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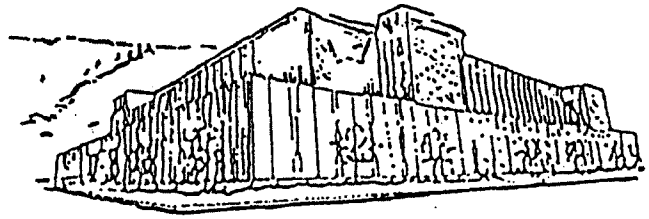
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REINVENTING HISTORICAL
NETWORKS?
THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE RURAL
COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE
PROGRAM IN DARBY, MONTANA

by

Joan M. Brehm

B.A. The University of Minnesota, 1991

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Montana

1998

Approved by:

Jul M. Belsky

Chairperson of Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

REINVENTING HISTORICAL
NETWORKS?
THE FOREST SERVICE RURAL
COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE
PROGRAM IN DARBY,
MONTANA

by Joan M. Brehm, M.A., May 1998

JB

Chairperson of the Supervisory Committee: Dr. Jill Belsky
Department of Sociology

In 1990 the Forest Service initiated the Rural Community Assistance (RCA) program to "assist rural communities dependent on natural resources to develop strategies and implement projects which result in community capacity building and long-term social, environmental, and economic sustainability" (U.S. Department of Agriculture 1993). The Forest Service's mission is to work with rural communities who "seek to build a vital rural community" as part of a healthy ecosystem. This implies that they will offer assistance to communities that have *already* identified a need or desire to improve their condition. Although the RCA program has been in existence since 1990 and has provided funding to more than 2,200 rural communities in fiscal year 1997, there have been few empirical analyses or evaluations. But how can an agency with a historical philosophy of managing public lands for timber and "multiple-use" suddenly charge its employees with a rural development mission that directs them to build community capacity? This study suggests that the RCA program in Darby, Montana did not necessarily *build* social capital, but rather *enhanced* existing social capital in a community that had a history of leadership, capacity, and relationships. It is not so much what the Forest Service did for the community, but rather the reinvention and rejuvenation of historical networks. Furthermore, the RCA program does not diminish people's perceptions that the Forest Service still has a primary responsibility for actively managing National Forest lands for uses that still include timber production.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

In 1990 the Forest Service initiated the Rural Community Assistance (RCA) program. Its purpose is to "assist rural communities dependent on natural resources to develop strategies and implement projects which result in community capacity building and long-term social, environmental, and economic sustainability" (U.S. Department of Agriculture 1993). The Forest Service's stated mission is to work with rural communities who "seek to build a vital rural community" as part of a healthy ecosystem. This implies that they will offer assistance to communities that have *already* identified a need or desire to improve their condition. The RCA program claims to build community capacity, but are they instead just enhancing *pre-existing* social and community capacity in selected rural communities that have already demonstrated an ability to adapt to social change? Furthermore, it raises an important question - what role does the RCA play in other rural communities that have *not* pulled together to identify their needs? This study will attempt to address these questions through an examination of the RCA program in Darby, Montana.

The RCA claims to provide assistance to rural communities through the collaboration with and involvement of many partners to meet diverse needs of rural people and communities. It is directed to work specifically with rural communities that are directly adjacent to or dependent upon federally managed natural resources. The RCA program has identified five process and product oriented outcomes for developing a vital rural

community. These include:

1. increase the use of skills, knowledge, and ability of local people
 2. improve community initiative, responsibility, and adaptability
 3. strengthen relationships and communication
 4. sustainable, healthy ecosystems with multiple community benefits
 5. appropriately diverse and healthy economies
- (U.S. Department of Agriculture and the North Central Center for Rural Development 1997)

The first three outcomes relate to the building of social relationships (known as “social capital”) and are process oriented. The final two outcomes are product-oriented, they relate to what actually happens and results when development succeeds. This study focuses on the first three goals, and in particular to building of community social capital.

Although the RCA program has been in existence since 1990 and has provided funding to more than 2,200 rural communities in fiscal year 1997, there have been few empirical analyses or evaluations. What is particularly lacking are critical analyses embedded in the context of broader changes in Forest Service policy regarding rural community development and collaborative participation. Devolution of decision making authority and power to the local level requires a prior examining of the specific political and social histories of a community. This study attempts to provide such an evaluation based on a case study of the RCA program in Darby, Montana.

From my study of the RCA in Darby, I found three significant themes: the importance and historical significance of social networks, how the RCA program is acting as a catalyst for collaboration, and significant issues that went beyond the RCA. I propose that the pre-existence of both formal and informal social networks provided a foundation upon which the RCA program could build. I also suggest that the RCA program acts as a catalyst for broader collaborative efforts in the Darby community planning process. Without the pre-existence of historical social networks, community leaders, and levels of trust among

community members, I conclude that the RCA program would likely be merely a small source of grant money. The historical presence of social networks and social capital allow the RCA program in Darby to foster broader, collaborative efforts beyond simply the community and Forest Service. But regardless of the level of acceptance and support for the RCA program, I also suggest that the RCA program is not responding to all the concerns of the people I interviewed in Darby. This includes the management of National Forest public lands. Many residents view the RCA program as an additional and essential component of their relationship with the Forest Service and the landscapes. But they think the Forest Service's main responsibility is to manage federal lands for multiple uses, to many of them, especially timber harvesting.

Historically, Forest Service policy has centered around the management of public lands as an economic or commodity based resource, largely based on timber production. The focus has been commodity use oriented and utilitarian (Hirt 1994). Despite a "progressive era" utilitarian approach to managing forests for the greatest good for the greatest numbers, management and policy were directed by industry and commodity needs. The impacts of forest policy on rural peoples were considered only in terms of the number of jobs or timber related employment, with little or no consideration to the broader community "well-being" (Kaufman and Kaufman 1946). Well-being can be defined as the opportunities people have and their achievements in light of those opportunities, and goes beyond simply a measurement of employment to include the importance of a sense of place (Kusel 1996). Kaufman and Kaufman (1946) refer to well-being as not only a concern for "what people do for a living," but also "how well they live."

Over the last 30 years, the Forest Service faced important organizational and policy changes that altered the historical ways with which it defined and measured its

relationship and responsibility to rural timber dependent communities. Some suggest that rising environmentalism, technological developments, and aesthetic considerations caused a historical shift of guiding Forest Service Philosophy from a strict commodity production focus to an ecosystem management focus, including sustainable rural development and collaborative decision making (Brown 1995; Davis 1997; Drielsma, Miller and Burch Jr. 1990; Fortmann, Kusel and Fairfax 1989; Hirt 1994). Yet the switch to ecosystem management and particular severe timber cuts led to public outcry, primarily by those whose job security was directly affected by drastic cutbacks in Forest Service timber sales. Forest workers and residents of timber dependent communities suggested that, with the loss of forest-based employment, the Forest Service broke what they perceived as a "social contract" between them (Brown 1995).

The question of whether or not the Forest Service has a responsibility to forest-dependent communities, and what does that responsibility mean in practice, has been hotly debated. Dale Bosworth, the Regional Forester for the Northern Region (R1), recently stated that the Forest Service has no legal responsibility to help forest-dependent communities adjust to recent changes. "A lot of people believe that the Forest Service has a direct responsibility to maintain viable communities or community stability, but we don't - at least not a legal responsibility" (Westby 1998: 12). In contrast, the pending Public Lands Management Improvement Act of 1997 is trying to impose a legal responsibility on the Forest Service and other Federal land management agencies for the stability of forest dependent communities. The bill is intended to "provide the Federal land management agencies the authority and capability to manage effectively the federal lands in accordance with the principles of multiple use and sustained yield, and for other purposes" (Congress 1997). According to this legislation, Part B, Section 109, land management agencies are

directed in their "responsibility for consideration of communities" as follows:

In preparing, amending, or revising a resource management plan, the Secretary shall consider if, and explain whether, the plan maintains to the maximum extent feasible under this Act and other applicable law the stability of each community dependent on the resources of the Federal lands to which the plan applies (Congress 1997).

Another social force influencing the policy debates is the federally mandated restructuring and downsizing of federal agencies. The size of the Forest Service workforce is reducing while at the same time the workload of the remaining employees is increasing. Since 1981, the total Forest Service full-time equivalent (FTE) workforce has declined from 3324 FTE to 2384 FTE in 1997, a twenty-eight percent decline in 16 years (U.S. Forest Service 1997). This downsizing has required people on the ground to do more with less and seek alternative means to accomplish their tasks. Rapidly changing technology in timber and shifts in global wood markets were also influential during this period. Finally, the shift is also driven by several national environmental policy acts, including the National Environmental Policy Act of 1970, and the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

In order to further understand the RCA program, it is first necessary to examine how the USFS defines its purpose and goals. According to the Forest Service, the purpose of the RCA program is to help rural, resource dependent communities to develop strategies and implement projects which result in community capacity building. However, this definition begs many questions about how community capacity is defined and what constitutes social, environmental, and economic stability? Furthermore, empirical case studies are essential to understand how the goals of the RCA program are operationalized and measured in terms of real, everyday success or not, specifically within the context of the particulars of a rural forest community. This is a complex task because no two rural forest communities are completely alike.

The term "community stability" has had a long history within the Forest Service. It was developed to signal a concern for the economic stability of rural forest communities. The concept was measured by the number of jobs created from Forest Service timber sales under a supposedly sustained yield management policy (Drielsma, Miller and Burch Jr. 1990). However, others argue that the Forest Service's commitment to a policy of "community stability" was tied to the politics of the times (Drielsma, Miller and Burch Jr. 1990; Fortmann, Kusel and Fairfax 1989; Hirt 1994). The narrow definitions underlying "community stability," its emphasis on politically-biased definitions, and critiques are significant to the understanding and analysis of the current rural development policy, and subsequent RCA program, and will be taken up later on.

In chapter two I provide a review of relevant literature which affords a glimpse of the critiques and various definitions for "community stability" , "rural development," and "social capital and community capacity." This review provides an understanding of how different meanings can affect policies such as the RCA program and can be used to justify and enhance the activities and relationships on the ground between the Forest Service and rural forest communities. In chapter three I discuss the study design and methods used to structure my research and analysis. Chapter four presents an overview of the history of Darby and demonstrates the historical nature of change and social networks within the community. Chapter five outlines the RCA program within the context of the Forest Service definitions, and frames the specific RCA program in Darby. Significant findings and themes are discussed in chapter 6, followed by lessons learned and questions for further research and debate in chapter 7.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Relationship Between Rural Communities and the Forest Service

The historical goal of the USFS was utilitarian in nature and focused on the management of federally owned forest lands for timber production. Regardless of the emphasis on managing forests for timber production, there is evidence of strong reference in law and policy that demonstrated consideration for rural communities in concert with sustained yield policy. At the time, "community stability" referred to the security of steady employment and economy, which in rural communities providing labor for the timber industry, was directly tied to harvest levels on National Forests. The concept of community stability first appeared linked to sustained yield in the 1920s. David T. Mason, a forester, consultant, and lobbyist for the timber industry, was instrumental in developing the concept of sustained yield which was eventually adopted as Forest Service policy, as the Sustained Yield Forest Management Act of 1944 (Drielsma, Miller and Burch Jr. 1990). Mason envisioned sustained yield policy first and foremost as providing for the nation's timber supply, and indirectly realizing a steady labor supply in forest-dependent communities as an outgrowth or secondary benefit (Mason 1927).

The Sustained Yield Forest Management Act of 1944, which Mason was instrumental in developing and supporting, provided the authority to establish Cooperative Sustained Yield Units to "promote the stability of forest industries, of employment, of communities, and of taxable forest wealth" in order to sustain the stability of communities

that were primarily dependent on federal forest timber resources. The act bound the Agency to supply timber at appraised values to only one or a select few mills within forest dependent communities (Drielsma, Miller and Burch Jr. 1990). The Forest Service was encouraged through the language in the law to enter into long-term, noncompetitive contracts with local mills in timber-dependent communities to assure a continuous supply of wood, consequently maintaining the stability of the community (Hirt 1994).

Since this time, several acts have further supported the policy of community stability. The National Forest Management Act of 1976 solidified a traditional but contentious even flow timber supply strategy for national forests through the sustained yield and nondeclining even flow (NDEF) provisions in section 11 (36 CFR 219.16) of that law . Both sustained yield and NDEF were designed in part to address community stability (Dana and Fairfax 1980). Furthermore, Congress continued to reaffirm the obligation of the Forest Service to maintain and promote community stability by recognizing the importance of Forest Service timber sales and the related road building program to the economies of forest dependent communities (Schallau 1990).

The Kaufmans (1946) study challenged the narrow focus of the USFS definition of community stability. To these researchers, community stability goes beyond just timber jobs but implies orderly change rather than a fixed condition or maintenance of the status quo. They claim the most stable communities are those that embrace orderly change towards given goals, goals which they define and move them towards broad social objectives (Kaufman and Kaufman 1946). Later on, the USFS guidelines define community stability in a simple sense as "the rate of change with which people can cope without exceeding their capacity to deal with it" (U.S. Department of Agriculture 1982). Although this definition recognizes the orderly change that the Kaufmans identified, it remains difficult to

operationalize or measure. Gilmore (1976) offers a more analytical definition of community stability. He states that community stability is achieved when a community's basic firms producing for markets outside the area and public service sectors are more or less in balance. Burch and DeLuca (1984) define a stable community as having three primary characteristics: 1) diversity of functions, 2) well-defined personal roles, and 3) changing slowly enough to allow for adaptation. The latter definitions go beyond "stability" based on timber jobs and provides an opening for the USFS RCA program to include non-timber jobs related to rural development.

Despite the fact that the concept "community stability" and connoted concern for rural communities has continued to appear in Forest Service policy and law, it has been widely critiqued as a euphemism and rationale for mostly "getting out the cut" and remaining too narrowly defined and measured as an economic indicator, with very little regard for the broader social well-being and economic development of rural communities (Burch and DeLuca 1984; Congress 1997; Drielsma, Miller and Burch Jr. 1990; Fortmann, Kusel and Fairfax 1989; Hirt 1994; Hoberg 1997; Kaufman and Kaufman 1946; Machlis and Force 1988). The Kaufmans questioned the elementary premise for "community stability," when in fact, the most apparently absent characteristic of rural forest communities is that of stability. Communities built around timber related industries are actually most noted for change or instability, as they are either boom towns or ghost towns (Kaufman and Kaufman 1946).

The Kaufmans critique the Forest Service policy of community stability as an attempt by the Forest Service to ensure the social welfare of rural communities through forest management techniques which above all promoted sustained yield management units (Kaufman and Kaufman 1946). In trying to move beyond these narrow concerns, the

Kaufmans outlined three approaches to a more development oriented policy of “community stability.” These included a land use approach which was based on the premise that a community’s survival is dependent on the conservation and wise management of its natural resources. Second was the industrial and employment approach, which promoted the need for sufficient industries to provide adequate services and employment. Finally, was the social welfare and organizational approach which noted that peoples interests and the organizations necessary for meeting these interests must be considered (Kaufman and Kaufman 1946). The Forest Service at the time did not agree. In contrast, the Forest Service concept of community stability continued to be narrowly applied and centered only around the second approach, that of economic and industrial stability through sustained timber management. The broad social objectives of social welfare and conservation of natural resources were not addressed in the Forest Service policies of the time.

Drielsma, Miller and Burch (1990) concur with the Kaufman study in that rural forest communities are in fact some of the most unstable and least prosperous of all rural communities. Most rural forest communities are plagued by high seasonal unemployment, low wages, and high rates of population turnover. Standards of health and happiness appear to be below average, and housing, amenities, and public services are poor (Drielsma et al. 1990). It appears that the notion of community stability within Forest Service policy lost some of its meaning, and became rather idealized as time passed. Fortmann, Kusel, and Fairfax (1989) argue that community stability has been used to justify or defend so many different activities and proposals that it is virtually devoid of content and that it is, politically, “a figleaf to conceal the agency's pro-industry bias” (Fortmann et al. 1989).

Since the historic Montana Study and its critique of community stability, several additional critical analysis have been conducted which examine the Forest Service concept

of community stability as a tool for rural development. Hirt (1994) and Drieslma, Miller, and Burch (1990) have noted that community stability was defined and measured by the number of jobs supported by Forest Service timber sales and sustained yield management, a very narrow definition that was not always in the best interest of the general public, but rather a select few private timber corporations. This is further supported by the previous notation that in fact it was a forester and timber industry representative, David T. Mason, who initially championed the concept of community stability as a byproduct of sustained yield. Community stability further provided justification for the sustained yield policy which had come into dispute, even within the Forest Service itself. The questionable policy of sustained yield was seen as justifiable if it kept mills running and rural people employed, therefore providing stability, if only for a few more years (Hirt 1994). As we move towards looking at broader ways of conceptualizing the Forest Service relationship to rural communities, it is important to examine how to study and think about "community."

Social Capital and Community Capacity

Social capital may be described as the features of social organizations, such as norms, networks, and trust that facilitate cooperation and coordination for mutual benefit (Putnam 1993). Social capital is essential to the capacity and ability of a community to deal with change and conflict. As Duane (1997) notes, it is not sufficient to only have intellectual capital grounded in good science and information to solve conflicts, but people must also have trust and certain levels of working relationships to reach successful agreements in good faith. "Information does not resolve social conflicts; people do" (Duane 1997: 775). Putnam (1993) further explains that voluntary cooperation is easier in a community that already possesses a certain degree of social capital, in the form of norms or

reciprocity and networks of civic engagement.

Reciprocity and mutual trust are significant related components of social capital (Flora and Flora 1996; Putnam 1993). Flora (1996) and Putnam (1993) identify and define several configurations for social capital. Social capital can be horizontal, hierarchical (vertical), or nonexistent, and each variation has different implications for community. Horizontal social capital implies egalitarian forms of reciprocity, in which each member of the community is expected to both give and receive something of value from the community. Hierarchical social capital implies the same norms of reciprocity and trust, but the networks are vertical rather than horizontal. Often the vertical relations in hierarchical social capital create patron-client type relationships, which creates dependency by the majority of the population on those few at the top of the hierarchy and mistrust of outsiders. Communities with hierarchical social capital commonly have a history of dependence on a single industry, such as the rural timber-dependent communities that were built up solely around the timber mills (Flora and Flora 1996). Of the various configurations for social capital, only the horizontal configurations constitute true "networks of civic engagement" and therefore are most likely to generate social capital and cooperation (Duane 1997; Putnam 1993).

Social capital can be created or enhanced by concentrating on building social infrastructure, which is based on trust and reciprocal relations (Flora and Flora 1996). Another indicator of social capital within groups is the overlap in organizational membership or "cross-boarding" of people. "Cross-boarding" refers to instances where members of one project attend the meetings of other projects and in the process share vital information and resources (Flora, Flora and Wade 1996). As noted above, Kaufman and Kaufman (1946) identified approaches to building community stability that went beyond the

simplistic and narrow economic focus exemplified in the Forest Service policies of the time. They discussed a need for trained leadership with vision, widespread participation on the part of all groups, and cooperative action toward common ends as essential for community well-being or stability (Kaufman and Kaufman 1946). They identified ten strategic areas of social, economic, and human capital as necessary to promote community well-being. In addition to economic areas, they cited as necessary promoting of greater public participation in determining forest policy, developing a forest-centered tradition, and securing adequate leadership in community affairs (Kaufman and Kaufman 1946). Increasing social capital is often achieved through focusing on the process, rather than on the product or outcome (Flora and Flora 1996). The process recognizes continuous learning and building of trust and relations along the way, which inevitably leads to stronger horizontal ties and horizontal social capital.

"Community capacity," like the concept of "community stability," has various definitions. The Lead Partnership Group of the 7th American Forests Congress defines community capacity as the "ability of local communities (residents) to take care of themselves, adapt to changing circumstances and improve local opportunities" (Kusel, Gray and Enzer 1996:6). Capacity is also described simply as "what enables communities to pull through hard times" (Kusel and Fortmann 1991:84). Community capacity is often associated with the improvement of social networks or social capital within rural communities. Social capital, including the ability and willingness of residents to work together for community goals, is often seen as one of the most important determinants of community capacity (Kusel 1996).

The RCA Within A Restructuring Rural West

Along with the transformation away from the concept of "community stability" as a primary goal of the Forest Service, definitions of and values for "rural" are also in a state of change. Throughout the American West, rural communities are experiencing rapid change spurred not only by U.S. bureaucratic change, but by local, national and global forces as well. As global commodity markets shift, technology advances, and urban populations increasingly take flight to rural areas, the implications for rural communities have been monumental. These changes are further complicated by the fact that the forces that buffet rural communities are no longer simply associated with local level activities, but rather they are far broader than those that originate within or can be controlled by the communities themselves (Freudenburg 1992). The consequences of the growing globalization of industrial and financial capital for nation-states, their regions, and localities and the spatial distribution of industrial production are increasingly becoming significant forces in the context of rural America (Marsden, Lowe and Whatmore 1990). Furthermore, increasing technology has enabled people to move further from urban centers of commerce, while still being able to conduct business on a global level. The advent of computers, modems, the Internet, and other such technologies have played a role in increasing the ability of people to live in rural communities with certain recreational or lifestyle amenities, without having to rely on the economy of the community for employment. The influx of people into rural communities whom do not directly depend on the local economy to make a living, but rather bring their own capital and resources from outside, has had dramatic effects on the restructuring of rural America; and on community cohesion in particular.

It is important to be aware of the multifaceted forces that are impacting Darby and the context in which Darby is responding to change. A significant change common to many Western rural communities is the decline of traditional natural resource extractive economies based on mining, logging and agriculture. Many of these communities grew up around the extraction of these natural resources and their processing. For example, Darby was born from the timber boom in the 1800s and has been considered a "logging town" ever since, even when the economic base had changed (Bell, Grant and Twogood 1982). The economy in Darby has historically been based almost exclusively on forest related industries, such as logging and mill work. During the last ten years, three out of four mills have closed, and many forest related jobs and employers have also vanished.

To further complicate the situation, natural resource dependent communities are struggling to find ways to deal with the influx of newcomers that are moving in but who increasingly do not depend on the community or surrounding natural resources for their economic livelihood. Advancing technology makes it possible for "lone eagle" types to carry out national and international transactions from the comfort of their rural home offices (von Reichert and Sylvester 1997). "Lone eagle" types are defined by von Reichert (1997) as professionals who abandon city life and set up businesses from their home offices. Many of these newcomers bring with them very different values and symbolic views of the landscape that are often perceived by long-term residents with jobs tied to natural resource based extraction as being in conflict with their values and livelihood strategies. Many researchers note that newcomers often view the forest as an amenity or something to provide solitude and recreational opportunities, while long-time residents view the forest as a means of making a living (Bengston 1994; Power 1983; von Reichert and Sylvester 1997). Additionally, social class distributions are becoming more apparent and divisive among long

term rural communities. This is visible as migrants have the capital and resources to purchase land and build expensive homes. These newcomers are frequently perceived by local, long-time residents as driving up property values, and creating a more stark division between the "haves and have nots."

A transformation of land, culture and economy has been occurring throughout the West with irrefutable results and implications. An example of the significance of the magnitude of the changing rural west is a special issue of High Country News which was dedicated solely to "Small Towns Under Siege" in 1993 (High Country News 1993). In this special issue, several case studies were reported which highlighted the rapid change that is underway in many rural communities in the West. The stories document the growing diversity in income, livelihoods, social construction of landscapes, and forest values which often build to a point of conflict and create deep polarization within the community.

Many rural communities, especially historically natural resource dependent communities, are facing economic vulnerabilities and new choices about how to make a living, how they view the forests, and how they respond to policy shifts and timber cuts that are beyond their control. The Forest Service is attempting to help absorb some of the tensions in these shifts by developing and implementing the RCA program. As rural peoples, especially those dependent on forestry jobs, struggle with change and adapting to a new place in the broader, expanding context of 'rural' places, the Forest Service also is developing its own ideas and funding to support their definition of 'rural development' in order to assist rural communities. The next discussion will explore the Forest Service role in trying to influence this outcome.

The Forest Service and Rural Development

In response to the cutbacks in timber harvests, public outcry, and political pressures during the late 1980s, then Chief of the Forest Service, Dale Robertson, established a National Rural Development Task Force in December of 1989 to review and redefine the Forest Service's rural development focus. He requested a "unified plan that clarifies our commitment and strengthens our contribution to rural America" (U.S. Department of Agriculture 1990: 1). The Agency received Economic Diversification Studies money from Congress, which was the Agency's first funds directly targeted at economic development in rural communities. The formation of the Forest Service task force on rural development was in response to a broader USDA report titled *A Hard Look at USDA's Rural Development Programs*, which recommended that the department "clarify its commitment to rural development, strengthen coordination of rural programs, improve its ability to implement those programs, and enhance the department's capacity for strategic action" (McWilliams, Saranich and Pratt 1993: 130).

This action represents evidence of the first directed Agency effort to clarify or question the historical concept, definition, and measurement of Forest Service relations and obligations to rural communities, including the historic concept of community stability.

Chief Robertson provided a six-point working agenda for the Forest Service in the 1990s.

This agenda included:

- partnerships
- customer satisfaction
- building strong grassroots support
- rounding out Forest Service programs
- workforce diversity

- innovative/creative, people-oriented Forest Service culture

Financial and political support for the new rural development policy and subsequent RCA program came from the 1990 Farm Bill, Title 23, Subtitle G, - Rural Revitalization Through Forestry (Chapter 2), known as the National Forest-Dependent Rural Communities Economic Diversification Act of 1990. This support has subsequently been extended through the language of the 1995 Farm Bill. The RCA program is part of the larger Forest Service Economic Action Programs, which "strive to integrate economic development and enhance quality of living with environmental protection" (U.S. Department of Agriculture 1990). The RCA program targets rural areas by focusing on strengthening rural communities through a coordinated and integrated Forest Service effort. The RCA program is directed to work with rural communities that are directly adjacent to or dependent upon federally managed natural resources.

As a result of the task force, the Forest Service developed a new vision, "A Strategic Plan for the 90s: Working Together for Rural America," which they promoted as their guide for a unified plan for "helping rural America." The plan was touted as an "umbrella" strategy which would focus the Forest Service efforts on greater internal coordination, greater cooperation with other public and private entities, and greater emphasis on being part of community based activities (U.S. Department of Agriculture 1990). The first goal of the Strategic Plan was to communicate to all Forest Service employees and the public that rural development is part of the Agency's mission since rural resources - land and people - are key to local and national development and Forest Service policy changes.

I suggest another interpretation is that the Strategic Plan further provided an

important medium for the Forest Service to begin restoring fractured and often crippled relations with both the public at large, rural communities, and specifically displaced forest workers. The 1980s were a decade of great turmoil and the role of the Forest Service as the unquestionable "professional and authority" was being scrutinized and challenged in record litigation levels as public awareness of the extent and the impact of industrial logging on national forests increased (Hirt 1994). There was also an increase in public outcry from rural community leaders over the loss of timber-related jobs and their perception of a broken "social contract" associated with their understanding of "community stability" policy (Brown 1995). Forest values were also in a state of change. As Bengston (1994) notes, a new environmental paradigm was emerging which included sustainable development, harmony with nature, skepticism toward scientific and technological fixes, finite natural resources, and a strong emphasis on public involvement (Bengston 1994). Each of these events combined took their toll and challenged the historical "progressive era" philosophy of the Agency. The Agency needed to respond with a renewed and updated vision which demonstrated that they were hearing the broader public and the residents of rural forest communities, and willing to listen and take action. The difficulty is that the broader public increasingly includes non-Westerners whom feel they have a vested interest in Forest Service policy and Western forests too. That action came in the form of the Strategic Plan for the 90s: *Working Together for Rural America*, and specifically the Rural Community Assistance Program. The Strategic Plan articulated five goals for the agency. These are:

1. assist rural communities and the Nation in achieving long-term economic development and improved quality of life
2. actively participate in planning and implementing community based rural development activities
3. understand and integrate the needs of culturally, geographically, and economically diverse communities in Forest Service activities
4. strengthen Forest Service participation in cooperative USDA efforts at the

- local level
5. develop and provide timely and current research and resource information on rural development opportunities (U.S. Department of Agriculture 1990)

The RCA program is directly related to the goal of actively participating in planning and implementing of community based rural development activities. The first requirement of the RCA program is that a community have in place a "Community Action Plan." All Forest service staff are directed to assist communities in developing this plan by providing meeting facilitation and guidance as needed, but the outcome of the Action Plan is to be directed solely by "community established goals." To facilitate, the Forest Service has established Rural Community Assistance Coordinators in an effort to better facilitate the planning and implementing of community based rural development activities.

This Strategic Plan represented an effort on the part of the Forest Service to support the broader rural development efforts and challenges of both U.S. Department of Agriculture (which includes the Forest Service) and the White House, which were established in 1990. USDA's broader rural development mission was "to improve the employment opportunities, incomes, and well-being of the Nation's rural people by strengthening the capacity of rural America to compete in the global economy" (U.S. Department of Agriculture 1990). Key points from the White House Rural Development Initiative included "recognizing that rural development is, at the heart, an economic issue, rapid change in rural America calls for tighter coordination of Federally run rural development programs, and local community leadership is key to successful rural development programs" (U.S. Department of Agriculture 1990: 5).

The Forest Service task force developed a definition of "rural development" to guide Forest Service efforts. "Rural development is the management of human, natural,

technical, and financial resources needed to improve living conditions, provide employment opportunities, enrich the cultural life, and enhance the environment of rural America. In the Forest Service, rural development is accomplished through partnerships" (U.S. Department of Agriculture 1990: 5). This definition of rural development, although intended to focus Forest Service efforts, remains rather broad and vague in its scope. For example, it uses generalized terms such as "improve," "enrich," and "enhance." Although the terms do elicit a feeling of forward motion or improvement, they do not specify to what degree something is improved, enriched, or enhanced or prioritize what will be changed. What constitutes an "improvement" in living conditions, or an "enhancement" of the environment of rural America? Furthermore, it is not clear as to what "environment" they are referring. Does this imply an ecological environment, a neighborhood or community environment, or a political environment?

The rapidly changing rural West complicates this question of defining terms such as "improvement" in living conditions and "enhancement" of the environment. As rural areas face an increase in the numbers of new residents who bring with them potentially diverse values and constructions about the landscape and economic livelihood, it becomes increasingly difficult to define these terms in a manner that is acceptable to both the Forest Service and diverse rural communities. Defining terms and reaching common ground is further complicated and even more difficult when acceptability has to be extended to include non-resident interest groups. Finding common ground within and beyond the communities is often perceived by local residents as increasingly difficult, and it becomes even more so between the diverse public and the Forest Service. Conflict may erupt as increasingly divergent community members try to come to agreement on what the future condition of their community should be, including use of natural resources. Community

goals are not simply self-evident, and the restructuring of the rural west is making this task all the more complex and complicated. This situation often leaves the Forest Service in the direct line of conflict, but I propose that the RCA program is one tool that the Forest Service can use to help bridge the conflicts at the local level, and bring together the divergent groups to discuss a common vision and plan for the community.

The official Forest Service policy on rural development is a bit more directed, although it too uses vague and generalized language that allow for a very broad interpretation of the policy. The Forest Service policy states

The Forest Service will provide leadership in working with rural people and communities on developing natural resource-based opportunities and enterprises that contribute to the economic and social vitality of rural communities. The Forest Service can make lasting improvements in rural America by helping people solve their local problems in ways that enhance the quality of the environment in accordance with our existing authorities.

(U.S. Department of Agriculture 1990: p.5).

Again, the phrase "enhance ..the environment" remains unclear and open to broad interpretation. What is the "environment" to which they are referring, and what exactly is the "social vitality" of a rural community?

METHODOLOGY

Design and Methods

This study incorporates a qualitative, single case study to explore the particular issues and histories that constitute the RCA as it operates in one place. Despite focusing in one place only, the case study sheds light on changes in Forest Service policy vis a vis rural community change in general, and an evolving policy towards greater collaborative partnerships between the Forest Service and rural communities within the Rocky Mountain West. A qualitative design is appropriate given the lack of information on the history and achievements of the RCA program in a particular community. A case study is suitable because it is an empirical inquiry that is used when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Yin 1994). The research will not prove or disprove an existing hypothesis, but rather explore and describe in depth the context of the social relations and history that are specific to one community and the RCA program. Hence the study is a revelatory case, which according to Yin (1994), is one in which the descriptive information alone will expose significant factors and issues that relate to the implications of the RCA in one place.

The unit of analysis for this descriptive study is the "community" of Darby, Montana. The "community" of Darby is commonly understood by the residents I interviewed as the school district boundaries, which includes the northern boundary at Gold Creek, the southern boundary at the Idaho State Line, and the eastern and western

boundary of the Bitterroot National Forest (Fig. 1). Although the study focuses on Darby, it does move up analytical scales to non-local forces as well. This 'bottom-up' analytical approach is referred to by Blaikie as "nested-scales of analysis" to which he focuses on analyzing political economic relationships at the local, regional, national, and international scales which influence the actions in a particular place (Blaikie 1985). From my 'bottoms-up' examination, I developed the primary themes or categories that I thought best describe the nature of relationships and tensions within Darby and with the RCA. I wanted to understand how people experience living in Darby through their individual perspectives and constructions, and how they relate to and view the RCA program. By listening to their views and choices, I tried to understand the people I interviewed as social agents actively involved in the creation of their lives, history, and community. At the same time, I tried to pay particular attention to the broader structural forces that influence individual lives, the economy, environment, and institutional response in the area.

I selected Darby as my case study for several reasons. First, Darby has been repeatedly held up by the Forest Service as an example of a "successful RCA program" by the Forest Service, yet their measurement and analysis of why it was a "success" was unclear. Second, Darby shares a common condition with many other rural, Western communities. Darby has a history of a dependence on forest resources and has been faced with reduction in timber harvests, and it has received funding and assistance from the Forest Service RCA program.

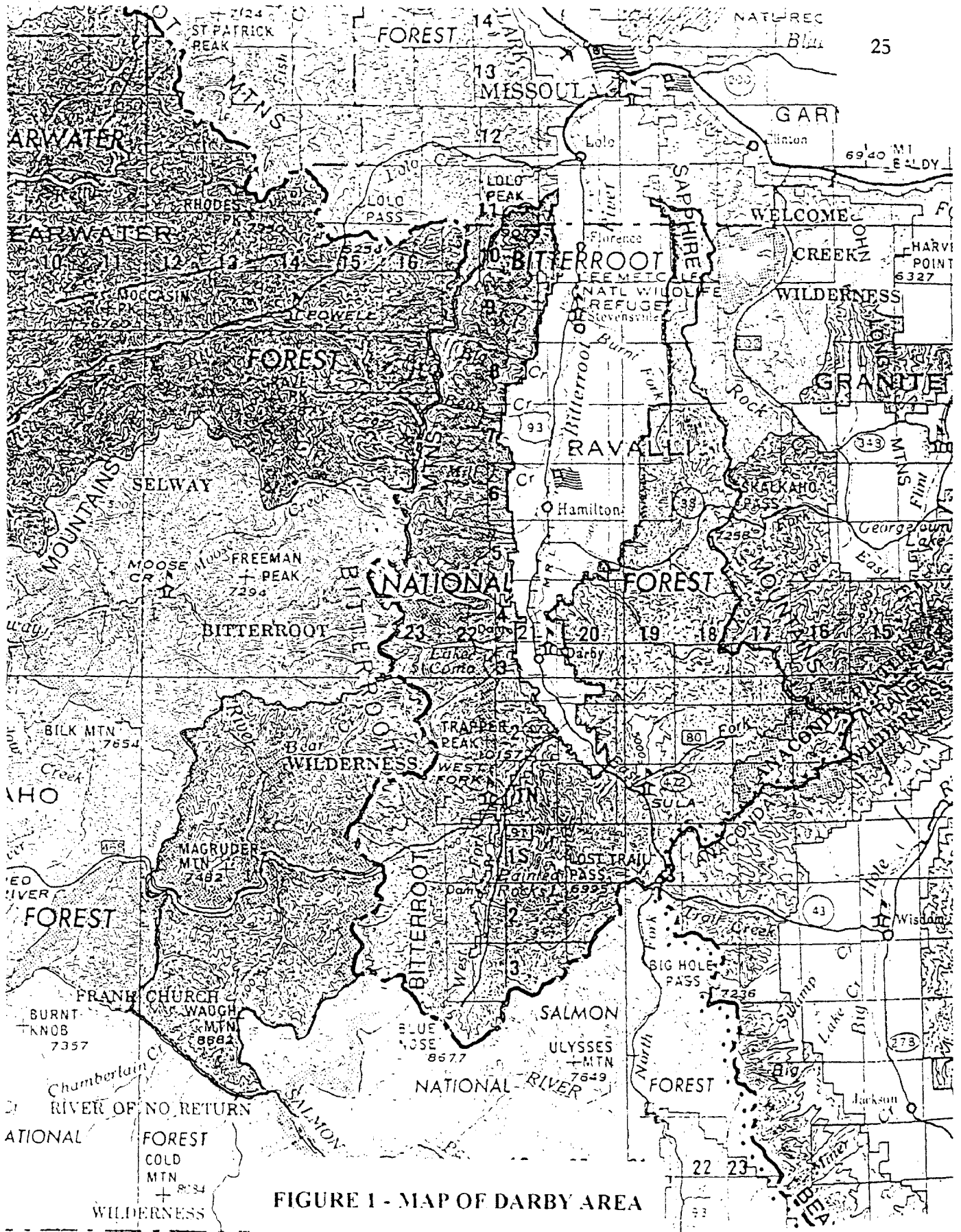


FIGURE 1 - MAP OF DARBY AREA

The primary research methods include historical analysis, interviews, and secondary data analysis. I use historical analysis to systematically recapture and study the complex nuances, the people, relationships, meanings, and events of the past that have influenced and shaped the past and present, and will shape the future situation (Berg 1998). In analyzing interview data, I draw on ethnomethodology, which focuses on the empirical phenomena of social activity in all its richness and diversity (Heritage 1987). Ethnomethodology involves the researcher engaging in a process of understanding and describing the world through the words, perceptions, and experiences of those who experience it. The hope is that through conversations, various themes and properties of the scene and the occasion will emerge. The content of discussions between myself and participants of the RCA program drove the development of my thesis, a process referred to as "grounded theory" (Glaser and Strauss 1967). I tried to understand how some people in Darby live and experience their particular place. I did this by examining descriptions and stories of they shared with me. I was mostly interested in the descriptions by each individual as he or she represented their own understanding and interpretations. Hopefully, this data provides a very rich, in-depth portrait of Darby and the RCA program through the eyes, minds, and social constructions of the individuals I interviewed.

Interviews were non-structured. I did not have a set of specific questions that each person must answer, but rather a few guiding questions to help direct the interview at key moments. The interviewees were given the freedom to direct the conversation in whatever manner they wanted, which allowed them to tell their story with as minimal influence from myself as possible. Nonetheless, I tried to capture their sense of attachments to place, their experiences that have shaped and influenced their sense of place, the social

relations that have built through time, and the history of their community as they each interpret and perceive it, particularly as this relates to the RCA program in Darby. Multiple sources of information, including open-ended qualitative interviews, archival records, and public and private documents helped to develop converging lines of inquiry (Yin 1994). These multiple sources of data produced an in-depth description of Darby as a 'place,' and the RCA as a 'program' and how residents and the Forest Service personnel viewed its implementation and outcomes.

I conducted interviews from January to March, 1998. I used a snowball sampling method to identify key community members to interview. I defined key community members as those that have been involved directly or indirectly with the RCA program, either through community action groups or as agency collaborators. I began my interviews with two Forest Service employees, the Rural Community Assistance coordinator and the Darby District Ranger. Using the snowball sampling technique, I asked each key community member to recommend 2-3 other people that they thought were involved in or informed about the RCA program and could provide me with different points of view or perspectives on the program. I made initial contact with these people by phone, at which time I introduced myself and the study and asked to meet them in person for further discussion at a time and place that was appropriate for them. Interviews were conducted at community members' homes or place of business and tape recorded with the permission of the interviewee. Field notes were kept for each interview and visit to Darby. One key community member provided me with the list of Community Action Team members, which formed the next stage of my contacts.

Among the 25 community members contacted, one refused an interview, one was not available by phone contact, two did not return any messages, and 21 consented to an

interview. All persons except two were permanent residents of Darby. Individuals that were interviewed included Forest Service employees, self-employed or private business owners, service sector employees, forest and mill workers, city government officials, and retired residents. Interviewees ranged in length of residence from 7-87 years. I relied on secondary data for background and historical information on Darby and the Forest Service RCA program. I collected secondary data from May 1997 to February 1998, which included Forest Service reports, U.S. Census Bureau documents, historical records, RCA meeting notes and reports, newspaper articles, county level reports and statistics, and other local government documents.

Analysis

I used content analysis along with my own interpretation to assess each interview. From detailed field notes taken during each interview and then elaborated upon afterward, I reviewed the content and developed a running listing of the major themes as they emerged from my review of the interviews. I continually categorized the content of each interview into emerging overall themes until I reached a point of saturation, at which time I ceased to schedule more interviews. This process is referred to as the "constant comparative method" by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Specific properties began to emerge for each theme, which guided and justified the further development of that theme. I gave each theme a title in an attempt to capture the essence of the overall content. Three primary themes emerged from the process which I think reflect the major issues. These three themes are: "historical social networks," "catalyst to collaboration," and "beyond the RCA."

Caveats

This study explores and describes emerging issues and themes as I understand them surrounding the implementation of the Forest Service RCA Program in Darby, Montana. Since I did not follow random survey selections, the study does not allow for generalizations either across the community of Darby and its residents, nor to communities beyond Darby. Although I used a saturation method in my snowball sample, I am unable to determine to what degree other viewpoints exist in the community and the nature of those viewpoints. A further limitation of the snowball sampling method is that the majority of those community members I interviewed were in some way involved in either the Community Action Team or the Darby Civic Group. This may imply that those I interviewed were already the people that possessed a certain propensity and the time to be involved or reflected a particular viewpoint. This further limits my drawing any generalizations to the broader community of Darby. Nonetheless, it allows for an in-depth exploration of the issues, experiences, and histories as experienced by these key community members.

In spite of the fact that my study does not exemplify trends across the broader community of Darby, or represent other communities, I suggest it provides lessons for others working with collaborative processes between rural communities and broader agencies. Furthermore, the research will inform and provide specific insight into lessons learned for other RCA programs throughout the Western U.S. My study of the social structures and forces that influence the operation and perception of the RCA program in Darby can be combined with other case studies in the future of similar efforts throughout

the Rocky Mountain West to highlight trends and similarities. It can also provide a foundation upon which to design further research on the RCA program. My study will undoubtedly generate more questions than it answers, but many of these questions may help to guide further research and exploration of the complex issues and variables that influence collaborative processes and responses to change in rural communities throughout the Rocky Mountain West.

Chapter 4

HISTORY OF DARBY

Logging Town Life Cycles

The town of Darby, Montana lies at the southern, narrow end of the Bitterroot Valley, about 50 miles south of Missoula. It lies directly in the valley floor in the middle of the Bitterroot National Forest, and is bordered on the West by the Selway-Bitterroot Mountain range (fig. 1). It was formally named in 1899 after James W. Darby, who came from Victor in 1896 and was the first postmaster in town (Bell, Grant and Twogood 1982). The Forest Service began their long standing relationship with Darby unofficially about the same time, when the Bitter Root Forest Reserve was created on February 22, 1897 under the management of the Department of Interior's General Land Office. At that time, the Bitter Root Forest Reserve included the Clearwater drainage, all of the National Forests within Idaho and the east side of the Bitterroot Mountains in Montana. This large expanse of land was later divided into the Lolo, Selway, Clearwater, Nez Perce and Bitterroot National Forests (Bell, Grant and Twogood 1982). In 1899 the first Forest Ranger cabin was constructed in Alta, Montana, and historical documents speculate that it is the first Forest Service building, even before the official Forest Service was created in 1905 (Bell, Grant and Twogood 1982). According to Bell (1982) a large part of the Forest Service job early on was to work with the community and establish sound working relations. Public relations were an important part of the job as Forest Service employees worked to settle

arguments over timber claims, control fire, map the forest district, determine boundaries, and build trails. The majority of the Forest Service employees were hired locally from within the Bitterroot Valley (Bell, Grant and Twogood 1982).

The vast forests of the Bitterroot Range built the tiny town of Darby. In 1888 Darby already had two lumber mills, and a third with a planer was added in 1890. In 1910 Darby consisted of a mercantile that carried groceries and shoes, a meat market, a bank, a drug store, a watch repair shop, a barber shop, one hotel, two livery stables, a blacksmith shop, two churches, a school, and six saloons (Bell, Grant and Twogood 1982). The heart of Darby was in "wooden gold." The forests that surrounded Darby produced thousands of feet of logs daily that moved from the dense forests to mills around the West. Darby was a typical one-street logging town of the time, with the raucous of loggers and their silver dollars heard nightly in the local saloons. According to Poston (1950) , most of the residents made their living either cutting trees or by selling supplies and services to the woodsmen and their families (Poston 1950).

Logging on private land continued at a rapid pace through the early 1940s. By 1944 the large private timber holdings around Darby had all but passed into history (Poston 1950). Although the rest of the country was experiencing wartime prosperity, Darby was on the brink of extinction, as it faced the downturn of the boomtown cycle. With the closing of the last large logging operator, which had employed more than 100 workers, a large portion of the 173 families in Darby were faced with the prospect of no income and the demise of their town. Although there was substantial National Forest land that remained to be harvested, the harvest levels in 1944 on National Forest lands could not fill the void left by the rapid decline in private harvests (Poston 1950). Buildings along main street were starting to be unoccupied, the appearance of Darby was becoming dilapidated and

run-down, rapid clear-cutting had reduced taxable valuation to sixty-seven percent below its 1930 depression level, and 75 percent of young people were leaving Darby after high school for lack of opportunities (Poston 1950).

In spite of the fact that the demise of Darby seemed inevitable, the residents of Darby were not about to let their community die without a fight. Most people did not have a lot of money, but "they loved Darby because it was their home" (Poston 1950:50). In 1945 the residents of Darby agreed to participate in "The Montana Study," an experimental study designed to strengthen and improve small American towns. With the help of The Montana Study team, the Darby Study Group was organized and presented with the challenge of identifying and tackling the community's long-range problems. Three committees were formed, which included small industries, local taxation, and education and recreation. The group met for thirteen weeks and their efforts culminated with a pageant-drama, "Darby Looks At Itself," which highlighted the history of Darby and their contemporary problems. The process which had brought so many people of divergent views and opinions together to work on a common project gave the community a new sense of unity and renewed spirit as they began to work together to identify solutions and approaches to their problems (Poston 1950).

Following the formation of the Darby Study Group and the presentation of the local community pageant, Darby community members began a renewed effort aimed at saving their community. A local lumber man formed a corporation and built a new planing mill to keep the raw timber from being sent afar for processing, a post treating plant was built to utilize the plentiful lodge pole pine in the area. Many other local residents invested in the communities future and began to update, renovate, and construct numerous other businesses such as a modern grocery, butcher shop and appliance store (Poston 1950). With

the help of local businessmen and new residents enticed to return to Darby by the prospects of change, many new businesses began to take shape and existing mills updated their equipment to include more efficient band saws. Darby business owners also began an effort to improve the looks of their community, but these efforts were not just restricted to the main street business district. Many private homes began sporting new coats of paint, yards were cleaned up, and flowers were planted throughout Darby. In addition to efforts aimed at the improvement of economic and aesthetic conditions, many projects were initiated to benefit the youth and foster civic responsibility. The Boy Scouts was brought up from eight to a flourishing troop, a private businessman bought new uniforms for a youth baseball team, and volunteering with social welfare agencies was strongly promoted (Poston 1950). From the historical accounts of the Montana Study, it appears that much of the capital, both social and financial, came from within the community itself. Local businessmen took risks and invested in improvements, while others that had left the area were enticed to return and support the changes in the community through their investments and developments.

Darby had successfully averted near demise in the late 1940s with the assistance of strong community leaders and through community planning efforts. With the assistance of the Montana Study and the formation of the Darby Study group, the community developed institutional structures to understand and become aware of their needs. Once the community came together to understand their needs, community leaders and businessmen began to take the initiative to address those needs and work collectively to save the place they had come to love and call home. An additional enabling factor in the cohesive planning efforts may have been the relative homogenous nature of Darby in the late 1940s. At that time, a large majority of the residents made their living either in the

timber industry directly or in a service sector that supported timber workers. As is the nature of boom and bust towns, the cycles of growth and downturn are likely to repeat themselves with time. Darby had weathered the first of several crisis related to their dependence on the timber industry as a primary source of economic support, but history would repeat itself again.

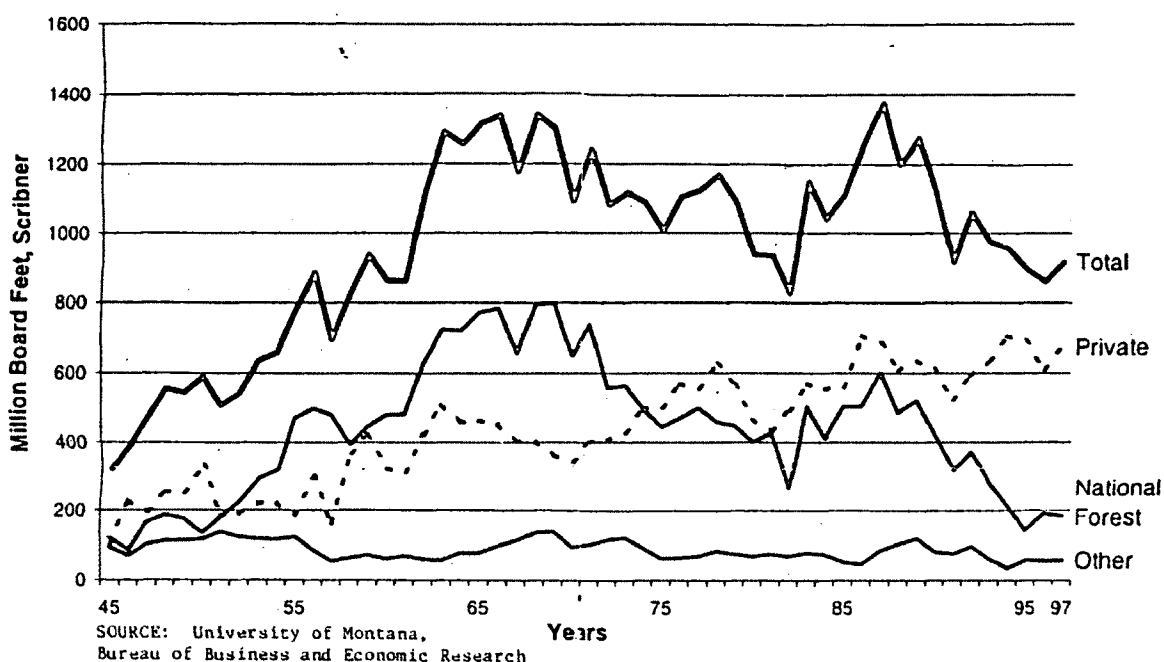
Even though the Forest Service had instituted the Sustained Yield Forest Management Act in 1944 to secure a sustainable supply of timber into the future, it was finally exposed in the 1980s that the actual allowed cut was anything but sustainable (Hirt 1994). In the 1980s, environmental groups and a concerned public strongly criticized the Forest Service's sustained yield policy, and, through litigation and grassroots efforts, successfully reduced timber harvests by up to seventy-five percent in some regions. These efforts came on the heels of a highly publicized, controversial, and critical report on the management of the Bitterroot National Forest. In 1970, Arnold Bolle, then Dean of the School of Forestry at the University of Montana, released a report which was highly critical of the Forest Service's "overriding concern for sawtimber production" on the Bitterroot National Forest (Bolle 1970). Bolle (1970) noted that, "In a federal agency which measures its success primarily by the quantity of timber produced weekly, monthly and annually, the staff of the Bitterroot National Forest finds itself unable to change its course, to give anything but token recognition to related values, or to involve most of the local public in any way but as antagonists" (Bolle 1970: 14).

This report signaled a shift in the timber production practices and harvest volume within the Bitterroot National Forest and exemplified some of the changes that were occurring throughout the State of Montana and the West. The National Forests in Montana experienced their peak production around 1969, with an annual harvest of about

800 million board feet (mbf). Since that time, they have declined to a current level of less than 200 mbf (fig. 2). Respectively, the amount of timber taken off the Bitterroot National Forest has fallen dramatically. In 1960, the forest yielded 69 million board feet (mbf), in 1970 it dropped to 34.8mbf, in 1980 it was 19.7mbf, and currently in 1998 it is at 8-10mbf.

FIGURE 2 -

Montana Timber Harvest by Ownership, 1945-1997



This decline in timber harvests between 1970 and the late 1990s is frequently blamed on environmental concerns, but others suggest it is the result of a combination of factors, including consolidations in the timber industry, advances in technology, and simply over cutting (Hirt 1994, Bolle 1970, Drielsma, Miller, and Burch 1990). Regardless of the reason, the end result has been job loss in the timber based economies like Darby, and the closing of all but one of its mills. As in 1944, Darby, in the early 1990s is now faced with severe social and economic change that had the potential to dissolve their sense of community. But instead of the Montana Study providing assistance and guidance for a

study group as they had in 1944, the Forest Service offered help in 1992 through a new program, the Rural Community Assistance (RCA) program.

Further Change - Growth and Development

In 1990 the population of the town of Darby was 625 permanent residents. Between 1960 and 1990, the population of Darby increased sixty-four percent, from 398 to 625 residents. Estimates for the population of Darby in 1996 are 851, which represents an increase of thirty-six percent in six years within the Town limits. The broader Census Division of Darby listed a population of 1657.¹ Eighteen percent of Darby division residents between 1985 and 1990 were new to the area, and of these, fourteen percent had relocated from another state. Seventy-three percent of the residents in Darby had lived in the Bitterroot Valley from 1985 to 1990, and forty-nine percent of those lived in the same residence within the Darby division (Bureau 1990).

The overall growth rate for Ravalli county is one of the highest for the state of Montana. From 1975 to 1993 the population increased by seventy-three percent and an eleven percent growth rate between 1980 and 1990, compared to the state's mere two percent growth rate (Bitterroot Resource and Commerce 1993). Ravalli county's economic type is labeled as "services-dependent," which is defined by USDA Economic Research Service as "service activities (private and personal services, agricultural services, wholesale and retail trade, finance and insurance, transportation and public utilities) contributed a weighted annual average of fifty percent or more of total labor and proprietor income over

¹ The U.S. Census Bureau map of the Darby Division does not indicate any geographic boundaries or markings, so it is not helpful in visualizing the exact boundaries of the Division.

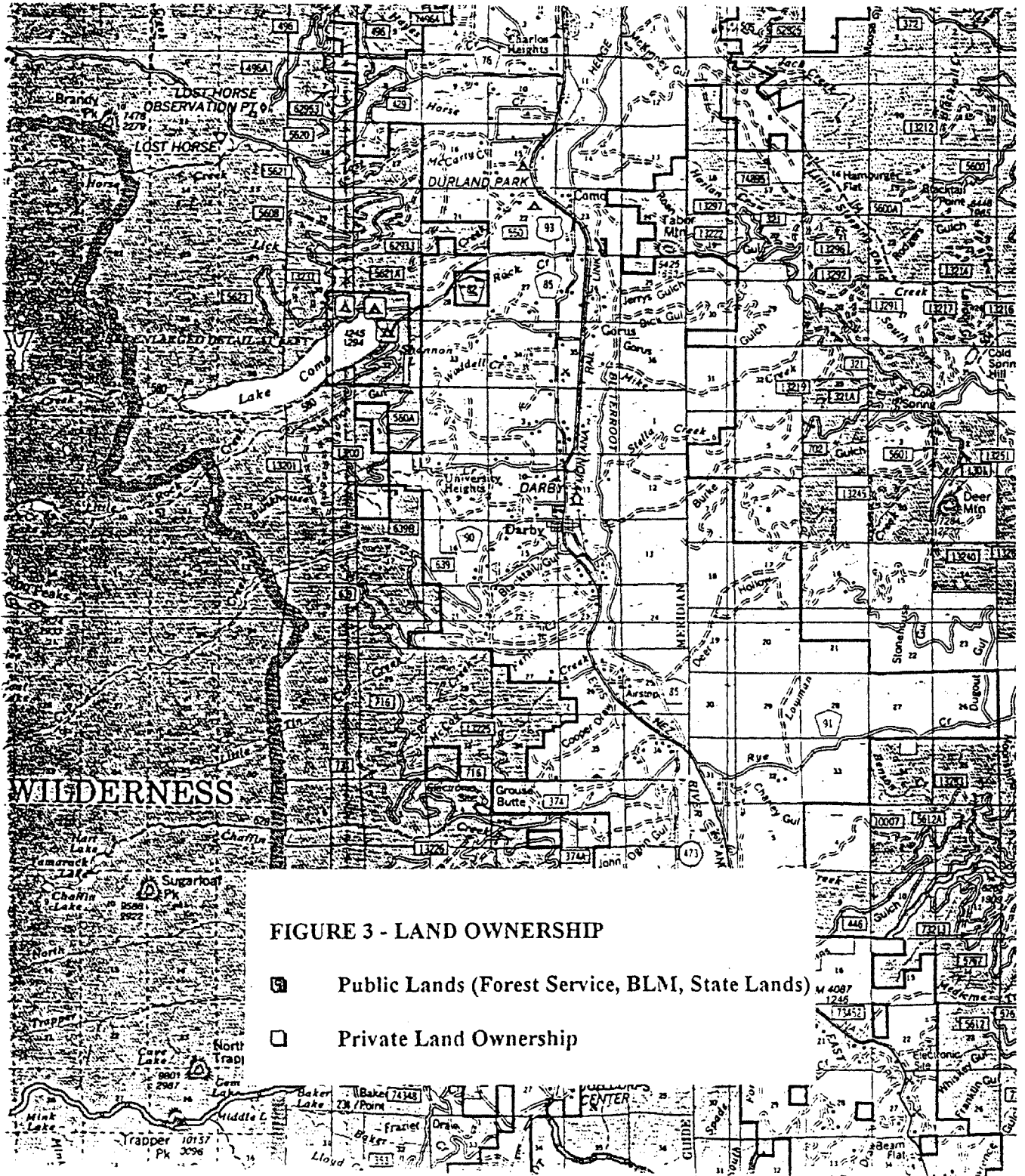
the 3 years from 1987 to 1989."² Its policy type is determined to be both retirement-destination, which is defined as "the population aged 60 years and over in 1990 increased by fifteen percent or more during 1980-1990 through in-movement of people" and federal lands, which is defined as "federally owned lands made up thirty percent or more of a county's land area in the year 1987."³ These typologies are useful when examining the broader issues and concerns of the Bitterroot Valley, but it is important to note that these typologies do not necessarily accurately reflect Darby. This is because they are reflective of the entire Ravalli county, and not specifically the town of Darby. For the purpose of this study, I use the comprehensive county level typologies for broader trends.

Despite the significant growth in Ravalli county, Darby and the southern end of the valley have not experienced the same magnitude and pace of growth. The geographic and political realities in and around Darby create unique situations that set it apart from the broader context of Ravalli County. The valley is much narrower at the southern end and ownership of private land suitable for development is much less than in the broader middle and northern parts of the valley. In the Darby Ranger District, approximately seventy-six percent of the land is in public ownership (fig. 3). Furthermore, state highway 93, the major transportation route that runs north and south through Darby, requires travel over several high passes such as Lost Trail Pass or Chief Joseph Pass to continue on south, east, or west to larger urban areas. Communities such as Hamilton and Stevensville that are further north in the valley have easier access to Missoula to the north, an urban center that offers many services for Western Montana residents. Consequently, development and growth has been

² U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service's 1989 Revised County Typology for Montana. [Http://www.econ.ag.gov/epubs/other/typology/TYP89MT.TXT](http://www.econ.ag.gov/epubs/other/typology/TYP89MT.TXT)

³Ibid

occurring at a much more rapid rate further north in the valley than it has at the southern end near Darby.



The area around Darby may be geographically and politically more limited for private development than further north in the valley, but that does not mean that Darby has been immune from problems and concerns over growth and development. The advances of technology and increasing nostalgia for rural areas has caused a growth in development and population, even in some of the most rural areas in the West. In the Darby area, the number of real estate agents has increased from one in 1972 to six in 1998, with three of those offices establishing their businesses in 1996 alone. Clearly business people have recognized that there is an interest in real estate and development in the area surrounding Darby, as any drive on the roads around town find numerous signs for housing developments and land for sale. When Darby area residents were asked to decide what the major challenges would be that would face the community in the next five years (1992 - 1997), fifty-seven percent of the respondents cited population growth as the largest problem (Team 1993).

Given that growth and development are a primary issue in the community, the obvious next question is where are all these people coming from and why are they moving to Darby? Montana's population grew by ten percent in just six years (1990-1996) and two-thirds of that growth can be attributed to the influx of migrants to Montana (von Reichert and Sylvester 1997). VonReichert (1997) characterizes the Montana migrants into four groups:

Humming birds: upscale types who fly into Montana and buy 20 acre ranchettes to visit twice a year.

Loan eagles: professionals who abandon city life and set up business from their home offices.

Equity refugees: people who sell their out-of-state homes for a bundle, roll the money

over into Montana spreads, therefore escaping tax penalties.

Californians: the group of people commonly thought to be invading Montana.
(von Reichert and Sylvester 1997)

My study indicates that migrants to Darby are often perceived by long-time residents as either loan eagles or equity refugees. Many long-time residents I spoke with remarked that they felt newcomers moving to Darby did not rely on the forest or the community to make a living, instead they brought their own resources in the form of financial support and technological support, such as computers and modems. One long-time resident commented "Nobody moves to Darby to find a job...they move for the beauty of the place...the land." The "dependence" on the forest has shifted from primarily extractive in nature to more amenity and recreational in nature, a change in the "consumption" of the landscape that is being echoed throughout the West.

As the population of Darby continues to grow, those that view and value the forest as an amenity or recreational resource are perceived by those I spoke with as fast on their way to becoming the majority, if they have not already done so. One community member that had moved to Darby seven years ago remarked "We did not settle here necessarily because of the community or for a job, we settled here because of this piece of land." The land and natural environment appear to be a large draw for many of the newcomers to Darby, and services and employment are not as high a priority as the quality of the environment. These shifts support an earlier observation by the Kaufmans that the experiences in the community and of the forest are not regarded as a means but as an ends in themselves - they are appreciated and enjoyed for their intrinsic worth (Kaufman and Kaufman 1946).

Historical Social Capital

My study suggests that social capital in the form of community leaders and resources have been significant in helping Darby respond to change throughout history, and continues today. The rugged nature of the landscape and lifestyle requires people to be self-sufficient, while at the same time very connected to and supportive of their neighbors and fellow community members. In 1995, Ravalli county had less than 4 percent of families receiving AFDC benefits, compared to 6-8 percent in Lincoln and Sanders Counties⁴. This supports the assumption that rural residents in Ravalli county and Darby retain a quite independence and self-determination to help themselves and their neighbors through tough times, instead of relying on government assistance programs.

Examples of the close-knit community in Darby were further brought out in the Montana Study project. When a long-time resident's house burned down, the whole town threw a dance to help build a new one, and when a widow's little boy needed medical attention in Helena, neighbors quickly pooled resources to raise the money for the trip (Poston 1950). Events like these were frequently recalled by key community members in my study as they described what type of community Darby was and why they remained even after many of the high paying timber jobs had vanished. One long-time resident commented "I stay because this is where I was born...I feel part of the community...your friends and people help when you need it...I don't stay because of a job." The lifestyle, sense of community, and connection to the land, reasons beyond economic sustenance, were frequently given as explanations for why they have remained in Darby and decided to

⁴U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, Rural America At-A-Glance (1998)

take an active role in dealing with the changes. Another long-time resident that was not involved in the RCA process noted "I may not like all the changes...but this is my home and I want to make the best of it...you can't stop change."

When the Community Clubhouse burned in 1990, the community put aside differences and individual interests and joined together in a massive volunteer effort to rebuild the Clubhouse. People I spoke with recalled a volunteer effort that spread throughout the community and involved a mix of ages, occupations, and brought together both long-time residents and relatively new residents. The common cause was clear and support came in the form of volunteer labor, supplies, and organization to keep the effort going. The Clubhouse was perceived as something that was central to the social fabric of Darby and something that everyone could benefit from. The RCA program built upon this initial effort and social capital by contributing a grant to complete the heating system and landscaping in time for winter. Furthermore, those I spoke with suggested that it provided a vital link to the final push to complete the project, not just with physical capital, but with a means for the community to complete what they had started.

Polarization and Conflict

Events throughout the history of Darby have demonstrated the existence of social capital through the close-knit nature of the community through shared experiences and attachments to the land, and their capacity to react and respond in the face of change and challenges, but Darby is not without its diverse opinions and difficulties. In 1992 a proposed town ordinance to prohibit carrying open beer and liquor containers sparked a very heated and polarized debate that was played out in the media with headlines like "Put a

lid on it? Darby's frothing" (Lakes 1992). In 1993 a political fight captured more headlines in the media and again portrayed Darby as steeped in controversy and corruption. The race for Mayor appeared in the media as a "bloody city brawl" full of allegations of criminal conduct, private agendas, and unfair campaigning (Lakes 1993). Shortly after the Mayor's race, which was one of the closest races in Darby's history, the town was again in the media headlights with more negative press. This time the controversy, labeled "Darbygate" in a local paper, focused around allegations against the Darby Marshall brought by the Mayor and culminated with the hiring of a private investigator to look into the charges which further developed into a "political war" (Lakes 1994).

The string of controversies created a great deal of negative press about Darby during the early 1990s and a feeling of disgust within community residents over the negativism and controversy. One long-time resident commented "...it was time to stop the negative images and talk about Darby, we needed to start the healing process." Another businessman, talking about the formation of the Darby Civic Group, commented that the formation of the Civic Group was in direct response to the negative talk and images, an effort to channel the energy into positive discussions and outcomes for Darby. The political situation is only now beginning to calm and settle down. Since the political allegations and divisions between the Mayor and Darby Marshall in 1994, the Mayor has stepped down from his position. A completely new town government was elected in 1996 and they have slowly begun to work with the community again in a positive manner. The community members in my study spoke frequently about a sense of pride in Darby and that they were tired of the negative images the press was portraying, they felt that people in Darby wanted to move beyond those images and were fed up with the divisions of the past. One local businessman commented "All people did was talk about the negative things, I

wanted to see a group that talked about the positive things...that was one of the ground rules for the Civic Group...all the talk had to be positive...and people came, they had a lot of positive things to say."

Chapter 5

THE FOREST SERVICE RURAL COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Background

In an effort to operationalize the broad rural development policy statements, the Forest Service developed the Rural Community Assistance (RCA) program as a means to implement their rural policy and Strategic Plan. The RCA is an assistance program which provides small grants to rural communities in an effort to help them capitalize on their own potential to diversify and expand their economies through the use of natural resources. The purpose of the RCA program is to "assist rural communities dependent on natural resources to develop strategies and implement projects which result in community capacity building and long-term social, environmental, and economic stability" (U.S. Department of Agriculture 1993: 5). The program has the authority to assist rural communities to form community action teams, develop community plans or update existing plans, and to begin implementing projects identified in community plans. Three program components form the core of this effort: 1) rural development, 2) economic recovery, and 3) economic diversification studies.

Economic diversification studies provides funds to cost-share feasibility studies and action plans that develop alternative economic opportunities for communities or regions whose economic base is largely dependent on forest resource activities and programs. The Forest Service contribution can be no more than eighty percent of the total project costs, the remaining twenty percent must be provided as matching funds from the community.

Criteria for these studies include economic dependency and diversity; economic need; practicality and feasibility; costs and benefits; and ability to cost share (U.S. Department of Agriculture 1993).

The economic recovery component focuses on rural areas with persistent economic problems associated with changes in Federal land management policies and natural resource decisions. The purpose is to assist these rural communities with economic development and diversification in the aftermath of timber cutbacks, particularly the loss of income to forest dependent economies. Similar to the rural development component, economic recovery provides assistance in the form of technical and financial assistance, training, and education to help communities that have become "distressed due to their economic dependency on forest resources" (U.S. Department of Agriculture 1993: 5). Emphasis is placed on assisting with projects that are contained in local action plans, which are developed by community groups such as local planning boards and community action teams.

The rural development component provides technical and financial assistance to help communities strengthen, diversify, and expand local economies. Special attention is given to those forest dependent communities experiencing long-term or persistent economic problems associated with changes in Federal land management policies. Technical and financial assistance is provided in the form of small grants which require matching funds for locally initiated and planned projects which are designed to stimulate improvements in the economic or social well-being of rural citizens through forest resources (U.S. Department of Agriculture 1993). The focus of the rural development component is on enhancing the overall quality of life in rural forest dependent communities through "natural-resource based solutions." Unfortunately, it is unclear what the Forest

Service means by "natural resource based solutions," the term is never clearly defined.

As noted earlier, financial and political support for the new rural development policy and subsequent RCA program came from the 1990 Farm Bill, Title 23, Subtitle G, Rural Revitalization Through Forestry (Chapter 2), known as the National Forest-Dependent Rural Communities Economic Diversification Act of 1990. This support has subsequently been extended through the language of the 1995 Farm Bill. According to the Forest Service language, the RCA program targets rural areas by focusing on strengthening rural communities through a coordinated and integrated Forest Service effort. The RCA program is directed to work with rural communities that are directly adjacent to our dependent upon federally managed natural resources.

The purpose of the RCA program raises many questions. Three include: how is "rural" defined, what is a "dependent" community, what is "assistance" and how does the Forest Service define "community capacity?" These terms can mean many different things to different people, but it is important to understand how the Forest Service defines these terms and how they then operationalize the definitions. How one defines "rural" and "dependent" will have very severe and consequential impacts on resulting policy and programs, including who qualifies for an RCA grant and what it can fund. Can the Forest Service really "assist" communities with trends that are beyond their control, such as changes in timber technology, shifts in global wood markets, and global and rural restructuring? Whose view in increasingly diverse communities will the Forest Service take as "the" community view? Whose definitions and constructions of "natural" and "development" are being used in the planning process? The restructuring of the rural West presents many problems and questions about how to balance the increasingly diverse values and interests in rural communities experiencing new levels of conflict and polarization.

The previous discussion and critique of Forest Service policy, specifically "community stability," demonstrates the need for working definitions that are not tied to particular interests and recognized as legitimate by those most impacted by the policy and programs. Yet there is also a political benefit to keeping the policies and definitions vague or founded on good terms like "community" and "stability" even as in the past they were really protecting timber interests (Fortman, Kusel and Fairfax 1989).

Mission and Measurement

In 1997 the Forest Service attempted to address the issue of measurement and assessment of the RCA program, and further clarified its purpose, goals, and measurements by contracting a workbook designed to assist Forest Service staff and their local collaborators: *Working Towards Community Goals: Helping Communities Succeed*.⁵ The RCA program developed a specific community mission to further define and direct their program efforts, which was more specific than the broader Forest Service rural development policy. The mission states that they will "work with rural communities that seek to build a vital rural community part of a healthy ecosystem. The Forest Service provides assistance with many partners to meet the diverse needs of rural people and communities" (Development 1997: 3). The Forest Service defines a "vital" community as one that has the "capacity to utilize, sustain, and renew the resources and skills it needs to thrive over time - and to become the kind of community its residents want it to become" (Development 1997: 3).

In an effort to operationalize and effectively measure the outcomes of the RCA

⁵ U. S. Department of Agriculture and North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, January 1997. The primary author was Comelia Butler Flora.

program, The Forest Service asked rural community Action Teams that were already part of the RCA program to identify outcomes associated with their community activities that spell success. From these responses, the Forest Service developed five general outcomes that they suggest are good measures of the success of a vital rural community, and indirectly the RCA program. These include:

1. increase the use of skills, knowledge, and ability of local people
2. improve community initiative, responsibility, and adaptability
3. strengthen relationships and communication
4. sustainable, healthy ecosystems with multiple community benefits
5. appropriately diverse and healthy economies

These measures indicate a noticeable divergence from the historic reliance of the Forest Service on the concept of community stability as its primary tactic for working with rural communities. Broader goals are included now as the Forest Service attempts to form a clear and concise mission for its role in community development, and subsequently the Rural Community Assistance program. It is particularly significant that the Forest Service says it will work specifically with communities "that seek to build a vital rural community," implying that they will offer assistance to communities that have already identified a need or desire to improve their conditions. This takes the onus off the Forest Service to help all rural communities based solely on the definition of "rural" put forth in the Farm Bill. Furthermore, it places limited funds where there is an increased likelihood of success when the community has already demonstrated the need and capacity to improve their conditions.

Furthermore, there appears to be an implication of that the Forest Service is relinquishing some of its historical perceptions as the "unquestionable authority or professional" and recognizing and supporting the individual directives and desires of each diverse rural community. There is no longer an assumption within the Agency that the

Forest Service must lead the effort to assist all rural communities in development and diversification. The Forest Service has made an attempt, at least in the language of their mission statement, to listen first to the communities themselves and hear what their needs and issues are, and then offer individual and specific assistance within their authority to do so. Unfortunately, this bypasses the complexity of defining who is the community and whose voice is heard. They have tried to define their approach within the context of collaboration with other institutional partners as well as within communities.

The definition of community capacity remains ambiguous in the RCA purpose, but its community mission and outcome measurements aid in providing more direction and discretion for the goal of building community capacity. The Forest Service has made an attempt to move beyond "stability" and to be more adaptive to future changes. A distinction has been made between process and product related outcomes which create more directed guidance for RCA program staff and subsequent analysis. Unfortunately, there is currently limited analysis or evaluation of the RCA program and its impact on the development of community capacity within rural, resource dependent communities. The next step is to examine how the RCA program actually functions on the ground within a specific rural community, and if it is meeting its desired outcomes and can be claimed a "success." My descriptive case study will examine and explore these questions in Darby, Montana:

Overview of the RCA In Darby

In 1991, the first year of the RCA program, Tom Wagner arrived in Darby as the new District Ranger. At that time, the RCA program was being heavily promoted within the Forest Service as a new tool to assist resource dependent communities like Darby. In

1992, with the help of the Region 1 RCA Coordinator, Tom approached the existing Darby Civic Group, which was newly formed in the spring of 1992, and informed them of the RCA program and the opportunity to receive funding to develop a Community Action Plan. In July of 1992 the RCA program awarded its first grant to the community of Darby to develop a Community Action Plan.

The City Council appointed a Community Action Team, which consisted of a diverse group of community and business leaders, as a subcommittee of the Darby Civic Group. Their goal was to work on the development of a plan for Darby's future. The invitation to participate on the Community Action Team was extended to all Darby area residents. A Forest Service staff officer was made available to help facilitate the process. In September of 1993 the plan was completed and adopted by the City Council. The Community Action Plan established a "desired future condition" for the community:

"Residents work hard to retain the positive characteristics of a safe, small, community while incorporating new business opportunities which provide for moderate economic growth and employment. Businesses which are viewed as desirable are small, locally owned, clean businesses which are compatible with our natural resources and local values. Desirable businesses are oriented toward manufacturing, services, woods/natural resource products, and tourism. The community encourages local entrepreneurs to initiate and expand businesses in this area."

"The traditions of independence, individualism, and relationships (both economic and emotional) with the natural environment and its resources continue to be honored."

"The community does not try to provide all things to everyone; rather it recognizes what is unique about Darby, and both protects and benefits from those characteristics."

"Visitors consider it an enjoyable place to visit; residents view it as a good place to live; those who have to move on remember it as a wonderful place to be from"
(Team 1993).

With the help of a 200 area resident phone survey conducted in early 1993 by a private consulting firm and the input from approximately 70 town meeting participants, the

Plan identifies what area residents want Darby's future to be, and includes a description of the things that need to happen in order for Darby to meet those future goals. The Plan addresses specific strategies for five prioritized categories of issues, including economic development, expanding community and health services, diversifying adult education and youth services, addressing quality of life issues, and resolving infrastructure problems (Team 1993). For each of the five categories, the Plan identifies several priorities for action, and then details a description of that action, key coordinator, technical and economic feasibility statement, an assessment of the funds or assistance needed and potential sources of help, the educational needs, a project schedule and status of activities.

The Darby Civic Group was formed to help combat the perceived negative images of the community. The impetus for the Civic Group came from several key community leaders. One of the founders of the Civic Group commented that so much time and energy was being spent on negative criticism of the community, that he wanted to develop a forum to channel that energy into positive discussions and efforts. The group began to meet informally at 7:00 am, to allow for business owners to attend, and was open to anyone who wanted to participate. Although one person was skeptical if people would come and participate, he was pleasantly surprised when they started coming, "even at 7:00 am!" the Darby Civic Group was on its way. By the fall of 1993 the Civic Group's numbers exceeded 100 members, twenty-five percent of the Darby-area population. The only parameters for the Civic Group were that no negative discussion or attitudes were allowed, everything had to be positive and differences were left outside. During the meetings everyone was given a chance to speak and be heard, and all their energy was to be focused on what was good and positive about Darby, and identifying positive ways for the city to survive and prosper despite the changes.

In response to the negative images of Darby that were appearing in the media, the Darby Civic Group joined efforts with the Community Action Team to develop a volunteer effort to improve the image of the community and clean up the streets. The time was ripe for the community to regain its historical pride and the leaders were willing and ready to take action to move the effort forward. To help the efforts along, the Community Action Team applied for another RCA grant in 1994 and was awarded \$6,000 for community services enhancements, which included things such as trash receptacles and flower boxes on the streets, and the creation of "Darby Clean Up Days," a public event in the spring to gather volunteer efforts to help plant the flower boxes, clean up the streets, and simply gather the community behind a positive cause. Beyond simply providing funding for physical improvements in the community, I argue that the RCA program further enhanced a positive attitude within the community and provided the means for tangible changes. Furthermore, Darby had gained momentum from the first grant and was awarded a second grant from Travel Montana to purchase banners to hang along Main street during the summer months to help attract more tourists.

My study suggests that the Community Action Team which grew out of the Civic Group fosters continued and expanding partnerships with other local, state, and federal agencies. Some of their key partners include the county planning office, the Bitterroot Resource, Conservation and Development Area Inc. (RC&D), Montana State Extension Service, Montana Department of State Lands, and of course the U.S. Forest Service. The efforts of the Community Action Team are consistent with similar economic diversification efforts conducted at the county level, such as the broader Bitterroot Futures Study, which is a county-wide economic diversification study conducted in partnership with the Bitterroot RC&D, Forest Service, and Bitterroot Chamber of Commerce. The Community Action

Plan contains strategies which not only address the specific needs of Darby, but also complement the broader needs and strategies outlined in the Bitterroot Futures Study.

The RCA program, in addition to assisting with the funding and support for the initial Community Action Plan, has provided subsequent funding support for several projects that were identified in the Plan. Projects included such things as the beautification of downtown with flower boxes and receptacles for trash, the support of a cultural music festival which was organized by the Community Arts and Recreation Program (CARP), also partially funded by an RCA grant. A complete listing of the RCA grants to Darby follows:

TABLE 1: U.S. Forest Service RCA Grants in Darby, MT

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>	<u>MATCHING FUNDS</u>	<u>PURPOSE</u>
1992	\$8,000	(unavailable)	Community Action Plan
1992	\$19,000	(unavailable)	Community Clubhouse
1994	\$6,000	(unavailable)	Community Services Enhancement
1995	\$2,000	\$2,500	Youth Baseball Field - Park Development
1997	\$8,668	\$11,000	Music in the Mountains Festival - CARP
TOTAL	\$43,668		

Source: United States Forest Service, State and Private Forestry

Darby has received numerous RCA grants, starting with a grant to fund the initial development of a Community Action Plan. The Plan was a vital first step for identifying the needs of the community and what projects were a priority and potential RCA projects, and it provided the momentum for further successful grants. Furthermore, certain community leaders also saw the RCA grants as a tool to help diminish some of the polarization and negativity that was increasing in the early 1990's. In response to the negative images of Darby that were appearing in the media, the Darby Civic Group joined efforts with the Community Action Team to develop a volunteer effort to improve the image of the community and clean up the streets. The time was ripe for the community to regain its historical pride and leaders were there and ready to take action to move the effort forward. The Community Action Team applied for another RCA grant in 1994 and was awarded \$6,000 for community services enhancements, which included things such as trash receptacles and flower boxes on the streets, and the creation of "Darby Clean Up Days," a public event in the spring to gather volunteer efforts to help plant the flower boxes, clean up the streets, and simply gather the community behind a positive cause. Beyond simply providing funding for physical improvements in the community, I argue that the RCA program further enhanced a positive attitude amongst those community leaders I spoke with and provided the means for tangible changes. Furthermore, Darby had gained momentum from the community enhancements grant and was awarded a second grant from Travel Montana to purchase banners to hang along Main street during the summer months to help attract more tourists.

Although the projects from the \$6,000 grant were aimed at improving the image and appearance of Darby, they contributed to improving the economy through the increase of tourism. One resident directly involved in the "facelift" projects commented, "About six

months passed after we started these projects and people started coming to Darby to see what was happening...people were coming to see what we had done...and they could not believe it was the same community." Gradually more tourists began stopping on their way through town, instead of just driving through and stopping further up the valley. Another woman, not involved in the RCA process noted, "I remember one summer day noticing people walking the streets in town...actually parking their car and walking around...I suddenly realized they were tourists!" Most community members in my study commented that they liked the cleaner streets and new image of Darby, it was "friendly and inviting," and they have seen a definite increase in the numbers of people that stop in town. According to one business owner, "It used to be that the restaurants and most shops closed during the winter months...now they are all open year 'round." The owner of a gas station and convenience store reported that his business has seen growth every month for the last six years, and he credits part of that to the improved image and "facelift" of Darby.

Chapter 6

FINDINGS

My study exposed four emerging themes that I think best represent and describe the interaction of the RCA program in Darby. The first two themes, “Social Networks” and “Catalyst to Collaboration” relate directly to the interaction between the community members and the RCA program. These two themes emerged as critical foundations for the planning efforts, visioning process, and working relations between the community and the Forest Service RCA program. Both Social Networks and Catalyst to Collaboration refer to the further development and enhancement of social and human capital. The third theme, “Beyond the RCA,” is one of the most intriguing themes that resulted from my study. Discussions during interviews frequently moved beyond the RCA program, and involved people’s perceptions of what the Forest Service should be doing on a broader scale that would in turn assist their community. While the RCA program was recognized and almost unanimously commended for its benefits and assistance, it represented only a piece of the broader picture of the Forest Service relationship to rural communities according to the majority of those community members involved in my study.

Social Networks

The most recurring theme people brought up during interviews with key community members on the question of how and why the RCA program is functioning in Darby is the

significance of social networks. As noted earlier, social networks can function on numerous levels and take many different forms, including horizontal and vertical. Although the RCA program claims to build social capital, and therefore social networks, the interviews suggests that social networks were already in existence on various levels throughout the history of Darby, long before the inception of the RCA program. As one woman so succinctly put it, "They always said that nobody could ever starve in the Bitterroot, and that was a fact." Those I interviewed spoke of the levels of trust that existed in the community during its days as a "logging town," they noted that people shared common interests and were willing to help anyone in time of need. Community members spoke of self-sufficiency, being able to take care of themselves, and solve their own problems without any outside help.

I propose that the pre-existence of these social networks provided a foundation upon which the RCA program could build. Part of the reason the RCA program is viewed as successful in Darby is the fact that there is a history of social capital, including community leaders and social networks, to support such efforts. These networks allowed the RCA program to offer "assistance," if to not "lead" the efforts in the community. The Forest Service was not in the role of determining the needs and issues for the community, but rather offering targeted assistance through the use of small grants and facilitation. The RCA provided the impetus and initial resources for the creation of the Community Action Team and served as a catalyst for the further development and strengthening of social networks and collaborative planning efforts. Without the pre-existence of social networks in the community, I argue that the RCA program would not have been able to find common ground to bring the community together in a planning effort.

Social networks can also serve to exclude as well as include, which may be seen as the antithesis of building social capital, actually decreasing social capital through exclusion.

Although a negative response to building social capital, the exclusion of newcomers in the past is further evidence of the existence of social networks throughout the history of Darby. Community members that recalled moving to Darby 10-20 years ago as an outsider noted how difficult it was at first to join the community and feel welcome. Social networks were very well established within the community and it was not easy to break into that as a newcomer. Change is always difficult, and when it occurs at such a rapid pace as it has in Darby during the last 10-20 years, it is even more difficult for people to accept.

I suggest that the diversity and inclusiveness of the Community Action Team is another important factor in the ability of the RCA program to further develop and enhance existing social networks and human capital. The Community Action Team consists of a core group of fourteen community members that range widely in age, occupation, and length of residence in Darby. Of the fourteen members (five women and nine men), five are private business owners, three are retired from various professional occupations, two work for the Forest Service, and four have moved. Mixing newcomers with long-time residents, including a broad range of interests and occupations, and involving women in leadership positions demonstrates that the Community Action Team social network has both diversity and inclusiveness.

The significance of social capital, which is a component of social networks, is represented in many of the stories from those in my study. The Forest Service has been an integral part of the community of Darby since 1899 and although their relationships with the community have certainly been tumultuous at times, the individuals of the Forest Service in Darby have maintained a strong working and trusting relationship in the minds of many community members. Forest Service employees are often remembered by long-time residents as vital and contributing members of the community, who volunteered in many

civic and social capacities. More recent residents frequently share that sentiment. Forest Service employees were seen as the same community members who attended church, were members of the Volunteer Fire Department, and understood the needs and concerns of the local community members because they were part of the social network themselves.

The RCA program has built upon these existing individual leaders (social capital) and their historical social networks and used them as the solid foundation upon which to develop a new community-based planning effort. The initial planning grant, totaling \$8,000, combined with the human capital support from the Forest Service, was instrumental in catalyzing the further development of social networks and the enhancement of human capital in Darby. This new planning effort has helped to provide direction, guidance, and a sense of empowerment to the existing networks. The Community Action Team was created from the existing Civic Group, which provided the social network foundation upon which the RCA program built. I suggest that the RCA grant to assist with the development of the Community Action Plan was much more than simply a lump sum of money given to a community group. The Forest Service RCA program played a key role in helping to facilitate the planning meetings and guiding the Action Team and community through a new process in planning and visioning.

Beyond the significance of Forest Service employees as contributing individuals in the social networks within the community, the RCA program itself further enhances the perception of a vital link between the horizontal networks within the community and the larger, vertical networks and power structures. Increasing the involvement of local Forest Service employees through the community planning efforts, which were partially funded by the RCA program, was perceived by many people I spoke with as an important link and connection to the broader Agency power structures. This link is particularly important in

providing a feeling of efficacy within community group members and allowing them access to the vertical power structures and a "voice" in the system. Even though my study is not capable of commenting on the exact quality of the "voice" or the extent to which that "voice" extends to and represents the community of Darby as a whole, it is clear that members of the Civic Group and the Community Action Team recognize and utilize this connection and "voice" as an important tool for their efforts to coordinate and plan community development.

Catalyst to Collaboration

While the RCA program itself is not a collaborative effort, I suggest it is serving as a catalyst for broader collaborative ventures and projects between the community groups in Darby and other federal, state, and private groups. Collaboration can take many forms, but in my study I found that it is most evident as a link between the vertical and horizontal social networks, particularly within the Bitterroot Valley. A collaborative process provides an opportunity for what Kemmis (1990) calls "a politics of engagement." This process directly involves the common citizen in exploring and deciding on solutions to public problems, rather than the more traditional style of top-down authority and decision making.

Since the Community Action Team is made up of members from the existing Darby Civic Group, there is considerable overlap in organizational membership and "cross-boarding" of people. There is evidence of considerable network flexibility in the community of Darby, as information is shared and various community initiatives are coordinated. Many of the people I spoke with were not only members of the Community Action Team, but also the Volunteer Fire Department, School Board, town government,

and other social organizations in the community. For example, when the Community Action Team identified the action of pursuing an open market for local manufacturers and farmers/gardeners, they joined forces with the Darby Civic Group and held the first open markets in conjunction with other community events that were organized by the Civic Group. The costs of advertising and other support services were shared by both groups and the first two markets were deemed successful by those I spoke with. Furthermore, when the Volunteer Fire Department identified the need for a new fire house, they utilized the resources and capital within the Community Action Team to apply for an RCA grant to help fund the new structure.

The efforts of the RCA program, the Darby Civic Group, and Community Action Team are not limited to the confines of the community of Darby. They have demonstrated that their networks function on a horizontal level as well and collaborate with other groups in the Valley. Both the Civic Group and the Community Action Team joined forces with the Bitterroot Valley Resource Conservation and Development Area Inc. (RC&D)⁶ in 1991 to raise money and awareness for the construction of a higher dam at Lake Como. Darby joined in a broad, Valley wide coalition that eventually raised \$400,000 to increase the height of the dam. At one point in the effort, Darby donated the entire proceeds from their annual Darby Fun Day, which totaled \$8,000, to the effort. One community leader commented "...that was one of the few times that almost everyone came together behind the same project, from the Friends of the Bitterroot, to the loggers, to the ranchers, everyone took pride in being able to accomplish that goal together."

The Community Action Team has continued to cooperate and collaborate with the

⁶The Bitterroot RC&D, although it receives funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, has 501C.3 status as a public non-profit organization and is managed by a local board of directors.

Bitterroot Valley RC&D on several other projects and grants beyond the Forest Service RCA program. The RC&D office has provided their services for receiving and tracking funds as a 501C.3 non-profit group, which has enabled the Community Action Team to receive additional grants from the Montana State Department of Lands. Grants awarded to Darby from the Montana State Department of Lands included funds for an inventory of trees on public space in the community, and for replacing dead and dying trees on the school grounds. Working closely with the RC&D office enabled Darby to take advantage of the RC&D's non-profit status and skills in grant writing, financial fund management, and reporting expertise.

The social networks in Darby have continued to expand beyond the efforts with the RCA program to include collaborative efforts and interest throughout the Bitterroot Valley. For example, Darby began a Community Arts and Recreation Program (CARP) with the assistance of a cooperative grant from the Forest Service RCA program and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). CARP began in 1996 as a result of a need for education and youth services which was identified by the Community Action Team in the Community Action Plan. One of the priorities under this category was to establish a community recreation director. I conclude that without the initial support from the RCA program both in funding and in assistance with strategic planning efforts which identified the need for a youth arts and recreation program, CARP would not have been realized.

CARP is run by a local Darby resident and offers diverse cultural and recreational resource based programs for youth and adults, including after school activities, special community events, summer day camp, lectures and workshops. Since the inception of CARP, other communities in the valley such as Hamilton have approached Darby to learn more about CARP, how they may become involved, and discuss the potential of starting a

valley wide project. In a discussion of CARP, one community member commented, "what is really interesting is that Hamilton probably takes more notice of it (CARP) than Darby does some times... because, number one I have a lot contacts up there, but, because we are in the paper a lot, and because there is nothing like this going on up there, people are constantly calling me to find out more. We are now starting to look at a combined grant for the whole valley." CARP continues to nurture and develop further collaborative linkages with regional and county wide resources such as Teller Wildlife Refuge in Corvallis and Bitterroot Ecological Awareness Resource (BEAR) in Hamilton.

Although CARP was created to meet the need for youth activities, adult education, and cultural activities for the community, it has contributed to the collaboration within the community itself as well. CARP does not have the resources to have their own van for transportation to events or programs, and initially relied on the volunteer efforts of community members to provide transportation. Now, CARP has utilized the resources of the school district's school buses and drivers that often went idle during the summer months. "When I couldn't rely on five volunteer mothers (to drive kids swimming for CARP) I went to the school, and I said can we utilize your busses in the summer time? Well, they love it because now I pay their drivers...their drivers now have more summer time at work, and nobody had ever done that. To me it makes sense...why not utilize what is already here."

The RCA program has further catalyzed collaborative efforts by providing a means for Darby to demonstrate to other potential partners that they have the capacity to undertake planning and development efforts and acquire grants in support of these efforts. As the number of rural communities struggling with change on multiple levels increases, so does the competition for limited resources beyond the community level. My study suggests

that the RCA played an important role in empowering the Community Action Team to achieve some of their goals, which in turn gave them the credibility and capacity to pursue other collaborative efforts beyond the RCA program. One Action Team member commented "...grant sources don't want to take a risk, they want to see that you can accomplish something....we have been able to do that with the help of the RCA program."

Beyond the RCA Program

Regardless of the reasons the Forest Service renewed their efforts with rural communities, the RCA program is commonly seen by both agency employees and community members as simply one tool for the Forest Service to re-build trust and relations in forest-dependent communities such as Darby, while at the same time assisting them to work towards goals and objectives which they have defined for themselves. The RCA program has certainly been viewed by the majority of people I interviewed as something that the Forest Service owes to Darby, but more importantly is has gone a long way as a tool of good-will and trust. One community member that was active in the Community Action Team commented, "That grant money was guilt money, blood money.. money to appease their (Forest Service) guilt, but I was still glad to get it. It helped to unite us behind common goals and brought people together behind certain projects that we could all benefit from."

The RCA grant money has certainly been appreciated and recognized as important by community members, but it was often noted that grant money is not the answer and that simply providing grant money will not solve the problems of Darby. The importance of strong social networks, community leaders, and trusting relationships that put extreme views

to the side appear to be the most critical pieces of the puzzle for Darby. Darby received a total of \$43,668 from the RCA program, which provided some important seed money and created a feeling of efficacy within the group of people involved in the Action Team and Civic Group, but grant money alone will not help Darby to remain resilient and vital if the social networks and relationships are not present and cultivated throughout time and across multiple levels in the community. Another business owner in my study noted "...that (grant money) was just a quick fix, we need more hard work and participation in the community to sustain us.."

Repeatedly, the majority of those I interviewed noted that, despite the fact that the grant money was helpful, what the Forest Service really needs to do for Darby is to get back to their job of managing the National Forest. Years of fire suppression combined with declining timber sales appear to be one of the most problematic concerns of community members in my study. There was a real sense of frustration among those I interviewed about the management of the National Forest, and a feeling that the Forest Service was being run by the interests of national environmental groups with little consideration for the local economic and land use issues, as well as the well being of local residents. Comments often placed the blame for the declining timber sales and related loss of jobs on the national environmental groups and the Washington office of the Forest Service. One former logger commented "I don't blame the locals (Forest Service)...they don't have any control anymore...when every person has an equal say and New York City alone has more people (votes) than the entire state (of Montana)...well...Washington runs the show and the local managers and people are helpless." Politics and power plays in Washington, D.C. were frequently perceived by those I spoke with as the root of the problem, they pointed out that the local Forest Service employees should not be blamed for something that they could

not control. As one community member put it, "they are good people but their hands are tied."

The issue was not simply that the Forest Service needs to "get out the cut," but rather take a more proactive role in the management of the National Forest for true multiple use, which according to those people in my study, included wildlife, recreation, small scale timber harvesting, and prescribed burns. When asked what more the Forest Service could do to assist Darby, the common response was "manage the National Forest," not provide more grant money. Of course when you begin to ask people to define "management" of the National Forest, that opens the door for a wide range of definitions as diverse as the people you ask. Regardless of the debate over the term "management," the majority of people I spoke with recognized a distinct lack of presence and activity in the National Forest on the part of the Forest Service. When I asked people about retraining of displaced timber workers and what else the Forest Service should be doing to help communities like Darby, the frequent response was to return to the active management of the public lands. One former forest worker commented, "It is not the place of the Forest Service to retrain workers...their job is to manage the National Forests."

Chapter 7

LESSONS LEARNED

Historical Perspectives on Change

The changes that Darby has been experiencing in the past ten years, such as decline in their natural resource based economy, loss of "living wage" jobs, and an influx of newcomers and growth, are not new to Darby. The Montana Study documents similar problems and issues in 1944, and the response of the community to meet the challenges that the changes brought. The Montana Study allows researchers and community members to view the historical and cyclical nature of change and to learn from the collaborative community-based response in 1944. In a democratic fashion, the community was given the task of determining their goals and procedures, which, according to the Kaufmans, is a vital ingredient to the success of an effort (Kaufman and Kaufman 1946).

In 1944, Darby was experiencing a timber crisis as the private timber holdings were exhausted and over harvested, and Federal land was not available for harvest at the same level as the private holdings. The last big logging operator had moved out and 75 percent of the young people left Darby after high school because there were no jobs (Poston 1950). With the help and effort of several key community leaders, in collaboration with the Montana Study group, the community came together and began to work together to address the problems of a deteriorating town and community. Community members used their special skills and resources in different areas to meet the needs of the community.

Although social capital is often viewed as a relatively new term and concept, and something that needs to be built, the presence of social capital is evident throughout the history of Darby, although at the time nobody knew it by that term.

The history of Darby is significant because it demonstrates that social capital was not necessarily "built" by the Forest Service RCA program, but rather further encouraged and developed with the assistance of the RCA program. Without the pre-existence of these social networks that have developed over time and throughout history, it is unlikely that the collaborative process of the RCA program would have experienced the level of success and accomplishment that it has. Darby has been dealing with change throughout history, long before the Forest Service had developed the RCA program as a response to change. The significance of historical social networks, both formal and informal, within Darby is confirmed through the stories of those that I interviewed. People repeatedly referred to events in history when the community came together for a common goal or purpose, and put aside their differences to focus on the importance of working together to save Darby, something they all cared about.

The pre-existence of social capital is significant because it forces one to ask, doesn't social capital beget more social capital (Putnam 1993, Duane 1997) ? How can the Forest Service develop social capital in rural, forest-dependent communities if social capital must already exist in some form for the program to have any level of success or impact? The efforts of the RCA program enhances existing social capital by building on and strengthening the existing horizontal social networks within the community and surrounding area. This raises the questions if it is possible or feasible for the Forest Service to create social capital in communities that do not already possess a certain level or propensity for social capital within their own fabric and networks?

Tensions in the RCA Program

The RCA program is very deliberate in making it clear that it will work with communities that already have an expressed interest in trying to build a vital rural community. Their language implies that they will offer assistance to communities that have already identified a need or desire to improve their conditions. The RCA program may be viewed by scholars and critics as an experiment in local or decentralized natural resource management, even though the focus of the RCA program goes well beyond simply the management of natural resources to include community development, economic initiatives, and community revitalization. There appears to be tension within the Forest Service itself between conflicting goals of rural development and natural resource management. How does an Agency that has historically been directed to manage the National Forest estate for such uses as timber, recreation, and wilderness make the shift to that of a rural development agency?

Another tension is the question of defining a community as a single homogenous group with uniform values and goals. As my historical description has noted, Darby itself is far from homogenous in its makeup and views on natural resource management, community development, and other related issues. It is also problematic to assume the Darby as a single "community" has the same needs and can use the same approach to solving those needs as any other resource dependent community. There are clear distinctions that set Darby apart from other rural, forest dependent communities throughout the Rocky Mountain West. These include the social and political history of Darby, its land tenure pattern, and Darby's particular relation to the Forest Service and other potential collaborative partners. It is dangerous to assume that all forest dependent

communities can apply the same approach to meet their needs.

Although my study does not allow for generalizations to the broader community of Darby, the small sample of interviews and secondary data analysis lead me to understand that community members of Darby hold very different, often polarized, views on many issues related to the management of natural resources and rural development. Political races in Darby have frequently been a close 50/50 split. Private land is limited in the Darby area and informal use of federal lands has largely gone unregulated. The large influx of new residents to Darby in the last ten years has rapidly changed the face and definition of their community. New residents bring with them values and beliefs that often conflict with those of long-term residents. Local leadership roles have shifted and new directions and ideas have been raised. All of these events and issues raise important questions about how community, management, traditional, and rights are defined within the context of what is Darby. Devolving decision making authority and power to the local level requires a prior examining of the specific political and social histories of a community.

Despite the fact that Darby is not a homogenous community, I argue that there are certain areas of common ground on which to base a definition of community for their own use. With the initial assistance of the RCA program, the Action Team (primarily business leaders and other active community leaders) was able to come to an agreement on a statement which they felt reflected the desired future condition for Darby. The pre-existence of social networks, human capital, and capacity among these leaders have helped to enable the RCA program to catalyze efforts in the community to develop an action plan for the future. Some common interests and a somewhat shared history exist in their relationship to the natural resources that surround them. In particular, their attachment to a particular place and lifestyle that is deeply entwined in the land. But this

raises important questions about "representation" and how well the active core group of community leaders in my study represent the broader, diverse community.

This study does not indicate that the group of community leaders making decisions necessarily speak for or represent the diverse interests in Darby. Darby is a very diverse community with various special interest groups, but I did not conduct a study to address how well the decision makers and community leaders represent these diverse interests. Based on my interviews and what people told me, I question the representation of the "community" in their planning efforts and actions. The Forest Service RCA program does not appear to recognize or address these deeper social issues. The Action Team provides an easy or convenient representation for them, and an easy way to work with the "community." Although a random sample survey was conducted to determine the interests and priorities of the community, the decisions about what actions were actually undertaken in response to the survey remained with the Action Team. It is interesting that many of the results and outcomes from the Action Plan were related to the benefit of local business owners, such as the "facelift" to increase tourism, while projects for the re-training of displaced timber workers were not emphasized.

A further tension that was apparent in my interpretation of the RCA program in Darby was the apparent lack of monitoring of results and progress. The Community Action Team appeared to make incredible strides in the seven years since the first RCA grant was awarded to fund the Community Action Plan, but it was very difficult for anyone to tell me with any certainty the status of many of the projects from the Plan, and what were the outcomes of all of their work. Obvious products noted included the re-building of the Clubhouse, the Community Arts and Recreation Program (CARP), the construction of the baseball complex, and the "facelift" to downtown Darby. These projects are certainly

very important and no minor accomplishment for such a small community, but there were many other priority projects in the Plan that did not appear to have any status report or monitoring.

The only monitoring appeared to be very anecdotal in nature, lacking any real process or procedure and involvement of the broader community. Furthermore, the Community Action Team and Civic Group were not as active as they had been in the past, and in the case of the Community Action Team, it had been almost one year since their last meeting at the time of my study. There was no priority or process in place to involve the wider community in monitoring or evaluation of their work, which may have helped to keep the group active and involved on a regular basis. The RCA program did not require any official monitoring of the progress, except through informal anecdotal reports from the Community Action Team itself. A formal or structured monitoring process could present an opportunity to assess outcomes as well as involve more of the broader community at large and increase the involvement of new people in the process.

Most community members interviewed for the study complained of a lack of broader involvement from the community at large, such as participants on the Community Action Team or Civic Group. It appeared that the core group of members were beginning to burn out. The same people were repeatedly involved in all the efforts with little infusion of 'newcomers' from the community at large. It is difficult to say why the group was not expanding its ranks, but it may be that the social networks were not being cultivated beyond the core group of community leaders. Consequently, the same group of people was burnt-out, and lacked time and energy to continue. The level of activity was noticeably decreased from what it was only one year ago, and many people I interviewed had a hard time recalling the exact date of their last meeting and effort. Developing a structured and

formal monitoring process may be one way to construct an opportunity for more broad-based community involvement beyond the core group members. A monitoring program would also allow for more input on the progress and projects within the Action Plan. Perhaps building in reassessment and monitoring during the process itself would help to increase the range and level of involvement of the broader community.

Meeting the RCA Goals

As noted before, the Forest Service in 1996 identified five outcomes for vital rural communities, and indirectly the RCA program. These include:

1. increase the use of skills, knowledge, and ability of local people
2. improve community initiative, responsibility, and adaptability
3. strengthen relationships and communication
4. sustainable, healthy ecosystems with multiple community benefits
5. appropriately diverse and healthy economies

The first goal, increasing the skills, knowledge, and ability of local people, refers to the building of social and human capital. In the Darby case study, community members and community leaders such as business leaders and members of the Action Team were benefiting from their ability to deal adapt to change, and increase their knowledge, skills, and partnerships. It appears that the community members that were the primary beneficiaries of this increase were those that already possessed a certain level of human and social capacity. They included community leaders, members of the Community Action Team, and members of the Darby Civic Group. These people were often those that had a combination of time, desire, and ability to be involved in the community planning and action process. There was considerable overlap of members between these groups, which further supports the notion that the members already possessed a certain degree of capacity

to be involved.

It is unclear from my study to what degree other community segments benefit from an increase in skills, knowledge and ability. Because I did not conduct a random sample survey, I am unable to generalize to the broader community, but it became apparent during my interviews that there is some question as to how much the RCA program benefits the "community as a whole." It would be interesting to see what the priorities for Darby would have been if other non-business people's opinions were sought and included in the Action Team activities. There remain unanswered questions about the primary beneficiaries of the program and if skills, knowledge, and ability are increased throughout the community, rather than just within the active planning groups.

Improving broader community initiative, responsibility, and adaptability appeared to be happening at the level of the Action Team and Civic Group. The Action Team developed the first long-range plan for Darby that dealt with key issues including growth and infrastructure, education and youth programs, and business, industry and tourism strategies. Each category was given a list of priority activities that would address the broader category for the long term. Subsequently, each priority was assigned a responsible community member to oversee the progress and completion of that task. The Action Team also took the initiative to apply for and receive five RCA grants over a six year period. Furthermore, they were successful in securing matching funds from several other sources such as Travel Montana. The Action Team now had the confidence and skills to take the initiative and responsibility to plan for the future of Darby in a pro-active manner.

Beyond the limits of the members of the specific community groups that were included in my study, I found there was evidence that initiative, responsibility and adaptability were also taking hold in other areas. For example, the library in Darby applied

for an RCA grant but was not awarded the funding for improvements and computer equipment. Rather than giving up on their projects, the library board, which is a volunteer group of community members and includes several people that are also involved with the Action Team, applied for a grant from U.S. West Communications. They were awarded \$60,000 to install computer technology and train library volunteers in its use. Using their skills and initiative, the library board expanded their search for funding and was able to receive more funding than would have been possible from the RCA program.

Strengthening of relationships and communication was demonstrated throughout my interviews and observations. Although the goal for the RCA program does not specify or discuss improved relationships and communication for and between whom, my study found that it appears to be happening at two related levels. On one level, it is resulting within the group of key community members which I interviewed. Those that were involved with either the Darby Civic Group and/or the Community Action Team spoke of how their working relations had improved and enabled them to put aside differences and work as a group to identify common goals and issues. In the beginning the Forest Service provided a facilitator for meetings, which was also mentioned as an important factor in enabling community members to communicate and put aside differences. Community members spoke of their ability to put aside the negativity and focus on the positive about their community. The Civic Group provided a forum for positive relations to be nurtured and differences were left aside. They often related that improved relationships and communication was one key element that enabled them to work as a group to accomplish many of the tasks and projects for the community.

On a second level, improved relationships and communication also appeared to be resulting between the Community Action Team, Darby Civic Group, and the Forest

Service. Those I interviewed had very positive comments about the local Forest Service staff members and the agency as a whole in their community. They commented that the Forest Service was playing an important role in the planning and development of their community, and could not say enough positive things about the District Ranger and the RCA coordinator. But this was also due to the length of tenure (seven years) of the District Ranger as a key element in their sound working relationship and level of trust. It is important to note that some of the positive perceptions may also be due to the particular personality of the District Ranger, but that is not something this study can determine. They also commented on the fact that he is an active member of the community on many levels outside of his job duties, and lives within the community, not further up the valley in Hamilton or Missoula. The methods used in my study do not allow me to discuss if this improved relationship extends to include the community as a whole, and I suspect that as in any community, there are those that do not feel that the relations and communication between the Forest Service and their community has improved at all. I can only comment that communication and relations have been perceived as improved by both members of the Agency and those in either the Action Team or Civic Group.

The goal of appropriately diverse and healthy economies is difficult to define and more difficult to measure. Although this was not a focus of my study, implications for this goal did evolve from my interviews. The first question is what is "appropriate" and what is "healthy?" If we follow the language of the RCA program, "appropriate" and "healthy" are terms that should be defined by the community. According to the desired future condition statement in the Darby Action Plan, an "appropriate and healthy" economy is one that

"incorporates new business opportunities which provide for moderate economic growth and employment. Businesses which are viewed as desirable are small, locally

owned, clean businesses which are compatible with our natural resource and local values. Desirable businesses are oriented toward manufacturing, services, woods/natural resources products, and tourism. The community encourages local entrepreneurs to initiate and expand businesses in the area.” (Team 1993)

Tourism and service sector business have certainly been viewed as increasing by the community members in my study. Most people I spoke with commented that they now notice more tourists stopping in town during the summer months. The perception is that the improved appearance of Main Street with banners, flower boxes, and western theme store fronts have enticed a noticeable increase in the number of visitors that now stop in Darby to eat and look around town. Since the construction of the new baseball complex to host tournaments, several new hotels have been added to meet the increased demands for lodging during the tournament season. Although my study did not set out to measure quantitatively the increase in tourism or service sector business development, comments from those in my study overwhelmingly supported the belief and perception that there has been an increase in this type of business over the last 5 years.

While I did not attempt to measure the incredibly difficult task of "sustainable, healthy ecosystems with multiple community benefits," implications for doing so did evolve from my interviews. This goal is tied directly to the management of the Bitterroot National Forest which surrounds a large portion of the Darby community. As previously noted, a common complaint amongst interviewees was that the Forest Service needs to get back to managing the National Forests for multiple uses, which they defined as small scale timber sales and selective harvesting as well as recreation. But this raises the question about how "multiple use" is defined and whose definition is being used to formulate policy and actions on the land? Is timber harvest and recreation true "multiple use?" There appears to be a strong perception amongst the community members I interviewed that although the RCA

program is important and has been very beneficial for Darby, it does not take the place of "proper management" of the National Forests. Of course, there is considerable debate as to what is "proper management," but there seemed to be somewhat of an agreement amongst those I interviewed on the issue that the Forest Service was not doing enough management of any kind on the National Forests, and that their "hands were tied" by national interests and the politics in Washington, D.C. Those I interviewed frequently expressed concern over the lack of management on the Bitterroot National Forest, specifically that of timber harvesting, which they perceived as resulting in numerous problems such as fuel build-up and increased danger of fire, and loss of marketable timber to disease and decay. Interestingly enough, the loss of timber related jobs was rarely discussed as a concern for the future. It appears that many people I interviewed had accepted that Darby would not regain the wealth of timber jobs from the past, and were more concerned with "forest health" and "multiple use."

Issues Beyond the RCA

The study suggests that a significant factor in the acceptance of the RCA program was the involvement of particular personalities, especially the local Forest Service District Ranger, Tom Wagner. Wagner has been a member of the community for seven years and has actively participated in many aspects of the community beyond his position with the Forest Service. His presence and commitment to the Darby community was raised in every discussion as one of the most positive and important aspect of the community's success, the RCA program, and relationship with the Forest Service. It is difficult to separate the personality of the individual from the other factors, but I suggest that his unusual length of

tenure in the community is highly significant. This represents a relatively new practice in the Forest Service which now allows Rangers to stay in one location for more than just a few years, while still maintaining their promotion potential.

In the past, most Forest Service Rangers were required to move every two to three years as part of their professional development. Rangers were typically not allowed to stay for more than two years unless they had a special case and were willing to forfeit a promotion. Along with the agency's shifting policy on rural development came a relaxation of the rotation regulations, and now rangers are allowed more flexibility in their length of tenure in a specific community. My study suggests that this has had a profound impact on how members of the community view the Forest Service and its commitment to their community. Continuity improves working relations on an individual level supporting implementation of the Forest Service RCA program.

Many of the variables that are driving change in Darby remain out of their control. As Bengston (1994) notes, there is a significant shift across the U.S. public - east to west - in how they want to see U.S. forests managed. The emergence of discussions about forest values is having very real impacts on many Western rural communities. The rural restructuring of the West is making adaptation to change in communities like Darby increasingly complex and complicated. Not only are there perceived differences in values and lifestyles across residents at the local level, but the national and global forces that impact change are also on the rise. As noted above, technology has increased the ability of people to live in remote areas, while still remaining tied to global business networks. A new and emerging definition and symbol of "rural" and "nature" make it more difficult for communities to agree on a common plan of action or desired future condition, and increasing conflict and polarization. This context also makes it more difficult for the RCA

program to work with communities who are trying to define common interests and develop an action plan amidst national debates and forces.

The impacts from multi-level forces in rural communities throughout the West have significant effects as well. The influx of newcomers further complicates and at times creates class and social structure differences within previously more homogenous communities. Many long-time residents in my study see Darby as increasingly comprised of very wealthy residents, a few white-collar earners, and an increasing number of service sector minimum wage earners. Increasing class divisions exacerbate polarization and increased potential for conflict.

Finally, although key community leaders recognize the RCA program for its contribution to Darby's planning efforts and for its role as a catalyst in building collaboration, it is not sufficient. In particular, it does not take the place of active management of the National Forest estate. Furthermore, there is controversy over how management is defined and by whom it is defined, and what this means for action on the ground. This controversy further complicates the situation. Darby is physically located in the heart of the Bitterroot National Forest, and its history provides a vital link to the forest in many different facets. Community members in my study felt that the primary goal of the Forest Service still remains the management of the forest, but that it is losing the power and authority to do so. Special interest agendas and political powers in Washington were commonly blamed for the ineffectiveness and lack of activity on management decisions for the Bitterroot National Forest. The RCA program has played an important role in rebuilding relations and trust within the community of Darby, but no amount of grant money will appease the perceptions that the Forest Service's "hands are tied" with regard to how local people wish to see the National Forest managed.

Questions For Further Research

Although my study focused on a few specific themes within the context of the RCA program in Darby, it raised many questions in the process. One of the most significant and broad questions is what are the views of residents in Darby that I did not interview? A snowball sample such as the one I utilized provides an in-depth cross section of a segment of Darby, but how representative are these views of the broader community? This is particularly pressing when one considers this within the context of a community that is rapidly changing on many levels. Are the perceptions of in-migrants and their values representative of only them or others? A random sample, using my findings as the basis for a questionnaire, would be a logical next step.

More specifically, my study does not allow for any conclusions as to the representativeness of the decision making groups in Darby, such as the Community Action Team. Do random community members in Darby feel the Community Action Team represents their views? The Community Action Team decides what projects take priority and where to apply RCA funds, but to what degree do these decisions represent the broader community? What are the priorities of non-business people? Of displaced forest workers? I am sure that there are several other special interest groups that likely have very different views on what the priority projects should be.

The RCA program, by the measures set forth by the Forest Service and the sample of people I interviewed, appears to be "successful" and meeting its intent. How does the program and situation in Darby compare to other rural, resource dependent communities in the West, especially others that are receiving RCA assistance? A comparative study that

contrasts several communities, including those where the RCA program is not active, would be another important level of analysis beyond a single case study. Although my study highlights some factors that I argue influence the activity and "success" of the RCA program in Darby, I do not understand what factors may prohibit the RCA program from achieving this level of initial activity in other communities.

Beyond local factors operating in Darby, what is happening at the national and international level that has direct influences on how different segments of Darby's population might react to change? Who is making the decisions that impact Darby and whose interests do they represent? The RCA program provides a link between the vertical and horizontal networks to the broader power structures, but what are those power structures exactly and to what degree different groups in Darby have access and influence on them? What is the quality of the voice that these different Darby residents have in the broader context of external power structures?

Based on the perceptions of those I interviewed, Darby was viewed as forest dependent, but it is still unclear as to what this means, and to whom; how is the nature of that dependency changing? Is it economic, historical, or cultural? As the population of Darby continues to grow and diversify, it appears that the nature of the dependency is shifting from a historical economic or employment dependence, to one of amenity or recreation-based dependence. It is likely that there may be a large portion of the community that still depends on forest resources for livelihood. How many families in Darby depend on the forest for firewood, game, and other special forest products to meet variable needs, and are not calculated in the formal employment statistics? How many families depend on these resources to earn some extra income to supplement minimum wage service sector jobs? These are questions that my study did not examine, but raise questions of how the

RCA may move to respond to its goals of combining building rural community capacity with good land stewardship, especially within the context of multiple use.

In sum, this study raises more questions than it answers, but that speaks to the complex nature of even a small, rural community such as Darby, and its interactions and relationships to the Forest Service. Although it is not clear to what extent changes and subsequent actions in Darby have resulted from the efforts of a core group of community leaders, the fact that the Darby Civic Group preceded the RCA program, and attracted the interest and participation of over 100 community members, over 25 percent of the Darby population at that time, leads one to believe that social capital in the community extends beyond the core group of community leaders that interact directly with the RCA program. Furthermore, it supports my claim that the RCA program did not actually build social capital in Darby, but rather further enhanced existing networks and relationships that have a long history in the community. This also further supports the assumptions of Putnam (1993) and Duane (1997) that social capital begets more social capital. In the case of the RCA program in Darby, I question if the RCA program could have obtained the level of activity and “success” it has were it not for the social networks, relationships, and leadership that was so deeply embedded throughout Darby’s history.

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