

# Community-based forestry in the US: An overview of activities and institutions

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## ABSTRACT:

Community forestry in the US involves a diversity of activities and institutional arrangements which vary by context. In community-based forestry, communities generally share in decision-making and benefits of forest activities and contribute resources and knowledge to managing forests and utilizing forest products. They do so with the joint goals of achieving and sustaining social well-being and ecological health. In the US, there are at least five categories of forestry activities which contribute to community forestry -- each has its own historical roots and geographical variations: forest-based community development, community-owned forests, community and urban forestry, community-based conservation, and forestry cooperatives. Community forestry can occur on public or privately owned lands, and extends beyond land management into the processing and marketing of forest products and services. Community forestry is carried out by a diversity of organizations in the US, usually through partnerships. In addition to grassroots non-governmental organizations, regional networks, government agencies and national advocacy groups are important players. Together they are creating an alternative model for how forests are managed in the US that emphasizes social well-being, economic viability and ecological sustainability while enhancing community participation and benefits.

Keywords: *community forestry, community-based forestry, USA, United States*

## INTRODUCTION

Community forestry in the US, just like community forestry elsewhere in the world, varies considerably based on the local institutional, cultural, political and ecological context. The term community forestry has different meanings to different practitioners. Some people and groups engage in activities that would be internationally recognized as community forestry, but they might not use that term themselves. And conversely, what some call community forestry might not fit the model others carry in their mind. As one leading US community forestry advocate noted, "A lot of people are using the term community forestry, but I don't think they are talking about the same thing." Some authors have written that community forestry began in the western US in the 1990 (e.g. Glasmeier, Charnley) while some practitioners in the eastern US assert they have been doing community forestry for generations. To understand community forestry in the US, one must understand a bit about the historical roots, geographical variations, tenure

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relationships, and policy initiatives that affect the form that community forestry takes in different places.

In this paper, we will discuss five major categories of forestry activities in the US that may – but do not always -- fall under the broad umbrella of community-based forestry. We offer some common elements – goals, values & practices – that together help distinguish the practice of community forestry. We then suggest a typology of the institutions that make up the partnerships typically found in community forestry in the US. This paper casts a broad, inclusive net to capture many initiatives that might be considered community forestry in the US. It acknowledges the differences and the tensions that arise as community forestry tries to bridge dualisms such as public and private, rural and urban, traditional and contemporary, conflict and collaboration. It is a work in progress and we welcome your comments.

## THE BIG UMBRELLA: COMMUNITY-BASED FORESTRY

This paper will use the term “community-based forestry,” or CBF, as the inclusive term for a variety of activities that share certain goals and methods. (As will be discussed, the term “community forestry” has a specific history in the US that represents only one of the strands that contribute to community-based forestry as understood internationally.) A central element to CBF is the role of the community, which can vary considerably. In CBF, communities generally share in decision-making and benefits, they contribute resources, labor and knowledge to managing forests and utilizing forest products, and they do this with the joint goals of achieving both social well-being and ecological health. The degree to which any of these elements are present can vary considerably. For example, regarding decision-making, communities can completely own the forest and control all management decisions, or they may contribute meaningful input to a governmental or private sector forest manager. Some CBF efforts emphasize forest management, and others focus more on the utilization of forest products through value-added processing and marketing. These elements are listed in Table 1. Because values, goals and processes are so integrated in CBF, this paper uses the term “elements to capture them all.

Values such as concern for inclusive participatory processes, equitable distribution of costs and benefits, and ecological and social sustainability are also key elements of community-based forestry. Reclaiming and sustaining cultural identity can be important goal for rural communities, indigenous groups and urban neighborhoods engaged in CBF. In many cases, CBF efforts seek to reduce conflict and build social capital across between local communities and government forest managers and even among members of fractured communities. Knowledge borne of local experience and tradition is valued along with scientific knowledge.

While forest land preservation may be a part or even the purpose of some CBF efforts, some form of subsistence or commercial use of the forest is usually part of CBF. Economic activity is a way to achieve the goal of community well-being and to help fund

ecological goals. CBF efforts often promote social entrepreneurship and small, community-scaled businesses to enhance community benefit from forests. Many CBF efforts seek to sustain local forest-based livelihoods by creating new job opportunities in areas such as fuels management, forest inventory and assessment, and processing of forest products.

Table 1. Elements of Community-Based Forestry in the US

Decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communities share with other entities or control</li> <li>• Participatory, inclusive, transparent and fair processes</li> </ul>
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared, at least in part, by local community and/or forest workers</li> <li>• Social and ecological benefits enhanced through CBF</li> </ul>
Sustainability and Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ecological health</li> <li>• economic viability</li> <li>• cultural survival</li> <li>• community and family wellbeing</li> </ul>

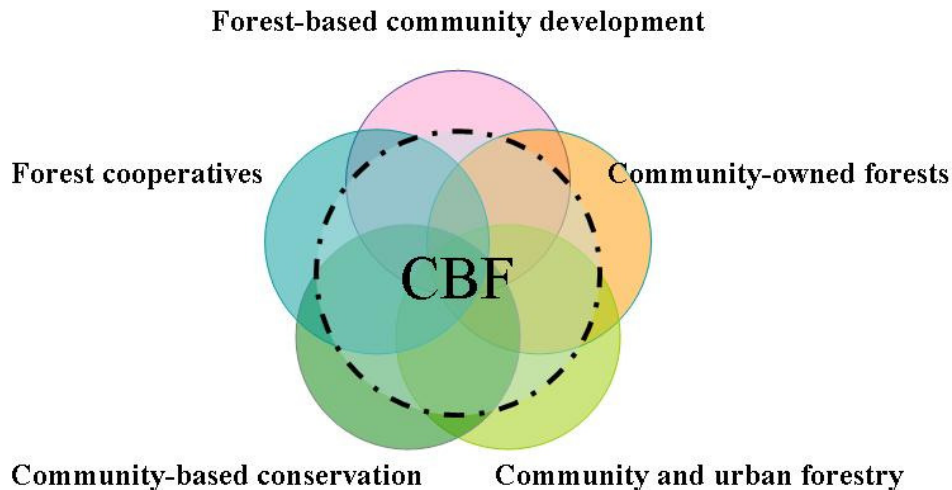
The “community” in CBF can also vary considerably. Forest communities, as discussed in this paper, refer to small, rural, human communities that are linked culturally and economically to nearby forest lands. In the United States, forest communities differ tremendously in many respects. They range from commuter suburbs of urban areas to remote towns surrounded by national and industrial forests. They also include communities of forest workers who are economically and culturally tied to forests through seasonal work, but may not reside immediately adjacent to them. Communities that are more isolated and more economically tied to forests are more likely to seek community-based forestry approaches. Obviously “community” is a loaded word with many meanings sociologically and politically which have been explored in greater depth by other authors (e.g. Li 1996).

#### FORESTRY ACTIVITIES CONTRIBUTING TO COMMUNITY-BASED FORESTRY

CBF in the US can be thought of as combining and drawing upon at least five separate strands of forestry activities, each with its own rich history, influences, priorities, practices and geographical foci. These activities, which are listed below in Figure 1, are forest-based community development, community-owned forests, community and urban forestry, community-based conservation, and forestry cooperatives. Many of these strands are creatively blended in the examples of community forestry present in the US. However, not all activities, initiatives and organizations associated with these categories are community-based forestry as discussed here. Initiatives can be considered CBF when they involve authentic community involvement in decision-making and management and seek to achieve the social and ecological goals valued by the

community. Therefore, the concept of CBF can be considered a big umbrella which covers many but not all of the initiatives in these categories, as shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. Categories of forestry activities contributing to community-based forestry (cbf)**



The IASC presentation as well as future versions of this paper will describe these five areas and provide examples of each.

#### TYPOLOGY OF INSTITUTIONS IN US COMMUNITY-BASED FORESTRY

The main activities and challenges in community-based forestry have not been silvicultural or even political (in the sense that there is often broad political support for such initiatives), but rather institutional. The term *institution*, as discussed here, includes groups, organizations, agencies and partnerships among them, as well as laws, regulations and established, rule-bound behavior such as economic markets and certain cultural or professional norms. *Institutional arrangements* refer not only to the array of institutions involved, but also to the relationships among them through which community-based forestry is put into practice.

There are several different types of organizations working together to promote ecosystem health and community well-being through community-based forestry. Throughout this chapter, we call the first three categories of actors below “community-based forestry groups.” We collectively call the other actors described below “partners” or “participants”. The institutional arrangements of community-based forestry involve all of these actors.

## *Community-Based Forestry Groups*

Among the newest players in US forestry are the **grassroots groups** which sprang up in local communities that were experiencing some crisis related to forest management. These groups often sought to ease the economic and social transition from a timber dependent economy to an uncertain future. Examples of these groups include the Flathead Forestry Project in Montana, the Watershed Research and Training Center in California, Wallowa Resources in Oregon, the Partnership for Public Lands in Colorado, and Framing Our Community in Idaho. Each started informally with local leaders who realized that the problems confronting their communities and forests required a collaborative approach. These groups became more formalized over time, and several, but not all, have incorporated as nonprofit 501c(3) organizations with local boards and paid staff. While these groups may not represent their communities in the sense that elected officials do, they generally seek to include diverse interests in their communities. Grassroots groups, with the help and participation of the other groups listed below, have pioneered community-based forestry in the US. While rooted in their communities, these groups have taken on an impressive range of activities locally, regionally and nationally in service of their missions to promote community well-being and environmentally sustainability. They have sought to build a new local consensus around sustainable forest management while promoting local forest-based businesses and pushing government agencies to adjust policies and practices to address local needs.

A number of **regional organizations** have also developed programs specifically to address community-based forestry concerns especially regarding poverty, social well-being, economic opportunity, resource sustainability and social justice. These include diverse groups like the Alliance for Forest Workers and Harvesters based in California, Sustainable Northwest in Oregon, the Federation of Southern Cooperatives based in Alabama, the New England Forestry Foundation based in Massachusetts, Rural Action based in Ohio, and the Forest Guild based in New Mexico. While they may have a number of local initiatives, their work often spans several states. A number of these regional groups have a long history of supporting community development or forestry in their regions, however community-based forestry may be just one program area among several. While these groups differ significantly from each other, they generally build local capacity for community-based forestry approaches by providing technical support and training for place-based projects, assisting in market development, conducting policy dialogues, and promoting formal and informal networking at the regional and national levels. They work with grassroots groups as well as directly with local landowners, non-timber forest products harvesters, and wood product manufacturers on some initiatives. Some of these groups help bridge the urban-rural divide by connecting forest communities with urban-based markets, funding sources, policy-makers and technologies. Similarly, some groups focus on linking underserved populations to government programs, advocacy networks and entrepreneurial opportunities.

There are several **national organizations** that work on community-based forestry issues. These include longstanding non-profit organizations such as American Forests,

the National Forest Foundation and the Pinchot Institute, as well as more recently established groups such as the Communities Committee of the Seventh American Forest Congress. The National Network of Forest Practitioners, one of the few national-level membership organizations in US community-based forestry, promotes networking among its members, facilitates research and policy activities, and partners with other support organizations on capacity-building activities. These groups collaborate with each other and with the grassroots and regional groups in efforts to bring the community voice to national level dialogues and policy initiatives.

### *Partners, Participants and Promoters*

In addition to these three levels of non-profit organizations that have taken the lead in envisioning and enacting community-based forestry, there are several other sets of actors who are major forces in supporting and participating in community-based forestry activities. These may be considered partner or participating organizations and individuals. The institutional arrangements of community-based forestry are comprised of the relationships between and among all of these groups --the community-based forestry organizations above and their partners below.

**Private for-profit businesses** and **private landowners** are active and essential participants in most community-based forestry efforts. The expressed goal of many community-based forestry activities – such as job training programs, technical assistance, product research and development, marketing initiatives, business incubators, and cost-share programs – is to promote the viability of these private sector actors who in turn contribute to community well-being.

**Government agencies**, especially the USDA Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management, have served multiple roles at multiple levels in community-based forestry activities in the United States. As major players in land management and local economic well-being, these agencies have served critical roles as collaborators, project partners, funders, and implementers. They have both contributed to and benefited from capacity building efforts. Individual innovators and risktakers within the agencies have been instrumental in helping community-based forestry activities to grow. Likewise the **non-governmental funders** of community-based forestry at all levels have not only supported the vision of community-based forestry groups, but helped them to develop it. Through both personal contact and strategic investment in networking, exchange visits, demonstration projects and research, several funders, most notably the Ford Foundation, have proven to be partners in capacity-building for community-based forestry in ways that go beyond the sums granted.

In the United States, the field of natural resource management has a number of types of **quasi-governmental** collaborative groups that work at the multi-community or county level. These include Resource Conservation Districts, Resource Conservation and Development program, Coordinated Resource Management Program groups, and most recently Resource Advisory Committees. These groups tend to be made up of local representatives of diverse interests. Some take on the governance task of reaching

agreement about how to allocate resources while others focus on implementing projects that help forests and forest communities. While they may not have identified themselves as doing community-based forestry, they may be contributors or key partners when their resource management work is infused with community development goals. In the field of community development, regional economic development corporations and councils and job training groups also frequently become partners in community-based forestry efforts.

Universities and other nonprofit and government **research organizations** have conducted, promoted and/or funded action-oriented research which has built capacity for community-based forestry as they have provided valuable information for community-based forestry efforts. University-based efforts include the Community Forestry Research Fellowship Program which funds graduate students to do participatory research with community partners, individual researchers who have provided expertise in fields such as GIS and monitoring, and organized visits of scholars and practitioners from other countries. There are also nonprofit research organizations active in community-based forestry including the Sierra Institute for Community and Environment in California, the Institute for Cultural Ecology in Oregon, and the former USDA-funded National Community Forestry Center which had four research centers spread across the US. The research branch of the Forest Service, including the Pacific Southwest and Pacific Northwest Research Stations and the Forest Products Laboratory, has also conducted and funded projects on topics central to community-based forestry efforts. In many cases, the research efforts of these organizations were done in collaboration with grassroots, regional, and national community-based forestry groups. In addition, traditional **educational institutions** such as local schools, community colleges, and universities have been active partners in developing and delivering youth activities, college courses, job retraining and internship opportunities.

#### WHAT COMMUNITY-BASED FORESTRY GROUPS ADDRESS: GOVERNANCE, IMPLEMENTATION AND CAPACITY-BUILDING

Community-based forestry groups have sought to provide a greater community role in two areas of resource management –governance and implementation– in order to promote forestry activities that are both ecologically sustainable and beneficial to local communities. Aspects of **governance** addressed in community-based forestry include participatory decisionmaking, assuring equity, gaining consensus on objectives, incorporating local and indigenous knowledge, resolving conflict, influencing policy and practice, and managing interorganizational relationships. Involvement in “governance” does not imply taking on the role of “government.” Nor does improved governance imply “local control” as advocates of US community-based forestry point out (Jungwirth 1997). It does, however, mean ensuring that diverse community voices are heard in fair and transparent processes. Some governance activities overlap with implementation. For example, groups may implement a monitoring program examining the ecological and/or social impacts of a fuels reduction project to contribute to transparency and to provide information for better decision-making.

**Implementation** includes facilitating or carrying out activities that are often chosen through participatory decisionmaking. Implementation activities in community-based forestry can include project planning, data collection and analysis, research, training, mapping, gathering, contracting, treating vegetation, processing raw materials, marketing, monitoring and securing the resources to make these things happen. Grassroots and regional nonprofit groups have typically become involved in implementation when the traditional practitioners of forest management, public agencies and private businesses, were unable to carry out activities due to lack of funding, perceived risks of innovation, lack of expertise, or differing priorities. Community-based forestry groups have also sought to experiment with and model how implementation can be done in ways that better involve and benefit forest communities. Their adaptations to implementation include utilizing local expertise, providing on-the-job training, developing new markets for forest products, and introducing low-cost, eco-friendly technologies. The emphasis on facilitating implementation in ways that benefit communities distinguishes community-based forestry from other efforts at collaborative governance of natural resources.

To enhance the success of governance initiatives and program implementation, community-based forestry groups have engaged extensively in **capacity-building**, the development of skills, knowledge, attitudes, institutional infrastructure and resources to get things done. Groups in each type of community-based forestry organizations and participating entities listed above have been both the beneficiaries and providers of capacity-building activities. Such activities typically include workshops and training programs. However, community-based forestry actors also generally infuse all activities – be it research, monitoring, policy education, tree-planting or brush control --with elements of capacity-building. They do so in the context of project implementation by providing on-the-job-training, by incubating new businesses, by experimenting with new approaches to implementation, by giving field tours, and by recording, reflecting on and sharing the innovative aspects of their work. Capacity-building is viewed as essential in order to help all actors – from community members to businesses to government officials – to participate in a new set of institutional arrangements that enhances community well-being and ecosystem health.

## HOW COMMUNITY-BASED FORESTRY GROUPS WORK: AS BRIDGES, CATALYSTS & SERVICE PROVIDERS

As noted above, community-based forestry groups almost always work in partnership with other players to achieve their goals. The emphasis on partnerships is a reflection of both a commitment to inclusive collaboration which these groups share and a recognition that community-based forestry groups rarely control the forests, policies and markets they seek to influence. Within these partnerships they serve the often overlapping roles of bridges, catalysts and service providers, as described below.



### *Bridging Sectors, Scales and Interests*

A distinctive role of community-based forestry groups has been to serve as a **bridges** that connect potential partners in sets of institutional relationships that better address community concerns. In carrying out both governance and implementation activities, community-based forestry groups often function at the boundaries or overlap between the public and private sectors. For example, in governance, community-based forestry groups have often been the conveners of collaborative groups that combine several different federal and state agencies, industry representatives, local businesses and other community members of diverse perspectives. Regarding implementation, nonprofit community-based forestry groups have secured government funding to retrain private sector workers to eventually bid on government forestry projects. They have also sought private foundation funding to carry out research related to government agency projects that would benefit private sector businesses. Community-based forestry groups thus act as bridges that connect people and resources which are otherwise separated by institutional, ideological, jurisdictional or sectoral boundaries or which fall in the gaps between them.

The importance of “bridging organizations” is noted in the sustainable development literature. For example, Brown (1991) argued that non-governmental bridging groups were central to a “multisectoral” development approaches which were likely to be more successful than strictly market-driven or government-led development activities. Bridging private and public sectors is important not only to reach community development goals, but also resource management goals. U.S. forest land is owned and managed by a diverse mix of public and private entities. Sustainably managing forest ecosystems often involves working with multiple ownerships and regulations that include local, state and/or federal government as well as industrial and non-industrial private owners. Wallowa Resources’ weed control program and the Watershed Research and Training Center’s Post Mountain wildfire risk reduction project, which both helped promote, coordinate and implement vegetation treatments on adjacent public and private property, are examples of how community-based forestry groups have bridged ownership boundaries for community and environmental benefit.

Community-based forestry groups not only connect the public and private sectors, but also function as bridges between different levels or scales within a sector. For example, there are several cases in which a grassroots community-based forestry group worked extensively with a local district ranger on specific projects, but also sought resources and support from the forest supervisor or regional forester and even the Forest Service Washington office and members of Congress. They have come to understand the different priorities and decisionmaking capacity of different levels of government. Much of their policy work seeks to align these levels so that government agencies can best serve forest communities. A good example of community-based forestry groups bridging scales within the public sector is the work to promote, pilot and monitor stewardship contracts – a form of federal contracting for forest management services that seeks to achieve ecological objectives and community benefits (USDA Forest Service n.d.).

In the private sector, a community-based forestry group promoting marketing of forest products is likely to be the one connecting local producers and processors to each other and to regional buyers. An example that kind of bridging activity is The Healthy Forest, Healthy Communities (HFHC) Partnership, a membership-based initiative of Sustainable Northwest established to help small wood products companies to market their sustainably produced goods. The HFHC Partnership has brought together nonprofit organizations, small manufacturers and high-end urban markets through capacity-building workshops, brand development, product shows and other activities. In Ohio, Rural Action established the Roots of Appalachia Growers Association (RAGA), a nonprofit organization of medicinal herb growers. RAGA serves as a support network for growers, providing information about how to grow and market woodland medicinals and how to develop their operations into businesses. These cross-scale linkages are critical for success of business ventures based in isolated, forest communities where access to capital, specialized expertise, and markets is often limited. Moreover, the relationships formed among peers involved in these programs have yielded information and collaborations that have enhanced the success of participants.

On private lands, market-based approaches such as Forest Stewardship Council certification have been an important element of several community-based forestry efforts. The development and promotion of forest certification is itself a case of cross-sector cooperation in which business and nonprofit organizations join under a nonprofit umbrella to promote sustainable forestry through the market rather than government regulation. In theory, it can connect a single landowner with a global market in which consumers will pay extra – a green premium – to cover the costs good forest management when they buy lumber, furniture, flooring, or paper. In practice, the costs of certification and difficulties in developing and accessing the certified market are barriers for some potential participants, especially small operations in relatively isolated areas. Some community-based forestry groups, such as the Vermont Family Forest Partnership, have served as a bridges by providing small landowners and community-based businesses with the resources and/or information needed to become certified and then by connecting producers with the local institutional buyers such as universities and museums.

The ability to bridge scales in the public and private sectors has relied in large part on the cross-scale connections and working relationships among community-based forestry groups at the local, regional and national levels. A good example of a program the crossed both sectors and geographic scale is the multi-party monitoring of congressionally authorized forest stewardship projects mentioned above (Pinchot Institute n.d.). In this program, the Washington Office of the Forest Service funded the Pinchot Institute, national non-profit, to work with local and regional multi-party teams to monitor local Forest Service projects involving for-profit contractors. It made good use of the knowledge and organization skills at each level and was conducted in a way that shared learning and built capacity among all involved. Moreover, the effort was “multi-party” which means that representatives of different interests were all part of the monitoring effort at each level. Other good example of bridging scales and interests is

found in policy work. Efforts to educate policymakers about community-based forestry issues make good use of the relative strengths of local, regional and national groups in bringing community issues into national policy debates. National groups that support community-based forestry like American Forests, the Pinchot Institute, and the National Network of Forest Practitioners have collaborated on “Week in Washington,” an annual event which brings members of forest communities to Washington, DC to learn how to access their federal representatives and agency leaders. The regional group Sustainable Northwest also helped to organize Rural Voices for Cooperative Conservation, a collaboration among local, community-based groups to identify and communicate key policy issues affecting forest communities. Through efforts such as these, local forest workers have been able to testify to in Senate and House committee hearings with concerns and stories that appeal to both Democrats and Republicans.

### *Catalyzing Change While Providing Services*

In the international development literature, some authors have distinguished between the roles of service provider and catalyst played by non-governmental organizations in promoting community development (e.g. Korten 1987, Carroll 1992, Lewis 2001). They note that these roles can be played by the same organization but require somewhat different organizational orientation, abilities and management. Service and social change roles can be reinforcing when both are conducted in ways that build capacity among participants (Carroll 1992). In order to reorient forestry to better address community needs and forest health, community-based forestry groups seek above all to change the existing system of forest management and utilization which is no longer working – and perhaps never worked well – to serve community needs. As typically practiced in community-based forestry, services are usually provided as a way to catalyze change, and almost all efforts are infused with capacity-building.

These groups act as **catalysts** by building capacity, advocating for policy change, leading demonstration projects, providing seed money and matching funds, conducting innovative research, and introducing new ideas and information. Their efforts to bridge diverse interests, geographic scales and public and private sectors are also catalytic in that they are intended to create new relationships that result in new ways of doing business for both the public and private sectors.

One major area in which grassroots community-based forestry groups play a catalytic role is in fostering for-profit activities for community benefit. The livelihoods and civic engagement associated with appropriately scaled, ecologically sustainable, community-oriented business contributes to their mission of promoting family and community well-being. Many groups, such as the Watershed Research and Training Center, Framing Our Community, Rural Action and Vermont Family Forests have promoted commercial opportunities in underutilized timber sizes, grades and species and/or non-timber forest products. Wallowa Resources even bought part ownership of a local sawmill in an attempt to keep it open, and later started a new for-profit enterprise, Community Smallwood Solutions. These grassroots organizations have stepped in to raise capital, development products, experiment with processing, and research markets where

entrepreneurs and economic development specialists perceive too much risk. These groups do so because they care deeply about their local communities, not as a way to generate revenue. They are eager for these businesses to operate independent of the non-profit group as soon as possible.

Community-based forestry groups have also offered **services** that are typically provided by government or the private sector. For example, several community-based groups, such as Wallowa Resources, the Watershed Research and Training Center, and Rural Action, have started their own natural resource-oriented summer camps and youth programs. While a camp may seem like a routine activity rather than catalyst for changing the local economy and forest management practices, it is central to the concerns that prompted the formation of these groups – the need to provide options for local families and to help them to see a future at home. The camps are also visible positive forces in the community which help local people understand and support the work of these community-based forestry organizations. Moreover, they have developed the program content of these camps to draw on the local natural resource managers from a diversity of government agencies and the private sector with whom they work on other projects. The camps have become activities which help kids and provide local employment while building social capital with the community and resources professionals. The camps thus facilitate other activities that contribute to their mission of social change.

Even for fairly routine goods and services typically provided by government or for-profit entities (such as extension, business incubation, job training, project planning, data collection, and information dissemination, and college courses) non-governmental organizations, especially community-based ones, are often better able to deliver services in ways that help communities address community and forest goals. The literature suggests that this ability is due in part to the better “reach” that non-governmental organizations may have in addressing the needs of underserved populations such as poor families, indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities (Chambers 1987, Carroll 1992, Lewis 2001). Non-governmental groups also offer innovation, both in service delivery mechanisms and in research into unmet needs, and they take risks that may exceed the comfort zones of bureaucracies or businesses (Lewis 2001). When working in cross-sector partnerships, such strengths of non-governmental groups can complement the strengths of governmental and business partners (which often include resources, authority and technical expertise) resulting in synergies that can better provide community-level benefits than single sector approaches (Evans 1996a, 1996b, Ostrom 1996).

Worker retraining programs and business incubators, started by groups like the Watershed Research and Training Center, the Rogue Institute of Ecology and Economy, and Framing Our Community, are good examples of community-based forestry groups functioning as service providers in order to extend the reach of government sponsored development activities into forest communities. These groups sought out partners, raised matching funds, and developed their own capacity to conduct these activities from scratch in order to make sure that their communities were

served. Without a local job training venue, local human capital could actually be depleted by government-sponsored retraining programs that require participants to travel to classes in a neighboring urban center to be trained for urban-based jobs. These training programs are valuable as catalysts for change because they have not just turned out graduates, but have served as opportunities for innovation. Retraining crews have tested new resource management approaches and technologies and even contributed to government-sponsored research projects. And like the camps, because they were place-based, were conducted in partnership with local agencies, and had positive community impacts, these training programs have built local capacity while strengthening their relations with the business community, economic development organizations, and land management agencies which formed the foundation for future collaborations (Danks and Aldinger 1998).

## CHANGE AND CHALLENGES FOR COMMUNITY-BASED FORESTRY

### *Evolving Governance and Implementation Activities*

The work of community-based forestry organizations and their relationships with their partners has evolved over time in response to the perceived needs. Some practitioners have likened their problem-solving work to peeling an onion; once one barrier is removed, they find yet another that constrains the ability of their communities to thrive through forest stewardship. As a result, the initial emphasis on the local governance work of developing collaborative consensus has shifted in two directions: towards regional and national governance issues and towards implementation of agreed upon projects in ways that help forest communities. Such shifts present institutional challenges as groups and their relationships change to address these needs.

In some places, new forms of local governance have become institutionalized in the form of multiparty decision-making councils, such as the Resource Advisory Committees established by the Secure Rural Schools, Community Self-Determination Act. As trust has grown, agreements have been reached, and local collaboration has become the norm, many community-based groups have turned their attention to policy issues that had once seemed beyond local reach, such as federal contracting practices and influencing the appropriations process. These efforts have stretched the volunteers and staff of grassroots groups and have been harder to fund than project implementation. Partnerships with regional and national level community-based forestry organizations has been critical for providing training opportunities, access to staff on of key legislative committees, invitations to hearings, participatory forums for discussing policy needs, and field trips for congressional staff to visit the grassroots groups onsite.

As grassroots groups move from dialogue to implementation, many have needed to formalize their structure and membership. Local groups such as the Public Lands Partnership in Colorado, which began as informal, common ground-seeking grassroots forum, have moved from talking to implementing projects in order to realize the fruits of their discussions. In doing so, they have had to consider whether or not to develop a

more formal nonprofit status in order to manage grants and contracts with government agencies and funders. Concerns about the potential trade-offs regarding inclusiveness, flexibility, funding and accountability accompany the formalization of groups. Moreover, they must confront the issue of whether they are primarily a catalyst or a service provider. Are these groups trying to promote change in the public sector that will help community-oriented businesses flourish—or are they trying to fill a gap that neither government nor business is expected to fill?

### *Evolving Roles as Catalysts and Service Providers*

Within the realm of implementation, the more catalytic activities offering training programs and demonstration projects has evolved into the more regular implementation of field projects via federal contracts. Examples of these contract services include community wildfire planning, ecological monitoring, and implementation of fuels reduction projects. This expansion of government contracting with community-based, nonprofit organizations, which had not existed 5 and 10 years before, reflects several changes. These changes include the downsizing of federal capacity and recognition of the expertise and capacity now residing in the nonprofit sector. Some of that nonprofit expertise is due to individuals who formerly worked for business or government; they chose to stay and work in their communities when sawmills closed or agencies offered them early retirement. Other factors include the new capacities needed – in collaborative processes, community participation, multi-party monitoring – which agencies and private sector did not formerly offer. It also suggests the success of community-based forestry efforts; the voice of communities had been heard and land management agencies made an effort to work with community-based groups as a way to support local communities.

Despite these potential advantages to the involvement of community-based forestry organizations in implementing projects and delivering services, there may be some trade-offs involved. If a need is met by a nonprofit organization, will government ever step up to the plate or will businesses be able to step in? Lewis (2001:70) states that “while there may be good short-term reasons for ‘gap filling’ in public provision, NGO service delivery should ultimately be judged on its developmental impact.” He and others (e.g. Poole 1994) suggest a “pragmatic approach” which “stresses a limited time frame scale and the ultimate goal of having the state (or the private sector) take over provision [of services] once new skills and approaches are acquired and resources mobilized” (Lewis 2001:70). Korten (1990) also warns of the dangers to the non-profit itself. He argues that the “public service contractor” role may deflect a non-governmental organization from its mission, detracting from its creative and value-driven qualities and leading it to act more like a business that focuses first on organizational needs. On the other hand, Carroll (1992) found that service and social change roles can be complementary, rather than conflicting, when both seek to develop the abilities of and connections among participants which enable them to meet community needs over time.

### *Bridging Conflicting Claims and World Views*

CBF stands at an uneasy juncture attempting to reconcile and integrate what many see as conflicting concepts, processes and practices. These tensions will be elaborated upon in the conclusion of the final paper.

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