

The Integration of Community Well Being and Forest Health in the Pacific Northwest

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Editor's Summary

The Pacific Northwest has long been known for its fog, rugged coastline, and giant trees. More recently, the Northwest's working communities, where jobs, hope, and prosperity have eroded along with the slopes of the landscape, has drawn national attention and galvanized local efforts for restoration.

The Columbia-Pacific Resource Conservation and Development Council was established in 1972 under the authority of the 1962 Agricultural Act, which provided funding for Resource Conservation and Development Districts throughout rural America. During its more than 20 years of existence, the Council has coordinated a growing number and variety of projects designed to sustain the relationships between the people and the working landscapes on which their rural identities and livelihoods depend.

An array of private and public Council member organizations provide technical services, labor, equipment, supplies, funds, and in-kind support for a variety of programs and projects. Programs in worker training, unionized habitat restoration, and micro-lending funds in addition to grantsmanship workshops, a special forest products brokerage, park, interpretive center, fishing access for the disabled, and placement of habitat restoration structures throughout the region have earned the Council a region-wide reputation for "getting things done." A number of "outsiders" have charged that Council projects threaten a "free market," by reducing incentives for private business. But the Council insists that subsidies are necessary to counter the area's chronic unemployment and "jump-start" local industries.

Part economic development council, part social service agency, part resource conservation and watershed rehabilitation agency, and part information and grants broker, the Council can generate projects and programs around social, economic, and ecological concerns, and in so doing, links environmental with community well-being. Some people say that as significant as the economic development opportunities the Council has developed, it is the "culture of collaboration" between local communities, private business, and government agencies that are most important. Success in both organizational areas has been attributed to the dynamic leadership of a strong executive director willing to take risks and guided by a principled commitment to inclusivity, diversity, and equality in program development for improved relationships and opportunities between land and labor.

Introduction

Traveling the southwest Washington coastline along the narrow black ribbon of Highway 101 as the fog rolls over the logging scars on the Willapa Hills is like stepping into a Ken Kesey landscape. Here, men cut timber, mills spew smoke, and fishing fleets head out early and return late. Work, risk, and danger are everyday life in this country.

The area's deep forests and vast tidal flats provided Salish-speaking tribes sustenance, shelter, clothing, and transportation for millennia. In the 19th century, traders from Britain and the eastern seaboard brought news from the West, and precipitated the radical transformation of the land and seascape. Within decades, farmers had occupied the land and were clearing the forests and river bottoms. Feeding the industrializing economy's insatiable demand for wood, logging crews felled the Douglas firs, cedars, and hemlocks. Canneries, built along the rivers and tidal flats, processed

and shipped vast quantities of salmon and shellfish harvested from the region's waters.

Over the past century, logging and fishing towns with names like Aberdeen, Hoquiam, Raymond, and Ilwaco boomed and busted. Town murals memorialize the relationship between humans, land, and sea. However, human and forest environments bear the toll of the boom and bust work style.

A decade of angry debate over the effects of clearcutting on the spotted owl and salmon has made the conflict between people as mythic in proportion as the earlier new world encounter with the region's great forest. Abandoned mills, clear-cut scars on declining forests, streams choked with sediment, and confrontations between angry loggers and anti-logging protesters have become part of this fabric of place.

In this landscape of people and nature, change seeps in like fog rising from the tidal flats of Willapa Bay—in increments, and slowly. New ways of logging, collaborative efforts to restore the ravaged streams and eroded slopes, businesses based on special forest products such as ferns, salal, huckleberry brush, mushrooms, and barks are emerging with public and private land managers. People of southwestern Washington are developing new leadership that focuses on the question “how can we change” rather than on the lament “why did this bust happen to us?” People are beginning to look at the landscape and themselves differently.

One of the important indicators of change is the Columbia-Pacific Resource Conservation and Development Council, a quasi-public organization that, with the help of professional and volunteer leadership, has developed programs and projects for the people and the landscape of this part of the American West.

Initiation of a Project

The Columbia-Pacific Resource Conservation and Development Council was established in 1972 under the authority of the 1962 Agricultural Act, which provided funding for quasi-governmental Resource Conservation and Development Districts throughout rural America. Council members consisted of county and municipal governments and conservation and port districts.

The grange movement in Grays Harbor, Pacific, and Wahkiakum counties was pivotal in the genesis of the Council, whose initial goal to “improve the economic and social well-being of the people in the project area” (CPRC&D 1972:3), reflected the grange's holistic view of rural life. Habitat restoration, including regeneration of logged-off lands and erosion control on poorly constructed logging roads, was a key objective in the Council's first work plan, which also proposed rural and municipal water delivery and sewage disposal systems.

When federal funding dwindled to a trickle during the mid-1980s, the council became inactive until 1989, when it re-emerged as a force of social change in southwestern Washington after a variety of government, quasi-government, and non-governmental entities met to develop a new mission, goals, and bylaws.

A series of events that took place over the late 1980s contributed to the reactivation of the Council. Leadership was stabilized in 1986 when the Natural Resource Conservation Service, formerly the Soil Conservation Service, agreed to provide funding for a full-time executive director in charge of acquiring funds and coordinating council activities. A downturn in the economy from the late 1970s through the 1980s resulted in mill shutdowns and massive layoffs. A series of federal court decisions regarding salmon allocation and forest management during this same time led to increased restrictions on salmon and timber harvesting.

The resurgence of the Council was bolstered in the early 1990s through the activities of the Chehalis Basin Fisheries Task Force. The Chehalis Basin Fisheries Task Force evolved from the

Grays Harbor Fisheries Enhancement Task Force, founded in 1980 as a volunteer non-profit coalition composed of federal and state agencies, local municipalities, businesses, tribal councils, and commercial and sport fishing groups. The Task Force was initially charged with enhancing salmon runs, but broadened to include fish resources enhancement. In the early 1990s the Task Force successfully advocated for Washington State's Jobs for the Environment, a bill to fund displaced timber workers retraining in habitat restoration. In 1993, the Task Force became the chief fiscal agent, responsible for habitat restoration projects in southwestern Washington. The success of the Task Force is due, in large part, to Council member Ellison's dynamic leadership and ability to corral resources needed to accomplish regional goals.

The Region

The Columbia-Pacific Resource Conservation and Development Council operates in Wahkiakum, Pacific, Grays Harbor, and Mason counties, an area whose rivers provide habitat and spawning grounds for a variety of anadromous fish species, including chum, coho, and king salmon. Willapa Bay, located in the southwest corner of the region, is the nation's most productive coastal ecosystem and provides critical habitat for shellfish and over 70 species of migratory birds (Wolf 1993). The area is located within the range of the spotted owl, a symbol of forest controversy in the Pacific Northwest. A large percentage of lowland temperate rain forest produces Douglas fir, western hemlock, sitka spruce, and western red cedar, trees which all bring a high market value.

Farming, fishing, and forestry (including special forest products industries) have been the region's economic mainstay for most of the 20th Century. Since the turn of the century, natural resource-based tourism has also been significant along the coast and in the Olympics. However, the quality of the region's natural resource base has deteriorated over the past 100 years. A combination of overfishing, dam construction, erosive logging, and road-building has decreased fish runs to a fraction of their former size and threatened the viability of certain salmon spawns. Industrial timber companies have changed most of the region's old growth stands on private and state lands to monocrop tree plantations. Farmers have converted large areas of forests to fields and pastures and the housing industry has begun to convert significant portions of the region's forests to residential development.

About 70 percent of the land in the region is privately owned (see Figures 1 and 2). The 30 percent under public ownership includes a portion of the Olympic National Forest and some large blocks of state land in Pacific and Wahkiakum counties. Several Indian reservations, the largest one encompassing nearly 200,000 acres belonging to the Quinault Nation, enforce treaty rights to fish and shellfish and wild plant gathering.

The region has a limited transportation and educational infrastructure. One four-lane freeway connects the area to the Interstate 5 corridor, which links the major cities of the West Coast. Grays Harbor Community College is the only institute of higher education in the region.

In 1996, the region's population was 139,800 with a population growth rate of about two percent per year since 1990. The percentage of non-whites is low (6.3 percent); Native American groups include the Quinault Nation (comprising descendants of the Quinault, Queets, Quileute, Hoh, Chehalis, Chinook, and Cowlitz tribes), and the Chehalis, Squaxin, and Shoalwater Bay Tribes. Asian and Hispanic workers, disproportionately concentrated in farming, shellfishing, and special forest products harvesting, are mostly concentrated in the coastal towns and Shelton.

The percentage of households with incomes below poverty level in 1995 ranged from 10.4 percent in Wahkiakum County (slightly less than the state average of 10.9 percent) to 17.2 percent in Pacific County (see Figure 3). Approximately 44 percent of adults in the region have no education

beyond high school, substantially below the state average of 60 percent with a high school education.

The population of seasonal residents is high (18 percent compared with 2.7 percent statewide). Unemployment in 1995 averaged 8.7 percent, down from a high of 12.3 percent in 1993, but slightly higher than the state average of 6.3 percent. Since the 1980 census, the area has experienced a net loss of 1,218 jobs.

Key features of the region's changing economy include a shift toward service-based employment such as prisons, schools, health care, information services, and tourism, an influx of relatively well-off retirees into areas along the coast, and transformation of the state's eastern towns into bedroom communities for Olympia.

Mission and Programs

In 1989, the Council's mission was to be a “. . . visible, grass roots, participatory four-county organization dedicated to fostering cooperation on natural resources issues and economic development” for regional planning and implementation activities that “achieve quality of life and economic health.” Within this broad mandate, the Council focuses on economic development in natural resources industries, especially forest product enterprises.

Projects undertaken with Council support range from watershed restoration to special forest products training to the development of a grants library at the organization's headquarters in Aberdeen (see Figure 4). Council roles are diverse and range from providing technical advice to facilitating meetings, advocating legislation, and retraining displaced workers (see Figure 5). Habitat restoration, special forest products, wood fiber production, and marketing programs address both forest health and community well-being.

Habitat Restoration

The Habitat Restoration program emerged in 1993 from a coalition between labor, environmental groups, small and large private landowners, and church groups to enact state legislation to train displaced timber workers in habitat restoration. In 1993, these efforts culminated in passage of the Jobs for the Environment Bill, which together with the federal Jobs in the Woods program provided funds for groups like the Council to train and hire former timber workers for habitat restoration. The program is the first example of a unionized habitat restoration project in the United States. The Council later helped Pacific Conservation District acquire funds to implement a displaced fishers habitat restoration program which employs non-union workers. Since 1993, the Council has leveraged more than \$4 million dollars to fund restoration activities, employed more than 60 displaced timber workers, and completed more than 35 restoration projects for public and private landholders. The Council is working with a local union to develop an apprenticeship program to train and certify journeyman habitat restoration crew workers.

Special Forest Products

The special forest products program grew out of the Council's attempts in the early 1990s to establish an agroforestry cooperative on the Olympic Peninsula. It has developed more slowly than the habitat restoration program because of lower funding and a lack of agreement in the special forest products community about what kind of support is needed. Like the habitat restoration program, the special forest products program was initiated to provide local residents with training, skills and resources; however, for special forest products, the Council seeks to transform an existing industry rather than to create a new one.

In 1990, the Council received \$80,000 from the Washington State Department of Commu-

nity Development to conduct a market feasibility study and develop a business plan for a special forest products cooperative. The cooperative was to encourage special forest products businesses to pool resources for equipment and marketing. In 1995, the program was strengthened by a full-time staff person whose duties included developing the special forest products program. RainKist Agroforestry Cooperative was incorporated in June 1995. With Council support, RainKist worked with Grays Harbor Community College to set up a year-long special forest products management training course.

Forty people, including welfare recipients, local business owners, displaced timber workers and members of the Quinault Nation have received training in special forest products harvesting and marketing since 1995. New businesses have formed. In 1996, the Council entered discussions with ShoreTrust Trading Group, a for-profit “green” bank based in southwest Washington, to develop RainKist into a viable organization. RainKist was transformed from a cooperative into a for-profit marketing brokerage owned by ShoreTrust. Aside from making a profit from the sale of special forest products, the Shore Trust-RainKist alliance promotes social equity in the workforce by paying premium prices for high quality and sustainably harvested products.

Wood Products Production and Marketing Activities

A third set of activities that address community well-being and forest health are the Council’s efforts to assist public and private landowners and businesses in producing and marketing wood products. The hybrid cottonwood program, which is the most visible, has two aspects: 1) feasibility studies and formation of a cottonwood growers association to promote the conversion of farm lands to cottonwood plantations (1990-1995); and 2) the use of hybrid cottonwood plantations by municipalities to treat wastewater in rural locations (1996). Under its wood products program, the Council has helped support a feasibility study of a woodworkers’ flexible manufacturing facility (1993), a business plan for an oriented strand board plant (1995), a laminated woods product study (1991), a wood waste utilization study (1991), and a business plan to reopen the ITT/Rayonnier paper mill in Hoquiam.

Participation in Council Programs

Participants in Council activities fall into three general categories: Council members, staff and non-members. The 36-member Council includes representatives from counties, cities, ports, tribes, conservation districts, economic development councils, and other non-profit organizations (see Figure 6). The staff and Council work with local and non-local businesses, volunteer organizations, and state and federal agencies.

Missing from formal Council membership are the Skokomish Tribe, representatives from community groups (i.e., granges, churches, Boy Scouts), social service organizations, businesses, unions, and several of the region’s cities and towns. Many of these groups, however, are active in Council activities. There appears to be relatively little incentive for such groups to join as formal members since any group can approach the Council for help in getting funds or other types of support for projects. The Council does not try to recruit new members; with the recent expansion to include Mason County in the Council region, there is some concern that the Council has become too large.

As a member of the regional and national associations of Resource Conservation and Development Districts, the Council has strong links to outside organizations (see Figure 7 for a partial list of outside partners). It receives the majority of its funding from federal and state government, and the staff executive director is an employee of the Natural Resource Conservation Service. The Council has also obtained private foundation grant monies. The Council seeks technical, financial

and marketing expertise from private firms such as Weyerhaeuser, Cascadia Bank, and ShoreTrust Trading Group and brings in outside consultants to help with feasibility studies and business plans. It has links to outside academic institutions; Washington State University cooperative extension for example was crucial to getting the Special Forest Product program off the ground. The Council's links to the University of Washington's College of Forestry will enhance the Council's ability to attract funding from the private and academic spheres.

Most of the organization's funding comes through state or federal agencies, and government involvement has been an essential factor in the organization's ability to carry out activities. The executive director's salary is paid through the federal government. Representatives from municipal and county governments, including elected officials, and representatives from quasi-governmental entities, such as conservation districts and economic development districts, comprise a large percentage of the board's membership and are instrumental in the organization's policy direction, as well as in the implementation of project activities.

Resources and Incentives

The Council draws upon a variety of resources within and outside of the community. Council member organizations provide technical services, labor, equipment and supplies, access to land, and funds. Other organizations based in the region, including the Natural Resource Conservation Service, chambers of commerce, and private timber companies also provide cash and in-kind support. Private support extends beyond technical and financial help. Companies such as Simpson Timber and Weyerhaeuser have provided support in the form of agreements to allow the Council to carry out restoration activities on company lands.

The mix of private and public resources used to carry out Council activities has shifted from about 50 percent public in the early 1990s to over 80 percent public in 1996. The increase in public funding is due largely to the restoration program that has received substantial monetary support from the state Jobs for the Environment and the federal Jobs in the Woods programs.

How Decisions Are Made

Decisions about the activities undertaken by or with the help of the Council are made through the district's local governing council. Council member organizations pay dues, with a sliding scale ranging from \$75 for non-profit groups and small government entities to \$6,000 for Grays Harbor County. Dues are waived in cases of financial hardship.

Council decisions are made by majority vote with input from the executive director. The executive director plays a major role in helping members and prospective partners develop specific projects and identify funding sources, and exercises considerable discretion over program implementation.

The Council is composed of an executive board and Council members. The executive board consists of officers and past presidents for continuity and institutional memory. Board positions are voluntary. Presidents are restricted to two one-year terms.

The Council is composed of a representative from each of the sponsoring organizations, an alternate from each group, and a member-at-large from each county. Full Council meetings are held every other month, with the executive board meeting in alternate months. New officers are elected annually. Council meetings are open to the public. A mailing list of members and non-members is used to inform people of upcoming meetings. Non-members can participate in Council discussions and project activities, but cannot vote or serve as officers. Judging from the diversity of projects implemented by the Council, any project that falls within the broad rubric of economic development or natural resources is potentially acceptable. The key selection criteria appear to be whether

the funding and labor needed to accomplish the project can be identified. Identification and administration of resources and projects is either carried out by the administrative staff, with member organizations taking the lead on a particular project, or by outside groups with a sub-contract to administer programs.

Over the past seven years, paid staff has increased from one full-time executive director and a secretary to a full-time executive director, a full-time development director, two part-time habitat restoration crew coordinators, a special forest products course coordinator, a full-time economic development officer, and a full-time secretary.

Problems and Barriers

One difficulty in evaluating the Council is that it is neither a discrete project, nor a project with sub-elements, but rather an organization that carries out many projects, often only tenuously linked. Two related visions seem to drive the selection and implementation of projects. One is the vision articulated in the group's mission statement of "fostering cooperation on natural resources and economic development." The other is the vision implicitly assumed by many participants of "linking economic development and resource conservation."

Barriers or problems associated with the Council fall into four categories: insufficient communications, philosophical differences about subsidizing industries, concerns about the long-term sustainability of activities, and cultural differences between the Council and potential or existing partners.

Insufficient Communication

Council communication with the community travels largely by word of mouth, and interviewees stated that few people outside the organizations that participate in Council activities are aware of its existence or mission. Council obscurity is partly intentional. The executive director and the board have made a policy of keeping activities relatively quiet and giving partners most of the credit for successful projects in order to create a sense of participant ownership and to avoid exposing the group to potential conflicts.

There is little evidence that a systematic effort has been made to include all interested parties when developing projects. Watershed restoration work is carried out with individual landowners without consulting with all members of the communities who live or work within the watersheds. Moreover, Council efforts to work with groups has been more successful with organized groups than with unorganized groups, so certain segments of the population, notably Hispanics and Asians, have had little contact with Council programs.

Internal communications are also weak. Most council members are unaware of the linkages between projects. Although most people are well-informed about the specific projects they work with, they tend to have only a limited knowledge about the Council's other projects and how they fit together. This lack of connection across projects is reflected in the organization's internal documentation, which neither sets out projects in ways to highlight their cross connections nor their connection to the organization's overall vision.

The staff is taking action to resolve these internal and external communication problems. A newsletter was initiated in Fall 1996 to help disseminate information about activities, a web page created, and a special series for the local newspapers planned as part of the Council's 25th anniversary celebration.

To address the issue of reaching communities rather than individuals, the Council is seeking funding to form watershed councils to develop coordinated watershed plans. The staff is also

developing a strategy for reaching out to Hispanic and Asian harvesters of special forest products.

Philosophical Differences about Industry Subsidies

Another problem that the Council has encountered relates to philosophical differences about the role public subsidies should play in industry development. A number of “outsiders” charged that Council projects thwart a “free market,” citing as an example the Jobs for the Environment program, in which incentives for private businesses involvement in restoration work are decreased by a non-governmental organization carrying out restoration with government funds.

The Satsop Nuclear Reservation, which is being deaccessioned by Washington Public Power Supply, was also given by interviewees as an example of how public subsidies thwart private incentives. The Council is working in conjunction with the Grays Harbor Economic Development Council to convert the site’s large land base into a demonstration forest and business park, and seeking substantial federal and state dollars to fund the conversion. Given the early regeneration phase condition of the forest, no private industry could acquire the entire property and profit. However, the subsidies are also being used to compete with a business park which is a viable private opportunity. Using the forest as an opportunity to acquire the reservation, the Council wants to convert the buildings into a business park, thereby eliminating the possibility of a private conversion of that part of the site. The Council sees both of these subsidies as necessary to cope with the area’s chronic unemployment and as a critical “jump-start” for encouraging viable local industries.

Questions regarding the merits of subsidies and their duration have practical implications for the long term sustainability of Council projects. The Jobs for the Environment program is already in jeopardy because legislators are increasingly unwilling to continue subsidies. Moreover, if community entrepreneurs begin to believe that Council activities inhibit their access to potential business opportunities, opposition to activities could develop.

To address these issues, the Council is taking several approaches. One has been to create opportunities for crew workers to develop contracting businesses for a network of firms that would eventually take over the kind of work that the Council crews perform. Thus far, however, these businesses have experienced only limited success. Another approach is to seek private sector funds to decrease reliance on public subsidies for restoration. Yet another is a campaign to encourage private timber company investment in watershed restoration to create demand for a private restoration industry. Engagement of private landowners is crucial given that most of the region’s forest is privately owned. An alternative that has not yet been proposed is to work with existing businesses (rather than create new ones) interested in expanding into restoration. Finally, the Council has taken steps toward creating an endowed community foundation to serve as a future funding source.

Sustainability or Longevity of Impact

Because the work of the Council is project-based and funded primarily by public grants, the sustainability of the work may be problematic. The habitat restoration program exemplifies the potential pitfalls of this organizational structure. A finite number of restoration projects are possible, on a finite amount of land, and a finite number of workers are available for training. In effect, restoration of resources has become a new resource. Once the resources are restored, will the projects change what they retrain workers in? And, if restoration is now the resource, is that a resource that is as dependent upon government regulation as harvesting has been? While interest in salmon protection has been in the public dialogue for almost 10 years, the threat of Endangered Species listing is relatively new. However, as a selling point for the Council’s watershed restoration work, the possibility of listing certain salmon spawns as threatened or endangered under the Endangered

Species Act is viable. If that act is changed, or the listing of species is altered, the work—and the newly retrained workers—could become irrelevant.

Some interviewees question the long-term viability of the Council’s worker retraining program on the grounds that training methodology is not aimed at creating a workforce adaptable to long-term, sustainable employment. Some people commented that the program focuses on providing workers with knowledge about specific types of restoration methods, but not with the skills to keep abreast of changing ecological theory and the ability to develop new methods that reflect those changes. They argue that this approach is similar to training workers to cut only certain age trees. When the system or the science changes, these same workers may need to be re-trained again.

Some people felt that the Special Forest Products certification program might be unsustainable in the long run because of its heavy reliance on grants. Given the scarcity of public funds, it is unclear how long program funding will be available.

The Council does not appear to be taking any measures to address either the “regulation dependency” or worker adaptability issues associated with the habitat restoration program. It has taken steps, however, to decrease its dependence on public grants through proposals for substantial funding from a variety of private foundations. The council is also in the process of establishing an endowed foundation that would fund long-term community development programs. Staff members are exploring ways to make programs self-supporting—working with ShoreTrust, for example, on a strategy for generating revenue from a Special Forest Products training course.

Additionally, the Council is considering how to integrate its approach at the program level. In a recent proposal for a watershed reinvestment campaign it outlined a series of activities that would be linked under the habitat restoration program, including funding partnerships, workshops, watershed councils, restoration apprenticeship, restoration projects, small business development, and coordinated monitoring.

Cultural Differences

Since the Council is a vast organization with diverse members and cultural issues, members vary in the ways they perceive their roles and contributions. Economic Development organizations see the Council as a tool for natural resource-based economic development. Governmental agencies see it as a channel for funds and a tool for completing projects. Private industry sees the Council as a way to accomplish restoration. Non-profits see it as a way to network and fulfill community-based missions. By providing forums and on-the-ground projects for these different groups, the Council bridges different organizational and group cultures, more effectively at the local than at larger scale levels. Without clear links between projects to the overall mission, however, differences in objectives sometimes impede the organization’s ability to achieve far-reaching regional impact.

While Council projects affect the region’s many ethnic- and economic-based cultures, there is little assessment of how to incorporate different values into the design of programs and projects. In the Special Forest Products Program, for instance, the Council trained new harvesters and helped them to develop new Special Forest Products businesses, rather than working with existing harvesters and buyers to develop training programs that would fit their existing needs. While the Council has been able to get funding for its retraining program, it has also elicited resentment from some established harvesters and buyers.

Another problem associated with cultural differences surfaced in the Special Forest Products program when the Council brought in ShoreTrust to help with the cooperative. Over the previous five years, the Council had developed a culture of sharing information and emphasizing the need to get away from the secrecy that many potential cooperative members felt was hampering the development

of the industry. People began to see the cooperative as a way to open up lines of communication among existing businesses. ShoreTrust, however, felt that in order for the cooperative to be competitive, it would have to adopt principles of secrecy and limited information sharing. A number of cooperative members who opposed these principles subsequently withdrew from the meetings.

The Council adapted to this situation by ceding to ShoreTrust, at least insofar as the operation of RainKist was concerned, which appears to have undermined support from some segments of the Special Forest Products industry. The Council is seeking to re-establish that trust by developing a Special Forest Products inventory and monitoring program to engage harvesters and buyers with scientists to establish harvesting guidelines and standards.

Outcomes and Successes

One comment that repeatedly emerged in interviews about the Council was that it “gets things done.” Some of the more widely known accomplishments since 1989 are: (see Figure 4 for a more exhaustive list of Council projects).

- development of a grants library and grantsmanship workshops;
- creation of a unionized habitat restoration program;
- development of training programs in habitat restoration and Special Forest Products;
- creation of a micro-lending fund program;
- creation of RainKist, a special forest products marketing brokerage;
- construction of fish enhancement facilities around the region;
- construction of habitat restoration structures around the region;
- construction of the Julia Butler Hansen Elk Interpretive Center;
- construction of Skamokawa Vista Park; and
- construction of Friends Landing (a fishing access site for the disabled).

Interviewees commented that Council activities have played an important role in creating new alliances and changing relationships among local and non-local organizations. They also noted that involvement with the Council and access to its resources have increased the capacities of local groups to obtain funds and to gain access to technical expertise from outside organizations. Key examples of these new relationships and capacity building efforts follow:

Emergence of the Council as a successful political advocate

At the state level, the Council has carried out successful advocacy efforts to increase legislative support for the Pacific Coastal Economic Recovery Plan and the passage of the Jobs for the Environment Bill. At the federal level it has played a role in getting congressional authorization for the transfer of the Satsop Nuclear Site to a locally managed entity.

Stronger links among local groups

Collaborative work with the displaced fishers habitat restoration program encouraged greater sharing of information and resources between conservation districts. The Council's work as a facilitator for the Grays River Watershed Committee fostered communication among three previously insular settlements. The construction of Friend's Landing brought a variety of previously unconnected community groups together to raise money and to provide labor for project completion.

Increased local capacity to obtain funds

Access to Council staff for materials and funding advice has increased local groups' success rates at obtaining funds. The Council helped local groups obtain approximately \$1 million dollars in grants in 1996, in addition to the roughly \$1 million that it administered itself. Income reports provide a clear indication of this rise in capacity to obtain funds: total income rose from \$55,281 in 1991 to \$1,359,967 in 1996.

Creation of new links with neighboring communities

The Council has sought to connect groups in the district's original three counties with groups in neighboring Mason County through the creation of an Economic Development District, and by expanding its jurisdiction to include Mason County. The Mason County Economic Development has already profited from this alliance through the opportunity to learn more about alternative wastewater treatment systems, such as using hybrid cottonwood plantations to treat wastewater. The Habitat Restoration program has now extended its activities to include Mason County.

Most people interviewed considered the Council and many of its activities successful. Chief among the successful projects cited were Friend's Landing, the Skomakowa Interpretive Center, the Habitat Restoration program, and the Special Forest Products training program. Success was defined as the Council's ability to "gets things done," bring money and jobs to the area, and engage diverse and contentious stakeholders in common projects.

Keys to Success

Factors people cited as contributing to success can be grouped into the following categories: strong and stable leadership; effectiveness in acquiring resources; insistence on collaboration; and application of principles of inclusivity, diversity, and equality.

Strong and Stable Leadership

Interviewees were unanimous in the belief that much of the Council's success is due to the presence of an executive director with superb networking and facilitation skills. Equally important was that the director had a vision, was willing to take risks, and incorporate new elements into old projects, all of which are important factors in the organization's ability to adapt to changing circumstances. Many interviewees stressed the importance of having a permanent full-time coordinator. Finally, interviewees noted that the director's and the board's long-term commitments to the region and to the Council promoted continuity and increased the chances of project follow-through.

Effectiveness in Acquiring and Sharing Resources

With few exceptions, the interviewees commented that success was linked to the director's ability to acquire and share resources, particularly funding from state and federal agencies. They also noted that an important part of success in this regard was creating the conditions, such as the

grants library and the grantsmanship workshops, for local groups to acquire their own funds.

Insistence on Collaboration

A third factor cited as contributing to success was the director's and the Council's insistence on creating a culture of collaboration and sharing. They thought this culture resulted in a cooperative mindset, incentives for mutual aid, and the ingredients needed for social cohesion. They noted that the spirit of cooperation was aided by the fact that funding agencies were more likely to award grants to groups working in partnerships.

Principles of Inclusivity, Diversity, and Equality

The Council's adherence to principles of inclusivity, diversity, and equality was often listed as a key element in its success. An example of the inclusivity principle is the director's policy of letting other partners take credit for successful projects, thereby creating a feeling of ownership on the part of Council members and partners. Many interviewees cited the group's apparent willingness to include all stakeholders interested in taking part in projects as a factor in success. Others noted that the Council members and partner organizations are drawn from a fairly diverse spectrum of organizations. Although they acknowledged that diversity could create difficulties at times, they also felt that bringing in a wide array of groups encouraged the development of the broad support base needed for sustained collective action. Representatives of the smaller organizations noted that an important element in success was that all members are treated equally when it comes to getting advice or resources for projects.

The Council is successful with individual projects and programs, but it is unclear how successful it is in terms of addressing its visions. In our conversations with Council members and non-members alike, few were aware how the various activities of the Council are linked. More importantly, the organization has not yet developed any measurable criteria or systematic evaluation system for determining whether its projects actually have significant impact on what the Council professes to be about—fostering cooperation around natural resources and linking economic development and natural resource conservation. Without such a system, it is impossible to judge the organization's success with respect to achieving that vision.

The Integration of Community Well Being and Forest Health

The geographic region encompassed within the Council's jurisdiction is "resource dependent." From coastal fishing to the areas of agriculture and timber, the region has a long history of labor linked to the sea and the land. The Council recognizes this vital link and seeks to create and sustain employment in natural resources and maintain individual and community self-esteem. Many Council projects, such as the restoration worker training program, the Special Forest Products program, and the efforts to develop markets for agroforestry products, are designed to sustain this link between land and labor.

Community well-being is a way of measuring or understanding how well communities are able to address change as well as the status quo. In traditional methodology, community health was assessed using an aggregate of measures of per capita income, availability of social infrastructures, and migration patterns. Community well-being evaluates those measures in addition to other attributes such as indicators of "quality of life." The link between community well-being and forest health is particularly important in rural communities where economic prosperity has been dependent on resource extraction. Developing strategies for sustaining communities rather than letting them go through boom and bust swings may require new ways of thinking about forest health and

its long term effects on community well-being. Additionally, environmental conditions, such as clean water, flood protection, the presence of diverse species, and clean air, greatly affect the quality of life and are linked to community well-being.

The Council does not explicitly discuss its projects in relation to community well-being. In fact, various members of the organization have different definitions of community well-being. For some, community well-being is equated primarily with “family wage” job opportunities, relatively high or rising per capita incomes, and the influx of new businesses. For these people, economic indicators are the measure of community well-being. For others, well-being is linked to jobs, but also equated with low rates of “anti-social” behavior, such as divorce, drug use, and crime, and includes a community’s sense of its own worth.

For yet other people, community well-being goes beyond an assessment of what happens to individuals to encompass the relationships between individuals and groups. Their definitions include the ability of the community to come to consensus; the ability of the community to work for common purpose; the existence of a sense of community; and the willingness of corporations and individuals to invest time, energy, and money in their community. One person expanded a definition of community well-being to include natural resources and aesthetics, linking natural beauty with high morale and community pride.

While all its projects address at least some of these aspects of community well-being, the Council has no system for assessing the impacts of projects on those factors.

As with the definition of community well-being, definitions of forest health also differed considerably. Four different perspectives of forest health were identified:

- *A natural character:*

Some of the interviewees believe a healthy forest is one that has not been “managed,” or one that is restored to a previous condition in a previous time. An old-growth or ancient forest is the primary measure of forest health. Indicators of whether a “natural forest” is healthy would be a lack of intrusive management, the absence of forest products extraction, and the absence of thinnings, cuts, or roads.

- *Sustained yield:*

Other interviewees, primarily those with forestry backgrounds, believe a healthy forest is one that provides a sustained yield of forest products. This belief focuses on timber, but a sustained yield of special forest products is becoming important. A measure of forest health would be whether the forests provide timber and other products over time.

- *Landscape management:*

Others defined forest health in terms of landscape management theory, citing a diversity of age classes and stand structure. According to this theory, age and stand structure diversity are important factors in sustainability and are linked to forest health. The four age classes are: stand initiation, stem exclusion, understory reinitiation, and old growth. A healthy forest is a forest in which these four stages are present. From an economic and human-use standpoint, the advantage of having all four stages present simultaneously is access to a wide range of products. A measure of forest health for these people is the relative distribution of different age classes in space and time.

- *Species diversity:*

Some people claim that variation in vegetation and fauna is the indicator of forest health, and that a variety of species as well as age variation and structural diversity is indicative. A measure of forest health according to this definition is the diversity of age, structure, flora and fauna.

Since the Council region has always been dependent upon natural resources, it is no surprise that nearly everyone interviewed recognized links between community well-being and forest health. However, the existence of differing perceptions and understandings of community well-being and forest health make it difficult to evaluate how projects address them. It is difficult for Council members and partners to arrive at a common understanding or evaluation criteria for these concepts. Community people's commitment to work with the land while striving for economic prosperity makes the need for explicitly linking projects with the overall goal of community well-being and forest health vital.

Arriving at a definition of "community" is difficult when community consists of hundreds of geographic communities, thousands of communities of interest, and dozens of economic communities. Perhaps that is why many people consider the Council's project-based work successful; since these projects fulfill individual communities' needs, individual communities are satisfied. What this approach does not address well, however, is the needs of the larger community made up of smaller individual communities. This approach assumes that maximizing the well-being of each individual community maximizes the well-being of the larger community. Without more effective internal communication between individual communities, this strategy could potentially undermine the Council's ability to function effectively in the long term.

Whether the men and women involved in stream restoration understand the link between their project and community well-being is also unclear. For the Council to assist those participants in understanding a larger picture would require the organization to clearly articulate a goal that links forest health to community well-being. It would also need to think through how individual projects are related to forest health and community well-being, and how they integrate both.

Future of the Project

Columbia-Pacific Resource Conservation and Development has the potential to evolve in a variety of directions. It could, for example, become more like an economic development council or a social service agency. Given its past record, the likelihood is that it will continue to grow in its hybrid mode—part economic development council, social service agency, information and grants broker, and resource conservation and watershed rehabilitation agency. This hybrid character—with the flexibility and the potential it creates to address a number of social, economic, and ecological concerns—is one of the Council's strengths. To the extent that it can maintain this hybridity, its success is likely to continue.

But the Council is at the point where its success could become its downfall. The addition of a new county to the list of member organizations has brought new ideas and possibilities for new projects. Unless the Council can develop its currently weak internal communications network, the "glue" that holds the organization together may prove inadequate for keeping the larger, more complex organization running. One possibility that may need to be examined is the feasibility and desirability of creating "sub-regional boards" with some autonomy to make decisions for geographically localized areas within parameters established by the existing regional board structure.

In the non-profit world there is a saying that as long as there's money, there will be programs. This is likely to be true with the Council, whose excellent track record for completing projects has demonstrated the "can-do" attitude that allows it to change strategies in accordance with new demands and

circumstances. The need for the kinds of projects that the Council is undertaking, such as watershed restoration, rehabilitation and marketing of the Satsop Nuclear Reservation, and special forest products training and business development, will continue in the foreseeable future in southwestern Washington.

A question that remains unanswered, however, is the degree to which these projects individually maintain and enhance community well-being and forest health. The forest-related Council projects are not “community forestry projects” in the sense that the forests being affected by Council activities are not community-owned, nor are management decisions about them made through a communal decision-making process. However, the restoration work, the Special Forest Products Program, and the restoration of Satsop certainly involve the community, or more accurately an agglomeration of many communities, and fulfill certain community needs in the region. These programs also explicitly seek to enhance or restore the area’s forests. However, one of the Council’s weaknesses is that it lacks provisions for assessing whether it is actually achieving its goals for either community well-being or forest health improvement. Until the organization is able to develop baseline data for community well-being and forest health, and establish a monitoring and assessment system for determining the links between specific kinds of actions and community well-being and forest health, it will remain impossible to evaluate the success of the Council’s activities in those realms.

Figure 1: Public and Private Ownership by County

County	Area in Private Ownership (acres)	Area in Public Ownership (acres)	Total Land Area
Grays Harbor	842,531 (68.8%)	379,869 (31.1%)	1,222,400
Mason	378,766 (61.5%)	236,914 (38.5%)	615,680
Pacific	473,572 (81.5%)	107,548 (18.5%)	581,120
Wahkiakum	122,505 (73.3)	44,535 (26.7%)	167,040
CPRCD Region	1,817,374 (70.3)	768,866 (29.7%)	2,586,240

Source: Washington State Atlas and Databook. 1995.

Figure 2: Area and Percentage of Total Land Area by Public Ownership Type

	GraysHarbor County (acres/%)	Mason County (acres/%)	Pacific County (acres/%)	Wahkiakum County (acres/%)	CPRCD Region (acres/%)
Federal	161,063 (13.2%)	164,940 (26.8%)	10,953 (1.9%)	2,632 (1.6%)	768.866 (13.1%)
State	81,939 (6.7%)	62,598 (10.2%)	93,482 (16.1)	41,036 (24.6%)	279,055 (10.8%)
Indian	129,468 (10.6%)	3,906 (0.6%)	337 (0.1)	n/a	133,711 (5.2%)
County	7,423 (0.6%)	5,470 (0.9%)	2,776 (0.5%)	867 (0.5%)	16,536 (0.6%)

Source: Washington State Atlas and Databook. 1995.

Figure 3: Median Household Incomes and Percent of Households Below Poverty Level

County	MedianIncome 1980 (\$)	MedianIncome 1995 (\$)	% Below Poverty Level
Grays Harbor	17,080	28,047	16.4
Mason	16,137	32,345	13.2
Pacific	14,103	24,718	17.2
Wahkiakum	19,452	33,300	10.4
Washington State	18,367	40,398	10.9

Source: 1995 Population Trends, WA State Office of Financial Management.

Figure 4: CPRC&D Projects (1989-1996)¹

1. Feasibility and Marketing Studies

- Timber Bridge Grant
- Laminated Wood Products
- Pacific Link Business Assistance
- Harbormill Feasibility Study
- Wood Waste Utilization Marketing Study
- Agroforestry Cooperative
- Alternative Wastewater Treatment Study

2. Fish Enhancement and Hatchery Improvement

- Chinook Fish Enhancement
- Humptulips Conditioning Pond
- Chehalis Fish Hatchery Improvement
- Delazene Boy Scout Fish Enhancement
- Wynochee River Fish Enhancement
- ASCS Fish Enhancement Cost Sharing
- Loomis Pond Improvements

3. Tourism

- Friends Landing
- Ocean Shores Boardwalk
- Grays Harbor Discovery Project
- Pacific County Park and Recreation Plan
- West Bend Rest Area

4. Interpretive Centers and Parks

- Julia Butler Hansen Elk Interpretive Center
- Coastal Resource Science Center
- Skamokawa Vista Park

5. Education and Training

- Habitat Restoration Training
- Special Forest Products Management Training
- Grant Library
- Grantsmanship Workshops
- Area Forestry Extension Agent Support
- Forest TV Film
- Heart in the Woods (Theatrical Play)

6. Restoration

- Displaced Timber Workers Watershed Restoration Program
- Displaced Fishers Watershed Restoration Program

7. Cooperative/Association Development

- North Shore Timber Cooperative
- Agroforestry Cooperative (became RainKist marketing brokerage)
- Cottonwood Growers Association

8. Water Quality and Erosion Control

- City of Hoquiam Water Quality
- Brooks Slough Critical Area Treatment
- Riverdale Creek Emergency

9. Economic Development and Lending

- Pacific Coastal Economic Recovery Plan
- Economic Development District
- Entrepreneurial Revolving Loan Fund

10. Workshops/Dialogue Sessions

- Forest Contract/Marketing Workshop
- Sludge Application Workshop
- Cottonwood Marketing Workshop
- Forest Base Protection Meeting

11. Committees

- US/Canada Salmon Treaty Committee
- Burrowing Shrimp Committee
- 50th Tree Farm Anniversary Committee
- Chehalis River Basin Fishing Restoration Steering Committee
- Chehalis River Basin Planning Committee

Figure 5: CPRC&D Roles

- Provider of technical advice for activities such as grant writing, restoration plans, market feasibility studies, and industry development;
- Employer (direct and indirect hires);
- Facilitator of meetings and workshops;
- Information and services broker (i.e., connecting council members with expertise and funding from outside agencies and organizations);
- Advocate for legislation supportive of the council's goals;
- Funder and channeler of funds for projects;
- Developer of training and educational materials on topics related to timber and special forest products industries and watershed restoration;
- Representative on local and regional committees that address economic development and environmental issues (i.e., Chehalis River Basin Planning Committee, Burrowing Shrimp Committee, U.S./Canada Salmon Treaty Committee).

Figure 6: Council Member Organizations

Economic Development Districts and Councils

Columbia-Pacific Economic Development District
Mason County Economic Development Council
Lower Columbia Economic Development Council
Pacific County Economic Development Council

Counties

Grays Harbor County
Mason County
Pacific County
Wahkiakum County

Conservation Districts

Grays Harbor Conservation District
Pacific Conservation District
Wahkiakum Conservation District

Transportation Agencies

Pacific Transit System
Port of Ilwaco

Port of Peninsula
Port of Willapa Harbor
Wahkiakum Port District #2

Native American Tribes/Nations

Chehalis Indian Tribe
Quinault Nation
Shoalwater Bay Indian Tribe

Cities

City of Aberdeen
City of Cathlamet
City of Hoquiam
City of Ilwaco
City of Long Beach
City of McCleary
City of Oakville
City of Ocean Shores
City of Raymond
City of South Bend
City of Westport

Community Groups

Coastal Community Action
Grays Harbor Trout Unlimited
Grays Harbor Historical Seaport
Willapa Alliance

Figure 7: Some CPRC&D Partners

Chehalis Basin Fisheries Task Force

Harbor Churches Community Outreach
Seattle Catholic Archdiocese
Washington Association of Churches

Central Labor Council (Grays Harbor)
IAM Woodworkers Local #W-2
Washington State Labor Council

Washington Environmental Council
The Nature Conservancy

Rayonnier Timberlands
John Hancock/Campbell Group

Weyerhaeuser
Simpson Timber Company
Mason Timber Company

Cascadia Revolving Fund

Mason Conservation District
Lewis Conservation District
Thurston Conservation District

U.S. Forest Service
U.S. Fish and Wildlife
Washington State Department of Natural Resources
Washington State Department of Ecology
Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development
Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife

Grays Harbor Community College

Many private landowners

Comment on Methodology

The information for this study was gathered by two social scientists, both Ph.D. students at the University of Washington's College of Forest Resources. The researchers worked part-time over a five week period between March and April 1997. Interviews were conducted with 34 people, including CPRC&D staff, CPRC&D board members, CPRC&D council members, founders, project partners, and others with some knowledge of or involvement with CPRC&D activities. Eight of the interviews were conducted in person, the remaining interviews were conducted by telephone. Interview data was supplemented with data from CPRC&D documents, census reports, and land use documents.

Notes

¹ This list serves to illustrate the range of projects and activities CPRC&D is engaged in. It is not meant to be an exhaustive list of all projects and activities.

² This list is meant to illustrate the range of partners that CPRC&D works with. It is by no means complete, and inclusion or omission is not indicative of the relative importance of partner groups' contributions.

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