

Understanding Union County's Economy Workshop Notes

**Bureau of Land Management
Baker Resource Area, Vale District
Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision Team
Malheur, Umatilla, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests**

Blue Mountains Conference Center
La Grande, Oregon
June 29, 2006

Welcome, Introductions and Attendees:

1. Amy Barnes, Ski Anthony Lakes
2. Sharon Beck, Grande Ronde Angus
3. Jack Boyd, Wallowa Forest Products
4. Robin Brooks, Oregon Women in Timber
5. John Buckman, Oregon Department of Forestry
6. Art Chase, Eastern Oregon ATV
7. Steve Clements, City of La Grande
8. Bruce Eddy, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
9. John Fullerton, Boise
10. Melissa Fullerton, Oregon Women in Timber
11. Bart Goldbar, Boise
12. Joel Hasse, Boise
13. Dick Hohstadt, Eastern Oregon ATV
14. Lee Insko, Oregon Cattleman
15. Colleen Johnson, City of La Grande
16. John Lamoreau, Union County Commissioner
17. Judy Laudermilk, Union County Chamber of Commerce
18. Steve Lyon, Boise
19. Colleen MacLeod, Union County Commissioner
20. Steve McClure, Union County Commissioner
21. Larry McLaud, Hells Canyon Preservation Council
22. Mark Mitchell, Local 2851 Boise Cascade
23. Heidi Morgan, Oregon Women in Timber
24. Vince Naughton, Retired
25. Jeff Oveson, Grande Ronde Model Watershed
26. Rick Pignone, Ski Anthony Lakes
27. Jared Rogers, Boise
28. Butch Stephens
29. Rex Storm, Associated Oregon Loggers
30. Craig Thompson, Union County Economic Development Committee
31. Cathy Troughell, Hells Canyon Preservation Council
32. Harry Upton, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
33. Nancy Van Sickle, Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative
34. Bob Weinberger
35. Steve Wickert, Boise
36. Nancy Lull, Field Manager, Baker Resource Area
37. Kurt Wiedenmann, USDA Forest Service, District Ranger, La Grande Ranger District
38. Judy Wing, USDA Forest Service
39. Bob Mason, Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision Team
40. Elaine Kohrman, Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision Team
41. Trish Callaghan, Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision Team
42. Rebecca Carter, Sonoran Institute
43. Nina Chambers, Sonoran Institute

Objectives for the workshop:

- Discuss and learn about relationships between public lands and the economy
- Build from local knowledge
- Identify strategies that address public lands and community goals
- Identify measures of success

How this information will be used:

- Forest Service: Inform and refine Forest Plan -
 - Vision
 - Strategies
 - Monitoring
 - Analysis of effects
- BLM: Provide preliminary input
- Provide social and economic information to other planning efforts

What I care about

- Where I live is my anchor
- Farming, way of life, raise kids
- Timber industry infrastructure
- Responsible use of the forest
- Maintain jobs, my job
- Great place to live and grow up
- Beautiful place to live
- A vibrant economy, sustainable
- rural character
- quality of life
- manage for all uses, multiple use
- forest health
- education (esp. about forests) schools
- grazing
- recreation
- access to the mountains
- access to public lands
- timber to support funding for schools
- protect private property rights
- sustainable management of public lands
- hunting and angling
- one of the last great places
- bring diverse interests together
- wilderness
- habitat for wildlife
- balance uses and conservation – commodity and non-commodity
- respect for and benefit from maintaining the land
- restoration
- restoration economy
- retention and expansion of business
- diverse economy
- people, community
- pride community service, volunteering
- people working together
- “an” and “solutions”
- winter sports

Expectations

- acquire more socioeconomic information for public lands plans
- role of the community to help with public land management
- investigate the role of public lands in the economy
- improve public lands monitoring to defend decisions, include economic impacts

- strategies and ideas of how to balance diverse interests on public lands
- information sharing from the agencies of where they are in decision making
- strategies for collaboration for economic growth
- public lands to understand role of business and industry infrastructure to manage forests/winter sports
- people to feel like they can make a difference

What is happening in Union County? (based on slide show on Changing Economies in the West)

- A lot of consumer services, hesitant to bring in producer services because of cultural shift
- Jobs v. affordable housing
- Wealth is created from natural resources
- New economic activity should support stewardship of resources, existing values
- Union County is well prepared
- Need a common vision for aesthetics
- A beautiful forest setting
- Low unemployment rate but low family income
- La Grande less than 1% growth rate, some want faster growth
- Demand is still high for wood products
- Developing technology park
- Union County income higher than Baker County
- Forestry is a stable base for the economy
- Has a diverse economy
- Need more active management

Vision – County and Public Lands

County

- Healthy forest
- Healthy economy
- Decent, family wage income
- Healthy schools and families
- Land use planning to protect agricultural land
- Healthy people – health care available
- Healthy environment
- Current forest products manufacturing capacity
- More areas open for recreation (motorized, non-motorized, maintain what we have)
- Maintain infrastructure
- Find common ground among diverse interests – balanced decisions, stability
- More place-based decision making

Public Lands

- Focus on reaching consensus on vision rather than disagreeing on methods
- Qualified personnel to manage our public lands. Expertise and qualifications appropriate to job needed at the right level
- Feds assume responsibilities and honor commitments to counties with federal lands
- USFS to reward people for what they accomplish rather than avoiding controversy
- Adequate funding

Conditions and Trends, Vision, Strategies and Measures of Success

After an introduction to the Union County profile using the Economic Profile System (EPS), the group was organized into several small groups to discuss conditions and trends, visions, strategies and measures of success for specific topics. Each group chose a recorder/spokesperson and discussed the topic and wrote down answers to several questions. The group alternated between small group discussions and reports back to the large group for the rest of the day. Further comments were added from the large group at each point in the process.

Business and Employment

Look at pages 7, 8, 14-19, 23, 28 & 30 of the profile.

1. How would you describe business and employment in the county?
 - a. Good – healthy unemployment rate
 - b. Relatively diverse economy – manufacturing, retail trade, government
 - c. Bad – average income below state average
 - d. Recessions – modulated in county
 - e. Movement of employable age classes?
2. What trends do you see?
 - a. Government – downward
 - b. Manufacturing – upward
 - c. Construction – upward
 - d. Retail – slight downward
 - e. Low population growth
 - f. Stagnant wages
3. Local examples of new business/employment opportunities?
 - a. Business park – increase professional/technology services
 - b. Eastern Oregon University
 - c. La Grande – becoming regional shopping
4. What role do public lands play in business and employment?
 - a. Biomass utilization and industries
 - b. Provide sustainable supply of resources – timber/grazing
 - c. Role in supporting community/county infrastructure
 - d. Recreation and associated businesses
 - e. Public lands be good neighbors – action vs. planning
5. What's your vision for business and employment here?
 - a. Stability (temporarily and long-term)
 - b. Robust growth and planned with infrastructure (not Bend/Californicated)
 - c. Diversity but balance in economic sectors – low/med/high wages
 - d. Pro-business climate
 - e. Protection of agriculture lands/forestry/grazing – “producing lands” – not becoming a specialized community
 - f. Educational excellence
6. What strategies might public lands management agencies consider to help meet that vision?
 - a. Plan management to be truly multiple use “balanced”
 - b. Facilitate environmental education – e.g. Oregon Women in Timber
 - c. Reliability of outputs that supports capital venture investments
 - d. Facilitating/participating understanding of public lands on communities/economics
 - e. Collaboration
 - f. More local agency control of budgets/projects
 - g. New overarching legislation
 - h. Growth opportunities for Forest Service locally
 - i. Investments in local area
7. What strategies might the community/county /others consider to help meet that vision?
 - a. Provide adequate infrastructure
 - b. Good collaboration/communication at all levels – county, NGOs, organizations,
 - c. A community being engaged
 - d. Develop and communicate community/county visions
 - e. Lobby in D.C.
 - f. Help in efficiency – product delivery
 - g. Be a friend in court (participating)

8. Measures of success
 - a. Job creation #'s, quantity & quality (natural resource jobs, average income levels)
 - b. Satisfaction of living – turnover
 - c. Business retention
 - d. Population growth
 - e. Stability of income – changes short/long-term vs. other areas
 - f. Time across town (time vs. distance)

Demographics and Housing

Look at pages 2, 4-5, 10-11, 25, 29-32 of the profile.

1. What do you think are some connections between demographics, housing, and public lands?
 - a. Setting attracting higher and non-labor income
 - b. Employment for youth more limited because traditional-resource based jobs lost due to forest restructuring
 - c. Kids/families moving away
2. What trends do you see in the population? What trends do you see in the non-labor income?
 - a. Population – slight increases in past but increase rate will increase
 - b. Non-labor income – increasing rapidly
3. What trends do you see in housing affordability?
 - a. Recently passed the point where average income can afford the average house.
 - b. Increases in out of county speculation investments.
4. What are some local examples of how demographic and housing affordability are changing?
 - a. Boise Cascade – new hires can't find affordable family housing, so they don't accept the job (Ex. Electrician \$22-24/hour wage)
 - b. Land use planning has limited the affordability of parcels out of town (ex. Larger subdivided plots in agriculture zones are more expensive than in town parcels)
5. What is your vision for demographics and housing?
 - a. Income in balance with housing prices.
 - b. An economy that can support young, growing families.
 - c. Forest products economy makes a meaningful, positive contribution to the economy.
6. What strategies should public land managers consider to help achieve that vision?
 - a. Forest products (logs, cows, mushrooms, recreation, hunting, etc) that support incomes sufficient for a decent quality of life for this area, especially for younger families.
7. What strategies should the county/community consider to help achieve that vision?
 - a. Remain involved at all levels.
 - b. Symbiotic relationship between private/public land management
8. How do you measure success?
 - a. Size of public schools sustained
 - b. Healthy forests – low risk for catastrophic fire, clean water, forest activities consistent with capability of the land

Forestry

Look at pages p. 28, 30, and 32) of the profile.

1. How much does forestry (counted in manufacturing sector) contribute to county employment? Personal income?
 - a. 12.4 incorrect data – include forestry related employment? (Pg. 32)
2. What trends do you see in forestry?

- a. Lack of management \$ to counties
 - b. Employment loss
 - c. Dependence of private land
 - d. Foreign imports
 - e. Lack of forest management and Knutsen-Vandenberg \$
 - f. More mechanization
3. Local examples of changes in forestry? New opportunities?
- a. No road maintenance \$
 - b. Access denials – road closures
 - c. Unhealthy forests
 - d. Actual old growth definitions
 - e. Clean up sick forests
 - f. More collaboration than conflict
 - g. Tort reform
4. How much do public lands vs. private lands contribute to the local forestry industry?
- a. See #2
 - b. Public 5%; private 95% of supply to Boise in the Iron Triangle
5. What's your vision for forestry in this county?
- a. Healthy – economically sustainable forests
 - b. Do what the resource needs
 - c. Trained management on public lands
 - d. Better access – particularly elderly – ADA
6. What strategies might public land management agencies consider to help meet that vision?
- a. Place-based decisions based on science
 - b. Local fee retention
 - c. Do what resource needs
 - d. Own only what you can care for (manage)
 - e. Maintain roads
7. What strategies might the community/county/others consider to help meet that vision?
- a. Local (city/county) management of public lands
 - b. Place-based decisions
 - c. Forestry boards – community collaboration
8. Measures of Success
- a. Less catastrophic activities
 - b. Healthy sustainable forests
 - c. Less \$ spent on fire suppression and more on management

Recreation

Look at pages p. 29-32 of the profile.

1. What is the connection between recreation and public lands?
 - a. Access – roads and trails
 - b. Motorized and non-motorized
 - c. Dispersed and concentrated
 - d. Facilities
 - e. 50% of land-base federal (USFS and BLM)
 - f. fee vs. non-fee
 - g. NW Forest Pass
2. What does recreation contribute to employment?
 - a. Indirect employment – retail and accommodations and health care and government and advertising and marketing

- b. Seasonal vs. year round
 - c. Manufacturing (off-road vehicles, trailers, etc)
 - d. Direct and indirect – multiplier effect
 - e. Local people working and recreation vs. outside people
 - f. 1 direct recreation job should result in “some” number of other employment
 - g. tax and fee generation
3. What does recreation contribute to personal income?
 - a. Anthony Lakes Ski resort
 - b. Concessions
 - c. Private companies – outfitters, rafting companies
 - d. Ripple/multiplier effect of income
 4. What trends do you see?
 - a. Worried about pluck areas being closed
 - b. User fees
 - c. Changes in types of recreation activities
 - d. Flat in employment and personal income/wages
 - e. Tourism advertising increasing but not drawing users (?)
 5. What are some local examples of how recreation contributes to the economy?
 - a. Ski areas
 - b. State parks
 - c. Wallowa Lake Tram
 - d. Scenic highway designation
 - e. Hunting, fishing, camping, off-road vehicles
 - f. Dinner train
 - g. Outfitters
 - h. Bicycling
 - i. How does recreation link to overall Union County economy?
 - j. How is recreation linked to outside economy? (e.g. money spent at national hotel chain)
 6. What is your vision for recreation?
 - a. More or maintain existing access and opportunities
 - b. Regular and consistent road repair
 - c. Increased funding for recreational opportunities
 - d. Recreational opportunity based on usage (% of land dedicated to a use based on % of use)
 - e. More variety of recreational activities
 7. What strategies should public land managers consider to help achieve this vision?
 - a. Relative allocation of land use based on actual uses
 - b. Measurement of use through data collection
 - c. Investment matching level of use
 - d. Place overall land ownerships to provide sustainable production
 - e. Recreation links to other resource production (road construction, maintenance)
 - f. Recreation can occur with other resource production (Tillamook State Forest model)
 - g. A fee structure that keeps \$ where use occurs (100% on forest)
 - h. A fee program for recreational uses to pay for maintenance
 8. What strategies should the county/community consider to help achieve this vision?
 - a. Coordination between local, state, and federal government agencies to funnel money from fees and taxes (on recreational vehicles, equipment, etc) back to forest
 - b. More flexibility in how federal agencies partner with local groups
 - c. More collaboration, coordination and overview of federal management toward local visions
 9. How do you measure success?

- a. # of opportunities, and variety
- b. no maintenance backlog
- c. \$ available

Grazing and Agriculture

Pages 21, 28, 30 may help.

1. How much does grazing and agriculture contribute to county employment? Personal income?
 - a. Employment = 11%
 - b. Personal income = 2.8%
2. What trends do you see in grazing and agriculture?
 - a. Employment = 3% reduction
 - b. Personal income = 7% reduction
3. Local examples of changes/innovations in grazing and agriculture? New opportunities?
 - a. Improved technology and equipment (putting up hay vs. repairing equipment)
 - b. Changing grazing patterns, monitoring use
 - c. Changing crops
 - d. Loss of acreage to development
4. What role do public lands play in grazing and agriculture?
 - a. Water source
 - b. Forage
 - c. Find a balance between resources
 - d. Could serve a role to reduce fire
 - e. Contribute to sustaining local economy
5. What's your vision for grazing and agriculture in this area?
 - a. Profitable in grazing with regulations removed which cost profitability
 - b. Maintain long-term sustainability
 - c. Young people encouraged – have a future in agriculture
 - d. Sustainable water resources for irrigation
 - e. No livestock grazing on public lands
6. What strategies might public land management agencies consider to help meet that vision?
 - a. Reduce regulations- become a good neighbor
 - b. Manage what you've got – improve as you go along
 - c. Lobby congress
7. What strategies might the community/county/others consider to help meet the vision?
 - a. Encourage local politicians to represent interests and to help fight lawsuits
 - b. Stay involved with RAC's (resource advisory councils) and all planning processes
 - c. Take promised actions
8. Measures of Success
 - a. increased income
 - b. average age of rancher gets younger
 - c. healthy vegetation
 - d. fewer catastrophic fires
 - e. Enough water for all uses – cattle, fish, people, plants, etc.

Quality of Life

Look at profile pages 2, 4, 10, 25, and 30.

1. What do you think are some connections between quality of life and public lands?
 - a. Provides the setting
 - b. Recreation including winter recreation

- c. Income
 - d. Resources
 - e. Air and water quality
2. Who do you think is attracted here for quality of life? Who is moving here?
 - a. Those who can figure it out (how to put it together to stay)
 - b. Those who can afford to
 - c. Students come and stay
 3. What trends do you see in non-labor income?
 - a. Increases
 - b. Retirees
 - c. Price increases in real estate
 4. What are some local examples of quality of life?
 - a. recreation
 - b. View
 - c. Balance of amenities (esp. for a small town)
 - d. Transportation
 - e. University
 - f. Sense of community
 5. What is your vision for your quality of life?
 - a. A vibrant community that is equally reliant on diverse type of economic activity and that provide diverse benefits to a multi-faceted population.
 6. What strategies should public land managers consider to help achieve that vision?
 - a. Support development of bio-mass facility(s)
 - i. Generate industrial electricity
 - ii. Provide municipal electric supply
 - b. Encouragement of continued collaboration
 - c. Stand replacement fires are limited in scale
 - d. Balance healthy growing forests
 - e. Increased use of volunteers (more efficient partnerships)
 - f. Recreation
 7. What strategies should the county/community consider to help achieve that vision?
 - a. Locals work with USFS and BLM to seek authorization of pilot programs so more decisions can be made locally
 8. How do you measure success?
 - a. Population growth rates
 - b. Family income
 - c. Air and water quality

Evaluation of Workshop

Common Themes

- Stability and sustainability
- Diverse and healthy economy
- Families and opportunities for youth
- Maintain or increase opportunities for resource use and access

What public land managers can do better

- Public involvement and more local input
- Be a good neighbor
- Be more creative and effective in managing their budget – spend more locally
- Regulations and legislation

Balance Issues

- Grazing ←-----→ no grazing
- Multiple use and access
- Wilderness ←-----→ more extractive
- Set priorities

What communities can do better

- lobbying, support agencies
- collaboration and partnerships
- volunteer
- take action, help with decisions
- increase efficiency and profitability
- have a vision

Measures Common to All Topics

- jobs
- income
- healthy forests
- reduced fire risk
- air and water quality
- variation of leisure and recreation opportunities

What I got out of the day

- Lunch!
- There is more consensus than we thought
- Economic numbers were helpful
- Recognizing Union County is in a “sweet spot”
- Realize a need to spread good news about the county
- Exchange of ideas