

# Environmentalism, the Forest Service, and the Hispano Communities of Northern New Mexico

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*The Hispano communities of northern New Mexico have farmed, ranched, and exploited forest resources since the 1600s. After United States conquest in 1848, much of the common grant land used for subsistence was alienated from the Hispano owners, eventually being managed by the U.S. Forest Service. Thus, continuation of traditional use practices is dependent to a considerable degree upon access to resources on former grant lands that are now federally managed. Increasing federal regulation and environmental litigation impact traditional resource-use practices of Hispano communities, who respond with protests and litigation of their own. This discussion examines causes of land and resource loss within their historical context and also explores the ways in which local communities are attempting to maintain and regain land and resource access. Concepts derived primarily from sociological theories of colonialism and bureaucracy are used to examine land and resource loss, while the concept of ethnic boundary maintenance is used to explore community response to resource loss.*

**Keywords** fuel wood and timber harvest, grazing, Hispano communities of northern New Mexico, traditional uses, U.S. Forest Service

Northern New Mexico has been a stronghold of Hispano culture since colonization in 1598. Throughout the Spanish Colonial and Mexican periods, New Mexicans engaged in subsistence agro-pastoralism based in small villages along the Rio Grande and its tributaries. Kinsmen tilled their fields cooperatively and herded their animals together on tracts of communally owned land.

After United States conquest, much of the common land used for grazing and fuel-wood gathering was alienated from the Hispano owners, eventually being managed by the U.S. Forest Service. Thus, continuation of traditional lifeways in many of the small, northern communities is dependent to a considerable degree upon grazing, fuel-wood gathering, and timber harvest on former grant lands that are now managed by the Forest Service. Growth of the protection-oriented environmental movement is in apparent conflict with the use-oriented ethic of Hispano farmers and ranchers. Increasing environmental litigation and federal control impact traditional resource-use practices of Hispano communities, who respond with protests and litigation of their own.

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Conflict between Hispano communities, the U.S. Forest Service, and environmental groups is examined here as an example of the conflicts occurring throughout the United States among traditional resource users, government agencies, and environmental protection advocates. The history of the area gives rise to conditions that are particularly helpful for understanding rural land use issues and relations between minority ethnic groups and the larger society. Thus, this discussion examines suggested causes of land and resource loss within their historical context and also explores some of the ways in which local communities are attempting to maintain and regain land and resource access.

## Theoretical Framework

Natural resource conflicts in the area are explored in terms of theoretical concepts that treat the causes of resource loss and the relations between ethnic minorities, the larger society, and government agencies. This study examines the usefulness of several bodies of theory current in discussions of rural poverty and poverty in natural resource-dependent areas as explanatory mechanisms for the case under discussion (Peluso et al. 1994; Rural Sociological Society Task Force on Persistent Rural Poverty 1993a). Certain aspects of the work related to models of what has been called internal colonialism (Fanon 1968; Memmi 1965; González Casanova 1965) are considered for their relevance in clarifying the process of resource loss and its consequences. In particular, notions of culture-based internal colonialism (that is, political dominance and economic exploitation of a subordinate culture by a dominant one) seem appropriate for understanding land and resource loss after United States conquest and during the Territorial period (1848 to 1912). Work related to the role of public agencies, which may be influenced by nonlocal interests, in regulating resource access seems especially applicable to contemporary resource conflicts, many of which involve public land (Culhane 1981; Peluso et al. 1994; Rural Sociological Society Task Force on Persistent Rural Poverty 1993a; West 1982). Arguments concerning the loss of jobs and local control that can occur with advanced capitalism also help to account for economic problems in this rural area.

Since the region under consideration consists of territory gained by United States conquest in the Mexican-American War of 1846 through 1848, an argument of resource loss resulting from imperialistic activities seems particularly appropriate. As discussed by Peluso et al. (1994, 31–34), changes in the valuation, ownership, and exploitation of land and resources, as well as redefinitions of appropriate resource use, are encompassed by the arguments of culture-based internal colonialism. Such processes of change have been ongoing in the area since shortly after conquest and have resulted in considerable land and resource loss to Hispano families and communities. The following sections detail these losses and the resulting economic consequences. The sections also argue that the process continues today in the form of changing land-use priorities and increasing regulation and restriction of traditional rural economic pursuits, such as grazing and timbering, on public lands.

As a result of historical factors, many rural Hispano communities are dependent upon federal land and the agencies that regulate its use, as is the case in much of the American West. Thus, it is also pertinent to examine local resource access and control policies of government agencies, which power-based theories of bureaucracy describe as often voluntarily or involuntarily controlled by their most powerful clients (Rural Sociological Society Task Force on Persistent Rural Poverty 1993a).

Examples of local communities losing access to government-controlled resources and services are discussed by West (1982), Peluso et al. (1994), and the Rural Sociological Society Task Force on Persistent Rural Poverty (1993a), among others. They argue that resource access and control are lost, in part, because government agencies are influenced by large industrial and agricultural groups to favor their interests over those of small, local users. According to this view, federal agencies favor powerful groups or constituencies that can garner political support to protect their budgets, regulatory authorities, and, in effect, their existence.

Suggested examples of external influences on Forest Service policy include pressures from timber companies and large, corporate ranchers to favor larger scale operations over smaller ones (Clary 1997; Kutsche and Van Ness 1981; Peluso et al. 1994; West 1982). This study uses the case under discussion to explore the apparent changing balance in external influencing groups from large-scale commodity producers to environmental protection interests and its effect on small, local resource users.

Whatever the reasons and mechanisms of land and resource loss, enduring resentment and protest over loss, discrimination, and economic decline have occurred in the area virtually since U.S. takeover (Knowlton 1985; Rosenbaum 1981). Even so, many Hispano farmers and ranchers of past generations could be described as a muted group (Ardener 1975). They tended to be silent because they lacked the opportunity to express themselves in their own terms and language, often suffering from an absence of power, isolation, and differences in communication tools and values. This silence is now being broken as well-educated sons and daughters return home with a desire to preserve their heritage and ties to the land.

Although cultural and ethnic identification (Fox 1996; Keefe and Padilla 1987) have always been strong in the area (Eastman et al. 1971; Liefer 1970; Rodriguez 1987), their use as a tool for cohesion in the struggle to compete for resources such as land, water, and grazing rights has increased since the late 1960s and 1970s. Rodriguez (1987) discusses this phenomenon in terms of ethnic boundary definition and maintenance as a competition strategy in the defense of resources deemed critical for group survival. In this view, ethnic identity results from intergroup contact, as opposed to development in isolation. Relations between groups become competitive over access to and control of critical resources. Competition intensifies as demand for the same resources within the same area increases. The maintenance and strengthening of ethnic boundaries, or differentiation between groups, represent strategies for exercising claims over critical resources (Barth 1969; Rodriguez 1987, 315–318). This study describes how these strategies are appearing in the formation of local companies and cooperatives, organized protests, and legal actions.

Historically, the northern Hispano communities have struggled with federal land management agencies over resource use and access and with outside developers attempting to take over local land and water rights. Now they are finding many of their traditional uses, as well as new projects designed to improve the socioeconomic condition of local villages, in conflict with the growing environmental movement and involved in increasing litigation. Local people are responding to increasing use restrictions in a variety of ways from protest demonstrations to litigation of their own. Rural protests of this type are described by Fortmann (1990) as means of defending claims to customary usufructuary rights to local resources against the state or other claimants. Such protests can range from political action to the selective use of violence, all of which are encompassed by the examples under study.

These types of disputes over the use of natural resources are often rooted in historical power imbalances and in cultural or ethnic-group differences over appropriate land uses. When these co-occur, the outcome can be greater cultural consciousness and ethnic boundary definition among subordinate groups, as well as the growth of intergroup conflict. Such conflict, in turn, can promote the evolution of new social mechanisms to resolve disputes. This process is consistent with basic propositions found in socioeconomic theories, such as internal colonialism, advanced capitalism, power-based bureaucracies, and ethnic boundary maintenance. It is reflected here in the case of conflict over natural resource use and access in northern New Mexico.

## **Historical Background**

### *Spanish and Mexican Periods*

A brief historical review is presented to describe the roots of contemporary land and resource conflicts and their relationship to theories of internal colonialism. During the Spanish Colonial (1598 to 1821) and Mexican (1821 to 1848) periods, New Mexicans engaged in a subsistence, agro-pastoral economy based in small, scattered villages along the Rio Grande and its tributaries. Raids from nomadic Apache, Navajo, Ute, and Comanche limited range expansion and the distance that settlers traveled from their homes to engage in commerce and trade (Clark 1987, 19–23; Van Ness 1987). Thus, the villagers' basic goal was to produce for local subsistence, not for competition in a commercial market.

Information on the community of Cañones (Van Ness 1987) demonstrates the importance of stock raising and farming to the Hispano villagers. Both animal and plant production were joined in a mixed farming system. The most important stock for food were sheep and goats, with small stock outnumbering cattle by as much as 20 to 1. Livestock were used to plow fields, thresh grain, transport produce, and manure fields. The community stock, individually owned but cooperatively grazed, were moved into the higher elevation pastures during the spring and summer and returned to the village after the harvest to graze and manure the stubble fields (Van Ness 1987, 188–191).

Landownership and use were confirmed by land grants from the Spanish Crown or Mexican government. Although there were several types of land grants, community grants, used by a group of settlers in common, are of particular interest because they are a primary landownership issue in the region (Eastman et al. 1971, 4; Harper et al. 1943, 18–19). Within community grants, settlers received individually owned building sites and plots of irrigated agricultural land. The irrigated plots, often averaging only 5 to 10 acres, grew even smaller when divided for inheritance (Van Ness 1987, 172). The villagers used the community grazing, timber, and pasture lands in common (Eastman et al. 1971, 4). Since groups of kinsmen often tilled their fields cooperatively and herded their animals together on large tracts of communally owned land, they were able to survive on the small, scattered agricultural plots.

### *American Period*

Conquest of the region by the United States in the Mexican–American War of 1846 through 1848 changed landownership and patterns of land use. Under the Treaty of

Guadalupe Hidalgo, the United States was supposed to recognize and respect the property rights of former Mexican citizens. To obtain valid land titles according to U.S. law, however, land grantees had to petition for title confirmation, at first through the Surveyor General to the Congress and after 1891 to the Court of Private Land Claims. In order to accomplish this, claimants generally had to hire an attorney, file their claim, and gather necessary supporting documents. As stated by Eastman (1991, 103), "landholders were turned into claimants who had to incur a substantial expense to have their property respected." Since cash was scarce in the subsistence economy of the region, many claimants signed over portions of their land to pay legal fees. Thus, even successful claimants lost considerable amounts of land because the legal fees often accounted for from one-third to one-half of the land involved (Eastman 1991, 103). In addition, many land claims were rejected; approximately 24% of the acres claimed in New Mexico were confirmed, compared to about 73% in California (Ebright 1987, 33).

The Surveyor General and the Court of Private Land Claims refused to confirm grants for a variety of reasons. Boundaries were often vague, some of the original titles had been lost, and communal ownership of pasture and woodlands did not reflect 19th-century American concepts of private ownership (Eastman et al. 1971, 5). Often, the court confirmed house lands and irrigated plots but did not confirm community pastures and woodlands (also part of the land grant), which had always provided the Hispano villagers with their main grazing and fuel wood resources. Lands from unconfirmed claims reverted to the public domain.

As discussed by Eastman (1991, 103) and by Ebright (1987), in many cases the U.S. government did not honor the intent of the treaty and related documents that land grants in the ceded territories should not be annulled. The government adopted a legalistic, restrictive stance toward land claims in the state. Although there were some fraudulent claims that were rejected, many legitimate claims were also rejected, often on the basis of incomplete or inconsistent documentation. Claims from families who had resided on their land for generations were denied because of lost or inconsistent documents (Eastman 1991, 103). In addition, villagers lost significant amounts of confirmed land because they were unable to pay property taxes under the American system of monetary tax payments, which differed substantially from prior systems of payment in animals and produce. Unscrupulous land speculation by both Anglos and Hispanos, which was often upheld by the courts, also resulted in land loss by Hispano farmers (de Buys 1985, 171, 178–179).

Thus, the American systems of land grant adjudication and property taxation ultimately served to facilitate and legitimize the loss of substantial amounts of land owned and used by the resident population, opening areas for colonization by Anglo-Americans and nonlocal commercial enterprises. Such processes of indigenous land loss also occurred during the periods of Spanish colonization in both Mexico and New Mexico (discussed in Melville 1994 and Wozniak 1995). Although this paper does not focus on examining use of the legal system as a means of land appropriation by colonizing powers, the history of land acquisition in the Southwest could serve as an instructive example of this process. In all, it has been estimated that the American conquest alienated more than 80% of the Spanish and Mexican grants from their owners in New Mexico (Westphall 1965, 49).

The postconquest process of land loss effectively stripped residents of the resources necessary to support themselves and their families. Although some local Hispano elites were able to maintain their wealth, status, and political position (Rodriguez 1987), most residents were not. In many cases, remaining land holdings

were insufficient to support farming and ranching operations, forcing long-time residents into work as migrant laborers for larger agricultural interests or into employment with the railroad and mining companies. Others migrated to the cities as laborers (Forrest 1989; Rodriguez 1987). Land loss and speculation also changed areas from subsistence agriculture to commercial timbering and ranching operations controlled by large corporations and entrepreneurs from outside the region (Rothman 1989).

It has been argued that models of internal colonialism are inappropriate in cases where some social and economic mobility exists and local elites, as well as outsiders, hold positions of dominance (discussed in Keefe and Padilla 1987), as is the case in the Hispano communities. However, the changes in landownership, valuation, and use that led to both economic and political domination of these communities by the larger Anglo society and its institutions argue strongly for the relevance of an explanation of internal colonialism. This is especially true in the early years of U.S. conquest. Contemporary resource-use conflicts, on the other hand, can be better accounted for by examining the relationship of these communities to local land management bureaucracies and their national power bases.

## **Role of Public Land as a Replacement for Lost Grant Land**

### ***Rangeland Resources***

Ultimately, a large portion of the alienated grant land ended up in federal control after passing through the hands of various owners. In the northern and central portions of the state, the Forest Service now manages much of this land. Twenty-two percent of the Santa Fe and Carson National Forests comes from confirmed land grants. An unknown additional percentage of the forests consists of grant land that was not confirmed (de Buys 1985, 257).

Presently, many of the remaining small ranching operations use private grant land or public land as the majority of their range. The private grant lands are generally grazed as community range. However, only about 14 community grants with significant amounts of common grazing land remain in private ownership (Eastman 1991, 107; Eastman and Gray 1987, 82). These community grant losses limit the grazing areas open to many villagers. For example, the community of Cañones, located near the northern portion of the Santa Fe National Forest, lost community grant lands to speculators who ultimately sold the land to the federal government in 1937. As a result, 89% of the Cañones valley is managed by the Forest Service, and the village is surrounded on three sides by national forest (Van Ness 1987, 201). Thus, local stockmen are forced to rely on grazing permits on forest lands for their livestock.

Over the years, this reliance has resulted in local economic systems being affected by the larger regional and national forces that can influence resource allocation decisions in public agencies, as discussed in theories of power-based bureaucracies. Since resource use and access are controlled by a nationally administered federal agency, the possibility of nonlocal influence is high. Even though the Forest Service has traditionally had a strong local orientation (Culhane 1981), extralocal factors have also played a considerable influencing role in agency decision making, in many cases leading to differential access to the region's resources (Peluso et al. 1994; Rural Sociological Society Task Force on Persistent Rural Poverty 1993a; West 1982).

External influences have been generated by powerful constituencies from industry as well as from the environmental movement (Clary 1997; Kutsche and Van Ness 1981; Peluso et al. 1994; West 1982). Such groups have influenced agency policies in varying ways, ranging from outright threats to agency budgets, resources, and spheres of influence to more subtle forms of domination. This more subtle domination occurs when the interests of the agency, and sometimes the ideology of its staff, coincide with those of external influencing groups (reviewed in greater detail in Rural Sociological Society Task Force on Persistent Rural Poverty 1993a). These various styles of external influence are discussed in the following sections describing resource loss by the Hispano ranchers and farmers of northern New Mexico.

### ***Paths to Resource Loss***

Many of the former grant lands came into federal control in degraded condition. Although concentration of animals near villages produced some areas of overgrazing during Spanish Colonial times (Baxter 1987, 23; Scurlock 1995, 4), herds were relatively small and the land base was large (Rothman 1989, 196–197). Thus, relatively small populations of both humans and animals successfully utilized the resources of the area over the long period of Spanish control. Areas of overgrazing increased during the Mexican period as commercial sheep production expanded substantially (Scurlock 1995, 4).

However, the most serious range degradation occurred after U.S. conquest with tremendous expansion of the range livestock industry in the 1870s and 1880s. Expanded markets opened by the entrance of the railroad into the region in 1880 led to rapid increases in primarily Anglo-owned commercial ranching, farming, timbering, and mining operations (Harper et al. 1943, 48). Overexpansion of the livestock industry and large-scale timber harvesting led to vegetation loss and soil erosion in the arid environment of New Mexico (Eastman et al. 1971, 6; Rothman 1989, 196–197). In addition, some traditional Hispano grazing practices that were sustainable with low populations and large tracts of available land became less so with increasingly constricted grazing areas, stemming from land grant loss and growing human and animal populations (Pulido 1993, 137). Poverty also limited the amount of capital that subsistence agriculturalists could invest in range improvements, which contributed to the problem of declining rangeland health (West 1982, 92).

Forest Service land managers began to address these problems on lands that had become part of the Carson and Santa Fe National Forests in the early part of the century. Dating from the 1920s and accelerating in the period from the 1940s through the 1960s, livestock ranching on the two forests changed tremendously as the economy changed and the Forest Service implemented range improvement programs, many of which were thought harsh and poorly explained by local ranchers. There was a steady decline in both the number of grazing permits and the number of animals permitted, from 2200 permits in 1940 to fewer than 1000 in 1970 (de Buys 1985, 247–249). Stock numbers were also reduced, with some areas undergoing substantial cutbacks in an attempt to bring animal numbers in line with agency-determined estimates of range capacity.

With declining numbers of animals permitted on the two forests, the small subsistence ranchers suffered increasing limitations on their herds over the years. One community had herd reductions of 60%, while the permittees of another lost permits for 1000 cattle over a period of a few years (de Buys 1985, 247–259). Free-use

permits, issued for animals used in household operation such as milk cows and draft horses, were completely phased out by 1980. Also during this period, there was a major change in the kinds of animals being grazed, with massive declines in the numbers of sheep and goats under permit. By 1980, there were no goats on either forest and no sheep on the Santa Fe (de Buys 1985, 247–248; Van Ness 1987, 202). These significant changes came about both as a result of Forest Service direction and as a result of changes conditioned by the switch from a subsistence-based to a cash-based economy. Land losses and cutbacks in herd size undoubtedly pushed many people into the cash-based economy of wage work (West 1982, 92).

The trend over the years was toward permit consolidation, which led to fewer permittees with larger herd sizes. Although there were undeniable issues of rangeland health that required attention, reductions in numbers of permittees and numbers of animals permitted, reductions in the number of sheep permits, loss of free-use permits, and restrictions on goats seriously affected the livelihoods of many villagers. This is reflected in Kutsche and Van Ness's statements (of the view of the residents of Cañones) that Forest Service administration favored large-scale ranching and was often not compatible with the subsistence needs of local communities (Kutsche and Van Ness 1981, 45).

West (1982) discusses this trend toward increasing restrictions on the smaller users in terms of a national Forest Service focus on larger scale, commercial livestock operations because these operations could produce outputs that matched the post-World War II Forest Service emphasis on supplying meat for a growing national demand. Thus, the larger commercial livestock industry was a powerful constituency whose goals coincided with agency goals of increased production. As West states (1982, 30), "the [large] stockmen were in a better economic position to contribute to intensified range improvements, and were more market oriented than small subsistence farmers such as the Spanish Americans." According to Friesma, these changes in livestock permitting regulations were not directed vindictively against the Spanish Americans, but were part of a larger, agencywide policy applied everywhere because of Forest Service stress on administrative uniformity (Friesma 1971, discussed in West 1982, 93). As such, the changing regulations serve as an example of the effect of powerful, nonlocal influences on the resource access policies of a government agency, as discussed previously with power-based theories of bureaucracy.

As a result of these range-use restrictions and other difficulties, many villagers developed considerable animosity toward the Forest Service and determination to defend their claims of traditional use rights on the forest. This determination, combined with poor economic conditions and bitterness over land grant loss, led to an upsurge in ethnic consciousness and boundary definition, resulting in organized protest in the late 1960s (Rodriguez 1987). In 1967, protest coalesced in several acts of violence including a raid on the Tierra Amarilla Courthouse. The raid was led by Reies López Tijerina, founder of the *Alianza Federal de Mercedes*, later called the *Alianza Federal de los Pueblos Libres* (or the *Alianza*). Two of the main goals of the protest were to bring the problem of massive land grant loss to national attention and to address a series of grievances concerning management of grazing on the national forests (de Buys 1985, 258–277).

A detailed discussion of this period of overt protest, the reasons it was able to produce changes in local Forest Service policies, and the duration of those changes is unfortunately beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say that certain policies did change in response to the protests and efforts were made to be more responsive

to the needs of the local people, at least for a time (de Buys 1985, 258–277; Raish 1997).

### ***The Importance of Domesticated Animals***

Although herd sizes have declined as discussed in the previous section, the contributions of livestock to the families and communities of the north continue to be very important. Most of the small-scale livestock operators no longer depend on their animals for their full support; they generally have outside jobs or are retired. They consider their animals as a means of savings, as “banks-on-the-hoof,” which can be used in hard times. Animals serve as a backup resource for emergencies, for periods of unemployment, or for special needs like college tuition for the children. They also add to family security by providing meat for the family no matter what the super-market price is or the condition of family finances (Eastman and Gray 1987, 39–50; William de Buys, personal communication 1995).

In addition to the economic considerations, small-scale livestock producers emphasize the quality of life that ranching provides them and their families. They speak of preserving a working relationship with the land that can be passed with pride to their children and of the self-sufficiency and frugality the rural life teaches. Owning animals is very important to them as a way of reaffirming ties to their ancestral lands and heritage. Cooperative work arrangements and participation in livestock-related community events such as branding and butchering also help to keep alive social cohesion in the community. In many cases, the extra buffer that the animals provide allows the family to stay in the ancestral, rural community and continue at least a portion of the traditional life-style (Eastman and Gray 1987, 39–50; William de Buys, personal communication 1995).

### ***Fuel Wood and Timber Products***

Public lands are also used by the villagers as sources of fuel wood and timber products that grant lands once provided. In many areas, fuel-wood gathering is a necessity, not a luxury, since people heat their homes and cook with wood-burning stoves. In these areas, harvesting wood is considered to be a traditional right that ties the people of the villages to their ancestral lands. Thus, fuel-wood gathering policies on the Carson National Forest, for example, have historically been liberal with no fees for gathering “dead and down” wood anywhere on the forest. In some areas, wood harvesters were also allowed to cut snags.

In addition, the commercial timber industry has been a substantial business in the north as well as in the state as a whole, providing approximately 10% of the manufacturing jobs between 1972 and 1977, declining to 6% by 1989 (Van Hooser et al. 1993). Historically, almost two-thirds of the wood processing plants were located in the northern and central portions of the state (Van Hooser et al. 1993), serving as major sources of employment for the small, rural communities. The Forest Service is instrumental in providing materials for these plants as well as jobs in logging and related industries.

The Vallecitos Federal Sustained Yield Unit on the Carson National Forest was specifically designated for the benefit of local communities (Clary 1997). Its designation in 1948 stemmed from the Sustained Yield Forest Management Act of 1944, which established sustained yield units to promote the stability of forest industries, employment, communities, and taxable forest wealth through continuous supplies of

timber. The unit policy statement required that primary manufacture of logs from the unit be within 1 mile of Vallecitos, New Mexico. Other provisions included employing local residents, providing lumber to meet their needs, and supporting local communities.

### **Environmental Views of Rural Northern New Mexico Hispanos**

In order to maintain their viability and their links to ancestral lands and traditional lifeways, the northern communities depend upon the resources of adjacent national forests for grazing, fuel wood, and timber products. These residents view themselves as environmentalists and stewards of both their private land and leased federal land (McSweeney 1995). Their attachment to land and place has been well described and documented (Eastman et al. 1971; Kluckhohn and Strodbeck 1961; Liefer 1970; McSweeney 1995). In his 1990 report on ranchers' attitudes toward wilderness designation, Karl Hess refers to a "cultural attachment to tradition, family, and community" in northern New Mexico. He found that "culture and tradition transcend the aspirations of individuals . . . grazing is a part of that tradition and culture. It is performed not so much for the sake of profit as it is for the sake of continuity with the past" (Hess 1990, 24–25).

Indeed, there are important differences between the majority of ranching operations in the Hispano communities of the north and larger, more commercially oriented operations in other portions of the state that affect the debate over cattle grazing on public lands. Northern grazing allotments are typically seasonal and smaller than allotments in other areas. Many are communally operated, with individual ranchers rarely having more than 100 head of livestock. Often they have many fewer, with the average herd size less than 30. Environmental differences require considerably larger allotments in the southern portions of the state and much larger herd sizes. Hess believes that values and attitudes of the ranchers also show differences, with a more entrepreneurial, profit-oriented attitude prevalent among the larger southern operators. Northern operators, on the other hand, tend to view prosperity and the security of future generations in terms of the continuity of traditional life-styles and the integration of community with the surrounding landscape (Hess 1990, 24–25).

### **Litigation, Regulation, and Hispano Response**

Ethnic Hispano groups and communities are increasingly defining themselves and their boundaries by a determination to maintain and defend their traditional lands and economic practices against both outside commercial development and governmental regulation (Peña and Gallegos 1993; Rivera 1998). One of the ways they are attempting to accomplish this is by developing business enterprises to promote and teach traditional arts and economic practices, while offering local employment opportunities. Pulido (1993) describes such a venture in her discussion of the *Ganados del Valle* Cooperative, a locally owned sheep-raising and weaving enterprise in Los Ojos, New Mexico. A local timber and logging operation in the Vallecitos Sustained Yield Unit is a part of this trend and is discussed in the following section. Actions that threaten the existence of such operations have been met with legal action, protests, civil disobedience, and exhortations to preserve the Hispano cultural heritage from continued encroachment and loss (Fortmann 1990; Peña and Gallegos 1993; Pulido 1993).

Historically, commercial development, spurred primarily by nonlocal corporate interests, and government regulation of public land use have posed threats to many traditional ranching and farming operations (Kutsche and Van Ness 1981; Rivera 1998). In recent years, those threats have been intensified by the growing ability of the nationwide environmental movement to promote increased restrictions on public lands (Rural Sociological Society Task Force on Persistent Rural Poverty 1993a).

In his study, Hess found that the northern ranchers looked upon radical environmentalists with fear and distrust because of their perceived threat to "historic ways of life and to communities whose heritage is rooted in the wilderness soil" (Hess 1990, 25). Pulido (1993) describes the struggles of the *Ganados del Valle* Cooperative with the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF) over grazing areas for their sheep. She concludes that NMDGF refused limited grazing requests in wildlife management areas from the cooperative so as not to alienate their environmental constituencies.<sup>1</sup> She further argues that "the situation presents, in microcosm, the conflict of philosophies espoused by mainstream environmentalists and advocates of sustainable development" (Pulido 1993, 132). In her view, the goal of many environmental groups to protect large amounts of land as wilderness runs counter to the desires and needs of traditional groups who consider those areas as their homeland (Pulido 1993, 135).

Over the years, the growing environmental movement, coupled with changing public expectations of the role and use of federal lands, has indeed impacted traditional use practices and traditional communities in northern New Mexico, as well as elsewhere in the West. Changes in the economy and fluctuations in supply and demand also impact the industries supporting these communities. These changes form part of a national and regional trend toward declining timber harvesting and grazing on public lands. This trend is part of a general decline in dependence on farming, extractive activities, and local rural industries, with a concomitant increase in service industries such as tourism, in rural areas (Rural Sociological Society Task Force on Persistent Rural Poverty 1993a).

### ***Timber and Fuel-Wood Harvest***

A Southwestern Region Forest Service white paper presents figures from 1984–1993 describing conditions and trends in the regional timber industry (USDA Forest Service Region 3 1994). During that period, the volume of all species cut declined from 434 million board feet in 1989 to 159 million board feet in 1993.<sup>2</sup> In the period from 1991 to 1993, all operating mills in New Mexico and Arizona reduced to one shift, and eight shut down because of lack of supply and market conditions (USDA Forest Service Region 3 1994). In 1984, 24 large and small mills were listed by the Forest Service in the 2 states, excluding mills on Indian lands. By mid 1996, 10 were operating (Buddy Stewart, U.S. Forest Service Regional Economist, personal communication 1996).

These trends are consistent with national figures from forest-dependent areas describing widespread mill closings and job losses. For example, Oregon lost 46% of its sawmills and saw a 30% decline in mill employment in the years between 1968 and 1984 (Weeks 1990, 129, discussed in Peluso et al. 1994), related in part to the "boom and bust" nature of the industry and to lack of supply resulting from excessive harvesting in the post-World War II years (Robbins 1997, 195–204). Many of these declines are also caused by changing productive strategies and restructuring

that occur with advanced capitalism and will continue in the years to come. Such strategies include a shift away from production of logs and forest products by small firms to production by large, nonlocally owned, industrial firms. These changes eventually lead to local job losses and a movement away from local control in economic decision making (Fitchen 1991; Humphrey 1990; Marchak 1983; Peluso et al. 1994).

In northern New Mexico, six small mills processing products from the Carson and Santa Fe National Forests closed in the 1980s and 1990s, and a larger mill operated by Duke City Lumber Company also shut down. Lack of supply and market conditions were given as reasons for the closures (USDA Forest Service Region 3 1994). In a pattern seen commonly across the state, timber industry officials often blame closings on the lack of Forest Service timber sales resulting from environmental legislation and litigation. Local environmental groups, on the other hand, stress the role of competition with timber coming in from Canada and the southeastern United States and alleged Forest Service mismanagement in the closings (Eichstaedt 1995; Korte 1996; McClellan 1995; Ragan 1996; Toppo 1995). Considering the larger national and global economic factors involved in timber production, a great many factors are undoubtedly involved in the mill closings, including some or all of those presented by the parties involved in the conflicts.

The previously mentioned Vallecitos Sustained Yield Unit provides an example of declining timber production with resulting effects on local communities that is litigation related. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, former local employees of an Albuquerque timber company formed their own company to harvest timber from the unit. A group of community members also formed a cooperative to harvest and sell fuel wood. These enterprises were celebrated for providing jobs to rural communities, a much-needed project in the effort to combat rural poverty (Rural Sociological Society Task Force on Persistent Rural Poverty 1993b). Unfortunately, during this period the Forest Service did not offer any timber sales in the unit, for a variety of reasons. Attempting to develop too many projects at the same time and revising guidelines to meet Mexican spotted owl and goshawk protection measures were mentioned by officials as causing part of the problem (Patrick Jackson, U.S. Forest Service Special Staff Assistant to the Deputy Regional Forester, personal communication 1998). As a result of the absence of timber sales, the two local companies suffered financial setbacks and filed suit against the Forest Service in 1994. They alleged discrimination because the agency was not making timber sales available to benefit small, minority-owned companies and their home community.

The Forest Service responded to the suit and prepared to offer the La Manga Timber Sale, which had been in preparation since 1989. At this point in August 1995, a federal injunction was issued placing restrictions on logging and fuel-wood harvesting on Forest Service land in Arizona and New Mexico to protect Mexican spotted owl habitat. The court ruling stemmed from a lawsuit filed by several environmental groups, charging that the agency failed to consider adequately the cumulative impacts on the owl in planning its timber program. The injunction halted both timber and fuel-wood sales in the unit, as well as on the forest as a whole, and limited gathering of "dead and down" personal-use fuel wood to designated areas. During this period, the local mill at Vallecitos joined the list of closures owing to lack of supply.

Fall 1995 and winter 1996 saw protest and unrest in the area resulting from the shutdowns. Residents feared inadequate fuel-wood supplies from the designated harvest areas, many of which were farther than local people normally traveled to

obtain wood (Ragan 1996). They were also concerned about job losses from the mill closures (Ragan 1996). The villagers, as well as the loggers, lumber company officials, and sawmill owners and operators, blamed the environmentalists and the Forest Service for their plight. The environmentalists responded by blaming the Forest Service for inefficiency and mismanagement, and the timber companies for greed. There were angry words and confrontations, with charges of racism and "newcomerism" reported in both the local and national press (Eichstaedt 1995; Korte 1996; McClellan 1995; Toppo 1995).

A new activist group, *La Herencia de Nortehños Unidos*, was formed to represent ranching, land, and logging interests in northern New Mexico. Use of a Spanish name for the new group emphasizes its role as a group supporting the interests of Hispanos in the area, although its membership is not limited to Hispanos. In late November 1995, the Herencia group staged a protest rally and hanged two Santa Fe environmental group leaders in effigy. Some lumber company officials and others with extractive interests on forest lands were also on hand to lend their support (McClellan 1995).

In early 1996, a bomb exploded at the Española Ranger District office (Santa Fe National Forest). No one was injured by the blast, which did minor external damage, and no one has been arrested. The FBI investigations focused on recent controversies in which the Forest Service was involved, including environmental issues, fuel-wood gathering disputes, and battles over grazing rights (Korte 1996; Ragan 1996). This discussion is not meant to suggest that Hispano groups were responsible for the blast but simply to demonstrate the presence of unrest in the region.

After these incidents, the situation calmed somewhat. Opposing groups began discussions, and community drives and donations of wood allayed most residents' fears about having sufficient wood for the winter. Community leaders urged compromise and understanding that would allow both protection of wildlife species and maintenance of traditional lifeways (de Buys 1995).

The Forest Service amended forest plans in Arizona and New Mexico to provide standards and guidelines for the Mexican spotted owl and the northern goshawk. The agency completed formal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (as mandated by Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act) on both formerly existing and amended forest plans, causing the original injunction to be lifted in late 1996. Other legal injunctions came into play at that time, however, stalling the proposed work in the Vallecitos Unit until late 1997, when the La Manga Timber Sale was offered and resolution of the Civil Rights Complaint filed by the two local companies began. The local timber and fuel-wood companies are currently working in the unit. However, the long delays caused them considerable financial difficulties.

### **Grazing**

Forest Service range statistics from Arizona and New Mexico also show a downward trend in numbers of permittees, animals authorized to graze, and AUMs (animal unit months) from 1982 to 1995.<sup>3</sup> Numbers of permittees in both states have dropped by about 25%, while animals authorized to graze have dropped by roughly 25% in Arizona and 20% in New Mexico. These declines stem from climatic and market fluctuations, consolidation of permits, and growing urbanization in the region. They are also affected by a growing emphasis on tourism and recreation on public lands, and by environmental protection legislation (Kennedy et al. 1995).

The fears found by Hess (1990) in his examination of ranchers' attitudes toward wilderness designations on public lands carry over into other areas of government programs and restrictions, as well. These concerns stem from the perception that restrictions, changes, and new designations are "but one more step toward elimination of livestock on public lands," giving outsiders greater control over the communities and lives of local citizens (Hess 1990, 11). For example, court-mandated revisions to federal grazing allotment plans, and an agreement signed in April 1998 between the Forest Service and the Southwest Center for Biological Diversity and Forest Guardians, are viewed with great concern and skepticism. The latter agreement stipulates that livestock will be excluded from riparian areas on a considerable number of allotments in Arizona and New Mexico until studies are completed to determine if cattle grazing is harming the southwestern willow flycatcher, spikedace, and loach minnow. Although most of the allotments affected by the agreement are in southwestern New Mexico and southeastern Arizona, there are several on the Carson and Santa Fe National Forests. Ranchers feel the effects of the agreement will be far-reaching, ultimately removing all cattle from Forest Service lands. Although the agreement does not require complete removal, environmentalists and ranchers agree that herd sizes will eventually have to be reduced (Taughner 1998). Northern ranchers are concerned that similar restrictions will eventually be implemented in their area, continuing the pattern of restricting access to traditional lands and resources.

These grazing restrictions and the settlement between the Forest Service and the two environmental groups demonstrate the influencing power of the outright threat of legal action, as well as the growing importance of the environmental movement, in agency decision making. Lawsuits, and the threat of lawsuits, are producing use restrictions supported by the movement. As in this case and as discussed in theories of power-based bureaucracies, once a threatened action such as a lawsuit is carried out, merely the threat is often sufficient to produce the desired result in following cases (discussed in Rural Sociological Society Task Force on Persistent Rural Poverty 1993a). However, countersuits and political pressure by user groups, as discussed in the case of logging in the Vallecitos Sustained Yield Unit, may counter this tendency somewhat.

### **Concluding Comments: External Influence and Community Response**

The attitudes, values, and smaller scale associated with the northern ranching tradition often carry over into other resource uses as well. In many cases, the smaller logging, fuel-wood harvesting, and ranching operations of the northern Hispano communities are caught in a struggle to influence public policy and decision making that involves larger economic interest groups, environmental groups (whose major concerns are often with larger scale resource extraction ventures), and government agencies.

In the case of the Forest Service, the agency responds to pressure from a variety of interest groups that can make their influence felt in the Congressional appropriations process (Bolle 1997; Culhane 1981; West 1982, for example). Throughout its history, the agency has responded to many different external influences and interest groups, cultivating them in many cases because their goals coincide with those of the agency (Culhane 1981, 332-341; Schrepfer 1997; West 1982). These groups include large-scale timber companies (Bolle 1997), corporate ranching interests (West 1982), and environmental groups (Schrepfer 1997), as well as many smaller,

local groups that are often allied to regional and national parent organizations (Culhane 1981, 332–333).

Legislation-mandated public participation has made federal agency decision-making processes more open to public input, but as many observers have argued, if a group is poor and has little organization and power, it will have little real chance of influencing policy (Culhane 1981; Peluso et al. 1994, 33; Rural Sociological Society Task Force on Persistent Rural Poverty 1993a; West 1982, 2). Such groups may be denied access to use rights on public lands or have those use rights diminished owing to their lack of power and influence. This attrition of use rights occurred during the previously discussed period of severe grazing permit reductions incurred by the small-scale ranchers on the Carson and Santa Fe National Forests. Some of the recent, hard-won Hispano victories in maintaining traditional life-styles and resource use rights (Pulido 1993; Raish 1995; Rodriguez 1987) seem to result from increased education, organization, and sophistication in using the legal system and the media to influence agency policy, as occurred in the eventual success of the Vallecitos fuel-wood and logging operations. Future research is needed into the methods by which local groups successfully battle large corporate interests and government agencies (Rural Sociological Society Task Force on Persistent Rural Poverty 1993a). A more in-depth examination of the patterns of success and failure of the north New Mexico Hispanos in defending traditional land uses could be helpful in this regard, since many local development projects and traditional uses such as grazing are still caught in battles between larger, more powerful interest groups, while others are accepted or successfully implemented.

Although environmental groups such as the Sierra Club have influenced Forest Service policy since its earliest days and have been used by the agency to assist in implementing conservation goals (Schrepfer 1997), their power has increased significantly since the 1970s (Culhane 1981, 208–229, 338; Rural Sociological Society Task Force on Persistent Rural Poverty 1993a). Culhane's work in the 1970s (1981, 208–229) suggested agency use of the growing environmental movement as a means of tempering demands from consumptive resource users, in his view creating a beneficial balance among user interests. However, multiple constituencies do not necessarily produce a balancing effect leaving a government agency free of dependence on a single pressure group. The situation can lead to an agency caught between warring interest groups in a constant struggle to survive (Simon 1965, discussed in West 1982, 26) that can limit its ability to function and worsen the condition of small, local resource users. West discusses this situation with respect to natural resources, government agencies, and the rural poor (1982, 130):

The preservation versus production conflict has taken over the center stage of natural resource conflict as the environmental preservation status groups have come to the political fore. Both large scale resource development interests and environmental elite groups have learned to effectively ignore the condition of the rural poor as they battle with one another over symbolic turf . . . Their [environmental groups'] struggle . . . has only weakened the ability of agencies like the Forest Service to pursue policies of distributive justice in rural development, as they are thrown into increasing dependence on large scale economic interests to defend resource production goals.

Rightly or wrongly, interest groups on both sides of the production/preservation debate tend to view multiple-use agencies like the Forest Service as

being in league with the opposition (Culhane 1981, 338–339). This attitude can lead to broad opposition to agency resource management programs, even though they may vary considerably between and within regions. As national-scale environmental groups strive to garner public support and influence public lands policy, they often lump resource uses into broad categories that do not make distinctions based on size, or on traditional use histories and practices (Pulido 1993). Broad habitat protection becomes the goal even though human poverty may be a consequence of denied resource access (Pulido 1993; Rural Sociological Society Task Force on Persistent Rural Poverty 1993a). “The growth of ecocentric values, as one scholar puts it, can lead to . . . ‘the substitution of environmental for social justice discourse’” (Buttel 1991, 13, discussed in Rural Sociological Society Task Force on Persistent Rural Poverty 1993a, 159). This philosophy can damage the economic, social, and cultural practices of traditional rural communities, such as the northern New Mexico Hispanos, when their traditional use practices and economic development projects are judged on the same terms as much larger projects, which may have a considerably wider range of environmental consequences (discussed in Pulido 1993).

As discussed previously, local Hispano groups respond to denied or restricted resource access with reassertions of their ethnic identity, heritage, and rights to continue practicing their traditional land uses. They continue to form and defend local, culture-based economic cooperatives, as well as participate in protests, legal actions, and community action groups. In recent years, north New Mexico Hispano groups have increased their participation in collaborative stewardship and community decision-making projects, some of which include participation with professionally staffed social movement organizations (SMOs) (Pulido 1993; *Southwestern Region News* 1998; Western Network 1997). Such groups extend an organized effort on behalf of a social cause into new groups. In the case of natural resource SMOs, they often work to assist resource-dependent communities in local development and improvement projects (Rural Sociological Society Task Force on Persistent Rural Poverty 1993a, 151–152). Hispanos are joining cooperative efforts with both environmental groups and government agencies to maintain resource access and control through active participation in the decision-making process. A desire for mutual education and understanding is also apparent in these ventures. As members of the *Ganados del Valle* cooperative agreed when discussing their problems with NMDGF and the environmental groups over areas to graze their sheep, “if the Green Wall [environmental groups] truly understood their situation, it would stop opposing them” (Pulido 1993, 133).

Cooperative efforts encompass a variety of projects ranging from documenting traditional forest uses to improving forest and rangeland health. Selected examples of these projects are described in the following paragraphs. A community resource mapping project in several of the rural, Hispano villages adjacent to the Carson National Forest is funded by the Ford Foundation and works with local people to document traditional and current uses of the forest by community members. The primary goal of the project is to “chronicle how and when people use the forest and to emphasize the important contribution that local citizens can have in the decision-making process about forest management” (Western Network 1997, unpag.)

Other examples focus on restoring ecosystem health and include an effort on the Camino Real Ranger District of the Carson National Forest to bring together diverse, often conflicting, groups to work together on mutual understanding and environmental stewardship projects. One such project is a collaborative effort among the Forest Service, the Truchas Land Grant (one of the remaining privately

owned land grants), Picuris Pueblo, and Forest Trust (a national organization designed to enhance the efforts of rural economic development groups). These groups identified an area where the Pueblo and the Land Grant members will use prescriptions developed by the Forest Service to harvest forest products and restore the watershed to an environmentally sound condition (*Southwestern Region News* 1998).

Another effort targets range restoration and consists of a demonstration grass bank being developed on the Santa Fe National Forest by the Forest Service, local grazing permittees, the Conservation Fund (a nonprofit organization chartered to engage in both economic development and land protection activities), and the New Mexico State University Cooperative Extension Service. This program allows the ecological improvement and rehabilitation of forest grazing land by providing an alternative grazing area while designated allotments are rehabilitated. The recently formed Quivira Coalition, a nonprofit organization that also focuses on improving rangeland health, brings parties involved in debates over grazing together for educational and information-sharing workshops (*Quivira Coalition Newsletter* 1997). Quivira counts many northern ranchers, local environmentalists, and government land managers as attendees and presenters at its various programs and workshops.

These multigroup efforts are designed to demonstrate that sound land management and environmental health protection can coexist with many traditional rural uses. Allowing local user groups and protection advocates to work together with government agencies as partners in designing and managing projects important to them and their communities and constituencies provides an opportunity for mutual education and understanding. Whether efforts such as these will lead to a general decline in conflict and litigation, and a rising spirit of cooperation in resource use and protection, remains to be seen. Whether increasing participation in such cooperative, multigroup, multiethnic stewardship projects will tend to increase, decrease, or have no effect on the maintenance of ethnic boundaries as a resource protection strategy remains an interesting question for further study. However, the perceived success or failure of the cooperative ventures will undoubtedly be a major factor in determining the choice of future strategies.

## Notes

1. Currently, the *Ganados del Valle* sheep graze under permit on the Carson National Forest for part of the year.

2. All figures on timber and wood product sales were obtained from the USDA Forest Service Southwestern Region, Albuquerque, NM, with the help of Milo Larson, Marlin Johnson, and Paul Fink.

3. All range figures were obtained from the USDA Forest Service Southwestern Region with the help of Dave Stewart and George Martinez. An AUM (animal unit month) is the amount of forage required to support a mature 1000-lb cow or its equivalent for 1 month.

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