

VII. Chapter Four—Community and Organizational Capacity

Over the past decade, a range of stakeholders has engaged in building local capacity for sustainable forest stewardship in the communities of the Dry Forest Zone. These include conservation groups, federal agencies, technical assistance providers, community and county governments, community-based nonprofit organizations, collaborative groups, and the private sector. The result has been the growth of numerous community-based, local collaborations. Key steps to building community capacity in the zone have included, but are not limited to technical assistance to increase the skills of local businesses and community leaders; collaborative planning and problem-solving; support to improve community infrastructure and technology; grants and loans available for business development, educational pursuits, skill-building, and the costs incurred in these activities; and delivery or coordination of government services. In addition to building capacity in communities, organizations and service providers have also begun to “scale up” their efforts and capitalize on years of successful work. It is essential to focus on both the mechanisms for local capacity-building and the ways in which this capacity is disseminated and mobilized for positive change throughout the zone. To this end, we describe the range of institutions able to provide capacity and where these institutions are found in the zone. We then discuss the accomplishments of zone communities and organizations in building trust, implementation capacity, business assistance, and access to government services and resources. In conclusion, we highlight opportunities for increased scope and scale of forest stewardship activities through better coordination of nonprofit, collaborative, and governmental organizations in regional networks.

ORGANIZATIONS IN THE ZONE

Collaborative groups 1) are comprised of diverse interests that may represent local, regional, national, and other distant interests; 2) agree to work together to identify common ground; and 3) agree to advance solutions based on that common ground. Many collaborative groups work out agreements through project development, design, implementation, and monitoring; others simply develop and advance recommendations; and others may do a hybrid of both.

Collaborative groups vary in structure and formality. They may or may not be staffed, have nonprofit tax-exempt status, or meet on a regular schedule. Most collaborative groups have documents that articulate their purpose for working together and their decision-making processes. Collaboratives that have been consistently active build up trust and momentum for agreement. However, longstanding collaboratives can also potentially fall into challenging transitions when a key leader leaves, or suffer from community fatigue and inertia. Some collaboratives have yet to develop formal processes and structures; others deliberately remain informal in order to maintain flexibility. Nonprofits are important because of their ability to implement projects on the ground, which many collaboratives lack.

Community-based nonprofit organizations are entities that generally have a nonprofit tax-exempt status, a board of directors, staff, and programs, although some community-based organizations run on volunteers with very few staff members. These organizations implement projects in the community on their own, through collaborative efforts, or in partnership with other entities, including businesses and county, state, and federal agencies. The type of capacity-building activities that a nonprofit community organization or collaborative engages in depends on its structure, focus, and “maturity.” A mature nonprofit is one that has an operating board, 501(c)3 status, and a staff capable of developing and implementing projects. These organizations can be more readily able to leverage funds and maintain stability than mid-capacity nonprofits. A mid-capacity organization may not have a well-developed board, durable funding sources, or an adequate staff. Several community-based organizations in the zone provide the facilitation and staff support to collaborative groups. One example of this is the Lake County Resources Initiative, which assists the Lakeview Stewardship Group in collaboration around the Lakeview Stewardship Unit.

In addition to community-based nonprofit organizations and collaboratives, local governments and delivery mechanisms for federal services can play a critical capacity building role. Since much of the zone is public land, county governments serve as

the interface between communities and the federal government. County commissioners are important local opinion leaders and decision makers. Many of the county commissioners in the zone have experience with natural resource management issues and make that a significant component of their work by working with natural resource advisory committees, which play an advisory role on natural resource issues; on community wildfire planning; or in collaborative organizations, although their involvement across the zone varies. The presence of delivery mechanisms for federal-government-based resources is a fourth source of capacity. USDA Forest Service, USDA Rural Development, USDA's Rural Conservation and Development Program, and Economic Development Districts have field offices in the zone. Although our assessment process did not gather extensive information about these government mechanisms at this time, they can be significant sources of capacity.

A SNAPSHOT OF CAPACITY ACROSS THE ZONE

Each of the institutions described here can function to build capacity for sustainable forest stewardship. Community capacity is the collective ability of residents to respond to social, economic, and environmental stresses, create and take advantage of opportunities, and meet the needs of the community.¹⁴ There are several trends in capacity building in the zone: 1) collaborative groups are building and maintaining trust while increasing forest management activity; 2) there are durable nonprofits with implementation capacity; 3) nonprofits are supporting and growing forest-based businesses; and 4) federal service providers have limited engagement with land management issues.

Collaboration and trust building

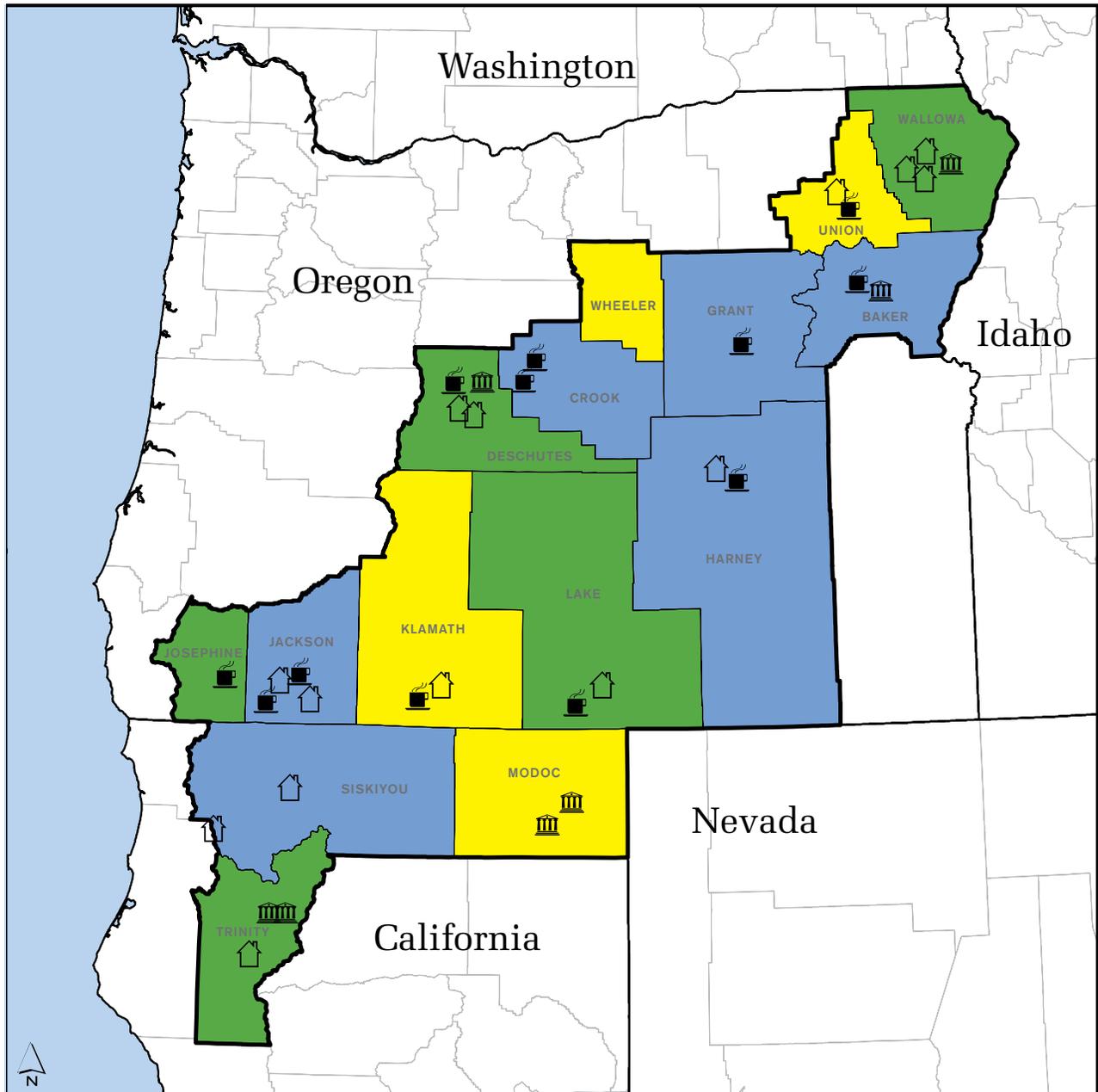
There are collaborative groups in nearly every county of the zone (*Figure 15, see 48*). These groups have identified a purpose for collaboration and developed procedures for meeting. Some have met for years, whereas others are newer. Collaborative organizations reflect their local contexts and offer valuable opportunities for rural stakeholders to participate in the decisions that impact their lands and communities. Moreover, they can be effective mobilizers in an area that also has nonprofit capacity. When stakeholders, agency staff members, and community resi-

dents first begin to meet in a collaborative setting, they are brought together by a shared problem such as disagreement over local forest planning. Starting small, conducting demonstrations, finding tools for decision-making, and monitoring active projects are key steps for collaboratives. In Trinity County, collaboration has taken place on a project-by-project basis with the Watershed Research and Training Center (WRTC) facilitating. These projects have included the Post Mountain stewardship contract and the Fire Learning Network. In each instance, collaboration began with small-scale initiatives that could offer tangible results. To build agreement and provide knowledge, they arranged demonstrations of forest practices on public lands (or on private lands if agreement on public land was not possible). These treatments offered the opportunity for first-hand observation and opened space for the different kinds of dialogue possible when in the field. In southern Oregon, communities have been collaborating since 1992 through defined groups like the Applegate Partnership, the first watershed councils in the state, a small-diameter collaborative, and a stewardship organization. Similar principles of starting small and building trust have guided their work, and this long history of working together has instilled a culture of collaboration in Josephine and Jackson counties.

More recently, collaborative activity has grown in central Oregon. While earlier collaborations in Trinity, Josephine, Jackson, and Wallowa counties emerged from conflict over federal forest management in the 1990s, these more recent collaboratives found impetus to convene stakeholders in issues of wildfire protection and forest restoration. Collaboration has actually occurred for over a decade in the Metolius Basin of the Sisters Ranger District in Deschutes County. In 2002, a new collaborative called the Central Oregon Partnership for Wildfire Risk Reduction (COPWRR) formed with the purpose of finding economic use for small-diameter material thinned from federal forests. This group was issue-rather than project-oriented, marking a new type of collaboration in the area. Numerous small coalitions of homeowners and concerned stakeholders have also formed to advance treatment of the wildland-urban interface around central Oregon communities. At a larger geographic scale, an interagency collaboration called Project Wildfire has led the process of collaboratively developing community wildfire

FIGURE 15

Community and Organizational Capacity Dry Forest Investment Zone



Data Source: EWP

Community-based forestry mobilization

- Implementation of complex projects
- Assessment and limited projects
- Convening

Community-based forestry entities

-  Formal collaborative
-  Government and quasi-government
-  Nonprofit



protection plans across Deschutes County. In 2009, the Malheur National Forest, the High Desert Partnership, the Blue Mountains Forest Partners, and the Harney County Restoration Collaborative partnered with The Nature Conservancy to use spatial tools to articulate the various values of importance to stakeholders on the national forest in Grant and Harney counties. For a more extensive discussion of agreement on land management through collaboration, please see Chapter Two.

As the Forest Service implements project collaboratives, another opportunity for trust building emerges. Multiparty monitoring can provide valuable data about impacts of forest practices and facilitate community learning. The Lake County Resources Initiative (LCRI) led the Participatory Biophysical Monitoring Project in the Upper Chewaucan watershed of the Lakeview Stewardship Unit on the Fremont-Winema National Forest. This project employed eight young community members and brought information about the watershed back to the Lakeview Stewardship Group, where collaborative participants were able to further understand and discuss what was happening on the unit. Monitoring has also helped further agreement in central Oregon, where COPWRR formed an ecosystem monitoring committee in 2006. Although this committee uses trained scientists and does not create local youth capacity, it has developed a process for monitoring public lands projects and the success of its own biomass supply model. This process has helped “re-affirm” the existing agreements of the collaborative and further build trust for new consensus.

Organizations with implementation capacity

While collaboratives build the trust and agreement necessary to agree on forest management, nonprofit organizations offer different kinds of capacity—in particular, the resources necessary for project implementation. A core strength of the Dry Forest Zone is its community-based nonprofits. Organizations like the WRTC (the earliest of its kind in the zone), Wallowa Resources, and the LCRI each have more than a decade of experience with collaboration and forest-based small business development. In their counties, they have successfully accelerated community and business infrastructure development to support sustainable forest stewardship. Sustainable Northwest, which is a Portland-area nonprofit

organization, catalyzed this local capacity building in Wallowa and Lake counties. Sustainable Northwest worked with community and county leaders in each nascent organization to provide financial and staffing resources, board development, strategic planning, and program development skills. In the absence of a robust private sector and adequately funded governmental agencies, an organization that can provide this capacity is crucial to the creation of durable local institutions that can foster systemic change. Over time, Sustainable Northwest became a partner and peer rather than assistance provider to Wallowa Resources and the LCRI, and these groups became centers of local activity and innovation.

These three place-based nonprofit organizations have learned to build effective partnerships, connect stakeholders, and create opportunities by bolstering their own capacity to acquire funding and develop staff members capable of implementation. They have each played a pivotal role in increasing the mobilization of community-based forestry across their counties. The work of the WRTC began in 1993 to help Trinity County adapt to the Northwest Forest Plan. This organization pioneered much of the knowledge and experiences of community-based forestry. It conducted worker training and ecosystem monitoring, created a small-diameter processing facility, and built a small business incubator to help reduce risk for local entrepreneurs. In addition to its cooperative work with the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest and local conservation groups, Wallowa Resources has spawned a for-profit community development company, an educational institute, and a local smallwood processing business. The LCRI and the Lakeview Stewardship Group have managed a 495,000-acre Federal Stewardship Unit on the Fremont-Winema National Forest in collaboration with numerous area stakeholders.

Elsewhere in the zone, organizational capacity varies. Central Oregon is home to several nonprofit organizations that act to address a range of specific issues including land conservation and watershed restoration. This provides Deschutes and Crook counties with high levels of capacity for grant-writing and project implementation. The key organization in central Oregon is not a nonprofit, however, but is the Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council (COIC).

This is a governmental group that local governments convened to provide regional capacity for planning, transportation, economic development, and natural resource issues in Jefferson, Crook, and Deschutes counties. COIC also acts as the official Economic Development District for central Oregon and staffs COPWRR. Northern California also has two nonprofits in Siskiyou County that work on different issues than the WRTC. This capacity has helped that county carry out assessment and limited project work. Local nonprofit activity is more limited in Grant, Union, Harney, Wheeler, and Klamath counties, but national groups such as The Nature Conservancy have been actively involved in fostering agreement between local collaboratives (Grant and Harney counties) and managing conserved landscapes (such as Sycan Marsh in Klamath County). Although Klamath and Union counties do have some nonprofit capacity, their overall levels are low in comparison to counties where nonprofits have worked closely with collaboratives, businesses, and county leaders.

Business incubation and capacity

Nonprofits can also play a key role in incubating local businesses that have limited resources for start-up. The WRTC has assisted small businesses by partnering with Trinity County to build physical infrastructure for incubation. New local businesses could rent space and equipment at the Trinity Small Business Incubator without having to capitalize. As the WRTC and the county received income from rent, they reinvested in more equipment to help explore value-added processing of small-diameter materials. Other capacity-building activities included a workforce survey designed to help area agencies structure contracts to fit the size and capacity of local contractors, and an on-the-job training program to help existing businesses build their employee skill base. Wallowa Resources and its for-profit subsidiary, Community Solutions, LLC, began by conducting biomass supply studies for potential investors. But larger investors from outside the region can be “impatient” about understanding the local context and



disinterested in what a community-scaled, integrated biomass utilization model can offer. Therefore, Wallowa Resources also examined the feasibility of biomass technology and markets for local businesses, school districts, and the county government. In doing so, they helped support small businesses and provided a more complete understanding of the variables that impact their success. In the future, they hope to help businesses acquire short-term bridge capital and act as an investment partner. Although both Wallowa Resources and the WRTC performed crucial services to their local private sectors, they also experienced challenges. One challenge was their organizational capacity. Wallowa Resources had to build its staff and partner with other organizations in order to offer the appropriate businesses and economic analysis skills. The WRTC learned that it is extremely difficult to acquire funding for physical infrastructure like an incubator, and that once primary processing capacity diminishes, it is challenging to rebuild.

Elsewhere in the zone, organizations have offered local assistance with biomass utilization and stewardship contracting. COPWRR in central Oregon has worked to provide CROP models of biomass supply to potential investors, assist small businesses with retooling or new ventures, and provide a collaborative environment amenable to new business partnerships. The Lomakatsi Restoration Project in southern Oregon formed in 1995 and has focused on building a restoration workforce. This organization bids on stewardship contracts and currently holds a ten-year contract on the Rogue-Siskiyou National Forest. By providing worker training, hands-on experience, and quality local employment, Lomakatsi has supported the capacity of local communities to restore their forests.

Federal service providers and sustainable forest stewardship

Federal service providers of note in the zone include the USDA Forest Service, USDA Rural Development, USDA Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D), USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Economic Development Districts. The USDA Forest Service has dozens of forest supervisor and ranger district offices across the zone and is a well-known interface with the federal government in public lands communities. The Forest Service is-

sues ARRA funding, stewardship contracts, service contracts, and timber contracts, all of which can generate local economic revenues. USDA Rural Development has eight offices in the zone. This agency can provide funding for community and economic development, energy, broadband, and other rural needs. Our assessment revealed that communities and organizations across the zone tend to have a limited degree of engagement with Rural Development. The agency held a jobs and economic development public forum in Bend and also awarded ARRA funds for rural business development to the Northeastern Oregon Economic Development District and the Southern Central Oregon Economic Development District (SCOEDD) in January 2010. USDA's Resource Conservation and Development Program creates "RC&D areas" that are able to receive federal technical and financial assistance program funds to improve natural resource and regional economic development. Six RC&D areas currently cover most of the zone, except northeastern and eastern sections of Oregon that have recently applied for designation. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is the federal agency that provides technical assistance, outreach, and conservation services for private lands through Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) in Oregon, and Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs) in California. District representatives are elected on local ballots and have taxing authority. There are seventeen SWCDs active in the Oregon portion of the zone, and five RCDs active in the California portion.

Finally, Economic Development Districts are another source of federal resources. There are nine Economic Development offices in the zone. These districts range in their involvement with natural resource management. Because COIC's community development program hosts COPWRR, sustainable forest stewardship in central Oregon is closely linked to economic development through both COIC's programming and the collaborative work of COPWRR. SCOEDD is another District that has engaged with natural resource issues. Through their partnership with the LCRI, they conducted a feasibility study for the proposed Lakeview Biomass Plant. However, these types of connections have been limited. Coordination between land management and economic development agencies in the zone needs to be strengthened.

OPPORTUNITIES AND NEEDS

Successful innovations in collaboration and capacity building have grown across the zone in the past decade, and these are beginning to increase in scope and scale. This growth will continue if communities can increase regional capacity for collaboration, implementation, and economic development through robust networks. To do so, collaborative and non-profit organizations can work to combine their capacities and provide small businesses with the skills and resources necessary to adapt to current market and supply challenges; and economic development agencies and districts can orient their work toward integration with land management goals.

Collaboratives and nonprofits have worked in tandem to advance sustainable forest stewardship in places like Lake County; their efforts have not been coordinated in Klamath or Union counties. Thus, although these counties are both home to collaborative and nonprofit capacity, their level of overall mobilization is lower. Although Josephine and Jackson counties have a number of organizations, their capacity to actively implement a range of complex projects has not developed. While collaborative groups help build the valuable base of social agreement, nonprofit organizations can be the “implementers” of projects and programs. Existing and emerging nonprofits in the zone must increase their implementation capacity while working closely with collaboratives to ensure that they have support. Implementation capacity includes decision-making abilities, staffing, and clear, equitable leadership structures. Collaboration has expanded in the zone in recent years, but this development must be accompanied by adequate growth of and partnership with the nonprofit sector.

Another need in the zone is the expansion of small business capacity and opportunities. This requires the development of workforce and entrepreneurship skills. Workers may be unemployed and untrained for new employment options, or may be unable to obtain training while working full time. Programs that can provide diverse and durable skills through training on the job are necessary in rural zone communities. Groups such as the Klamath Tribes are emerging as landowners who are in need of both a local restoration workforce and business capacity. Local entrepreneurs are facing difficulty from market

challenges and competition from larger operations. Many also have equipment that is not designed to conduct small-diameter logging; this inhibits them from capturing the contract opportunities available in small forests. Contractors can learn how to adapt their existing equipment and find ways to re-tool their businesses that involve less risk and support for up-front capital investments. Organizations across the zone have developed tools for business support that include assistance with startup-costs, risk reduction, feasibility studies, and negotiation of smaller contracts and sales that are accessible to local businesses. These services will help entrepreneurs adapt to current market challenges and thrive in the future.

Regional networking

Although capacity is crucial to local organizations and communities, networks are also necessary to facilitate the spread of capacity-building activities and innovations. Nonprofits, collaboratives, federal agencies, and business leaders must build robust connections across the zone in order to take local successes to the regional scale. Currently, networking in the zone tends to be localized but has begun to expand in scope and scale. Wallowa, Lake, and Trinity counties are examples of places with high degrees of connectivity within county boundaries. Wallowa Resources, the LCRI, and the WRTC each work with Forest Service and BLM officials, wood products companies, county commissioners, and conservation groups. The Nature Conservancy’s “Bigger Look” project is bringing together staff from the Malheur National Forest, Malheur Lumber Company, and both local collaborative groups across Grant and Harney counties. These connections have helped unite local stakeholders in pursuit of sustainable forest stewardship. Communities in the zone are beginning to expand their networks beyond their local areas to 1) expand county-based efforts to a regional level; 2) coordinate diverse and often disconnected collaborative efforts; and 3) connect land management and economic development agencies. All three of these approaches are essential to successful community-based forestry mobilization.

The first step in “going to scale” is the expansion of county-based activities to the surrounding region. Wallowa Resources has identified the need to work more closely with commissioners from Union

County, contractors, regional investors, and emerging community forestry organizations in Union and Baker. The WRTC is beginning to learn about and partner with groups like the Siskiyou Biomass Utilization Group and with Modoc County officials. Although Lake and Klamath counties face different forest stewardship issues, groups such as the Klamath-Lake Forest Health Partnership could increase their connections with other stakeholders across the region. This could help Klamath County develop capacity for project activity and implementation. Increased coordination in areas where there are many actors and groups is also key. In southern Oregon, for example, numerous collaboratives and nonprofits may work on the same issues in isolation. Partnership between the Southern Oregon Small Diameter Collaborative and the Josephine County Stewardship Group would help the groups to share resources while moving their focus to the landscape scale. In central Oregon, COPWRR, the Crook County Natural Resources Planning Committee, the Prineville Juniper Working Group, Project Wildfire, and the Fire Learning Network are among the many organizations that can stretch stakeholder energies thin. COPWRR and the FLN have begun to address this by collaborating on the Central Oregon Restoration Principles and attempting to draw connections between these various initiatives. Finally, the lack of coordination between land management and economic development agencies has prevented zone communities from fully accessing all potential resources for sustainable, integrated forest stewardship. RC&D areas, Rural Development offices, and Economic Development Districts already work at a regional scale and could convene with land management agencies and collaborative and nonprofit organizations to discuss shared goals and strategies for maximizing regional funding opportunities. This approach could also help federal service providers to understand and better address the local needs and nuances in their service areas.

CONCLUSIONS

Effective collaborations, nonprofits, government providers, and their networks are the critical infrastructure that helps provide an array of benefits to rural resource-based communities. These institutions can increase agreement on forest management, develop critical mass for community forest ownerships, and better coordinate stakeholders (e.g. across public-



private lands interface). For biomass utilization, they can build agreement, provide business and market support, and help negotiate biomass supply. Their participation in land management and biomass issues can help ensure that restoration and utilization work produces local jobs and local benefits, and they could work to convene leaders in land management and economic development in order to promote a coordinated approach to sustainable forest stewardship and community viability. They can also act as mechanisms for policy engagement and dissemination of policy knowledge. The future of sustainable forest stewardship lies in the continued promotion of local capacity while the zone also coalesces as a proactive and resilient region. Most importantly, community and organizational capacity are the basis of multifaceted solutions that can address the complex, interrelated challenges facing rural forest-based communities.