

3 NATURAL RESOURCE INTEREST GROUPS

The 1995 KNF Social Assessment identified local interest groups and organizations with an interest in forest management. These entities included environmental organizations, industry groups, community-based groups, as well as recreational groups (e.g., Rod and Gun Clubs, Backcountry Horsemen, etc...) and other interest groups such as the Militia Montana. For this update, the task was to focus on identifying new groups that have emerged since the 1995 update. Consequently, this section addresses three specific questions:

- What new groups have emerged?
- Given the presence of new groups, what are the effects on the social dynamics for all groups?
- What are the implications of these new groups for Forest Plan revision?

3.1 New Groups

The Montana Wilderness Association, the Cabinet Resources Group, Communities for a Great Northwest, and other groups identified in the 1995 Social Assessment remain active and concerned with forest management issues. However, several new entities have emerged that have changed the social dynamics among all interest groups. These new groups of interest for this work include:

- Resource Advisory Council (RAC)
- TIMBER (Totally Involved In Managing Better Economic Resources)
- Yaak Valley Forest Council
- Lincoln County Recreation Association
- Local Watershed Groups

In this discussion we briefly describe the emergence of these groups, their purpose and goals, activities, and their interests in forest management. This is general background for a more focused discussion of how these groups have changed the overall social environment of natural resource groups in the region; and, the implications of these changed dynamics for Forest Plan revision and other responses to management actions and plans.

3.1.1 THE RESOURCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Resource Advisory Councils were mandated as part of the Payments to States H.R. 2389 (P 106-393) legislation briefly summarized in a previous chapter (section 2.2). Section 205 of H.R. 2389 provides for the establishment of a 15 member Resource Advisory Committee. The purpose of the RAC as described in Section 204 (a) (2) is: "The purpose of a resource advisory committee shall be to improve collaborative relationships and to provide advice and recommendations to the land management agencies consistent with the purposes of this Act." Section 205 describes four primary duties for the RAC:

1. Review projects as proposed by counties or other parties under Title II of the law.
2. Propose projects and funding as limited by Section 203.
3. Coordinate with land management officials in proposing projects for consideration.

4. Provide an opportunity for all interested parties to participate in the formulation and advancement of projects for consideration.

Members of the RAC apply for positions that have a three-year term. The counties and the KNF review the nominations before they are forwarded to the Secretary of Agriculture for appointment. Five persons from three categories form the fifteen member RAC. The three categories and the persons on the current RAC in those categories are as follows:

- Category One: representatives of organized labor, developed outdoor recreation, off-highway vehicle use, energy and/or mining development, timber industry or holders of federal grazing permits.
 - Tony Johnson -- organized labor
 - Timothy Ryan -- developed outdoor recreation, off-highway vehicle use
 - Kenneth Stephens – energy and minerals development
 - Robert Glover – commercial timber
 - Lee Disney – grazing
- Category Two: representatives of environmental and resource conservation organizations, with a focus on wildlife and/or fisheries resources, dispersed recreation, archaeological and historic interests, and wild horse and burro groups.
 - Timothy Linehan – nationally recognized environmental organization
 - George Martin – nationally recognized environmental organization
 - Robyn King – locally recognized environmental organization
 - Peter Kitts – dispersed recreation
 - D. Wayne Hirst – archaeological and historical interests
- Category Three: representatives of State and county government, Native American tribes, school officials or teachers, and the public-at-large.
 - Eileen Carney – state elected official
 - Rita Windom – county elected official
 - Gary Huntsberger – school official or teacher
 - Russell Hudson – affected public at large
 - Bruce Vincent – affected public at large

The RAC meets about once a month to discuss and review projects to be funded with Title II monies. The KNF maintains a web site³ with links to the minutes of meetings, project activities, and other essential background information about RAC activities and legislative authority.

Members from each of the categories of RAC membership participated in the discussions for this project. Uniformly, these individuals praised the RAC as operating effectively, although often cautiously, in the types of projects considered for funding. That is, members of the RAC suggest they have considered projects for which they could reach consensus. The emphasis has been on building working relationships and providing a forum for the discussion of projects and issues of concern to all parties.

³ <http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/kootenai/rac/documents.shtml>

The success of the RAC appears to be related to the following factors:

- Membership represents a diverse set of views among the constituents of the KNF. Discussions suggested that RAC members are perceived as holding moderate points of view. Both the diversity and the moderate perspectives of RAC members is evaluated as positive assets that contribute to the RAC's success.
- KNF leadership provides an important support role in guiding but not directing the meetings. KNF personnel who participate in the RAC are perceived as providing a useful resource that guides the functioning of the RAC without dominating its operation. This non-overbearing support has enabled the RAC to perform successfully as an advisory group for the KNF.
- Collectively, the membership has worked hard to develop cooperative working relationships. RAC members suggest that everyone involved in this volunteer group has extended special effort to minimize conflict and respect opposing opinions. This is not to suggest that differences in points of view are set-aside, but rather that in spite of their differences, RAC members have focused on building relationships that can be applied to constructive problem solving
- There has been an emphasis on consensus building in selecting projects to consider and to fund. Several members suggested that the RAC has focused on projects where agreement could be reached. This has allowed the group to build solid working relationships and to make consensus decisions rather than engage in conflict that results in no decision. Although some members suggested that tougher decisions are in the future, there is a more solid foundation to address these more difficult projects because of the experience in consensus building.
- Members have found common ground in some areas, but they also respect their differences on natural resource management issues. This is the underlying theme in all of the above points: differences in views about natural resource management exist, but they are not polarizing the RAC. Success is enabled because members do not allow different points of view to become the issue addressed by the group.

Importantly, the RAC is evaluated as a more or less neutral forum in which diverse interests can meet to work on common problems. This addresses one of the major issues about community problem solving addressed in the 1995 Social Assessment: there was no arena for community members to meet to engage in problem solving. The measured and steady success of the RAC provides an example that collective problem solving among diverse local interests can succeed.

3.1.2 T.I.M.B.E.R.

T.I.M.B.E.R. (Totally Involved in Managing Better Economic Resources --TIMBER) is a group that formed in the spring of 2003 in Eureka of northern Lincoln County. The group meets monthly and posts minutes of their meetings on the web site of the Tobacco Valley News, the local paper. Membership is open only to local residents. The group describes itself as representing diverse interests, although local environmental interests have chosen not to participate at this time. The issues related to participation by local environmental interests are discussed in more detail below. There are between 8 and 15 active members who regularly attend group meetings.

3.1.2.1 GROUP PURPOSE

The purpose of TIMBER is to address issues about Forest Plan revision and the use of natural resources in the environs of northern Lincoln County.

Our analysis of discussions with TIMBER members suggests the following factors contributed to the group's formation.

A perceived need to include more community interests in discussions about forest management issues. Member's perceived a need to find some middle ground in the discussions about the use and management of forest and other natural resources. As one of the TIMBER founders noted, there is a perception that the "middle ground" has been missing in discussions regarding forest management issues:

I found ...polarization ... the (timber industry) on one side ...and the Ecology Center on the other side. In decision after decision there were the same arguments ... in which each accuses the other of one thing and another, each demanding from the Forest Service 'this' or 'that.' Nowhere were the business community, the education community, and all these people who say the management of this Forest is absolutely essential to our livelihood. If it is, then, why is no one ever participating in anything? I came to the realization no one is participating because everyone is busy. Everyone agrees it is an important issue, but no one has taken the time to get the community involved.

The perceived lack of "community" participation in forest management decisions combined with an assessment that such decisions affect local livelihoods is a fundamental reason for formation of this group. Although TIMBER would like to represent all interests within Eureka and environs, local environmental interests are currently not participating in the group. As one TIMBER member noted:

In this group TIMBER we have tried to invite people ... we have tried to get local environmentalists and couldn't get anyone. I asked the Yaak Valley Forest Council and the Montana Wilderness Association (MWA), but no one has stepped forward. Why they are not joining us ... we were told quite plainly at a meeting just recently by one of our long time environmentalists That the reason none of his group would join us is because of the intimidation they are victims of. They did not give any clarification of that....

TIMBER members acknowledge that the Yaak Valley Forest Council (YVFC) is a group that is outside of their geographic area and therefore would not normally be asked to join the group. However, TIMBER members also suggest they have requested assistance from the YVFC to identify local environmentalists who might become TIMBER members. This expresses the need of some TIMBER members to include environmental interests in their efforts. "Environmental" interests represent a specific identity in these communities. For example, there are local members of the Montana Wilderness Association, some of whom are also TIMBER members, in the community. However, these individuals are not likely to identify themselves as "environmentalist" nor would they suggest that because they are MWA members, they can represent an environmental perspective on forest management. There are also local "environmentalists" who are also MWA members, but these individuals

have not yet attended TIMBER meetings. Consequently, there is no “official” local representation of an environmental perspective in TIMBER.

Some meetings have been attended by representatives from the Montana Wilderness Association from outside the county. However, because TIMBER has restricted formal membership to local residents, the MWA representative who attends does not necessarily represent a local environmental presence in the group. Local environmentalists, some of whom are members of the Tobacco Valley Resources Group, suggest that participation in TIMBER may not be possible because of their concerns about perceived intimidation of others with environmental interests. This will be discussed in more detail in as a separate topic below. The identity of who is and who is not an environmentalist and who can represent this point of view is important since TIMBER desires to represent a cross-section of interest groups and points of view.

A perceived need for a new type of community participation in issues related to forest management in general and Forest Plan revision in particular. Members also suggest that other important functions of the group are to advocate for community interests in Forest Plan revision and to provide information to their community about Forest Plan revision and related issues. The group thus fills a gap in public involvement with a community-based group that was formed to represent diverse points of view about forest management issues. As noted above, TIMBER members suggest that in the past, community members were often just too busy to participate in many of the meetings and other activities associated with forest management.

We have been negligent in getting out and getting involved in the planning process. It was never put home, it never came out it was an important step to take. It has become evident that it is important to be involved. The planning effort is there for people to use and use it as a bible for how we are going to manage our Forest.... I was involved in the Upper Columbia Project ... we made some substantive comments on that project ... that we are a timber dependent community and it became clear then that whether we have the time or not, we need to be involved in this process. At least 50% maybe 90% of people who live in Eureka have some association with the timber industry and we need to encourage people to get involved.

TIMBER members hope to fill a role in acting for many of those individuals who have not, in the past, participated in what is now acknowledged as an essential issue. TIMBER also hopes to represent those who know it is important to be involved, but who may not have the time to do so. They describe their emerging role as follows:

Public involvement does not have to mean everyone getting involved in every decision at every meeting. That does not work, that is impossible. What we recognize is that an institutionalized group that has the ‘o.k.’ to represent the community and it (the group) feels it has the community’s backing in tracking some of these issues and taking on corollary objectives such as educating people about what is happening. For example, having an in-service at the school ... about the forest planning process, Forest Plan revision, the old growth law suit, simply as an educational tool to discuss the process and what is going on and this is why we perceive it should be of interest to them. The next step is to ask them to be involved by simply submitting comments or if not submitting comments to the planning group

in Libby, then at least to us, so that we know what it is they are looking at. We see other ways to be involved in the community without necessarily asking them to come to every meeting.

TIMBER hopes to both represent community interests and to act as a catalyst to involve other individuals in the forest planning process.

An assessment of the need to work proactively to protect a valued heritage and way of life perceived as threatened by changes in resource uses that affect local economies. The founders and some other members who participated in discussions for this update described the importance of the “timber town” identity among residents of this region. This identity is important because it links lifestyles with an identity that is “in the woods.” For example,

This is a timber town in identity. To me it has always been a timber town. There is some diversification, but it is some individuals who see an opportunity to use resources that are a direct benefit to them. I don't see them expanding to the kind of breadth and width say that an Owens and Hurst and other people that have a history of logging. If you ask ten people in this town, nine out of ten will tell you it is a timber town. I am not even sure even one would tell you different. By- in- large our identity is out in the woods.

Another TIMBER member also suggested the deeply felt assessment of the community as having both a timber history and a current timber identity that residents desire to preserve. There is also a strong sense of pride in community heritage and identity, but there is also a sense that community heritage and identity are threatened:

If you go to Butte or Whitehall and the vein runs out, then you put up statues of your heritage because it is tapped out. I don't want to see statues of loggers showing that's what it used to be and people saying 'guys get over it.' We have a renewable resource. ... It is like a wheat field ... you let it rest, you come back, and you take another piece. That is how we are being pigeon holed - people are saying 'northwest Montana get over it' your timber industry is dead it is all over.... And I wonder why we are shutting down a wheat field, why are we shutting down a renewable resource?

There is also a linkage of community pride, heritage, and identity that is linked with a sense of stewardship of natural resources:

Where we are misrepresented ...is the pride and the heritage come from our families and people we know are good stewards of our environment. We don't want to see this environment destroyed for our children. That is why most of us are staying here. And we have other people telling us that we don't know what we are doing or that our fiduciaries (USFS) are not managing it right. Now, there will be abuses, but none of us want that. We want sound management. Part of our heritage is taking care of our lands and waters and soils. If I see an abuse of that I am working hard against it. But I want to see it used too and if it is not, then that is an abuse too. If that

forest is not managed ...(that is not) respectful and taking pride in our heritage.

This sense of heritage also links family experience, community, and the timber industry:

A lot of the people in this community ... the goal they have is not to be a millionaire, it is to do what their dad did, what their grandfather did. The cultural heritage of that is something people want to continue. I live out past the mill ... and when I drive in I get that smell and it is just such a good smell and it is something that reminds me of our heritage. And when I take my kids up in the woods and they can see some space between the trees and I take them to places and tell them 'there is where your grandpa logged' and then I feel a sense of this is who we are. And I am proud to be a part of that. And even as a community ... we know our loggers are doing a good job out there. They are investing lots of money in equipment to take better care of the environment so that it is there for their grandkids. I think that science has advanced, and the logging industry has advanced along with it ... and we want to make sure we have a forest here forever and clear streams. We are going to work with the science and talk to the loggers and see what they are doing, we are going to sit down and work together rather than the way some groups just say 'we are just going to stop what you are doing.' We want a solution and we want to work with groups that want solutions.

Family, experience, and community become connected and expresses individual as well as community identity. One result for this connection is that community interests, individual interests, and overall well being are perceived as continuous. An implication of this assessment is that community interests are consistent with a "healthy forest." If healthy forests do not exist, neither will healthy communities. The definitions of healthy forests for members of TIMBER include timber harvesting that protects communities from catastrophic fires and otherwise making use of available resources without abusing them. It also implies working with others who have diverse interests that have sincere interests in developing solutions to different points of view about managing forest lands in a way that can also support local communities.

There may be other reasons that contributed to the formation of this group, but these are core reasons that influence TIMBER activities and interests concerning forest management. In noting some of these interests and concerns, an issue also emerged about the participation of environmentalists in the group that may affect how TIMBER contributes to representing diverse community interests.

3.1.2.2 ENVIRONMENTALIST PARTICIPATION IN TIMBER

As noted previously, TIMBER currently lacks a local member from the "environmentalist" community. Although many current TIMBER members believe they are also ardent conservationists and they have deeply felt beliefs about environmental stewardship, they generally do not consider themselves as members of the greater Eureka "environmental community". The Tobacco Valley Resource Group (TVRG) is traditionally identified as the core of the local environmental community, but there are other environmentalists who are not TVRG members. TIMBER members suggested that they desired participation from local environmentalists, but they were informed that there were concerns about "intimidation" and they were reluctant to participate. TIMBER also contacted the Yaak Valley Forest

Council and members of the Montana Wilderness Association in Kalispell for assistance in identifying local environmentalists to participate. At the time of the writing of this update (September 2003), no local environmentalists are participating, but the meetings are attended by a Montana Wilderness Association representative from Kalispell. The situation about local participation is expressed in recent minutes from the August 2003 TIMBER meeting.

One "environmentalist" applauded the efforts of the committee to gather input from the community during the forest planning process. He had at least one caveat, however, one that reflected a Catch 22 worthy of Joseph Heller.

The committee has no one "representing that part of the community which is made up of environmentalists," this visitor explained. The reason, he said, is because environmentalists who speak up in the Tobacco Valley find themselves on the receiving end of intimidation that includes boycotts. No further elaboration was offered.

Despite its efforts of recruitment, the committee is thus hard pressed to find an "environmentalist" willing to serve with other members of the community. "It's an unfortunate reality," the environmentalist said, pointing out that the problem is not unique to Eureka.

His Catch 22 is this, then: TIMBER needs a representative of the environmental community on the committee, but no one from the environmental community is willing to serve (TIMBER, 2003).

Self-identified local environmentalists who participated in discussions for this update suggested that they have witnessed recent intimidation that they do not wish extended to them. One specific incident cited concerns work done for an out-of-area environmental organization by a Eureka area resident. The products of this work were used in the recent old growth lawsuit against the KNF by the Ecology Center. The local resident who prepared the report was, according to other environmentalists, intimidated or what was described as at least subjected to "uncivil" behavior. The possibility that they would be subjected to similar actions inhibits the willingness of these local environmentalists to participate in TIMBER. These sentiments and their influence on public participation in general are expressed in the following statement:

There is an attitude among some people here that is not particularly civil. I can remember at one point being at a meeting of snowmobile interests and someone I was with raised a question and people said, 'Who are you and what group do you represent?' And there was this very hard intimidating kind of behavior. After awhile, you just say 'I don't really need this'. An agency like the Forest Service trying to get both sides in a small community like this, it just does not give a lot of free space for a free discussion and dialogue about this (environmental issues). I know they are trying some new things and maybe that is going to improve things so there is not this sense of numbers overwhelming you. They are also using facilitators to make sure everyone gets heard. In a larger group people can get up and point their fingers at you and scream at you and they have the safety of all these other people behind him. In a small group it is like a one on one and that helps tone them down.

In a small community in which one's neighbor may also be your dentist or grocer, public conflict can be especially complicated because of the multiple ties that people have with one another. Consequently, participating in arenas where such conflict is assessed as likely has a high social risk that members of the Eureka area environmentalist community evaluate for each particular situation. This evaluation has clearly affected their decision about participation in TIMBER.

TIMBER members are uncertain about "intimidation" although they do recognize that some community members did have a strong response to the individual who prepared the report used by the Ecology Center in its old growth lawsuit. It is suggested that this individual was working with other community interests at the same time that the report was in preparation. This report was used by the Ecology Center, according to some TIMBER members, to attack community interests and lifestyles. It was also used to "call the Forest Service crooks and criminals." TIMBER members indicated that they and others in the community felt betrayed because of the involvement in community-based development efforts while simultaneously working on a report that was used to undermine the community and the Forest Service.

Local environmentalists also suggest they have concerns that TIMBER is not truly seeking the "middle ground" in representing the entire community. An environmentalist who attended one of the initial TIMBER meetings observed to others that they would not be participating further because, "The middle was in a different place than he felt comfortable with." There is also the suggestion that TIMBER was formed as a "very emotional" response to the old growth lawsuit by the Ecology Center; and, the process of forming the group was not perceived as including diverse interests:

I was at the Chamber meetings in which the announcement of the group (TIMBER) occurred. And if you look at the name they took and what they said is the purpose of the group, it is not a neutral process. If it was a neutral process it would have been somebody from that side of the argument calling somebody from the other side of the argument saying, 'let's get a group together' so common ground can be explored. But that is not how it came about. I think they want it to be very much unbiased, I think it will be very difficult to get that. Those of us on the other side of the argument just feel it was very biased from the beginning. Although some people in that group want to be open and welcoming, I don't think others are in that place and they are just unable to be in that place (open and welcoming).

There is acknowledgement by local environmentalists that a process that includes diverse interest to establish common ground is viable:

I believe that if you can get both sides together, we can eventually find common ground and produce something of value to both sides. You can have a happy medium. Other environmentalists (from outside the area) think that I am foolish with that type of approach, and they say that it will not be possible to find common ground and that what we need to do is win. But, I have problems with that approach. I see compromise and common ground as possible. I have seen examples of how it can happen.

While an approach of diverse interests working to achieve common ground is perceived as possible, TIMBER is not currently assessed as a feasible approach to find that common ground because: the process to form TIMBER is not perceived as inclusive of diverse interests; TIMBER is not perceived as representing middle ground approaches to resource issues; and, the risk of possible intimidation for holding environmentalist positions in such an organization may not be worth the possible rewards.

3.1.3 YAAK VALLEY FOREST COUNCIL

The Yaak Valley Forest Council (YVFC) is a non-profit organization (501.C3) with environmental concerns about the Yaak Valley. YVFC has a membership of about sixty-five persons with approximately eight to ten persons who are actively involved in the work of the organization. There is a paid Executive Director who works with an eight-member Board of Directors. YVFC interests are concentrated on forest and resource management issues in the Yaak Valley, particularly advocacy for roadless areas in the Yaak. The YVFC is similar to the Cabinet Resource Group and the Tobacco Valley Resource Group in that they are locally based with local interests. There is a perception that the Yaak is an area that requires an advocacy group just as the Tobacco Valley and the Cabinet Mountains do. As one YVFC member indicated:

Well this whole place is looked at as the Cabinet-Yaak ecosystem as one region. What we say is that it is really two separate ecosystems because the Kootenai River divides us and there are two different things going on even though people talk about the area as being joined, but they are not. The Kootenai River separates them. If you are looking at grizzly bears, the Kootenai River cuts that off. If you look at the landscape of the Cabinets as compared to the Yaak, they are different. And the issues are totally different. Plus if you look at the Cabinets up to the Canadian border, it is a big area. ... We felt there was a need for a focus on this area, to focus on protecting the last roadless in the Yaak. That is very specific; it is to the west of the reservoir and to the north of the Kootenai River and that is our focus.

YVFC suggest their concern is with the management of the KNF in general, but very specifically with issues in the Yaak: "If it involves the Kootenai we try to be involved, but where we will be most present is where it involves Three Rivers (The Three Rivers Ranger District)." There is thus at once a very local focus, but a more general concern with the management of the KNF. Although roadless areas are a specific concern of the YVFC, there is also a more general interest with advocating for productive community-based dialogue about forest management issues, particularly ending what is described as the "forty year war on the Kootenai." This war is described as having polarized interests so that seeking common ground and finding broad-based solutions to environmental issues has not been possible:

It has been a war about wild places, roadless areas, land management and permanent protection of roadless areas. We have been fighting over roadless and wilderness areas for forty years. The war is about how we ... ah, it has been so incredibly polarized. Groups like ours have more common ground with the local logging community and not just the local logging community; it is the local community period. But, what has continued to

keep the polarization is that if you are an 'environmentalist' then you are 'this.' And if you stand for wilderness, then it must mean 'you want us to be shut out of the woods.' ... We have had conversations with those in the logging industry and they say they agree with a lot of what we are saying....

This statement expresses the assessment that polarization of interests has prevented finding 'common ground' or pursuing mutual interests because of an emphasis on the differences rather than the commonalities about resource management issues:

There is a lot of common ground between some in the environmental movement and those in industry --- all of it became such a labeling thing. It is the fact that people who are local and consider themselves conservationists, we have this common ground with them, but because of the word 'environmentalist' or what they think their friends will think about them if they get involved with 'environmentalists' then everybody - well about 75% of the people here have the same interests (about conservation). Early on when we came to this community and had conversations with people, it became obvious there was more to agree on than disagree about. And, in theory, many people agreed with us about the roadless areas, but it became so hot because it became associated with 'locking out' and it became 'us' and 'them.' One of the things we wanted to do in this organization was to end that polarization because there is really no reason for it. I hear people throwing around the word stewardship and people asking 'who are the real environmentalists?' We should be talking together about what is best for the landscape and what is best for the community and to continue that dialogue.

The YVFC does not oppose timber harvesting per se, that is they are not identified as a "no cut" organization as are groups such as the Ecology Center. In fact, YVFC members have participated in efforts to find timber to keep the now closed Stimson Mill open and they have expressed an interest in understanding the timber needs of Owens and Hurst in Eureka. They are also perceived by different interest groups, including some timber industry groups, as an entity that is "reasonable" and credible. They are contrasted with other entities that are described as "no cut" and not credible because their positions are classified as "extremists." That is, the current receptiveness to the YVFC is in part because they are perceived to contrast with other types of environmental groups that are not local and they are perceived as radical and extremist in their approach to land management.

The YVFC has participated in other community efforts that have in effect extended its range of influence and built new ties with those who previously may not have worked with environmental groups. One of these efforts was the previously mentioned initiative in Libby to respond to the pending closure of the Stimson Mill. The group that formed included a wide range of interest groups; and, members of the YVFC were among those who participated in the committees and discussions to respond to the pending mill closure. YVFC members perceived this as consistent with their concerns and interests in the relationship of their communities with the KNF. One member described the collective efforts of the group to "find" the timber Stimson said was needed to keep the mill open:

So, we worked very hard to come up with more timber than Stimson needed. That is not what they wanted to hear. Once we did it, in a relatively short time, then we said that what we needed was a special

exemption from the Region and the delegation. So the timber task force committee recommended 'let's ask for money so the Forest Service can fast track the fuels reduction project.' So, we don't have to do anything with appeals because if we work in the wild land-urban interface and we are very careful about what we are picking and we have environmental groups on board that are with us working through the process, then we can lessen the chance of appeals and litigation on this issue. We found more than what they asked for and found a way to fast track it and we kept appeals in play. What we found was that ... this was not the intent of some of those involved.

Despite the collective efforts of the group, the mill was closed. The YVFC actively participated in ways to identify a timber supply that could assist in keeping the mill open. This expressed their assessment that mills and timber harvesting are not inconsistent with their view of forest management. And, they did have the opportunity to work with others that created new bonds that may be useful for future problem solving efforts. The utility and consequences of this participation is expressed in the following statement:

What I found in participating in this was that there were so many people ready to find a solution. And in private conversations we said 'we have to stop the fighting between these two interests (environmentalists and timber industry).' And we said we think it is really simple and it is what we have been saying since 1997: Get the roadless areas off the table and then we can sit down and get some agreements about how to work in the front country. That will have to be defined and we will have to look at it, and some groups will be more open to regular timber sales than other groups.

There will be zero cut groups and there is nothing we can do about that. There are other groups out there ... enough folks think that treatment is necessary and we can find common ground. It (participation in the Libby task force) opened the door for us to be involved in the community in a way that we were not involved before and that was a good thing. We are still involved in the healthy community meetings, but we had to pull off and work on the Forest Plan revision issues because that is our priority to be involved in Troy, Libby, and Yaak.

We are not zero cut, but we will not get off the roadless issue. We believe we need a facility like the Owens and Hurst Mill to process the fiber that is coming off the Kootenai. We ... went up there to Eureka to introduce ourselves. He (the mill owner) has been willing to talk to us and we call him up and ask him about things we hear and he calls us up and asks us about things he hears. We are trying to build a relationship there. He has been very honest with us.

Participation led to cross-cutting ties with other individuals and groups, it demonstrated the willingness of the YVFC to consider what they identified as reasonable timber harvesting, and it expressed a willingness to demonstrate the continuity of the YVFC interests with the interests of others in their community. These efforts appear to be building some trust that local environmental interests can work with other community interests and pursue common ground.

An implication of this is that the YVFC may occupy a unique role in assisting with environmental problem solving in the region. That is, in the past the polarization around

issues has had a cultural and social basis that has affected ongoing conflict. The activities and the stated interests of the YVFC suggests they can enter into working relationships with timber and other community interests to engage in productive problem solving. This has been demonstrated in some of the activities of the YVFC wherein they have provided information or facilitated discussions and exchanges of views about specific forest management issues. Another example illustrates this emerging role:

We brokered a dialogue between the Forest Service and the Ecology Center. We got the Ecology Center to sign off on ... we went out and did ground truths on 80 some units held up in that judgment. We went out and looked at them and took photos and asked all the questions and said, 'O.k. ... Ecology Center this is what it looks like to us.' It would be o.k. to let these go only if you think it is o.k. to let this go. We acted as a kind of broker between the two because there was some angst between those two groups. They agreed with us, they looked at everything we said. Their agreeing and being willing to release those sales so that fiber could start moving through this area again (was positive).

This role as a broker or intermediary between different environmental interests and the Forest Service, the timber industry, or other community groups may be only a secondary function of the YVFC. However, it is socially important because it suggests establishing new bonds and ties that can be a basis for collective problem solving. As noted previously, TIMBER in Eureka has contacted the YVFC to assist in finding local environmental interests to participate in that group. TIMBER also invited a presentation by the YVFC about their interests and concerns regarding the old growth lawsuit and other issues. This suggests they do have an emerging role in establishing common ground. However, the actions of non-local environmental groups will affect the ability of the YVFC to perform this role. Since groups such as the Ecology Center, the Alliance for the Wild Rockies, and related groups are perceived as attempting to “win” and not find solutions to the issues that meet community as well as environmental interests, the relationship of the YVFC with these other groups will likely affect their success in establishing a different and new forum for problem solving. If those “external” groups are perceived as controlling or directing the YVFC or if the YVFC is perceived as subordinating its local interests to maintain ties with these external groups, then this role will likely diminish. It is also likely the YVFC may then be lumped with these other groups and its effectiveness in building bridges and establishing common ground may also diminish.

Nonetheless, the YVFC appears to represent an emerging organization that offers the promise of new types of problem solving efforts in Lincoln and Sanders counties because of their local status, their willingness to work with diverse community interests, and an unambiguous statement of what is important to them in the debate about resource management issues: protection of roadless areas in the Yaak.

3.1.4 WATERSHED COUNCILS

There are watershed groups in both Lincoln and Sanders counties. These groups appear to be of two types: community-interest based and private-landowner based. The community-interest based group, the Kootenai River Network, is composed of individuals with diverse interests in the relationship of the Kootenai River to local environmental and economic conditions. Members do not necessarily live along the river, but their interests are in how rivers benefit the community and quality of life in the region. The private-landowner type

group is composed of individual landowners who share a river or stream as a common property resource with their neighbors. Their interests are usually specific to their watershed, although there is recognition that their public and private neighbors influence their watersheds. Both types of groups appear to organize around localized concerns about water quality, stream restoration, and fisheries issues.

In Lincoln County, the Kootenai River Network has been in existence since 1991 and exemplifies the community-based watershed type group. The Bobtail Creek Watershed Group was formed in 1996. It is the only private-land owner group the county. In Sanders County there are approximately six watershed groups in the area of interest for this study and all of these are private-land owner groups. Most of these groups have formed since 1995. The Sanders County watershed councils are Bull River, White Pine Creek, Elk Creek, Prospect Creek, Pilgrim Creek, Trout Creek/Little Trout, and Rock Creek. There is currently an umbrella organization that has formed to add administrative and coordination efficiency among the Sanders County watershed councils.

Both community interest and private land owner groups have some interest in Forest Plan revision. However, their general concerns appear to be focused on issues specific to their locality and watershed. The groups in Sanders County cooperate with the KNF on projects of mutual interest, but beyond these project specific interactions, their interests in other plan revision issues appears limited. Similarly, in Lincoln County the Bobtail Watershed Group has specific interests in KNF plans that may affect water quality. However, they do not perceive a wider involvement in Forest Plan revision issues beyond those that have an immediate effect on their watershed. Similarly, the Kootenai River Network has a broad interest in forest management and plan revision issues that affect communities and residents adjacent to the Kootenai River. However, their interests and activities appear to be focused on other community development and watershed issues. Beyond these general interests, these groups are not especially active as advocates for any positions beyond those that affect their local interests. They are noted here because they are new natural resource groups that have emerged as part of the social environment since the 1995 Social Assessment.

3.1.4.1 KRN: A COMMUNITY-INTEREST WATERSHED GROUP

The Kootenai River Network (KRN) is the only community-interest based group in the region. This group appears to have waxed and waned since its formation in 1991. The organization now has a new Executive Director and is making new efforts to pursue watershed projects of interest to a range of interests in the region. The KRN describes itself as follows:

The Kootenai River Network is an alliance of diverse citizen's groups, individuals, businesses, industry, and tribal and government water resource management agencies in Montana, Idaho, and British Columbia. Our mission is to involve stakeholders in the protection and restoration of the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Kootenai River Basin waters (Kootenai River Network 2003).

The organization is apolitical and, like other watershed organizations, they prefer not to take political stands on environmental issues.

In contrast to the private-land owner based watershed groups, the KRN is not membership driven and in fact has a relatively limited membership. The board of directors and the paid

staff, an Executive Director and a Financial Director, are the working members of the organization. The organization is funded almost exclusively through grants for stream restoration and related projects. Projects have been funded primarily in the Tobacco Valley, including a restoration project on Graves Creek. Additionally, the organization collaborates with a variety of federal and state agencies, including tribal entities, in performing its restoration work. Collaborating organizations include the following:

Montana Department of Environmental Quality
Resource Protection Planning Bureau
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Libby Area Conservancy District
USACE Libby Dam / Libby Dam Visitor Center
USDA Forest Service
Plum Creek Timber Company
Idaho Department of Environmental Quality
US Fish and Wildlife Service/Montana Partners for Fish and Wildlife
Free Run Aquatic Research, Hayden Idaho
Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
Idaho Department of Fish and Game
East Kootenai Environmental Society
Canadian Columbia River Inter-tribal Fisheries Committee
Ktunaxa/Kinbasket Tribal Council
USFWS Partners for Fish & Wildlife

KRN is also initiating coordination with other regional entities, but these efforts are in their initial stages as the new Executive Director takes the helm of this organization. KRN does not appear to be coordinating with other local watershed groups. As a community-based group with regional interests, KRN has a wider range of interests that cross county as well as international boundaries. This group appears to have some interest in Forest Plan revision, but its focus is on a wider range of development interests that may benefit local communities.

3.1.4.2 PRIVATE-LANDOWNER WATERSHED GROUPS

The private-land owner groups focus on issues such as bank erosion and stabilization, riparian vegetation and other habitat issues, fish populations and native fisheries, point source pollution, and other chemical and biological factors that contribute to water quality. Streams that are on what is known as the “303(d)” list, or streams that are “impaired” because of the Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) are ones for which state and federal grant monies are available for restoration projects. The formation of these types of groups may be in response to specific events or more general concerns about water quality issues. For example, one of the founders of the Elk Creek Watershed group described the formation of this council as follows:

The 1996 rain and flood event was the start of it, but there was some interest prior to that in the condition of Elk Creek. We thought conditions could be better. There was 319 (Section 319 of the Clean Water Act) funding available for watershed councils and doing restoration work. So the council was formed in response to a specific problem - the availability of funding helped - but it was more the fact the local conservation district and state agencies were very supportive and helpful. That made the most difference, it was great cooperation. AVISTA also helped through their dam re-licensing program. They wanted to enhance habitat within their dam-affected areas. Their support is through their professionals (biologists and scientists) and with funding.

In this instance the availability of external funding and the support of state agencies and AVISTA were key events that led to the success of this group. In fact, the success of the Elk Creek Watershed Council was a stimulus for landowners in other watersheds to form groups and seek funding for projects of concern to them. White Pine Creek, Prospect Creek, Bull River, and the other local watershed groups subsequently formed to address TMDL, riparian habitat, and fisheries issues.

The Bobtail Creek Watershed Council in Lincoln County has a somewhat different origin, but the types of issues of initial concern are similar. An individual with a general interest in watersheds contacted a local representative of the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks for suggestions about pursuing those interests. Bobtail Creek was suggested because it was of a scale and size that local efforts could address some of the problems and issues that affect many watersheds in the region. This individual contacted a variety of federal and state agencies as well as private landowners along Bobtail Creek to form this citizen's group. After some initial meetings, the group eventually developed a Mission Statement that included improvement of fisheries and the overall stability of the watershed. The group worked to collect data about existing conditions in Bobtail Creek and found some specific issues regarding TMDL's, 303d listing, fisheries, and riparian restoration that needed to be addressed. The group made some efforts to write grants to address these issues, but their initial efforts were not successful. They then contacted some entities outside the community that specialize in watershed consulting and grant writing for assistance in preparing another grant. This effort was successful in obtaining some 319 monies that funded several projects and additional grant writing efforts. This watershed council exemplifies the type of grassroots effort to stabilize stream channels, improve riparian habitats, and otherwise address stream water quality issues that are of concern to private landowners as well as public land managers.

As with many grassroots efforts, establishing the group and developing a dialogue among diverse interests required ongoing effort and problem solving to promote communication about mutual interests. As one of the group members suggested,

We went from the common point of everyone wanting to have a stable stream and more fish in the creek. We went as far as each land owner was willing to go to get to that.

These dialogues also focused on "cutting past the politics" of environmental issues, to emphasize the common interests of the landowners. In fact, those who participated in discussions emphasized that since they must work with diverse groups of stakeholders in

pursuing projects, they try to refrain from engaging in discussions that take sides about the politics of environmental issues.

The Bobtail Creek group as well as the Elk Creek and other Sanders County watershed councils also exemplify how such groups often require external resources to maximize the opportunity to succeed. The Bobtail Creek group notes they did seek some assistance from the Kootenai River Network, but found sources outside the community more receptive to providing grant writing help and grant administration assistance. The Elk River Council notes that they have sought grants as well as professional assistance from a variety of state and federal agencies, including the Kootenai National Forest:

When our interests and activities coincide they have helped us out and we have appreciated their receptiveness to helping small locally based groups concerned with watershed issues.

Grass-roots groups that are focused on localized watersheds may require external assistance to pursue successfully the stream quality and restoration issues of concern to them. The recent “umbrella” organization that provides assistance to the Sanders County watershed groups represents another type of solution that may also support the efforts of these types of groups.

3.1.5 OTHER GROUPS OF INTEREST

There are two other groups of interest for this discussion: the Lincoln County Recreation Association and Project 56. For each of these groups limited information was collected. The Lincoln County Recreation Association is still in the process of organizing, but the purpose and major goals of the organization are worth noting, even if the data are limited. Project 56 is an ongoing group, but we were able to collect only limited data about the activities and goals of this group. Nonetheless, there is some information and we present as a preliminary discussion about Project 56 in Lincoln County.

3.1.5.1 THE LINCOLN COUNTY RECREATION ASSOCIATION

The Lincoln County Recreation Association is a newly forming organization that has yet to complete its organizational structure and membership. The idea for the organization was developed by local ATV (all terrain vehicles) interests about access and recreation opportunities on the Kootenai National Forest. Since other recreationists and recreation groups also have concerns about access issues, it was decided to form a county-wide organization that could “speak with a larger voice.” At least two information meetings were held to identify if there was enough local concern about access and trails. At least one of these meetings is reported to have been attended by about sixty persons. Organizers of the developing group suggest that their interest is in working with the KNF to identify recreation access issues, trail maintenance, and related issues. As one of the organizers noted,

People here have seen their access to the woods change and we are trying to work with the Forest to keep recreation access. If we all band together, we have a better chance to be heard. We are not the jump up and down and scream type people. We want to sit down with the Forest and talk things over in a calm and rational manner.

Another organizer suggested:

We decided that we needed to have an association that represents all users of the forest, not just ATVs. The reason is that there needs to be a presence within the Forest Service that looks at everybody's needs and balances those needs as best as they possibly can. So this association we agreed on should include hunting, fishing, hiking, ATVs or OHVs, horseback riding, snowshoeing, cross country skiing, snowmobiling, and any body with a recreation interest. So, we decided to have a meeting about that and I'll be dammed if we didn't have a whole bunch of people show up, even people not from our county!

The organizers also hope to develop an entity that can pursue grants that can be used for improving trails and providing maps that will benefit local users as well as attract out of area visitors. Among the ideas for attracting out of area visitors is an ATV Jamboree and a Cross-Country Ski and Snowshoe event. Promoting these types of recreation events is also perceived as providing a benefit to the local economy:

Our economy, well what else do we have now but recreation opportunities? If we can make this a destination, then it will benefit the whole economy in the county and broaden our economic base.

However, there is an emphasis on integrating diverse recreation concerns for local benefit, even though some of those interests in the past may have had conflicts:

What we are trying to do is form an organization that can at best mitigate but hopefully eliminate the conflicts between the hikers and the mountain bikers or the horse back rider and the ATV rider or whatever the issues seem to be. So, we decided we had to get involved in the Forest Plan. And we met with them and they were all for this idea because they wanted to have one group that they could deal with that would represent all users. The idea was to sit down with a map and representatives from different types of recreation, hikers, bikers, horsemen, and figure out where we want to have each of these user groups to have access. We wanted to have a group where we could provide the opportunity for everyone to get along and to realize we are all tied at the hip.

This is the stated goal of the group to develop a multi-interest group that has problem solving as well as advocacy for the access interests of all recreation users. The association also has the stated purpose of working with the KNF to develop trails and other recreation infrastructure that will benefit the community, individual recreation users, and the economic interests of Lincoln County.

Although the association has not yet formally organized, the leaders have reached out to various recreation groups as well as the Kootenai River Network to pursue mutual interests. These leaders report that some in the community have responded positively because of the interest in an organization that advocates for the needs of multiple recreation interests. These leaders also suggest there is some negative response among some interest groups. This negative response is based in the concern that the recreation association may be an

effort to replace the interests of their particular group. As one leader observed about this negative response,

Our interest is in supplementing the interests of these other groups and not replacing them. Our interest is in providing multiple-use opportunities and ensuring we can address conflicts among different users.

As the association develops, the leaders suggest they have more ground work to do to integrate the potentially conflicting views among diverse recreation interests.

3.1.5.2 PROJECT 56

Project 56 takes its name from Lincoln County as the 56th county in Montana. Project 56 was formed in 2000 by a core group of about five individuals. One of these members suggested that concerns about forest management, issues about local control of resources, and concerns about local government were primary reasons for the formation of the group. Project 56 holds weekly public meetings; and, one member reported that about twelve to fifteen people usually attend the meetings to discuss topics of interest to the group. The Mission Statement of Project 56 is as follows:

The Project 56 Mission Statement is: to promote the moral, physical and economic well-being of Lincoln County and the people living here by utilizing our natural resources through the empowerment of the Lincoln County government.

We Support: God, U.S. Constitution, Bill of Rights, limited federal government, free enterprise system (capitalism) and home rule (local self-government); in short, the principles upon which this Christian nation was founded.

We Oppose: Atheism, socialism, racism, collectivism, pluralism, social engineering, the New World Order and the United Nations; in short, the ideologies of tyranny.

Focus Areas: Individual rights, the right to own and use private property, multiple use of public lands (federal and state), road closures, roadless areas, mining, ranching, farming, grazing, livestock, hunting, fishing, trapping and water use regulations (Project56, 2003).

In addition to holding weekly meetings to discuss issues of concern to the group, they attend meetings of local government, public meetings about natural resource issues, and they have sponsored local seminars by the National Center for Constitutional Studies. These types of activities are consistent with other such groups in the west that are “watch dogs” on the activities of local, state, and federal government.

Project 56’s activities are diverse, but as noted above their published materials emphasize a focus on public lands and issues related to access to those lands. However, many of these forest management issues are part of other beliefs related to constitutional concerns and the role of local control in government.

An expressed concern of Project 56 is “top down” management of the KNF that does not take into consideration local needs and the custom and culture of Lincoln County communities.

I have heard them say down there (at the Forest Service) that we cannot talk about this, this, and this because they are off limits because of the federal mandate. It is top down management and it does not work. It is not management. It is control. That makes me bristle. Those top down management issues where the powers that be say 'this is how it has to be' and we look around and say 'that does not work here.'

Endangered species issues represent some of the "top down" mandates that Project 56 members suggest are problematic and do not take into consideration both local knowledge and local conditions. Local managers are perceived as knowledgeable, but undercut by others outside the local agency:

I would trust the District Ranger and the Forest Supervisor or any of many of the employees working over there to take the ball and run with it. They know what works and I would say to them 'have at it.' That is a better management style. Federal edicts just don't work and we are subject to a continual barrage of them. There is this tyranny of federal laws and it is not good. ... There are some real constitutional scholars in Project 56 and they can tell you about tenth amendment rights, state's rights, and county supremacy.

A specific concern of Project 56 members is the very nature of the Forest Plan and especially how the previous Plan has not been followed. Members indicate that they plan to be actively involved in Forest Plan revision because, 'The world belongs to those that show up. And this is going to affect us all. What we believe is that if you are involved and you have a say then you have an opportunity to direct it. Maybe not, but you have had your say.' Members are skeptical about the process that may be used, especially the influence of outside groups and the use of facilitators in meetings.

When outside groups can come in and shut things down, that is not local control. The obstructionist industry has an interest in shutting things down.

The way meetings are run now, the facilitated meetings, are unethical and a manipulation of the meetings. The facilitator says they are a disinterested third party, but they direct the meeting and they direct the outcome. Consensus is the product of that unethical manipulation. I would prefer meetings run by Robert's Rules of Order. It would take longer, but in America everybody has their say. If the facilitator does not care for you point of view in those meetings, you may not get your chance to say what you need to say....

Local control and manipulation of the process are concerns about participating in the process, but there remains a fundamental belief that participation is necessary to have a say in the development of the Forest Plan. They suggest that a possible solution is to have smaller group meetings on topic specific issues that are chaired by local experts.

I would love to see a focus meeting on wildlife issues; a focus meeting on access issues; and, a focus meeting on wilderness issues. You are just doomed from the beginning when you say 'we are going to discuss the Forest

Plan' because it is such a complex subject. A thousand people show up and you have two hours. It is not going to work.

The "conflict industry" and "obstructionists" who reside outside and in some cases inside the county are a major concern of Project 56. These interests are perceived as concerned primarily with prolonging conflict, obstructing resolution of forest management issues, and pursuing their own self-interests by pursuing conflict rather than solutions.

We are right here in the bread-basket of timber and we don't have a mill. I know these forests ... and I have never seen these forests so unhealthy. There are patches of dead trees like I have never seen before. It is disturbing. I did not like the clear cuts ... but at least we had people out in the forest and it was being managed. Now it is not being managed.... The obstructionists and activists think we should go back to the pre-settlement era, but we can't, we are here. It is a fantasy. The reality is we live here, we have to manage fires, and we have to manage the forest.

Activists, obstructionists, and the conflict industry are perceived to be paid for what they do. They are believed to be good at networking and 'working the system' although they are not perceived to believe in what they are doing. This contrasts with Project 56 members who are believed to be "rugged individualists" who are not necessarily good at networking and care not to be otherwise; but, they believe in what they do.

The people who founded Project 56, and there are constitutional scholars in the group, the constitution was supposed to give everyone a voice. The main focus and the big hope for us is local control. Now, I can go to the District Ranger and the Forest Supervisor and I respect them. They may not agree with me, but I always feel respect. I walk out of there maybe not getting what I wanted, but knowing that I had my say.

Local control and 'having one's say' is perceived as a sharp contrast to what is described as the obstructionists and conflict industry that focuses on manipulation of the process without true belief in what they are doing.

Access is an issue of fundamental concern to Project 56 members. As one member suggested:

Access and obliterating roads is a waste. When I was a kid, when we were not hiking, we were driving up the roads just to see where they went. There was a lot to do like that when we were kids. Matter of fact I told my kid one time when he was whining 'there is nothing to do here', I told him to do just like we used to do, go get in the truck and start driving up a road just to see where it goes. And he said back to me, 'I know where they go, they all end in a gate.'

There is also a belief that access is tied up with a larger set of issues about outside groups that wish to keep the public off public lands. For example:

People hate the gates. They feel it is their lands. They live on the land, hunting, fishing, and picking berries and they hate not having access. It is like a rural cleansing is underway. It is an effort to rid people of the area. The Sierra Club, Alliance for the Wild Rockies, the Ecology Center all want to turn this place back into something like a National Park and have all of us gone.

Again, the theme of local use, local control, and local knowledge is prominent in the concerns of Project 56. Many outside interests are perceived to have more of a “fantasy” about local conditions. That is, the concerns of outside interests about forest management are perceived to be based in how they would like things to be or what media sources tell them rather than on local knowledge and awareness of local conditions.

However, the group appears to believe that local control is being inhibited by internal conditions related to social and cultural changes that are occurring in Lincoln County.

Right now there is a change in our culture that has come about through the loss of our resource extractive industry. People are now more involved in surviving at this point. They won't go to meetings, they just don't have time and they tell me they are just barely surviving. In the past we directed our own destiny. We controlled our own lives. Now we are controlled. Deep down we are neutered and that is a sad way to live your life when you have known freedom. There are these top down edicts that we can't get around. There are a few of us that stand up to it. Somebody has to when others can't.

Project 56 continues to meet weekly and there continues to be the strong belief that, “The world belongs to those who show up.” Project 56 plans to be involved in expressing their views about revision of the KNF Forest Plan.

3.2 New Groups and the Implications for LRMP Revision

Given the presence of these new groups, how may they influence the process for Forest Plan revision? To address this question, it is important to assess the relationship of these new groups to existing groups; and the relationships of these new groups with one another. The relationship of new groups to existing groups with similar interests may affect the management issues that may be pursued in LRMP revision. The inter-group relationships may influence how groups position their issues given the current mix of all groups in the region. The combination of these two issues is likely to affect how these groups participate in the LRMP revision process.

3.2.1 RELATIONSHIPS OF NEW TO EXISTING GROUPS

The Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) is a unique organization. Its mandated structure ensures a diversity of local and other interests have representation on the RAC. Furthermore, the mandate of the organization to gather public input on Title II and III expenditures and also to develop programs for those expenditures results in a forum for these multiple interests to work together. The implications of the RAC as a unique organization are discussed in more detail below.

Existing environmental groups in Lincoln and Sanders counties have been joined by the Yaak Valley Forest Council. The Cabinet Resources Group and the Tobacco Valley Resource Group have interests in management issues such as: pollution from mining; developing a fire plan for the KNF; cultivating responsible extractive use of natural resources; the use of stewardship programs for timber harvesting; protection of old growth; endangered species protection; creating roadless and wilderness areas; water quality related to timber harvesting; the effects of OHV activity on other recreational users; and, monitoring of forest projects and plans to ensure compliance. Many of these same interests are shared by the Yaak Valley Forest Council. Indeed, the Cabinet Resource Group and the YVFC share two board members and are aware of the activities of each other through these shared board members. However, the geographic area of interest for the YVFC and its emphasis on creation and protection of roadless areas provides a specific focus and defined interests for this new organization. Furthermore, the participation of the organization in a wider range of community arenas, such as the healthy community's initiative, has broadened its base and established new connections with non-environmental groups and interests. The YVFC also has connections with non-local environmental interest such as the Montana Wilderness Association and related groups. The connections the YVFC has with these other groups, positions the organization to work cooperatively with them as well as to act as a "bridge" group that can communicate interests across boundaries.

TIMBER is an emergent group that is in some respects similar to the Healthy Communities group in Libby. This group was formed in Libby to respond to the pending closure of the Stimson mill in Libby. This group evolved into an entity with wider community development interests, but this group is not directly focused on LRMP revision. Nonetheless, each of these organizations is concerned with the implications of Forest Plan revision for local economies and lifestyles. Both are also concerned with promoting access to KNF timber as a means to provide jobs and community enrichment by contributing to a broader social mix within each of their communities. TIMBER's closest relationships are with the Eureka Chamber of Commerce and the Eureka Economic Development Agency. Thus, its focus is clearly northern Lincoln County. Given the historical differences between Eureka and Libby, it may take extra effort for these groups to cooperate to work on Forest Plan revision.

The private watershed councils in Sanders County have an umbrella organization that is providing a wider organizational base for watershed interests in western Sanders County. Members of these groups represent diverse interests, although there is a strong concern with environmental protection, developing conservation easements to protect the natural resources of the region, and working with diverse entities to pursue improved water quality and fisheries. The Bobtail Creek Watershed Council does not have the same type of connections with other groups as does the private landowner groups in Sanders County. Despite what might appear to be a natural alliance with the Kootenai River Network (KRN), these entities do not appear to have a working relationship. Although the KRN is not a new organization, it is experiencing some rejuvenation and it was included in this update because of its watershed focus. This group continues to develop relationships with governmental agencies and other groups that are concerned with watershed issues in the Kootenai River basin. However, it appears to have limited interaction with other watershed groups.

The Lincoln County Recreation association is not yet a functioning organization. If it does continue to develop, it will represent a unique coalition of recreation interests within the region. The interests of the organization are multiple and range from promoting community economic development, advocating for recreational access to public lands, and providing a forum for recreational users to address potential conflicts in their use of public lands. These are ambitious goals that are likely to require a broad membership base representing diverse interests and strong leadership skills.

Project 56 is also a unique organization. While some have linked the group to the Militia Montana and to Project 7 in the Flathead, the group indicates they have no such connections with these other groups. They emphasize the local focus of their interests and suggest that as a group of “rugged individualists” they are content with their lack of networking and inter-group coordination.

3.2.2 RELATIONSHIPS AMONG NEW GROUPS

The work for this update identified some noteworthy relationships among these new groups. The first noteworthy connection is between the RAC and other entities throughout Lincoln County. These connections are through the individual members rather than through the organization operating as a particular group. These diverse members ensure that the RAC is connected to the spectrum of economic, community, environmental, and recreational interests in the region. A second noteworthy connection is among the private watershed groups in Sanders County. Through the umbrella organization working with these groups, they have also developed crosscutting ties across watersheds and to some extent across interest groups. However, these are relatively new ties and how they unfold to act on common interests remains to be seen. A third noteworthy inter-group connection is between the YVFC and other community and other interest groups in the region. Some members of the YVFC participate on the Resource Advisory Council and others are members of the Healthy Community’s group; and, they have also been asked to assist TIMBER with some issues. Although their resources to respond to the demands for their time are limited, the organization is in a position to develop crosscutting relationship that can be a basis for local problem solving.

3.2.3 THE IMPLICATIONS FOR PLAN REVISION

TIMBER, the Lincoln County Recreation Association, and the Yaak Valley Forest Council each express a direct interest in participation in Forest Plan revision. TIMBER was, in part, formed to represent the middle ground in advocating for the community and economic interests of northern Lincoln County. If the organization is acknowledged as representing diverse interests; and, if it is perceived as not an advocacy group for past approaches to timber management, then it is likely to offer a presence in the forest planning process that will effectively advance its interests. However, if local or non-local environmental interests refuse to work with TIMBER, it is likely to be perceived as industry advocacy group rather than a voice of the middle ground. This may compromise its ability to develop common ground with other interest groups concerned with forest management. The Lincoln County Recreation Association also plans to advocate for access and recreation issues in Forest Plan revision, but since it is a nascent group, we cannot speculate on its potential for effectiveness.

The YVFC and TIMBER share similar positions in the implications for plan revision. A strength of the YVFC is its cross-cutting ties with other groups; and, the assessment of the YVFC as “reasonable environmentalists.” While not everyone may share that assessment, there are existing working relationships with other environmental and community organizations that empower this group to develop common ground with diverse local and non-local interests. This may mean that it can act as a broker between diverse interests that could create conflicts over planning issues. In fact organization members indicated that they have a vested interest in trying to create useful problem solving in the Plan revision process, despite arguments from other environmentalists that the Forest Plan cannot be litigated so their efforts should be invested elsewhere. However, YVFC members suggest that Plan

revision is important because it represents a blueprint for the future of the environment and surrounding communities regardless of the ability to litigate the Plan.

While this may appear a potentially volatile mix, the RAC appears to provide some stability for the region because it offers a forum for diverse interest groups to work together. In this sense, it offers a model of diverse interests cooperating in a civil and productive manner. Other groups may engage in conflict and others may disagree with positions about forest management, but the RAC exemplifies the potential for productive problem solving among local interests.

Diverse groups appear to have a strong interest in advocating for their positions as Plan revision moves ahead. An important implication of this fact is that the process for involving and working with these groups will need to address concerns about fairness and consideration of all points of view.

3.3 Summary of Key Points

Since the 1995 Social Assessment several new natural resource interest groups have emerged in Lincoln and Sanders counties. The groups identified by this work are the Resource Advisory Council (RAC), TIMBER (Totally Involved in Managing Better Economic Resources), The Yaak Valley Forest Council, local watershed groups, Project 56, and the Lincoln County Recreation Association. The RAC is a citizen's group that was mandated by Payments to States legislation. This group is evaluated by its participants as providing a cooperative working environment for addressing natural resource management issues among participants with diverse views. TIMBER is a group based in Eureka that has formed to focus on providing community input during the process of Forest Plan revision. The group is composed of a range of community interests with some limited participation by environmental interests. The Yaak Valley Forest Council is based in the Yaak Valley, but it has members in other parts of Lincoln and Sanders counties. The focus of this group is the protection of wilderness and especially roadless areas, although they have concerns about the spectrum of forest management issues. They have worked with other interest groups to identify potential areas of cooperation to resolve long-standing differences between environmental and industry interest groups. Watershed councils are most active in Sanders County where they work to maintain and restore stream water quality. In Lincoln County the Kootenai River Network has new leadership that is working with other community groups to address water quality issues as well as the Kootenai River as a community asset. These watershed groups work with the KNF on selected issues where forest management affects watershed issues. Project 56 is based in Lincoln County and has specific concerns about local control of resource management. This group has a specific interest in the process of plan revision and advocating for access issues and increased use of timber and other natural resources on forest lands. The Lincoln County Recreation Association is in the initial stages of development as an organization. The interests of this group are in advocating for more consideration of recreation issues in the management of forest resources. The relationships between some groups suggest the potential for improved cooperation to address existing conflicts about the use and management of forest resources.