within the community. Part of the project goal was to assess marketable products in New Meadows, given the businesses that currently exist. According to residents who

participated, one of the most interesting products of the study was people sitting in the same room together for 2 hours talking about possible economic futures. Participants were surprised to discover that the “ski resort had never met the golf course.” The process alone made the study worth while.

It is particularly important in a community like New Meadows to distinguish what has traditionally been considered the community from the definition of community in the aftermath of community change. Like Eureka, and Plains, New Meadows is experiencing changing community structure characterized by ex-urban residents versus in-town growth. This is changing the distribution of the population of New Meadows and is creating what can be considered two different communities. And like the other rural communities in this study, New Meadows has an overarching reluctance to developing growth management policies. In communities, such as New Meadows, that are experiencing increased growth, land use issues are becoming more of a concern, and residents are beginning to see the potential for degradation of the surrounding amenities in the absence of planned growth.

“We have actually two communities and they are very separate. I think people fail to understand that. The city of New Meadows itself has become poorer and very mobile. I mean we might have a pretty good enrollment in the school in the fall and by the end of the winter months you might pull 10, 12, 20 kids away from the system. I mean it is just amazing.”

“Now because of some of the civic leadership problems, one thing that is starting to happen is businesses are starting to move out of down town and sprawl which is scary and sad. But there are so many problems with the civic leadership within the city limits themselves.”

“The big problem for the infrastructure here is that nobody who doesn’t live in the city can vote and so I think the last election there were 63 people voting. I think there are probably, my guess

is there are 150 people over 80 here and 150 below 18 and that leaves maybe 300 in between, maybe. So, the leadership core to pull from and I personally believe we should be incorporating the whole valley and make it one.”

“We don’t have a land use plan in this county and a lot of people don’t want a land use plan because they don’t want to be told what to do with their own property but having said that sometimes you have to look at those avenues because if you don’t you could create what you don’t want to happen. One of the things that is very unique to this valley, one of the reasons that people love it is because of the view shed. If you change that view shed then you are going to compromise and people aren’t going to want to come here.”

Overall the formal civic leadership in New Meadows was perceived as quite poor.

This coincides with the findings by Harris’ findings in 1996. The government of New Meadows, in particular, and the rural communities in this study, in general, are run largely by unpaid officials and part-time staff. As such, they are perceived as ill-equipped to deal with the increasing complexity of governing a changing population. This was perceived by many opinion leaders as forcing other active residents and informal leaders to turn to private initiatives for community progress. The formal civic leadership is accused of not being able to meet the standards that have “been lifted up” in the midst of community change.

“I have had some really bad problems with the city here because the city is backwards thinking. They are not proactive thinking. They are very conservative. Very, very conservative.”

“I think it is ignorance. It is lack of education and understanding. It is not that they are not intelligent because I think that if they had a vested interest they could become more educated, more understanding of the way communities have visions.”

“You know, year after year we go around and get a petition signed for downtown revitalization, and I helped do it this year. We need \$100,000 over 5 years. So you go to property owners and you ask them if they are willing to pay this increased property tax and 84

out of 100 were strongly supportive of it. But 16 of the 100 said no we didn't want it because it would have been \$20 more a month. First of all, it is not even required to go through city council but they chose to vote on it and because 16 of the 100 said no they wouldn't approve it for the fourth time, I mean where do you go from there? So you know we are basically completely stymied and there is just nothing we can do and I don't know how that is going to change. I just keep thinking if we keep doing things through the private sector initiatives. We finance things ourselves. Every time we put in a new building we put in our own sidewalk."

"There are private initiatives so the EMS building, the Depot building, the recycling center, the library. There are people doing tremendous work but not really the traditional political ways. It is harder to do without the political support because it is easier to apply for grants through the city but you could do it through other things. But it is more through private initiatives."

The perceived level of involvement of certain types of residents depended on who was speaking but no apparent pattern emerged. There were many competing explanations. There were those who perceived newcomers as not participating to the degree that long-time residents do. The other argument was that long-time residents were not willing to accept newcomers as participants. In New Meadows, this infighting seemed to be best described as between those who accept change as inevitable and those who resist change all together. The schism between newcomers and long-time residents is a real threat to social capital in New Meadows and as in Eureka and Plains, is perceived as negatively affecting community well-being.

"I am just real active and I am one of those people who loves change just for the sake of change so I am not very empathetic to that problem (resisting change) but it is a huge and painful problem for many people quote unquote locals and people who move here hoping it would never change. So my new friends are as likely to be in that camp as people who have here for three generations."

"The truth of the matter is if you don't engage change that is when changes really takes place."

“No, they (newcomers) are willing to invest in the community. The community is not willing to accept them.”

“There is a real independent type kind of thing, you can’t tell me what to do; we don’t like big government.”

“The biggest challenge is not going to be to sell people to come here, your biggest challenge is going to be to sell the people who already live here. The attitude has to change.”

### **Amenities**

Like Eureka and Plains, the distribution of growth and community settlement is affected by amenities. The growth occurring in and around New Meadows is perceived as having the potential to completely change the face of the community as new residents continue to buy homes, or build new ones, and property values begin to rise. Housing costs have increasingly become an issue. The increased land values may increase pressure on farmers and ranchers to sell their land. Some respondents expressed concern that families who have lived in New Meadows for generations may not be able to afford to stay in the area. This is increasingly a destabilizing factor in terms of community well-being.

“I am fortunate that I own a little piece of Idaho, but all of the people I grew up with, a majority of them are still renting in town or own a very modest something and now it has out paced them and what I was going to say to you is that I have third generation ranchers living here that their way of life has been raising a little of bit of hay, few cattle, and paying their taxes, selling their cattle for their income and just going on with their life, living in a very modest home. Now what has happened to them is that taxes are so damn high that they have no way to be able to make the money to pay their taxes because their way of life has just been raising a little bit, selling a little, so now they are being forced off of the own property.”

“There are geographical limitations. I mean we are a valley and we are surrounded by Boise Cascade land or state land and federal

land and we do have a river which floods into a flood plain for 2 or 3 months out of the year so there are some very severe geographical limitations. I think you could cram more places in if you wanted. You have probably heard people complain about this downtown area, how terrible it is. And it is just the fact of economics. When we develop this valley a little more, real estate values will begin to rise, these old slums that everybody hates will be priced out and they will be bought and they will be changed. So, you could have higher debt, and I can see that too. It may take 10 or 15 years but you will have higher density in this city.”

“There is an old, third fourth generation here and they really resent anybody coming in. And they still think they control everything but yet as a generation comes along they figure out they can’t make a living ranching they end up splitting it up and selling it as, most of it goes into developments for subdivisions and I think there’s five or six now and some of the older people still can’t understand why they do such a thing.”

### **Agency Domain**

The local land management agency was perceived as being responsible for remaining involved in civic matters within the community. Much of the recent community progress was perceived as relying heavily on those who are employed by the local Forest Service office.

“Now there are many employees at the Forest Service who are huge community leaders here. I mean just incredible. So it doesn’t always have to come from the top. They may be involved on their own anyway. In fact, recycling and EMS would not exist without some of the Forest Service employees. It just would not exist because they can bring so many resources with them.”

However, the agency in general was perceived as being out of touch with the interests of the local people.

“It would be nice if they would represent our communities but they get there marching orders elsewhere so sometimes the Forest Service is caught between the devil and the deep blue sea.”

“You will find that a lot of people in the valley really sour against the Forest Service because some of the people who are our age

who have lived here all their life talk about how the Forest Service got along with one ranger and the few foresters who worked and planted trees and did things whereas now they have a whole entourage of cars and trucks and they all sit there, or if they go out they don't do a whole lot."

"Every little group that has power via money and a voice pulls their chain. And the politicians... I think they would be tuned into the community if there wasn't somebody out there saying we are shutting down our forest. You wouldn't believe how they destroyed the roads into the forest in this area. You know that is just like locking it up."

### **Narrative Economic Data**

Like Plains and Eureka, schools were perceived as suffering in New Meadows due to decreasing enrollment resulting from declining job opportunities. However, in New Meadows, schools are also perceived as suffering due to the increase in retirees to the area, which also ultimately influences the relation between New Meadows and adjacent communities.

"Our school makes a community here. It is really the hub of the community for activities."

"Because this is more and more a retirement community. And there are no children. Well, it is just getting fewer and fewer. They laid off 12 teachers this year. They just don't have anything for them."

"Two years ago they discontinued the football team because there weren't enough kids to make a football team. And so if you wanted to play football you had to go to McCall. And so whether or not it closes in the next year or two I have no idea. The grade school is still pretty well supported but the kids here if they go away to the University they never come back because there are no jobs. There is no incentive to come back."

## **HALFWAY, OREGON**

### **Community Characteristics**

Halfway is located in northeast Oregon, east of Baker City and 40 miles from Hells Canyon. Situated in Pine Valley, Halfway has a long history of agriculture, mining, and timber. Halfway has also been known as Half.com. In January 2000, Halfway, became the “world’s first dot com city” when representatives from Half.com, an Internet company, convinced the community to rename itself as a publicity stunt. After a great deal of controversy Halfway became Half.com in exchange for 20 new computers for Halfway Elementary School, a prize raffled off at the County Fair, and funds to be used in civic improvement efforts, as well as numerous scholarships for youth in the community. The transition did not come easily as there were those in the community who believe that “some things just aren’t for sale.” The media heavily covered this story, and broadcasts were seen on CNN, Good Morning America, and in newspapers such as the Wall Street Journal and USA Today.

The Half.com publicity stunt occurred in the aftermath of years of economic fluctuation for the community of Halfway. Dam construction in Oxbow, 10 miles from Halfway, created a boom and bust industry in the community that can be traced through school enrollment over the years. At the height of dam construction in the early 1960s, local community schools including Halfway, Richland, and Oxbow had nearly 1000 students enrolled, more than 3 times the entire population of Halfway in 2000. School enrollment began to drop as certain portions of the dam construction were completed. Thirty years later the enrollment leveled off at about 200 students where it has stayed. Downsizing by the Forest Service and Idaho Power has caused perceived economic



decline in Halfway. These organizations were perceived as much larger in previous years. Presently there are no active mills in the area. What was once a sleepy ranching community is now a community forced to look for new ways to diversify its economy.

### Social Indicators

**Table 7: Halfway, Oregon: Descriptive Statistics**

Year	Pop.	School Enroll.	Comm. Unempl.	Oregon Unempl.	U.S. Unempl.	Comm. Poverty	Oregon Poverty	U.S. Pov.
-----Percent-----								
1990	340	20	1.7	4	4.1	21.9	12.4	13.1
2000	337	20	4.1	4.2	3.7	28.3	16.8	12.4

Source: USDC Bureau of the Census (1990, 2000), Baker County Schools (2001).

Halfway, Oregon is the smallest community of the five selected for this social assessment and had a stable population from 1990 to 2000. Between 1990 and 2000, the population decreased slightly from 340 to 337 people (table 7). During this same period, the population of Baker County increased by 8.6 percent. In 1990, the average household size was 2.22. This decreased slightly in 2000 to 2.12. Again, this shrinking of household size indicates a slightly older population with fewer children living at home. Approximately 23.7 percent of the population of Eureka was 65 and older in 2000 compared to 22.2 percent in 1990. This percentage is greater than in Baker County where only 19 percent of the population was 65 and older in 2000.

In 2000, the poverty level in Halfway (28.3 percent) exceeded that found in Baker County (16.8 percent) and the state (11.6 percent). However, Halfway unemployment (4.1 percent) was similar to Baker County (4.6 percent) and the state (4.2 percent).

Community unemployment apparently increased over the 10-year period and exceeded the rest of the nation.

Per capita income lagged the rest of the county and state (see app. 2).

Additionally, percent of owner-occupied housing in Halfway (58.5 percent) was lower than the rest of Lincoln County (70.1 percent). State housing tenure was 64.3 percent.

According to Halfway Public Schools, the total number of students enrolled in Halfway is decreasing. School enrollment is recorded at the county level, and the growth occurring in the surrounding area, particularly Baker City, may mask what is occurring at the community level. From 1990 to 2000, about 20 percent of the population in Baker County was enrolled in school (table 7). As in the other communities in this study, as population in Halfway continues to age and households continue to shrink, school enrollment will likely decline. The health of local community schools was perceived as affecting the overall sense of well-being in the communities in this study.

Additionally, the educational attainment (persons 25 years and older with high school degrees) in Baker County (80 percent) was lower than the state average (85.5 percent). Baker County residents 25 and older had the following educational background in 2000: 13.9 percent had not graduated from high school, 31.4 percent had earned a high school diploma, 27.3 percent had attended some college, and 21.6 percent had graduated college or pursued graduate or professional degrees.

Baker County ranked five on the natural amenities index which ranges from one to seven with seven being the highest amenities value. Baker County is a large and densely populated county. It covers 3068 square miles with 5.5 people per square mile.

## **Social Capital**

Community informants described their overall sense of well-being as associated with the “lifestyle” and “fellowship” of their community.

“This is the kind of community where you need your neighbor because financially it is hard to survive. There is just a dependence that is beautiful here.”

“We have a large group of friends here that hold a similar philosophy. Interestingly enough for a community of this size there is a real unordinary number of people who are well-educated. It is an alternative lifestyle. It is not real main stream. Much more than you would expect to find in a place of this size.”

“I like our lifestyle. It is laid back and I am kind of laid back. I like the recreation. I like the mountains.”

“Well, it is our togetherness, our willingness to work together to find solutions.”

“I enjoy small towns because there is just a laid back lifestyle. The town is small enough that you know a lot of people. The school is small enough that the kids can get involved in just about everything that they want to.”

The role of conflict in social capital is often indistinct. Often social capital is considered implicitly higher where there is little conflict. Halfway, however, has used controversy to ignite discussion and change and to increase social capital. With the emergence of the Half.com issue came the resurgence of and increased tension surrounding the relation between the community proper and the functional community that surrounds the area.

“There are 350 who live in city proper and 1200 who live outside of city limits in Pine Valley. Valley people can’t vote in city elections and they resent the fact that Halfway got the lion’s share of the Half.com money. Turns out the tension has been there a long time but nobody talked about it till now.”

“That was one of the problems with Half.com was that you have the city with whom the agreement was signed but you look around and the valley is so much bigger than that but this is my valley. This is me you are talking about. My address is Halfway. So yes the community is small and the valley around it is an extension of the community. The reason they started that was that the deal with Half.com and the city. The valley is affected just as much as the city.”

“There are a lot of folks who can’t serve on the council because they are outside of the city limits.”

“The main thing is in January we had a public meeting. It was attended by over 100 people. And in that meeting we went through and by input from people in the audience identified projects and issues that needed to be addressed and we prioritized those.”

“A real divisive issue was this Half.com thing. It really split the community apart. There were some really hard feelings about it. The UCP, we want to bring the community back together.”

Whereas Eureka and Plains, Montana and New Meadows, Idaho have recognized that the schism between newcomers and old-timers and the new community population distribution and community structure are real threats to social capital, Halfway is unique in that it has been actively working with residents of the rest Pine Valley to lessen the tension associated with these changes.

“Looking at the potential for the positive we have as a result of this, this whole getting together to list objectives, all evolved out of the desire for people in this valley to have more of a say about what goes on in the valley. Because you can’t make decisions about what goes on in Halfway without affecting the whole valley and so the potential for good coming out of this controversy is really pretty high. Taking lemons and making lemonade.”

Meanwhile, other civic groups in Halfway have been in long run decline.

Community informants attribute this to generational differences.

“Yes particularly from the younger segments of society, 20 to 30. They are not joiners. The Lions Club here in town over the years

has done numerous things. I don't know what it is. They young people just don't want to. We are growing older. But I think they are finding that everywhere. The Elks Club is sort of that way and all of the service groups. I would hate to see the average age of the Elks Club. It is pretty gray."

"Let's see, I joined the Lions Club when I was 30 and I have been in there about 30 years. And now, geez, we can't get 30 year olds to come. And I think it is just a generational thing. Gen-xers."

Halfway was ranked high for civic leadership and high for social cohesion in the ICBEMP assessment in 1994. Presently, civic leadership appears to be making concerted efforts and the population seems somewhat responsive to the innovation. Likewise, the residents of the surrounding Pine Valley are actively involved in the community decisionmaking process. Halfway is a good example of where the potential to deal with the civic leadership dimension of social capital was greater than the threat to social cohesion caused by the dissolution of place-based communities. This can be contrasted with Challis, Idaho.

### **Amenities**

Halfway was eloquently described by one community resident as "Halfway between heaven and Hells Canyon." Amenities are a driving factor for community change. Other residents described other characteristics of the physical landscape as contributing to their sense of well-being.

"I guess it would be a mix of this place and the physical setting. Access to the wilderness area and Hells Canyon."

"Being close to the timber and the mountains, and the hunting and the fishing. There are four seasons here. There is a mild climate."

"Visually it is a nice place to live. I come over the hill and I look across the valley and oh, it is a nice place."

The growth occurring in and around Halfway is perceived as affecting community well-being in both positive and negative ways. Like the other communities, that when Halfway residents become aware of the community amenities, for instance, in promoting tourism as an economic development strategy, that the potential for changing the face of Halfway increases. The uniqueness of Halfway is perceived as being affected by these factors.

“There was obviously a shift in the focus of the economy because I started coming to Pine Valley when I was 13 years olds. The big central point of the economy then was logging. They had a mill down the lower part of town. And then that was phased out in the ‘60s but there was still a high impact on the economy from logging clear up through the mid ‘80s. So there has been a shift away from that as the focal point of the economy. More towards tourism. Of course you have your agricultural base but you’ve got probably 3 or 4 more bed and breakfasts. Some outfitters. And there has just been a lot more people coming into this area for hiking and backpacking.”

“That is the north access to the Eagle Cap wilderness and there are getting to be more and more and more people over there using it. Snowmobiling has picked up significantly over the past 10 years.”

“Increased traffic. A big attraction this time of year is the canyon, recreation. There has been a heck of an increase going down that Highway 86. I would guess at least 100 percent increase.”

“I think most of the traffic increase has been because of the increases in recreation.”

### **Agency Domain**

Many local residents perceived the timber industry as being a less vital part of the community economy. The timber industry was often understood as out of the community’s control, yet the Forest Service was often still charged with having a responsibility to the local community in terms of active participation in community projects. However, a lot of controversy surrounded the land

management agency within the community. The downsizing of the Forest Service was perceived as affecting community well-being in negative ways.

“They are a big employer and so therefore they have the potential to have a big impact not just economic but social. Although they do seem to have their own little social circle, they also have kids in the school so they get involved with other social circles too.”

“Well I would think it would be imperative for them to stay here. And not to downsize a great deal further. So I am hoping that they remain a real viable employer in the next 25 to 30 years. And I would like to see some more logging if for nothing more than to clean the forests up. Take care of some of the horrendous fuel that is down there.”

“It was a multiple-use agency and now it is a no-use agency. They are not doing nothing.”

### **Narrative Economic Data**

Like Challis, in particular, and similar to other communities in the West, the prevailing preferences for limited government and the overarching desire to maintain a rural way of life persist in Halfway. Reluctance toward change is seen as affecting the sense of community well-being in both positive and negative ways.

“A lot of it is people’s willingness to adjust. There have been some people, the ones who were heavily involved with logging, who have been forced [out]; they didn’t have anything else to do for a living. But for the most part, people around here stick to this area, and so in order to do that, if they are not going to have the economic means to do that because logging goes out, then they have to find another way to make a living. So I guess the resiliency or the ability to adjust to find new ways to stay here. It definitely had an effect.”

“Well, you know there is a prevailing attitude in eastern Oregon that resource extraction is the only way to earn a living and people have a hard time letting go of that, and so I think that stubbornness, that unwillingness to look at other options is a real detractor.”

Community informants repeatedly expressed concern about the ability for community economic conditions to provide local employment opportunities for the youth. Schools in Halfway were often considered the focal point in the social lives of the residents in the community. The schools in Halfway were perceived as suffering from decreased enrollment due to declining job opportunities, which leave the youth few options other than leaving the community directly after graduation. These factors were perceived as reducing well-being.

“When they get out of high school they either go to college or somewhere else for work. Our local employers are the Forest Service and they have cut back, way back on their personnel in the last 10 years. And the school district is losing teachers. We have to cut back. Idaho Power has cut way back.”

“There is nothing for young people here. When they graduate from high school they either have to join up with their family in a family ranching situation and there are very few of those left or they have to get out of here and go to school and get themselves trained to do something else because you can’t make a living here. Not a good living.”

“Thirty-eight kids graduated from this high school last year and there’s none of them in town now. They’ve all gone to school or gone someplace else to work. That happens pretty much every year.”



## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

“You know we are going through profound and rapid change which many people have a difficult time with. I like to tell a story here. A lot of people say they don’t believe in change, and I like to tell them that it is not religion. It doesn’t matter if you believe in it or not because it is going to happen anyway, and we either get input into what happens with change or we react to what happens with change.”

-Resident of New Meadows, Idaho

It makes economic and social sense for a community to plan for change. And, while there are many possible solutions for communities that wish to manage growth, finding solutions for communities that are losing population poses an equally, if not greater challenge. Understanding the ways in which individual communities perceive change and the speed at which those perceptions develop is important. While change is inevitable and constant, it is likely that community perceptions will change dramatically during times of rapid transition. It was difficult to determine where each community was in the transition process imposed by changing federal land management and other shifts in the economy. However, the perceived levels of importance for factors affecting community well-being are likely influenced by stage of transition and are an indication of the general status of the community.

### **Understanding the Utility of Resiliency Framework**

The factors affecting the well-being of the selected communities have implications for understanding the durability of the social assessment framework used in ICBEMP. One way this study illustrates the factors affecting community well-being is

by recognizing higher ranked communities in decline and lower ranked communities that are improving. Also important are those instances where the scores given to communities during ICBEMP are reconfirmed 7 years later. My findings generally support those by Harris (1996).

Communities are constantly evolving. Measures that account for this change are necessary to evaluate resiliency effectively. Examining communities in different stages of transition helps address the temporal concerns with the resiliency framework. These concerns center on the ability of social assessments to examine communities in different stages of development and shed light on forecasting potential impacts of any particular policy or project.

In this study, it was difficult to examine the communities in the context of others because of the limited number and diversity of communities. This study examined the changes in the 5 communities over the last 6 years. Resiliency was defined in ICBEMP as a predictor of ability to adapt positively to change. It seems the communities in this study have changed so much in the past 6 years that typical measures of positive change, such as, population growth, and the definition of community itself, may no longer be relevant. What may be relevant to community well-being, however, are individual components of the old aggregate index used in past social assessment, such as social capital and amenities.

### **Defining Community**

Common in these communities was an evolution of the definition that placed less emphasis on the formal community (maybe defined by municipal boundaries) and more emphasis on informal communities, made up of the traditional community and the

surrounding residential development. This change in how we understand a community may change the way resilience has been understood. Eureka and Plains, Montana and New Meadows, Idaho have changed the most structurally. In these communities, the center is composed of the traditional formal community and the outer ring is increasingly being developed by new residents with a different set of values. How people identify with the community is changing to include and represent the informal community, which makes dealing with communities in social assessment difficult.

The social assessment portion of SNEP offers an alternative that may more effectively use census block groups. Aggregations of block groups were chosen as the primary unit of analysis because block groups captured the variation in social conditions throughout the Sierra and adequately represented social communities. In SNEP, the examination of block group data revealed that a larger portion of the population could be accounted for as compared to using census data at the place level. However, this approach still does not provide detailed descriptive information about specific community structure and processes that affect community-forest interactions. Indicators are important; however, this study found that the communities were all generally stable but the area around the communities was changing.

In this study, I selected communities that had similar characteristics: they are small and isolated, surrounded by large percentage of public land, and have a historical relation with the Forest Service. Based on the secondary data for the socioeconomic variables used in this social assessment, it is apparent that these communities are changing in similar ways.

Overall, the population trends for the selected communities and their respective counties show that while there was both growth and decline in the communities, county population increased from 1990 to 2000. This indicates that much of the community growth is actually occurring outside of formal and traditional municipal boundaries. Household size decreased over this same period at both the community and county levels. In conjunction with a older than average population, the shrinking household size may indicate that retirees compose a larger percentage of the population as do seasonal residents wishing to live near recreational opportunities.

Measures for income and equity were also fairly consistent for the selected communities. Per capita income was consistently lower than county and state per capita income for all communities except Challis, where per capita income was comparable to the rest of Custer County. Poverty and unemployment were also consistently higher with the same exception for Challis. Additionally, if higher levels of equity are indicated by greater levels of home ownership, then all 5 communities in this study have low equity.

Levels of education attainment were consistently lower for all selected communities. Furthermore, community and county school enrollment decreased from 1990 to 2000 at an increasing rate.

The distribution of growth and community settlement is driven by newcomers looking for recreational opportunities or coming to appreciate the scenery. The measures for quality of life reveal that all the communities in this study are ranked fairly high on the natural amenities scale previously described for this assessment. According to narrative data from community respondents, amenities are driving this type of growth in the communities and, in turn, make it difficult to study or even define community. A

new relation with national forest land is evolving based more on aesthetics; however, this is not to say that this new relation is not economic as well, as could possibly be demonstrated through an analysis of land prices in high amenity areas. Frequently it seems that the resilience of communities is highly dependent on the beauty of the landscape; less attractive places may have fewer options and therefore, a harder time adapting to change.

The distinction between several of the factors used to determine community resilience is ambiguous in that some of the components cannot be measured definitively or they are interrelated. It is important to consider the relative value of each of the factors examined across the entire set of communities in this study; this suggests key factors useful to policy makers when designing future interventions.

### **Social Capital**

Communities can be loosely or tightly knit. In the communities in this study, the types and strengths of connections among people living in the same locale influenced not only what they believed, but also their willingness to act on their beliefs. Furthermore, divisions between factions of residents within a community are an indicator of the level of community organization that also has implications for how individuals and groups respond to issues. At times there were competing explanations between community respondents. This study's evaluation looked at the predominance of evidence.

Community involvement trends focus on single issues rather than a broad base of participation in community groups and activities. Although many community leaders are good at understanding their community, they may lack the resources to respond to some of the concerns and issues. Most of the differences in the selected communities were in

their levels and types of social interaction. As such, this may account for most of the differences in communities and in their levels of resiliency. Many of the participants in this study talked about the schism between newcomers and long-time residents. (This was also understood as a schism between those who accepted change as inevitable and those who resisted change all together.) This is perceived as a real threat to social capital. However, migration in and out of the communities in this study has implications beyond those described above. The emphasis placed on informal social networks, which is directly affected by migration, is downplayed in the resiliency model. Community transition, resulting from in-migration leads to situations where government processes are increasingly substituted for informal networks to accommodate new residents who are often more accustomed to formal processes. For this reason, civic leadership is in flux as historically, many community events were predominantly led or organized by civic groups such as Lions Club and Elks that were key parts of the informal networks. In the past decade, the selected communities turned to formal processes, and residents were expecting local governments to perform nontraditional tasks often outside of the experience of government officials. In New Meadows, Idaho, for example, the inability of the formal city government led many community leaders and residents to turn to private initiatives to implement projects.

Social capital is likely a function of successful social interaction in a community. In this study, social capital was distinguished as containing two components: social cohesion and civic leadership. Civic leadership is a prerequisite for strategic planning, and communities that can develop a strategic plan are likely to be more resilient than those who cannot. Coordinated plans for the future are beneficial. After years of

economic declines, the selected communities lack such plans. Not all community residents were convinced that they were facing a situation that needed them to unite to overcome economic challenges. Acceptance of the inevitability of change is key if these communities are to prosper. Many participants in this study perceived the lack of strategic planning as affecting community well-being in negative ways.

Developing a strategic plan is the most feasible approach, in terms of a management intervention perspective, to influence community well-being. Developing a strategic plan enables a community to consider the emerging critical conditions and assess whether or not the community is progressing or declining. This holds important implications for the type of assistance that would best meet the needs of the community. Attempts to develop strategic plans in the selected communities were prompted by issues such as increased demands on community infrastructure. The lack of formal planning and attempts to develop a vision for the future leaves great uncertainty for the future of these rural communities. This may leave them at the mercy of larger changes. It is important for the well-being of a community to balance emerging critical conditions with a strategic plan.

The process of strategic planning enables a civic discussion, which becomes a valuable component of the strategic plan. The process of gathering input from residents, discussing community weaknesses, working toward consensus, and implementing projects makes a significant difference in the way communities address important issues. Community assessment must recognize that there are ongoing changes at the time of any study, so the assessment is reflective of a point in time but subject to uncertainty in the future.

The well-being of the communities in this study is, in part, negatively affected by changes going on that demand immediate strategic attention, such as Eureka's new 600-acre housing development and the dispute over management of the Salmon River Electric Co-op in Challis. These changes are affected by and affect community structure and social capital. Poverty level is not always an indicator of low social capital. For example, Challis, where social capital was perceived as being quite low and community structure in disarray, had the lowest poverty level.

### **Amenities**

Respondents most frequently said amenities were what they liked best about their communities. It is difficult to assess amenities in a regional social assessment because the rankings are often similar among communities and therefore do little to explain the conditions of communities.

In this study, addressing amenities did help describe personal attachment and overall quality of life in the communities. A quality environment, a good place to raise kids, and scenic beauty were among the top reasons people enjoyed their communities. Local policies that enhance and protect amenities valued by residents will likely help communities to retain and attract residents.

### **Agency Domain**

Change is inevitable, but it does not have to come at the expense of citizens and communities. With the increased realization that the timber industry will not cure structural problems within the community, community members are starting to look to the Forest Service for more than just resource utilization. If amenities and social capital are inherent to happiness and well-being, the Forest Service could help communities



adjust to change by participating in land-use planning, and economic development among other civic activities.

For this study, I chose communities of interest to the Forest Service because of the demands of rural residents associated with surrounding national forest lands. However, attempting to evaluate socio-demographic trends at the community level is difficult as is determining and ranking community resiliency. It may be that we no longer understand community. If this is so, federal actions may be better targeted at sub-communities rather than communities as a whole. Sub-communities are affected based on who they are and what their traditions are. The ex-urban versus in-town animosity is one example of this from this study. Examining the effects of agency decisions on these different sub-communities is an area for further research.

As a steward of the land, the Forest Service should participate in building strategic plans with rural communities. The Forest Service should ensure that their staff and the community has skills to support and are able to manage the national forest effectively and for a diversity of proposals.

### **Dynamic Measures of Community Well-Being**

Increasingly, the propensity for the conditions of communities to change overtime is becoming a more important measure in community social assessment than simply understanding the static condition of a community in transition. An effective social assessment addresses how communities perceive their ability to move into the future, assessing trends, and the tendency for a condition to increase or decrease. Dynamic measures could move social assessment beyond assessing static conditions.

The implications for dynamic measures of resiliency would lie primarily in the type of assistance designed for particular communities. For instance, if a community with low resilience was improving, the appropriate type of assistance might be different than in a community where resilience was declining. Assessing how a community is changing rather than how it is currently faring will likely be more useful to decisionmakers.

As one component of resiliency changes, it affects other components of resiliency. For instance, the out-migration of an educated middle class is likely to affect the social interaction of a community in terms of the quality and quantity of local leadership. It is likely that the components of resiliency will continue to affect one another in positive and negative ways.

The utility of a social assessment framework is found in its ability to be implemented over time and in other regions. In the interior Columbia River Basin, oral traditions are largely intact because these are relatively young communities. However, this would be one of the dilemmas to moving the ICBEMP social assessment elsewhere. Additionally, there is a need to meld small-scale with large-scale indicators. Whereas small-scale social assessment may provide a more adequate picture of the condition of communities, large-scale ecosystem management projects may need more time, energy and resources than are available to reach the level of analysis useful for social assessment.

## **Chapter 6: Inferences**

In this chapter, ways to strengthen and utilize social assessment are discussed from the perspectives of both management and science. The context for these inferences is set, in part, by the rural communities used in this study. This sample is representative of communities who have had the power to hold national forest policy hostage because of the demands of the rural residents. Recently, many programs have originated from the awareness that communities embedded in forests are affected by forest policy. The extent to which a rural community can adapt to changes associated with policy or program changes is a question now considered by policymakers.

### **The Management Perspective**

Ultimately, the question from a management perspective is how to sustain people while bringing about change. Social assessment is a useful tool for those who are in these positions. It is important for managers (natural resource managers, city officials, and others) to understand the unique culture of rural communities so they can plan for change affectively. For this reason, effective social assessments consider the prevailing values of the residents of rural communities and that these values are in flux.

The results of the social assessment for the communities in this study indicate that managers and agencies, such as the Forest Service, may be able to increase the ability of local communities to plan for the future by developing more effective processes for social interaction. Ideally, this will empower communities to build the skills necessary to access outside sources of help rather than relying on government financial aid to satisfy immediate problems. And although the Forest Service and communities do not have a

whole lot of control over economic structure or amenities, there is still potential to deal effectively with civic leadership.

In the original social assessment, Harris et al. (2000) suggest two alternative ways policy analysts can view the role of resilience. The first of these views centers on the idea that those communities lowest in resiliency are the ones most needing support, and government resources should be expended in this arena. The other view is that, in the name of economic efficiency, the government should “cut its losses” in terms of communities that are on the decline and not worth the benefits derived from expending societal resources on these communities. “Rather, government resources would be more effectively used on communities at risk but that have the potential to benefit from those resources” (Harris, 2000).

This research recognizes that communities are constantly evolving and changing. As such, defining the static condition of a community and drawing policy based on that finding is inconsistent with the realities of rural communities. Describing the way communities change will provide a clearer view of the way policy can intervene and the debate may shift from which communities are worthy to which intervention is most appropriate.

### **The Science Perspective**

An adequate definition of well-being is necessary but difficult to arrive at because people hold different values. Therefore, a pluralistic approach is required to address this problem. From a scientific perspective, the question is how to better capture the characteristics of rural communities. In this study, the question was how to represent the change from 1994 to 2000. This study does not contribute to the development of new

indicators of well-being, it does support Harris' predictions of community resiliency, the significance of the social capital features—social cohesion and civic leadership—and the importance of economic structure and amenities.

This study also recognizes the ambiguity that exists between current measures of resiliency and that these measures affect one another in positive and negative ways. The resiliency framework could be further improved by using more dynamic measures of community well-being. Additional research is needed to develop such measures.

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## **APPENDIX 1: Interview Protocol**

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this interview. I have about a dozen questions about your community, and it will probably take about an hour for us to go through them. The interview is part of an exploratory research project that is being conducted in the Interior Columbia Basin as part of a follow up study to the original social assessment completed as part of the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project in the mid '90s. The study is being conducted by the University of Montana and myself as part of my graduate thesis research. The purpose of the research project is to gain a better understanding of the factors that community leaders identify as important to community well being so as to provide insight on how natural resource managers and rural communities can fine tune inquiry in the future to better address factors around change that small, rural communities face in times of transition as well as to see how the communities are fairing relative to where they were at the time of the original study. Your participation in the interview is entirely voluntary. If there are questions that you do not wish to answer, let me know, and we can simply move on. Your responses to questions are entirely confidential. Your name will not be identified anywhere within the reports produced under this research. To make sure that we gather your comments as accurately as possible, with your permission, I would like to tape record the interview. As we've transcribed the interview, the tapes will be destroyed. Is it OK with you if I tape record the interview? (Wait for response). Thank you. Shall we begin? (Turn on tape recorder).

I want to start by asking some general questions and then some more specific questions about change in the community. But first can you tell me how long you've lived in the community?

1. In what ways have you been involved in the community?
2. What do you like most about living here?
3. What changes has your community seen over the past 10 years?

Probes: Have there been any changes in...

1. Economics
  - new business
  - lost business
  - businesses sought
2. Demographics
  - change in numbers
  - change in spatial distribution
  - change in kinds of people
3. Social Changes
  - social interaction patterns, conflict/cooperation, community involvement/participation, etc.
4. Political changes

--community leadership/ decision making; major issues, etc

5. Environment/ Natural Resource Changes

--Use patterns (economic, non economic), importance, etc.

--Fire

4. How has the community responded to these changes?
5. What aspects do you think contributed to the community's ability to meet its needs and move forward?

Probe: How does the community function to meet its needs?

6. What aspects detracted from the community's ability to meet its needs and move forward?
7. Are there any forces that you perceive as out of the community's control?
8. In addition to what you've mentioned above what do you perceive as the most important component of well-being for your community?
9. What do you feel is the responsibility of the local land management agency as an influence on the community's well-being?
10. How do you feel about the overall effectiveness of local leadership?
11. How do you feel about the overall ability for residents and community members to work together to meet goals?
12. How attractive do you feel your community is overall?

Probe: Scenery, Amount of Recreation

13. How about the attractiveness for businesses?
14. How economically diverse is the community?
15. When a major change (GIVE EXAMPLE FROM BEFORE) has hit the community, what things have most helped the community to adapt to change?
16. And finally, what additional information about the community should I know of?

I would just like to thank you again.

## APPENDIX 2: Community Characteristics

	Challis	New Meadows	Halfway	Eureka	Plains
<b>County</b>	Custer	Adams	Baker	Lincoln	Sanders
<b>State</b>	Idaho	Idaho	Oregon	Montana	Montana
<b>Population Trends</b>					
<b>Pop1990</b>	1073	534	340	1000	992
<b>Pop2000</b>	909	533	337	1017	1126
<b>County Pop1990</b>	4133	3254	15317	17481	8669
<b>County Pop2000</b>	4292	3428	16743	18837	10443
<b>Average Household1990</b>	2.57	2.58	2.22	2.37	2.39
<b>Average Household2000</b>	2.21	2.56	2.12	2.26	2.31
<b>County Ave. Household1990</b>	2.63	2.59	2.45	2.6	2.53
<b>County Ave. Household2000</b>	2.41	2.42	2.37	2.4	2.35
<b>State Ave. Household2000</b>	2.69	2.69	2.51	2.45	2.45
<b>65 years or older1990</b>	13.7	9.9	22.2	14	21.4
<b>65 years or older2000</b>	19.5	9.9	23.7	18.2	22.5
<b>County 65 years or older1990</b>	12.05	14.6	18.84	12.25	16.1
<b>County 65 years or older2000</b>	14.5	16.1	19	15.2	16.9
<b>County Land Area</b>	4295	1365	3068	3618	2762
<b>County Pop. Density</b>	0.9	2.5	5.5	5.2	3.7
<b>State Pop. Density</b>	15.6	15.6	35.6	6.2	6.2
<b>Income</b>					
<b>Per Capita Income1990</b>	11919	11160	9317	10012	8286
<b>County Per Capita Income1990</b>	11607	13732	10802	9813	9459
<b>Per Capita Income2000</b>	15803	11884	12997	12619	13010
<b>County Per Capita Income2000</b>	15783	14908	15612	13923	14593
<b>State Per Capita Income</b>					
<b>Unemployment1990</b>	4.6	14.6	1.7	10.2	8.5
<b>Unemployment2000</b>	2.8	10.8	4.1	9.8	4.7
<b>County Unemployment2000</b>	3.9	4.2	4.6	7.4	5.2
<b>State Unemployment2000</b>	3.8	3.8	4.2	4.1	4.1
<b>Equity</b>					
<b>Poverty2000</b>	12.7	16.4	28.3	22.9	20.3
<b>County Poverty2000</b>	12.1	14.6	16.8	18.7	19.8
<b>State Poverty2000</b>	13	13	11.6	15.5	15.5
<b>Housing Tenure</b>	69.3	65.4	58.5	65.9	70.6
<b>County Housing Tenure</b>	74.9	79.1	70.1	76.6	76.4
<b>State Housing Tenure</b>	72.4	72.4	64.3	69.1	69.1
<b>Quality of Life</b>					
<b>County Amenities Index (1 to 7)</b>	4	5	5	4	4
<b>School Enrollment</b>	decreasing	decreasing	decreasing	decreasing	decreasing
<b>County Education</b>	84.5	80	80.3	80.2	81.2
<b>State Education</b>	84.7	84.7	85.5	87.2	87.2
<b>Commuting Time</b>	23	19.8	15.4	13	16.2