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FROM CONFLICT TO CONSENSUS?
A SOCIAL AND POLITICAL HISTORY OF ENVIRONMENTAL COLLABORATION
IN THE SWAN VALLEY, MONTANA

by
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B.A. Princeton University, 1988
presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Science
The University of Montana
1997

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From Conflict to Consensus? A Social and Political History of Environmental Collaboration in the Swan Valley, Montana (178 pp.)

Director: Jill Belsky

This study provides a critical history of a place-based collaborative effort in the Swan Valley of Western Montana. For the past seven years, a group of Swan valley residents, calling themselves the Swan Citizens' ad hoc Committee, have sought to address and resolve the ongoing natural resource conflicts in the valley using a consensus, collaborative process. As part of this effort, these residents are attempting to influence US Forest Service decisions about public lands in the Swan Lake Ranger district of the Flathead National Forest. Using a qualitative, case study approach, this thesis explores and illustrates the complex dynamics of citizen involvement in public lands decision making through the use of community based collaboration. Interviews, historical research and participant observation of collaborative meetings provide the data for this study. This thesis documents a variety of perspectives including: valley residents who actively participate in the collaboration, residents who do not participate, agency personnel at varied levels of the Forest Service, and an environmental advocacy group involved in Swan Valley issues.

Three ways of understanding the outcomes of place-based, community collaborative efforts emerge: building community capacity and well-being; decentralizing Forest Service decision making; and integrating the protection of ecological integrity with rural economies. Multiple perspectives on the Ad hoc committee indicate that the group is seen as like-minded and not inclusive of some interest regarding Forest Service land management in the Swan valley. These voices also illustrate the Ad hoc committee's benefits of providing a community forum and opportunity for dialogue about local natural resource and land use issues. While limited and uncertain success is seen as far as decentralizing Forest Service decision making and protecting ecological integrity, the collaborative is most successful in reducing polarization and building capacity within the Swan valley community. Lessons for rethinking the outcomes and purpose of community based collaboratives are also explored.
Acknowledgments

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Chapter I:
Introduction

Condon is barely noticeable even as a small town to those driving through the Swan Valley in western Montana. A log community center, a diner and a small market-gas station mark the physical presence of the town. Condon is the focal point of the Upper Swan Valley, the place where people congregate as they strive together to deal with the rapid changes confronting them. Immigration and an economic transition away from dependence on timber extraction are among the changes altering long-standing relationships and challenging established ways of doing things. Public participation in the management of US Forest Service lands is another arena in which these new dynamics of transition are evolving.

Since 1990, a group of Swan Valley residents has been involved in a collaborative process aimed at addressing the contentious natural resource issues facing the valley. Calling themselves the "Swan Citizens' ad hoc Committee," these citizens are seeking a greater level of involvement in the decisions made regarding Swan Valley lands managed by the US Forest Service's Flathead National Forest. In doing so, they have found themselves in the midst of what could be a profound shift in the ways public lands issues are addressed and the outcomes of management decisions are evaluated.

Lately it seems that everyone with an interest in natural resource issues is talking about collaboration. Northern Lights magazine and High Country News, two chroniclers of the West's environmental issues, recently devoted entire issues to these "homespun coalitions that rely upon building relationships among former adversaries" (Snow, 1995). A new publication, the Chronicle of Community is devoted entirely to exploring the growing collaborative movement. Calling themselves collaboratives, partnerships or consensus groups, these groups are popping up across the West to address everything from watershed management, riparian restoration and toxic contamination to sustainable forestry, grizzly bear reintroduction and economic diversification.
(Jones, 1996). The state of Montana created the Montana Consensus Council which has published a booklet of successful collaborative case studies. The Council's mission is to foster the use of consensus processes at the community level to address natural resource issues (Montana Consensus Council, 1995).

High Country News estimates that there are hundreds of these groups around the West (Jones, 1996). The organizational structures and participant profiles are as diverse as the issues tackled by these groups. They have been created by government agencies as advisory councils or they can be informal citizen-initiated groups (Jones, 1996). Broadly defined, the term "collaborative" encompasses groups composed of people from diverse, typically adversarial, perspectives that seek to resolve environmental problems through a consensus process. This thesis specifically deals with a community-based collaborative, using the consensus process at the local level and largely driven by the residents of a specific place.

As collaboratives proliferate at the grassroots level, policy makers, environmental advocates and academics are becoming involved as observers, participants and facilitators. Federal land management agencies, in shifting to the vaguely defined philosophy of ecosystem management, often include some form of collaborative process as a component of this policy. In fact, the Keystone National Policy Dialogue on Ecosystem Management, which brought together individuals representing a diversity of local, regional, and national interests to examine ecosystem management, defines ecosystem management as:

A collaborative process that strives to reconcile the promotion of economic opportunities and livable communities with the conservation of ecological integrity and biodiversity (The Keystone Center, 1996: p. 6).

Mike Dombeck, recently appointed as Chief of the US Forest Service, has made collaborative stewardship his "professional resource philosophy." His first day on the job, Dombeck called for citizen councils to "bring people together to define a shared vision for management of natural resources" (Dombeck speech, 1997).
Academics, from a variety of disciplines, also advocate a change in the way citizens are involved in natural resource decisions and public land management. Environmental policy analyst, R. Edward Grumbine writes that “A complementary approach to testing public support for ecosystem management would be to grant citizens a greater role in environmental decision making” (Grumbine, 1994). Hanna Cortner and Margaret Moote, studying forest and water policy at the University of Arizona, place collaborative decision making and ecosystem management on equal footing as principles within an emerging new paradigm of land management (Cortner and Moote, 1994). Toward the more extreme end of the spectrum calling for change lie some scholars of public administration and public land policy who advocate the decentralization of public land management (Nelson, 1996; Hess, 1996). Karl Hess, Jr., a senior fellow in environmental studies with the Cato Institute, proposes something that, in the right light, looks suspiciously like a community-based collaborative. He proposes “... a third option for the federal domain— ... common resources being managed by small, self-governing communities” and calls them, after Aldo Leopold, “a land community” (Hess, 1996: p. 179-180).

Environmental and conservation organizations are divided over participation in collaborative groups. Proponents argue that the traditional “lobby, legislate and litigate” approach to environmental problem solving no longer works and that collaboratives are an opportunity to achieve positive ecological results on the land without litigation (Hatfield, 1993; Jones, 1996; Bernhard and Young, 1997). They also see collaboratives as a means to break down the entrenched stereotypes that environmentalists don’t care about people’s livelihoods and rural people care only about what they can extract from the land (Bernhard and Young, 1997). Community-based collaboration was recently called a “third wave” in the American conservation movement in which “... the locus of responsibility and action is the individual and community, not a depersonalized, distant government (Bernhard and Young, 1997: p. 25).

Critics, however, see collaboratives as a dangerous road toward the co-optation and disempowerment of the environmental movement. Michael McCloskey, chairman of the Sierra Club, writes that community-based
collaborative groups "... have the effect of transferring influence to the very communities where we are least organized and potent. They would maximize the influence of those who are least attracted to the environmental cause and most alienated from it" (McCloskey, 1996: p. 7). Wary environmentalists fear that these processes will be dominated by industry with greater resources, especially financial, to participate in time consuming collaborations (McClosky, 1996). They argue that the West's rural communities have always had a powerful influence on natural resource decision making, often with ecologically destructive results (Jones, 1996).

Under all the rhetoric, debate and theory about collaborative groups and environmental decisionmaking, something very real is happening that warrants closer examination. For those who favor collaboration, the underlying assumptions are that the process will lead to better environmental decisions and to stronger communities. But, what are the outcomes of this process? How do those involved understand these outcomes? What are the criteria for determining the success of these collaborative groups? Are they really resulting in better environmental outcomes, and how are these defined or measured? What are the benefits and opportunities as well as the obstacles and pitfalls encountered by these groups? These were the central questions in my mind as I began this study.

In light of these questions, this thesis examines the role that a community-based collaborative group has played in Forest Service land management decisionmaking. Using the Swan Valley as the case study, it explores the complex history and current context in which one such collaborative emerged and now operates. The inherent tension between a federal bureaucracy responding to national mandates for the land it manages and a local community seeking influence about the local federal lands underlies this story. Dynamic relationships within the community as well as between the community and the US Forest Service shape the benefits and opportunities as well as the obstacles and pitfalls of the Swan Valley collaborative group.

The US Forest Service is charged with the management of 191 million acres of public land (Wilkinson, 1992). Born in the Progressive era, the Forest
Service long operated under a scientific, expert-driven technocratic paradigm, seeking the efficient allocation of resources, primarily timber, ostensibly for the good of the American people (Clary, 1986; Wilkinson, 1992; Hirt, 1994). It has always been a highly centralized and hierarchical agency, guided by sometimes conflicting Congressional mandates (Wilkinson, 1992). Today, the Forest Service struggles to meet the needs and concerns of myriad competing interest groups at local, regional and national levels. The agency also struggles internally, as budgets are cut and government is downsized, to accomplish its multiple-use mission. In a simplistic portrayal over the current conflict surrounding National Forest management, environmentalists are pitted against the advocates of extractive uses in a protracted effort to influence agency decisions.

In this context, the role a community-based collaborative plays, or should play, in Forest Service decision making is not a simple question. The topic forces the question of who should manage the federal public lands and for what outcomes? The answer, as I see it, hinges on several questions and levels of analysis:

1. Who participates in this collaborative process and who doesn’t? Why do these people decide to participate or to be uninvolved? How do different interests and perspectives across the valley perceive this collaborative group, its accomplishments, and its processes? How do these diverse interest groups affect the committee’s ability to participate in Forest Service decisionmaking?

2. How do the participants in the ad hoc committee perceive their role in the management of Forest Service land in the Swan Valley? What outcomes are they concerned with?

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1 For example, Congress continues to mandate a national allowable sale quantity of timber, but it has also passed legislation like the National Forest Management Act which contains language requiring the agency to protect biodiversity through protecting the habitat, and maintaining viable populations, of designated management indicator species. (See Wilkinson, 1992 and Keiter, 1994).
3. How do officials within the US Forest Service perceive the role of community-based collaborative groups in decisionmaking? How does collaboration fit into the current structure of public participation in Forest Service decision making?

These questions are explored from the diverse perspectives of the Ad hoc committee’s leadership, US Forest Service personnel, Swan Valley residents and the leadership of a local environmental group.

Three ways of understanding the outcomes of a collaborative like the Ad Hoc Committee emerge from this research. These outcomes suggest possible criteria for evaluating the successes of the Swan collaborative effort. First, collaboratives can be understood as a process of community-building in a place-based resident community. Second, collaboratives infuse a more participatory democratic process into Forest Service decision making; the degree to which they accomplish this is a measure of their success. Finally, the ecological impacts of the decisions made by collaborative groups are an important measure of the success of these groups.

Community-based collaboration is a dangerous road to walk for an environmentalist in today’s West of wise-use, county supremacy movements, and calls for the devolution of federal lands to more local control. Angry rhetoric from all sides creates the impression that the empowerment of rural communities would result in continued unabated environmental degradation. It will remain an unpredictable road as well because, as this thesis will also argue, it is far from certain that collaborative decision making processes will inherently result in more ecologically sound decisions. Because collaboratives will prove so place specific, broad predictions about environmental outcomes are difficult at best, maybe even impossible. I probably wouldn’t walk this road of community-based collaboration if I didn’t believe that, as Brick and Cawley observe, the environmental movement has entered a new era that “means organizing in rural communities and paying more attention to social-justice issues” (Brick and Cawley, 1996; p.9). Community-based collaborative groups present a powerful opportunity to engage this new environmental movement.
Environmental historian, William Cronon (1992), writes that “... we inhabit an endlessly storied world. We narrate the triumphs and failures of our pasts. We tell stories to explore the alternative choices that might lead to feared or hoped-for futures” (p. 1368). He goes on to say that narrative is “... our best and most compelling tool for searching out meaning in a conflicted and contradictory world” (Cronon, 1992: p. 1374). Similarly, sociologist Piers Blaikie (1995) uses narrative as a tool in his “interactionist” analytical approach to the study of society and environment. This approach explores and analyzes the multiple perspectives of the diverse actors in any environmental problem to better understand how these problems are framed (Blaikie, 1995).

In this spirit, the story I will tell of the Swan Citizens ad hoc Committee seeks to capture and learn from the myriad perspectives on the collaborative process. I also hope this thesis will help the citizens of the Swan Valley, as well as other Western communities involved in collaborative efforts, by painting a realistic picture of the complexity behind this type of decisionmaking process as a means of involving Western communities in public land management. In order to capture the multiple perspectives about the Swan valley collaborative, the study takes a qualitative, historical, and ethnographic approach. Specific methods are discussed next.

**Methodology:**

I chose the Swan Citizens' ad hoc Committee as the case study for this thesis because of the group's 6 year history and its attempt to influence Forest Service decisions about federal lands in the Swan Valley. Because of the valley's proximity to Missoula, I could easily travel to the Swan for interviews and meetings. I designed the research to include a variety of qualitative research methods including: historical research, observations of Ad hoc committee meetings, and interviews with Ad hoc committee participants as well as non-participants. Both primary and secondary sources were used. The use of multiple methods in qualitative research produces a rich, substantive picture of reality (Berg, 1995).
The current relationship between the Swan's community-based collaborative and the US Forest Service arose in part from the specific history of the relationship between valley residents and the agency. Thus, this thesis includes an examination of the Forest Service's historic relationship with the Swan Valley community and the changes over time in this relationship. Data for this section was gathered from: forest plans, timber management records, homestead records, local histories and newspaper articles as well as Forest Service histories from the national, regional and local levels. I also conducted five oral history interviews—three with descendants of original valley homesteaders and two with former employees of the Flathead National Forest, Condon ranger district. Those interviewed for this component of the thesis gave verbal permission to use their names in the text of the thesis.

Observations of Swan Citizens' ad hoc Committee meetings provided insight into the group's process and organization. Between November 1995 and February 1997, the ad hoc committee held six general meetings; I attended five of these meetings. I recorded agenda topics, attendance, and my observations regarding the process including who spoke and the topics raised in comments or questions. I also attended four meetings of the Ecosystem Management and Learning Center (EM&LC) subcommittee as a participant observer. Again my notes included who attended and my impressions of the decision making process. This series of meetings was entirely focused on strategic planning for the committee's proposed EM&LC. My role, as a minor participant, included assisting with facilitation and recording of the meetings.

The bulk of the data for this thesis, however, is drawn from interviews conducted with four perspectives: the leadership of the ad hoc committee, Swan Valley residents who are not regular participants, Forest Service personnel, and a representative of Friends of the Wild Swan (FOWS), a local environmental advocacy group.2

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2 Plum Creek Timber, as a major landowner in the valley, is an important stakeholder that is not included to a large degree in this thesis. Because of the Ad hoc committee's current focus on developing a partnership with the Flathead National Forest and addressing public land management issues in the valley, I limited the scope of the thesis to public lands issues and decision making processes. The valley residents that I spoke with also feel powerless, to a large degree, to influence Plum Creek's land use decisions. It is important to
First, I interviewed those residents of the Swan Valley recognized as the informal leaders of the Ad hoc committee. I identified this core group of participants through my attendance of Ad hoc meetings, initial conversations with Ad hoc participants, and a review of past meeting records. The meeting minutes indicate the frequency with which specific individuals serve as the rotating co-chairs for general meetings and as subcommittee members. Valley residents who do not participate regularly in the ad hoc as well as Forest Service personnel identify these same individuals as the leadership of the committee. This core group of nine people serves as contacts for those outside of the valley interested in the ad hoc committee's work. They are the most knowledgeable about the group's history and process.

I interviewed all nine of the core group members. At the end of each core member interview, I asked them for names of other valley residents who are not regular Ad hoc participants but who might be willing to speak with me. I specifically requested names of people whose views would reflect other perspectives in the valley. Core group members gave me permission to use their names as a referral when I contacted other valley residents for interviews. They also gave me written permission to use their names in the thesis.

From this first step in a chain referral (or snowball) sampling technique, I generated a list of 54 Swan residents who participate in the ad hoc committee infrequently or not at all. In October of 1996, I sent thirty-five letters of introduction (See Appendix A), contacting all 54 people out of this original list.3 This letter described the nature of my project and its objectives; it also informed people that I would be following up with a phone call to arrange an interview if they were willing to speak with me.

The response was overwhelmingly positive. Several residents called me before I had a chance to begin my follow-up calls. People generously welcomed me into their houses and freely offered their ideas and thoughts.

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3 Several of the names I was given were couples. In these cases, I sent one letter of introduction and conducted the interview with both people simultaneously. During the interview, I recorded each individual's responses separately.
about their community. Only six people who were contacted after receiving a letter turned down interviews: one person canceled a scheduled interview; one was busy guiding during hunting season and therefore unavailable; two couples never returned messages that I left after being told to call back to arrange the interview.

I was unable to reach ten people by phone after sending them a letter of introduction. After repeated attempts to call them, if I had not found them at home, I gave up. Some of these people are not full time residents of the Swan Valley. I only interviewed 1 seasonal resident during this research. Thus, the perspective of seasonal residents is unexamined.

During the last two weeks in October 1996, I lived in the Swan Valley and conducted the majority of these interviews. Everyday I drove the rutted dirt roads that crisscross the valley out to beautiful log homes set with perfect views of the mountains. The generosity and friendliness of the people in the Swan made this the most enjoyable and rewarding part of my research.

In total, I interviewed thirty-eight Swan valley residents who are not members of the core group. This represents approximately 10% of the total population of year round residents. Conversations ranged in length from 45 minutes to over two hours. I characterized these people as either non-participants or participants. Participants occasionally attend general meetings and rarely serve on subcommittees. Twenty-six of those interviewed were non-participants; twelve were participants although six of these called themselves “past participants.” From this group of interviews, I gathered nine new contacts in the community. These nine people were never contacted due to time constraints. I also felt I had spoken with a sufficiently diverse cross section of residents based on the variety of occupations, lengths of residency, community activities and the variation in the perspectives of the people I had already spoken to. However, because I did not randomly select the individuals I interviewed, I cannot be certain that my sample is representative of the Swan community.

I used the same series of open ended questions to guide my conversations with core group members and Swan Valley residents (See
Appendix B). Questions dealt with three general categories: personal background and views about the changes and issues confronting the valley; perceptions of the ad hoc committee; and perceptions of the Forest Service. I inquired about each individual’s reasons for participating, or not participating, in Ad Hoc meetings. I asked core group members, participants and non-participants for their views of the committee’s purpose, accomplishments, process and relationship with the broader community. I asked everyone to describe the benefits and problems of the ad hoc group for the community. I explicitly asked if those who did not participate felt their views regarding Forest Service management in the valley were included in Ad hoc committee meeting topics and discussions among regular participants.

Because I was also interested in residents’ views of the Forest Service and its management of the valley’s federal lands, I then asked a series of questions about the USFS. Specifically, I inquired about: residents’ opinions of the Forest Service’s ability to deal with the management of federal lands in the valley; the public’s role in decisionmaking regarding National Forest lands in the valley; and the Forest Service’s role in the Swan Valley community. I asked residents to describe the current status of these issues, as they saw it and how they felt things should change in the future. Finally, I asked each person to describe their vision of the results of a successful process of community involvement in Forest Service ecosystem management. In the interviews where I spoke with couples, I recorded each individual’s response.

I took handwritten notes during each interview, choosing not to risk inhibiting conversation with a tape recorder. These notes were transcribed after each interview. Responses were analyzed by documenting common themes that emerged when the interviews were reviewed together and direct quotes were pulled that illustrated important issues. Those residents who were not core group members were assured that confidentiality would be protected and their names not attached to specific comments.

Finally, I interviewed Forest Service personnel at varying levels of the agency hierarchy. Beginning at the ranger district level and moving up to the regional office, I spoke with key individuals who had been involved with, or were
familiar with, the work of the Ad hoc committee. District Ranger Chuck Harris, Flathead National Forest Supervisor Rodd Richardson, and Regional Forester Hal Salwasser were all interviewed as part of this research. Again, open-ended questions guided the conversations and focused on their perceptions of the Ad hoc committee as well as the general public’s role in ecosystem management. In these interviews, I sought each individual’s perspective on the benefits to the Forest Service of community-based collaboratives, the role agency officials see for such a group, how it differs from traditional public participation procedures and the issues confronted in involving community-based collaboratives. I also asked Forest Service officials for their own vision of success regarding these groups. Both Richardson and Salwasser offered their perspectives based on their experiences and familiarity with a variety of collaborative groups in addition to their familiarity with the Ad Hoc Committee.

I also interviewed Arlene Montgomery from Friends of the Wild Swan (FOWS), a local environmental advocacy group. I used similar questions in this interview as in the interviews with Forest Service officials. Montgomery based her comments on her familiarity with two other collaborative groups working with the Flathead National Forest — Flathead Common Ground and the Flathead Forestry Project — as well as what she knows of the Swan Valley group specifically. Thus, her concerns regarding collaborative groups reflect a broader perspective and are not necessarily aimed specifically at the Ad Hoc committee.

As much as possible throughout the thesis I have tried to allow the voices of the people I interviewed to come through. I use their own words to describe their place and its landscape, its human community and the complex issues that confront them. However, before delving into the specific case study, it is important to understand the theoretical background behind community-based collaboratives. Therefore, in the second chapter I provide a literature review to define and clarify several concepts central to the paper. The next chapter explores the theories of collaborative processes, public participation and community.
Chapter II:
Literature Review

Collaborative groups such as the Swan Valley Citizens' *ad hoc* Committee hinge on evolving notions of community and public participation in Forest Service land management decisions. This chapter explores and defines collaborative processes, public participation and community in order to develop a theoretical framework for understanding the specific case study of the Swan Valley.

The chapter begins with a review of collaborative problem-solving theory as it relates to environmental decisions. It then traces the evolution of public participation in National Forest management in order to situate collaboratives in this larger legal and political context. The concept of community, as it relates to collaboration and National Forest land management, is then defined. These sections develop the "ideal" of collaboration. Finally, the chapter concludes with a review of several well-known collaborative efforts tackling issues similar to those of the Ad Hoc Committee. The chapter represents a synthesis of an enormous volume of literature tackling the topics of collaborative problem-solving, public participation, and community. I focus on three ways of understanding the current efforts at community-based collaboration that emerge: community building; building participatory democratic processes into public lands decision making; and ecological outcomes.

*The Collaborative Process*

The collaborative process goes by a number of different names: Alternative Dispute Resolution (Wondolleck, 1988), Environmental Dispute Settlement (Crowfoot & Wondolleck, 1990), Consensus decisionmaking (Shands, 1991), Facilitated Dialogue (Johnson, 1993), Collaborative Learning (Daniels, et al., 1993) and Transformative Facilitation (Maser, 1996), just to name a few. Despite the varied nomenclature, the theory and principals of a collaborative
process are fairly straightforward. The following fundamentals are common to all the versions listed above.

The first principal of any collaborative process is the broad inclusion of all "stakeholders" (Crowfoot & Wondolleck, 1990; Daniels, et al., 1993; Johnson, 1993; Chrislip, 1995). This term is often vaguely defined as anyone with an interest or "stake" in the problem to be addressed (Crowfoot & Wondolleck, 1990; Johnson, 1993). Chrislip (1995) defines a stakeholder as "... any citizen who desires an opportunity to participate ..., those affected by the decisions or who have a direct stake in the outcome ..., and those necessary for successful implementation..." (p. 2). The Montana Consensus Council (1995) defines a stakeholder as "Anyone who might be effected (sic) by an agreement, needed to successfully implement it, or anyone who could undermine an agreement..." (p. 5). These stakeholders have diverse, often conflicting, interests in the problem at hand; as adversaries, they could successfully and perpetually block each other’s proposals (Kemmis, 1990; Snow, 1996).

In some collaborative models, representatives are chosen to speak for specific stakeholder or interest groups; these individuals then report to their constituencies (Wondolleck, 1988; Crowfoot & Wondolleck, 1990). These representatives are chosen by their own group through that group’s governing process (Crowfoot & Wondolleck, 1990; Montana Consensus Council, 1995). Other models are less formal, arguing that "... whoever is willing to contribute must be welcomed to the table" (Bernard and Young, 1997). In these models, the emphasis is on broad, inclusive participation rather than representation (Kemmis, 1990; Chrislip, 1995).

The literature is largely silent, however, on if, or how, to determine which individuals or groups have a legitimate stake in the issue. Ultimately, those who participate in the process decide who else needs to be included in the group being assembled (Johnson, 1993; Montana Consensus Council, 1995). Only Chrislip (1995) offers some questions to guide the identification and selection of stakeholders. These include:

- What are the perspectives necessary to credibly and effectively define problems... and create solutions? ... who can speak for these perspectives? What are the interests that must be represented
in order to reach agreements that can be implemented? ... Who can block action? Who controls resources? Who are the people who cause or are affected by the problems...? Who will be affected by the solutions? Who ... could generate the political and institutional will to steward significant change? (p.25).

The initiators of this process vary, ranging from a government agency (Wondolleck, 1988; McCoy et al, no date) to an initial committee of stakeholders (Johnson, 1993; Chrislip, 1995). Participation is always voluntary (Crowfoot and Wondolleck, 1990; Montana Consensus Council, 1995).

Once the group is assembled, the focus shifts to building relationships, understanding and trust among participants who often view each other as adversaries. A neutral facilitator helps structure the process by shaping ground rules and ensuring communication among the participants (Johnson, 1993; Maser, 1996). The facilitator’s role is to empower group members to solve their own problems rather than to advocate or propose solutions themselves (Johnson, 1993; Maser, 1996). A joint learning process builds common ground and a shared definition of the issues being addressed (Wondolleck, 1988; Johnson, 1993; Daniels, et al., 1993; Maser, 1996). The group explores its common interests and values rather than focusing on the differences that have traditionally separated the stakeholders.

The relationships that are built between participants in a collaborative process, as well as those that exist prior to the start of the collaborative process, influence the success and outcomes of any collaboration. Daniels (1997), sees understanding the relationships between a collaborative’s participants as a cornerstone to making substantive progress in natural resource conflicts through a collaborative process. These issues include: power, legitimacy, history, incentives and trust (Daniels, 1997). Prior relationships between parties will shape and constrain any practical application of the collaborative process.

Decisions are supposed to be reached based on the dialogue between all participants. The emphasis is on cooperation rather than competition. Solutions are to be mutually beneficial as well as incorporate the conflicting
values and concerns of all parties (Crowfoot and Wondolleck, 1990; Johnson, 1993; Bernhard and Young, 1997). According to Chrislip (1995) “The goal is to reach agreements that everyone ... can live with and implement. ... each participant has, in essence, a veto ...” (p. 22). This consensus building process, in theory, presents an alternative to compromise and negotiation. Practitioners distinguish between facilitation, mediation and negotiation in this way: facilitation seeks to empower a group to define and solve its own problems; mediation is intervention in a specific dispute and negotiation involves advocacy of a particular point of view (Johnson, 1993). In an ideally facilitated, consensus process, no one should feel they have compromised their principals or values when the final decision is crafted. Rather, consensus theoretically should result in a vision of the public good which transcends each stakeholder’s particular interest (Kemmis, 1990; Snow, 1996).

Despite the distinction made above, the roots of current efforts at collaborative problem-solving lie in mediation and negotiation. During the 1970s and 1980s, environmental mediation became increasingly popular as a means to resolve disputes without resorting to expensive litigation. Practitioners coined the term “Alternative Dispute Resolution” (ADR) to refer to voluntary, fact-to-face negotiations aimed at settling specific disputes (Bingham, 1986; Wondolleck, 1988; Crowfoot and Wondolleck, 1990). A third party mediated formal agreements between paid representatives of warring interest groups (Bingham, 1986; Crowfoot and Wondolleck, 1990). Government agencies, private companies and environmental groups bargained and negotiated over land use, natural resource management, water, energy, air quality and pollution issues (Bingham, 1986).

Alternative Dispute Resolution was designed to reduce costly litigation by bringing together the competitors to find common ground and workable, practical solutions to their disputes (Wondolleck, 1988; US Congress, 1992). In ADR, an important distinction is made between a dispute and a conflict. The former refers to discrete, issue specific disagreements that can be settled while the latter is ongoing and reflects fundamental value differences (Gerald
Cormick, 1982 as cited in Bingham, 1986; Crowfoot and Wondolleck, 1990; Daniels, et al. 1993). The Forest Service experimented with ADR techniques on a limited basis to resolve specific disputes over controversial forest management plans released in the late 1980s (Wondolleck, 1988). Several case studies emerged from these early Forest Service experiments. All were evaluated based on: successfully reaching an agreement, implementing that agreement, and improving communication between parties even if no agreement was reached (Bingham, 1986; Wondolleck, 1988). The process of decision making, rather than the outcome of the decision, was the criterion on which these efforts were called successful.

While ADR represents the early seeds of today’s collaborative approaches to natural resource issues, the community based groups emerging now have a distinctly different look to them. Collaboration is no longer the domain of paid interest group representatives and government agencies. It no longer focuses solely on resolving singular disputes under threat of litigation. As will be seen, community collaboration has become a more proactive, long-range visioning process that encourages individual participation rather than representation. But where did this emphasis on cooperation over competition come from? Why did the desire to bring opponents together in a joint problem-solving process arise? A look at the literature on public participation in Forest Service decision making provides part of the answer.

**Public Participation**

Collaborative models are rooted in the belief that public involvement at the outset of a decision making process should integrate the expertise, values, and concerns of a diversity of groups and individuals to produce a more democratic decisionmaking process (Renn, et al. 1993). These models are nothing new, but for an agency such as the Forest Service, integrating collaboration into their traditional public involvement procedures is relatively new and innovative. For this agency, community collaboration represents a shift along a spectrum of public involvement processes that ranges from public input about its preferences toward participatory democracy. Between these poles of
input and democracy, "A distinction is made between simply listening to the public versus actually allowing them to influence the land-use or resource allocation" (Knopp and Caldbeck, 1990: p. 14). In order to illustrate this shift, this section begins with the legal structure and agency culture that frames public participation in Forest Service decision making. It then presents the critiques of traditional public participation processes and the model of participatory democracy that has emerged in response.

The primary laws guiding the Forest Service’s public involvement efforts are the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the National Forest Management Act (NFMA). The language of these acts and their implementing regulations structure the Forest Service’s traditional approach to public participation.

The National Environmental Policy Act passed in 1969 during a time of growing environmental awareness and increasing public demand for access to administrative decisionmaking (US Congress, 1992). It provides the primary procedural guidance for public lands decisionmaking in every federal agency including the Forest Service (Keiter, 1990). NEPA assures that a system of environmental review is incorporated into decisionmaking through the preparation and evaluation of detailed written statements describing a project’s environmental impacts (Keiter, 1990; Coggins, et al., 1993). The language of the law requires "a systematic, interdisciplinary approach," that must include statements on the environmental impact of a proposal, any adverse environmental effects, and alternatives to the proposed action (section 102, 43 U.S.C.A. § 4332). The process of preparing an Environmental Assessment or Impact Statement, now familiar to those concerned with National Forest lands, evolved from this requirement.

However, the law itself does not require that the public be actively involved in the decisionmaking process, nor does it require that the most environmentally sound decision is made. The Supreme Court, in a series of decisions interpreting NEPA, concluded that agencies were only obligated to consider environmental impacts and to make full disclosure to the public to demonstrate that these impacts had been considered (Keiter, 1990; US
Congress, 1992). Thus, the public participation system that evolved from NEPA is structured so that the public reviews a decision rather than taking an active part in its making. The regulations written to implement NEPA include more specific guidance regarding mechanisms to involve the public in this review. They create a “scoping period” to identify issues that need to be addressed in the environmental analysis. They also require public notification of decisions, the availability of documentation, and public meetings. NEPA requires strict compliance with this procedure to inform the public, but a government agency is solely responsible for developing the proposed project, conducting all necessary analysis, and providing citizens with pertinent information (Keiter, 1990; US Congress, 1992). Agencies retain considerable discretion as far as the methods and the timing of public involvement (Blahna and Yonts-Shepard, 1989).

Passed in 1976, the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) affirmed the public’s right to participate specifically in Forest Service decisionmaking. The NFMA requires the Forest Service to develop comprehensive, long-range management plans for each National Forest according to the NEPA process (Wondolleck, 1988). The law directed the Forest Service to prepare Environmental Assessments or Impact Statements as part of this long-range planning process. In addition to this requirement, the NFMA contains specific language regarding public participation. It “casts the public in the role of advisors and consultants to the planning and decisionmaking process” (US Congress, 1992, p. 80). Its implementing regulations provide for mandatory comment periods and require that the agency demonstrate that public input has been considered by responding to comments in the environmental analysis; this is also a requirement of the NEPA (US Congress, 1992).

But why did these laws, providing for public participation in environmental decisions, emerge? There are those involved in environmental management who argue that environmental problems are too complex for the lay public, who are untrained, biased, and emotional. Thus, these decisions are best left to scientific experts and administrators who can make rational, objective decisions based on available technical and scientific information (Fiorino, 1990). For
federal public land management agencies, such as the Forest Service, this technocratic approach was the operating procedure. Born in the Progressive era, the USFS viewed land management as a scientific process to be handled by professional foresters, engineers, hydrologists and agronomists based on scientific forestry principles. For the Forest Service, the paradigm of centralized scientific management has been at the center of agency culture for much of its history (Hays, 1959; Wondolleck, 1988; Hirt, 1994; Nelson, 1996). As Charles Wilkinson, a leading public land law scholar, notes "From Pinchot’s day on, the implicit byword in the national forests had been ‘leave it to the experts’" (Wilkinson, 1992, p. 144).

The NEPA and the NFMA are the result of growing challenges to this technocratic decision making model. Participation theorists generally trace the rising calls for citizen participation to the growing discretionary powers of modern bureaucracies (Langton, 1978). People perceived that decisions affecting their daily lives were being “made by officials ‘far away’ and unattached to the affected social relationships” and began demanding a greater role in bureaucratic decision making (Shannon, 1990: p. 230). In the specific case of the Forest Service, the NFMA arose from a series of angry controversies in which citizens directly challenged clearcutting as a management practice on National Forest lands (Wilkinson, 1992; Hirt, 1994). Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, concern about the ecological and aesthetic effects of Forest Service management mounted, and citizens, concerned with forest degradation, asserted their desire to participate in the decisions about National Forest lands.

The passage of NEPA and NFMA were a first step toward bringing democracy to federal land management. However, these laws were interpreted from the perspective of a rational, scientific management paradigm. The legislation created mechanisms to encourage public involvement, but it also protected agency discretion and the assumptions of centralized scientific management. Thus, despite the spirit of legislation like NEPA and NFMA, public participation as typically conducted by the Forest Service has remained at the public input end of the spectrum described earlier. The public’s comments and
concerns are treated as another type of data to be analyzed by the managers making the decisions.

Even today, the typical Forest Service decisionmaking process remains "highly systematic, rational and scientific" (Wondolleck, 1988, p. 37). The purpose of public involvement in this process is primarily information gathering and public education. The agency develops, defines and analyzes projects as well as their alternatives internally, then invites the public to review and comment on them (Wondolleck, 1988; US Congress, 1992; Gericke et al, 1992). During "scoping," the Forest Service solicits public comment on issues to be addressed in the environmental analysis. Then the agency prepares a draft analysis describing a range of alternatives including its preferred one. This is released to the public for a mandatory comment period. During public meetings, comments are limited to the prescribed alternatives and directed at the agency. Comments are reviewed, a final environmental analysis prepared, and a record of decision issued (Wondolleck, 1988). At this point, the Forest Service gives parties disagreeing with the final decision an opportunity to appeal a decision to a higher ranking official within the agency's hierarchy. Once this internal appeals process is exhausted, disputants may take the issues to the courts seeking judicial review (Wondolleck, 1988).

This standard procedure is repeatedly criticized for failing to involve the public in meaningful ways. The rising number of administrative appeals and lawsuits is, for many, indicative of the failure to let the public play a meaningful role in decision making (Wondolleck, 1988; US Congress, 1992; Gericke and Sullivan, 1994). Critics both from within the Forest Service and from outside the agency suggest that the agency's model of public participation is fundamentally wrong. They argue that standard public participation procedures contribute, if not create, the current gridlock over National Forest management decisions. The weaknesses of the current process are explored next.
Critiques of Forest Service public participation

A primary criticism of the public participation process as it has evolved from the NEPA and the NFMA is that groups concerned with National Forest management are forced into polarized relationships, advocating the rightness of their respective positions before a neutral agency official (Wondolleck, 1988; Kemmis, 1990; Shands, 1992; US Congress, 1992; Bates, 1993; McLain, 1995). As a result, there is no dialogue between the various interest groups or between the public and the agency. Dan Kemmis, the former mayor of Missoula, Montana, sums it up this way:

... the duty to hear does not extend beyond the decision maker: those who testify are not encumbered by any such responsibility. Their role, in our system, is to make the strongest possible case for their particular interests. The decision maker will then sort out, balance, or broker those interests and dispose of the case accordingly (Kemmis, 1990: p. 53).

Public meetings become a forum for airing concerns about a predetermined project rather than actually making a decision (US Congress, 1992). Interest groups organized around a single shared perspective compete against each other to gain influence over agency decisions (Wondolleck, 1988; McLain, 1996). In theory, the agency will balance all of these interests, attempting to please everybody with better management (Hirt, 1994). Advocates for specific interests argue their case before a supposedly neutral agency official who makes the final decision.

This fundamental dynamic and the absence of dialogue are rooted in two flawed assumptions about public participation. First, the public’s positions and preferences are assumed to be static (Bates, 1993; Reich, 1985 as cited in McLain, 1995). This allows little opportunity for learning or for the development of opinions as a result of participation in the process (US Congress, 1992; Cortner and Shannon, 1993). Second, the agency is not a neutral decision maker, objectively balancing competing needs. In fact, Forest Service critics often describe quite the opposite; they see an agency protecting its administrative discretion and its budget as well as an agency “captured” by certain interest groups at the exclusion of others (Wondolleck, 1988; Hirt, 1994).
The Forest Service public participation process has also been criticized for its strict procedural emphasis. Cortner and Shannon (1993) observe that “Participation has been narrowed into a set of techniques designed to secure administrative compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements” (Cortner and Shannon, 1993: p. 14). The Forest Service decisionmaking process, in order to follow mandates for public involvement, has been designed to treat public input as another type of data to be gathered and analyzed (Wondolleck, 1988; US Congress, 1992; Cortner and Shannon, 1993). For the agency, the legitimacy of a decision is linked to how well public participation procedures were followed (Gericke and Sullivan, 1994). For interest groups, the process has become the means by which they establish the legal standing necessary to eventually file suit (Robinson, 1988).

Finally, despite attempts to involve the public, federal lands decision making largely remains a centralized, expert-driven process. The very notion of public participation in decisions of forest management represents a fundamental challenge to the paradigm of expert-based decisionmaking. Agency professionals continue to define problems out of public view and final plans consider, but do not necessarily “accommodate,” concerns expressed during the participation process (Wondolleck, 1988). The administrative appeals process, as well as attempts to use ADR techniques to settle these disputes, are largely the domain of lawyers and scientists representing special interest groups. The Forest Service continues to be criticized for approaching the public participation process as an opportunity to “inform and educate” the public about its activities (US Congress, 1992; Cortner and Shannon, 1993). Thus, participants have little evidence that they have affected the outcome of the decision making process. Some critics argue that the lack of real power sharing in the decisionmaking process is in part due to the agency’s need to maintain its discretion (Wondolleck, 1988; US Congress, 1992).

What all of these critiques add up to is clear: the current process does not create public participation in decisionmaking but rather public review of decisions already made by the USFS land managers. It has evolved into an adversarial relationship in which distrustful citizens monitor bureaucracies they
believe are making the wrong decisions. Participatory democracy has been suggested as a means to alter this relationship and involve the public in a more meaningful and powerful way. According to Wellman and Tipple (1990) “... management of the national forests offers an excellent opportunity for nurturing democracy ...” (p. 82).

The various theories of participatory democracy share three fundamental components. First, power is shared between citizens and government throughout the decisionmaking process. Citizens are actively engaged in the definition of the problem as well as the design of alternatives and the implementation of a decision. They share authority and responsibility with government officials who are no longer assumed to be neutral (Knopp and Caldbeck, 1990; Wellman and Tipple, 1990; Fiorino 1990; Kemmis, 1990; McLain, 1995). The process of participatory democracy entails the creation of a common vision as well as shared set of values and interests through an on-going process of dialogue (Fiorino, 1990; Wellman and Tipple, 1990; McLain, 1995). Kemmis (1990) calls this “a politics of engagement” which depends...

Rather than an adversarial focus on the differences between groups, the emphasis is on understanding common interests and change in opinions or values is allowed to occur as part of the process (Kemmis, 1990; McLain, 1995).

Participatory democracy is based on inclusiveness; all parties interested in a problem or affected by the outcome must be involved in the decision making process (Wellman and Tipple, 1990; Knopp and Caldbeck, 1990). Continued participation by a broad spectrum of citizens is essential to the success of participatory democracy (McLain, 1995). The underlying assumption is that an equal ability to participate exists across this spectrum of people (McLain, 1995). Factors affecting the ability to participate effectively include: time, financial resources, as well as the ability and willingness to articulately speak in public (McLain, 1995).
Fiorino (1990) gives four criteria for evaluating participation processes based on the ideal of participatory democracy. These include: the “direct participation of amateurs in decisions;” a shared authority with government officials; “a structure for face-to-face discussion over some period of time;” and a basis of equality between citizens, experts and officials (Fiorino, 1990: p. 229-230). If these criteria are met “Participation engenders civic competence by building democratic skills, overcoming feelings of powerlessness and alienation, and contributing to the legitimacy of the political system” (Fiorino, 1990: p. 229). In addition to these process outcomes, participation theorists also argue that more democratic forms of participation will produce substantively better decisions because citizens provide a social and political context that experts lack (Fiorino, 1990; Cortner and Shannon, 1993).

The principals of participatory democracy are strikingly similar to those of collaborative decision making theory. In fact, for proponents of participatory democracy, a collaborative process is the mechanism of forging a shared vision of the common good (Kemmis, 1990; McLain, 1995). The role of a federal agency like the Forest Service is fundamentally altered to participant (Kemmis, 1990; Wellman and Tipple, 1990) and “decision builder rather than decision maker” (US Congress, 1992). Thus, the collaborative groups emerging to address public land management issues can be seen as experiments in participatory democracy.

But what is it that engages citizens in this democratic process? According to Kemmis (1990) “... what holds people together long enough to discover their power as citizens is their common inhabiting of a single place” (p. 117). For the former chief of the Forest Service, Jack Ward Thomas, it is “... networks or responsibility called communities of interests” (Thomas, 1995). Here, the concept of community, as the unifier of a diverse group of people, enters the discussion of collaboration in Forest Service decision making. The next section develops our understanding of the various uses of the term “community” in collaborative forms of public participation.
Defining Community

The feeling of community is such a fundamental part of human experience that it seems needlessly academic to quarrel over definitions. Intuitively, community is easy to understand; we know when we have it and when we don’t. It is, at its essence, a feeling of belonging. However, the question remains: belong to what? The ways in which we define our communities determine who is in and who is out. It is a process of inclusion and exclusion, of describing social boundaries (Lee, 1989). How we describe our community affects the way we define and solve problems because it influences how we are affected by these problems (Machlis and Force, 1990; Carroll and Daniels, 1995). As the quotations from Dan Kemmis and Jack Ward Thomas illustrate, two ways of conceptualizing community frame collaboration over Forest Service land management: the community of place and of interest. These theoretical perspectives overlap and interlock to create the complex reality of any specific collaborative.

Sociologist Amitai Etzioni offers a fundamental definition of community that serves as a starting point for understanding the concepts of community most relevant to collaboratives. He writes that:

A community is to (sic) a group of people who share affective bonds and a culture. It is defined by two characteristics: Communities require a web of affect-laden relations among a group of individuals ... relations that often crisscross and reinforce one another. And being a community entails having a measure of commitment to a set of shared values, norms, and meanings (Etzioni, 1995: p. 14).

But what brings people together in this way? What fosters the development of affection and relationship? Communities of place or of interest offer two perspectives on the creation of these relationships called community.

First, a community can be described in terms of a specific location. In this definition, a geographic boundary encompasses the human community. The physical place contributes to and fosters a shared identity, culture and social system. Thus, human interaction and relationship combine with shared physical space to create a sense of community. (Lee, 1989; Bates, 1993; Kusel, 1996).

Jonathan Kusel refers to this as “a locality-based shared identity” (Kusel, 1996: p.
A community of place is specific and local, tied to a particular geographic area. This geographic area can be thought of as the container that holds the human inhabitants. It fosters the interactions and relationships that constitute Etzioni’s community.

A community of place is connected to the physical setting that encompasses it by bonds similar to those Etzioni describes between people. Sarah Bates notes that in the boundaries of a geographically defined community "... most residents identify to some extent with their surroundings.... (Bates, 1993: p. 83). In fact, the term “place” connotes these bonds of affection. As Mark Sagoff writes:

A natural landscape becomes a place ... when it is cultivated, when it constrains human activity and is constrained by it, when it functions as a center of felt value because human needs, cultural and social as well as biological are satisfied in it (Sagoff, 1996: p. 253).

Thus, interactions and relationships between people as well as between people and their surrounding landscape are encompassed in the term “community of place.” The centrality of this definition of community to collaboratives will be explored later.

Geography, however, only partly describes the associations that many would experience as community. “Communities of interest” or “affiliation” are another way of understanding what unites individuals into a community. These communities are not rooted in geographic proximity but instead are fostered through a shared identity derived from a common interest (Lee, 1990; Bates, 1993; Carroll, 1995). They are primarily social associations rooted in occupation, religion, or political beliefs. For example, loggers’ sense of community is based in their shared work and the values and lifestyle that derive from that work (Carroll and Lee, 1990; Carroll, 1995). Organized environmental groups can also be considered communities of interest (Brown, 1995). These communities are analogous to political special interest groups such as those described in the public participation section.

Communities of affiliation extend beyond a person’s actual residence, and thus, contribute to the diversity of geographically defined communities. As
Kusel notes, "Individuals may hold multiple 'community' identities as a result of associations at their place of work and through other organizations and institutions that are outside of their community of residence" (Kusel, 1996: p. 367). To favor one definition of community over another is to overly simplify the notion itself. Communities of interest overlap with those of place or as Machlis and Force describe it: they are "... nested within communities of place" (p. 266). These varied allegiances to layers of community create the complex views people hold regarding issues like National Forest management.

Carl Moore, from Western Network, a nonprofit dispute resolution center, writes that:

Conflict is essential in creating and recreating community.... Community is forged out of a struggle by people to determine how they can live together. One of the critical requirements of any community is to invent the processes of interaction that allow people to live together. ... Community exists when people who are interdependent struggle with the traditions that bind them and the interests that separate them so that they can realize a future that is an improvement on the past (Moore, 1996: p. 30)

The idea that community is built implies a process rather than a static entity. The view that conflict, in its nonviolent sense, is inherent also challenges our idealized image of a community as harmonious. The motivations stemming from identification with the two types of community may be quite different. As Robert Lee has noted "members of particularistic communities seek to maintain a quality of life rooted in enduring social relationships and attachments to particular places (Lee, 1989; p. 41). In contrast, communities of affiliation, rooted in a shared interest, may be more inclined to promote that interest single-mindedly. The interplay between communities of place and of interest produces this conflict and collaboratives, in theory, seek to capitalize on it, turning the conflict toward creative problem solving. Collaboratives operate at the nexus of these two concepts seeking members of various communities of interest who are concerned with a specific place. By uniting diverse interest groups around a shared place, a collaborative group can perform an important community-building function.
This discussion of community is not merely abstract. Concepts of community have both explicit and implicit policy implications for National Forest management in specific management decisions as well as in the process of public participation. Beginning with the policy objective of "community stability," the US Forest Service has been concerned with the rural communities surrounded by federal lands. As it was traditionally conceived, community stability meant the economic stabilization of forest communities through a steady, controlled supply of timber to local mills (Clary, 1986; Schallau, 1990; Power, 1996). This, theoretically, would stem the cycle of boom and bust so common in rural areas dependent on timber jobs and enable settled communities to replace transient logging camps (Clary, 1986; Schallau, 1990; Power, 1996). Although vaguely defined, community meant, for the Forest Service, specific geographic locations near to National Forest lands. Most often the county was their unit of analysis in measuring the sought after stability since census data is only available at this level (Machlis and Force, 1990).

Defined in this way, community stability has been soundly criticized for assuming a simplistic linkage between the economic prosperity of the timber industry and healthy functioning rural communities (Robbins, 1987; Fortmann, et al, 1989; Machlis & Force, 1990; Power, 1996). As early as 1946, a study on community stability in Montana's Lincoln county concluded that merely assuring a steady timber supply to a local mill would not lead to stable communities (Kaufman & Kaufman, 1946). Despite the critique, community stability became, for the Forest Service, a justification to promote increasing amounts of timber harvested on its lands and sold to private mills. (Fortmann, et al. 1989; Power, 1996). As a result, this conceptualization of community has long influenced the relationship between rural communities and the agency. Community stability produced a simplistic, narrowly economic, understanding of how communities define and sustain themselves. Labels like "timber dependent" overlooked the myriad ways National Forests support the nearby communities economically as well as non-economic (Machlis and Force, 1990; Kusel, 1996).

However, this is changing. Those concerned with rural communities are developing more complex ways of understanding the relationship between rural,
forest communities and National Forest management policy. As sociologist Robert Lee notes:

> Close identification with a geographic locale, coupled with interpersonal knowledge and a commitment to a particular local way of life cause people to seek other sources of income and employment to sustain their residential community. ... stability of a local way of life can be measured by continuity in the strength of interpersonal ties and commitment to local cultural patterns. The strength of shared social values can make perpetuation of the community more important than economic prosperity... (Lee, 1989: p. 41-42).

Thus, concern for community has evolved from a focus on “stability” to a focus on “well-being.” Well-being broadly defines what makes rural communities functioning, livable places. Kusel (1996) in his methodology for assessing community well-being identifies “community capacity” as one component of evaluating well-being. This refers to

> ... the collective ability of residents in a community to respond... to external and internal stresses; to create and take advantage of opportunities; and to meet the needs of residents, diversely defined. It also refers to the ability of a community to adapt to and respond to a variety of different circumstances (Kusel, 1996: p. 369).

Kusel goes on to say that community capacity depends, in part, on social capital which he defines as “the ability and willingness of residents to work together for community goals” (Kusel, 1996: p. 369). If, as Kusel suggests, community well-being is in part a function of the relationships and interaction between residents of a specific place, then one potential criteria for assessing the outcomes of collaboratives is their contribution to community well-being.

While the policy of community stability hinged on a geographic understanding of resident community, communities of interest have been equally pivotal in public participation policy. Special interest groups are analogous to communities of interest, organized around a shared occupation or issue of concern. Most recently, the language “community of interest” is being used by the Forest Service in reference to collaborative problem solving. Jack Ward Thomas defined a community of interest as:

> a group of concerned individuals who are leaders and
advocates for the things they believe in. Some members have formal authority to act on behalf of groups or institutions to which they belong, but most are without authority or title of any kind. Membership is open to all who express an interest in the goals of the group. A community is large, diverse, and inclusive.

The shift in terminology from special interest group to community of interest coincides with the shift toward cooperation rather than competition in public participation. It introduces the language of community, with all of its positive connotations, into a public participation process dominated by cynicism and polarization.

The interaction between community of place and community of interest in collaborative forms of public participation emerges more clearly in the brief review of some well known case studies that follows. These examples of other collaborative groups also describe more concretely the three ways of understanding the outcomes: community well being, participatory democracy and integrating the protection of ecological integrity with rural economic diversification.

**Contemporary Collaborative Groups: Towards a comparative perspective**

The Swan Valley Citizens’ ad hoc Committee is by no means alone in its attempts to use a collaborative process to participate in US Forest Service land management decisions. Today, collaborative groups are forming all over the country to address a variety of public lands issues including grazing and forestry. In Nevada, New Mexico and Oregon ranchers, environmentalists, and land managers are joining together to restore range land and riparian habitat. In Oregon and California, forestry issues are the focus. In these collaborative efforts, a specific place unites communities of interest in the practical application of the theory of collaborative problem solving to public land management. Some emerging case studies of efforts similar to the Ad hoc committee are briefly sketched here along with the central themes that link them. Their commonalities concretely illustrate ways in which to assess the success of the Ad hoc committee.
All of the most well known collaborative groups currently tackling natural resource issues united around a particular place. For example, the Trout Creek Mountain Working Group in Southeastern Oregon brought ranchers, environmentalists and land managers together to develop a management plan to restore a public land grazing allotment suffering from degraded riparian habitat and declining native trout populations (Hatfield, 1993). Similar efforts to restore and protect overgrazed range land while also fostering economically viable ranching operations are underway in the Toiyabe mountain region of Nevada (Dagget, 1997) and in the borderlands region of southern Arizona, New Mexico and northern Mexico (Bernhard and Young, 1997). Forest ecosystems offer similar placed-based attempts at collaboratives. The Applegate Partnership in southern Oregon formed to develop a management plan for the Applegate watershed based on ecological and community assessments and resulting in the sustainable production of forest products. At the start of their work together, members introduced themselves not as representatives of particular organizations or interests but with their reasons the watershed was important to them as individuals (KenCairn, 1996). The Quincy Library Group met in this northeastern California town’s public library to develop a management plan for National Forest lands surrounding the town that would sustain both the forest and the community. The plan, forged by local loggers, environmentalists and county government officials, called for “no more logging in old growth, no more roads in roadless areas, and selective cutting on the surrounding national forests to restore forest health and protect people from cataclysmic fires” (Christensen, 1996: p. 16; Bernard and Young, 1997).

In each of these cases, concern about a local place united members of diverse communities of interest that had previously been adversaries. Place then becomes, literally and figuratively, the common ground on which these groups build. The collaborative group itself builds into a community of place as each participant’s commitment to the specific landscape becomes the seed for shared values and identity. Relationships are built as the group works together. Each of these collaborative efforts also began with a few key individuals who were able to motivate others to try a different approach to natural resource
issues (Bernhard and Young, 1997). The role and influence of specific individuals cannot be underestimated in the collaborative process because its success or failure hinges on how well those who participate get along.

The tension inherent in the overlap between communities of interest, which are non-local, and a community of place, which is inherently local, can be both creative and troublesome to collaborative efforts. KenCairn (1996), in his work on the Applegate Partnership, concludes that "... the propensity for being pushed into the role of ... attempting to 'represent' the interests of many major interests in a struggle" is one of the major challenges of collaborative efforts (p. 274). He argues that place-based collaborative groups are most powerful as "essentially informal community problem-solving processes" that "create space at the table of decision making and power for local people" (KenCairn, 1996: p. 274). The story of the Swan Valley's collaborative group will further illustrate this point as well as the collaborative's function in community building.

Whether addressing grazing or forestry, another characteristic shared among the collaboratives listed above is the evolving relationship between the collaborative group and the federal land management agencies responsible for nearby public lands. In each of these efforts, local citizens initiated a collaborative planning process; they took the lead in addressing a problem rather than responding to a proposed agency action. Bureau of Land Management officials were substantially involved in the Trout Creek Mountain Working Group, but "as people with concerns and cares, not just as B.L.M. employees..." (Hatfield, 1993: p. 20). According to the group's literature, agency representatives in this case had no more influence over the recommendations made then any of the other participants. Field trips for the Applegate Partnership brought all participants into the woods with foresters, environmentalists and industry representatives marking which trees should be cut (KenCairn, 1996). For the Quincy Library Group, the Forest Service is seen as a stubborn roadblock as the agency responds to national mandates, offering timber sales in areas the group would like to leave untouched by logging (Christensen, 1996). In this case, the agency finds itself constrained by federal laws and its own bureaucratic
procedures leaving it unable to respond to a local effort (Bernard and Young, 1997).

Rural communities in the West, surrounded by federally owned public lands, are often buffeted by forces over which local residents perceive little control. Don Snow, director of the Northern Lights Institute, writes...

...the West owns the longest, deepest history of political centrality in the U.S. The region’s destiny has always been tied tightly to decisions made in the boardrooms of New York, Minneapolis, and Chicago, but the strongest tie has always been to Washington (Snow, 1995: p. 10).

As Bernard and Young (1997) trace the history of the American conservation movement, they conclude that it has been “assumed without question that centralized resource management was the only way to get the job done” (p. 31). They call these collaboratives “place-based initiatives” and believe they represent a shift away from the old land management paradigm in which “the government is expected to do everything” (Bernard and Young, 1997: p. 39).

Collaborative groups operate under their own authority. Their participants no longer wait for governmental agencies to propose the project or to craft the plans before involving themselves; instead, they do the planning and offer their proposals to the agency. As the story of the Applegate Partnership goes, when a Forest Service official asked who gave them the authority to come up with their watershed management plan, they responded “I guess we did!” (KenCairn, 1996: p. 266).

Finally, these collaboratives all express concern with the ecological health and sustainability of the places that unite them. While “sustainability” and “ecosystem health” remain vaguely defined and variously interpreted by the individuals involved, this is, nevertheless, the language collaborative groups use to describe their goals. All of these efforts pursue a vision to integrate ecology and economics in ways that “... create synérghies: ways that economic activity can promote a healthy environment, and that healthy ecosystems can enrich their inhabitants, economically and otherwise” (Johnson, 1993: p.1). For example, the Malpai Borderlands project explicitly seeks “to restore and maintain the natural processes that create and protect a healthy, unfragmented landscape .... by working to encourage profitable ranching and
other traditional livelihoods ....” (as quoted in Bernhard and Young, 1997: 121). The Quincy Library Group plan is “driven by the need for forest restoration” and involves selective timber harvest in areas not identified as roadless, sensitive habitat, or riparian areas. It also includes the recommendation that harvested trees go only to local mills (Bernhard and Young, 1997: 160).

Whether collaborative groups can succeed at instituting these lofty, long range, and “win-win” environmental goals remains to be seen. It is important to view these efforts as ongoing processes and first steps toward implementing a vision of sustainable, functioning ecosystems and rural communities. As Bernard and Young note in the conclusion of their collection of case studies, “We didn’t find Eden. We found communities with myriad challenges and enormous, complex problems. None of them could be described as sustainable” (Bernard and Young, 1997: 182). Goals such as sustainability and healthy ecosystems are so long term they are largely unmeasurable at this point in time. Such a perspective is important when trying to assess these efforts in terms of ecological outcomes.

There have, however, been small scale ecological improvements as the result of some collaborative efforts. The Trout Creek Mountain Working Group has seen young willow, aspen and grass return to badly eroding stream banks as a result of its grazing plan that included three years of complete rest from grazing (Hatfield, 1993). Prior to the formation of the Quincy Library Group, residents of Plumas county had already experienced some small successes with collaboration on stream restoration projects that saw trout populations increase and stream bank erosion decrease (Bernard and Young, 1997). Similarly, the Applegate Partnership has seen some smaller scale successes with riparian habitat restoration efforts (KenCairn, 1996). While these ecological improvements were not directly tied to economic goals or the commercial harvest of wood products, they contribute to fostering continued commitment to the collaborative process (KenCairn, 1996; Bernhard and Young, 1997). These efforts at environmental restoration are a fundamental part of community based collaboration and can foster further connection to the local landscape (Bernhard and Young, 1997).
Summary

Three ways of understanding the outcomes of collaborative groups emerge from the literature on collaborative theory, public participation and community. First, a collaborative process represents a mechanism through which to build a community of place from its diverse community of interests. The emphasis on building relationships among those united by their shared interest in a common place contributes to a community’s well-being. A second, related, way of understanding collaboratives is as participatory democracy that builds a sense of self-governance in rural communities and shifts federal agencies away from a centralized, top-down, expert-driven decision making process. Finally, collaboratives can be understood in terms of their ecological outcomes. Here they operate at two levels - long range ecological and economic sustainability and more immediate, small scale efforts at restoration. The visions of ecosystem health and sustainability presented by these collaborative groups, all link ecological goals with social and economic goals. Social and ecological outcomes are given equal importance as goals for these efforts. Thus, community building and well-being, participatory democracy and ecological integrity should all be included in any assessment of the outcomes of collaborative effort. The Swan Valley story illustrates these outcomes in concrete terms and contributes to our understanding of the real power of collaboratives by describing where this group has succeeded and where it has found challenges.
Chapter III:
The Swan Valley: the landscape and its people

Place and community are the rallying points for those involved in the Swan Citizens’ ad hoc Committee; they are the common ground on which the committee’s work rests. Thus, any understanding of this collaborative must begin with an understanding of the land and people that most influence it. The next two chapters will situate this study firmly within the Upper Swan Valley by describing its physical environment and human community and how they came to co-exist today.

The physical landscape

Nestled between the Mission Mountains to the West and the Swan Range to the East, this long, narrow valley in Northwestern Montana is a small corridor of development through rugged and relatively pristine country. The glacially carved valley measures 15 miles wide and 70 miles long separated from the Clearwater valley to the south by a small, almost imperceptible divide (Seeley/Swan Action Team, 1993). Montana state highway 83 runs the length of the valley. However, the landscape, rather than the human presence, first catches the eye of any northbound traveler. The Swan River meanders through a forested valley bottom, snaking its way around the Missions to join Flathead Lake and the larger Columbia River watershed. Snow lingers late into summer on the slopes rising to the steep, rocky summits of the mountains that define the valley’s borders. High alpine lakes tucked against these mountains gather the melting snows and form the headwaters of this river system (Figures A and B).

A moist climate has endowed the valley with diverse forests. The thick coniferous forests are a mix of species including Douglas fir, Englemann Spruce, Lodgepole pine, Western Red cedar, and Grand Fir. In the fall, splashes of yellow on the hillsides reveal stands of Western Larch. Some large diameter Ponderosa pine still preside along the highway. In a few places, the forest
Figure A: Western Montana and the Swan Valley Study Area
Figure B: The Swan Valley study area within the Flathead National Forest.
Source: Flathead National Forest Forest Visitors Map.
opens onto natural grasslands with dramatic views of the mountains. Cottonwood and willow mark the riparian areas that, along with the forests, provide habitat for a diversity of species. Grizzly bears use the valley bottom to travel between the Missions and the Swan Front. Black bear, mountain lions, elk, moose, mule deer and coyote all call the Swan Valley home. White-tailed deer are abundant, browsing roadsides and meadows throughout the valley (Seeley/Swan Action Team, 1993). The river system provides habitat for cold water species of fish, most notably the bull trout which is an indicator of healthy aquatic ecosystems. The Swan river basin is home to one of the last native bull trout populations that does not compete with introduced lake trout (Frissell, et al. 1995).

Because the Swan valley remains relatively undeveloped compared to other valleys in the northern Rockies region, the integrity of its aquatic, and even its forest, communities remains high. Sixteen tributary basins of the Swan river, identified in a recent assessment of the valley’s aquatic ecosystem, retain high biological diversity and are considered high priorities for protection by the study’s authors (Frissell, et al. 1995). The valley “contains the highest concentration of rare plant populations known anywhere on the Flathead National Forest” including the locally endemic plant water howellia (USDA Forest Service, 1994). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service identified four “linkage zones” connecting the Mission mountain Wilderness with the Bob Marshall Wilderness. These linkages are areas of low human use levels that retain favorable habitat and security for grizzly bears and other wildlife traveling across the valley floor (Pelletier, et al., no date). The Swan valley maintains a relatively unfragmented landscape and therefore, a fairly high level of ecological integrity. Thus, the valley is the focus of a variety of research and conservation efforts.

The political boundaries that overlay the valley’s physical landscape make land management in the Swan Valley an incredibly complex task. The rugged mountains are the easily identified markers of two federally designated Wilderness areas - the Mission Mountain and Bob Marshall Wilderness Areas. Thus, to both the east and the west, once you leave the valley bottom and its foothills, the landscape of the Swan is protected from development such as
roads and timber harvest (Figure B). Both wilderness areas in the Swan fall under the management jurisdiction of the Swan Lake Ranger District on the Flathead National Forest.

Between the Wilderness areas, however, land management is a more complicated matter. A distinct checkerboard pattern divides the landscape among four different parties (Figure B): Plum Creek Timber Company, the Flathead National Forest, noncorporate private land owners and the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation own, or hold management authority, over alternating sections of valley land (Seeley/Swan Action Team, 1993). Plum Creek Timber company owns approximately 18% of the land base in the Swan Valley, the legacy of the 1864 land grant to Northern Pacific Railroad (Swan Valley, 1996).¹ The Flathead National Forest manages 73% of the land in the Swan Valley not all of which is designated Wilderness (Swan Valley, 1996). Non-wilderness Forest Service land in the valley is legally managed for multiple use including recreation and timber harvest.

Non-corporate private land owners account for about 18,500 acres in the valley bottom or less than 10% of the valley’s land base (Swan Valley, 1996). These small tracts of land were among the original homesteads in the valley; some have since been subdivided (Seeley/Swan Action Team, 1993). The people living in the Swan make their homes on these parcels, building log homes tucked back in the woods at the end of rutted logging roads. These land owners have also periodically harvested their lands for timber. Montana’s Department of Natural Resources and Conservation is the remaining large land holder in the Upper Swan valley, with management authority over several sections of land at the northern end of the valley.

Two small, unincorporated communities - Salmon Prairie and Condon - are the physical centers of the human community dispersed throughout the Upper

¹ In 1864, Congress created Northern Pacific Railroad Company and granted it 40 million acres of the public domain in order to build and maintain a railroad from the Great Lakes to the Pacific Ocean. The land grant was made in alternating square mile sections. Northern Pacific Railroad became Burlington Northern which in turn created Plum Creek Timber Company as a limited partnership, controlling the remaining railroad grant lands. In 1993, Plum Creek acquired what had been Northern Pacific grant lands from.
Swan valley. Two different county governments - Missoula County to the south and Lake County to the north - have jurisdiction in the Swan Valley. The county governments serving the valley are located in Missoula, which is about 70 miles south and west; and Poison which is west of the Swan, on the other side of the Mission mountains. Given how census data is collected, the county is most often the unit of analysis (Machlis and Force, 1990; Kusel, 1996). However, these political boundaries often do not coincide with local definitions of community. As Kusel (1996) notes in his study of Sierra Nevada communities: “People do not generally identify with their counties, and, indeed, numerous (natural-resource-dependent-communities) are alienated from their parent county. Relationships and life take place in communities, not counties” (p. 366). The Swan Valley is no different in this regard.

Ignoring the various political boundaries drawn across the valley, the Ad hoc committee defines its community as those people living between the divide with the Clearwater river in the south and Goat Creek to the north. In terms of land ownership and management responsibility, this geographically defined community encompasses: parts of both counties, Flathead National Forest land, Plum Creek land and a small amount of Montana DNRC lands. This geographic place, the Upper Swan Valley, is also home to approximately 550 seasonal and permanent residents (Swan Valley, 1996). Here, the overlap between a “community of place,” defined by geography, and “communities of interest,” defined by shared lifestyle, values and interests, becomes tangible reality. The Upper Swan Valley is the focal point that draws the diverse residents of the valley together with the many outside interests that influence land management in the Swan Valley. Representatives of the Flathead National Forest, Plum Creek Timber Company, the DNRC, and the county governments attend Ad hoc committee meetings because these agencies and organizations are the decisionmakers regarding a large percentage of the land base in the valley.

However, it is a group of valley residents who are driving this community-based collaborative effort. They are seeking influence in the policies and

Champion International bringing its total land base to 2.1 million acres, approximately 1.5 million acres of which are in Montana (Jensen and Draffan, 1995).
decisions of the valley’s large, absent stakeholders because they greatly affect valley residents’ lives and landscape. Thus, the geographically defined community (Bates, 1993) which the Ad hoc committee strives to serve is the focus of the next section.

The Community of the Upper Swan Valley

“We’re all looking for the same things - to get away from it all, from cities, high crime, back to nature.” a retired Swan Valley resident.

“When we first moved up here, it was like moving home.” a recent Swan Valley resident.

The Swan is a “forest-dependent community” as the term is broadly defined in Kusel (1996). He writes that:

As a landscape, sacred place, or resource, the forest supports local residents and contributes to the definition they have of themselves.... The lifeways of community members and the landscape are intertwined. Thus, when discussing dependence, one must recognize that the forest provides not only the means of production, diversely defined, but sustenance to the local living tradition, economically, socially, and spiritually (Kusel, 1996: p. 368).

The land that encompasses the people of the Swan shapes their livelihoods, lifestyles and values directly and indirectly. The diverse perspectives that develop and exist within this shared landscape are essential to understanding the Ad hoc committee’s collaborative effort.

The Swan Valley is home to approximately 550 people (Swan Valley, 1996). About one-fifth (+ 110) of these people are seasonal residents, visiting the valley primarily during the summer or for winter weekend retreats (Lambrechte and Jackson, 1993). Permanent residents earn their livelihoods in a variety of ways, often involving some form of use of the valley’s forest lands. As will be seen, the material livelihood in the Swan provides one means of describing this geographically defined, forest dependent community.

“When I first moved here I did anything that was available to make a living - that was legal and moral - that’s the way it is here in the Swan Valley,” declares Mary Phillips with a laugh. All kidding aside, she has succinctly captured the essence of livelihood in the Swan Valley. It is a hard place to make
ends meet, and the fundamental ethic is: "whatever it takes" to be able to remain in the valley. Men and women alike string together a number of seasonal or part-time jobs to make a living. A 1993 community profile study conducted by Mark Lambrecht and David Jackson, and commissioned by the Ad hoc committee, revealed that 25% of permanent residents hold more than one job (Lambrecht & Jackson, 1993). Thirty-four percent of the residents interviewed for this study have several different jobs during a year.

There are no single, large scale employers in the Swan; earning a living requires independent initiative and a certain amount of entreprenaurship. As a result, many valley residents are self-employed. Lambrecht and Jackson found that half of the valley’s employed permanent residents were self-employed (Lambrecht & Jackson, 1993). Of the working residents interviewed for this study, 66% were self-employed. Being self-employed no doubt contributes to residents’ ability to work many different types of jobs to earn a living.

The types of jobs available to Swan residents as their primary occupations are often forest resource based, including both timber and recreation (Kusel, 1996). According to Lambrecht and Jackson (1993), 16% of all valley residents worked in timber related jobs as loggers, sawmill workers, log home builders, log truck drivers, Forest Service employees and foresters. Ten percent of all valley residents worked in the recreation and tourism industry (Lambrecht & Jackson, 1993). For this study, I tried to speak with individuals from across the valley’s spectrum of occupations. The primary livelihoods of those interviewed for this study are listed in table 1.

While the primary livelihoods of those interviewed for this study are described in Table 1, this simple categorization does not convey the complexity of this issue for Swan residents. Recreation related jobs and timber jobs are not mutually exclusive: The same person may harvest timber and guide hunters into the Bob Marshall Wilderness seasonally to earn their yearly income. Nor does retirement in the Swan Valley mean that the person no longer works. Based on the community-wide survey, thirty percent of the valley’s total population is retired which represents the largest, and fastest growing, segment of the community (Lambrecht & Jackson, 1993). However, of the 18 retired residents
Table 1: Primary Livelihoods of study participants (N = 47)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Livelihood</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage(^c) (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logging/ Wood products industry</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small business(^a)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other(^b)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) Includes tourism related business such as guiding services, guest ranches and tourism promotion.

\(^b\) Includes artists, nonprofits, and out of valley employment

\(^c\) Percentages rounded to the nearest whole point.

Interviewed for this study, five continue to earn income through labor and business ventures although this fact is not reflected in Table 1. For example, Bud Moore, a core member of the Ad hoc committee still logs and runs a small sawmill though he is retired from the US Forest Service. Other valley retirees are now small business owners or artists after leaving lifelong occupations as teachers, government employees or business people. Income earned from these new business ventures is supplemental to retirement income though in some cases still essential to support living in the valley.

What is essential from this portrait of Swan residents' livelihood is that residents depend on both the extraction and protection of the valley's natural resources. However, most residents also depend on the valley's forests in other ways besides strict economic livelihood. Residents supplement their income through hunting, fishing, and gathering fuel wood on the valley's forest lands. In the Lambrecht and Jackson study, 68% and 55% of valley residents said they were experienced anglers and hunters respectively (Lambrecht & Jackson, 1993). Gathering wood for winter heat is an annual ritual. The vast majority of homes I visited were heated by wood stoves. According to residents I spoke with, fire wood, taken from both Forest Service and Plum Creek land, is often for a household's own use, but residents also collect it to sell or trade with their
neighbors. Participation in this "land-based informal economy" (Brown, 1995) has enabled people to live in the Swan and contributes to the "dependence" of the community on its forests.

Historically, the Swan has been a difficult place to make a living. Recent declines in the wood products industry have exacerbated this difficulty. The increasing mechanization of the industry along with reductions in timber harvests on both public and private lands have led to declining employment in the wood products industry across the region (Flowers et al., 1993; Power 1996). The Swan could not escape this trend. In 1980, an estimated 27% of the valley’s permanent residents held jobs in the timber resources category, but by 1993 only 16% held these types of jobs (Lambrecht & Jackson, 1993). However, despite the difficult economy of the Swan valley, it attracts and holds its residents. Their reasons for living here also help describe the nature of this community by revealing what it is they value most.

For the Swan residents that I spoke with, no matter where they are positioned on the political spectrum, the valley’s rural character, proximity to wilderness, lack of development, remoteness, solitude and beauty are listed consistently among the reasons they live in the Swan. Though my sample is not representative of the community as a whole, 94% of the residents I interviewed settled in the valley for at least one of these reasons. One man summed it up for many when he described his attraction to the Swan: "I was looking for more rural, more undeveloped. ... This area appealed - big forests, undeveloped wild country on both sides, Wilderness areas, the Bob Marshall, horse country." Old-timers and recent arrivals alike told me that they value the Swan’s landscape for the quality of life it provides. One woman, who grew up in the valley, says "I like the quiet, the calm.... I don’t like to look out of my window and see that I can touch another." The valley’s lack of crime and traffic as well as its being a safe place to raise kids are aspects of the quality of life so important to the residents I spoke with.

The lifestyle that derives from working in the woods also drew some of those interviewed to the Swan. One recent arrival says that he saw this as "a working community - you could work here instead of just retire." Another
couple, having recently relocated from an urban area, believe that "All of the hardship that goes with living in a place like this - (fire) wood, the distance to town - there’s meaning in that." Some came to the valley following work in the woods; one logger arrived in the Swan “in 1978, like any gyppo logger gets anywhere, following the jobs. I liked it so I stayed. ... I’ve been here ever since, ... other than going out to work once in awhile when there wasn’t any work here.” The economic hardship caused by declining timber harvests hasn’t driven all of the loggers out of the valley. Some remain committed to their place; they say they’ve struggled to stay, often commuting to logging jobs in other parts of the state, because there “wasn’t any reason to leave, its home.”

According to the results of Lambrecht and Jackson’s 1993 survey of community preferences for the future, residents have a strong desire to protect the valley’s rural, wild character. When presented with two opposing statements about the Swan valley’s future, residents consistently favored the protection of the valley’s environmental quality (Lambrecht and Jackson, 1993). The survey results indicated community preferences for limits to growth in the valley and saving the valley’s resources for future generations. This strong conservation ethic indicates the importance for valley residents of the Swan’s physical landscape and the rural way of life derived from this landscape. Conservation, however, should not be misconstrued to mean no utilization of the valley’s natural resources.

Ties to other humans as well as the landscape hold people in the valley. According to one resident,

...the people who grew up here... their values, lifestyle, beliefs, attitudes had as much to do with my staying as the country. They were down to earth, didn’t judge you by where you came from.... They were respectful of others, (of) things, nonjudgmental, quiet but knew a lot, humble.

Residents hold fund-raisers for their neighbors in need, conspiring to auction a huckleberry pie for $1,000 (Vernon, 1996). Many are active in community organizations like the Quick Response Unit (a volunteer emergency medical unit), the American Legion, and the schools as well as the Ad hoc Committee. Despite the challenges of earning a living in the valley, these residents volunteer
their time and labor to support community efforts. Many of the residents I spoke with still find a strong sense of community here despite residents’ reputation for being independent, self-reliant, and tending to want “to be left alone.” Two recent arrivals find that “here we’re constantly being pulled into things. We were more anonymous in the city and more able to be loners.” From my conversations with valley residents, it seems this sense of community is an important part of the quality of life that attracts and holds people to the Swan Valley.

While there is much to admire and celebrate in Swan residents’ attachment to their community and landscape, the valley is not without significant challenges and conflict. Economic hardship does take its toll. The Economic Diversification Plan notes that “... in the midst of this beautiful setting, residents also experience problems such as depression, suicide, substance abuse, family abuse and feelings of isolation” (Seeley/Swan Action team, 1993: p. 1-5). Several people commented during interviews that they had noticed a rise in crime as well as drug and alcohol abuse. As in other parts of the rural West, the landscape and human community that attracted the valley’s current residents are drawing more people seeking the same quality of life that these residents value so highly. The Swan valley is experiencing rapid change and increasing conflict partly as a result of in-migration. The valley’s traditional economic base is shifting away from a dependence on timber harvest toward an as yet unrealized diversification, causing upheaval for some segments of the community.

Along with these social divisions, the community is also confronted with several environmental issues that some fear threaten the very things they hold dear about their valley. These social and environmental issues form the current political climate in the Swan and are the final component of this description of the place that grounds this case study.

Current social and ecological issues confronting the Swan Valley

Just as the residents I interviewed spoke with a consistent voice about their reasons for living in the valley, they are also unified in the environmental
issues they see currently confronting their community. The people I spoke with repeatedly listed growth, forest management and economic transition as the community’s biggest challenges. Again, my sample is not representative of the entire community, but it does include a variety of the people who live in the valley. Thus, I believe it is instructive to illustrate where these people, coming from differing lifestyles, values and interests, observe common problems facing their community. While the individuals I spoke with may agree about what the problems are, their reasons for viewing these issues as such are varied. Each issue was described in terms of the social and ecological problems it presents for valley residents. These problems, and the ways in which the residents I interviewed define them, reflect the centrality of the Swan landscape to the community as well as the diverse ways people are affected by land management decisions in the valley. Here community and landscape come together to form the complex context in which the Ad hoc committee operates.

In the eyes of the Swan residents I interviewed, the number one threat to their valley, both ecologically and socially, is growth. Eighty-one percent (38 out of 47) identified increasing population or development as the biggest change or threat they saw in the valley. Statistics from the Missoula County Rural Planning office presented in the 1993 Seeley-Swan Economic Diversification report support this observation. Between 1979 and 1992 the number of post office box rentals jumped from 60 to 220. Enrollment in the valley’s biggest elementary school rose from about 60 students in 1980 to 90 in 1993 (Seeley/Swan Action team, 1993). The limited amount of land in small private ownership is being subdivided. Taxable residential lots rose from 516 in 1987 to 729 in 1993, and the number of commercial lots increased from 12 to 24 in the same time period (Seeley/Swan Action team, 1993).

For the residents I talked with, this growth is problematic for a number of reasons. First, many believe that “newcomers” bring attitudes and needs that are contrary to the values of the community. They think that these new migrants don’t understand the challenges of earning a living in the Swan because their incomes are not dependent on the valley economy. They expressed fear that
these “newcomers” will impose their more urban values on this rural community. Ironically, it was a newer resident who pointed out that:

As a lot of new people move in they agitate. Old timers earn a living from the land. Newcomers want to lock it up, preserve it. They’re not sensitive. They think you can just go get another job and you can’t do that here.

I did not discover a dramatic difference in environmental attitudes between newcomers and old-timers during my interviews. In fact, some of those raised in the valley were the most concerned about forest degradation, noting the amount of clearcutting that has occurred in the past twenty years. However, whether real or perceived, attitude differences between newcomers and old-timers are seen by those I interviewed as a source of tension and conflict in the valley.

These perceived “new” attitudes extend beyond the use and protection of the environment. Many residents also believe that newcomers are less independent and self-sufficient and will demand more urbanized services that longer term residents have happily done without. As one long time resident put it:

It’s a great thing to dream about living in the Wilderness, it’s a different thing when the toilets freeze up. Some who arrived wanted to start a golf course, a bowling alley, a movie theater. They came to spoil what they thought they’d come to enjoy.

Others feel the increasing size of the population is eroding the sense of community once enjoyed in the Swan. Several people mentioned that valley residents don’t gather together as they used to. One logger complained: “Used to be everybody did everything together, big Christmas dances. Now there’s so many people, don’t do it anymore. Everybody’s run off in their own little groups.” One man, who was raised in the valley, notes that “the community is badly fractured but is also one of those communities to pull together in times of crisis.” Some of these social groups are organized such as the volunteer fire department or church group. Others are informal; several residents referred to “the bar group” during interviews as a distinct segment of the community that regularly hangs out at the local bar.
Whether the Swan's more recent settlers really do hold attitudes that are markedly different from more long term residents is beyond the scope of this paper. However, the perception of differences between newcomers and old-timers is prevalent among those I interviewed, and creates the potential for conflict over issues such as development. These divisions within the community also affect participation in the Ad hoc committee. As Ad hoc core group member, Tom Parker observes: “Once you look at yourself as part of one group, you think there’s more difference between you and other things than there is.” This issue of participation will be explored more fully later on; for now, it is important to recognize these perceived divisions within the Swan community.

While differences in attitudes are subjective, escalating land prices are a tangible problem that many of those interviewed link to growth. One woman, who relocated to the valley seven years ago just before land prices began to escalate, says “We got 5 acres for $14,000, now it would be $40,000 about. We’re fortunate to have our land, there’s no way if we didn’t have it that we could now hope to own land.” Rising land prices mean that “… locals can’t afford to buy land and build, …. The only people who can move in have money or … can have a job that’s not in the valley.” Residents see that “… working people in this valley can’t afford to buy land anymore. … That’s a tragedy.” In their eyes, land prices are changing the type of people who are able to live in the valley, and therefore, the nature of the community.

During the interviews, residents also expressed concern about development and increasing population for ecological reasons. There is a general awareness that “As lands are developed its going to hurt the wildlife and trees and water.” One person specifically noted that subdivision creates problems for wildlife because of habitat fragmentation. Several residents, who were raised in the valley, are concerned that as large pieces of land get subdivided it “makes everything smaller” and that “fencing off the private sector has rearranged the way game travel.” Others say conflicts between people and wildlife are increasing. One resident, of 22 years, complained that people “move to bear country and then complain about or kill a bear knocking over their garbage. Shoot, shovel, and shut up is more prevalent now.” Another
resident observed “More people ... more encounters. The assumption is that seeing more lions means more should be killed without seeing that more of their habitat is being invaded.” The apparently widespread concern about growth in the valley stems from potential harm to the Swan’s human community as well as to its wildlife and natural environment.

The second most important series of issues that emerged from my interviews with Swan residents revolves around forest management. Seventy percent of the residents interviewed mentioned this cluster of problems as a major challenge for the community. Of the residents that viewed forest management as a problem, 51% were concerned with a variety of ecological impacts resulting from past logging including: clearcutting, erosion, increased flooding, road building and decreasing wildlife populations. They based their concerns on personal observations of areas near to their homes. Lifelong valley residents as well as younger, more recent settlers expressed concern over the rate of timber harvest and road building in the valley. One man, whose wife grew up in the valley, observed that

Glacier Creek used to never do what it does now, floods every year. They clear-cut up at the head of the creek. It’s all rocky up there, it used to have trees to hold everything down, now they’re gone. I’m not against logging, I’m just against so much of it.

Just as this man did, most residents carefully state that they were not inherently opposed to logging. Likewise those involved in the wood products industry would carefully state their disapproval of the large clearcuts visible from the highway. By using these disclaimers, these residents strive to balance their concern for their environment and their concern for their neighbors.

Twenty-eight percent of the residents I interviewed cited Forest Service management as another reason forest issues present a threat to the valley but for two very different reasons.² Some of these people are frustrated with the agency’s inability to make decisions about its lands. They view the lack of Forest Service timber sales offered in the Swan as evidence that the agency is

² Many people gave more than one answer when asked what the current threats confronting the valley were. Likewise they often had more than one reason for viewing a
paralyzed by administrative appeals and lawsuits. One man stated this perspective quite succinctly:

I feel that natural resources need to be managed and its not being managed now. Even the blow down from the big winds the last few years is just laying there, they’re not doing anything.”

From this perspective, management equals some form of timber harvest. Others believe the agency’s decisions themselves are the problem. During another interview, a man, who used to work for the Forest Service, said he believes “The Forest Service is a real threat. ... Part of it is the Forest Service is fascinated with new knowledge and new ways to ‘manage’ the forest. They’ll mess it up every time; they’ll never know enough.” There were vast differences of opinion among the individuals I interviewed as to why Forest Service management is an issue and what should be done differently. From these conversations, however, it is clear that forest management and protection are a central issue for these members of the community.

Finally, several people identified the economic transition confronting the valley as a key issue during the interviews although not in the numbers one would expect. Only 17% mentioned the difficulty in finding good employment in the valley as a major challenge. This is in contrast to Lambrecht and Jackson’s survey in which “not enough good jobs” was ranked as one of the most urgent problems facing the valley (Lambrecht and Jackson, 1993). This difference certainly may be due to the broader sample size of the Lambrecht and Jackson study.

It may also, however, reflect a shift in the issues confronting the valley. For some of the residents I interviewed, this lack of good jobs is accepted as a fact of life in the valley; it is “just the normal economic (challenges)” according to one logger. This acceptance of the limitations of valley employment may help explain why the economy was not mentioned more frequently as a major challenge for the community. Perhaps, the Swan’s transition from a historically high dependence on timber to a more diversified economy is succeeding.

given issue as a problem. This is why the numbers of people expressing a certain view do not match the total number of interviews.
Research on economic diversification, done by the Ad hoc committee and discussed later in this paper, may have helped spur this transition. One longtime valley resident, who said jobs didn’t seem to be much of an issue as they once were, speculated later in the interview that “maybe people feel a little more secure in their jobs....” Those who did speak of the economic challenges confronting the valley cited changes in the timber industry - both increased mechanization and decreasing harvest rates - as the underlying cause.

Summary

Several key themes emerge from this description of the current situation in the Upper Swan Valley that are relevant to understanding the Ad hoc’s collaborative effort. Due, at least partly, to land ownership patterns, the local community is heavily influenced by forces beyond its own geographic boundaries. Non-local entities such as the US Forest Service and Plum Creek Timber Company have decision making authority over much of the valley’s land base although they are not solely accountable to local residents. The Forest Service, specifically, responds to a broad range of constituencies at the local, regional and national level. However, the natural resource and land use decisions of these institutions greatly affect Swan valley residents in a variety of ways depending on their position within the community. Thus, in addition to the diverse interests associated with non-local stakeholders, there is also a wide range of perspectives about natural resource management within the geographic community as well. Seasonal and permanent residents, newcomers and old-timers, loggers, hunting guides - all of these social groups have an interest in Swan valley land management decisions.

The issues being discussed in the Swan Valley today are not unique to this community. In fact, this could be the story of many rural towns in the Northern Rockies region, as well as much of the West. Forest-dependent communities throughout the Pacific Northwest and Rocky Mountain regions are experiencing rapid growth as so-called newcomers move to these areas in search of a good place to live (Rudzitis, 1993; Larmer and Ring, 1994; Rasker, 1994; Brown, 1995; Rasker, 1995). The perceptions that some Swan residents have of these
newcomers are also not unusual. Rural people in Southwestern Oregon, for example, have also experienced an influx of wealthy people and an eroding sense of community (Brown, 1995).

The debates about the management and protection of public forest lands are also not particularly unique. The ecological impacts of various forms of timber harvest are well documented (Robins, 1988). Controversy and conflict over Forest Service management has become increasingly familiar since citizens first questioned clearcutting as a silvicultural practice in the early 1970s (Hirt, 1994). However, a unique history combines with the current Swan valley context to shape the Ad hoc’s collaborative effort, especially the committee’s relationship with the Forest Service. This history is where we now turn.
Chapter IV:
Unsettling Foundations: a history of community and bureaucracy

"Break up" is a time of transition in the Swan Valley. Winter thaws to spring, before slowly drying into summer. At this time of year, the roads turn from firmly frozen into a quagmire of slick, red-brown mud. Taking off from the paved highway into the woods, these roads lead to the homes obscured from view, set deep into the forest. Laid over glacially deposited gravel and sand, the once solid road beds become saturated with spring meltwater, turning to jelly. It is easy to bog down, getting mired deep in the mud on these roads, the legacy of a quick twenty-five years of intensive logging. One old-timer told me that break-up this year, 1996, is the worst he’s ever seen -- longer, wetter, muddier. But the residents adapt, parking their cars further from the house and walking the muddiest sections. They wait for the dryness of a Rocky Mountain summer to solidify the ground under foot.

Like the foundations of the roads at breakup, the foundations of the Swan valley community no longer seem as firm as they once were. As described in the last chapter, declining timber harvests and significant population growth are usually portrayed as the causes of the valley’s crumbling sense of community. However, there is another factor bringing change to the valley — the role of the US Forest Service.

The history of the valley is layered over the long and influential presence of the US Forest Service, and the story of the Swan community is closely entwined with that of the agency. The development of the Forest Service spurred the settlement, growth and development of a valley long characterized by remoteness and isolation, becoming an essential cornerstone of the Swan community. The agency provided a seemingly solid foundation, resembling a rural development agent, fostering and encouraging the slow building of a community. However, the Forest Service, as a federal agency, responds to broader forces such as the nation’s rising demand for lumber after World War II. Intensive logging in the Swan, driven by the mandate to meet this demand, had
a profound impact on the landscape and the community of the Upper Swan Valley. Increasingly, the Forest Service ushered rapid development into the Swan saturating the valley with change and turning its foundations to mud.

This is the story of local people responding and adapting to the particulars of its place. It is also the story of a rootless USFS bureaucracy responding to its national agenda. The intersection of these stories shapes an important piece of the Swan Valley’s history and helps to explain the transitions confronting the community today. The Forest Service’s history is well-known; many scholars have told the agency’s story from the top, focusing on the development of legislation, budgets and policies at the national level (Steen, 1976; Clary, 1986; Hirt, 1994). However, as Patricia Limerick notes in speaking about the origins of the National Forests, “A proper study would begin with the ground-level reality of the effects of bureaucratic power on particular western places (Limerick, 1992: p. 16). This chapter seeks to tell such a story, tracing the Forest Service’s influence in the Swan from the ground-up in order to better understand the current relationship between the agency and the Swan community.

From a map, the Swan valley does not appear that removed from the rest of western Montana. However, the valley largely escaped the early Euro-American exploration in the region. The first maps to include Swan Lake and its river system were drawn based on hearsay, rather than actual visits (Browman, no date: p. 4-5). The Forest Service arrived early in this relatively unknown country, and the start of the agency’s presence is where this story begins.

**Forests Reserved: 1897-1916**

On February 22, 1897, president Grover Cleveland, with a stroke of his pen on an executive proclamation, created the Lewis and Clarke Forest reserve. This 2,926,000 acre reserve included what is now known as the Swan Valley. A part of what became known as “Washington’s Birthday Reserves,” the Lewis and Clarke was one of thirteen reserves that doubled the amount of forest land held permanently in the federal domain and incited angry protest from western residents (Wilkinson, 1992). As the story goes, Gifford Pinchot, who would become head of the as yet uncreated Forest Service, had traveled up the Swan
the previous year. So taken with the valley’s beauty, he supposedly advocated for its inclusion in the reserve (McKay, 1994). Today, the Washington’s Birthday Reserves, named for the date of their creation, seem an almost impulsive act by a president about to leave office. The federal government had no idea what it had gained; the lands in the reserve were largely unsurveyed, and consequently, its boundaries encompassed both agricultural and timber lands.

These hurried reservations were intended to “guard the watersheds of major rivers and ‘reserve’ a portion of federal timberlands from the effects of short-sighted commercial exploitation” (Hirt, 1994: p. 29). Spurred by fears of a timber famine induced by destructive harvests on private lands, the forest reserves, in part, brought federal regulation to the West. Political debate swirled around the 1897 reserves with Western congressman screaming about the impediment they presented to the region’s future economic development. Fearing the lock-up of exploitable mineral, timber and agricultural lands, western politicians pressed hard to overturn Cleveland’s proclamation. Despite the furor, the reserves stood, and federal land management was established in the Swan (Steen, 1976; Clary, 1986; Hirt, 1994).

There was reason to be concerned with the specter of a timber famine at the turn of the century, even in western Montana. From the late 1880s through the early 1900s, industrial development in the state boomed. Mining generated a voracious demand for timber as did the arrival of the Northern Pacific railroad. Sawmills sprouted quickly throughout western Montana primarily to supply the Anaconda Copper Mining Company and the Northern Pacific Railroad with wood for their operations. By 1888, 4,000 board feet of timber a day fed the Anaconda mines and the company began buying its own timberland to ensure itself a stable wood supply (Barker, et al., 1993). Railroad construction consumed lumber for crossties, bridges, fuelwood, telegraph poles and other infrastructure necessities as tracks were laid to Missoula and the Flathead Valley (McKay, 1994). Between 1879 and 1899, timber harvest in the Montana and Idaho territories surged from 40 million board feet to 320 million (Barker, et al., 1993).

The mines and the railroad opened western Montana to settlement. Missoula county had 2,500 residents by 1880. By 1890, 3,000 people had settled
into the upper Flathead Valley to the west, across the Mission mountains from the Swan (McKay, 1994). Farmers were beginning to irrigate south of the Swan, in the Bitterroot Valley, to feed hungry mining towns. Kalispell, Whitefish and Columbia Falls grew up along the rail lines, bringing development to Montana’s mountain valleys (Malone, et al., 1991).

But the Swan remained isolated and relatively untouched by this flurry of extraction and settlement. Not for a lack of development opportunities, however. The Northern Pacific railroad, as a result of its 1864 grant from the federal government, owned alternate sections of land in the Swan. At least twice before the reserve was created, the valley was surveyed by the railroad in search of a route to the Flathead Valley (McKay, 1994). The final reports were always “adverse” and a railroad was never built through the Swan. In 1893, land agent R. O. Hickman assessed the Swan-Clearwater region in order to chose prime timberland for the new state. His report noted “many sections of valuable timber in the Swan Valley ... but they were so inaccessible that they could not be readily sold to raise money for state institutions.” The state choose land along the Clearwater river instead (Browman, no date: p. 6-7). Mining also never lured prospectors to pan the valley’s streams. Although one claim was filed in 1908, it was never worked (Browman, no date).

Thus, when H.B. Ayres arrived in 1900 to survey the Lewis and Clarke reserve, the Swan Valley was largely unaltered by Euro-Americans. And what he found seemed ill-suited for settlement. The soils were poor and shallow. Ayres concluded: “Commercially, agriculture within the valley will never be important. Vegetables, small fruits and hay, perhaps some grain, would grow, but only in a small way....” (Ayres, 1900: p. 80).

The timber, too, was disappointing for the market of the times. Skinny trees, damaged by fire, were not merchantable. Ayres reported that: “Yellow pine, while thoroughly abundant in the Upper Swan...,is not as large and vigorous as in the lower and more fertile lands of the Flathead Valley...it is seldom more than 3 feet in diameter and 90 feet high” (Ayres, 1900: p. 42). The streams were too shallow and braided to be of any use in transporting logs to the mill. Even if the logs could have been moved, none of the three small mills located on the
reserve at the time were in the Swan valley. The only logging that Ayres found on his tour of the Swan had been done by a few squatters for domestic use on their homesteads (Ayres, 1900).

While the mining boom propelled settlement in other parts of western Montana, the Swan was home to only ten unoccupied log houses between Swan Lake and Ben Holland’s ranch at the valley’s southern tip (Ayres, 1900). Holland, the first settler in the valley, filed a water right and built a small irrigation ditch in 1897. He laid claim to a prime piece of land - 200 acres of natural prairie - one of the few open meadows in the entire valley. Holland raised horses and guided hunters into the South Fork of the Flathead River from his idyllic location (Browman, no date).

He also served as the first forest ranger in the Swan valley, patrolling the land first for the General Land Office, and then the Forest Service until 1913 (Browman, no date). A ranger’s main responsibility in those days was to ride his district watching for and extinguishing fires; he had no real authority to enforce regulations (McKay, 1994). Though Holland’s tenure saw the creation of the Forest Service in 1905 and the reorganization of the Lewis and Clarke reserve into the Flathead National Forest, such administrative changes probably had little effect on his duties. Remoteness made communication between rangers difficult (McKay, 1994). It wasn’t until settlers started entering the Swan that the ranger’s duties began to expand, and the Forest Service became a cornerstone in the growing community’s foundation.

The settling years: 1916 - WWII

The Lewis and Clarke reserve made land in the Swan Valley unavailable to homesteading -- a fact that, around the west, produced an increasingly contentious political atmosphere. Hell-bent on development, many voices in the West protested the lock-up of agricultural lands in the forest reserves. Congressmen, newspaper editors, county governments and citizens all joined the fray complaining bitterly about the inability of future homesteaders to access these lands (Kerlee, 1962). In 1906, Congress passed the Forest Homestead Act opening agricultural lands within the National Forests to settlement, at least in
part, to placate westerners hostile to the reserve system. According to Forest Service historian Harold Steen, "The act was a tangible statement officially recognizing local primacy. The Forest Service welcomed permanent settlers but would not tolerate land speculators" (Steen, 1976: p. 79).

Under the provisions of the Act, the government had to survey and list all lands available to settlers. Then a homesteader would file, laying claim to 160 acres of agricultural land. In order to successfully "prove-up," an individual or family had to occupy the claim for 3-5 years, cultivate at least 20 acres of land and construct a home and outbuildings. At the end of this period, homesteaders producing the required proof of residence and cultivation successfully earned title to the land (Kerlee, 1962). Forest rangers had the discretion to accept or reject this final patent on a homestead. Sometimes loathe to release lands from the federal domain, they ultimately controlled which were transferred into private ownership (McKay, 1994).

Implementation of the law was slow. The Swan didn’t officially open to settlement for another ten years after the passage of the act. The Forest Service found itself in a difficult situation: Much of the land in the valley was still unsurveyed\(^1\) and the Northern Pacific Railway had the right to alternate sections. The Forest Service couldn’t open the lands to settlers until the title questions with the railroad were clarified, but the General Land office had to conduct the surveys (Public Sentiment, 1913). In 1910, district forester W.B. Greeley wrote to Gifford Pinchot seeking authority for Forest Service officials to conduct these surveys. He complained that:

The existence of large unsurveyed areas in regions where there is an active demand for timber, special use and settlements, creates one of the most perplexing administrative difficulties in this District. In the Swan Valley, for example, there is a block of country 24 miles in length...which is unsurveyed, this block lying within the primary limits of the grant to the Northern Pacific Railway and including a large percentage of the agricultural areas to which it is proposed to apply the revised settlement policy of the Flathead National Forest" (Greeley, 1910).

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\(^1\) The Ayres survey was admittedly inadequate. Only four months time was allotted to survey the entire reserve making it "necessary to pass many square miles by with only a cursory view from a mountain or hill top." This was insufficient to settle questions of title to the land (Ayres, 1900: p. 44).
Despite the fact that their hands were tied, the agency bore the brunt of the blame for the delay. A 1913 Forest Service document summarizing public sentiment in Region 1 pointedly stated that local people felt “...there has been considerably too much delay on the part of the Forest Service in opening up agricultural lands in the Swan River Valley,...” (Public sentiment, 1913). Some of the original homesteaders had picked their 160 acres as squatters before the official opening of the valley and they were losing patience with being unable to secure title to the land. Finally, in 1916, the agricultural lands in the Swan were opened to homesteading. Seventy men or families and seven single women immediately filed their claims (Browman, no date).

Homesteading was no easy task in the Swan Valley. As one of the last frontiers, the isolated valley attracted a hardy and eclectic group of people. Loggers from Minnesota, railroad engineers, fur trappers and many others all attempted to gain a piece of land in the Swan (Browman, no date). One valley historian described the early settlers:

As is often the case in frontier country, the first comers tended to be highly independent individuals. Some were lured from relatively crowded Oregon valleys by the vision of land of their own in a place where there would be plenty of elbow room. Others thought in terms of big profits from selling homesteads after proving up on them. Then there were those who just plain liked to be away from too many people: those with wanderlust who never stayed long any place: those who wanted to start a new life away from old troubles; and even one or two who were said to be interested in an isolated base for such activities as horse-stealing (Browman, no date).

Some succeeded at carving a home into the forested valley but many more failed. In 1924, Tom Wiles, the forest ranger, estimated that over half of the claims had been abandoned before they were finally “proved-up” (McKay, 1994).

The old Forest Service claim records tell a tale of marginal agricultural lands at best. Settlers fought to clear a space for cultivation in a valley so heavily forested “you could hardly see straight up because of the timber” (Jette, personal communication, 1996). They cut and burned through spruce, lodgepole, tamarack and pine creating smoke “...so thick from the burning brush that one couldn’t see the mountains” (Browman, no date: p. 18). A good
wind in the dense lodgepole was a terrifying time; the homesteaders cleared the timber away from their buildings until they felt safe from the trees that fell like pickup sticks (Haasch, personal communication, 1996). Usually, no more than 10 acres for hay was the meager result of this hard labor, and many settlers sought a reduction in the area required for cultivation from the US land office (USDA reports on homestead claims, 1912-1940).

Even once the homestead was established, settlers in the Swan Valley had a difficult time sustaining themselves without another source of income. Families raised milk cows, potatoes, and hardy vegetables such as beets, chard, cabbage, carrots, squash. They supplemented these hard won crops with gathered berries, fish and wild game. But the staples like flour had to be bought in Missoula with cash that was "also needed for taxes -- and cash was hard to come by" (Browman, no date: p. 19). Joe Wilhelm, whose father bought one of the valley’s original homesteads, only remembers one person who made a living off their land without leaving to earn some income. Olle Semling, an old Norwegian bachelor, ran 25-30 cows on a homestead along the Swan River, subsisting quite nicely until the late 50s when he traded the homestead for a car and moved back to Minnesota (Wilhelm, personal communication, 1996).

The settlers couldn’t sell their timber either, at least not on a commercial scale. Walter Deegan, the valley’s first homesteader, was an engineer with Northern Pacific, and, for fifty dollars, helped locate claims for others moving to the area. He was certain that, eventually, Northern Pacific would build a spur railroad past Seeley Lake to access its land in the Swan (Browman, no date; Jette, personal communication, 1996). But the hoped-for-logging railroad never materialized leaving the settlers without a means to transport and sell their logs in markets beyond the valley.

The Forest Service, anxious to prevent timber speculation, also kept much of the best timber in reserve (Kerlee, 1962). Forest rangers inspecting a claim often found that a homesteader’s timber "had no merchantable value...especially so since all the larger trees have been killed by bark beetles" (USDA reports on homestead claims, 1912-1940). Logging did not become a large source of income until after World War II. Prior to the war, the few family
run sawmills that did exist in the valley cut and exported ties for the railroad (Wilhelm, personal communication, 1996). Or they supplied rough hewn lumber for the needs of the homesteaders themselves or their neighbors. The lumber mainly stayed in the valley -- exporting it on the two track wagon road, dodging stumps between the wheels, wasn't worth the trouble economically (Wilhelm; Jette, personal communications, 1996). As one old timer observed, back then “… logging didn’t take as much land to satisfy the logger” (confidential interview, 1996)².

Harold Haasch, whose father homesteaded the land he still calls home, recalled the isolation of his childhood in the valley with a grin, “There was no getting out of here.” The road, cut by the settlers, scarcely deserved the name. Travel was arduous. As late as the 1920s, it was rare that people made the trip between Missoula and the Swan in a single day, and old-timers still remember the trip as taking several days (Haasch, personal communication, 1996). A 1922 report on the road described the adventurous journey: “From Holland Creek to Goat Creek, there is little more than a circuitous wagon track cut through the timber…. Creek crossings were made by dropping logs across the streams and flooring these with poles. … Grades in numerous cases exceed 20% with abrupt turns at ends” (in Hunt, et al., 1967: p. 22). Winter lasted from October to May, preventing travel beyond the valley. Families would stock up on groceries as autumn drew to a close, then settle in with what they had (confidential interview, 1996). Largely isolated from the rest of western Montana, especially in the winter, the residents of the Swan valley learned to make do, to get by however they could.

Most of the men left in search of a wage income. Homesteaders were absent from the valley for months at a time, most often during the winter (USDA homestead records). The railroad, Butte’s mines, and big lumber mills in the Flathead, Blackfoot and Missoula valleys all provided jobs to the people of the Swan (Browman, no date). As Joe Wilhelm remembers “you’d work any place

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² Confidential interviews were conducted in the fall of 1996 as part of the interviews with Swan residents who do not participate in the Ad hoc committee; oral history interviews were conducted in the spring of 1996 and I obtained permission to use these names in the thesis. These interviews are cited as personal communications.
you could get a nickel in those days” (Wilhelm, personal communication, 1996). They made due shipping cream to Missoula, trapping for muskrat, beaver and mink or selling mountain lion pelts for bounty (Browman, no date). One woman, who grew up in the valley in the 1940’s, remembers:

We didn’t have money and we didn’t need it. ... We raised pigs, cattle, hens and lived off the land with fish or deer. ... We milked cows; my mom sold the cream, churned the butter and ... traded it for groceries at the Swan Lake store (confidential interview, 1996).

Sometimes the women and children stayed the winter on the homestead while the men went to work. “The women worked like the dickens,” Evelyn Jette recalls of her childhood in the Swan. For the children, though, it was an adventure. Evelyn spent much of her youth following her father, Walter Deegan, around the valley locating homesteads for other settlers (Jette, personal communication, 1996).

During the summers, Swan valley men worked for the Forest Service throughout western Montana. They packed supplies into the backcountry for fire crews. They built the extensive trail system that the Forest Service needed to protect its lands. They spent lonely summers, stationed in the fire lookouts scattered on both sides of the valley, picking huckleberries to put up for the winter (Haasch; Wilhelm, personal communications, 1996; Browman, no date). Fortunately, this hard labor counted in the settlers’ favor in establishing homesteads despite taking them away from the valley: “Working for the Forest Service was considered partial fulfillment of the residency requirements even though the person might be absent, and the employment was at a busy time of year for a farmer” (McKay, 1994: p. 221). As Harold Haasch, who also grew up in the valley, points out “the Forest Service was a living to folks who lived here then” (Haasch, personal communication, 1996). As an employer contributing to the diverse livelihoods of the Swan residents, the Forest Service began to build itself into the community.

During the settling years in the Swan, the Forest Service’s mission was mainly custodial, protecting the reserve lands from the “scourges” of fire, insect and disease (Clary, 1986; Hirt, 1994). To do this, the agency brought early
development to the remote valley. After the large fires that swept the west in 1910, a member of a Forest Service crew stationed in the Swan wrote:

when, by operation of the Forest Homestead Act and the development of transportation, vast stretches of wilderness become populated ... the conditions that proceeded the great fires of 1910 will have been brought fully under control... (Chapman, 1910: p. 658).

Homesteading, and the development of communities, thus became a means to achieve the agency’s mandate to protect its timber from destruction. The settlers would be available to help fight fire and insect infestations. Their communities would need the same infrastructure that would make the National Forests accessible to agency employees in times of emergency. The agency’s national agenda, in part, required the establishment of rural communities.

During these early years the Forest Service, because of the remoteness of its lands, was a fundamentally decentralized organization (Kaufman, 1960; Steen, 1976). District rangers had decisionmaking authority which

...had a decidedly positive effect on relations between the Forest Service and local communities. Citizens could receive an immediate response to their advances, and rangers who were answerable to their neighbors behaved differently from those who could pass the buck to an office a continent away” (Clary, 1986: p. 27).

The Swan valley benefited from this organizational structure as one of the earliest ranger districts on the Flathead National Forest. Condon’s old log ranger station, built in 1915, was among the first permanent structures in the Swan (USDI National Register of historic places). The community and the agency settled into the valley together.

The rangers during the settling years knew the valley and its residents intimately. From 1915-1931, Elmer Billsborough, and Tom Wiles after him, toured the valley on horseback, visiting with the settlers and inspecting homestead claims. The rangers filed their reports with the Forest supervisor but ultimately it was their discretion as to whether a claim was patented. They looked after the homesteaders helping them, as neighbors, to sustain themselves in a still wild valley and on marginal lands. As Evelyn Jette remembers, the rangers “knew
folks in the valley as friends” (Jette, personal communication, 1996). They moved into the valley and adapted to its demands just as the settlers did. These rangers stayed for awhile; both Billsborough and Wiles stayed at their post for seven years, longer than any Condon district ranger since (Condon District Rangers list).

Like the homesteaders themselves, the rangers were generalists rather than specialists doing whatever work needed to be done. Everything, from horse packing to chopping brush from fence lines and stringing telephone wire to the administrative paper work required by the bureaucracy was in a ranger’s job description. They labored hard alongside of the residents that the agency hired. Except for Ben Holland, however, the settlers were not hired as rangers. Even in these early days, technically trained foresters, from eastern schools, usually held the decisionmaking positions (Steen, 1976).

In addition to employing people to build the infrastructure needed by the Forest Service and the community, the agency funded much of it. Money from the Forest Service helped settlers construct the rutted wagon track that served as a road, and rangers constructed the first phone lines into the valley between 1910 and 1912 (McKay, 1994). In the fall of 1929, when a big fire “blew up” near Loon lake at the valley’s southern end, families quickly gathered possessions into their wheelbarrows and headed to the ranger station. There, they waited to be “hauled out” of the valley assisted by the Forest Service (Wilhelm; Haasch, personal communications, 1996). Another current resident, who grew up during the later part of the valley’s settling years, remembers when Forest rangers “...were just neighborly and if there was something they could help you with, they’d do it. They’d let you go cut fence rails for your own corrals .... You could go cut firewood whenever you wanted to. When the ranger station was here, they hired local people basically” (confidential interview, 1996).

The settling era lingered longer in the Swan than elsewhere as relative isolation continued to define its character. The last homestead was finally patented in 1940 (USDA homestead records). Residents did without electricity until 1957; the road wasn’t paved until 1958 (confidential interviews, 1996). The Forest Service served, in many ways, as the Swan valley’s rural development
agent bringing slow progress and modernization to the area as it built trails, roads and phone lines for itself. These years are remembered by “old-timers” as a tranquil time with the Forest Service an “essential” part of the community (Haasch, personal communication, 1996). The Swan’s isolation created a spirit of cooperation between the agency and the community, an implied partnership in the settling of the valley. One woman, who lived with her father in the valley fire lookouts during her childhood summers, remembers “It was like you were a part of it, a part of the government, a part of the Forest Service” (confidential interview, 1996).

However, the Forest Service was then, as it is now, a federal agency responding to broader national forces. Before World War II, the valley’s remoteness obscured that fact. But rapid change was about to descend on the Swan, at least partly ushered in by the community’s partner in isolation, the Forest Service. As David Clary notes in his history of the agency:

Before World War II the national forests were mostly custodial institutions, their rangers guarding the resources and protecting their inventories against the expected time of increased demands. The demand arrived with the war and expanded thereafter. The Forest Service’s attention turned increasingly to answering this demand. The agency was greatly decentralized and localistic, but as timber became a larger economic and political subject, inevitably the Washington office attempted to influence what was going on in the field (Clary, 1986:p. 119).

This shift in the agency’s focus quickly became apparent in the Swan Valley, with dramatic effects on the land and the community.

**Opening up the country: World War II -1970s**

Joe Wilhelm shakes his head slowly, musing “boy they’ve sure taken a lot of timber out of this country.” In his opinion, logging had more to do with the changes that hit the valley beginning in the 1950s than anything else. “This country isn’t worth much except for logging,” he says, noting that many have tried and failed to make a go of farming and ranching over the course of the valley’s history (Wilhelm, personal communication, 1996). The Forest Service is not the only party responsible for the logging that Joe Wilhelm believes transformed the Swan Valley. In fact the agency cannot even share a majority of the blame
for the clearcuts that have crept across the valley and up the slopes of the Missions and the Swan Range.

Starting in the 1960s, Northern Pacific Railroad, followed by Burlington Northern and Plum Creek Timber Company, logged their Swan valley lands for stockholder profit. Initially, the company sought to "eliminate its stands of mature and over-mature timber to reduce possible economic loss by insects and windthrow" (Wright, 1966). However, the Forest Service initiated the large-scale intensive logging in the valley, escalating its sale of timber through the 1950s and 60s. By building roads to access the timber, the USFS opened up the country for the private companies to follow profitably later (confidential interviews, 1996). As a result, the Forest Service played a crucial role in bringing rapid change to the valley. At the same time, the relationship between the agency and the community began to change. Driven by forces far greater than the Swan Valley, the Forest Service became an increasingly centralized and technocratic agency (Hirt, 1994) and an increasingly uncertain foundation for this local community during these years of intensive logging.

For most Forest Service historians, World War II represents a turning point in the agency’s history. Propelled by the rapidly rising demand for raw materials that accompanied the war, as well as the depletion of private forest lands nationally, timber harvests on Forest Service land began to rise. The agency shifted its management emphasis from custodial to intensive management and expanding production (Clary, 1986; McKay, 1994; Hirt, 1994). Nationwide, timber sales on National Forests rose from 1.3 billion board feet (bbf) to 3.1 bbf between 1939 and 1945, a 238% increase (Hirt, 1994). During the 1950s, the cut rose again from 3.5 bbf to 9.3 bbf. The percentage of the nation’s total timber harvest coming from National Forest lands rose from 5% to 15% during this same period (Hirt, 1994).

A lack of access to the West’s timber resources was the primary obstacle to increasing production so road building also proceeded at a frenzied pace after the War. Over 6,000 new miles of roads were built on the National Forests between 1951 and 1953; the Eisenhower administration asked for a 90% increase in the agency’s budget for the construction of timber access roads (Hirt, 1994).
Thus, the Forest Service was able to bring formerly remote areas into production. This, combined with the rising market value of previously worthless species like lodgepole pine, enabled the agency to continually increase its allowable cuts (Hirt, 1994). According to David Clary, "Timber was such an active program by 1952 that any ambitious young foresters could see that in the Forest Service, timber was where careers were to be made" (Clary, 1986: p. 125).

These national trends clearly manifested themselves on the Flathead National Forest. In 1944, the Flathead sold 44 million board feet to private contractors; by 1955 this had jumped to 102 million board feet, and in 1963, 141 million board feet was actually cut. In 1939, there were 275 miles of roads on the Forest; this skyrocketed to 1,658 miles by 1964 (McKay, 1994). Initially, the logging and road building was concentrated on the forest lands in the Flathead valley. Because this area was better developed and geographically close to the mills, it was more economical to harvest the timber in the Flathead first (Shaw, 1967).

Once again, remoteness kept rapid change at bay through the 1940s, but the Swan valley’s time was coming. A 1948 timber management plan for the Swan working circle\(^3\) stated that the area was “fourth or lowest priority” for harvest. At this time, 3.3 million board feet had been cut on Forest Service land in the Swan over the previous 5 years; 4 million had been cut on private, commercial forest lands. All of this timber was milled in the valley itself (USDA Forest Service, 1948). Small, portable “gyppo mills” were run by a few local families. They earned a modest living off the rough hewn lumber they sold to their neighbors for construction. The road still made hauling lumber difficult so although some was shipped out of the valley, the amount of exported lumber was minimal (Jette; Wilhelm, personal communication, 1996). Most of the harvested trees stayed in the valley and helped build the community.

The Forest Service’s plan noted this lack of a good road: “Development of timber resources of this circle (is) dependent upon construction of an all-weather highway through the valley.” The plan went on to say that “Given a good highway... all of the timber resource could logically drain to the Flathead valley
for processing and manufacture” (USDA Forest Service, 1948) Therefore, the Swan valley’s timber would remain in reserve until it became more accessible and profitable. Once the country opened up, however, the harvest would feed mills outside of the Swan Valley. During the postwar era, the Forest Service sought to satisfy national and regional demands rather than those of local communities. The dynamic between the Flathead National Forest and the Swan Valley reflected this trend and contributed to ending the valley’s isolation.

The long awaited highway slowly crept northward through the valley. Beginning in 1952, the road was constructed in segments from Clearwater junction over the next twelve years. Asphalt reached the Swan valley in 1958, and State highway 83 was finally finished in 1964 (Hunt, 1967). Electricity arrived along with the road, and the Swan was transformed. At long last, the valley was connected to the Flathead and Missoula valleys and “the isolation which was characteristic of much of the Swan-Clearwater Valley (was) in great part eliminated through the improved mobility” (Hunt, 1967: 157). The national trends already manifesting themselves elsewhere on the Flathead National Forest now were now welcomed in the Swan Valley. An economic report assessing the impact of the highway noted: “...without improved access, external economic trends would not greatly affect...an area such as this. Thus, the effect of access is to make it possible for better participation...in external economic trends...” (Hunt, 1967: 78).

The Forest Service began to build its own roads in the Swan. The agency and Northern Pacific shared the costs of construction and maintenance associated with the road development necessary to access timber in the Swan Valley. Taking off from the main highway, logging roads criss-crossed the valley’s forests reaching into the remotest areas (Wright, 1966). Today, there are 1,611 miles of roads in the Swan valley (USDA Forest Service, 1994). In contrast to the settling years, these roads were not originally designed for the community’s benefit. The country was opening up and rapid change was certain to follow.

3 A working circle is “an area that, by virtue of the character of the timber market and the trees it contains, the terrain and the communities lying within it, is best managed as a single unit...” (Kaufman, 1960: p.100).
Intensive logging followed the improved access just as the 1948 timber plan indicated. That Forest Service timber sales in the valley increased dramatically during the 1950s is clear from the statistics. A 1960 timber plan for the Swan working circle summarizes the average annual cut during the preceding two decades: A harvest of 3.3 million board feet per year from 1940-49 jumped to 14.6 million board feet between 1950-59. The Forest Service projected that it could harvest 34 million board feet annually in the Swan valley (USDA Forest Service, 1960). The highway economic impact study found that for the combined Swan-Clearwater valley, federal sales of timber rose from 17 million board feet in 1950 to 75 million in 1964. The Swan valley saw a majority of this increase because a higher percentage of its land relative to the Clearwater is managed by the Forest Service (Hunt, 1967).

That this timber was not meant for the small Swan valley mills is also clear. The Forest Service plan states that: "Material from ... the northern portion of the Condon Block will logically go to mills in the Flathead Valley or upper Mission Valley. Material from the southern end of the Condon Block might well go to mills in the Seeley lake or Missoula area" (USDA Forest Service 1960). The economic study noted that while logging had increased substantially in the valley "... the processing of these logs is primarily carried out in milling centers outside of the Valley ..." (Hunt, 1967: 88). While exports from the valley had always been small, milled lumber was hauled to other communities. Now, choice ponderosa pine logs were leaving the valley.

While the valley's few mills may not have benefited from the increasing harvests, the logging did bring a definite economic boom to the community. Just as they had before, Swan residents seized any opportunity to earn a few dollars. The men went to work in the woods cruising timber, laying roads, felling trees. They drove the trucks hauling logs north and south all day long. Families rented out cabins and trailers, filling extra rooms with timber crews in need of a place to live. The crews had to be fed too. So the women went to work cooking huge meat-and-potato meals for loggers and Forest Service timber surveyors or planting trees on harvested Forest Service lands. Evelyn Jette got so busy she "didn't have time to do anything but cook" during the twelve "big logging
years" between 1960 and the early 70s, when the valley bustled with camps full of men working in the woods (Jette, personal communication, 1996). It was a busy time in the Swan, and those who had grown up on the homesteads knew it was time to earn a living while they could.

The flurry of development brought new people to the valley. Reversing the labor migrations of the homesteaders, people started coming to the valley because of available jobs. There was more work than the local population could handle. Both the Forest Service and the private companies that purchased the federal timber brought people from around the state to work in the Swan (Jette, Styler; personal communications, 1996).

For the first time, most people had work in the valley, close to home; going to town for supplies was easier. The children of the homesteaders had a chance to earn some money for retirement, to buy some land for their own home in the valley. These were the undeniable benefits of the development brought by the logging boom (Jette, personal communication, 1996). Just as in the settling years, the Forest Service was modernizing this rural valley, but there was a difference in this progress. Earlier, it had been a slow response to a local place and growing community. During this period in the Swan's history, however, change came fast, driven by policies beyond the valley's real influence. As a result, slowly, almost imperceptibly, beneath the boom of the 50s and 60s, the relationship between the valley's community and the Forest Service was beginning to change as well. The agency was undermined as a cornerstone of the community's foundation.

The Condon district rangers weren't staying as long as they had during the settling years. At least six rangers held that position on the Condon district between 1953 and 1970 (Condon District Rangers list). The Condon district became a place for new district rangers to cut their teeth in Forest Service administration (Tassinari, personal communication, 1996). Rooted in agency policy designed to foster loyalty to the Forest Service rather than local communities, career advancement meant moving on to other districts, the supervisors office, or the regional office rather than learning a place intimately over time (Kaufman, 1960; Steen, 1976). These bright, ambitious, technically
trained foresters lost the close contact with the place and the community of the earlier rangers. The old-timers, valley residents working for the agency, taught each new ranger about the land, showed them the ropes, told them what kind of trees they had (Styler, personal communication, 1996).

The Forest Service continued to usher economic development and modernization into the Swan, but two trends emerged as the country opened up. First, while Forest Service rhetoric emphasized community stability as a part of timber management policy, the Flathead National Forest tended to define its communities as those in the Flathead valley. The smaller, more historically isolated, Swan valley wasn’t discussed in the management plan sections addressing community stability as a goal of timber harvest. Second, the district rangers were no longer as intimately involved with the Swan valley community. Their allegiance was to the agency more than to the local community (Kaufman, 1960). The consequences of these trends began to be realized in the 1970s.

**Pulling back: the 1970s-present**

By the mid-1970s, the timber harvests on Forest Service lands in the valley were beginning to ebb. From 1965-69, the annual volume to be cut in the Swan was 11 million board feet, already less than the peak federal harvest of the early sixties (USDA Forest Service, 1965). In the 1965 timber plan for the Swan, the Forest Service stated that its logging would decline further when a new management plan was written at the end of the decade (USDA Forest Service, 1965). Northern Pacific had begun to intensively log its Swan valley land and the Forest Service compensated for this by lowering the cut on the federal sections in the valley bottom (Wright, 1966; Tassinari, personal communication, 1996).

Once again people started looking for work beyond the valley because they couldn’t find local jobs. According to Evelyn Jette, not many of those drawn by the timber boom stayed; they had come because “they needed a

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4 The term “community stability” is used in conjunction with the Forest Service’s sustained yield timber management and implies a policy of “continuing controlled supplies of raw
job, they lived from pay day to pay day” (Jette, personal communication, 1996). Those who stayed quickly learned that jobs were usually hard to come by in the Swan. As Mrs. Jette observed, even the Forest Service wasn’t employing valley residents as it once had, now that it was no longer in the trail building business (Jette, personal communication, 1996). Local loggers now drove to jobs across Western Montana, covering a working circle with a 100 mile radius from Seeley Lake (confidential interview, 1996).

In 1974, the Flathead National Forest consolidated the Condon and Swan Lake ranger districts.5 Forest Service personnel in the Swan were moved to the town of Bigfork with better economics and efficiency cited as the reasons. The better highway made communication and transportation easier, reducing the need for small ranger districts that kept staff close to the resources. For the Forest Service, it made sense to eliminate one ranger district’s budget especially as staffs grew larger and increasingly specialized (Couvalt, 1994). The Condon ranger district “just kind of got swallowed up by Bigfork,” according to one Forest Service employee (confidential interview, 1996).

Situated where the Swan River enters Flathead lake forty-five miles from Condon, Bigfork isn’t considered part of the Swan Valley, and Swan residents knew that they had “lost contact with a decisionmaker” (Tassinari; Styler; Haasch; Jette, personal communications, 1996). The Forest Service continued to maintain the facilities in Condon, but staff drove back and forth from Bigfork. The facility became a “work station,” used primarily in the summers to house fire and trail crews. Valley residents watched the emblematic Forest Service green pick-ups drive by and reluctantly listened to agency personnel answer their questions with “I’ll have to call Bigfork” (Tassinari; Styler; Haasch; Jette, personal communications, 1996).

5 There is confusion amongst a variety of sources over the exact date of the districts consolidation, with guesses ranging from 1969 to 1975. Herb Styler, Swan valley resident and employee at the Condon ranger district believes 1974 was the date. Because his long-standing relationship with the district, I choose to rely on his best estimate (Styler, personal communication, 1996).
In 1977, the Forest Service proposed moving the old ranger station buildings to the agency’s administrative site at Spotted Bear along the South Fork of the Flathead River. This action would have moved the weathered log buildings to an already established Forest Service historic district. Swan Valley community members resisted. Arguing effectively that the buildings should remain in the valley, residents claimed them as a part of their history as well as the agency’s (USDI national register of historic places). While an arguably minor episode of the long relationship between the Forest Service and the Swan community, the story symbolizes the increasing distance between the agency and the valley. The Forest Service was physically pulling out, a trend that fundamentally altered the relationship between the agency and the Swan Valley.

The rangers weren’t out on the land as they had been in the past. To valley residents, it appeared that agency personnel spent more time and money driving between Condon and Bigfork or sitting in their offices (Tassinari; Styler; Haasch; Jette, personal communications, 1996). Some residents began losing respect for the agency that had been such an integral part of earlier valley life. One local logger complained: “I hadn’t seen a rig in the woods in months. I went up there (Bigfork), they got 300 up in the office, sitting in front of a computer. I don’t see where that’s productive” (confidential interview, 1996). Another resident observed that in the past “… forestry people were just working people. They knew about the end of an ax handle, as much as what happens when you cut a tree. They understood both ecology and the doing of it” (confidential interview, 1996). The Forest Service, whose staff had once known the residents as friends and neighbors, had fast become a nameless, faceless federal bureaucracy. They were no longer generalists, working hard in the woods, cut from the same cloth as the settlers. Instead, agency personnel were seen as specialists, “outsiders,” who didn’t know what life was like in the valley. “Anymore,” says Evelyn Jette, “I wouldn’t know who the ranger was…” (Jette, personal communication, 1996).

“Downsizing” pressures within the agency continue to threaten the Forest Service presence in the Swan Valley. In 1994, the Flathead National Forest
announced that it was considering closing the work station in Condon altogether (Swan Citizens’ ad hoc Committee meeting minutes, 1994). Even more recently, the Forest cut funding for two Condon residents who contracted with the agency as rangers in the Mission Mountain Wilderness during the summer season (Schwennesen, 1996). Over the last 15 years, timber sales in the valley have ground to a halt providing some residents with more evidence that the Forest Service has pulled out of the valley (confidential interviews, 1996). These types of actions are not what the community expects from the Forest Service; residents want agency personnel in their valley, closer to the ground, accessible to those who use the land. This expectation of access to the agency decisionmakers says much about the historic presence of the Forest Service in the valley.

Proximity fostered a sense of empowerment in Swan residents; they knew the Forest Service; in many cases, as employees, they were the Forest Service. Historically, valley residents felt they had some influence in agency decisions regarding local federal lands because of their close connection with the agency’s employees. For those who do not participate in the Ad hoc committee, this is no longer the case.

**Today’s perspectives on Forest Service Management in the Swan**

“Put it this way, the Forest Service office is empty. Its hard to deal with things when nobody is here, nobodies home.” Swan valley resident

Today, if you ask Swan residents about the Forest Service’s ability to deal with land management issues in the valley, they express frustration. In my interviews with residents who do not regularly participate in the Ad hoc committee, 63% expressed dissatisfaction about the way the Forest Service manages its Swan Valley lands. Regardless of their opinions of the actual decisions made by the Forest Service, these people share the perception that the agency cannot manage or care for its Swan Valley land from Bigfork. From their perspective, the physical distance of agency personnel from the land they are supposed to care for undermines their credibility and their ability to respond to the local situation.
A logger who complained that “Millions of board feet of timber are going to waste because they (the Forest Service) can’t sell it...” also firmly believes that the

... work center should be where all the work in the Swan is done out of. People should live there instead of getting windshield time coming down from Bigfork.... The Forest Service should be a very, very profitable organization that hires lots of help, putting timber out, keeping trails open. ... They need more people in the field, not more people in the office (confidential interview, 1996).

Similarly, a resident, supportive of Forest Service road closures for grizzly bear security and habitat protection, but aware that these closures are being violated, notes that “... because the agency doesn’t have any on the ground personnel, they don’t have a clue what’s going on...” (confidential interview, 1996). A valley woman, who has been active in environmental issues, believes the Forest Service’s

... purpose is to take care of the land ... not to pay for centralized facilities, they need to put the money on the ground. If we didn’t have the Forest Service in the valley, we’d have four wheeler roads everywhere, people driving tractors in the streams... (confidential interview, 1996).

Thus, in the eyes of many residents interviewed for this research, the Forest Service is out of touch with the community and the land it was once so closely connected to.

In addition to believing the Forest Service can’t effectively manage its Swan valley lands from Bigfork, many residents also feel powerless to affect decisions about these lands. When I posed the question, “who most influences management decisions about local Forest Service lands,” the residents I spoke with who don’t regularly participate in the Ad hoc said “outsiders”—federal bureaucrats, environmentalists or corporate executives far removed from valley life. Only 10% of these residents felt that people at the local level—whether valley residents or Swan Lake ranger district personnel—had any real influence in the decisions made about federal land in the Swan valley. Instead, they believe that:

The power is way up the totem pole, that’s who has the most impact. The bureaucrats are handing down the decisions. The
eastern establishment doesn’t understand what goes on out here
(confidential interview, 1996).

Specifically in regard to the Forest Service, where once Swan residents saw a
neighbor, today they see a large, centralized bureaucracy that is unresponsive
to local needs as a result of its own regulations and procedures. They see an
agency in which “The local managers are inhibited in their ability to manage the
forests by lawsuits and appeals.... they’re caught between the environmentalists
and the logging industry on the other side” (confidential interview, 1996).

Summary

Swan Valley community members repeatedly find themselves resisting the
forces pushing the Forest Service further and further away from the valley. Ad
hoc committee participants have worked tirelessly for the past two years to
develop a proposal to keep the Condon work center open, recently
succeeding in creating the Swan Ecosystem Center in partnership with the
Flathead National Forest. One of the primary goals of this new non-profit is to
maintain a strong Forest Service presence in the valley. Valley residents also
organized to raise private moneys to support the Mission Mountain Wilderness
ranger positions that were almost cut in 1996. These efforts mark the
community’s attempts to regain the influence they once had in Forest Service
decision making.

As manager of much of the land in the valley, the Forest Service has
contributed significantly to the development of the Swan and to the doubt that
confronts valley residents today. A federal agency is a loose and shifting
foundation to build a community upon, and the history of the Swan Valley
demonstrates the influence such an agency has on a small rural community.
National and regional forces driving the Flathead National Forest brought rapid
change to the valley. Now, the residents of the Swan are adapting, waiting for
the ground to solidify underfoot.

The ad hoc committee, through the collaborative process, is one of the
ways in which some community members are adapting. As will be seen in the
next chapter, Ad hoc participants are reestablishing the historically close
relationship between the Swan community and the Forest Service. Through the collaborative process, they are pushing the agency toward decentralization and a more participatory, democratic decision making process. They also believe they are re-empowering themselves by gaining influence in agency decisions about Swan valley lands.
Chapter V: The Swan Citizens' ad hoc Committee

The late 1980's were a contentious, volatile time in the Swan Valley. Forces seemingly beyond the control of local residents threatened to tear their community a part. For awhile, the Swan looked like just another battlefield in the archetypal “jobs versus the environment” war. The Ad hoc committee emerged, for some, as a direct response to the powerlessness they felt and the anger that feeling spawned. This chapter explores the history and process of the Ad hoc committee including its initiation, organization and composition. It describes and discusses the group’s purpose, accomplishments and struggles as seen through the eyes of its core members. The story of the Swan collaborative, from the perspective of those most heavily involved in it, illustrates three possible means of assessing the outcomes of collaboratives in general: as a means of building community well-being, as a participatory, democratic process and as a means of making ecologically sound decisions.

Polarization breeds Cooperation

The late 1980’s were also a period of economic stress in communities like the Swan valley. Nationally, the timber industry was in decline, and rural areas like the Swan were hard hit. Overall, more than 100,000 workers in the wood products industry lost their jobs during the 1980’s; mill employment, specifically, declined by 2% each year in the Pacific Northwest, even as production rose (Power, 1996). Regional predictions for the timber industry were no more favorable. Montana’s Northwestern region faced a 25% decline in its annual harvest while the western and southwestern regions showed declines of 24-39% (Flowers, et al, 1993). Closer to home, the valley’s local newspaper—The Seeley-Swan Pathfinder—painted an equally gloomy picture of timber’s future in the Swan. The volume of timber sold by the Forest Service in the Northern region was steadily dropping (Seeley Swan Pathfinder, 1987). Headlines proclaimed “More unemployment likely in timber industry” over stories that revealed sobering
statistics: 2,000-2,500 of the region's jobs would be lost to increasing mechanization and structural changes in the timber industry (Seeley Swan Pathfinder, 1987).

The timber industry, as it has throughout its boom and bust history (Clary, 1986), raised the threat of "timber shortages" because of a lack of access to National Forest timber. Sawmills in nearby Dillon and Darby Montana were closing because they couldn't purchase National Forest timber (Seeley Swan Pathfinder, 1988). When Pyramid Mountain Lumber, Inc. in Seeley Lake, an employer of some Swan valley residents, announced a reduction in the workforce at its mill, the Pathfinder's report began: "The long touted timber shortage is coming home to roost" (Noland, 1989). Pyramid's president warned: "The lack of a predictable and sufficient supply of timber will continue to be a threat to our mill and our jobs" (Noland, 1989). Reading the newspaper stories, it is easy to understand the fear that valley residents, employed by the wood products industry, felt.

At the same time, cries to protect the valley's remaining forests grew louder. From the same newspaper carrying the statistics of a declining timber industry, also came stories relating the mounting evidence of ecological degradation in the valley. Valley environmentalists grew increasingly concerned about the ecological and aesthetic impacts of past logging in the Swan. Large clearcuts visible from the highway drew sharp criticism for the threat they posed to the valley's scenic beauty (Vernon, 1987). Residents involved in the tourism industry worried that clearcutting would be detrimental to their livelihood. (Dahl, 1990). Homeowners around Lindbergh Lake galvanized to fight a Plum Creek logging operation on a section of lake shore owned by the timber company (Smith, 1989).

Beyond the aesthetic impacts of logging, residents and scientists suspected that the valley's rivers were suffering from past cutting practices. In 1987, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks released studies showing that the native westslope cutthroat trout had disappeared from the Swan River and instituted new fishing regulations. The state agency cited sediments and gravel from forest
road runoff as one factor in declining trout habitat (Vernon, 1987b). Sediment from a logging operation along Jim Creek washed into the stream, severely damaging its bull trout population (Schwennesen, 1990). None of this came as a surprise to residents, who had been raising the issue of declining fisheries in the Swan valley with Forest Service officials in public meetings for years (Vernon, 1987a).

The combination of economic uncertainty and environmental degradation can turn quiet neighborly communities into contentious and angry places. The Swan Valley was no exception. Residents responded with fear and anger to the news in *The Pathfinder*. Advocates of continued timber extraction and of the protection of the valley's remaining forests traded irate letters-to-the-editor. From 1987 to 1990, the community grew progressively more polarized. Residents on all sides of the issues were motivated to myriad forms of action. Mill workers and their families went to Missoula to demonstrate against Pat Williams' Wilderness bill. Their placards proclaimed: "HB 2090 locks out jobs!" and "To Hell with more wilderness, to (sic) many pay for a few to play" (Vernon, 1987c). Citizens for Awareness of Resources and the Environment (CARE), a wise-use group affiliated with Bruce Vincent's Communities for a Great Northwest, organized to educate the community about resource issues (confidential interview, 1996). Residents involved in the tourism industry formed Scenic 83 to advocate managing the highway for its scenic qualities. (Dahl, 1990). In 1987, Friends of the Wild Swan (FOWS), an environmental advocacy group headquartered in Swan Lake, launched their fight to preserve the Swan Valley. Led by Swan Lake residents, this group began successfully challenging logging and road building practices on state and federal public lands in the valley through administrative appeals and litigation (Friends of the Wild Swan, no date).

The Upper Swan community was embattled. Both sides staked out their positions, screaming accusations back and forth. Green wooden signs appeared at the end of driveways proclaiming "this family supported by timber dollars." Public meetings, addressing any natural resource issue, were packed, drawing 150-200 people to the Condon Community hall on several occasions.
(Woodruff, 1987; Dahl, 1990). These meetings are legend, described now as “disastrous ... with lots of screaming and yelling about logging, environmental issues, national forests decisions.” The hostility even reached the point where one local environmentalist allegedly received a death threat from a group going by the name V.E.T.S. (Victims of Environmental Terrorism and Subversion) (Vernon, 1990). Emotion ran high. As cliched as the war metaphor may be to describe environmental conflict, that was the atmosphere in the Swan Valley as the 1980s came to a close.

Amidst all this rancor, a few residents were sowing the seeds of what would become the Swan Citizens ad hoc Committee. A 1990 meeting sponsored by Scenic 83, a short-lived, local group advocating management of the highway corridor for scenic qualities, was a watershed event. Those who endured the marathon meeting, that featured speakers from FOWS and candidates in an upcoming election, began calling for an end to the polarization (Dahl, 1990). The Pathfinder carried a story about the meeting, capturing the sentiments of these battle weary residents. “I want to appeal to neighbors to be neighbors,” commented one resident (Dahl, 1990). Neil Meyer, a local logger who would become quite active in the Ad Hoc committee, observed, “We need to quit drawing lines between environmentalists and loggers. I’m an environmentalist” (Dahl, 1990). Finally, someone summed up the feelings of those weary of fighting quite simply: “we all need to work together on these things because we all want to live here” (Dahl, 1990).

Around this same time, a small group of people began meeting sporadically to discuss the complex issues confronting their community. This group, that would evolve into the leadership of the Ad hoc committee, was motivated by a desire to reduce the hostility and fear that permeated the valley. Today, when core members are asked why the Ad Hoc committee formed, the answer invariably mentions this polarization: “Those green signs sprouting up, antagonism among neighbors, between people who had previously been friendly; that hurt!” Their vision for easing the tension in the valley was proactive. According to a current core group member, Sue Cushman, “... it was an
attempt to prevent division in the community. It might be possible to have a diversity of views, come to middle ground, diminish radical feelings, meet people with different views."

Ecological concerns also motivated the Ad Hoc’s founders. Members of the group had been watching the progress of road building and timber harvest in the Swan. According to founding participant Bud Moore, "We began to fear that we’d screw up the habitat of the Swan badly trying to keep the mills going. We were afraid that in desperation to keep the money flowing we would damage what brought us here to live." They wanted to balance protection of the landscape with some means of earning a living in the valley.

These neighbors tackled what they saw as the most pressing issue -- the declining timber economy. Meeting in people’s homes, this small, self-appointed group began brainstorming alternative business ideas. In the words of Bud Moore: "... we needed to think through converting the economy to lesser dependence on timber. Right from the beginning we had the idea that we needed representatives from all the interests in the valley... we called together the ‘think group.’" In the fall of 1990, after about a year of informal meetings, a professional facilitator who lived in the valley volunteered his services. Alan "Pete" Taylor became the "neutral traffic cop" who kept people with diverse viewpoints talking rationally and listening to each other during the meetings. He initiated a strategic planning process to help the group define its role, and the Swan Citizens’ ad hoc Committee was born.

**Organization and Process**

The choice of the name—Swan Citizen’s ad hoc Committee (SChC)—shapes and reflects the committee’s purpose, structure, process, and membership. It captures some of the key attributes of this unusual “organization.” These characteristics of the committee influence the benefits and pitfalls that participating community members have encountered in their use of a collaborative process. This section describes the Ad hoc committee’s organizational purpose, structure and process.
Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary provides three definitions for the adjective *ad hoc*:

1. concerned with a particular end or purpose:
2. formed or used for specific or immediate problems:
3. fashioned from whatever is immediately available.

The group chose this adjective to describe itself because they intended to be a temporary group that would exist only as long as there was a need. Initially, the group’s initiators asked people to participate who they knew would be able to listen and discuss emotionally charged issues rationally. They chose a loose structure to ensure that no specific interests dominated and to enable anyone with an interest to participate.

By January 1991, brainstorming and strategic planning sessions produced a Mandate, Mission, and Goals statement that further defined the Ad Hoc Committee’s role in the community. The group presented this to other Swan Valley residents through a meeting with the Community Club and an article in *The Pathfinder*. The one-page document continues to guide issues tackled and actions taken by the group. Briefly, it states that:

this ad hoc group of citizens has a self-imposed mandate to: address the economic, environmental, and cultural problems related to the decline (in the valley’s natural resource base)” and to “suggest to the full community possible remedies that maintain or enhance economic livelihood and the quality of life in the Swan Valley (Swan Citizens’ ad hoc Committee, 1991).

The Ad hoc committee also seeks to “assist the community in resolving, collaboratively, the ... conflicts affecting the Swan Valley” (Swan Citizens’ ad hoc Committee, 1991). Naively, few thought this need would last as long as it has. The group explicitly excluded “serving as a spokesman for the community” as a role for the Ad Hoc according to meeting minutes (Swan Citizens’ ad hoc Committee, meeting minutes, 1991). While the founders sought to include the valley’s many diverse perspectives, they knew that they were not “representative” of the community as a whole. Thus, they wanted to make it clear they were not speaking for the community. Despite its attempts to foster
economic diversification, the group also felt it should not get involved in business either by starting a business or promoting one specific idea.

With the exception of the Mandate, Mission and Goals document, the Ad hoc committee has no formal structure. There are no by-laws or an official membership. There are no officers or designated responsibilities. Membership is open to anyone in the community, requiring no dues nor any explicit commitment of time. Again, this structure is intended to prevent any specific special interest from dominating the committee. As Alan Taylor explains “if you walk in the door you’re a member for as long as you want. There are no officers, no permanent fixtures.” As a result of this structure, I use the word “participants” rather than “members” in describing the people who compose the Swan Citizens’ ad hoc Committee.

The Ad Hoc committee strives to include the diverse perspectives and interests from throughout the valley in their meetings. At times, Ad hoc participants will invite specific individuals who they feel can speak for a particular viewpoint. This includes the spectrum of opinions within the local community as well as non-local stakeholders such as the Forest Service, Plum Creek and county government representatives. They also hope that their loose structure serves as an open invitation to anyone who wants to participate. Here, this collaborative effort walks a difficult line between being “representative” and inclusive of all the stakeholders. Valley residents who participate in the Ad hoc come as individuals, speaking their own concerns and beliefs; they are not acting as representatives of formal groups or organized constituencies. Yet, the Ad hoc strives to include all of the perspectives of all of the valley’s stakeholders. The challenges presented by this ambiguity will become clear later in the thesis.

Two simple ground rules guide the group: respectful listening to each participant, and consensus must be reached in order to advocate a specific

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1 In the fall of 1996, the Ad hoc subcommittee working to keep the USFS work center in Condon open incorporated as the non-profit Swan Ecosystem Center (SEC). While many of the Ad hoc core group are now on the board of directors of this organization, they envision SEC as a separate entity with a distinct purpose from the SCahC even though its roots are in the Ad hoc committee. Incorporating as a non-profit was necessary in order to form a partnership with the Flathead National Forest to keep the Work Center open.
position. Consensus is attained if everyone is comfortable with a decision that is reached; the group is usually asked if anyone objects to the decision that has evolved. The Ad hoc, as a group, has not taken very many specific positions in which consensus must be reached. The specific examples will be discussed in the later section describing tangible accomplishments. It is important to note that the SCahC’s fluid membership presents some specific challenges in regard to the consensus process. This point will be explored more fully in Chapter 6.

Meetings can be categorized as two types: general information sharing meetings and decisionmaking meetings. The weathered, log community hall in Condon often provides the setting for information sharing meetings. They are held roughly each month and are advertised in The Seeley Swan Pathfinder. Agendas are sometimes posted on bulletin boards located at the grocery store, the Community Hall and the Pasttime cafe. The agenda is developed by two volunteers serving as co-chairs in conjunction with the facilitator. At the end of each meeting, new co-chairs agree to put together the next meeting in order to ensure that this duty is shared among those who regularly attend the meetings.

Information sharing meetings usually involve presentations by land managers, public officials, or interest group representatives who serve as “resource people.” Presentations are followed by question and answer periods from the audience. The facilitator keeps track of time and ensures that questions and comments proceed in an orderly manner. A recorder keeps track of comments on large sheets of paper taped along the wall. This serves as the meeting record.

Information meetings often resemble a traditional public hearing and their primary function is public education. Agency officials use these meetings as an opportunity to inform the community about projects in the valley. Federal, state and county officials have all attended these information meetings to present projects and opportunities to the community. Non-profit land trusts and environmental advocacy groups as well as the University of Montana and representatives of Plum Creek Timber Company also present at these meetings.
Minutes are prepared based on the meeting record and sent to those on the mailing list along with the agenda for the next meeting.

Information sharing meetings do not generally engage community members in a dialogue amongst themselves. At the meetings I observed, participants sat in rows facing forward to the flip charts and the resource people. During the question and answer period, members of the audience have the opportunity to comment. However, it was often the same people who are the most outspoken with questions or to observations. Usually, these people were members of the core group. The comments offered by Swan residents during these meetings are challenging ones; participating individuals question and critique resource people based on their personal expertise with local community and ecological issues.

Attendance at the meetings I observed varied from approximately 20 people to over 45, depending on the agenda topic. Controversial topics, not surprisingly, draw larger crowds. Grizzly bear conservation and Plum Creek’s Land Use Plan in the wildlife linkage zones produced the largest turnout during the six month period in which I attended meetings. In contrast, a meeting about fire management in the valley drew only 22 participants, half of whom were agency personnel or other resource people. At the most recent Ad Hoc meeting, attended by approximately 40 people, 13 of those attending were representatives of the various county, state and federal agencies involved in Swan valley land management.

In contrast to these general meetings, decisionmaking meetings are conducted under a model of consensus labeled “facilitated community problem solving” (Johnson, 1993). In general, the goal of this type of facilitation is to empower local communities to solve their own problems. Unlike mediation or negotiation, this process does not involve maintaining and advocating for opposing viewpoints (Johnson, 1993). It involves bringing together “diverse interests to develop a common understanding of a problem and seek mutually beneficial solutions” (Johnson, 1993: p. 11). The outcome is supposed to be a “win-win” decision that accommodates everyone’s concerns.
These decisionmaking meetings involve a smaller subcommittee that agrees to tackle a specific issue presented in an information meeting. If a topic is identified as important enough to work on, volunteers agree to meet more regularly to resolve the issue. For example, one subcommittee of eight valley residents worked for the past two years to create the non-profit Swan Ecosystem Center which, in partnership with the Flathead National Forest, will ensure a continued agency presence at the Condon Work Station. Other subcommittees have addressed road closures and economic diversification.

These smaller meetings have a synergetic energy to them. Participants build on each others' ideas in a creative flowing dialogue that can take on a life of its own. For Neil Meyer, this energy partly motivates his continued participation because as he put it: "you get with those guys and discussions get so good sometimes!" In these meetings, the consensus process most clearly operates. Participants usually sit in a semi-circle and each individual is encouraged to offer their views. Anne Dahl describes the process this way:

... all problems from everybody's perspective are brought out, looked at over time and the right solution floats to the top somehow. It's like a friendly game of volleyball, not really competing, volleying back and forth— spirited at times, emotional but it doesn't get out of hand when it's working right. Finally, everyone just knows what the right answer is.

In the end, "everybody doesn't come out thinking the same but you do arrive at common thought. People are consistently civil even though they have divergent views."

The process depends on a workable number of people, part of the rationale behind using smaller subcommittees to work on specific issues. Through the collaborative process, a group of people learn as they work together to resolve an issue but no individual should compromise their core beliefs. An important tenet of this collaborative is that each person will maintain their own personal principles in order for it to function and work well. According to Anne Dahl:

It's important to maintain your own personal principles for it to function and work.... Over time principles will change up and
down the scale as you learn but you shouldn't stop expressing concerns to appease someone else's goal, to get something for some other place. It shouldn't become a trade-off system like government.

The distinction between compromise and consensus is a subtle but important one. How well participants maintain this line is a matter of perception and ultimately unmeasurable. Participant's ideas, values and opinions change and evolve as part of the collaborative process; whether this change represents a compromise of one's principals is open to question.

Representatives of non-local stakeholders, such as the US Forest Service, are not involved as frequently in subcommittee meetings. When they are, their role is clearly different than in information sharing meetings. They are not in the role of "expert," resource person; rather, they listen and offer an outsider's perspective as a participant in the dialogue.

In order to inform and involve the broader community not attending meetings, Ad Hoc committee participants attempt to "talk up" their activities among their neighbors. Using what they call the "dispersion model," participants try to engage the neighbors they meet in the grocery store or the post office in a dialogue about the committee's projects.

Despite the open invitation to the broader community, a core group of participants is clearly identifiable through their time commitment and the consistency of their participation. This core functions as the leadership of the Ad Hoc committee. Most of these core participants were among the founders of the Ad Hoc committee although some of the founding group no longer participate. Over the past 6 years of Ad hoc committee work, this core has evolved into a well-functioning group with a level of trust and understanding that can only develop over a long period of time. They describe themselves as "... a diverse group, one that can be friends now but couldn't for awhile. ... as you work together and discuss things you deepen a friendship and have lots in common." When residents, uninvolved in the collaborative, think of the Ad hoc committee, core group members are the people they think of.
Understanding the function of the Ad Hoc committee as well as the benefits and pitfalls of this collaborative process requires an understanding of the composition of this core group. The next section will present data on the livelihoods and length of residency of the core group as well as its members’ views on the problems confronting the Swan community. This will provide the background from which to evaluate the role of the Ad hoc committee in building community well being in the Swan valley. It will also frame the discussion of collaboration as a process of participatory democracy.

The Core Group

Because livelihood is a central struggle in the lives of Swan Valley residents, it is a good place to start this description of the core group’s composition. Once again, although the core group members participate as individuals rather than formal representatives of larger constituencies, their group theoretically is striving to be inclusive of the valley’s diverse perspectives. The livelihoods of the core group influence the community’s perceptions of the group and thus, at least somewhat, the group’s ability to be effective. Furthermore, some of the Swan’s “communities of interest” are defined by occupation. Thus, livelihood is one way of describing the Ad hoc core group’s inclusiveness. Tables 2 below provides some simple demographic data on the current occupations of core group members.

Table 2: Primary livelihoods of the Ad hoc core members (N = 9)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary livelihood:</th>
<th>N =</th>
<th>Percentage(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logging/ Wood products industry&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small business&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> 3 retired core members are, or were, involved in the wood products industry.

<sup>b</sup> one retired core member is also a small business owner.

<sup>c</sup> one retired core member was a teacher.
Of the nine core members, seven are retired from their primary occupation. The remaining two participants are self-employed piecing together several different projects and businesses to earn their living. Both retirement and self-employment have clear implications for participation in the collaborative. Both allow for flexible schedules that enable active, frequent participation. Retirement also provides people with a steady income source beyond wage labor, freeing people up for volunteer activities. These points will emerge even more strongly in the next chapter exploring the various community perspectives on the Ad hoc committee.

The category “retirement,” however, does not completely describe the livelihoods or the affiliations of the core group to the various communities of interest in the valley. Retired core group members do not “represent” the retired people in the valley. Two of the retired participants run small businesses that supplement their retirement, one of which is a small sawmill. In the Swan, retirement doesn’t mean the end of labor. In fact some chose this area to retire to for quite the opposite reason. Bud Moore says “I came here because I wanted to get back to ... hands-on work. ... I love to work the forest and wanted to do that....” The specific past or present livelihoods included in the core group are: outfitters, loggers, sawmill operators, artists, educators, Forest Service employees and tourism/recreation business owners.

Whether retired or not, core group members are concerned with the challenges of making a living in the Swan. Rod Ash observes: “It’s not an easy place to make a living. You have to figure out how to put together enough income ... to live here. It’s a struggle for younger folks.” In fact, ensuring that other valley residents can make a living in the valley is central to much of the work the core group does. Thus, while the majority are “retirees,” they do not represent or advocate for such a singular interest special interest. Rather they speak for their own interests and concerns as individuals who care about their community and its environment. For example, several core group members participated in the development of an economic diversification plan to lessen the valley’s economic dependence on timber harvests despite the fact that the
individuals involved would be relatively unaffected economically by the decline in timber.

The core group is composed of three women and six men. It is also worth noting that none of the core group members have children currently living at home. This, as will be seen in the next chapter, is another factor influencing Swan residents’ ability to participate in Ad hoc activities.

Finally, the length of residency of core group members also affects other residents’ perceptions of the Ad hoc committee. Table 3, on the next page, indicates years of residency for members of the core group. Five core group residents were seasonal residents during their first years in the valley but all nine core participants are now permanent valley residents. The importance of length of residency as a measure of legitimate participation in valley land use decision making stems from the perceived split in values and attitudes between “newcomers” and “old-timers.” Where this line is drawn is obviously subjective. The majority of core group members have lived in the Swan year-round for more than ten years. When their years as seasonal residents are added in, their commitment to the valley, in terms of time lived in the community, is even greater. Yet, as will be seen in the next chapter, some of their fellow community members still say they are “newcomers” apparently by virtue of the fact that most core members moved to the Swan from somewhere else.

Table 3: Length of residence of Ad Hoc core members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of residency</th>
<th>N =</th>
<th>Percentage° (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 5 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 -10 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 -15 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 - 20 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 - 30 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 - 40 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 40 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

°Percentages were rounded to nearest whole number

Because the general Swan community identifies the core group so strongly with the Ad hoc committee, the opinions of core members affect
perceptions about the collaborative’s work. The participation of people holding divergent views is also essential to a successful collaborative process. This inclusiveness, or lack of it, within the core group impacts the Ad hoc’s legitimacy both within the community, and in the committee’s relationship with the Forest Service. Thus, the attitudes and opinions of the core group members are presented here as another means of describing the composition of this core.

**Core Group Perspectives on the Swan Valley**

When asked to identify the biggest threat to the valley, all nine of the core group participants identified growth as their top concern. This problem of growth, and the development that comes with it, seems particularly intractable. As Anne Dahl put it:

> The biggest threat is if land is developed faster, development like the Bitterroot, like if Plum Creek sells. It would be worse than addressing the logging issues. People’s own willingness to recognize the threat..., willingness to accept limitation to personal goals in order to protect the good of the whole.

The reasons that core individuals give for growth being a threat are similar to those given by non-participating community members. They range from the loss of habitat and the valley’s rural atmosphere to rising property values and the different attitudes that newcomers bring.

As they talk about the issue of growth, core members articulate a complex understanding of the issue. They are sensitive to the range of perspectives on growth in a rural community. One retired core member said:

> ...now I have neighbors that I could reach if in trouble - when you’re getting older that’s real and positive. Negative aspects are crowding and the decrease/ loss of rural ambiance. I don’t

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2 The Ad hoc committee itself does not work on the growth issue. That responsibility, at least for the Missoula county section of the valley, falls to the Swan Valley Community Club which is recognized by Missoula county as the community’s voice on land use issues. A committee created by the Community Club recently completed a draft amendment to the Swan Valley-Condon Comprehensive plan using a collaborative process facilitated by Allan Taylor (see Draft Comprehensive plan Amendment, 1996). The draft presents goals and objectives to Missoula County to guide future growth in the valley. One member of the Ad hoc core group participated in the committee that drafted the amendment.
resent them moving in. They’re here for the same reasons I came ... people getting away from hectic city life.

Another notes that:

More people is going to change the face of the valley... ecologically and economically. With the value of property going up its making it harder for original people to stay here. As lands are developed its going to hurt the wildlife and trees and water.

The core group cannot be described as strongly anti-growth. They are concerned with protecting what they value about the valley including its open space, wildlife habitat and human community. Through their participation in collaborative problem solving, core members strive to balance economic and ecological needs.

Forest management, in the eyes of the core group, is the second biggest threat to the valley, and the Ad hoc committee’s work is most focused on this issue. The reasons forest management is seen as a problem range across the spectrum one might expect to find in a rural community with a history of dependence on the timber industry. According to retired logger and core member, Neil Meyer, the biggest threat is: “The inability of the Forest Service to manage the resource because of various concerns. ... There’s a misconception that we made a lot of mistakes. I don’t think we made any. It looks pretty good to me.” In contrast, Anne Dahl says “Extractive industries going at it too hard is still a threat as far as species loss. My quality of life will be diminished if all we have left are ravens, robins and white-tailed deer.” Other core members also noted an unsustainable rate of harvest, the loss of habitat, and the cumulative impact of roads and specific harvest practices in the valley as reasons that forest management is an ecological threat. The economic consequences of declining timber harvests also remain a top concern for core group members.

Finally, core members identified tourism and economics as interrelated threats to the community. Tourism brings development and more people to the valley, negatively impacting its rural atmosphere. Members also believe, as Sue Cushman notes, tourism “...doesn’t offer good paying jobs. Loggers and log haulers make money not the maid at Motel 8.” Despite the efforts of the Ad hoc
committee to identify ways to diversify the valley’s economy, earning a living in the valley remains difficult. While the core group members may be relatively economically secure, they continue to work on ensuring that other community members can provide for themselves as well. As Sue Cushman put it “A community should be more than one age group and if retirement income is the only income that’s tough.”

Throughout the interviews I conducted, the Ad hoc committee’s core members demonstrated a strong conservation ethic toward non-Wilderness Forest Service lands in the Swan valley. When Anne Dahl describes her view of the Forest Service’s role in the community, she says “I want them to be land stewards, to consider the whole and to make sure degradation doesn’t occur.”

Neil Meyer, who worked in the wood products industry for over thirty years, now says “... the forest hasn’t been maintained in historic condition—we may have overdone in the past, but now we’re underachieving—harvesting is only a part of management.” When asked how he would measure the success of this community-based collaborative, first on Bud Moore’s list is: “Are we helping the land?” and Mary Phillips says the valley “wouldn’t be degraded any more than its already been and the areas that needed help would be ... made healthy.”

The issues—growth, forest management, economics, and tourism—are the same ones that the non-participating residents interviewed listed as well. This congruence is evidence that, as Neil Meyer believes, the Ad hoc is “working on stuff that’s important for the community.” It is also evidence that core group members look beyond personal self interest. They are “... dedicating time and effort for the common good of others and the environment without political or economic motivation.” They strive to make the valley’s economy and environment mutually sustaining. The Ad hoc committee’s accomplishments over the past six years further illustrate this point.

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3 Here, the word conservation is used as Aldo Leopold defined it: “... a conviction of individual responsibility for the health of the land. Health is the capacity of the land for self-renewal. Conservation is our effort to understand and preserve this capacity” (Leopold, 1966: p. 258). For the core of the Ad hoc committee, conservation means that humans are considered “a part of, not apart from,” the ecosystem that surrounds them (Seeley/Swan Action team, 1993: p. 2-7).
The Ad hoc Committee’s Tangible Accomplishments

A great deal of effort has produced some tangible accomplishments that core group members point to with pride. Most of these successes illustrate the committee’s focus on the ecological and economic problems stemming from National Forest management in the valley. With the help of the University of Montana’s School of Forestry, the Ad Hoc committee spearheaded a community-wide survey of the Swan Valley’s human resources and its vision of the future in 1992 (Lambrecht and Jackson, 1993). The resulting community profile includes important demographic and skills information about the community of place that the Ad hoc serves. Nearly all Swan Valley residents in both Lake county and Missoula county were included in the census. The results continue to provide the Ad hoc committee with a foundation of understanding about their community. The survey indicated a community-wide desire to protect the Swan’s rural character and way of life (Lambrecht and Jackson, 1993); the Ad hoc committee is striving to accomplish this goal.

This survey contributed directly to the next accomplishment: the economic-diversification plan developed in conjunction with residents from the Seeley Lake area. Three core group members and three Seeley Lake residents worked with technical advisors from the US Forest Service and a Missoula-based regional economic development group to produce the plan. This 60 page document describes the 1993 status of the area’s economy, quality of life and environment as well as its “desired future conditions” (Action team, 1993). The Action Team developed a variety of potential opportunities for economic diversification that are in keeping with community goals of maintaining the rural character of the valley. The plan has seen limited implementation thus far, but it continues to inform and guide the Ad hoc committee’s work.

The survey and the economic diversification plan drew greater attention to the Ad Hoc committee’s work. The Missoulian, western Montana’s regional newspaper, called the Ad hoc committee “home-crafted democracy.” The Seeley-Swan Pathfinder carried several articles about the Jackson-Lambrecht survey to encourage community participation and to publicize the survey’s
results. The Northwest Policy Center, of the University of Washington in Seattle, included the Ad Hoc as a case study of a community successfully using collaborative process. Most recently, the Montana Consensus Council featured the committee in its brochure "Solving Community Problems by Consensus: A Celebration of Success Stories." This attention from beyond the valley has affected the committee's relationship with the broader community in some interesting ways, as will be seen later.

There are other tangible successes that did not earn quite as much outside notoriety. In 1992, the committee reached consensus that it would support the Forest Service acquisition of three sections of Plum Creek Timber land along Elk Creek. The Forest Service proposed the land exchange with Plum Creek to protect the pristine bull trout spawning habitat in upper Elk Creek. According to the proposed exchange, the Forest Service would trade similarly valued sections of land in the Squeezer Creek drainage for the Plum Creek sections along Elk Creek (Swan Citizens' ad hoc Committee meeting minutes, 1993). After gathering the position statements from all involved agencies, environmental groups and Plum Creek, as well as touring the Squeezer Creek site, the core group agreed to favor acquisition "through whatever means the parties involved can work out between them" (Swan Citizens' ad hoc Committee meeting minutes, 1993). Plum Creek had refused a direct sale of the property leaving the land exchange as the preferred alternative.4 Exactly what impact the Ad hoc committee's recommendation has had on the land exchange is unclear. However, the ability of the group to reach a consensus that meant removing some forest land from commercial use is, for those involved, a major accomplishment.

More recently, Ad hoc subcommittees have worked with the Flathead National Forest(FNF) on a number of local issues. They have gained some limited

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4 The proposed land exchange was appealed by Friends of the Wild Swan which opposed corporate acquisition of the old growth in the Squeezer Creek drainage because Plum Creek would harvest the timber. FOWS sees this exchange as "just trading unroaded old growth for bull trout" which is unacceptable from their perspective (Montgomery, personal communication, 1997). This is an example of an ongoing dynamic between the Ad hoc committee and FOWS that will be explored in chapter 7.
flexibility with road closures on Forest Service land in the valley. Select roads were opened for a 14-day period for residents to collect firewood. Another subcommittee, primarily composed of core group members, collaborated with the FNF on a “Forest Stewardship,” Ponderosa pine restoration project behind the Condon Work Center. This project used commercial logging to thin a 30 acre stand in order to restore the open parklike conditions of historic Ponderosa Pine forests in the Swan (Harris, 1995). The newly created Swan Ecosystem Center (SEC) is, perhaps, the most far-reaching of the Ad hoc committee’s tangible accomplishments. The subcommittee that tackled the threatened Work Center closure has established the SEC as a non-profit that will, among its many purposes, “represent the community in partnership with the Forest Service” (Bylaws of the Swan Ecosystem Center, Inc., 1996). Again, this effort mainly involved core group members during its initial planning phase.

The real benefits of collaboration

None of these tangible accomplishments rank, among core group members, as the Ad hoc committee’s most important achievements. Instead, the core group identifies benefits that are more difficult to quantify but have, perhaps, more to do with the long term well-being of their community. These accomplishments center around the relationships formed between the residents participating in the collaborative problem-solving process. They illustrate the Ad hoc’s contribution to building community capacity and stem directly from the context in which the Ad Hoc formed.

The green sign, proudly proclaiming “this family supported by timber dollars” at the foot of Neil Meyer’s driveway, has faded white, a symbol of what core group members feel is the Ad hoc’s most important accomplishment. Quite simply, they say the ad hoc has “... reduced the polarization amongst ourselves and to a degree beyond that.” Working together over the past six years fostered trust and understanding among this group of nine that started

5 This project was also unsuccessfully appealed by FOWS.
with such divergent views. They hope, and wonder if, this decreased animosity is filtering into the community as whole. As Anne Dahl sees it:

The period of animosity was making people scared. Now I see people starting to listen to each other again, a more stable community settling in.... The climate seems less adversarial, there’s more willingness to tolerate. We’ve learned to listen, to respect each other. Maybe it’s filtering into the community or maybe people gave up the fighting when they realized it didn’t get anywhere and go back to being the good neighbors they really are.

The trust and respect built through the process of collaboration form the foundation of all of the more tangible accomplishments. Now, core members know that if they miss a meeting, their perspective will still be considered by those who are there; they have come to understand each other’s beliefs this well. While difficult to list and evaluate as a concrete achievement, this trust and understanding are essential ingredients for continued success.

The collaborative process itself is, according to core members, the Ad hoc’s greatest success. Public meetings are no longer contentious shouting matches; participants are civil, listening to each other regardless of perspective. This, they believe, holds true for everyone attending Ad hoc meetings, not just the core group members. The meetings enable those community members, who choose to attend, to gather facts about contentious issues, and to hear from the diverse interests affected by and influencing federal land use decisions in the valley. Anne Dahl believes that

The most important accomplishment is a forum for rational discussion, an opportunity to lay all the facts on the table. Reaching consensus is less important than going through the process of learning all sides of the issue.... Its good to have to listen and acknowledge where others are coming from.

That people can come, voice their opinions, and be listened to is as significant an accomplishment as any on the tangible list in the eyes of the core participants. This, they believe, will ultimately be what protects the valley they love. According to Tom Parker, the Ad hoc has

... created an environment of positive community dialogue, helped to show people there was more common ground ... then
people realized. .. it brings out ... better thinking, less judgmental, rational, caring thinking rather than impulsive. ... listening tends to force you to give time to think before you speak. Takes out the reactionary, emotionally charged thinking.... The example of others who discipline themselves to calm rubs off on others.

Alan Taylor, the group’s facilitator, describes this as community-building. The Ad hoc committee, in Taylor’s view, is fundamentally about fostering the kinds of relationships and dialogue necessary for problem-solving. “If we could do a good job of that we could deal with putting some constraints on the overcrowding and habitat loss,” he says.

Finally, the core group believes the Ad Hoc has given the community invaluable contact with non-local interests wielding the decisionmaking power over the majority of land in the valley. The Flathead National Forest and Plum Creek Timber know that if there is something in the plans for the Swan Valley, they had better inform the community because of the core group’s activism. Usually, an Ad Hoc meeting is their venue. In March of 1996, a Plum Creek representative attended a general meeting to address rumors that the company was selling off some of its lands in the valley. The Swan Lake District ranger routinely brings his staff down from Bigfork to inform participants of projects planned for the valley. As a result, core members believe the Ad hoc has “... given those who are willing to participate more influence on land agencies and ownerships.” Rod Ash hopes that:

Contacts with Plum Creek and the Forest Service might give a little more control over our destiny that other isolated communities might not have. We all know lots of decisions will get made outside of the valley but now we have contacts. That’s important to a community whether everybody realizes it or not.

If the numbers of non-local stakeholder representatives attending Ad hoc meetings are any indicator, the Ad hoc is definitely gaining influence. At the meetings I observed, there were usually ten to fifteen representatives of agencies and interest groups such as the Flathead National Forest, Plum Creek Timber Company, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks and the Montana Department of Natural Resource Conservation.
Many of the Ad hoc’s tangible accomplishments, to date, have hinged on the Flathead National Forest’s willingness to include the participants in Forest Service decisionmaking in a different way than typical public participation procedure. For example, the Ponderosa pine project involved core group members in deciding which trees to harvest and in the ongoing monitoring of the project’s ecological effects. The continued long-term success for the Ad hoc committee will hinge on their ability to influence the non-local interests that make land use decisions. The degree to which the Forest Service, for example, shares decision making power with Ad hoc participants, as it did in the Ponderosa pine project, will turn the intangible benefits into tangible accomplishments. For, as Tom Parker sees it, one of the primary benefits of the Ad hoc is “the transfer of power from government to people.”

This statement of Parker’s reflects one of the beliefs shared by core group members and it is one that continues to motivate their participation. While they are not after local control of National Forest lands, core group members do want a greater voice in decisions than local people currently feel they have. This is where the Swan valley collaborative can be seen as an exercise in participatory democracy in Forest Service decision making. All of the core group members believe that local residents should have a greater voice throughout the Forest Service decisionmaking process. As Neil Meyer describes it traditional public participation procedures have resulted in the Forest Service paying “... the most attention to the noisiest without asking everyone. The people having input now are doing it from a personal, individual level, not broader.” They see the Ad hoc and its relationship with the Swan Lake Ranger District as an important step in changing this dynamic in which special interests dominate the process by involving local people more meaningfully.

The core group clearly understands that increasing the influence and involvement of local residents in decision making about the federal lands they live in close proximity to is an inherently contentious issue. They believe that in order for it to work the diverse communities of interest must be included. Just as they strive to balance the economic and environmental issues in the valley, the
Ad hoc core group walks a narrow line between national and local interests. When asked about the public's role in Forest Service decision making, Rod Ash says

A local community, if it's a responsible one, ought to have more influence on decision-making. That's tough because the forests belong to everybody but if you've got a community that's representing diverse points of view they can work things out sensibly....

Anne Dahl echoes this when she says "It would worry me if an unbalanced citizens group was helping the Forest Service to make decisions. We have to always keep the national interest in mind." Thus, core group members see the inclusion of diverse perspectives as central to achieving the goal of greater local participation with the underlying assumption being that if all the diverse local perspectives are involved, national interests will be looked after.

The Ad hoc committee's focus on the local community problems stemming from Forest Service decisions has given the core participants the sense that their voice counts, that they are making a difference. The feeling of empowerment fosters continued involvement. Anne Dahl describes her reasons for participating this way:

... it was... about residents working together to decide the future before disaster brings the government in to tell us how to do it. I am uncomfortable with stone throwing—looking for solutions versus just complaining is important to me.

If there is one view the core group shares it is a desire to be proactive about the changes confronting the Swan Valley. As Dahl continues to explain "we are actively helping the Forest Service decide what needs to be done. In the past we were reacting to the Forest plan." Core members feel that their persistent efforts have built some real influence with the Forest Service; they have developed a close and positive working relationship with the Swan Lake district ranger.

The hard work aimed at being proactive is producing some important results such as: greater influence for these Swan residents in land management decisions and a reduction in the polarization of the late 1980s. However, the Ad
hoc is not without its challenges and they are as instructive about the collaborative process as are its successes.

**Challenges**

The main challenge presently confronting the Ad hoc committee, according to its core members, is its ability to involve new people and new ideas to ensure the continued participation of the diverse perspectives within the community. Remaining inclusive of, and sensitive to, the valley’s divergent communities of interest is central to the Ad hoc’s continued success. Core members identify three issues that they feel combine to affect the general community’s participation in the Ad hoc committee.

First, the informal structure that defines the Ad hoc potentially contributes to the lack of participation of some of the valley stakeholders. According to Alan Taylor, “... the downside of the structure is ... you don’t have someone in charge of getting the word out and advertising meetings like we should.” While meeting agendas sometimes get posted around town, it is inconsistent. *The Pathfinder*, when the Ad hoc was first getting started, published stories about its mission and purpose, but they are now five years old. As a result, core participants are concerned that the community at large is unaware of its projects, accomplishments and purpose.

Secondly, the time consuming nature of the collaborative process also makes maintaining and fostering broad participation a challenge. Each core group member has put in, literally, thousands of volunteer hours working on Ad hoc projects. This time commitment presents, as Rod Ash describes it, “... the problem of people getting tired out—there’s a limited amount of leadership in any community. ... There’s a point where you start running out of steam. We’re not doing a good job of recruiting younger folks to get involved as older ones start running out of steam.” Core group members are concerned that working community members, with families, are largely uninvolved in Ad hoc activities. In a process that depends upon broad participation, attrition, as participants move on to other interests or tire of meetings, also has a large impact on maintaining a
diversity of perspectives. If a participant who brings a unique perspective drops out, the Ad hoc has no specific mechanism for ensuring the continued inclusion of this perspective.

A third aspect of the participation challenge involves the group dynamic of the core itself. Over six years of working together, the core has become comfortable and confident with each other and the collaborative process in general. They have built a level of trust and understanding among themselves that can be subtly, and unintentionally, exclusive of newcomers. Anne Dahl observes of the core group she is a part of: "... we have evolved to the point of working together too smoothly— we’re more a like than we were at the beginning." As perspectives shift, through the learning and trust building that are a part of collaboration, participants can become increasingly like-minded. Over time, they may cease to represent the diversity of perspectives they originally sought to include.

Understandably, core group members have a great deal of ownership in the projects and accomplishments of the Ad hoc. In the meetings I observed, this ownership contributed to the impression that the core group, and therefore the Ad hoc, is its own, defined group rather than broadly open to the community. This is reflected in the language that core group members sometimes use to describe their efforts in general Ad hoc meetings, often referring to "our group" in describing ongoing projects to other, less frequent, participants. Here is a subtle contradiction to the premise that by walking in the door anyone becomes a member of the Ad hoc. As a result of their familiarity with the process, core members also tend to dominate the general meetings. Based on my meeting observations, core members speak up to question resource people roughly two to three times more often than other participants. This is, at least partly, due to the fact that the core group attends in higher numbers, but it is also influenced by their comfort level speaking openly with each other. The unintentional evolution of a core group that can dominate the collaborative process raises important questions about the democratic aspects
of collaboration as well as the Ad hoc’ contribution to the well-being and capacity of the broader Swan community.

The core group is concerned about broad participation because it clearly impacts their ability to speak for the community. However, the reasons people chose not to participate in meetings or projects are complex and may prove beyond the control or influence of the core group. The next chapter, through its discussion of some of the community’s diverse perspectives on the Ad hoc committee and its efforts to affect National Forest management issues in the Swan, will explore this question of participation more fully.

**Summary**

Several key points emerge from this portrait of the Swan Citizens’ ad hoc Committee through the eyes of its leadership. This collaborative emerged from the extreme polarization that existed in the Swan in the late 1980s. Born of conflict, the Ad hoc represents an attempt to resolve some of the valley’s contentious natural resources issues in a different way—one that rests on deliberately bringing together divergent perspectives in dialogue rather than debate. The goal is not total victory over opposing views but a synthesis that benefits both the community and the environment.

The Swan Citizens’ ad hoc Committee is a fundamentally grassroots effort, driven by volunteer labor. The residents that make up the core leadership of the Ad hoc came together because of their shared concern for the place and the community that they live in. Community and place are the common ground on which they have built their collaborative effort. This process has built strong relationships between people who initially held divergent views on the issues confronting their community.

From the perspective of those most heavily involved in the Ad hoc, the committee’s work has successfully reduced the level of polarization in their community and has empowered them with greater influence in Forest Service decision making about its Swan valley lands. These are two important measures of success for this collaborative group, contributing to building both a community of place in the Upper Swan and democratic decision making within the Swan
Lake Ranger District. A third, and final, measure of success is captured in Bud Moore's guiding question: “Are we helping the land?” Rod Ash describes this ecological criterion a bit more concretely when he says success would mean “… to look at the Upper Swan Valley as a unit, to do things that would protect the land and sustain the community.”

If, as both my conversations with core group members and the literature on collaboratives suggest, these efforts are about building communities of place and bringing participatory democracy to land management decision in order to sustain rural communities and ecosystems, then those who don’t participate hold important pieces to this complex puzzle. The perspectives of Swan residents who are not heavily involved in the Ad hoc committee help shed light on the outcomes this collaborative. As observers and potential beneficiaries of the Ad hoc’s collaborative efforts, these residents also help point the way toward a means of assessing the outcomes as well.
Chapter VI:
Community Perspectives: Voices from the sidelines

This chapter is about some of the Swan Valley residents who are largely uninvolved in the Ad hoc committee’s efforts. While Ad hoc core group members do not speak for the Swan Valley community as a whole nor represent the valley’s diverse communities of interest in any formal, organized capacity, they are striving to serve, and include, the residents of this “community of place.” Therefore, the perspectives of valley residents who remain outside of the collaborative process provide important insights into the Swan collaborative’s outcomes. These voices further illustrate the Ad hoc committee’s efforts in terms of: building community well-being, participation in US Forest Service decision making, and ecological sustainability in the Swan valley.

The individuals interviewed for this chapter were not selected by random sample and thus, their opinions and perspectives cannot not be interpreted as “community opinion” regarding the Ad hoc committee or any of the issues confronting the Swan valley community. The perspectives of these residents are, however, instructive about the benefits and outcomes, that they see, of the Ad hoc’s collaborative process as well as the obstacles encountered. This chapter explores: non-participating residents’ perceptions of the Ad hoc committee’s process, outcomes and benefits, their reasons for remaining uninvolved in Ad hoc activities, their critiques of the Ad hoc committee and the implications of these perspectives for the Swan collaborative’s success. First, however, we begin with a more thorough profile of these residents.

Who are the “uninvolved” in this study?

The Ad hoc Committee’s fluid membership makes “non-participant” a tricky category to define since anyone who comes to a meeting is technically a member. Meeting attendance, as a measure of participation in the collaborative, is constantly evolving with new people walking into the log Community Hall each time a meeting is held. In total, I spoke with 38 Swan
residents who are not part of the Ad hoc’s core group. Of this total, 12 said they occasionally go to general meetings but aren’t active participants. These residents usually do not serve as meeting co-chairs or on subcommittees, and they also rarely speak during the meetings they attend. They describe themselves as “outsiders,” and do not consider themselves part of the Ad hoc’s leadership.

I also interviewed 26 residents who, at the time of their interview, said that they never attended Ad hoc meetings. Several of these people have, however, shown up at general meetings since their interviews. Thus, it is important to remember that this collaborative is a living, evolving process especially when considering the critiques offered by these residents as well as their perspectives on participation. This cluster of 38 interviews includes twenty-five men and thirteen women.

While this group of Swan residents doesn’t attend Ad hoc committee meetings regularly, many are involved in other community activities. I spoke with residents who are, or have been, involved in: the Quick Response Unit (the valley’s Emergency Medical unit), the American Legion, the Community Club’s comprehensive planning effort, the Saddle Club, the school board and other school related activities, various church groups, and other natural resource issues related groups. Thus, these residents are not necessarily “non-joiners” who never participate in any community group.

Tables 4 and 5 show the primary livelihoods and length of residence in the Swan valley for those residents I interviewed who are not part of the Ad hoc core group. Again, this group of interviews is not necessarily inclusive of all of the communities of interest or perspectives in the Swan valley. However, the people I interviewed offer a multitude of perspectives as illustrated by their various livelihoods, community activities, and differing lengths of residency.

A comparison between Table 4 below and Table 2 in chapter 5 reveal an important fact about the livelihoods of those who don’t participate in the Ad hoc committee and the core group members. Swan residents who are employed by someone else are largely uninvolved in Ad hoc activities, raising important questions about the core group’s inclusiveness of differing valley
Table 4: Primary Livelihoods of study participants not regularly participating in the Ad hoc committee (N=38)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Livelihood</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>32.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logging/ Wood products industry</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small business</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> includes artists, nonprofits and out of valley employment

<sup>b</sup> Percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number

Table 5: Length of residence of study participants not regularly participating in the Ad hoc Committee (N=38)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of residence</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 5 years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10 years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20 years</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;40 years</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> The one seasonal resident interviewed was not included in this total.

<sup>b</sup> Percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number.

perspectives. If only those who are retired or have the flexible schedule of the self-employed, what does this mean for a collaborative’s ability to involve the broad spectrum of interests in a community of place? This fundamental question is explored throughout this chapter.
The benefits as seen from the sidelines

Despite choosing to remain largely uninvolved, the Swan residents I spoke with identified some definite benefits of the Ad hoc’s collaborative efforts for the Swan community. Their perspectives on the Ad hoc committee’s accomplishments suggest that the most widely recognized outcome of this collaborative is its contribution to community well-being. From the perspective of the residents I spoke with, the two biggest benefits include: providing an opportunity for the diverse segments of the community to come together to share and discuss their concerns, and secondly, gaining greater influence or control over the decisions that affect the valley’s future. Table 5 summarizes, in simple categories, the benefits that this group of residents identified during my interviews.

The label “community forum” does not completely describe this benefit as seen by non-participating Swan residents. During their interviews, several residents elaborated on this role that the Ad hoc committee plays in the community. One occasional participant, who is an avid environmentalist,

Table 6: Benefits of collaboration according to Swan residents interviewed in this study. (N=47)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group:</th>
<th>N =</th>
<th>Provides a Community forum (%)</th>
<th>Gains influence or control over valley’s future(%)</th>
<th>Specific projects (%)</th>
<th>Unable to identify any benefits (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Core Group</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasional Participants</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonparticipants</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Total interviews:</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number

described the Ad hoc as “... a democratic process to get people involved to discuss issues, to try to come to solutions.” A woman, who was raised in the Swan, believes “One of the positive things is the fact that there’s a place if anyone has a concern, you can take it to them. For someone who doesn’t like government, that’s what it would be ....” Finally, another non-participant said:
Main benefit? I think I see it as making people aware that there are problems. ... The beautiful thing is getting various groups ... together to talk things over without pulling hair or throwing rocks, which is a big accomplishment.

Thus, even if they remain on the sidelines, relatively uninvolved in the collaborative process, many of the residents I interviewed find value in the simple act of dialogue.

These residents believe that their community will benefit, in the long term, from bringing residents with divergent perspectives together to discuss, and maybe resolve, some of the challenges facing the Swan Valley. One woman, who described the Ad hoc’s efforts as a “public forum,” believes that “A greater sense of ‘we’re all in this together’ tends to make for more cohesion between parties, more communication and spirit.” This vision of the Ad hoc committee as a place for community dialogue supports the idea that community well being is one of the primary outcomes of collaboratives such as the Ad hoc. Even the non-participating residents that I interviewed, see this dialogue as a means to understanding each others’ perspectives and responding to the changes facing the Swan community.

Many of these residents also see the Ad hoc’s potential as a means to gain more influence in decisions about valley lands made by outside interests such as the US Forest Service and Plum Creek Timber Company. In a community that strongly favors local government,¹ the Ad hoc committee represents an effort to gain some access to decision makers even for those residents who chose not to participate. According to one non-participant, the main benefit of the Ad hoc is that the group is “enabling people of the valley to have some control over the direction the valley will move.” She adds that “Whether people take that opportunity is up to them, but at least its there.” A life-long valley resident, who quit participating primarily because of time, says that ...

¹ 73% responded favorably to the statement “Local people should have the most say about using public lands in the valley” in the 1993 community survey (Lambrecht and Jackson, 1993).
Some of these residents hope that this influence will extend beyond the Forest Service as well. One non-participant, who is deeply cynical about public participation in general, still hopes that: "If it creates a little twinge of consciousness about whether to agree with clearcutting, maybe it’ll put pressure on Plum Creek at the top to not butcher the place. That’d serve some purpose."

Based on the non-participants I spoke with, greater influence in local land use decision making, either Forest Service or Plum Creek land, is a hoped for outcome of the collaborative process. Whether the Ad hoc has gained real influence and power for the general community is still an open question. While core group members feel more empowered than in the past, at least in regard to Forest Service decisions, there is a fair amount of cynicism among the occasional and non-participating residents I interviewed about the value of participation in Ad hoc committee efforts to affect Forest Service decision making. This cynicism is explored more fully later in this chapter. For now, it is important to point out the hope that the Ad hoc committee may enable the community to have a greater influence in decisions about federal lands in the Swan. Again, the views of these residents support the idea that the Ad hoc’s outcomes can be best understood in terms of building community well-being and participatory democracy in the Swan Valley.

Several residents, who are not in the core group, offered a concrete example of the Ad hoc committee’s contribution to community well-being. This incident provides anecdotal evidence that the collaborative process can build “community capacity” in the Swan Valley. In April 1996, budget cuts on the Flathead National Forest meant that Swan Lake district Ranger, Chuck Harris, was unable to renew a private contract with two Condon residents to continue as backcountry rangers managing the Mission Mountain Wilderness (Schwennesen, 1996). A group of Swan valley residents, led by core group member Anne Dahl, raised private funding to help the Forest Service employ the Mission Wilderness rangers after Harris announced the cutback at a Condon
meeting. One woman, who occasionally attends Ad hoc committee meetings, believes that

Because the organizational basis existed people have picked up the ability and the confidence to react and respond to the Wilderness crisis. If the Ad Hoc hadn't existed, we may not have had the ability to turn out for that meeting with Chuck.

Six other residents mentioned this meeting, and the speed with which residents were able to organize a response, during my interviews. While the fundraising for the Wilderness ranger positions was not an Ad hoc Committee project, several of the residents I spoke with saw individuals' experience working collaboratively with the US Forest Service as an important factor enabling this group of residents, concerned with the Mission Wilderness, to respond quickly to more Forest Service cut backs in the valley. These residents clearly viewed this organizational capability, and knowledge of working with the agency, as an asset to their community.

Despite the apparent support for community dialogue and increasing local influence in Forest Service decisions among those I interviewed, it is significant that 21% of these residents could not identify any concrete beneficial outcomes of the Ad hoc committee’s efforts. Several of these residents said they didn’t know what the Ad hoc did or had accomplished. As one man described it:

Its accomplishments, I don’t really know of any. I think its purpose is fantastic. ... I think their intentions are good, they’ve got ... good ideas. ... I lost faith in them because I couldn’t see that they did anything but talk.”

Only five percent cited any of the tangible accomplishments discussed in chapter 5. The few people who did mention tangible outcomes pointed to the economic diversification work that core group members were involved in early in their collaborative efforts. One non-participant specifically said “...the diversification, working long and hard on that to come up with other ways to employ the loggers who are out of work because of Forest Service shut downs” was an important benefit. However, she then went on to say “it hasn’t been seen to its fullest extent because they haven’t been able to implement it...”

According to a valley business man I spoke with, the Ad hoc is “... trying to
find ways to keep people gainfully employed without destroying the environment." Another occasional participant listed the Ponderosa Pine project among the Ad hoc committee tangible outcomes saying "... at least they’re trying to show that timber harvest can be accomplished to the nondetriment of old growth." These are the only references made by non-core group members to any environmental outcomes of the Ad hoc’s collaborative efforts. However, even these “outsiders” see the collaborative’s environmental goals as fundamentally about integrating ecological protection with economic opportunity.

Judging from my conversations with these 38 non-participating Swan residents, many are either unaware of the tangible accomplishments of the Ad hoc or do not see those projects as the main benefits of this collaborative. Potential ecological benefits or criteria were largely absent from these conversations. Instead these residents emphasized the community building and participatory democracy outcomes as ways in which the Ad hoc is beneficial to the community as a whole. That dialogue and power/influence in federal lands decision making are “process” oriented outcomes may affect participation in the Ad hoc’s efforts because they are difficult to measure in any concrete way. Understanding the reasons behind these residents’ lack of participation in the collaborative is what we turn to next.

**Participation: Getting local “Communities of Interest” to the table**

For those who occasionally chose to go to Ad hoc committee meetings, the motivations are fairly straightforward: They go if the issues on the agenda are of interest to them or if they are specifically asked to come by a core group member. One couple, who had been asked to attend a meeting that was expected to be contentious, agreed that “...we go more for support - they wanted all the community support they could get.” For these residents, the Ad hoc general meetings are educational, providing a source of information about natural resource issues in the valley. They are drawn by specific resource people speaking on topics they want to learn about. These are the same motivations that drew them to US Forest Service public meetings in the past, as well. In the
meetings I observed, these residents tended not to participate in discussion or question and answer sessions with the resource people. Instead, they listened quietly. That these occasional participants attend meetings to learn probably contributes to their less active participation in Ad hoc projects and dialogue.

The reasons behind individuals’ choices not to participate are more instructive as far as their perceptions of the Ad hoc and its collaborative process. They also point toward some of the challenges the Ad hoc faces in achieving both its community building and participatory democracy outcomes. Table 7 lists the primary reasons given for not participating in the Ad hoc Committee during my interviews with Swan residents. Both occasional participants and non-participants are included in the total number of interviews.

Table 7: Reason cited for not participating in Ad hoc committee meetings by study participants (N=34)°

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for not participating:</th>
<th>N =</th>
<th>Percentage listing this as their primary reason (%)°</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Too busy</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know what the Ad hoc is or does</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cynicism about Ad hoc’s purpose/accomplishments</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not a joiner/don’t like meetings</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t agree with some aspect of the Ad hoc’s work</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otherb</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

°Four people attended meetings regularly enough that they did not give a reason for not participating.

bIncludes: poor health and issues don’t pertain to their lives.

°Percentages rounded to the nearest whole number.

Many of those interviewed simply felt too busy meeting the demands of daily life to participate in the time-consuming collaborative process. As one woman, who initially attended meetings but eventually dropped out, said:

I quit because the meetings just go on and on .... Then they’d have projects in between - we were just too busy to be involved in all of that. And most of them in Ad hoc don’t have other jobs - most of them are retired or they can set their own schedule. So its different when they take on a project.
The residents I interviewed cited long work days, particularly if they are involved in the wood products industry, and family obligations as factors contributing to their inability to be involved with the Ad hoc committee. Many of those interviewed, including core group members, noted that the majority of the valley's logging community does not attend Ad hoc meetings at least in part because of their work schedules.

Another common reason for not participating was a general distaste for meetings. Several residents said simply “I’m not a joiner or a meeting goer.” Others said that “When we moved here, we decided we weren’t going to get involved in those things any more.” For these residents, moving to the rural Swan Valley was a way to “get away from it all,” including being involved in potentially contentious public meetings. This should not be interpreted as apathy, or a lack of concern for the Swan, however. During my conversations with Swan residents, even those who labeled themselves “not joiners” also said they were involved in community activities such as the comprehensive planning committee or donating time and goods for local benefits. They also shared very definite, well-developed, opinions about issues confronting their community, especially those related to land management.

While “I’m too busy” or “I’m not a joiner” were often the quick first responses to the question “Why don’t you participate?” it became clear, as my conversations with Swan residents continued, that their reasons were more complex. Most of the residents I spoke with revealed more than one reason for their choice to remain uninvolved in the Ad hoc’s efforts. A general cynicism about public participation and philosophical disagreements with the Ad hoc committee’s work underlie the time constraints felt by many of the residents I interviewed.

Cynicism about the worth of the Ad hoc’s effort ran deep among the residents I interviewed who don’t regularly participate. One man, working in the valley’s tourism industry, put it bluntly:

To be perfectly honest, I don’t know what those things accomplish. As far as I’m concerned, it’s people out of the valley that will make the decisions. Government, business, they will do as they please. It’s just a typical scenario—out of state industry trying to force
things down our throats and they don’t know a thing about living here and they don’t care.

Others expressed their cynicism about the Ad hoc committee’s potential to accomplish anything with comments such as “Too much talk and not enough action from what I observed.” Again, those who are not regular participants don’t see many tangible, on-the-ground accomplishments resulting from Ad hoc efforts. Thus, they question the value of their participation in the collaborative’s efforts.

However, this cynicism has a second, more general source as well. As a result of past experiences with land management decision making, many of the people I interviewed fundamentally doubt that local citizens can have any influence on these decisions. They are deeply cynical about public participation, in general, not just the Ad hoc committee’s efforts at collaboration. One man, when I asked what he saw as the public’s role in US Forest Service decision making, replied “I see the public as having no role unless you’re part of a group willing to bring lawsuits to further a political agenda or you’re in with political figures.” Another man, who once worked for the Forest Service, said “Having been in on public scoping meetings in the agency where they’ve discussed the decision that’s already been made, we throw scoping letters in the garbage because we know the decisions been made.” The belief that agency officials have already made the decision by the time they seek public input is carried into Ad hoc general meetings. Because these meetings closely resemble traditional public involvement meetings conducted by the US Forest Service, they provide the cynics with little evidence that the status quo has changed. A woman, who has attended a few Ad hoc meetings to hear agency representatives speak, said:

I’d just get frustrated, like with the grizzly issues. Maybe it’s because I didn’t feel like it would make a difference. There was no way anything we said would change it. At that point, it’d only be information about how things are going to affect us.

This perception contributes to her current lack of participation in the Ad hoc committee.
The feeling of powerlessness, specifically in regard to Forest Service
decision making in the Swan, distinguishes residents who are not regular
participants in the Ad hoc from the core group more than any other
characteristic that emerged from my interviews. These residents don’t
necessarily feel powerless to influence the Ad hoc committee itself, but they do
feel that private citizens are unable to affect government in general and the
Forest Service specifically. As one non-participant put it: “The Forest Service
being the government would always ask for people’s opinion and then turn
around and do whatever they wanted anyway.” Here, the academic critiques
of public participation explored in chapter 2 become on-the-ground reality.
Many of the Swan residents I interviewed, who are not part of the Ad hoc core,
clearly believe they will not be able to play a meaningful role in Forest Service
decision making. The powerlessness, for now, is reinforced in the minds of these
residents by a perceived lack of tangible outcomes of the Ad hoc’s
collaborative efforts, and influences their decisions about participating in these
efforts.

There are also residents who do not participate in the Ad hoc because
they disagree either with the committee’s work or the values that they perceive
the core group to hold. One woman, who occasionally participated early in the
Ad hoc’s efforts, said

I had a really hard time ... because it was mostly made up
of preservationists, wanting to lock things up. And I do have a
problem with locking things up. I guess that was one of the things
that made me a little leery of getting involved in Ad hoc.

Another occasional participant disagreed with Ad hoc efforts for exactly the
opposite reason. According to him:

The last meeting I went to was talking about Forest Stewardship
but the bottom line was they were cutting trees. ... To me it was like
they were there to try to appease, to get everybody together to say
its OK to cut trees. It was a move to get rid of the dissent.

Finally, a logger, who does not participate, complained: “I do not like that sort of
meeting where you try to get a whole bunch of people to agree about
something. ... Environmentally leaning people in there made a lot of strides that
they’re trying to poke down other people’s throats.”
That people who disagree with Ad hoc work have dropped out as participants, or chose not to become involved at all, raises important questions about the Ad hoc’s efforts at inclusiveness as well as its consensus based process. Does the collaborative process attract groups of like-minded people? Does it marginalize those with opposing views with its emphasis on rational, “civil” dialogue and consensus? If those who disagree simply drop out or don’t participate, what are the implications for the Ad hoc’s efforts at community building and participatory democracy? The next section develops and illustrates these questions further as it explores some critiques of the Ad hoc committee.

**Critiques of the Ad hoc**

Several critiques of the Ad hoc committee emerged from my series of interviews with Swan valley residents who remain outside of the core group. While these critiques present important insights into the outcomes and challenges of collaboratives such as the Ad hoc committee, they should not be inflated to indicate widespread reproach. In fact, many of the same people who voiced these criticisms also recognized the community benefits described above. The individuals I spoke with often presented the critiques as complaints they had heard from their neighbors. For example, one non-participant said “I hear a lot of people moan about it being an elitist thing. I don’t think that at all.” Other residents qualified their criticisms of the Ad hoc with comments such as “In turn, we should be there to change it if we don’t agree.” These qualifiers may be the result of individual reluctance to be completely honest during their interview as well as a general hesitancy to criticize the hard work of their neighbors. Because these critiques were, at times, presented third-hand, I haven’t made an effort to quantify the prevalence of these opinions among the residents I spoke with. Again, while not representative of “community opinion” about the Ad hoc committee, the various critiques I heard during my interviews are presented here because of the questions they raise about this collaborative’s outcomes.

One of the primary criticisms leveled at the Ad hoc committee by the residents I spoke with is that it is an exclusive, like-minded group. Forty-three percent of the people I spoke with mentioned that some Swan residents see the
core group as "their own little group" with a shared identity based on specific interests or values. However, exactly what this shared identity is varies. Several residents complained that "... it gets a little one sided, from the retired point of view - they have time to do everything and don't have to rely on (the) economy of living here." Others feel that the Ad hoc is composed of "newcomers." One logger found it problematic that he knew of "Only one Swan Valley native on (the Ad hoc) and he didn't spend his whole life in the valley."

Another apparently common, and for these residents, troubling, perception of the core group is that it is full of environmentalists. According to one man, who does occasionally participate "The leadership is centralized, environmentally oriented and narrow." In the eyes of a valley logger, "Environmentally leaning people in there made a lot of strides that they're trying to poke down other people's throats." According to another non-participant, "... a number of people don't go to the Ad hoc because they figure they're trying to shut them out of the woods." Thus, despite the core group's expressed efforts to find ways to integrate economic and environmental goals, some members of the community see only the environmental focus.

When it comes to being perceived as an environmental group, the Ad hoc core can't win. For the individuals who said the group is too environmentally oriented, there were also those who said the Ad hoc is not enough of an environmental group, especially when it comes to the work they have done with the Forest Service. One valley native, who does not participate, says

I perceive the Flathead Forest as interested in only timbering what little is left of the Swan Valley's forests, doing it a few acres at a time with the blessings of the Ad hoc which makes this a group of traitors in my view.

After hearing these two diametrically opposed perspectives on the core group's environmental values, it appears that by reducing the polarization between themselves, the core group has landed in the middle of the division between valley environmentalists and loggers. Only now, in contrast to the 1980s, this division is less overt.

The various labels applied to the Ad hoc core group—whether it be "environmentalists," "newcomers," or "retirees"—seem to reflect the larger
divisions within the community discussed in chapter three. Whether true or not, the perception that the core is a like-minded group indicates that there are valley residents who do not feel their perspectives are included in the collaborative. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to evaluate how widespread this sentiment is in the whole community, it clearly exists, raising questions about the Ad hoc’s success at including the diverse communities of interest in the Swan valley.

This perception of an exclusive and like-minded Ad hoc group also affects the effectiveness of the collaborative process itself. Several people said that they did not feel it was an open forum where they could freely voice their opinions in a community dialogue. One non-participant observed that “Those guys set the agenda and expectations before hand. When you have a preset agenda, it determines what happens.” A woman who has attended, but not participated in, a few meetings feels “...its too closed, it doesn’t make people feel comfortable saying something. ... unless you play by their rules you won’t be heard.” Certainly part of this inability to speak freely is related to life in a small community. Another woman, who is privately a strong environmentalist, explained “I don’t think I’ve ever spoken a word in those meetings because we know too many loggers and families. ... We feel like if we were to really get involved environmentally we’d lose some friendships that are important to us ....” However, in an ideally functioning collaborative, these individuals, by working with their neighbors over time to find common ground, would build the trust necessary to overcome this fear. Thus, the fact that some people do not perceive Ad hoc committee meetings to be truly open forums suggests a need to reexamine how well the process is functioning.

Several of the residents I spoke with are also very concerned that outside interests, especially the US Forest Service, believe the Ad hoc committee is representative of the entire community. In the eyes of these residents, the core group equals the Ad hoc committee, and the perception that the core is exclusive and like-minded compounds their concern about the group’s representativeness. Because the Ad hoc core group was not elected, nor did the various “communities of interest” chose their representative, these residents
feel that the Ad hoc does not accurately reflect the diverse valley community.

One man, who is quite angry about this issue, articulated his concern in this way:

I have a problem with a group of people that springs to life, is accepted as representing the community when by their own admission its not.... I believe its illegitimate, the community had no voice. I believe in open democracy, that didn’t happen here. As far as I’m concerned those 12 or so represent those dozen or so. I think the Forest Service buys into it, the media buys into it, as representative of the local community, of local attitudes. Its not representative of a damn thing.

Others concerned with this issue noted that “I don’t know whether its apathy or what, sometimes they’ll set policy but only three or four showed up for the meeting. It isn’t really the consensus of the valley.”

Because there is no formal mechanism to ensure that all stakeholders are involved or present at a given meeting, this is an important criticism. Again, it indicates that there are people in the valley who do not feel their concerns and perspectives are included or represented in the core group and therefore, by association, the Ad hoc committee. Despite the Ad hoc’s best efforts to make it clear that they are not speaking for the entire community, they are perceived as doing so from within the Swan valley.

Contributing to some residents’ perception that the Ad hoc does not represent or include their interests, is, according to one vocal critic, the fact that “…they don’t do any outreach. Its your fault if you miss a meeting and didn’t hear what’s going on. … That’s wrong. It isn’t being a good neighbor.” An occasional participant, who sees the Ad hoc as a place where “…the smaller voices should have role” echoed this concern, saying that the committee “…is not reaching people well enough. Its not reaching us as well as it could.” From the point of view of these residents, the core’s dispersion model for keeping other community members informed of their efforts is not working.

Some of the Ad hoc’s critics also pointed out that ultimately the collaborative has no power; nothing that results from all of their effort is binding. One particularly cynical critic said of the Ad hoc’s work:

It's a good intention, nice documentation, but when it comes to dictating what’s going to happen they don’t have any power, they don’t hold any clout. ... The Ad hoc is futile because nobody is
going to listen. You’re not going to convince anybody of anything by
dialogue. These people would really have to put together political clout,
legislative connections, and organization with money and they have e.)
none of the above. They’ll (referring to outside interests) sit down and
listen... but it’ll stop there. I don’t think they listen, there are too many signs
that they don’t.

Another non-participant commented that the Ad hoc is "... like a government
blue ribbon commission - when you don’t know what to do appoint a
commission." This critique stems from the perception that there have been few
tangible outcomes from the Ad hoc. Both of these Swan residents, as well as
others who felt the Ad hoc is limited by its lack of power, would like to see some
form of control on continued timber harvests in the valley as well as on private
lands development. From their perspective, there has been little accomplished
toward protecting the valley’s environment as a result of the Ad hoc’s work.

Finally, several residents were concerned that the Ad hoc, with its
emphasis on consensus and cooperation, could be co-opted by decision
makers to conceal substantive problems in the valley. One non-participant, who
was generally supportive of the Ad hoc committee’s efforts, said

... conflict and struggle is still a way to make change. ... I worry
... that it tempers things in a way that hides conflict rather than
resolves it. It might just be a pressure valve, give people a way
to blow off steam. ... I don’t know if that’s what’s happening but
it may be a danger.

This specific issue will be explored more fully in chapter 7 when some
perspectives from beyond the valley are explored, but it is important to note
here that there are valley residents who also raised co-optation as an issue.

**Defining the success of the Swan Valley collaborative**

The potential environmental outcomes of collaboration were not raised
by the non-core group Swan residents I interviewed, until I asked more generally
what “success” would look like. In response to this question, most of the
residents I interviewed for this chapter described a balance between
maintaining the valley's environment and its economy. According to one
occasional participant, success would mean:
Jobs and personal lives be placed on an equal level with wildlife sustainability, forest health and overall ecological viability. Timber still taken off National Forest ground, cutting units would be designed against forest health— if forest health indicated clear-cut, so be it; if forest health indicated it be left alone, so be it.

For many of the non-core group residents I interviewed the simplest measure of success will be an aesthetic one: the valley will remain looking as it does today. As one woman, who grew up in the valley, said “I hope to keep it similar to the way it is now…. I’d like to keep it as a primitive area I guess you’d call it.”

Balancing economic livelihood with the maintenance of the Swan’s natural environment is the means to protecting the rural landscape and way of life that drew these residents to the valley.

However, defining this balance is elusive, with varied opinions of what sustainable ecosystems and economies look like among the residents I interviewed. For one relatively new Swan resident, the success of the Ad hoc’s collaborative efforts would mean

... obtaining a true consensus that represents as best it can the whole valley and pass that on to those who make the decisions. On the land, it should look like: every forest should still be a forest even if its had some management on it. It should be an honest to god forest with shade in it.

For others, collaboration’s success goes hand-in-hand with more timber harvest on federal lands in the valley. According to one former logger, success means “Timber management - we have a lot of bug kill in this country.... Picture Germany or France, I’ve seen pictures. They log it, they log it consistently. ... You don’t want dead, fallen down trees.” In his wife’s eyes, timber is the way to protect the valley’s rural character. She says success would mean

Having (the Forest Service) start managing the timber. For about five years they haven’t done anything up here except the campgrounds. I would like to see (the valley) stay rustic in appearance, not something ... with a strip of businesses right out on the road.

Thus, there is no really shared vision of a sustainable Swan ecosystem or economy among the residents I interviewed for this chapter.
Summary

The perspectives of Swan residents presented in this chapter have several implications for the Ad hoc committee’s collaborative efforts. First, based on the comments of the residents I spoke with, even residents who remain largely uninvolved see the outcomes related to community well-being and participatory democracy as the primary benefits of the Ad hoc committee. As a result, the criticisms leveled at the committee from these same residents revolve around issues of inclusiveness, representativeness and the power or influence that the Ad hoc might gain in valley land use decision making.

The critiques indicate that there are segments of the community who do not feel included or represented in the collaborative’s core group. There are also residents who chose not to actively participate, due to reasons such as lack of time or cynicism about the productivity of their involvement. My impression is that these residents do care about the issues confronting their community, as evidenced by their strong and considered opinions about these issues. These residents, like the core group, hope for greater local influence in US Forest Service decision making. They do, however, remain on the sidelines of the collaborative effort in their community. If the Ad hoc is to continue successfully building community well-being and participatory democracy in Forest Service decision making, the question then becomes: How to engage these non-participants in the collaborative process? By extending these outcomes in ever broadening circles through the Swan valley community, the Ad hoc collaborative effort can extend well-being and influence to all rather than only some Swan residents.

Simply inviting more people to more meetings will not accomplish the goal of broader, more inclusive participation. General Ad hoc meetings, from the perspectives of this small sample of valley residents, resemble traditional public meetings and feed their cynicism about the value of participation. Agency representatives and other resource people still appear to arrive at these meetings with proposed projects in hand and decisions already made. Thus, there are questions among the non-participating residents I spoke with about what the Ad hoc committee is truly accomplishing. These criticisms point to the
need for concerted effort in recruiting and including new participants as a core group gains experience and comfort with each other over time. Some other mechanism, besides meetings, is needed to involve those community members who don’t currently participate in the Ad hoc committee but care about the future of the valley. New tools for gathering the ideas and concerns of those who won’t attend meetings would involve these residents in a dialogue about the valley’s future and invigorate the process of building community well-being and participatory democracy.

If cynicism about the value of participation contributes to the choice to remain uninvolved, then there is a need for the Ad hoc to demonstrate more tangible successes. This may take two forms — for some, on-the-ground projects that achieve that vague, but much sought after, balance between economy and environment could demonstrate tangible success; for others, gaining some demonstrable influence in Forest Service decision making may inspire greater participation. The core group’s recent success in keeping the Forest Service’s Condon work center open may go a long way toward demonstrating this type of success.

The Ad hoc’s ability to gain real power in Forest Service decisions about federal land in the valley will, however, be constrained by a National Forest’s communities of interest lying far beyond the valley. Some perspectives from within two of these non-local “communities of interest” — the Forest Service itself as well as environmental groups — are explored in the next chapter.
Chapter 7: Perspectives from beyond the Swan Valley: Forest Service officials and Environmentalists talk about collaboration

Because the Swan Citizens' ad hoc Committee functions, at least in part, within the "community of interest" model in its collaborative effort, the group draws stakeholders from beyond the valley's borders. The Ad hoc's involvement in decisions about federal lands creates a complex overlap between a community of place and the myriad communities of interest involved in National Forest issues. The group's efforts to gain influence in decisions about the Swan valley's federally managed National Forest lands means that stakeholders, with no geographic tie to the valley, are interested in, and potentially affected by, this local collaborative effort. The legal, procedural framework of public participation, created by the NEPA and the NFMA, still require the Forest Service to consider any and all public input. Thus, while not necessarily composed of Swan valley residents, many National Forest "communities of interest" seek to influence the management decisions about valley lands. Their perspectives on the Ad hoc's collaborative process, its outcomes and challenges are an important piece of the puzzle we are trying to understand.

In the Swan valley, two of the most important non-local stakeholders are the US Forest Service itself and the Friends of the Wild Swan (FOWS), a regional environmental advocacy organization with headquarters in the town of Swan Lake. Certainly, there are many other non-local stakeholders with an interest in the Swan Valley. However, for the purposes of this thesis, the perspectives of Forest Service officials and Friends of the Wild Swan are the only ones explored. I chose to focus on these specific non-local players because the Ad hoc core group is currently working closely with the Flathead National Forest as a major land manager in the Swan valley. The Ad hoc's current effort to form a partnership with the Flathead to keep the Condon work center gave immediate relevance to my attempt to understand the agency's perspective on collaboration. Because the Forest Service is a government agency, rather than a private corporation such as Plum Creek Timber, the residents I spoke with see...
more likelihood that local people can influence Forest Service land management decisions in the Swan.

Any look at the Flathead National Forest’s decision making process and land management in the Swan valley has to include the voice of Friends of the Wild Swan. As an organization, FOWS is actively involved in Swan valley public lands issues, especially forest management on the Flathead National Forest. They pursue a strategy of administrative appeals, litigation and public education in their efforts to affect forest management on the Flathead National Forest in general and the Swan valley in particular. Currently, Friends of the Wild Swan, as an organization, does not participate in the Ad hoc committee’s collaborative efforts although individuals affiliated with the organization have occasionally attended general meetings. They can, and do, affect the implementation of Ad hoc projects, as noted in chapter 5, through the administrative appeals process.

This chapter explores the perspectives of US Forest Service officials, at varying levels in the agency’s hierarchy, on collaboratives such as the Ad hoc committee. It then shifts to the perspectives of national and regional environmentalists who chose not to participate in the collaborative process. These perspectives are gleaned from written statements by national leaders of the Forest Service and the environmental movement as well as personal interviews conducted with agency officials and activists in this region. The individuals interviewed for this chapter offer perspectives that have been shaped by experience with, and observations of, the Swan Citizens’ ad hoc Committee specifically as well as other collaborative efforts on the Flathead National Forest. Thus, their insights begin to broaden our understanding of collaboratives beyond the Swan Valley. This chapter provides an understanding of how stakeholders without the geographic ties of residence view the outcomes and challenges of place-based collaboratives in terms of building community well-being, participatory democracy in Forest Service decision making, and ecological criteria. We begin with Forest Service perspectives from the top down.
Collaboration is the word of the day within the US Forest Service. Mike Dombeck, the current Chief of the Forest Service, and Jack Ward Thomas before him have embraced theories of collaboration as a "new" way for the agency to engage the diverse publics interested in Forest Service land management. This new policy, as described by these two national leaders, looks much like what Ad hoc participants work so hard to apply in their community.

Jack Ward Thomas specifically described collaboration in terms of a community of interest model in a 1995 address given at Syracuse University. According to Thomas,

Ordinary citizens can help solve problems that affect their lives, even relatively complex problems of natural resources management. However, they must be truly engaged in the process. They must learn from one another about the issues, and they must gain the skills necessary to full participate in democratic governance (Thomas, 1995).

In Thomas’ view, the potential benefits of collaboration include “...better decisions, fewer delays, lower costs,…” but he also says that “Engagement with a community of interests is both an activity and an outcome. ... it is first and foremost an end unto itself, a key element of the management of any large organization” (Thomas, 1995). The Forest Service’s role in these efforts includes: bringing scientific information to the community, facilitating values clarification among participants, and representing the views of those “communities of interest” not present at the collaborative table (Thomas, 1995).

Chief Dombeck, in an address given his first day in office, described collaboration as the means to achieving his view of the Forest Service’s mission. He told agency employees:

... our first priority is to protect and restore the health of the land. ...Just how do we maintain the health of the land? By working with people who use and care about the land. People are the delivery system for ensuring healthy, diverse, and productive ecosystems. ... Assuring healthy ecosystems begins and ends by working with people on the land (Dombeck, 1997).

He reiterated Thomas’ community of interest model as well as his view of agency officials’ role, saying “...we are the educators and communicators, the teachers
and technical experts who can bring communities of interests together to help define the policies and practices needed for healthy sustainable forests" (Dombeck, 1997).

These statements by the current chief and his immediate predecessor can be interpreted to include community well-being, participatory democracy and better ecological decisions as outcomes of collaboration. It is significant that Dombeck specifically ties ecological health, however vaguely described, to the collaborative process making it an explicit outcome. There are also potential benefits specific to the embattled agency, such as the lower costs and fewer delays, contained in these speeches. However, the visions of Dombeck and Thomas provide no guidance as to how to implement or evaluate collaboration as a decision making mechanism for Forest Service lands. At the national level, collaboration as theory sounds like such a simple and common sense approach. Agency officials, closer to the ground, are already involved in these processes and their insights add practical reality to the rhetoric of top agency officials.

I interviewed three Forest Service employees for their perspectives on the benefits and outcomes of collaborative groups such as the Ad hoc: Chuck Harris, the Swan Lake District Ranger; Hal Salwasser, the Northern Region’s regional forester; and Rodd Richardson, Flathead National Forest Supervisor. These individuals were chosen because of their familiarity with the Ad hoc committee. Chuck Harris drives down from Bigfork to attend Ad hoc committee general and subcommittee meetings; he considers himself a participant in their collaborative process. As district ranger, he is the direct decision maker regarding Forest Service projects on federal lands in the Swan valley. Both Rodd Richardson and Hal Salwasser are aware of the Ad hoc committee’s efforts and have met with core group members, but they have never attended an Ad hoc general meeting. Richardson and Salwasser, positioned above the district ranger in the Forest Service’s hierarchical chain of command, are also vested with decision making authority by the agency. Thus, because of their positions within the Forest Service, these three individuals have the most power to change agency policy and actions based on the influence of the Ad hoc committee.
Below, these agency officials describe their perspective on the collaborative’s outcomes in two ways: first the benefits to the community and second, the benefits to the US Forest Service. They then discuss the pitfalls of the collaborative process again for both the Swan community and the agency itself. Their views on collaboratives such as the Ad hoc committee set the stage for further understanding of the complex dynamic surrounding place-based collaboratives involvement in federal land management.

On the ground:
Three agency perspectives on collaboration’s benefit to the Swan valley
For all three of the Forest Service employees I interviewed, the Ad hoc committee’s contribution to building community well-being and public participation in agency decision making were the obvious benefits to the Swan valley. From what Chuck Harris has seen, over his years of involvement, the Swan residents participating in the Ad hoc have

...learned how to listen to one another even if the person across from them comes from a totally different walk of life. ... Through listening they have somewhere to meet in the middle rather than being polarized. ... when they come to a meeting place they have a sense of community and respect each other (Harris, personal communication, 1997).

He also believes that the community has “... a sense that their opinions are heard by a government agency in this era where everybody’s anti-government” (Harris, personal communication, 1997). Harris, as an Ad hoc participant, is the key to this second benefit; he is the primary decision maker, as Swan Lake district ranger, when it comes to the management of Forest Service lands in the valley. His decisions regarding on-the-ground projects in the Swan get reviewed further up the chain of command only when under appeal. Thus, the degree to which his decisions reflect the Ad hoc committee’s ideas is an indication of their influence. The Condon Forest Stewardship project, in which Ad hoc participants were actively involved in the design of the harvest, is the most tangible example of Harris’ willingness to genuinely share decision making regarding proposed Forest Service projects with these Swan residents.
Hal Salwasser echoed the benefits described by Chuck Harris, labeling them “civic capacity.” In his view, the Ad hoc committee benefits the Swan valley community by

... leveraging the talents of other individuals in the community, through creating a forum for finding common ground. And, as a group, ... to leverage other groups such as the Forest Service or foundations to accomplish its projects. All these things build civic capacity to get common work done (Salwasser, personal communication, 1997).

Rodd Richardson also lists elements of community well-being and participatory democracy in his description of the benefits of collaboration to the Swan community. Ultimately, he says, by strengthening community ties, “They’re creating their own destiny in how to sustain themselves and their surroundings which include National Forests and Plum Creek” (Richardson, personal communication, 1997).

These three agency officials were relatively silent on the ecological outcomes of the Ad hoc’s collaborative effort, which could be due, in part, to the way I asked the question. They are, however, aware that beneficial effects on the valley’s environment are part of the goals of the Ad hoc. As Salwasser observed, Ad hoc participants “… believe they’re in the best position to determine what concepts like ecosystem health and sustainability mean in their environment” (Salwasser, personal communication, 1997). A collaborative group such as the Ad hoc can provide the venue in which to collectively define these concepts. Salwasser, however, didn’t indicate how he felt about this proposition, begging the question of whether he would really accept, or be informed by, a locally crafted definition of ecosystem health.

The Condon Forest Stewardship project represents the first attempt to implement ecological goals that were arrived at collaboratively with local people. Swan valley residents, mainly Ad hoc core group members, and agency officials worked with others to collaboratively design the 30 acre project. According to the project’s Decision Memo, these included a broad goal to “Restore and maintain the ecological health and productivity of the areas....” The Decision Memo also included more specific goals of restoring historic open
Ponderosa pine habitat, maintaining cover and travel corridors for wildlife and restoring low-intensity fires to the site (Harris, 1995: p. 4). The project involves an ongoing monitoring component that will involve Swan residents in data collection (Harris, 1995: p. 5). The Forest Service identified several areas in the Swan where Stewardship projects would be possible; the agency also conducted a biological evaluation of the site once it was chosen as well as "required public involvement procedures" (Harris, 1995: p. 7).

**On the ground:**

**the benefits to the agency**

The benefits of collaboration for the agency itself, identified in my interviews with Forest Service employees, say much about the current political climate that the Forest Service finds itself in. Over and over, from all sides of land management debates, the agency is accused of being paralyzed, ineffective and inefficient. Critics register myriad complaints about the lack of habitat protection or the lack of Forest Service timber sales or the loss of taxpayer money. Proposed Forest Service projects are held up for years as they go through the traditional public participation process including environmental analyses, public comment periods, and the seemingly inevitable environmental challenges. Collaborative groups, such as the Ad hoc committee, provide the agency with potential relief from what they perceive as gridlock, a point reflected in the perspectives of the agency officials interviewed for this thesis.

Repeatedly, collaborative groups such as the Swan Ad hoc committee, were described as a way to build public support for, and trust in, the US Forest Service as managers of public lands. According to Chuck Harris, by

> ...involving the public from the very beginning to conceptualize how we want the land to look, you improve the chances of success for a project coming to being. If they’re helping at the front of the process, identifying what we should be doing to treat or not treat a piece of land, it improves the chance of success. ... In the end, not spending time on appeals, spending time on things that never come about is more efficient (Harris, personal communication, 1997).

The Swan Lake Ranger District recently embarked on a landscape analysis of the Upper Swan valley to do just that. The landscape analysis team involves a group of residents drawn from an Ad hoc committee general meeting. The goals of the
landscape analysis include: developing a shared vision of the desired future conditions in the valley in preparation for Forest Plan revisions and building trust between Swan residents and the agency (Swan Citizens’ ad hoc Committee meeting minutes, 1997).

Collaboration also signals a return to the close historic relationship between the Forest Service rangers and rural community residents. As Chuck Harris observes:

In the early days, the Forest Service ... lived in the community. Now through better technology, improved transportation, a very small percent even live in Bigfork. We’ve lost ... our link to the community. Now we’re not as highly respected a part of the community. This process returns back to the Forest Service being a part of the community again (Harris, personal communication, 1997).

Again, the emphasis is on building trust between the agency and “the public” which, in this case, equals residents of the Swan valley. As Harris sees it “Through informed consensus we gain enough people’s support that we’re doing what’s best for the resources we’re managing” (Harris, personal communication, 1997).

There is also a personal, human benefit to collaboration for agency employees, like Harris, who have grown used to being in the direct line of fire at contentious public meetings. Ad hoc committee meetings are a welcome relief from the usual adversarial position they find themselves in at other meetings.

Chuck Harris, at the close of his interview, said:

I can’t tell you how exciting it is to go to those meetings— you go to other meetings and get chastised, beat up— its a pleasure to work with those people, they are supportive, they want the Forest Service to be there (Harris, personal communication, 1997).

Just as Ad hoc core members feel that their collaborative efforts have reduced the polarization somewhat in their community, Chuck Harris feels the polarization between the agency and the Swan community is abating.

Both Richardson and Salwasser echoed Harris’ belief that collaboration will enable the Forest Service to build public support for specific projects as well as a more general trust in the agency as professional land managers.

According to Richardson, “We have more of an ability to make decisions that stick, enduring decisions because the community has shared it with us, helped us
craft our results” (Richardson, personal communication, 1997). Hal Salwasser believes that a collaborative such as the Ad hoc committee benefits the Forest Service because it,

... improves our access to the community to understand what the community is interested in/concerned about through dialogue that’s more constructive than normal public information meetings. And certainly more constructive than trying to resolve through appeals or litigation (Salwasser, personal communication, 1997).

Salwasser hopes that eventually,

a high enough level of trust exists between the Forest Service citizen groups that the Forest Service can decrease the amount of analysis and planning it has to do to undertake a project and the citizen group doesn’t have to spend as much energy on every project (Salwasser, personal communication, 1997).

From the perspective of each of these three agency officials, reducing the number of appeals of Forest Service projects is an important goal; collaboration is a means to this end.

Salwasser’s hope for a reduction in the level of analysis and planning required of the agency also presents an important contradiction in his support of collaboratives. Collaboration hinges on a shared learning and information gathering process (Daniels, et al., 1993). The environmental analyses and biological evaluations of proposed projects are an important source of information if protecting ecological integrity is to remain a potential outcome of community collaboration. Thus, reducing the level of analysis potentially hinders successful collaborative decision making as far as ecological outcomes are concerned.

Finally, community based collaboratives, done well, theoretically balance national and local interests. According to Salwasser,

By getting a diverse array of people in the community group, you end up with people defending the things they care deeply about that are in the national interest— like the grizzly bear, clean water (Salwasser, personal communication, 1997).

The agency officials that I spoke with see the Ad hoc Committee as adequately inclusive of these diverse perspectives. Rodd Richardson believes “...its broadly
representative ... but it doesn’t include the extremes that might not chose to be a part of it” (Richardson, personal communication, 1997). According to Salwasser, ... its representative from the standpoint of having people who are passionate about livelihoods based in wood products and those who are passionate about amenity values and those who are passionate about civic capacity. ... They’re not representing the apathetic or the extreme wise use or the extreme back to nature types. But I don’t think they set out to represent them either. This is not a negative comment (Salwasser, personal communication, 1997).

But how do we ensure this broad spectrum of participants, so consistently mentioned as the key to a collaborative’s success? Who defines the extremes and how? Will the extremes be defined by virtue of not being able to agree with a collaborative decision? There is currently no mechanism in the Ad hoc Committee to evaluate this assumption that diverse local perspectives will include national interests. These are essential questions given that these are federal lands, drawing diverse users and stakeholders from far beyond the Swan valley’s geographic borders.

The benefits of community collaboration to the Forest Service, as identified by Harris, Richardson and Salwasser, also raise questions about the Forest Service’s institutional motivation to collaborate. The emphasis on building public support for agency decisions seems to ignore the fundamental challenge to the agency’s decision making authority that community collaboratives represent. While Ad hoc core group members speak of a substantive sharing of decision making power, Forest Service officials still speak of building public support for the decisions the agency makes. Thus, the Forest Service remains the ultimate decision maker while the public continues to provide input, albeit through a somewhat different process.

Implicit in these benefits to the agency is the desire to reduce conflict over Forest Service management decisions. A lack of appeals becomes the agency’s indicator that collaborative decisions are better than those reached through more traditional decision making procedures. This, however, is a procedural measure, saying nothing about the substance of the collaborative decisions. Appeals are like an annoying headache, easily gotten rid of with aspirin without ever asking the hard question of what caused it. The emphasis on
building trust and reducing conflict between the agency and the various communities of interest concerned with Forest Service land management makes questions about who participates increasingly important. Without deliberate attention to ensuring that even the most critical perspectives are somehow included in the decision-making process, collaboration could evolve into a mechanism for working only with those groups and individuals it is easy to get along with. While building trust and reducing conflict are positive outcomes of collaboration, an overemphasis on them could marginalize those who don’t agree or who chose to remain outside the process.

The perspectives of some of these “outsiders” who are not necessarily residents of the geographic place that roots the Ad hoc committee are explored later in this chapter. First, however, we look at the pitfalls of collaboration as seen by these three Forest Service officials.

**Forest Service perspectives on the challenges of collaboration**

Three main challenges for community-based collaboratives such as the Ad hoc Committee emerged from my conversations with Forest Service officials. First, from the pragmatic perspective of the district ranger, the amount of work involved, and the number of people that work gets distributed among, is a potential problem. Chuck Harris observes that within the Ad hoc Committee “There’s usually only four or five or six that do 90% of the work. Maybe there’s a burnout factor. That’s maybe a problem on the horizon” (Harris, personal communication, 1997). Again, it is apparent that a core group of heavily involved residents has emerged within the Ad hoc Committee. The emergence of a core group of leaders may be a fact of life in the collaborative process; given the amount of work involved, there may always be a small number of people willing to do that work. This fact does, however, create some of the other pitfalls’ agency officials identified for community-based collaboration in Forest Service decision making.

When discussing the benefits of collaboration, inclusion of diverse perspectives at the local level was seen as an essential component, enabling the collaborative to make decisions that included national interests as well as local ones. The flip side of this, according to Hal Salwasser, is that collaboratives
have "...the potential to become an elite club. ...Depending on how well balanced you are in representing the spectrum of interests in our society they could end up representing a biased view of the public" (Salwasser, personal communication, 1997). While he was clear that he didn’t see this as an issue in the Swan valley, Salwasser does see this as a potential pitfall of collaboration at the local level.

Finally, the bureaucratic structure and culture of the agency present challenges for the Forest Service as it becomes more involved in collaborative efforts similar to the Ad hoc committee. Rodd Richardson sees two internal challenges confronting the agency as far as collaboration. The first one is the laws, regs, policy we work under now, the budget process and timelines that we’re required to produce under are not aligned with the time requirements that it takes for the community to have time to take part in decisions (Richardson, personal communication, 1997).

A January 1997 Ad hoc Committee meeting clearly illustrated this point. The Swan Lake district initiated a collaboration with Ad hoc participants to conduct a landscape analysis of the Upper Swan valley. Residents openly questioned the agency’s goal of producing a written document by the following September using the community based collaborative process. From their perspective, rooted in past experience with Ad hoc projects, this simply was not enough time to genuinely involve community members. However, according to Harris, this rapid timeline was necessary, at least in part, "to produce something that justifies the budget" (Swan Citizens’ ad hoc Committee minutes, 1997).

Swan residents’ open challenge to the agency’s timeline in this example symbolically points the way toward Richardson’s second internal challenge. According to the Forest Supervisor, a big hurdle for the agency as it tries to collaborate with rural communities, will be:

...changing the mindset of resource professionals. ...to share their knowledge and then allow the community to work toward a decision that may not be the best fit resource wise in their mind. To share that power of making that decision..." (Richardson, personal communication, 1997).
He cited the Condon work center’s Ponderosa Pine restoration project as an example as there were agency employees who did not completely agree with the way the project was designed. This, however, begs the question of: What if a collaborative group arrives at an ecologically destructive decision? While this has not been the result of the 30 acre Ponderosa project, there was little discussion by Forest Service officials of how to ensure that collaborative decisions are ecologically sound. Whether or not collaborative groups will arrive at ecologically sound decisions is one of the key questions raised by critics of collaboration within the environmental movement. That is what we turn to next.

Wary voices from within the environmental community

As a prelude to this section, I must stress that there certainly are organizations and individuals within the environmental community who see many benefits to community based collaboratives. These include the benefits that have been discussed throughout this thesis. These environmentalists see community based collaboration as, among other things, empowering for those involved, as an opportunity to break down polarized stereotypes that have dominated environmental debates, and as a way to attain better solutions, tailored to specific places (Jones, 1996). From the perspective of these environmentalists, collaboration is fundamentally about fostering ecologically sustainable solutions in rural communities.

But there are also individuals and organizations within the environmental community who are deliberately choosing to remain outside of the collaborative process. They remain skeptical and critical of cooperation and consensus as a means of achieving environmental protection. This is the perspective explored here in order to raise issues and questions that haven’t already emerged at other points in thesis. They highlight some of the most central and complex issues underlying place-based collaboration about federal land management. These voices, at the national, regional and local levels, contain some of the perspectives at risk of being marginalized as collaboration becomes increasingly popular within the Forest Service. They have been among those most critical of the agency.
In the fall of 1995, Michael McClosky, chairman of the Sierra Club, wrote what has become a widely circulated critique of collaboration. Originally written as a memo to the Club's board of directors aimed at spurring discussion after he attended a conference on community collaboration, McClosky's piece has now been printed in both High Country News and Harpers magazine. It raises three key questions about community collaboration as a means to resolving natural resource disputes. First, McClosky sees these efforts as a means to disempower environmental interests in public land management. He writes that the...

... re-distribution of power is designed to disempower our constituency, which is heavily urban. Few urbanites are recognized as stakeholders in communities surrounding national forests. Few of the proposals for stakeholder collaboration provide any way for distant stakeholders to be effectively represented (McClosky, 1996).

A shift toward rural communities as the locus of decision making about National Forests, from McClosky's perspective, is unacceptable because environmentalists are poorly organized in rural areas. He goes onto say that collaboratives "... would maximize the influence of those who are least attracted to the environmental cause and most alienated from it." He assumes that the ecological outcome of community collaboration, and its corollary of decentralized decision making, would be environmental degradation.

McClosky also fears that the figurative table around which stakeholders gather is not level, and extractive industry will dominate these forums because local environmentalists, where they exist,

... are not always equipped to play competitively with industry professionals. There may be no parity in experience, training, skills, or financial resources; ... these processes ... consume huge amounts of time, wear people down and leave little room for regular environmental activism (McClosky, 1996).

Again the assumption is that the outcome will be ecological degradation as well as the disempowerment of environmental organizations.

His final criticism directly contradicts those who believe collaboratives will, by involving and integrating a diversity of perspectives, result in better long term decisions. Rather, McClosky believes that consensus produces "lowest common
denominator” decisions; because people with such diverse perspectives have to all agree, decisions become vague and watered down. In his eyes, consensus means that “... small local minorities are given an effective veto over positive action.... if the status quo is environmentally unacceptable, this process gives small minorities a death grip over reform” (McClosky, 1996). Fundamentally, the issue as McClosky sees it is that “Local interests do not necessarily constitute the national interest” (McClosky, 1996). He fundamentally questions collaboration’s outcomes as far as participatory democracy and ecological criteria.

McClosky’s perspective, that of an environmentalist working at the national level, finds its echo in the Swan valley. At the local level, Friends of the Wild Swan chose to remain outside of the collaborative process and the organization has twice appealed Forest Service projects that had Ad hoc committee involvement— the Elk/Squeezer Creek land exchange and the Forest Stewardship, Ponderosa pine restoration project.

Friends of the Wild Swan specifically formed “... to address the impacts to wildlife, water quality, fisheries, scenic values, and other amenities found in the Swan Valley...” (Friends of the Wild Swan, no date). Their strategy has been to use the traditional public participation process, including administrative appeals, litigation, and public education to advocate a biologically based ecosystem approach to land management through restoration of areas damaged by past management activities, linkage corridors for wildlife movement and preservation of remaining roadless areas (Friends of the Wild Swan, no date).

As an organization, FOWS works for timber harvest reductions on all lands, the elimination of clearcutting as management practice, and limits on new road construction and re-construction (Friends of the Wild Swan, no date). The organization has been an important player in Swan valley public lands issues especially forest management on the Flathead National Forest. FOWS was one of several environmental groups to file suit challenging the Flathead Forest’s 1986 Forest Plan. The lawsuit resulted in “Amendment 19” to the Forest Plan which lowered the Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ) for timber harvest on the forest and set objectives for reducing road densities on the Forest to protect grizzly bear habitat. FOWS was involved in getting the aquatic plant, water howellia, listed
as “threatened” under the Endangered Species Act and is currently involved in the battle to list the bull trout as an endangered species (Friends of the Wild Swan, no date). From FOWS’ perspective, Forest Service decisions are based on inadequate scientific information because the agency conducts no long-term evaluation or monitoring of the direct impacts and cumulative effects of its management activities. As a result, FOWS believes Forest Service management activities have caused ecological damage in the Swan valley.

The organization, and the individuals who support it,1 are stakeholders in decisions about Flathead National Forest lands in the Swan valley by virtue of their concern for, and involvement in, forest management decisions. Arlene Montgomery, the director of Friends of the Wild Swan, offered her perspective on collaboration during an interview in Swan Lake. She has attended a couple of Ad hoc committee general meetings as a concerned individual when the meeting topic was important to her. Her observations about collaboratives are informed by these experiences as well as her familiarity with two other collaborative efforts involving the Flathead National Forest—the Flathead Forestry Project and Flathead Common Ground.

Like McClosky, Montgomery is concerned with the precedents set by local, place-based collaboratives because their decisions extend far beyond their place-specific boundaries. She points out that decisions made in the Upper Swan valley have policy consequences throughout the Flathead National Forest as well as ecological consequences downstream in the watershed. As an example, she used the Condon Ponderosa pine project that the Ad hoc was involved in designing. According to Montgomery,

> The people involved (in Ad hoc) haven’t done their homework - like looking at Forest Plan standards, the law, what the agency is supposed to be doing. Like the Condon Project, .... I don’t think they looked at the bigger picture. ... it wasn’t the project so much as the precedent it set - it was a categorical exclusion rather than getting an EA done for an old growth stand2 (Montgomery, personal communication, 1997).

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1 Friends of the Wild Swan is not a membership organization, but over 700 individuals and organizations subscribe to their newsletter (Montgomery, personal communication, 1997).
2 Friends of the Wild Swan appealed the Condon Forest Stewardship Project because the project harvested timber in an old growth Ponderosa pine stand despite the Flathead...
She questions whether a small geographic community can make decisions that include the interests of other communities downstream. She says

The blinder problem is a pervasive problem, that this is our community. ... what goes on in the Upper Swan winds up in Swan Lake— this lake is on the verge of collapse and they’ve linked it to logging. I don’t think you can look at a tiny geographic area and say: “what’s good for our community is good for the whole valley, or the entire ecosystem” (Montgomery, personal communication, 1997).

This may be the crux question for community-based collaborative efforts as far as the ecological outcomes of the decision making process. Will geographically based communities of place make decisions about natural resources based on the knowledge that communities downstream or down wind will be affected by these decisions?

Montgomery also raised fundamental concerns about the substance of the decisions reached through collaboration. Echoing McClosky, she believes that the consensus based decisions reached by groups like the Ad hoc committee will “come down to the lowest common denominator.” From her perspective

Collaboratives thwart the NEPA process because the range of alternatives isn’t developed and analyzed— we have all these people who agree so it must be right, rather than science or what’s right for the land. ... the things everybody can agree on won’t be the tough issues or the things that really benefit wildlife and fish (Montgomery, personal communication, 1997).

The fact that all of the projects Montgomery has seen produced by collaborative groups have involved some form of logging is evidence, for her, that the consensus process won’t result in the most difficult choices being made. She says: “...they won’t ever deal with tough issues, like restoration that doesn’t involve logging. .... I don’t see that they’re going to tackle the tough, ...

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National Forest’s lack of Forest Plan standards for maintaining old growth habitat at a landscape level (Montgomery, personal communication, 1997). FOWS protested the “categorical exclusion” from conducting an Environmental Assessment/Impact Statement on the project as well as the lack of Forest Plan standards for old growth. The Forest Service believed a categorical exclusion was warranted because the amount of timber harvested was so small and no extraordinary circumstances,(i.e.: steep slopes, highly erosive soil or impacts to threatened/ endangered species and their habitat)
contentious issues because you’re not going to get consensus on those” (Montgomery, personal communication, 1997).

From her perspective, the biggest issues in the Swan are ecological including excessive roading, habitat fragmentation and declining water quality and fisheries. Logging has played a large role in this ecological degradation in the valley (Montgomery, personal communication, 1997). Her perspective is based on many scientific studies done in the Swan, and raises the question: what role will science play in the collaborative process and whose science will it be? Will the measure of success be that everyone agreed or will it be the health of the land? From Montgomery’s perspective, “Everything’s been grounded more on what everybody agrees on rather than what’s good for the land or what’s in compliance with Forest Plan standards” (Montgomery, personal communication, 1997). The fact that there has been no analysis of the ecological outcomes of Ad hoc projects leaves this an open question.

Finally, Montgomery raised questions about the true inclusiveness of collaborative group’s such as the Ad hoc. Based on her personal experiences at Ad hoc meetings, she has “not felt that my perspective has been welcomed ... everyone sits stonefaced and silent ... Maybe there’s more interaction and discussion at meetings I’m not at” (Montgomery, personal communication, 1997). Her comments have gone un-recorded on the flip-charts that serve as the Ad hoc’s meeting record. She is concerned that the people involved in these collaborative groups determine whether the group truly includes a broad spectrum of opinions. Because she believes that “the comments of people not involved with collaboratives seem to be ignored more,” (Montgomery, personal communication, 1997) she worries that

... if they’ve (the Forest Service) got a group of people that agrees that...it is a good cross section, then they’re going to forge ahead. I don’t know that you can get that broadness and get people to go to meetings. People don’t have time, they have families and jobs but they still care and they still can comment on something. You’re never going to get everybody who has concerns at the table. Then they fall out of

existed (Harris, 1995). Friends of the Wild Swan disagreed and requested an Environmental Assessment in their appeal (Montgomery, personal communication, 1997).
the process... (Montgomery, personal communication, 1997).

Fundamentally, she is concerned that the Forest Service will co-opt the collaborative process, calling it public participation because it is a group that they believe will support their actions.

Montgomery reiterated McClosky’s point that local interests are not necessarily congruent with national interests. Including stakeholders from beyond specific geographic boundaries like the Upper Swan valley in the decision making process, is essential because “They’re public lands, owned by all of the American people, so somebody’s opinion in Florida is just as important as somebody’s in Condon” (Montgomery, personal communication, 1997).

The history of FOWS’ relationship with the Flathead National Forest certainly affects Montgomery’s view of the Ad hoc committee. She asks “… how objective are these groups when they are funded by the agency…? They are supposedly representing community views. But whose views are they representing?” Time and again, FOWS has battled the Flathead over management decisions that the group feels are illegal and environmentally destructive. The courts have ruled in favor of FOWS on both charges. As a result, Montgomery remains skeptical of groups like the Ad hoc Committee, which have received funding and support from the Forest Service.

The potential for collaboratives to marginalize some “communities of interest” or individuals concerned with National Forest lands is clearly an important question. Whether deliberately, or through benign neglect, those who are perceived as difficult to get along with because they cannot agree with the collaborative group may fall out of the process. This includes differing scientific perspectives on the causes of environmental degradation in a specific locale as much as the voices of stakeholders like Friends of the Wild Swan.

**Summary**

When the concept of community collaboration in Forest Service decision making is looked at from beyond the geographic borders that have defined it until now, an already complex picture becomes even more so. The US Forest Service, driven by its own institutional needs, and environmental advocacy
groups, which chose to remain outside the collaborative process but retain a
stake in its outcome, muddy the waters of a neatly defined community of place
such as the Upper Swan valley. A collaborative group such as the Ad hoc
committee, and its potential outcomes, cannot be understood in isolation from
this larger context. In fact, the Ad Hoc’s collaborative effort is shaped by the
ongoing adversarial dynamic between the US Forest Service and Friends of the
Wild Swan. FOWS’ challenges to agency decisions have, at least in part, pushed
the Forest Service to engage concerned citizens in a different public
involvement process. The threat of appeals and litigation underlies the Forest
Service’s participation in the collaborative process because for those officials I
interviewed, the process represents a means to avoid these costly challenges to
the agency’s decisions.

The importance of participation emerges even more clearly. From all
points of view, it is agreed that collaboration will only produce better land
management decisions if a broad spectrum of perspectives are included in the
process. However, from the evidence in this chapter as well as the last, it
appears that there are clearly those who do not see their perspectives included
in the Ad hoc committee. That the collaborative process has the potential to
marginalize these perspectives, specifically in regard to Forest Service decision
making, subverts the contributions groups like the Ad hoc committee can make
to building participatory democracy into Forest Service decision making as well
as maintaining the ecological integrity of the Swan valley.

The final chapter will focus on the key themes that have repeated
themselves throughout the thesis in order to begin building a way to assess the
success of community based collaborative efforts. It will also point the way to
future questions aimed at furthering our understanding of what these
collaborative efforts can accomplish.
Chapter 8:
Conclusion: Understanding the outcomes of community-based collaboration

The seemingly simple act of people, holding adversarial perspectives, coming together to forge “win-win” solutions to the contentious natural resource issues that divide them has made collaboration the latest hope for resolving long standing battles over public lands. There is much to be hopeful about in this act. However, as this thesis demonstrates, collaboration is no easy task, with complex dynamics shaping the outcomes as well as the process. Successful community based collaborations will entail a thorough understanding of the dynamic relationships within a given community of place and between that geographically defined community and interests beyond its borders. They will also involve understanding the complex ecological processes of any given place if the overarching goal of these efforts remains the integration of ecological and social goals. Just as understanding ecosystems involves varied scales of analysis across space and time, so will understanding the complex social and political relationships that shape efforts at community collaboration.

This case study poses three potential outcomes of community collaboration—building community well being in the Swan valley; building more meaningful public participation into Forest Service decision making; and integrating the protection of ecological integrity with the Swan valley’s rural lifestyle and economy. Based on the various perspectives given voice throughout the thesis, the Swan Citizens’ ad hoc Committee’s greatest contributions have been toward building community capacity within the Swan valley. There is a growing efficacy among those who actively participate in the Ad hoc committee. Even those residents interviewed, who are not actively involved in the Ad hoc committee see the ability to effect change in the valley as the greatest benefit of collaboration. The collaborative’s success in altering the structure of Forest Service decision making and maintaining the ecological integrity of the Swan valley is less certain.

This concluding chapter highlights the key elements of each outcome that emerge from the Swan case study, providing important lessons for rethinking
the role of community collaboration in regard to Forest Service land management decisions. Finally, the chapter raises some essential questions for the Ad hoc committee specifically and community collaboratives more generally.

**Community Well-being:**

*The Ad hoc Committee within its community of place*

The literature on community well being includes the capacity to deal with change within the community as an important component of this well being (Kusel, 1996). The Swan Citizens' *ad hoc* Committee, by creating a forum for valley residents to gather together to learn about and discuss the issues confronting their community, is helping build this capacity. Here, the Ad hoc, as a local, place-based collaborative, is the most powerful and successful. Core group members who are most heavily involved in the collaborative process speak about the sense of empowerment they derive from their efforts to affect management decisions about Forest Service lands in the Swan Valley. They feel they are gaining influence with the District ranger who has management authority in the valley. Because the decisions of this federal agency have, throughout the history of the Swan valley community, brought change to this small corner of Northwestern Montana, this empowerment is important.

The relationships built through the collaborative process—both within the community as well as between community members and non-local stakeholders, like the US Forest Service—are also an essential component of community capacity. Fostering trust, reducing polarization, understanding divergent perspectives, gaining influence with decision makers—all of these outcomes, both real and hoped for, indicate the centrality of relationship to the collaborative process. A divided community cannot effectively direct the changes confronting it; providing a community forum and dialogue builds relationships between former adversaries. By serving this function, community based collaboratives, such as the Ad hoc committee, hold the potential to bridge the perceived divisions within the rapidly transforming rural communities of the Rocky Mountain west. Seen in this light, community based collaboratives
are not necessarily about addressing environmental issues; rather, forest management issues happen to be central to the Swan valley community and therefore, this collaborative effort.

Because relationship building is so central to collaboration, the process is profoundly influenced by the personalities of the individuals involved. Consensus theoretically means that all participants must be comfortable with, and supportive of, the final product; thus, individuals are vested with a great deal of power within this process. Individual participants' abilities to get along and communicate with each other as well as their openness to being influenced by those they disagree with, inspire and constrain the collaborative process. Each of the contemporary efforts at collaboration sketched briefly in the literature review were shaped by the vision of a few key individuals; the Swan Citizens' ad hoc Committee is no different in this regard. Thus, each collaborative will develop its own dynamic, specific to the relationships among those involved.

The importance of personality and relationship in collaboration makes questions of participation central to evaluating the success of this process. Who is included and excluded, either deliberately by invitation or by virtue of the structure of the process and the time consuming nature of collaboration? Are the necessary relationships being built among those most concerned with, affected by, and influential in decisions about Forest Service lands? In the Swan valley, there is evidence that the answer is no. The perception that the core group is like-minded and the cynicism about the effectiveness of involvement indicate that the non-participants interviewed for this study do not share the core group's sense of efficacy and empowerment. The Ad hoc Committee, and other community collaboratives like it, face the challenge of broadening participation in order to extend the benefits of community well being to all, rather than some, residents of the valley.

The fact that volunteer labor drives the Ad hoc Committee means fostering broad participation will remain a challenge. Volunteerism is, in many ways, a luxury, especially in a community like the Swan valley where economic livelihood often depends on long hours of hard labor. That many of the residents
I spoke with during my research feel too busy to participate in Ad hoc meetings contributes to the perception that the Ad hoc does not include many of the diverse perspectives of the valley’s residents. However, meetings are only one mechanism to engage people in dialogue and decisions about their community of place. More creative tools, in addition to the Ad hoc meetings, are needed to engage those community members interested in Forest Service land management in the Swan Valley. This point will be developed further in the chapter’s final section on recommendations and future questions.

Through its emphasis on building relationships, the collaborative process offers a different method of decision making about natural resource and federal lands. Empowering rural communities with the capacity to deal with change has never been the goal of Forest Service decision making. If collaboratives such as the Ad hoc Committee become more common place as a decision making mechanism, than the outcomes of Forest Service decisions will be profoundly altered. Land management decisions will no longer be designed to achieve only scientific and technical results on the land. The Swan residents who are actively involved in the Ad hoc, seek locally crafted solutions, tailored to needs of their specific place rather than top-down prescriptive Forest Service policy that, from their perspective, has not met the needs of their community or its landscape. Community collaboratives represent a “bottom-up,” decentralized decision making process—the antithesis of the model the Forest Service has operated under for most of its history.

Empowering rural communities implies a fundamental shift in power to the community, in order to truly build their capacity to effect change. If residents do not see that they have been able to substantively alter Forest Service decisions, their feelings of efficacy turn to cynicism. This cynicism regarding public involvement in Forest Service decision making is nothing new as noted in the review of the critiques in Chapter 2. Theoretically, collaboration as a more participatory form of decision making, offers a meaningful alternative to a public participation procedure that has evolved into data gathering and input rather than shared decision making. But has the Ad hoc committee succeeded in
altering the structure of public participation in Forest Service decision making? The answer to this question lies in assessing the collaborative as an exercise in participatory democracy.

**Participatory Democracy:**

*The Ad hoc Committee, the Swan Community, and the US Forest Service*

"If the people will lead, the leaders will follow" -- familiar bumper sticker.

When considering a community based collaborative, such as the Ad hoc, as an effort to shift Forest Service decision making toward "participatory democracy," it must be analyzed at two levels: how it functions within the community itself as well as within the structure of Forest Service public participation. The dynamics, outcomes and challenges at each level of analysis are very different. The style of decision making, and the way in which the public is involved, contained in the process of collaboration is vastly different from the Forest Service’s usual public participation procedures.

Several characteristics of the Ad hoc committee illustrate the collaborative’s role in building participatory democracy within the local Swan community. Swan residents, engaged as individuals with complex and interconnected concerns about their families, their neighbors, and their landscape drive the Ad hoc Committee. The collaborative process allows the individuals participating to engage in dialogue based on all of these concerns. Participants are not “experts” that are paid to represent specific constituencies on a single issue. They are volunteers dedicated to the care of their community and its landscape. Thus, a community based collaborative operates as a participatory democracy in which everyone who wants to can participate. The figurative table that the collaborative gathers around is less uneven, as residents come together voluntarily as individuals, invested with no greater expertise or authority than anyone else, to form a vision for their community. This organization and vision may then gain these residents voice and influence at a “table” of stakeholders, who are paid representatives of particular constituencies.

In the case of the Ad hoc Committee, no one was formally chosen to "represent" the perspectives of the valley’s loggers or outfitters or business
people by the members of those groups. As a result, this community-based collaboration is really about broad participation, not representation, and therefore, at the local level involves a different style of democracy. This carries with it some unique problems. Not every Swan resident will be actively involved in collaboration, nor is this necessary for a place-based collaborative group to succeed at participatory democracy. However, those individuals who choose not to be involved should recognize that their perspective is included among those who are actively participating. Again, there is evidence that the Ad hoc Committee is not succeeding at this as well as it could. The informal structure of the Swan Citizens’ ad hoc Committee makes it difficult to ensure that all of the valley’s diverse perspectives are included.

The overlap between a community of place and a National Forest’s “communities of interests” muddies this distinction between representation and participation. In the Ad hoc Committee, Swan residents participate as individuals yet the group also strives to include the diverse perspectives concerned with Forest Service land management in the valley. This has created confusion about the Ad hoc’s “representativeness” of the entire community because, again, the various communities of interest didn’t choose who would speak for their perspective. Just because there is an outfitter involved in the committee does not mean that this individual speaks for all outfitters either in the valley and beyond. When a community based collaborative like the Ad hoc committee is mistakenly assumed to be representative of a broader community, valuable input and perspectives are disenfranchised.

Applying the term “participatory democracy” to the Ad hoc committee’s involvement in Forest Service decision making is even more problematic. Collaborative efforts such as the Ad hoc committee’s arise to address a perceived fault in the status quo of government decision making; in this specific case study, the status quo of Forest Service management in the Swan valley was unacceptable. Local residents’ desire to correct the problems they saw in Forest Service decisions about Swan valley lands led to the Ad hoc’s involvement in agency decision making. The residents who lead the Ad hoc feel they have
expertise about their home that Forest Service managers can learn from. They see collaboration as a mutual learning and shared decision making process between Swan residents and the US Forest Service.

An important point of clarification is necessary here. If the Swan valley is any indication, community collaboration should not necessarily be equated with local control of federal lands decision making. Rather, it is about gaining (or, perhaps, re-gaining) influence in those decisions. The residents I spoke with seek this influence because Forest Service land management directly affects them in a variety of ways, not just through a lack of federal timber available to harvest. They want a Forest Service presence in the valley to care for the lands the agency is responsible for. And they want the agency to listen to them as people who live close to and care about those lands. But I heard no one advocate more local control of those lands, nor did anyone advocate privatizing these lands. For the Swan residents I interviewed, however, public participation in Forest Service decision making, about Flathead National Forest land in the Swan, is not just about their input being taken and considered. They want to share decision making with the Forest Service at the local level, but they do not want to shoulder the whole responsibility for management of these lands.

The Ad hoc committee, however, is not vested with any decision making authority—neither by its own geographic community nor within the Forest Service. In the case of Forest Service decision making, it is the agency’s willingness to share its authority with a collaborative group that will ultimately determine its success in altering the structure of public participation within the Forest Service. Given the history and critiques of public participation in the Forest Service, whether the agency will (or even can) share this authority is far from certain. Presently, the Forest Service still determines what is discussed as far as management on federal lands. Swan Lake district personnel still propose the projects and then seek the public’s participation, although now they strive to use a collaborative process to foster public input. Forest Service planners and scientists, at each level of the agency, conduct the environmental analysis and determine the alternatives that will be considered based on the scope of their
proposed project. While the Swan Lake district ranger is sincere in his efforts to collaborate with Ad hoc committee participants on a range of issues, including road closures and the development of the Swan ecosystem center, he is constrained by the Forest Service hierarchy as far as his decision making power. Forest Service policy and budgets are not set at the district level; in fact, as in the case of targets for timber harvests, decisions are, at least in part, driven far from the local level, by Congress. The top-down, centralized nature of the agency and the “bottom-up” shift in power posed by collaborative groups are in direct contradiction.

While the Forest Service officials interviewed for this thesis are supportive of collaboration, they view it as a way to build public support for their projects. This is very different from viewing collaboration as a means to genuinely involve the public in proposing, designing and shaping on-the-ground projects. While community collaboratives are pushing the agency toward a more decentralized, place-based decision making process, these collaboratives have yet to achieve the devolution of power implied by participatory democracy. Thus, based on this case study, characterizing community based collaboration as true participatory democracy is inaccurate.

Reducing the conflict over management decisions is an important institutional reason behind Forest Service participation in collaboration, which poses a danger for collaboration as a decision making mechanism for Forest Service, lands. As a result of this motivation, public support for agency projects and trust in the Forest Service as professional land managers becomes one measure of collaboration’s success. A decline in the number of administrative appeals and litigation is assumed to indicate greater public support. These measures of success, however, say nothing about the substantive outcomes of collaboration either in terms of building community well-being or the ecological impacts of collaborative decisions. The absence of administrative appeals and lawsuits is not necessarily an indication that collaboration has achieved the social and ecological goals that community groups like the Ad hoc committee set out to achieve.
Whether talking about collaboration between residents of a particular community or between interest groups, collaboration is, fundamentally, a political process. As such, the question "who is participating?" is essential when assessing the outcomes of collaboration. Without deliberate attention to ensuring broad participation, collaboration can marginalize critical voices that are labeled as "extreme" or difficult to get along with. Collaboration still involves conflict—there would be no reason for dialogue if there was no conflict, no perceived difference in values or opinions. In fact, as noted in chapter 2, some see the constructive engagement of conflict as essential to creating community (Moore, 1996). Thus, collaboration is not about getting rid of, or resolving once and for all, conflicts over Forest Service land management. It is about engaging this conflict in a way that is different from the status quo of public participation in Forest Service decision making.

**Ecological outcomes:**

**The Ad hoc Committee and the Swan Valley ecosystem**

Implicit in the Ad hoc Committee's collaborative efforts is the goal of integrating some level of protection for the valley's ecological integrity with social and economic goals. Community-based collaboratives are striving toward that elusive goal of "sustainability." However, in the Swan valley, relatively little, as far as on the ground management, has been implemented yet, and therefore, even less has been evaluated over the length of time needed to understand a project's impact on ecological integrity. What if everyone agrees to something ecologically destructive? Is this then a collaborative "success?"

There is a definite need to develop yardsticks that will measure the ecological results of decisions reached through collaboration. From this story of Ad hoc committee, there is nothing that indicates the collaborative process inherently produces better ecological decisions. Collaborative decisions may indeed be implemented more successfully because the process has built support for a project, but this says nothing about the ecological impacts of these decisions. It remains to be seen whether community-based collaboration will enable rural
communities to integrate the maintenance of ecological integrity with rural economies and lifestyles.

This lack of a concrete ecological yardstick for efforts at collaborative decision making raises an important question left unanswered by this research. What is the role of science, and scientists, in these collaborative groups which are by their nature non-expert driven? And whose science will be involved in the process? Collaboration, in terms of its ecological outcomes, will be limited by the information about the local ecosystem that is available to the particular group. Just as any decision in the past, collaborative decisions based on inadequate understandings of the ecological processes involved will not be successful in achieving the goal of sustainability.

The Swan's lessons for other collaboratives:

How typical is this case study?

Many groups are using the label “collaborative” to describe themselves. Several characteristics of the Ad hoc committee distinguish it from other efforts. First, the Ad hoc does not fit the “stakeholder” model of collaboration because participants are only representing themselves rather than an organized constituency. They act as volunteers of their own initiative to address issues in their community. In this regard, the Swan valley community is blessed with a tireless core of residents who lead the collaborative effort. The fact that the majority of core group members are retired makes this level of time commitment and dedication possible. This resource of retirees willing to work on behalf of the entire community does not necessarily exist everywhere.

As with the other efforts at collaboration sketched briefly in chapter 2, the Ad hoc committee is shaped by several key individuals. The Swan happened to be home to a professional facilitator who volunteered his services to the group; Alan Taylor’s training and problem-solving method clearly influence on the Ad hoc committee’s process and organization. Key members of the core group, who were among the founders of the Ad hoc committee, had the vision to bring diverse perspectives from the community together in a dialogue about the contentious natural resource issues confronting the Swan. They recruited other
residents and coached them in the process of civil dialogue. These individuals, possessed of leadership and motivation as well as expertise in natural resource management issues, are among the unique features of the Swan valley community.

The Ad hoc committee is a truly place-based collaborative. Even the Forest Service officials who participate regularly are from the district level of the Flathead National Forest, and therefore, are more closely linked to local issues and projects than to broad policy setting within the agency. The Ad hoc committee remains focused specifically on Swan valley land use issues rather than trying to influence policy at a Forest wide scale or even the broader regional and national levels. This local focus is, in some ways, a double edged sword, potentially limiting the Ad hoc's ability to effect significant policy change within the Forest Service, but also allowing the committee to be most effective at building community well-being in the Swan valley.

The Swan valley, itself, provides a unique context for this collaborative, shaping the Ad hoc in ways that make it difficult to generalize about collaboration in other rural communities. First, the nature of economic livelihood, throughout the Swan's history, may make this community more easily adaptable than other rural communities. The Swan community as a whole, has never been solely dependent on the wood products industry, or any other single industry for that matter, as the backbone of its economy. There is also a history of community activism in the Swan valley extending beyond the history of the Ad hoc committee. Swan residents have formed groups such as CARE, Scenic 83 and others to address the natural resource issues in the valley.

Finally, the Swan valley is both blessed and cursed with a checkerboard pattern of land ownership that makes the concept of ecosystem management a fascinating and complex puzzle. Many stakeholders from outside the valley are involved in trying to piece the puzzle together; the US Forest Service and Friends of the Wild Swan are only two. State agencies, county governments, private industry, and the University of Montana are all involved in trying to envision the implementation of an ecosystem based approach to land use
decisions in the Swan valley. For the local community, this potentially provides access to financial, informational and technical resources that other rural communities may not have. However, the involvement of these non-local stakeholders also threatens to overwhelm residents’ participation at times. Non-local stakeholders can potentially undermine the collaborative’s positive contributions to building community well-being by mistakenly assuming the Ad hoc committee’s core to be more representative of the entire community than it currently is.

This is the context that shapes the Ad hoc Committee’s collaborative effort; the situation will not be the same in other areas. Other communities will confront different opportunities and challenges making a “one-size-fits-all” approach to community collaboration impossible. There is a need to start differentiating between community collaboratives like the Ad hoc Committee and more formal stakeholder groups involving these paid representatives of interest groups. The dynamics of power, and the outcomes that can be achieved, will be inherently different.

**Recommendations and Future Questions:**

Several recommendations specific to the Swan Citizens’ ad hoc Committee emerge from this research. They are offered here as suggestions to help the core group continue its efforts to foster broader participation within the Swan community.

First, the structure and format of general meetings could be altered periodically to better foster the community dialogue that so many of the people interviewed for this thesis identified as the primary benefit of the Ad hoc committee. Based on my observations of general meetings, they closely resemble traditional public meetings in which agency officials provide information to the public in what appears to be a one-way communication pattern. This feeds the cynicism of some of the residents I spoke with, perpetuating the belief that an agency, often times the Forest Service, has already decided what it wants to do, remaining beyond the influence of citizens.
In order to diversify the format of general meetings, the Ad hoc committee could periodically sponsor meetings without an agenda packed with resource people as speakers. Instead, a broad topic for community dialogue, such as residents' priorities for potential land trades with Plum Creek Timber Company, would be the only agenda item. No proposed plan would be presented even in the draft stage. This format, while certainly more challenging to facilitate, would genuinely engage participating Swan residents in a dialogue amongst themselves about the valley’s future. While periodic information-sharing meetings would still be necessary, this type of community visioning format could help foster broader participation and increased efficacy among residents who currently don’t perceive much difference between Ad hoc general meetings and traditional public meetings. It would also give the Ad hoc leadership a clearer sense of what a community wide consensus might really be about a particular issue.

However, inviting people to more meetings, even with a different format, will not achieve broad participation alone. Meetings are only one mechanism to engage people in dialogue and decisions about their community of place. More creative tools are needed to engage those community members interested in Forest Service land management in the Swan valley. Based on my interview experiences, albeit with small sample of Swan residents, even those who do not participate in Ad hoc meetings care about, and have opinions on, Forest Service land management in the valley. These people were quite willing to share their ideas when asked. The Ad hoc committee could devise a system of outreach to engage these residents who will never come to a meeting. This could take the form of going door-to-door soliciting ideas on a specific topic or setting up a table at the local grocery store to ask people for their opinions on a current issue. Core group members could also deliberately meet with leaders of other community groups in the valley to discuss the concerns of different “communities of interest.” Listening would be the goal, rather than sharing an already developed proposal. While admittedly demanding an even greater time commitment and workload from an already busy core group, this type of
outreach would potentially break down the perception that the core group is like-minded and not really open to the diversity of valley perspectives.

The case study of the Swan Citizens’ ad hoc Committee also raises important questions for community-based collaboration beyond the geographic locale of the Swan valley. Once again, the role of science and scientists in a process that is non-expert driven is a crucial question given the ecological goals that are a part of the collaborative effort. While strictly science based approaches to conservation have not addressed the social conflicts underlying natural resource decisions, land management decision making is also not just a value based process. Collaboration strives to integrate diverse perspectives and values about land management decisions. However, as the cliché goes, throw the baby out with the bath water, in seeking to include non-scientific understandings in the decision making process. How will we (and who should) evaluate collaborative decisions in terms of their ecological impacts? This case study provides little guidance on this question, and as long as it remains an unanswered question, it is too early to conclude that community based collaboration will (or for that matter will not) result in better ecological decisions.

Finally, it remains to be seen whether community based collaboration will substantively alter public participation in Forest Service decision making. While these groups may succeed in fostering a more decentralized and inclusive process, it is unclear whether community based collaborative groups will achieve truly shared power in decision making about federal lands in their community.

These questions, looming large at the end of this study, do not mean that community collaboratives such as the Ad hoc committee are accomplishing nothing. Indeed, the community-based collaborative in the Swan valley is fundamentally about democratic empowerment, representing a move away from Progressive era, top-down federal land management. This group most powerfully serves to build community capacity and may, as Don Snow and Dan Kemmis suggest, represent “new governance” (Kemmis, 1990; Snow, 1995).
seeds of what Brick and Cawley call “place-centric environmental activism” are
found in the Ad hoc committee where:

Rather than loud national debates about an abstract entity
called the ‘federal lands,’ carried out by abstract players called
‘environmentalists,’ ‘land-rights activists,’ and ‘bureaucrats,’
future discussions would focus on specific places where real
people live, work, and play” (Brick and Cawley, 1996: p. 307).

The particulars of specific people and place, embedded within the larger
political landscape, shape the outcomes and the problems encountered by any
given collaborative group. By building community, these collaborative groups
accomplish much for their communities of place. In the Swan valley, this
dynamic process continues to evolve and change, extending itself further into
the entire community. How well the Ad hoc committee will succeed at fostering
broad participation and protecting the ecological integrity of the valley are
questions for the future.
Appendix A: Sample Letter of introduction

Barb Cestero
734 Locust St. Missoula, Montana, 59802 (406)543-5926

Dear,

Hello. My name is Barb Cestero and I’m a graduate student at the University of Montana working on my Master’s of Science in environmental studies.

I am currently working on my thesis which focuses on the role of rural communities in public land management and decisionmaking. More specifically, I am interested in the role of the Swan Citizens’ ad hoc Committee in Forest Service decisionmaking. The committee describes its purpose in part as: “To assist the community in resolving, collaboratively, the economic, environmental and cultural conflicts affecting the Swan Valley.”

As part of my project, I would like to speak with folks who both do and do not participate in the Ad Hoc committee. ________ suggested you might be willing to share your perspectives and insights about both the Swan community and National Forest management.

I hope to learn more about this issue from you. Your opinions, views and beliefs are vital to my project. I will give you a call in the coming weeks to ask if you would be able to spare about 1 hour to speak with me. I have a list of open-ended questions to guide our talk. All of your responses will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous; the person who referred me to you will not know whether or not you have been interviewed. I’m a student seeking to complete an objective and thorough study. I am not employed by any organizations in relation to this project nor am I advocating any particular proposals.

Both the Ad Hoc committee and the Swan Valley library will receive a copy of my thesis as it is my intent that this be helpful to the community. However, the information I gain will be summarized and no names used.

I look forward to talking with you and hearing your views. Your help is greatly appreciated. Thanks very much.

Sincerely,

Barb Cestero
Appendix B: Interview questions for Swan Valley residents

I. **Introduction**: introduce myself, goals of study, assure confidentiality, explain flow of interview.

II. **Background/general information**:
   1. Where did you grow up? When and why did you come to the valley? How long have you lived in the valley? **Probe: Year round or seasonal?**
   2. What is your current or past occupation? *(where did you go to school? what did you study?)*
   3. In the time you’ve been here, what has been the biggest change in the valley? *(Positive and/or negative?)*
   4. In your opinion, what are the major issues/threats/challenges confronting this community? Ecological and social?

III. **Ad Hoc related questions**:
   5. Do you participate in the Ad Hoc Committee? In what capacity? How often do you attend meetings? Are you on any of the subcommittees addressing specific projects? Which ones?
   6a. When did you begin participating? Why?
   b. If you don’t participate, why not? Do you keep up with the efforts/projects of the Ad Hoc committee with regard to local environmental issues? Of the meetings?
   7a. What do you think of the ad hoc committee? Its purpose? Its accomplishments?
   b. What are your perceptions of the process by which the committee makes decisions? Can you characterize it? *(Is it collaborative?)*
   8. How would you describe the relationship between the Ad hoc committee and the community? *(its membership & leadership/ the issues it works on/addresses?)*
   9. What do you see as the benefits and/or problems/disadvantages of the Ad Hoc for the community?
   10. Do you feel your views regarding land use in the valley are represented on the committee? Why or why not? Specifically regarding Forest Service lands?

IV. **Forest service related questions**:
   11. Who, in your opinion, makes/influences decisions about public land use in the Swan?
12. How well do you feel the FS is able to deal with land management issues in the valley? Do you feel your views regarding the management of federal lands in the Swan are reflected in Forest Service decisions? Do you feel your concerns are heard/taken into account?

13. What do you see as the public’s role in decisionmaking regarding public forest lands in the Swan valley? What should it be? (If not Ad Hoc what would you suggest for community involvement in FS decisions in the Swan?)

14. What do you see as the Forest Service’s role in the community in the valley? What should it be?

15. What would “success” look like? (re: this process of community involvement in FS ecosystem management?)

Last but not least:
Do you have any questions for me about my project? Suggestions about other questions/topics I should ask? Other people to talk to?
Appendix C: Interview Questions for Forest Service Officials

Background Information:
1. Name? Position in the Forest Service?

2. How long have you been with the FS?

3. Have you attended Swan Valley ad hoc Committee meetings?
   - if yes: How often?
     What has your role been? describe it.
   - if no: Are you aware of this group? Do you follow its efforts?
     How so?

Ad Hoc related questions:

5. What is your view of the relationship between the ad hoc & the rest of the Swan Valley community? Is the committee representative in your perception?

6. What are the benefits for the community of this group? Problems/challenges?

Forest Service questions:
7. What benefits do you see for the Forest Service of a group like the Ad hoc? Problems/challenges?

8. What role do you see for the Ad hoc in Forest Service land management decisions? How would you structure it? (how would it work in your view?)

9. Does this differ from more traditional public participation procedures? How so?

10. What are the biggest issues you see regarding increasing the involvement of rural communities through collaborative processes?

11. What would “success” look like as far as increasing community involvement in ecosystem management? What would the results be?
Appendix D: Interview Questions for Friends of the Wild Swan

**Background Information:**
1. Name? Job? The mission of FOWS?

2. What are the biggest issues in the Swan?

3. Have you attended Swan Valley ad hoc Committee meetings?
   - **if yes:** How often?
     - What has your role been? describe it.
   - **if no:** Are you aware of this group? Do you follow its efforts?
     - How so?

4. Why do you/do you not attend? Is there anyone representing FOWS perspective on committee?

**Ad hoc related questions:**
5. What are your perceptions of the group? Its process? Its accomplishments?

6. What are your concerns about a group like the ad hoc?

7. Do you see any benefits?

**Forest Service related questions**
8. Do you see a role for the Ad hoc in Forest Service land management decisions? How would you structure it? *(how would it work in your view?)*

9. Does this differ from more traditional public participation procedures? How so? *(is this positive or negative?)*

10. What is your view of the relationship between the FS and the Ad hoc committee? Your concerns?

11. How would you like to see the public involved in FS decisions/management? *(what has to change - the way they do Public participation or the agency itself?)*
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