# You gotta' know the territory!

An exploration of the Cultural Interpreter Model and
Co-Orientation Model of Public Relations
on land-use issues in the Northern Rockies
of the American West
as seen through the eyes of Montana

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Where am I goin'?
I don't know.
Where am I headin'?
I ain't certain -

All that I know
Is I am on my way.

When will I be there?
I don't know.
When will I get there?
I ain't certain -
All that I know
Is I am on my way

Got a dream, boys,
Got a song -
Paint your wagon,
And come along!

*Lyrics by Alan Jay Lerner for "Paint Your Wagon," 1969*

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## Abstract

This study investigates the use of the cultural interpreter model of public relations, the personal influence model of public relations, and the co-orientation model of public relations concerning land-use and natural resource issues in the American West, defined as the Northern Rockies region, with a focus on Montana. The West is described as a culture within a culture, with its own customs, language, perceptions and way of life, and as a region home to extractive industries which have long caused tremendous conflict. With the region undergoing explosive population growth, the debate over land use is escalating, but so are new collaborations.

Because there has been no guiding theory or model of practice for conducting a public relations campaign in such a setting, research was conducted in a variety of fields in order to determine if the public relations theories might be of use. Ten personal interviews were then conducted to determine which methods and strategies were being used by communicators "on the ground." The overriding conclusion is that personal relationships count for everything and are of primary importance, followed only by the support of senior management and the complexities of explaining some issues, or of working with multiple, and multi-layered, stakeholders. Those who do not understand the history and culture of an area and who do not commit to the time it takes to make and establish relationships, cannot expect success.

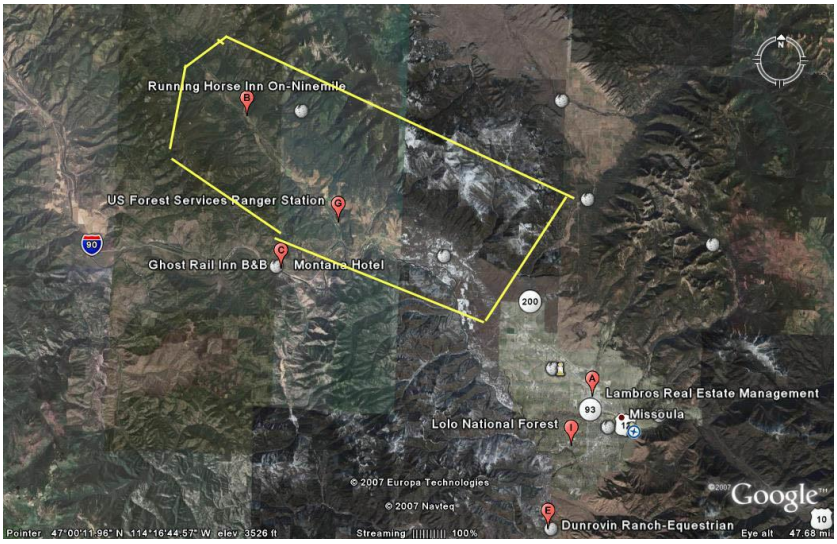
## Introduction

Back in 1998, the Yellowstone Pipeline Company (YPL) was told to remove its pipe from the Flathead Indian Reservation, just north of Missoula, Montana, by the Salish, Kootenai (koot-en-eee) and Pend O'reille (Pon-der-ray) tribes who live there. The company had a bad track record with the tribes: too many leaks, not enough remediation. Negotiations, which eventually included large sums of money, failed.

YPL then applied for permission from various private landowners and the U.S. Forest Service to reroute a segment of the pipeline, which carries jet and diesel fuel from refineries in Billings, Montana, to Spokane, Washington. The requested route would run west from Missoula along Interstate 90, then turn northwest up a long draw known as the Ninemile Valley, and from there over the mountains to a YPL storage terminal at Thompson Falls, Montana, along the upper reaches of the Clark Fork River, and from there to Spokane.

This kicked off the need for an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and a good deal of public communication, as might be expected. YPL received very mixed reactions in communities along both its current and proposed route. For the most part, people in Thompson Falls had no problem with it; they'd had the huge storage tanks and rail cars full of fuel at the south entrance to their community for many years (see photo). They were used to it, it was familiar to them, and they didn't experience significant problems with it.

In other areas, however, particularly the Ninemile Valley outside of Missoula, reaction was harsh and unyielding. As in Thompson Falls, residents of the Ninemile Valley knew each other and had long-established bonds with each other. As in Thompson Falls, Ninemilers had bonds with the land. They loved the area in which they lived, and were very protective of their community. However, there was no pipeline running through the Ninemile; there were no storage tanks for fuels or any other chemicals – and, perhaps remembering the area's previous gold-mining history, they wanted to keep it that way. This is a satellite view of the Ninemile drainage (outlined in yellow) about 20 miles east of Missoula (photo from the author's Google Earth subscription). Residents of the Ninemile - a mix of farmers, ranchers, small businesses owners and just plain rural residents - did their homework. They were more than a little aware that pipelines could leak, and pipeline routings across rivers could be particularly difficult. They understood that pipelines were a safer method of carrying fuel than either trucks or railroads, but that was not such a concern to them as the valley in which they lived, particularly not since the fuel was not going to benefit Montanans. Residents of the Ninemile showed up at every public meeting in their area.




The author was hired by YPL primarily to write newsletters explaining the project, and to take extensive notes at public hearings. She was in the strange position of almost straddling middle ground because she knew several people in the Ninemile, who said at the public hearings, "We know you're just doing your job." At the same time, she understood YPL's need for the re-

route and understood the elements of safety which factored into the complicated question of how best to transport fuel. Safety wasn't YPL's only concern; the pipeline was also much more cost-efficient for them than transporting fuel by rail or truck.

The Ninemilers weren't about to give up. They dragged out the Environmental Impact Statement with requests for detail, further research and further proof of safety. They railed so hard at public meetings that YPL ended up quitting the project out of concern for the continued expenses (YPL was funding the EIS, as required) and in no small degree of frustration. The company ended up taking its fuel out of the pipeline at the Missoula station, loading it onto railroad cars, and transporting it to the terminals tanks in Thompson Falls for continuation to Spokane via the existing pipeline, a method it still uses today. Although the company still has staff members in both Missoula and Thomson Falls, other company representatives left town, and several people lost jobs in the end.

Is western Montana safer for the way in which the fuel is now being transported? Probably not. Has the environment been protected? Not necessarily. One good derailment could cause severe, long-lasting problems. Did people speak up in favor of the pipeline at the public meetings? Not very much. Those who did speak up did so in private, off the record.

Many of these are classic public relations and community relations problems. They are even more classic public relations problems for the American West.

Afterward, one of the company representatives asked the author if she would let them know what they could have done better. The first thought that occurred to her was, "You should have packed a couple of tents and sleeping bags and literally camped out in the Ninemile for two or three weeks that first summer. Then you would have understood more about what the land means to those people."

That wouldn't have solved all the problems, but it certainly would have helped. YPL was looking at the Ninemile from a strictly utilitarian point of view; the company valued the Ninemile for ease of access for its pipeline to Spokane. But the people who live in the Ninemile Valley value it from naturalistic, aesthetic, symbolic and humanistic points of view (Hunter & Brehm, 2004), quite a number of values compared with a strictly utilitarian outlook.

This is the story of a beloved land and a beloved landscape. It is also the story of a needed land and a needed landscape, and these are not necessarily the same things.

The YPL case was the one which first started the author thinking about the need for some guidelines when it comes to public communication surrounding land use issues in the American West – or at least, the West with which she was most familiar. It seemed that the world of corporate America simply didn't know the territory. Companies and government agencies used a "one-size-fits-all" approach to their public communications (if they were communicating at all) when they were, for all intents and purposes, operating in a different culture and a different country. By the same token, Westerners have become so resentful of government and of corporate America that even when a project makes sense, hearts and minds may have closed.

## Definitions and Perspectives

The problem seems simple enough to encapsulate in the one story of Yellowstone Pipe Line, but it isn't. There are further problems of definition and perspective which seem to pop up around every corner.

*Which West?* When the author first felt compelled to research and write about communicating in the American West as a whole different culture within a culture, it was difficult to know which "West" to use. The initial confusion later became an asset to this report, in that it helped to define some of the problems with how people think about, approach, and live in the West. For example, there was the mythological Old West, portrayed with Roy Rogers and Dale Evans singing "Happy Trails to You" and the television show "Gunsmoke." Fess Parker was "Davy Crockett, king of the wild frontier," which, to the amusement of those in the far West, was defined as a mountaintop in Tennessee. Children in the western U.S. became aware through media images and storytelling that anything west of the Mississippi River – and sometimes west of the Hudson – was considered wilderness. The far West was a kind of wild frontier full of adventure, to be sure, but also full of backward, ignorant, uncivilized people and great danger. Indians, children were taught by certain exclusions in their textbooks, no longer existed; they were of the past.

Even if the media and textbooks had not played an active role in defining the West, the author's family would have. A lifelong Westerner, she was born and raised in the San Francisco Bay Area. Her family, took extensive trips around the western United States. Summer vacations meant visiting nearly every old gold-mining town in the Sierra Nevada; following the travels of Mark Twain; and taking special sojourns to Idaho's Snake River, to the Grand Canyon, to Yellowstone National Park, and many a time across the Nevada desert to Salt Lake City.

Western history and culture were as familiar and comfortable as the stories of the Pilgrims, the Puritans and early settlers must have been to children in the East.

In addition, her adult career in public relations has been spent in the West, starting with Oregon, where she co-owned a sheep ranch for a time, and later with her firm in Montana.

California didn't seem to be part of the "real" American West after some undefined point in the mid-20th century; it had become too overdeveloped and crowded. Yet certain attitudes, particularly the Westerner's dislike of anyone from "back East," were pervasive even then. From earliest childhood the author heard the refrains: *That person is rude - must be from the East, probably New York. What a city slicker! What a snob! East Coast, no doubt. Here come the suits; wonder if they're government people from D.C.*

Reciprocally, some Easterners seemed to perceive those who lived in the West as back-woods know-nothings. Possibly these perceptions arose as early as the 1849 California Gold Rush; perhaps it was due to the fact that the California mentality has always been one of innovation and experiment, free from government restraint. Innovation, because it means change, can make people uncomfortable. Perhaps it was that when people came to "settle" the West (the word "settle" is in quotes since there were already many thousands of Native Americans on the continent), they left the laws, rules, expectations and classes of the East behind and simply formed something new. However it started, a keen distrust and dislike of Easterners were part of the California culture of the 1950s and '60s. As it turned out, those were mild attitudes compared to places elsewhere in the West.

The author moved with her husband and two young children to southern Oregon in 1975, with vague notions of joining some friends in order to live off the land, a common notion for a lot of "back–to-the-landers" in those days. With another family, they bought and ran a sheep ranch between Roseburg and Grants Pass. Californians, who were then starting to move north in droves to escape increased urbanization, were not much appreciated by Oregonians in those days, nor were Californians as a whole prepared for living in the rural areas of Oregon. The author's family and friends purchased a ranch from a woman who, with her

husband, had come up from southern California with the idea of living on their little slice of paradise out in the country. It was not to be. There was a creek, sometimes swollen to a river, running through the ranch. There was a bridge over the creek to some ranch acreage on the other side. One winter, the snows were heavy and were later followed by heavy spring rains. The creek became a river and it flooded, right up to the bridge. The husband, thinking to just walk down the driveway to the road and check on the bridge, wore only light clothing and his bedroom slippers out of the house that night. He fell into the torrent, and by the time his wife had rushed back up the hill to find a rope and haul him in, he had been swept away. During the author's time on the ranch, the story took on the tone of legend.

For a couple of idyllic years that ranch in Azalea, Oregon provided a new sense of freedom, a new way of life, and a new understanding of the land. After the personal relationships on the ranch fell apart, however, it was sold to a neighbor who had leased it out for cattle; the sheep were sold at auction in Roseburg. Shortly after that the ranch, too, became subject to the land use ways of the West, when a good third of its acreage was destroyed to make room for a new dam on the river. Hearing about this development from a distance, the author found herself thinking of her upstream neighbors, and wondering what they would do. The neighboring upstream sheep ranch was run by a couple who had been there for over 30 years and was known to produce some of the finest lambs in the state. Where were they now?

There had been a massive culture shock in moving to rural southern Oregon from suburban California; it took a good two years to adjust. Learning to live off the land, produce all of one's own food, and depend upon a gravity-fed water system turned out to be a challenge. The challenge, however, also brought new skills, an understanding of the interconnectedness of the land and its resources, and increased confidence.

People were friendlier in Oregon. They would wave when driving on back country roads. They would look a person in the eye, where in the more urbanized areas of

California, looking someone in the eye could be interpreted as a sign of unwanted aggression.

It was possible to get to know people faster and better in such a rural area, because neighbors were more dependent upon one another and because, in a community of 400 people, no one stayed a stranger for long. People needed to know that they could rely on one another if there was a medical emergency and the nearest doctor was 16 miles away, as was the case on the ranch. They needed to know help would be there when it was time to get the hay in, or if the cattle needed to be vaccinated against pink eye, or the sheep needed their hooves dipped.

In contrast to the gleaming, large grocery stores in the San Francisco Bay Area, Oregon still had local general stores in those days. The author discovered that if a well-stocked general store didn't have an item, it probably wasn't needed all that much.

She quickly discovered there is no anonymity in rural areas or small towns. In Canyonville, Oregon, the local weekly paper reported on out-of-town relatives and visitors to people in the region. Word-of-mouth generally seemed to be faster than the telephone

Was Oregon the West to explore, the culture-within-a-culture? Was this the West that could illustrate the difficulties of learning to communicate in an entire region? Certainly, in some ways, it was. The author had lived a truly "Old West" existence there for a time, before becoming a single parent and moving farther north to finish her college degree. Today, as much as Portland has taken its place among the nation's finest cities, and as developed as the Interstate-5 strip is from Portland south to Ashland on the California border, and from Portland north to Seattle, there is still much of Oregon that is very rural in nature. There is a deep, shared history in the land, and in the memory of those who trekked west to the end of the Oregon Trail.

In Oregon, the anti-Eastern, anti-government sentiment was at least as strong as it was in California, but with a twist. "Northwesterners continued to see their region as both underdeveloped compared with such places as California and the industrial Northeast, and in competition with those places for opportunities to grow," wrote John Findlay in

an essay explaining the Pacific Northwest of the early 1920s. “They lamented that the region, far from controlling its own economic destiny, was yet ruled by distant capital. Once more, they tended to define the region more by what it lacked than by what it contained” (Findlay, 1997, p. 55). Being thought of as backward, Westerners have often reacted to their own perceived sense of what is lacking with resentment toward the outsiders who seemed to make them that way.

Of course, the bad reputation of Californians preceded the author’s arrival in Montana as well. Being a native Californian was mitigated only by the 10 years spent in Oregon before moving to Montana (“you must have become civilized,” one person said.). And if Oregonians distrusted politicians and policies from the Eastern U.S., in Montana it was close to a religion.

Having lived in Montana for over 23 years, the author has absorbed and understood a good deal of that culture as well. Montana is different from both Oregon and California; it perhaps has more in common with other Rocky Mountain States. Far more isolated than the coastal regions of the West, Montana is, as the old-timers say, the place “where you can’t get there from here.” It is landlocked, and the sheer size of the landscape means an extra commitment to getting around.

Montana, as with other states in the region, has a long history of being home to extractive industries, those industries which take minerals, precious gems, oil and gas, and timber from the land. Tourism development comes quickly on the heels of the extractive industries, as mines play out, timber decreases, and economies need to be restored. But other diversification of the economy can pose difficulties. The Pacific Northwest states of Washington, Oregon and Idaho have managed to diversify much of their economies; certainly California has as well. Montana and other states in the Northern Rockies region are still working on it, hoping to find some compromise between preserving a cherished landscape and providing high-paying, stable jobs.

As the search for a focus progressed, it became obvious that it was impossible to speak about the entire West in terms of one culture; there were too many. Then the

research turned up a book which put it all together. *Many Wests: Place, Culture & Regional Identity*, is a remarkable compilation of essays about the various regions and cultures of the West, edited by David M. Wrobel and Michael C. Steiner (University Press of Kansas, 1997). If one were to draw a line from eastern North Dakota at the Canadian border down to eastern Texas on the Gulf of Mexico, the region west of that line would mark what most people think of as the West. Separate out California and the Pacific Northwest, and generally follow the Rocky Mountains from Canada down through Montana, Wyoming, Colorado and New Mexico. This defines a region which has a common history and, in many ways, a shared set of values and a shared set of land-use conflicts.

In *Many Wests* the editors include downhill ski resorts along with mining, the timber industry, and oil and gas leases on the list of extraction industries. The reason is that when the extraction industries played out or were no longer profitable, many towns throughout the Rocky Mountain West turned their attention to tourism. All ski runs are actually clear cuts of the forest. That's how Aspen, Colorado got started. Montana has long promoted tourism, now an industry second only in importance to agriculture.

Even if tourism has not supplanted the extractive industries, the lure of rural living near a town, or the chance to put in special amenities to attract people has taken hold. The Ninemile Valley described at the beginning of this introduction was once home to active gold mines and now attracts backcountry hikers, campers, and ex-urbanites as well as long-term Montanans. Last Chance Gulch in Helena, Montana, once the entrance to silver mines further up the draw, now hosts a renovated downtown shopping and business district. Butte, Montana, perhaps the most famous mining town of all, still has a devastated, ruined landscape, but is also home to a high-altitude skating rink where Olympic athletes come to train, and to a Jack Nicklaus golf course built over some of the worst of the environmental damage.

Then there are areas such as Ravalli County (encompassing the Bitterroot Valley), Missoula, Bozeman and Whitefish which have become fast-growing communities full of wealthy "outsiders" and retirees. These newcomers represent another kind of culture and another set of values, which may conflict with those of traditional or long-term Montanans. Montana's famed ranchland is considered threatened in many areas, as some landowners find it more lucrative to sell to home developers than to keep working the land.

*Definition of the "West:"* The culture of Montana is changing, and changing rapidly. Because the land-use conflicts here are emblematic of many of the land-use conflicts throughout the Northern Rockies, and because the author has come to be more familiar with these issues in Montana after 23 years, for purposes of this project the West is defined as the Rocky Mountain West, with specific attention being paid to Montana. The communication problems this paper addresses speak to the difficulties of understanding cultures within a culture: the regional culture of the West versus the culture of the East; the mythological culture of the Old West versus the culture of the real West behind the myth; the culture of long-term Western residents versus the cultures that newcomers bring with them; the culture of the Indian nations versus the dominant white culture; and the culture within certain government agencies and corporations as contrasted with the cultures of the various target audiences in the West.

People throughout the western United States will probably recognize many of the land-use conflicts. The author strongly cautions, however, that taking a communications template that has worked in one western community and applying it to the next is a mistake. These individual cultures need to be understood on their own, despite their many commonalities. They will reveal themselves if the practitioner takes the time to listen.

In the process of conducting this research the author was introduced to whole new collaborations in the West regarding land-use issues, and found that theories from the fields of psychology, sociology, ecology and environmental studies were being used to

formulate communications strategies. They are strategies which public relations professionals should have been involved with all along. This paper is an introduction to the culture and values of the Rocky Mountain West as seen through the eyes of Montana, albeit with some examples from other western states included. Specifically, it explores the use of two primary public relations theories and models for anyone communicating to and with this particular Western culture: the cultural interpreter theory and the co-orientation model of public relations.

## Definitions of Specific Terms

**Environmental Impact Statement or EIS**: An EIS is a long process of study, analysis and recommendations for requested use of land, as required by law under NEPA.

NEPA, or the National Environmental Policy Act, is a federal law – Public Law 91-190, passed by Congress in 1969 – which established a national policy designed to encourage consideration of the influence of human activities on the natural environment. NEPA procedures require that environmental information be made available to the public before decisions are made. A typical EIS goes far beyond environmental considerations during the course of its investigation. The EIS conducted by the Montana Air National Guard, outlined later in this report, included investigations into how the proposed training range would affect area transportation, socioeconomics, safety, airspace management and cultural resources in the region in addition to investigation of geological, biological and water resources.

**Environmental Impact Assessment or EIA**: This is a less formal, less involved, less complicated study of the impact of requested use of the land. In general, the public does not understand the EIS process or NEPA law.

## Setting the Stage: History and Culture

It is only in Montana's past that the current land use conflicts and public discussions can be understood. When Lewis and Clark first ventured into Montana via the upper Missouri River in 1805, the contrast between the world they had left behind and the one they now entered was enormous. Behind them was a literate society, a society with a written language which had already produced the beginnings of a land-grant university system and a new, experimental form of government. The United States, not all that long ago, had won its war for independence from Great Britain. Benjamin Franklin had already discovered electricity, invented bifocals, and served as the United States' ambassador to France.

But here in the western wilderness, Lewis & Clark found native people who walked the land, having no wheeled vehicles. Families hauled their goods on a travois, a triangular wooden framework which could be dragged along the ground, sometimes pulled by dogs, sometimes pulled by them. There were some tribes which had horses, inherited from the line of mustangs brought by the Spanish Conquistadors in the 1600s to portions of Mexico and the American Southwest. Tribes for the most part were nomadic people, following the seasons and the food supply throughout the year. They had no written language, although they had a history steeped in thousands of years of culture and oral tradition. It is easy to understand why their civilizations immediately looked backwards and less developed to the new white men who came through, and easy to understand why there was an immediate assumption that these must be inferior human beings whose lives could and should be vastly improved. To say it is understandable, the reader is reminded, is not the same thing as saying it was justified.

In Appendix B of this report is a timeline outlining Montana's history parallel to some developments in the history of public relations (which by nature also refers to some of the history of the eastern United States). The stark contrast between what was happening in Montana and the American West compared with developments in the eastern United States

brings home the point that while "real time" may have been the same, stages of development were vastly different; "effective time" was nowhere near parallel. If one is to read the timeline with no other frame of reference, one would think that the peoples, races, and development of the western United States were irreparably backward and ignorant.

The lie is put to those assumptions, and to other assumptions about race, class and indigenous peoples, in the remarkable Pulitzer-Prize-winning book *Guns, Germs and Steel*, by Jared Diamond (W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1997). Diamond traces the development of societies back to the original centers of food production wherein a society might, for the first time, make the transition from a nomadic hunting and gathering lifestyle to a more settled farming and agricultural lifestyle which would support other types of activity in addition to food production. He followed the path of history to its most logical and scientifically accurate conclusions, explaining that there were originally few such food centers in the world which developed on their own. For the most part, the centers were in the Fertile Crescent area of the Mid-East, China, Mesoamerica (Central America) and the eastern portion of the United States. Portions of West Africa, Sahel, Ethiopia, New Guinea, and the South American Andes and Amazonia were also possibilities named in the book.

There is not room to adequately summarize Diamond's research here. Suffice it to say that a society's original location and environment had everything to do with whether or not it was able to develop stable food supplies, domesticate livestock and plants, and from there, go on to build what we refer to as advanced civilizations. The western part of the United States was not part of the deal. For one thing, humans simply had not lived as long on the American continent. And when it came to possible trade of goods and services, where new food producing techniques and other basic technologies might have been shared, there were problems of climate in some areas. In others, insurmountable physical barriers such as the southwestern deserts and the Rocky Mountains prevented more trade and development. (Diamond, 1999).

"It *seems* logical to suppose that history's pattern reflects innate difference among people themselves," Diamond wrote. "We see in our daily lives that some of the conquered peoples continue to form an underclass, centuries after the conquests or slave imports took place. We're told that this too is to be attributed not to any biological shortcomings but to social disadvantages and limited opportunities. Nevertheless, we have to wonder. We keep seeing all those glaring, persistent differences in peoples' status. . . Until we have some convincing, detailed, agreed-upon explanation for the broad pattern of history, most people will continue to suspect that the racist biological explanation is correct after all. That seems to me the strongest argument for writing this book. Authors are regularly asked by journalists to summarize a long book in one sentence. For this book, here is such a sentence: History followed different courses for different peoples because of differences among peoples' environments, not because of biological differences among peoples themselves" (Diamond, 1997, p. 25).

## Patriarchal and Colonial Attitudes toward the West

There were French fur trappers in the Northern Rockies long before Lewis & Clark embarked on their fabled journey. However, from the time of that journey to the present day, the patriarchal attitude toward the western United States and its people of all colors has been an almost unbreakable stance, made into formal law and policy and reflected in actions by government agencies, corporations, and private citizens. Thomas Jefferson laid the groundwork for attitudes toward the West and toward its indigenous people in particular when he wrote his letter to Captain Clark detailing his assignment for the trip. Part of the purpose, he said, was to "acquire what knowledge you can of the state of morality, religion, and information amoung them; as it may better enable those who may endeavor to civilize and instruct them, to adapt their measures to the existing notions and practices of those on whom they are to operate" (Jefferson, 1803, ¶13).

In fairness, Jefferson was only reflecting the values and attitudes of his society at the time, and indeed, the values and attitudes of most of Europe. Jefferson also emphasized that the expedition go forth in peace. Dr. Benjamin Rush, who outfitted Lewis and Clark with medical supplies for the trip, asked them to learn all they could about the natives' use of medicinal plants and any other remedies for treating illness.

## Montana Today

Today Montana is still home to an extensive agriculture industry which by definition includes timber as well as wheat, hay, barley, sugar beets and cows and calves. Tourism continues to be extremely important to the area's economy. There are still few corporations which make their headquarters in Montana, but one of the largest and best-known is Washington Corporations, headquartered in Missoula. ashington Corporations is comprised of a group of mining, construction and transportation companies started by Missoula native Dennis Washington. The high-tech industry is starting to gain a foothold in areas such as Bozeman, Missoula and Whitefish; and Chinook Wireless, operating only in Montana, is headquartered in Great Falls.

Both the communities of Missoula and Bozeman are home to lively arts communities. The two university systems, Montana State University and the University of Montana, have branches in far-flung corners of the state in addition to providing online distance learning to serve students unable to travel the state's vast distances. Montana has long been known as home to some of the nation's foremost writers such as James Lee Burke, Thomas McGuane and William Kittridge. Movie stars have second homes in the state, cherishing the ability to be out of the public spotlight in a place where people generally let them alone.

The state is divided by the Rocky Mountains and by the Continental Divide, so that the eastern side of Montana, by far the largest side, is primarily agricultural and

primarily rural with the exception of Billings, the largest city in the state. Eastern Montana is a place of vast, open sweeps of prairies and rolling hills. Truly “big sky country,” it can take over two days to drive across. From the Rocky Mountain Front west, a whole new Montana emerges, one of mountain ranges and lakes, valleys, streams and meadows. The area is characterized by ski resorts and other forms of recreation, fine arts and performing arts, rural/suburban lifestyles, and growing retirement communities.

Today, Montana is home to about 935,670 people on its 147,000 square miles, according to 2005 census estimates. Out of that population, 90.6 percent are white; 6.2 percent are American Indian; 2.0 percent are Hispanic/Latino; 1.7 percent are listed as two or more races; 0.6 percent are listed as “other;” 0.5 percent are Asian; and 0.3 percent are Black (infoplease.com, 2007, left column).

The urban counties of the state – the counties in which Billings, Bozeman, Butte, Missoula, Great Falls, Helena, and Kalispell are located – account for the state’s major growth, according to Larry Swanson, director of the O'Connor Center for the Rocky Mountain West at the University of Montana. More and more people are moving to the cities in an urbanization process that is a little unexpected. Swanson says “one obvious reason for the differences is that county boundaries don't change, but cities keep expanding. People want to live near mountains, rivers and other natural attractions but still have the benefits of urban living - mainly sewer and water service” (Kemmick, 2007, ¶13). He says that Gallatin County, where Bozeman is located, has been experiencing 3 percent growth, something that "is almost incapacitating for planners" (Kemmick, 2007, ¶16).

On Montana’s seven Indian reservations, employment runs an average of 50 percent. The median household income for American Indians in Montana in 2000 was $22,824, or more than $10,000 less than the figure of $33,024 reported for all Montana households (Polzin & O’Donnell, 2004), which is in itself lower than national averages.

There is a new kind of political and social revolution taking place across the state, a counterpoint to the previous "sagebrush rebellion." In a piece called "The Greening of the West," Ronald Brownstein of the Los Angeles Times wrote: "Now the "renewable revolution" is taking over. Since the arrival of the white setters, the American West has been shaped by the discovery and extraction of natural resources, beginning in the 19th century with silver and gold and then extending to timber, copper, uranium and fossil fuels such as oil, natural gas and coal. For decades, the industries that grew around these resources mined state capitals as thoroughly as they did the riches beneath the earth. As recently as three decades ago, the Mountain West states erupted in what was known as the 'sagebrush rebellion' – a loud and sustained clamor from the extraction industries and their political allies for the federal government to open millions of acres of public land for resource exploration and development. But that has changed. In less than a generation, the sagebrush rebellion has given way across the West to a 'renewable revolution.'

"Today, from the Rockies to the Pacific, a new political axis is emerging that could transform the national debate over energy, the environment and global warming. Across the West, governors from both parties are advancing the nation's most ambitious policies to promote clean energy, encourage conservation and reduce emissions of greenhouse gasses. . . . The political coalition for these sweeping changes begins with the influx to the rapidly growing Mountain states of new residents unattached to the traditional resource industries – and, in fact, inclined to view those interests as threats to the outdoor lifestyle that in many instances prompted them to relocate. . . .Resistance to this agenda hasn't vanished, especially in the Mountain states traditionally skeptical of government…John Caldara, president of the Independence Institute, a conservative Colorado think tank, maintains that the new energy consensus across the regions 'could be potentially devastating for the states' that adopt it, raising energy costs and suppressing economic growth. Even supporters who dismiss such a gloomy forecast acknowledge other impediments. Schweitzer (Montana's governor) and Ritter, while supporting

national action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, expressed reluctance to join the regional carbon compact for fear of ceding an economic advantage to neighboring states that didn't. Solar facilities and the clean-coal technologies that Schweitzer and other governors are promoting may take many years to develop at economically competitive costs. But the overall shift in the region's energy priorities appears irreversible" (Brownstein, 2007, p. A8).

Perhaps it would help to repeat this sentence from the Brownstein article: *"*The political coalition for these sweeping changes begins with the influx to the rapidly growing Mountain states of new residents unattached to the traditional resource industries – and, in fact, inclined to view those interests as threats to the outdoor lifestyle that in many instances prompted them to relocate." That sentence neatly summarizes the different cultures of the "New West" versus the "Old West." Let's look at the "Old West" for just a moment.

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## The Mythology of the West

In an essay for the *High Country News,* John Clayton wrote: "Do you see the West as the frontier, a place where you can reinvent yourself? Then you're probably from the East. Do you equate wilderness with unspoiled purity? Then chances are you're from a coastal city. Do you see the concept of honor on horseback as proving your electability? Then maybe you're a recent immigrant from Pennsylvania" (Clayton, 2004, ¶4).

The American West retains a mythological place in the country's consciousness, and preconceptions abound. As stated on the website of the Bill Lane Center for the Study of the North American West at Stanford University, "The West, through Hollywood, has an enormous influence on popular culture, but otherwise it generally lacks an intellectual, cultural, or social presence within either the country or the continent" (Bill Lane Center for the Study of the North American West, 2007, #4).

As is noted later in this report, the railroads started the first heavy promotion of the West, originally to get paying customers to visit Yellowstone and Yosemite National Parks, in which the railroads were heavily invested. Later they simply wanted to entice people to take vacations in the West so that they could continue to pay for their huge outlays of track and other expenses.

"In 1883 an exhibition car called the 'Fair on Wheels' made its way from Minnesota throughout the East to display minerals, timber, and specially made stuffed animals representative of Yellowstone's species along with fruits, grains, and potted plants indicative of the bountiful harvests of the old Northwest -- all made possible by the railroad. Over 400,000 people visited the car and took away promotional literature about the 'Yellowstone Park Line,' its hotels at Mammoth Hot Springs and Old Faithful, and the names of the nearest ticket agents. Throughout the '80s, Northern Pacific circulated travel brochures in the East that promised the best of both worlds - an 'authentic' Wild West experience in a wilderness made safe, prosperous, and civilized by the railroad. Although the railroad estimated a distribution of two million pieces of promotional literature about Yellowstone, visitation to the railroad car was considerably higher than visitation to the park, which averaged only about 500 per season, largely because of the tremendous expense of travel to the West. Still, the 'Fair on Wheels' stunt indicated to the railroad that there was enough public interest in the West to consider opening travel to a mass market in the near future" (Johns, 1996, p.1).

Annick Smith addressed the mythology of the West with an essay in *The Last Best Place*, an anthology of Montana literature she edited with William Kittredge. "During the nineteenth century, even more than today, plenty of fiction was being written about the Wild West. Stories hit the streets hot on the heels of the events they depicted. We know of 1,700 novels written about Buffalo Bill *during his lifetime*, but not a single one is in print today. The dime novels that popularized the West were invented by eastern writers for the entertainment of large, urban audiences. Imagine Rambo in 1885 but call him Wild Bill Hickok, and you will

know how the Western came to be. . . and the simplistic cowboy code that lies at the heart of the western myth – good guys versus bad guys in a ritual duel – unfortunately still holds great power in American politics and foreign policy" (Smith,1998, pp. 256, 257).

Certainly Montana politicians use the myth. This essay, which appeared in *The Smithsonian,* describes an example: "Brian Schweitzer, a mint farmer who in 2004 was elected Montana's first Democratic governor in 16 years, told me that western politicians have to pay careful attention to the disconnect between economic reality and the fantasies floating around inside the heads of voters, especially male voters. He said that two statewide elections (he lost a race in 2000 against Republican Senator Conrad Burns) taught him the importance of those fantasies, even while reaching beyond them.

"In his second, successful race, Schweitzer did most of his TV campaign ads sitting on a horse or holding a gun or both. He did it, he said, so his 'visuals' would show that he understands Montana. 'Hell, I can be on a horse and talk about health care,' he said. What a Western politician cannot do, if he or she wants to get elected, is scold voters about the gap that exists between their imagined West and the place where they actually live. 'Look,' Schweitzer told me, 'if I stand in front of voters and tell them, 'Everything you thought you knew about Montana's economy is wrong,' then who in the hell is going to vote for someone like that?'" (Harden, 2007, p.2, ¶s 2-3).

The Governor could as easily have put on some hip boots, grabbed his fishing pole, and waded out into the Big Hole River, home to some of the state's best trout fishing, and he would have been equally effective in using the mythology.

Patrick Jobes addressed the more modern Montana fantasy in *Moving Nearer to Heaven*: "The general outline of their dream is common, shared by many exurbanites who move to the Northern Rockies. They seem to have a dreamscape geographic image which they think can be objectively played out like chess or Monopoly®. They only want a few

affordable acres, which they intend to develop only a little bit. They want urban amenities and a flexible, mobile lifestyle. They want community to almost magically, though sensibly in their minds, converge around them. Yet, they want to be somewhere else several months each year. Multiply this lovely individualistic vision by tens of thousands and there is a traffic jam in Yellowstone National Park, a subdivision crisis in hundreds of small towns in the vast terrain of the Rockies which stretches from the Mexican border well into Canada" (Jobes, 2000, p. 4).

## Western Culture

The concept of culture which lies at the heart of this study deserves further explanation**.** In the dominant white culture of the United States, culture is often thought of as a commodity - the arts, literature, concerts, museums, and so forth. People speak about whether or not someone has access to culture or is a cultured person. When the term is applied to another country's culture, it is expanded to include language, values, history, race, and lifestyle, often as expressed through the arts.

An expanded use of this term comes with the concept of corporate culture, which defines the climate, values, and principles operating in a business or government agency. In this report, that concept is further expanded to include the differences between a hierarchical, bureaucratic or corporate culture and that of a more loosely-organized, entrepreneurial culture such as that found in much of the West, and also between that of the horizontal, laterally-based cultures such as are found among Native American peoples. In addition, during the interview process it became apparent that yet another aspect or definition of culture was needed, that of natural resource professionals - foresters, wildlife biologists, fisheries experts, water scientists, and fire fighters. Their culture, common across agencies, greatly affects public communication.

For both non-Indian and Indian populations, the concept of culture helps to define the differences in values, attitudes and lifestyles between themselves and corporate

America, government bureaucracies, or simply their own new neighbors. In Montana, it must be stressed that the landscape *is* the culture, and the culture *is* the landscape; a person's sense of place in the community and in the state derives from that person's relationship to the land. Writing in *Community and the Politics of Place*, former Missoula Mayor Dan Kemmis said "If you ask the residents of this region – especially those who clearly remember their arrival here – why they are here and not somewhere else, you hear time and again the story of feeling crowded, oppressed, and alienated elsewhere. These people speak of the need they felt to be able to get into open country, to experience its power, to come to know and identify themselves against the background of such a setting. The experience of being drawn into and claimed by open country . . . was the essence of the frontier, but it is also the essence of why most of us live 'way out here'" (Kemmis, 1991, p. 36).

Throughout the Rocky Mountain West are vast stretches of land which may be defined as "resource-rich and people-poor" (Kemmis, 1991, p. 40). Home to vast stretches of timber, oil and gas reserves and precious metals, the West has been a place attractive to corporations and government entities who have logged its timber, drilled for oil and gas, mined for precious metals, and deposited nuclear missiles in readiness for possible attack.

Tourism, recreation and the preservation of two national parks, Yellowstone and Glacier, also comprise a large part of land use. These activities have also provided jobs. Yet these jobs can come at a terrible price to the people who live there and to the natural landscape they so treasure (Kemmis, 1991). The money made from these activities too often has left the state, or is not enough to have a strong impact, doing little to improve the quality of life for its citizens. The case for a corporation becoming a good community citizen can be made, but many people still feel as Kemmis did when he wrote, "Left to themselves, of course, corporations are not going to practice citizenship in this way. The main reason is that they are not inhabitants in the same way that other residents of the place are. The corporation's chief loyalty is not to the

place but to the shareholders and executives who almost always live somewhere else" (Kemmis, 1991, p.133). One result is a western society often 20 or 30 years "behind" the rest of the nation - a notion attractive primarily to those *not* struggling to make a living in a rural area.

Another result is that the Rocky Mountain West has become a place reflecting a still-strong suspicion and distrust toward people from the eastern U.S., whether from the government or simply from Big Business. That, too, became part of the culture.

Throughout the West there are many distinctive and unique regions and cultures, some bound together by a shared past, some not. Again, the editors of *Many Wests* articulate the concept: "Shared memory of the pioneering process, for example, has been a significant contributor to the regional identity of many Euro-American Westerners and has been a key to the endurance of a 'frontier' outlook in parts of the West. The descendent of western pioneers have often been drawn to the legacy of their predecessors and worked to keep alive the spirit of the pioneer era through 'frontier days' celebrations'" (*Many Wests*, 1997, p. 16).

This report would be remiss not to note that part of the frontier heritage manifests itself in Montana's culture of gun ownership. This is a heavily-armed state, albeit most of the firearms are for hunting purposes, another huge part of western culture. A 1990 survey found that 78 percent of Montana households owned guns as compared, for example, with 15.5 percent of households in New Jersey (Kleck, 2004). "Montana's Hunting Heritage Week was established in 1991 as a time for Montanans to reflect on hunting as an expression of their culture; to acknowledge the contributions made by sportsmen and sportswomen that have resulted in Montana's diverse wildlife populations; and to celebrate the rich traditions of Montana's hunting heritage. Montana's relationship with hunting and the outdoors is unique in the nation. With 25 percent of Montanans over the age of 16 hunting each year, Montana is the top state, per capita, for resident-hunting participation in the U.S. That level of participation can be seen this time of year, especially in rural Montana where each motel's 'No Vacancy' sign is a

welcome sight on Main Street as the state's hunters directly contribute more than $302 million annually to Montana's economy" (Mt. Dept. of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, 2005, ¶s 3-4).

As might be expected, not everyone shares the same perspectives concerning the land, its uses and its history. "This 'frontier heritage' has helped mold the regional consciousness of many Euro-Americans in the West and demonstrated the interconnectedness, for some Westerners at least, of the themes of frontier and region. Frontiers evolved into regions, and regional consciousness was formed, in part, through recollection of the process of moving to, adjusting to, and (to varying degrees) transforming new places. But for the West's many other groups, including Native Americans, Asians and Asian-Americans, Hispanics and Hispanic-Americans, and African-Americans, European recollections of benign and noble frontier settlement of the West may seem absurd, even obscene. "While the shared memory of 'frontiering' might be crucial to the regional sensibility of many Euro-American Westerners, quite different shared memories have shaped the sense of place of other ethnic groups. Different groups' memories of the past can collide, and then we are reminded that even within one unique western sub-region, regional identities can be diverse and divergent" (Steiner & Wrobel, 1997, p.16).

For Native American people, the concept of culture is neither specific nor limited. Pam Jumper Thurman, Ph.D., a Western Cherokee, says "Culture is a very emotionally loaded issue for many people. Most tribes hold their cultural traditions in high esteem because culture is more than language, dress, songs, and drumming. It is the very moral fiber for many of us - it is a way of life, a way of prayer, and a connection to our surroundings" (Terry, 1999, p.3). She goes on to note that community is perhaps more important in Indian Country than almost anywhere else.

The concept of culture in Indian Country is very much the concept of connection. All things are one, and culture is not separated from health, education, religion or politics. As a result, when interpreting their various cultures to outsiders, Native American

people are faced with explaining the roots and value system of their entire way of life, because culture is interwoven throughout.

Relating back to the formal study of public relations theories and practice, cultural differences are not restricted to a "systematic line of assumptions and arguments that reinforces a preferred pattern of social relationship," and are portrayed by defined ways of life (egalitarianism, hierarchical, autonomous individualism, competitive individualism (Leichty and Warner, 2001, p. 62). Nor can cultural differences be restricted to an understanding of differences between countries as being geographically outside the United States (Grunig, 2001). In addition to the varying cultures circumscribed by regional differences, there are different countries located within the boundaries of the United States. They are the Indian nations; they are usually located on Indian reservations; and they are sovereign nations.

## Personal Observations

Following are a few of the author's personal observations of the values and ethics of Missoula and Montana after more than 23 years. Though fairly simplistic, they shed a more focused, personal light on some aspects of western culture.

For example, there is a strong ethic in Montana of leaving people alone and not interfering in their lives unless requested to do so. Space, in all its meanings – physical, psychological, emotional – carries weight in Montana. That's one reason the Unabomber, Ted Kaczynski, was able to hide out in the small town of Lincoln, Montana, for so long. He wasn't hiding locally; everyone knew him. He was a fixture at the local library, in fact. But they didn't know who he really was; they just assumed he was a hermit who wanted to be alone.

Kaczynski's story tells a lot about Montana culture on two fronts, in fact. The first concerns dress, and how FBI agents learned that they couldn't merely "blend in" with the locals in the tiny town of Lincoln as they were setting up Kaczynski's arrest. The

second, as noted, was Kaczynski's isolation. Here are some interesting segments of an analysis of the event, demonstrating both points:

"The most delicate aspect involved the stakeout. If the task force officers could watch Ted Kaczynski, they'd be able to apprehend any parcel he might attempt to mail or transport before it reached a potential target. So their approach was simply to blend in with people who might visit the area. That way, they hoped to surreptitiously get information on the man known simply as 'The Hermit' to the people of Lincoln, Montana.

"In his book *Unabomber: A Desire to Kill*, Robert Graysmith cites the growing numbers of FBI that infiltrated the town – mountain men who were too tidy, postal workers far off their routes… tourists out of season, lumberjacks and prospectors…He tells how locals noticed the cars pulling snowmobiles were too shiny and new. 'We instantly knew something was up' one told Graysmith" (Ottley, 2001, ¶s 2, 4).

On the lighter side, movie stars have enjoyed the privacy an attitude of "let them alone" brings when they purchase homes in the state. The locals may see Randy Quaid walking down the street in Livingston, but they'll politely leave him alone. When Robert Redford scouted locations in Missoula for his movie "A River Runs through It," people in a local delicatessen that he visited looked, nodded, chatted about it, and didn't approach. It must be admitted, however, that some of the author's employees became highly distracted watching Redford walk down a sidewalk on the opposite side of the street.

People are expected to help out their community in some way in Montana. This is very much a reflection of the state's rural frontier heritage, when people needed each other just to get through. It has always seemed to the author that Missoula didn't care who you were when you moved here – you could be purple with pink polka-dots – as long as you didn't hurt your neighbor and you contributed something to the community. Back in 1984, her first indelible impression of Missoula was of reading a newspaper story about a little boy who

needed a kidney transplant, but whose parents couldn't afford it. "Poor kid," she thought. "He's not going to make it." She didn't know Missoula: the money was raised in three weeks flat.

Community spirit is also reflected in how Missoulians take great pride relating to visitors the story of their home-grown "Carousel for Missoula," full of hand-painted ponies and built with all-volunteer effort and donations; and later, a playground named "Dragon Hollow" right next to it, also built with volunteer labor. This is not unusual across the state. Missoula has always been a community that works, that functions, and so are most Montana communities.

People are expected to think for themselves. "Who are the opinion leaders in Montana?" the author has been asked on more than one occasion. There is no one answer; it's entirely situational. Is the need for grizzly bear expertise, or information on the job market, or the status of the timber industry? Opinion leaders can change in the blink of an eye, depending upon the issue and the leader's expertise and reputation. There is no one person or institution who leads the general public in its opinions all the time. Montanans probably would not allow it.

Civic responsibility in Missoula is not automatic on all fronts, however. The community may come together to build a carousel or a playground, but that doesn't mean there won't be a fight over the next school bond issue.

A note about the use of language may be useful here. As has already been seen in this report, a Montanan may not say "it's up in the Ninemile Valley." Instead, the statement might be, "It's in the Ninemile." Those who live in the Ninemile Valley are "Ninemilers." Likewise, the meaning is understood if a person says "They live somewhere in the Flathead." That means from the beginning of the Flathead Valley, all the way up through Flathead Lake and north, possibly as far as Kalispell, Whitefish, and Columbia Falls. "I took a trip this summer out in the Bob" means a trip into the Bob Marshall Wilderness. People who live in Butte have so much pride of community that they are well-known for using return addresses that say "Butte, America."

As already noted, people are shaped by the landscape and cherish it while at the same time deploring a lack of well-paying jobs. A common saying in Montana among those holding down two and three jobs to pay the bills is "you can't eat the scenery." The saying is apt; the Bureau of business and Economic Research at the University of Montana estimates the "Montana Discount" to run about 10-to-12 percent. In other words, that's how much *less* a person will earn by taking a job in Montana, compared with national averages. Ironically, the more education a person has, the higher the discount tends to be (Barrett, 1998). This sets up the clash with another culture in Montana: the tourists and the newcomers.

## Newcomers to the West

The problem, some people say, is that newcomers to the West bring a lot of the culture and values with them that they hoped to escape in California or elsewhere, and don't realize the adjustments they need to make here. The new housing developments which have sprouted up in areas such as Whitefish, Bozeman, Missoula and other towns have raised property values beyond the reach of many local residents, all for people who may then tire of shoveling snow in the winters and tire of the lack of convenient services found in the larger metro areas of the country, and eventually leave.

In an article titled "Deconstructing the West," Ed Marston reviewed a highly pessimistic essay written by Patrick Jobes: "Based on work done over the last 20 years in Montana's Gallatin Valley and centered on Bozeman, Jobes concludes that newcomers to the West are fated to remain forever new since they move again and again: '80 percent of the newcomers to the Gallatin Valley had moved away within 10 years, and the residents in particularly visible tourist towns, like Aspen and West Yellowstone, were even more migratory'" (Marston, 1995, ¶2). That migratory pattern begs the question as to whether or not community values are absorbed by these transplants, and whether or not they ever do quite understand or contribute to

the culture of the area and the communities in which they have temporarily settled.

A common theme among those who are outraged is expressed by Steven Greenhut, senior editorial writer and columnist for the *Orange County Register*, in a 2004 editorial: "Most appalling in Bozeman: The newcomers who sold their houses in the Silicon Valley and Seattle have plenty of money to buy the fancy log houses on 20 acres with views of the mountain ranges. Now that they are here they are doing everything they can to a) stop newcomers from coming; b) force anyone without their income levels to live in drab high-density housing. They get their piece of the Montana Dream, and everyone else can take a hike. (Well, at least the planners are building lots of trails!) These policies also cause division and anger. People born and raised in the town who want to have an economic future for themselves and their kids are finding limited opportunities as the wealthy newcomers who view the area as a playground are hostile to new industry and development. So much for 'building community.' It's all about protecting their own aesthetic preferences and dressing it up as protecting the environment for the future" (Greenhut, 2004, ¶s 17-18).

But Greenhut doesn't get it, either, because in the same breath, in the same article, he goes on to say: "Bozeman's anti-growth fixation is bizarre to me. Here we have a vast valley with only a handful of people and those here believe it is being ruined by sprawl. I live in a basin that's home to nearly 17 million people, and still find plenty of open space, dramatic vistas … and room for others" (Greenhut, 2004, ¶20). Montana is home to less than a million people, and in the perspective of long-term Montanans, open space is disappearing at an alarming rate.

At the same time, it might be those very newcomers who provide a greater measure of support for their community's open space initiatives, in which citizens "use direct democracy to raise taxes or issue bonds to purchase private land for public open space." according to a 2005 study on land conservation initiatives on the American West. The study goes on to point out that the impetus to fund open space is more connected to "civic social capital," or

the way of life of the community, than "environmental social capital" (Shanahan, 2005, abstract). For those who do absorb the local culture, perhaps civic social capital does influences their attitudes and behaviors.

The Montana Consensus Council (MCC), a state government effort, recognizes these difficulties in a way that talks about the identity of Montanans. "There is fear not only about what will become of land-use policies but what that will mean to individuals personally as Montanans. MCC believes Montanans are grieving the loss of who they believe they are, as defined by what Montana is. The sense of, 'will there be a Montana that I can be a Montanan to, when this proposed change (whatever its nature) is all done?' or 'will I be a Montanan with no Montana to inspire me, or provide me with my internal compass? And if so, what then?'" (Montana Consensus Council, 2005, ¶3).

Even as the author admits to missing familiar external landmarks of mountains, valleys and rivers when traveling to the eastern U.S., so can a person lose an internal compass if all of those landmarks suddenly seem to shape-shift away from the known and the familiar.

## **Racism in Montana**

Finally, Montana has a racist history, as does much of the West. The culture of racism lives on today in pockets throughout the region of northwestern Montana and northern Idaho. Referring the reader back to the demographic breakdown of Montanan's population, it needs to be said that it is not the climate which has kept minorities out of Montana and other western states and regions: they simply haven't been welcomed in previous years. For example, the Militia of Montana, based in Noxon, Montana (in the far northwest corner of the state), is described this way by the Anti-Defamation League:

"Militia of Montana is one of the best known of the paramilitary 'patriot' militias that formed in the mid-to-late 1990s. John Trochmann, along with his brother David

and nephew Randy formed the group in January 1994 in Noxon, Montana. All three have been involved with the Idaho-based Aryan Nations (AN) -- John as a featured speaker at the 1990 Aryan Nations Congress. AN founder Richard Butler has said that John helped write AN's code of conduct; he has also been interviewed by The Spotlight, the conspiratorially anti-government and anti-Semitic journal, and was a featured guest at the Liberty Lobby's 40th anniversary celebration" (Anti-Defamation League, 2003, introductory paragraph).

Racism toward Native Americans (remember this is the author's personal observation) seems to increase the closer one gets to a reservation. Perhaps one reason is that conflicts over water rights and personal property rights become that much more pronounced on or near a reservation, and it is simply too tempting to give into old racial stereotypes. Perhaps it is that old holdover from the days of Lewis & Clark, when Thomas Jefferson sought to help bring the natives to a higher form of civilization.

Keeping in mind that the Flathead Reservation was opened up to white homesteading in the 1920s, consider the voice of Velda Friedlander-Shelby of the Kootenai Tribe on the Flathead Reservation in an essay she wrote for the Center for World Indigenous Studies: "I first became aware that I was an Indian through a very traumatic experience. It happened on the playground of the Linderman Elementary School in Polson, Montana. It was 1967 and I was in First Grade. During recess, my classmates and other children physically attacked me for being what they perceived to be a 'dirty Indian' because I frequently wore the same clothes throughout the school week. As I struggled to regain my footing, I apparently scratched one girl's arm. The girl became hysterical and the others ran to get help. As the playground teacher led the weeping child away, I heard her reassuring the girl that she did not have 'Indian germs' but the school nurse would check her anyway. The girl's parents came to get her, and I was punished for fighting. Until that day I had not even known I was an Indian, let alone diseased.

". . . The Flathead Reservation encompasses 1,242,969 acres of land and is 80 miles long and 40 miles wide. There are approximately 74,000 surface acres of pristine water on the reservation. The timber base is about 200,000 acres. It was probably more at one time. Our Reservation is rich and abundant in natural resources such as small game, bears, birds, riparian habitat, fish, minerals, natural gases, various species of coniferous and deciduous trees, grasslands, wild fruits and vegetables, and other plants. I have lived in some of the most prejudiced towns on the Reservation, but if I were to choose the worst of these there would be no contest, and probably every Indian person would agree with me. It is Polson, Montana. Polson is the County seat for Lake County, Montana. Its current population is about 5,700, the majority of the residents are middle-class, non-Indian immigrants who have decided to relocate into this area for its high quality of life. Polson is a tourist resort because of its convenient location on the south end of Flathead Lake. Most of the development around the Lake consists of summer and retirement homes. Over the past four decades this area has experienced an influx of Californians who have decided to make their home here. Most of these property owners are unaware that they are on an Indian Reservation, and this ignorance is an additional problem. They are ignorant of Indian culture, beliefs, sovereignty, and management styles" (Friedlander-Shelby, 1998, ¶s 4-5, 10-12).

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These pages contain a very complex picture of Montana, and, indeed, of a vast portion of the American West. The reader may interpret any number of things from reading these portraits: that the state is overrun with armed militia and gun-toting cowboys; that it is full of wealthy, uncaring newcomers; that it is a state simultaneously stricken with poverty and the wealth of those same newcomers; that it is a state riddled by racism and full of community spirit at the same time; that it is a state still home to the vast open spaces and the Old West

traditions of cowboys and Indians; that it is a state becoming increasingly urbanized. The reader may end up wondering exactly how much land is left; or may have seen the photos elsewhere in this report of all the gorgeous scenery and been left thinking, "Well, yes, there's been pollution and wildfires and some destruction of the land, but it couldn't be all *that* bad." If the reader is left a little confused about what Montana (and by inference the Northern Rockies) is or is not, perhaps that's a good thing, because there isn't a one-size-fits all perspective. That is exactly what complicates communication about land use issues and natural resources, and why such communication presents huge challenges. The premise of this study assumes that ignoring these differences in culture, perspective and outlook hampers communication so severely as to cause the failure of an associated public relations campaign and thus the potential failure of any given project in which public communication plays an integral part.

## The Research Problem

In Montana and throughout the Rocky Mountain region, land use conflicts manifest themselves in the media, in various public relations campaigns, and in city council meetings, public hearings, closed-door strategy sessions, land use planning workshops, letters to the editor, and private conversations. The public conversation has deep roots, is ongoing, and is heated. The public arena has become increasingly filled with anger and bitterness; yet pockets of collaboration are providing hope for the future. Resolutions to land-use problems which often seem intractable may be within sight – or may be farther out than ever.

Over the years, the author became increasingly aware of the often ineffective, uninformed communication practices put into use by corporations and government agencies working in Montana and much of the rural West. There was not even a sense of solid communication between Montanans wanting to communicate with each other regarding land-use and natural resource issues. There are no guiding philosophies, theories, or models for

public relations practitioners to conduct public communications programs in a rural western state such as Montana. The research that has been conducted about the values, interests, problems and proposed resolutions concerning land-use issues – and there has been a lot - seems to have been conducted in the fields of public policy, administration, environmental studies, forestry, sociology, ecology and psychology. Little to no attention has been paid in the field of public relations to these problems. Perhaps because the West has always been seen as a whole, and not as the myriad parts of which it is actually comprised, or perhaps because the patriarchal view of the West from the time of Lewis & Clark to the present has resulted in a more utilitarian perspective, the particular and specific cultures which make up the American West have been seen too often through stereotypes and mythology. Echoing the thoughts expressed by the Bill Lane Center for the Study of the North American West at Stanford University, the West has not been in our social and political consciousness except through the myths of Hollywood.

Yet the success or failure of communication about these land-use issues and cultures-within-a-culture deeply affects every American. From meeting the nation's vast energy needs through oil, gas, coal and hydroelectric power, or alternative energies such as wind; to national defense, agriculture, timber, and hazardous waste disposal; from the migration to rural landscapes for the lifestyle, to tourism and recreation, to the preservation of wilderness lands and our national parks, all Americans are affected by the West in one way or another. The use of these lands affect the rest of the country and sometimes the world.

Certainly changes in the use of the land and its natural resources have a more direct effect on every aspect of life for people living in those areas than they do on those living in more urban regions who are not dependent upon the land for a living, or are not inherently tied to the land as part of their lifestyle and heritage. Yet for over 200 years, it has been the people living in urban areas - particularly in Washington, D.C. but also in various industrial or business centers - who decide upon land-use policies in the rural American West.

It is therefore incumbent upon public relations professionals to learn how to communicate in these settings, but very few do. Perhaps part of the reason is that public relations has traditionally been a profession that originates from the corporate, urban way of life, and reflects a corporate, urban way of thinking, particularly toward consumers. This viewpoint is so pervasive throughout public relations research as to have faded, nearly unnoticed, into the background. Statements such as "Evidence within the broad field of public relations has demonstrated that organizations of today need friends as much as they need customers" (Cheney and Christensen, p. 180) are absorbed without question. That's a retail statement, basically; a statement based in the retail shopping industry. Yet a great portion of rural western America has not traditionally been part of the consumer society, and cannot be approached on the basis of being customers. For example, many people from Missoula and northwestern Montana routinely travel three hours or more to Spokane for shopping, big entertainment events, and cheaper and better airline connections.

It could be said that neither is much of Montana home to the country's major corporations, i.e., it does not live with them as "corporate citizens," with the possible exception of the homegrown Washington Corporations in Missoula. Washington Corporations is actually comprised of several different companies primarily in construction and transportation, so unless there is a problem with one of its trains, as an example, the general public doesn't feel it. However, at the same time, in part of the Montana psyche is a deep resentment toward those corporations which did turn out to be neighbors in various communities, such as the Anaconda Company in Butte and W.R. Grace & Company in Libby. Their stories are coming up.

Other researchers (Leitch & Neilson, 2001; Leichty & Warner, 2001) assume that the target audiences, those "publics" addressed through organizational communication, live in a shared framework referred to as democracy. These theories posit that, no matter

what their viewpoints and values, the various publics are stakeholders in preserving a democratic way of life. “Whatever its limitations might be in practice, a public sphere in which multiple competing voices may be heard is central to the function of democracy” (Leitch & Nelson, 2001, p. 130). Yet Native Americans do not have a history of being allowed to live in the framework of democracy represented by the rest of the United States. Add to that the longstanding power imbalance between the West and those who use the West for its natural resources, and you have a region that Wallace Stegner once described as a colony for the rest of the nation. “It seems to be almost like a continuous repetitive act of God that the western resources should be mined ... that populations should rush in and have to rush out again, or trickle out again…. Get in, get rich, get out…. Every boom and bust leaves the West physically a little poorer, a little worse damaged” (as cited in Baron, Fagre & Theobald abstract, 2000).

The concepts of “different culture” and “different country” as they apply to public relations campaigns are both literally and figuratively true, although not within the context of traditional definitions of the terms. The American West has long represented the great frontier -- freedom of space and thought, and personal independence. Indian reservations as often viewed by those in the larger urban areas as relics of the past, or of quaint tourism interest where one can buy artifacts or watch a powwow. Rife with stereotypes, the reality of the West can come as a shock and a surprise. People don’t speak the same: the language is much more casual. They don’t think the same: time becomes a different thing under wide open skies, and relationships take on a different cast. People don’t operate from the same framework as they do in corporate or governmental America, or in more urban areas of the country.

The West was traditionally more of a meritocracy, more of a classless society than the Eastern Seaboard, for example. It took every able hand to settle the West; men, women and children all had specific tasks, and it was all full of hard, manual labor. There was no choice about contributing. Results always counted for a lot more than image.

Without this understanding, public relations campaigns based upon traditional premises and theories can fail miserably, or at best take more years than necessary to come to fruition. Failure can leave behind a backlash of bitterness and resentment that lasts for years in rural communities, and often causes other proposals to fail per se, without proper investigation to see what a project really involves and whether it might benefit the region.

Robert Heath, writing in "A Rhetorical Enactment Rationale for Public Relations," began to frame the problem well: "...interculturally literate communicators must understand that a) most, if not all, truths are perceptions of truth viewed through the prism of culture; b) a communicator's effectiveness, verbal as well as nonverbal, is enhanced through intercultural competence; c) the perception of what constitutes relevant information, as well as gauging its importance, is culturally determined; and d) interpretations and perceptions of those engaged in communication are culture bound, meaning that errors of interpretation and perception are inevitable without sensitivity to and knowledge about cultural difference" (Heath, 2001, p. 58).

The conflicts posed by problems with interpretation and perception are often stated right up front in a news story. Here are two examples:

1. "Two East Coast lawmakers introduced a bill Friday with 73 co-sponsors that would designate as wilderness 23 million public acres in five northern Rocky Mountain states, including Montana and Wyoming" (Straub, 2007, p. A1). The story goes on to relate the strong objections of Congressional representatives from Montana and Wyoming.

2. "Using language that suggests they are fed up with the Bush administration, federal judges across the West have issued a flurry of rulings in recent weeks, chastising the government for repeated and sometimes willful failure to enforce laws protecting fish, forests, wildlife and clean air" (Harden, 2006, p. A03).

These two stories are emblematic of major land use conflicts in much of the West. The story by Straub relates the opposition of Congressman Denny Rehberg (R-

Mont) and Congresswoman Barbara Cubin (R-Wyoming) to that particular federal wilderness bill. Their objections include no consideration for impacts on the local economy nor for protecting access for "hunting, fishing and other forms of recreation," (Straub, 2007, p. A7), and the lack of local input and control. Rehberg and Cubin are taking viewpoints that represent three of the strongest values and perspectives among citizens of the Rocky Mountains: 1) It's very tough to find jobs in these rural areas as it is ("you can't eat the scenery"); 2) people who hunt and fish traditionally have had access to the back country, and closing off more land for wilderness could close off that access; and 3), land use policies traditionally decided upon in the East incur tremendous resentment in the West, along with a certain incredulous take on the naïve attitudes of urbanites toward wilderness in general.

On the other hand, the federal judges who have spoken out against the Bush administration in the Harden article want more and better protection for wilderness and wildlife, not less. The article reviews recent court decisions and opinions expressed by federal judges in California, Oregon, Montana and Wyoming. According to the article, "The rulings come at a time when an emerging bipartisan coalition of western politicians, hunters, anglers and homeowners has joined conservation groups in objecting to the rapid pace and environmental consequences of President Bush's policies for energy extraction on federal land" (Harden, 2006, p. A03). This particular conflict – the development of vast regions of the area for oil and coal development, and for the extraction of coalbed methane gas -- takes up an increasing portion of the public dialogue. The addition of homeowners as part of a coalition fighting for more wilderness protection speaks to the huge influx of newcomers throughout the region as well as to those who are traditional, long-term Montanans.

Other land use conflicts are on the front pages of Montana newspapers daily, from summer wildfires and salvage logging, to mining, to proposed ski resorts; from housing developments and loss of ranchland, to issues revolving around energy. As

more people move into the rural West, the conflicts become more pronounced and seemingly more intractable – and yet it is the very nature of these conflicts which holds the seeds for reaching resolution or compromise.

In sum, the public relations practitioner without a strong knowledge of western cultures and of the history which gave rise to those cultures is at a loss. As she travels west, she finds herself in a different country, without a guidebook.

What are the best ways to communicate with citizens who have an enormous stake in the outcome of land-use policies and change? How does one communicate with citizens who, even among themselves, may not agree with each other on what land, and the landscape, means to them as individuals, and to their communities?

## Research questions

The primary research questions were intentionally broad. The intent was to find out how people are communicating on a variety of land use issues now, and then to discover, through their help and through secondary research, the best methods and strategies that might be recommended for communicating about land use and natural resource issues in the future. The intent was to explore the presence of the cultural interpreter model of public relations and the presence of the co-orientation theory of public relations - even if called by other names - and to determine if they were the most useful ideas, or if other ideas provided better results. The primary questions were:

1. What communications strategies are public communicators using now as they deal with the various land-use and natural resource issues confronting them? This question was meant to ferret out the strategies used, as well as the underlying assumptions which communicators may hold going into a situation; and to examine the process through which communications strategies are chosen and implemented. Because

there is no guiding public relations theory, this question assumed that answers would come from a range of different disciplines and/or from an intuitive sense of public relations and how it should be handled.

2. What strategies can be used to be more effective in this often-divisive environment? This question was meant to discover the overall range of strategies that public communicators have considered, or might consider; and whether or not they wish they had more and better strategies to communicate about land use and natural resource issues.

Underlying these questions and premises, the interviews were also designed to ferret out differences in cultures, values and perspectives related to any given project. Questions were asked about how those cultural differences were addressed, and whether or not specific messages needed to be tailored to specific groups as a result. Because it was the difference in culture and background which often led to the differences in outlook and perception – the co-orientation piece of the puzzle – questions addressed these challenges as well. Finally, questions were also asked as to what the respondent might do differently next time; and what, if anything, came as an unexpected surprise during the communications effort.

## Literature Review

The author reviewed literature on and off for nearly three years, and it cannot all be included here. Nevertheless, as much as possible has been used to try and provide a framework for explaining Montana's communications challenges in a deeper way.

### Communications History and Challenges

Montana has always been a very "local" state with a low population base of about 950,000 people spread over 147,000 square miles. On the eastern side of the Continental Divide, sometimes that comes out to about one person per square mile. As a result, Montana has long operated on its own version of "six degrees of separation," in that it's who a

person knows and word-of-mouth that will get things done and establish reputations. It is possible to go anywhere in the state, and with one's own perhaps not-so-official connections, get a lot done.

This means that Montanans have traditionally approached public communication in an intuitive manner, without a formal theory or strategy. Referring the reader to the timeline in Appendix B, Montana was in a far different place in its development when formal public relations theories were first being developed in the eastern United States. Montanans have, however, long recognized the need of "establishing and maintaining relationships between an organization and the publics upon whom its success or failure depends" (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 2001, p.1), but these relationships took place in informal, rural networks. Because communication has traditionally taken place within the framework of long-established relationships, the ongoing stewardship of those relationships has always been a major concern (Kelly, 2001).

More accurately stated, Montanans have long practiced the personal influence model of public relations, in which "practitioners try to establish personal relationships – friendships, if possible – with key individuals in the media, government, or political and activist groups" (Grunig, Grunig, Sriramesh, Huang & Lyra, 1995, p 180). However, contrary to an opinion expressed by the same authors, the personal influence model is not necessarily a model that works best in authoritarian or autocratic cultures. In a geographic setting with an extremely low population base, or in certain rather self-enclosed industries - the timber industry, for example - people know each other anyway. Their very informal networks have meant that (at least until the last few decades brought a huge influx of population), knowing whom to ask to get something done was not specialized knowledge, but common knowledge, in the same way that Montanans or any Westerners know who the local expert might be on grizzly bears, water rights, and so forth. In addition, Montanans likely live next door to, or down the street from,

the local Sheriff, municipal judge, or city council member. As a result, everything is much more "up close and personal," and it can even be argued that elected officials are held more accountable as a result. Certainly it remains true throughout most of the state that no local or state politician can be elected if he or she is not willing to go door-to-door when campaigning.

In part, the personal influence model of public relations was used because it simply couldn't be avoided, due to the 80-year-long dominance of the Anaconda Company in Butte. A brief review of the history of Butte is included in the results section of this report in order to provide the basis for understanding the conflicts around mining issues in the state. For now, suffice it to say that for many decades, the Anaconda Company literally ran the state and its communications. "The arrival of the railroads to Montana in the late 19th century also made possible the rise of industrial mining. The industrial revolution in Europe and across the Atlantic created a demand for Montana's mineral resources. In a mining sequence that moved from gold, to silver, to copper, Butte developed into a nationally significant urban center during the 1890s.

". . . Atop 'the richest hill on earth,' and spreading to the communities of Anaconda and Great Falls, the Anaconda Company became the dominant corporate power in Montana. The 'Company' emerged from the 'War of the Copper Kings' to control Montana's economics, journalism, politics — even the state legislature — well into the 1960s" (The Industrial Miners, 2007, introductory paragraph).

The Anaconda Company was an outgrowth of Standard Oil. Standard Oil had its own culture. The original public relations professional hired by Standard Oil in 1905, Joseph Ignatius Constantine Clarke, quit in 1913 when the company's executives quit giving him information (Cutlip, Center & Broom,1994). Montanans would recognize that control of information as an unwelcome hallmark of the Anaconda Company. The company's rule over the state for so many years is one of many reminders to Montanans of out-of-state companies or big corporate America exploiting the state for its mineral and timber resources, and leaving

town. Public relations, at least in the sense of two-way symmetrical communications, was then, and sometimes still is, non-existent.

The example of the W.R. Grace & Company in Libby, Montana, close to the Canadian border in the northwest section of the state, is a modern-day reminder of such issues. W.R. Grace mined vermiculite there for many years, eventually contaminating the air, soil, water, buildings and people with asbestos, resulting in severe, often fatal illnesses for much of the populace. "W.R. Grace & Company knew all along that asbestos from its Libby, Montana, mine was sickening workers and their families -- but said nothing. Only now, a decade after the mine closed, are the town's residents learning the painful truth" (Barnett & Vollers, 2000, introductory paragraph.).

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has called the asbestos contamination of Libby the worst case of community-wide exposure to a toxic substance in U.S. history. Over 200 people have died in this small town of about 2,662 people, and 1500 more have been diagnosed with asbestos-related lung problems. The nearby town of Troy, Montana, has also been found to have asbestos by the EPA (Carr & Hawes-Davis, 2005). W.R. Grace & Company later declared bankruptcy. Although then-Montana Governor Judy Martz declared Libby to be a Superfund site, there remain ongoing problems as to what the word "thorough" means when it comes to EPA cleanup of the town.

Drury Dunn Carr, co-director and co-producer of the film "Libby, Montana," spoke in an interview about the film with Montana's PBS station in Missoula: "The EPA itself is a big story. This is a community that's been stereotyped as 'you're not very fond of government.' . . . It's very much both rugged individual but it's also institutional in that there's a sense that this is a company town, also. But there *is* this individualism. The federal government coming in and saying, 'This is how we're going to do things, this is how we're going to run things,' didn't sit well with a lot of people" (Carr, 2005, added interview).

To a lesser or greater degree depending upon the situation, these attitudes and conflicts are pre-existing conditions for corporations and government entities working on land-use and natural resource projects in the West. Certainly they do not bode well for those coming in with expectations of two-way, symmetrical communication (Grunig, 2001). Traditionally, there is not a genuine balance of power, and certainly not a balance of trust. In fact, many public relations theories fail to provide guidance under these circumstances. "The strategic approaches that dominate the field portray publics as consumers of targeted organizational messages. The dialogic approaches portray publics as active and equal participants in a dialogue with the organization" (Leitch & Nelson, 2001, p.128). There was no equality for the people of Libby.

Nor does the problem lie solely with "outsiders" coming to the West to do business. Conflicts which make communication difficult also underlie many of the conversations between those who already live and work in the West. There can be vast differences in values, cultures and outlooks between newcomers who may still be prey to mythology about the West, or enter the region with certain expectations of their own – from where? a tourism brochure? a Western novel? a movie? - and the old-timers who have lived here all their lives, or at least for many decades. To newcomers, places like Montana, Idaho and Wyoming are often viewed as places with pristine natural environments, and those areas are to be used for spiritual renewal, recreation, and the rural way of life they might provide. Old timers, on the other hand, know what it means to try and make a living in that same area, and it hasn't been easy. From mine workers, to farmers and ranchers, to the low-paying tourism industry, those workers may see the land as a little more unforgiving. While newcomers may be shocked to discover the Superfund site stretching between Missoula and Butte (old mine tailings which have contaminated that portion of the Clark Fork River); the asbestos problems in Libby; the nuclear missiles surrounding Great Falls; or the proposed new mine up in the Flathead River basin in Canada which drains down into Glacier National Park and Flathead Lake, old-timers

haven't known the economy of the area to be based on anything very much different.

The research into communication concerning cultural differences in the West was disheartening at first, because the search concentrated on public relations studies, and most cultural studies of public relations are international in scope. This is a problem well recognized by San Diego State University Professor Bey-Ling Sha, in an article titled "Cultural identity in the segmentation of publics: an emerging theory of intercultural public relations." Although Sha specifically wrote about racial and ethnic differences in intercultural communication, her statements apply equally well to a culture bound by its history and geography such as the Northern Rockies, yet residing in a larger culture such as the American West or the culture of the United States as a whole: "Although the definition of culture at the level of national societies is useful for global or international public relations, such a definitional limitation could hinder the field if public relations scholars and practitioners forget that publics within a national society are not culturally homogenous, as we know to be true given the demographic shifts in the United States and other countries. In other words, intranational public relations still may be intercultural in nature, and I believe that effective intercultural public relations within one country must logically precede attempts to practice public relations across national boundaries" (Sha, 2006, p.48).

Adapting this expanded view of culture to the Northern Rockies, there is a distinct group in the region which identifies itself as that of people privileged to live in a beautiful, often stunning landscape which is perennially under attack for its resources by various corporations and government entities. There is a distinct group of newcomers to the region who want the amenities and conveniences of the places they just left and yet want to own their five or 10 acres of paradise and preserve the rest. There is a group of people whose way of life depends upon their ability to make a living from the land and its resources. There are the cultures of the various Indian nations, certainly distinct from dominant white cultures around them.

There are the cultures within government agencies and corporate entities which may be distinctly different from the cultures in the various communities in which they work. Then there are the cultures of those who manage the land and its resources, and who fight fires. None are quite the same. The argument is easily made for intercultural public relations as a necessary aspect of public relations in the West.

This perspective of cultural identity "considers identity as the enactment of cultural communication…In other words, a cultural identity is created by the exchange of messages between interactants; it 'is the particular character of the group communication system that emerges in the particular situation.' In this view, communication is the means by which individuals and groups negotiate, co-create, reinforce, and challenge cultural identity. Furthermore, cultural identities emerge in communication contexts…When cultural identities are enacted, patterns of communicative conduct become evident, and these patterns may vary according to the culture of the communicator" (Sha, 2006, p.51).

The Northern Rockies region is as defined by the extractive industries for which the region has always been used, as it is by its huge landscapes, way of life, and its mythology. Both the mythology and the reality of the West can pose problems for those wishing to do business or relocate here. It is like entering a different country (Mitnik, personal interview, 2004).

Before last year's severe drought in Georgia and Florida, the next statement read: "For example, differences in ways of life and culture include the fact that people living in rural areas are far more interdependent upon one another than those in the East, due in no small part to the lack of critical natural resources such as water" (Nelson, 2003, p. 2). Obviously, increasingly severe weather patterns and the severe droughts in the Southeast as well as the West are driving home the point that we are all more interdependent upon each other than we might have realized.

But contrast this interdependence with the rugged, independent cowboy stereotypes of the West - the Marlboro Man, John Wayne, Clint Eastwood. These ignore the fact

that anyone living off the land, while existing, perhaps, in some degree of isolation, still deeply needs connection with the nearest human community. Even though many Westerners themselves think in terms of leading independent, isolated lives (Kemmis, 1991), they place high value on the sense of community which they find throughout the region. That sense of community is particularly noted on American Indian Reservations, where traditional values hold family and the tribal community in the highest degree of importance (Doyle, 2001).

At the same time, due in no small part to extreme poverty on the reservations as well as in some other rural areas, the fatalist viewpoint of the world can take hold (Leichty & Warner, 2001). The fatalist viewpoint is one in which the individual feels his or her voice or vote doesn't count, because there is no changing the overall outcome. This was obvious in the 2007 annual publication about Montana's Indian reservations, *The Burdens of Indians' Affairs* (a word play on the federal agency Bureau of Indian Affairs), written and produced by the students in the School of Journalism at the University of Montana. Speaking about the need for better law enforcement on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation, a man who lost his son to a stabbing said, "I don't think it's ever going to work…. To me, they just don't care. It's just two Indians" (Person, 2007, p. 22).

On the other hand, also obvious in the stories from the different reservations were the efforts by various tribes to overcome that inertia and make some positive changes, including, for example a new medical clinic built on the Rocky Boy's Reservation. For every seemingly intractable situation, there seem to be others which are no less difficult, but in which people are fully engaged in order to find solutions.

In this sense, "publics" in rural areas and within Native American communities are as likely to come from an agenda-building perspective as they are to come from an individual's sense of culture or group identity. In other words, people may gather to support or oppose an issue of some importance to them, and become a self-identified "public"

focused around that issue, with a specific agenda in mind. They may feel that building a medical clinic on the reservation is of utmost importance; they may feel that allowing oil and gas drilling along the Rocky Mountain Front is one of the worst things that could happen, and it must be stopped; they may feel that steam-side setbacks, written into Montana law, are a travesty for private property owners, and that the law should be changed.

"A public is defined in light of issues. . .. Research emphasizes the degree and direction of a public's effort to expand an issue" (Vasquez & Taylor, 2001, pp. 144-45).

Or course, people can center their efforts on more than one issue; they may be part of several different "publics" to whom communication is targeted. Perhaps there are some people in a certain community who work on steam-side setbacks as well as on access to hunting in the backcountry; the two issues are separate, but related. How to reach people on both counts?

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## Theories - proposed and existing

Given the realities of several different cultures and a diversity of opinions in the West, the author has both investigated and proposed the use of two specific models of public relations theory and practice in designing a public relations program around land-use and natural resource issues: the co-orientation theory and the cultural interpreter model. The proposal rests on the assumption that land use managers and public communicators will have the time and the resources to plan and design a public relations program, and that such a plan will be of more use than working on a project day-to-day, adjusting to changing realities as necessary. This assumption flies out the window in the face of crises such as wildfires, a sudden and severe environmental pollution spill in waterways or agricultural soil, or some other incident. Having the time to design a plan set within a theoretical framework may not be practical where day-to-day flexibility is critical and the situation can change in a heartbeat, either. It also flies in the face of the fact that many land use managers and communicators do not have a

propensity to do this kind of planning, nor do they have the background and training for it. All that being said, in the long run the need to know the various publics, any tendencies toward co-orientation regarding the topic at hand, and the local culture remains exactly the same.

## The Co-Orientation Theory

The Co-Orientation Theory of public relations is described in this way: "The social or interpersonal concept of public opinion requires two or more individuals oriented to and communicating about an object of mutual interest. In other words, they are 'co-oriented' to something in common and to each other. . . The co-orientational approach casts public opinion as the product of both individual perceptions on an issue and their perceptions of what significant others think about the same issue" (Cutlip, Center & Broom, pp.249-250).

A particularly important point is that what may appear as logical in the context of this discussion "apparently is not widely recognized by those who commission or practice public relations. Instead of trying to increase the accuracy of cross perceptions in social relationships, most communication efforts attempt to influence levels of agreement, or to 'engineer consent.' But actual agreement can exist independent of perceptions of agreement" (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 1994, p. 251).

Using the co-orientation approach to assess public opinion in advance and to identify relationship problems and differing perspectives only makes sense in the varied cultures of the Northern Rockies. Lt. Col. Tammy Mitnik (USAF-ret) and Col. Bill Schulz, Montana Air National Guard, reflected on the Guard's proposal to build an air-to-ground training range near the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation in north central Montana. They advised going into a project without assumptions, and to have an attitude of "show me, tell me." Being willing to listen and learn and assessing the co-orientation of various "publics" before starting a project can eliminate many headaches and save both time and money.

From Korea comes more insight on the co-orientation process. In writing about the professional standards of practice in public relations in that country, Jongmin Park says there are three measurements of co-orientation: "Agreement, or the degree to which one person's evaluations resemble the others; congruency, an intrapersonal measure of the degree to which Person A thinks person B's opinion resembles his or her own; and understanding or accuracy, or degree of similarity between the content of A's and B's orientation toward X. In other words, accuracy represents the extent to which one's estimate matches the other person's actual views" (Park, 2005, p.256).

Co-orientation has been used in another cross-cultural study looking at the congruency, or lack thereof, concerning specific issues between Slovenia and Croatia. The authors' statements below might well provide a perspective to the different cultures within the western U.S. (Vercic, Vercic & Laco, 2006).

"The use of the co-orientational approach in the analysis of relations between two nations implies the analysis of relations is not limited to only determining differences in attitudes, i.e. the level of congruence. The case of Croatia and Slovenia, and their citizens' attitudes on some key issues in the bilateral relations between these two countries, shows heterogeneity of communications problems. Relations between citizens include situations of dissensus (in a large number of issues they simply do not agree) and a false conflict (in issues they agree on, but in which they are unaware of their agreement)" (Vercic, Vercic & Laco, 2006, p. 6).

The "heterogeneity of communications problems" is a concept that seems to underlie many of the communications problems at work in the Northern Rockies as well; there is strong dissimilarity in viewpoints, expectations, and methods of communication among the different cultures. Referring back to the case of the Yellowstone Pipeline and its attempted re-route up the Ninemile Valley, the residents of the Ninemile had concerns stemming from living on the land in question, oftentimes making their living from that same land, and their values

reflected that. YPL, on the other hand, had concerns with a utilitarian use of the valley, stemming from its need to find a new transportation corridor for its pipeline.

The study of values and perspectives in any given local populace, although perhaps not measured or analyzed as such, is a kind of co-orientation study in itself. Once the public relations practitioner finds out about real and perceived agreements and disagreements, and real and perceived values and concerns, it will then be possible to start designing a communications strategy to fit the situation at hand.

## Cultural Interpreter Model

The Cultural Interpreter model of public relations is normally "found in multinational companies in which the CEO was a foreigner and depended on natives for input about the country's culture and politics" (Grunig, 2001, p.12). The statement means literally what it says, that it makes a critical difference to have someone on the ground who can interpret the local culture, customs, language and lifestyle for an organization. By the same token, it makes a different to have someone interpret a corporate or government culture back to those working in local communities.

As mentioned previously, Bey-Ling Sha at San Diego State University has used the Cultural Interpreter Model of public relations to state that how a person identifies his cultural identity makes all the difference in how that person will perceive and react to various situations. Her specific theoretical proposition is that "In situations where the avowed cultural identity is salient, differences in identification with a cultural group will predict differences in problem recognition, level of involvement, constraint recognition, and type of communicative behavior; therefore, if an organization and its public hold different avowed identities salient to the situation, intercultural public relations becomes a necessary aspect of excellent public relations" (Sha, 2006, p. 46).

## Balance Zone Theory:

In the West it is helpful, if not necessary, to strike a balance between relevant theories and practices precisely because of the cultural differences. Dr. Terry Flynn of the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University in New York and the DeGroote School of Business at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, has written about "balancing theory, practice and outcomes" in public relations. He argues that we "move beyond two-way thinking about publics and begin to re-conceptualize public relations in a multidimensional perspective, where dialogue, collaboration, and negotiation with multiple stakeholders and stake-seekers occur simultaneously" (Flynn, 2006, p. 191). Introducing what he calls the "Balance Zone Theory," Flynn writes that its roots are "in organizational-public relationship management… and acknowledges the dynamic and fluid societal context within which all entities must now operate" (Flynn, 2006, p.193).

These theoretical approaches emphasize listening, searching for co-orientation; being flexible; recognizing that contexts and identities are dynamic, not static; coming in without assumptions; and being willing to learn the culture. All of these are critical when working in the varied cultures of the Northern Rockies and the American West.

## Other theories and perspectives from other disciplines

Outside the field of public relations, other disciplines have relied upon other theories and strategies for communication techniques about land use issues and natural resources.

*The Policy Marketer Theory:* Dr. Elizabeth A. Shanahan from Montana State University and Dr. Mark K. McBeth from Idaho State University argue against the use of cultural values and perspectives in establishing land use policy, because culture is not a rational thing. In a paper for *Policy Sciences* titled "Public opinion for sale: The role of policy marketers in Greater Yellowstone policy conflict," Shanahan and McBeth use the Greater

Yellowstone Area (GYA) as a case study to review how proposed solutions – technical, scientific, and economic – and cultural issues "lead to inadequate policy solutions." They propose that "special interest groups, the media, and elected officials do not act solely as linkage mechanisms, but rather as policy marketers who market public opinion to citizens," and relate that to the rise of consumerism in our society. They conclude that 'Concurrent with the decline in social capital and the rise of policy marketing, consumer-oriented citizens in the GYA live in competing social realities with mutually exclusive sources of knowledge and competing interpretations of reality. Thus, when citizens examine policy conflicts they - like the policy marketers that provide the information – approach the conflict from diametrically opposed frames that fail to consider the values of the opposition and the larger context of Greater Yellowstone policy conflict." They advocate for an interest-based rather than a value-based conflict, replacing "marketed discourses with authentic discourses," but note that this is a perplexing dilemma, "given the societal macro-trend of the citizen-turned-consumer" (Shanahan & McBeth, 2006, pp. 233-234).

*Conflict Resolution and the Imbalance of Power:* From the field of conflict resolution and negotiation, Guy Burgess, Ph.D., and Heidi Burgess, Ph.D., co-directors of the Conflict Research Consortium at the University of Colorado, observe that many environmental conflicts resist resolution, even when leaders in the field apply state-of-the-art conflict resolution techniques. They say that "many traditionally disempowered groups believe that conflict resolution professionals have been co-opted by powerful interests, and thus use this process as a mechanism for 'sugar-coating' the continued domination of the disempowered groups. Thus, many of these groups tend to distrust mediation and other conflict resolution processes, preferring to wage their battles in the courts or through direct action" (Burgess & Burgess, 2007, p. 2).

*Land Management Planning and the cumulative effects of tiny decisions made by diverse publics and individuals:* In "Management of Land-use Conflicts in the United

States Rocky Mountains," authors Jill Barons, an ecologist with the U.S. Geological Survey, David Theobald, a scientist at the Natural Resource Ecology Lab at Colorado State University, and Daniel Fagre, an ecologist with the U.S. Geological Survey, stress that traditional land use planning methods and theories limit the perspectives needed for what is happening throughout the Rocky Mountain West, because "many small, seemingly benign impacts accumulate to cause large, harmful effects on environmental goods like wildlife habitat—what economist A. E. Kahn calls the tyranny of small decisions." They note that "wise land management requires that public and private stakeholders come to share a similar vision of Rocky Mountain environmental health. This will call for communication skills and willingness to listen among all sectors of the West: the ranchers, the developers, the new immigrants, service providers, local governments, and public land managers" (Barons, Fagre & Theobald, 2000, pp. 25, 26).

*Social relations disrupted by land use conflict or crisis:* From the social sciences comes a study about the conflict that takes place in communities after a wildfire. "The literature notes that natural disasters, including wildfires that damage human settlements, often have the short-term effect of 'bringing people together.' Less recognized is the fact that such events can also generate social conflict at the local level . . . Rationalized forms of interaction and problem solving imposed by extra-local organizations during and after wildfire events are often resisted by local actors who are also inhibited from acting due to local capacity limitations. Thus, conflict occurs when social relations are disembedded by non-local entities, and there is a perceived loss of local agency" (Carroll, Higgins, Cohn, & Burchfield, 2006, abstract).

*Learning Theory:* Eric Toman and Bruce Shindler from the Dept. of Natural Resources at Oregon State University, and Mark Brunson from the Dept. of Environment and Society in the College of Natural Resources at Utah State University, have studied how learning theory might be applied to an analysis of the communications methods for fire outreach activities in certain areas of Utah, Oregon, Colorado and Arizona. They particularly draw upon

adult learning literature, and explain the concept of andragogy, which is "built around the following six central principles: 1) the learner's need to know; 2) the learner's self-concept; 3) the role of the learner's experience; 4) the readiness to learn; 5) the orientation to learning; and 6) the motivation to learn. Of particular interest to public relations professionals is the fact that the definition of adult learning emphasizes learning as a dynamic process as opposed to simple exposure to information" (Brunson, Shindler & Toman, 2006, pp. 324-325). In public relations terms, this dynamic process speaks to the need for relationship building with various constituencies rather than the easy-out dissemination of information.

*Social Acceptability or Congruence Theory*: Brunson and Shindler collaborated again to write about "Geographic Variation in Social Acceptability of Wildland Fuels Management in the Western United States." This study looked at the variations of geographic location, cognitive beliefs and judgments across the same four states regarding wildfire fuels management, and in many ways parallels any co-orientation study that might be done on the issue. In a wide sense, "Social acceptability" might become a synonym phrase for "co-orientation" when analyzed accordingly. "Agencies wishing to measure, respond to, and influence social acceptability must understand the nuances of public perception regarding controversial issues . . . Results argue against using "one-size-fits-all" policies or information strategies about fuels management" (Brunson & Shindler, 2004, abstract).

## Methodology

While the field of public relations provided theoretical frameworks for this investigation, there is little research in public relations which touches upon this particular topic – that of treating the West as a culture within a culture, and examining the current and suggested methods for effective communication on land-use and natural resource issues. Extensive secondary research conducted in fields such as environmental studies, ecology, forestry,

natural resources, psychology, sociology and more have provided insight into communications perspectives and theories from other disciplines. The secondary research and various theories were brought down to earth through 10 personal interviews with land use managers, project directors, communications professionals and supervisors from around the region. Personal experience underlies the author's interest in the topic, so where applicable those personal experiences and observations are included and so noted.

Particular attention was paid to see whether or not there were certain patterns in the respondents' answers, and whether their answers and any patterns that evolved might correspond to the theories just reviewed. The complexity of the subject and the wide diversity of issues included in the interviews at first seemed to belie any pattern or connection to theory. Gradually, however, a clearer picture emerged. At that point, it became necessary to try and put a framework around certain things. For example, when respondents said the most difficult part of their communications program was the complexity of it, did they mean the complexity of the number of publics with whom they had to communicate, or did they mean complexity in the issue itself? Did everyone have this same difficulty, or were there others who, for whatever reason, felt that communicating about a land use issue was a much simpler thing? There were shadings and nuances throughout the interviews.

Tying the interviews back to theoretical propositions at first seemed like an insurmountable obstacle, partly due to the mind-set of professionals working in natural resources. They would rather talk about trees, or fish, or wildlife, or energy development, or watershed protection - almost anything but academic theory. For many of the interviews, communicators were being asked to speak outside of the field in which they were trained. However, if one were to take the formal framework off of the issue, the connection to various theories became obvious. Calling a theory or a model by some other name does not negate the theory or the model. For some, it becomes recognizable for the first time.

In no sense a quantitative body of research, this project is an attempt to drill down into some issues of communication, culture and values that would not come up in a normal broad-based survey. In addition, there are so many land-use and natural resource issues that could be researched that it became necessary to limit the scope of this project to those areas which were highly accessible to the author, and to those individuals who were willing to go on record with their thoughts and recommendations. "Direct personal interviewing is perhaps the ideal survey method in terms of response rates and data quality. . ." (Public Research Institute, 2007, ¶ 9).

The personal interview is a qualitative technique, a "conversation with a purpose" (Baxter & Babbie, 2004, p.325). It may involve semi-structured or unstructured questioning; the design is "flexible, iterative, and continuous, rather than prepared in advance and locked in stone" (Baxter & Babbie, p. 325). This research project reflects that flexibility. Although there is a defined research instrument (see Appendix E), various sub-questions changed depending upon a respondent's answers or profession. Indeed, there were new concepts brought up during the course of the interviews that made it necessary to explore a little further.

This type of personal interview meets all of the criteria of qualitative rather than quantitative research as defined by Creswell. These follow, with comments as to how the interviews fit these criteria (bulleted points in bold are taken from Creswell, 2003, pp. 184-85.):

**1. "Qualitative research takes place in a natural setting; the home or office of the participant."** Most of these interviews were done on site. Exceptions included the interview with Shannon Dunlap from Atlantic Richfield in Butte, Montana; with Professor James Fazio from the University of Idaho in Moscow, Idaho; and with an anonymous public relations consultant in another western state. The night before the author was scheduled to make the two-hour drive to Butte to interview Shannon Dunlap, over eight inches of a heavy, wet snow fell over the area and moved toward Butte; the roads were dangerous with black ice. The interview was therefore

conducted by telephone the same day. Driving to Moscow, Idaho, was neither feasible nor considered necessary for that particular interview. Nor was it feasible or necessary to drive to another western state to interview the public relations consultant. For the rest of the interviews, the author visited offices in Missoula, Seeley Lake and Helena, Montana. The case study of the Montana Air National Guard was the result of the author's personal experience working on the project, as well as phone calls to conduct interviews. In all cases, follow-up questions were asked via telephone and/or e-mail.

**2. "Qualitative research uses multiple methods that are interactive and humanistic; researchers look for involvement of their participants, and seek to build rapport and credibility."** The author has lived in Montana for over 23 years, and was in Oregon for 10 years prior to that. As an independent consultant, she has worked on many land use issues, including a fuel pipeline; the timber industry; regional utilities; an Air National Guard proposed training range, economic development projects on the Flathead Indian Reservation; and forest management. This diversity of experience led to the perspectives and the contacts necessary to establish a rapport with the interview participants. In some cases, the author had previously worked with or knew those she interviewed. Specifically, she has worked with Gordy Sanders, now of Pyramid Mountain Lumber, but then working for Plum Creek Timber Company, on a timber industry campaign for the American Forest and Paper Association; has trained Forest Service personnel in strategic thinking at the request of Ed Nesselroad from the Northern Region of the Forest Service; is a neighbor, and has worked on school trust land issues with Roger Bergmeier, and knew his forestry background; met neighbor Dave Mihalic through his kids, who look after the author's home when she is traveling; and enjoys a long-term friendship with the public relations consultant who worked on a proposed wind farm project. These contacts are not indicative of bias in this report, but are indicative of Montana's

(and the West's) highly local culture, as mentioned earlier. Previous relationships made a difference in the ease of the conversation between interviewee and interviewer, because trust had already been established. Being able to share stories with many of the respondents provided a common framework for the discussion. It is perhaps more to Shannon Dunlap's credit at Atlantic Richfield in Butte, more than to the author's credit, that he provided a wide-ranging interview to an author he had never met, with a great deal of trust and mutual respect, despite the need to have supervisors and attorneys review the final results.

**3. "Qualitative research is emergent rather than tightly preconfigured**." These interviews were open-ended, allowing participants to speak in more directions if they so desired, and some of them took advantage of that. As a result, various communications issues not previously a part of this project came to light. Of particular note are the cultures within government entities employing scientists such as wildlife biologists, foresters and others who conduct research and management on wildlife, fish, and public lands; the internal culture and mind-set of fire fighters; and the general attitudes of many of the residents in local communities, which belied the author's original expectations in some of the areas in question.

**4. "Qualitative research is fundamentally interpretive."** Interpreting the answers was done through the lens of long experience in Montana on both personal and professional levels, and through the lens of secondary research conducted for this project. Knowing some of the interviewees in advance led a distinctive advantage to the research. As mentioned, relationships which already existed paved the way for an easier and perhaps more comprehensive exploration of the issues involved. Some of the author's perceptions were easily verified; with others, it was very simple to call the respondent back and ask, "Is this correct? Is this what you meant?" to avoid any wrong

interpretations. Because many of these topics and interviews are politically sensitive, respondents were given every opportunity to read the transcribed notes of the interviews and/or to read the write-up of their particular interview. Although the author's interpretation is necessary, the nature of conflicts regarding land-use and natural resource issues dictated that her interpretation be as accurate as possible.

**5. "The more complex, interactive and encompassing the narrative, the better the qualitative study."** The various cultures of the Western U.S. are complex enough in themselves; adding land use issues to the mix comes close to being overwhelming. The resulting narrative portrays this complexity while attempting to maintain a tight focus. The author many times felt overwhelmed, and worked overtime to ensure that this report provided as comprehensive and easily-read a narrative as possible. The reader will find both the melding and separation of peoples and beliefs, and both the collaborative and "us. vs. them" sides of these issues, all overlain with changing political realities.

**6. "The qualitative researcher systematically reflects on who he or she is in the inquiry and is sensitive to his or her personal biography and how it shapes the study."** The author's background as a lifelong Westerner and 25 years of experience conducting her public relations practice in the West have shaped this study and provided needed insights and perspectives to the work. The author recognized that some biases and opinions came into play as the study progressed, and some biases and opinions were also changed as a result. Specifically, the author entered the study highly conflicted about the mining industry. In a state of extreme cognitive discord, she understood that she herself used the products of mines every day; on the other hand, she was not convinced the land could be reclaimed after a mine was played out. Her stance has softened on that issue.

At the beginning of the study, the author was primarily aware of the things that made living in Montana increasingly difficult: the "Montana Discount"

previously mentioned and the summer smoke from wildfires topped the list. As the study progressed, she was reminded many times over that she long ago came to cherish the landscape as most Montanans do. The old conflict of "you can't eat the scenery" was ever present throughout the research and writing.

The author would like to acknowledge some of the issues left out of this report. A few which come to mind and which the reader might wonder about are the rebuilding of Going-to-the-Sun Road at Glacier National Park; the expansion of Montana Hwy. 93 through the Flathead Indian Reservation; the proposal by private citizen Tom Maclay to build a ski resort not only on his own land, but extending up Lolo Peak just south of Missoula, which is Forest Service Land; the proposed Cabinet Mountain mine in northwest Montana and the Idaho Panhandle, and its location in prime grizzly bear habitat; the freeway bypass at Sandpoint, Idaho, slated to run alongside the river rather than on a major arterial to the north of any watershed area; the issue of brucellosis in the bison of Yellowstone National Park; the preservation of wildlife; snowmobiles in the winter in Yellowstone; massive housing developments – and the list goes on.

The author also acknowledges the absence of interviews with some types of professionals or organizations concerned with land-use and natural resource issues. Again, it was impossible to include everyone and every point of view. In this report there are opinions solidly on the side of preserving every bit of the environment that it is possible to preserve, and there are opinions solidly in favor of developing the land for mining or energy purposes. The fact that those opinions may not be expressed by "the usual suspects" does not mean that those people and those organizations were deliberately avoided; they were not. In some cases, establishing contact proved so difficult as to extend beyond the time limits of this project. In other cases, people were reticent to go on the record for a number of reasons. Still, the

interviews that were conducted provide a good snapshot of the various land-use issues, and a good snapshot of the various communications challenges thus posed.

## Data Collection and Analysis

The author tried to obtain a cross-sampling of both issues and organizations in choosing which interviews to conduct. As a result, interviews included the following:

- One professional at each end of the Clark Fork River Basin Superfund site stretching between Butte and Missoula. Both men are mining engineers by training and experience. Matt Fein is senior project director for Envirocon in Missoula, the environmental cleanup company hired to do the work. Shannon Dunlap works for Atlantic Richfield in Butte, the company which bought out the old Anaconda Company, and is the project director for Opportunity Ponds, the dry bed area to which the Milltown sediments are now being transported;
- Rich Moy, Montana's chief of the state Water Management Bureau and chair of the Flathead Basin Commission, works extensively with Canada on transboundary issues, specifically on Canada's wish to develop mining in the Flathead River basin which drains into Glacier National Park and Flathead Lake on the American side;
- Dave Mihalic, former superintendent of Glacier and Yosemite National Parks, and former District Ranger at Yellowstone National Park, spoke about cultural differences in adjacent communities as well as cultural differences between Park Service employees and the public;
- T.O. Smith, Montana's Dept. of Fish & Wildlife planning coordinator, spoke about the difficulties of trying to talk about energy development in the state, specifically natural gas and coal, and its impact on fish and wildlife;

- Gordy Sanders, resource manager for Pyramid Mountain Lumber in Seeley Lake, Montana, a private, family owned lumber company, led a coalition of people and organizations to successfully propose a highly unusual collaborative piece of legislation wrapped around wilderness and roadless issues; a co-generation plant, motorized and non-motorized recreation, and more;
- Ed Nesselroad, director of public and governmental relations for the Northern Region of the U.S. Forest Service, spoke about communication issues and institutional cultural differences during wildfire seasons in Montana;
- James Fazio, professor of natural resources at the University of Idaho in Moscow, Idaho, spoke about the textbook he co-authored on public relations and communications issues for land-use managers, and about his personal views of some of the issues;
- Roger Bergmeier, a retired employee of the Montana. Dept. of Natural Resources and Conservation and a forestry consultant with 40 years' experience, spoke about issues of slash burning and smoke, as well as the issue of school trust lands in Montana and their effect on funding for education;
- A public relations professional who requested anonymity spoke about dealing with communications issues for a client who has proposed a major wind farm development in another western state;
- A series of interviews done with personnel from the Air Force, the Montana Air National Guard, a private company, and a local community college was part of the Montana Air National Guard Case study done by the author in 2004, and was based on the author's personal experience as a contractor to that same project.

All interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed, with hand-written notes taken as well. Each interview lasted from one-to-two hours. Again, follow-up questions were asked via e-mail and direct phone calls. Secondary research, which was conducted prior to

and during the interview process, extended into more subjects than those mentioned above simply because it was not known for a long time which interviews would work out, nor which topics could be explored within a reasonable context. Trade journals from the fields of forestry, ecology, wildlife biology, education, and more yielded articles on watershed management, housing tract development, brucellosis in the bison in Yellowstone National Park, the disappearance of Montana's ranches, private property rights in the Flathead, conservation easements, access to back-country hunting, fisheries, Native American lands, new collaborations, new political developments, and more.

Trade journals and textbooks from the field of public relations yielded a good collection of theories which helped to frame the discussion.

The following books and videos are recommended for anyone wanting to understand western, rural culture, identity, conflicts and communication challenges.

- Videos:
  - *Libby, Montana.* 2005, High Plains Films: Missoula, MT
  - *American Values, American Wilderness.* 2005, High Plains Films: Missoula, MT
  - *Path to Eden.* 2006, The Rural Landscape Institute: Bozeman, MT
- Books:
  - *Guns, Germs and Steel*, by Jared Diamond. 1999, W.W. Norton & Company, New York
  - *Many Wests – Place, Culture & Regional Identity*, edited by David M. Wrobel and Michael C. Steiner. 1997, University Press of Kansas
  - *Community and the Politics of Place,* by Daniel Kemmis. 1990, University of Oklahoma Press
  - *Moving Nearer to Heaven: The Illusions and Disillusions of Migrants to Scenic Rural Areas,* by Patrick C. Jobes. 2000, Praeger Publishers, CT

- *Public Relations and Communications for Natural Resource Managers* (1986 edition) by James R. Fazio and Douglas L. Gilbert. Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company. Out of print; it may be possible to find editions at amazon.com.

Then there were the newspapers. Finally, the stacks of clippings became so large that filing and organization became very difficult. In Montana, land use issues are on the front pages of every newspaper almost daily, with few exceptions. The questions and their possible solutions are fluid and dynamic, ever-changing and ever-evolving. As a result, this report should be considered as just a snapshot in time, albeit perhaps one which gives broad perspectives for future use by public communications professionals. It goes against the author's grain not to provide updates to the interview topics as this report "goes to press," but that might take another 200 or so pages and will not end there in any event.

## Underlying assumptions

There are several theoretical assumptions which underlie the basis for this research. One is that the personal influence model of public relations is still to be found at work throughout much of the West, particularly in its sparsely-populated rural areas. Montanans, as stated previously, are used to face-to-face communication and depend upon the influence of those they respect and know on any given topic.

Another assumption is that there has not been, at least until recently, any history of symmetrical, two-way communications in this land that has been described as a "plundered province" by at least one writer (Hyde, 1997, p. 96). The "until recently" portion of that sentence seems to be the operative phrase, because as it turns out there are exemplary efforts at communication being made on many fronts. In addition, to the author's surprise not everyone in the target audiences want symmetrical, two-way communications. Some people just want to be kept informed.

Originally the author's contention was that because there are many different cultures throughout the West the cultural interpreter model of public relations could be used effectively to research and design communications methods in this region, adapted to the specific environment in which a project is taking place. Perhaps equally as important, all employees of an organization or government entity working on land-use and natural resource issues in the West should receive some kind of training to become familiar with the culture of each community in which they are asked to work. In addition, the cultural interpreter model can work in a reciprocal direction, in that it's often helpful – even a key to success – to have someone interpreting the worlds of government and corporations back to people in local communities.

Those contentions still hold, but in a way that is much more focused on the development of strong personal relationships in a number of sectors, so that it is through these relationships that cultural identity and concerns are seen, heard and understood.

Likewise, the co-orientation model of public relations was an underlying assumption upon which the research was predicated. Given the numerous different cultures throughout the West and the sense of individualism in many communities, it seemed only obvious to advocate finding out who was on the same page before starting any given project, or at the very least, before the project gets too far along. The author had long said to colleagues that "if you can get any two people in Missoula to walk down the street in the same direction, you're doing fine."

The interviews took the overwhelming amount of secondary information out of the realm of theory and grounded it in actual practice. Each person interviewed had come to certain conclusions as to what strategies and tactics worked, and where they would have corrected course. Certain issues and perspectives came up repeatedly across interviews, so that some results were indeed triangulated (Yin, 2003).

Because land-use and natural resource issues are very emotional topics for much of the population in the West (and certainly in Montana), the author cautions that this

report focuses on communications strategies and tactics only, and is not in any way a debate or a statement, either implied or inferred, as to who is right and who is wrong on these issues. In fact, as will be seen in at least two examples, there are times when a situation can be a "win-win" if enough people work together in the right ways. As an old horse trainer once said, it's simple - it's just not easy.

The final portion of this report, the "deliverable," is a small booklet of recommendations for those public communicators working on land-use and natural resource issues in the West. These are merely ideas and suggestions, and need to be adapted to one's own community, company, or agency.

## Results, Section I: The Interviews

This section provides narratives of the interviews, and is organized by the specific land-use issues around which the interviews were conducted. Again, it is noted that these are not by any means the only land use or natural resource issues concerning the people in Montana or in the Northern Rockies region. However, they are representative of many of the issues which arise throughout the West.

Explanations of the various issues are coupled at times with brief historical reviews for better understanding. Each interview is summarized in its appropriate section as a whole narrative so that the reader may become more easily familiar with it. In the next section, individual answers are looked at in the light of the interview questions themselves, so that, for example, when several people mentioned that their greatest challenge in communicating about a specific project was the sheer complexity of the project, with a large number of agencies, regulators, and groups to address, that is so noted. The second section also includes the results of various surveys and studies concerning land-use values in the West.

Within each interview that follows, all the direct quotes are from the individual respondents unless otherwise noted. Because the interview narratives are extensive, each interview begins on a separate page as if it were a separate chapter, for easier reading.

## The Mines and Superfund Sites

Mining for gold, silver, copper, vermiculite, sapphires, coal and more has played a large and dominant role in Montana history. Butte is the most well-known mining town in the state, and certainly one of the most well-known mining towns in the West.

Knowing about Butte explains many western attitudes toward mining, toward corporations and big business in general, and toward government. In the latter decades of the 1800s, Montana saw the beginnings of its cattle and sheep ranching industries, Yellowstone National Park was created, General George Armstrong Custer was defeated at the Battle of the Little Big Horn, and gold was discovered in Bannack, Montana. In 1887, extensive silver and copper mining was underway in Butte. The picture was not pretty from the start:

". . . By 1876, Butte had become a prosperous silver camp with over 1,000 inhabitants. Marcus Daly arrived that year representing the Walker brothers, entrepreneurs from Salt Lake City. His mission was to inspect the Alice Mine for possible purchase . . . Daly purchased the mine and successfully managed it for the Walkers. The town of Walkerville . . . sprang up around the mine and other mines in the area.

"In 1880, Daly sold his interest in the Walkers' properties and bought the Anaconda Mine. He did so with investment money from several San Francisco capitalists, including George Hearst, the father of media mogul William Randolph Hearst. Clark and Davis also attracted investors from Denver and points east. It wasn't long before capitalists from New York and Boston bought into the huge potential of the area. During the 1880s, copper mining came into the forefront and Butte became the world's greatest copper producer. The Union Pacific Railroad came to the area in 1881, allowing developers to build and equip smelters. The Butte smelters quickly became the best in the world at extracting the metal from the ore.

"It wasn't long before Butte began to pay a price for the riches. The air filled with toxic sulfurous smoke. Daly responded by building a giant smelter in Anaconda, just 30 miles west of Butte. To this day, the giant smokestack remains a landmark. ... In 1899, Daly teamed up with Rockefeller's Standard Oil to create the giant Amalgamated Copper Mining Co., one of the largest trusts of the early Twentieth Century. By 1910, it had changed its name to the Anaconda Copper Mining Company, swallowing several smaller mining companies along the way. The Company dominated Butte for the next 70 years" (Ultimatemontana, 2007, section 6).

That story in one form or another has been played out numerous times around the western United States, from silver mines in Idaho to gold mines in Colorado and California. The out-of-state capital and controlling corporate interest remain a part of modern-day Montana. Already mentioned is the recent example of Libby, where the Maryland-based W.R. Grace & Company operated a vermiculite mine and more than half the population has asbestos poisoning.

In Butte, exploitation of the workers led to the rise of an intense, violent labor movement in the early 1900s after working conditions became intolerable.

In 1887, the same year that Copper King Marcus Daly arrived in Montana, Chief Joseph and the 700 remaining members of the Nez Pierce tribe began their final retreat across the state. The reader will remember Chief Joseph by one simple statement: "From where the sun now stands, I will fight no more forever." When he finally surrendered to the U.S. Cavalry, he thought they'd made it to Canada; they had not.

Also in the late 1800s, the railroads came to Montana and by now the concept of Manifest Destiny had gotten a firm grip on the population. "The people of the United States felt it was their mission to extend the 'boundaries of freedom' to others by imparting their idealism and belief in democratic institutions to those who were capable of self-government. It excluded those people who were perceived as being incapable of self-government, such as Native

American people and those of non-European origin" (Public Broadcasting Service, 2007, ¶3).

When the railroads stepped up their advertising to attract new riders, they were deliberately portraying the West as being a gentler, safer place, much more fit for human habitation. Men and their families flocked to the mines in Butte, lured by the promise of steady work and well-paying jobs, however dangerous those jobs might be. Butte became a city of international flavor almost overnight. "The earlier skilled miners were Cornish, but the Irish soon followed, tempted by the prospects of steady pay. They came in droves and soon became the largest ethnic group. Suburbs of Butte, with names like Finntown, Meaderville, Dublin Gulch, Chinatown, Corktown, and Parrot Flat were soon filled with Italians, Croatians, Serbians, Finns, French Canadians, Lebanese, Scandinavians, Chinese, Mexicans, Germans, Austrians, and African-Americans" (Ultimate Montana, 2007, Section 6). To this day, when the organizers of Missoula's International Choral Festival want to find translators and interpreters for choirs from overseas, they can find an astonishing number of the needed languages in Butte.

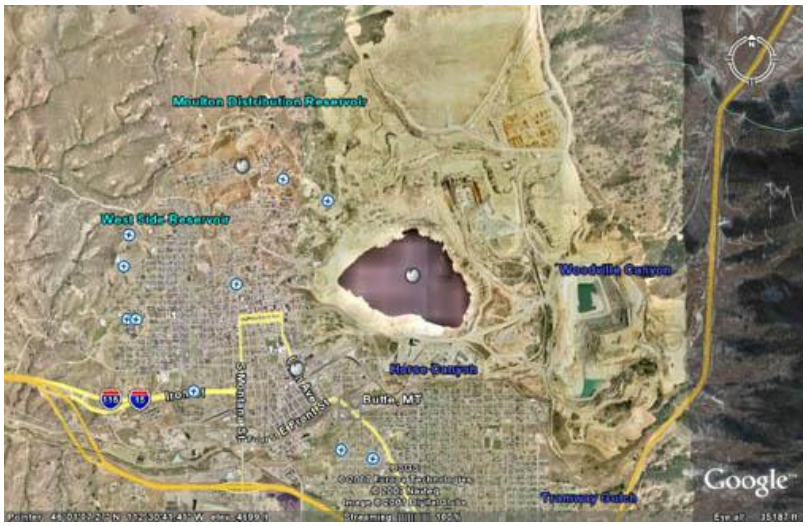
In the ensuing years, hydroelectric dams were built; more mines were opened and played out in the West's traditional boom-and-bust cycles; timber was cut, oil and gas sites were developed, and farmers and ranchers kept one eye on the sky and the other on precious rivers and streams. Glacier National Park was set aside to join Yellowstone as the jewels of Montana's natural preserves.

Native Americans were rounded up and forced onto reservations; their children were sent away to boarding schools where they were not allowed to speak their native languages, nor dress in their native dress. As late as the 1970s, Indian women still underwent forced sterilizations (Johnson, B.E., 1998).

The community of Butte continued to suffer severe losses under the heavy hand of the Anaconda Company, and not only through terrible mining accidents such as the 1917 fire which killed 168 men. The union battles were legendary and violent.

Of tremendous sentimental value were Butte's famed Columbia Gardens, a combination amusement park, dance pavilion and landscaped park which operated in the town from 1898 to 1973. Columbia Gardens was so well known and loved that Tommy Dorsey came to play with his band, as did other big band greats of the era. But it, too, fell to the Anaconda Company, which wanted the minerals under the park.

By 1955, the Anaconda Company had made the decision to revert to open-pit mining, and excavated Butte's infamous Berkeley Pit, an open, infected sore high on the hillside, now full of contaminated water and irreparably poisoned. Even migrating geese landing in its water will die, it is so toxic. The surrounding hillsides will not recover from the damage done.




*A satellite view of Butte and the Berkeley Pit: author's image*

As mentioned earlier, the stretch of the Clark Fork River which runs between Butte and Missoula, a distance of approximately 132 miles, is one of the nation's largest Superfund sites. It is currently undergoing remediation. The site is the byproduct of smelter operations in Anaconda, which took in ore from the Butte mines, and in a typical smelter process, separated the metal from the ore by heating it. Then it was all sent to settling ponds near the small town of Opportunity, just outside of Anaconda.

That worked for a time, but Mother Nature intervened. "The sediments made their way downstream in the 1908 flood," says Shannon Dunlap, project manager of the Opportunity Ponds project for Atlantic Richfield. "And of course over time, they accumulated behind the Milltown

Dam. What's happened is those sediments - and the water changes, and different activities going on naturally in the river – contributed to arsenic in the Milltown area being above the drinking water standard. So they had to take action . . . and put in new wells for the water supply."

The sediments had traveled over 100 miles in the Clark Fork River between Opportunity and Missoula. As mentioned above, the water in the Milltown area on the eastern edge of Missoula became contaminated and unfit for human consumption. Wells were contaminated; everything was. A large arsenic plume still exists in the soil and water at the confluence of the Big Blackfoot and Clark Fork Rivers at Bonner and Milltown.

The Milltown Dam is being removed, and the course of the river is going to be restored to its natural stream bed. The sediments, full of heavy metals and arsenic, are being moved back upstream to the Opportunity Ponds near Anaconda, which are now dried-up beds full of old mine tailings. The people in Missoula, Milltown and Bonner are, so far, concerned but happy with the cleanup. The people in Opportunity feel that once again, they are being used for the worst byproducts of mining operations.

Dunlap, who works for Atlantic Richfield in Butte, is the project manager and deals with community relations with the communities of Opportunity and Anaconda concerning the sediment removal from near Missoula back to the dry Opportunity Pond beds. (When Atlantic Richfield purchased the old Anaconda Company in the 1970s, it inherited the responsibility to clean up the environmental damage.) Matt Fein works from Missoula as senior project director of the Milltown cleanup site for Envirocon, the contactor charged with removing the dam and cleaning up the Superfund site under the auspices of Atlantic Richfield and under the supervision of the EPA.

Of the two men, Fein definitely has an easier time of it when it comes to public communications. He says, "It's part of my job just to be out there explaining to people what

we're doing. And we do it because we live here, it's our community, because we think people should know, and they can't just come out there and see what we're doing. We obviously do it to try to build good will for the company with our neighbors. We do it to get our name out there – who knows who might be in the crowd, looking for our kind of services. And part of why we do it is because there's a void, because Atlantic Richfield doesn't do it. Atlantic Richfield does not have people that go out and speak – at least not on this end of the basin."

Shannon Dunlap explains that "each one of these different Superfund areas has different operational units, even though it's all the same Superfund site. So Milltown is called the Milltown River Sediment Operational Unit, and then up here we've got the Anaconda Regional Water, Waste and Soil Operational unit; then there's Streamside Tailings, which the state is responsible for. Priority Soils – each has a different project manager." He notes that Atlantic Richfield has people whose tasks are in media relations, or maintaining government relations with various legislators and regulators.

As noted, Dunlap deals with the communities of Opportunity and Anaconda, who are on the receiving end of the sediments. "Probably for me, the most difficult part has been in the past relationships between the residents in the area and Atlantic Richfield. You know, this has a long history of course, as you can imagine, going back to the late 1800s – though not with Atlantic Richfield ourselves. . .. But when Atlantic Richfield acquired the Anaconda Company in the 1970s, they actually never really did much work out here; the smelter ran for a short time before it was shut down. No mining actually was done. So the people that are here now actually had no involvement with the work that was done in the past, but the relationship has been wavering between certain residents and the company. So – that still is one of my biggest challenges here, trying to deal with that."

Dunlap says he'll be satisfied if he can just get the story full out concerning what's really happening at Opportunity Ponds. "One of the frustrations I have is that the information that comes out in the media, although it's typically true, it's not necessarily the whole story, so people hear things, or they read things in the paper - they're not getting the full story of what's really going on. So my objective is to try to let people know that we really are doing something out here, we're accomplishing things. For instance, I have a tour set up next week with a group in Opportunity that's called the OCPA (Opportunity Citizens Protection Association) which is a group that a few folks out there started up to kind of oversee what goes on in Opportunity - primarily, in the area of the Superfund. And then also what's called the CFRTAC – a group which represents people on the Clark Fork River Operable Unit, which of course is between Milltown and us. So I'm going to take them on a tour next week, which I offered to do, if nothing else to show them what we really are doing out there. Everything they've heard has been terms like 'toxic mud' and the stuff you've seen in the paper – which isn't true, that's not what we're placing out here on these tailings."

In fact, says Dunlap, they expect that by covering the old tailings in Opportunity Ponds with the sediments sent up from the Milltown Dam area outside of Missoula, they can eventually re-vegetate the area, and it will support life again. He's dealt with these assumptions and misunderstandings before. "We had an issue with trees being cut down. Most of the area out there is our property, but we try to be cognizant of the community – they don't necessarily think that we are – but we try to take their concerns into account. We had an issue with trees being cut down, where they thought we were going to go in and just take all the trees down basically between us and Opportunity Ponds and the town of Opportunity, and you know, I was hearing things and seeing things come out in the paper. So I asked them to come out and we could show them what we really were doing, show them that we were leaving most of these trees. I think if

nothing else, once they left, in their minds they realized that we aren't taking all the trees down. They have a little bit better understanding."

Fein talks about his own challenges: "My real challenge when I go out to talk to groups and people is to convey that 'We know what we're doing, we're doing a good job, we live here and we're concerned about the environment and things are going well.' And so it's just to reassure people we're on top of it, and we're not some fly-by-night organization that's just here to make a buck, and then we'll leave. I mean I live here, I have a house here, I have a family." Fein works under the direction of Atlantic Richfield and the EPA, so is not proactive in his communications efforts; he'll speak to any group or individual who requests information, and if Atlantic Richfield or the EPA ask him to do more, such as give tours to politicians or others, he'll do that. Basically, his company – although they have designed and are implementing the clean-up – is not in the spotlight and doesn't handle controversy except very rarely.

Both Dunlap and Fein are engineers by training and experience, and both have worked at other mines and had difficult experiences at other mines. Dunlap has worked for the Golden Sunlight mine just outside of Whitehall in southwestern Montana, as well as on the ill-fated and ill-conceived Zortman/Landusky mine in north central Montana. Fein has worked at Idaho's famed Bunker Hill silver mine. In those cases, they were in the position of being the "bad guy," representing the company that people loved to hate. Fein explained that originally, he didn't have a lot of experience explaining the after-effects of mining to the public, saying, "Those are tough to explain, because people don't understand what it was like 100 years ago. And so we try to remind them, 'look, think back 100 years,' and we show them old photographs, for instance, over in the Silver Valley. In the Silver Valley, we have photographs where the outhouses were all over the rivers. And that's how people were. And the rivers, 100 years ago, were the way we got rid of our waste. . . So you try to explain to people that it wasn't John Daly sitting at his

desk, wringing his hands, saying 'How can I screw these people and make more money dumping the stuff in the river?' It was just the way we did things. Now, there came a point in time where the technology existed to contain these wastes, and I think there might have been some of that going on, where people said, 'Well, we can continue to dump it, but we know it's not very good….' Those are sometimes difficult to explain, where there's a transition between where it was obviously O.K., and people didn't think about it -- to, in the '60s or late '50s, we started getting aware of these things, and then today, where we obviously have very strong laws that just won't allow it. There's that gray area, where people think, 'Well, I can still do it – I'm not sure if it's that bad, or maybe it is, but it saves me money.' But that's a small piece of the big history. You know, this had gone on since the late 1800s – so that was always something we tried to remind people of, because they'd like to put their finger in your chest and say, 'You did this.' I wasn't even born when this was done, I didn't do this, neither did my family. I'm just trying to do the best I can to manage it."

Fein underwent highly personal attacks in meeting with attorneys representing local tribes in the area. He said now that he looks back on it, he believes they were trying to control the playing field, but he didn't know that at the time, and the stress level was intense.

Dunlap had another kind of challenge at the Golden Sunlight Mine, but it worked out successfully. There was an issue about the need to backfill the open pit of that mine when mining operations were done. Dunlap explains: ". . . the environmental groups have been suing the company since 1992, saying the Montana Constitution requires that they backfill the pit, and the lawsuits have gone on and on and on. That was a lot of my job, was working on that issue, and getting the supplemental EIS (Environmental Impact Statement) done. We were able to show through technical work that backfilling the pit was going to cause more ground water degradation than leaving it as it was; even though we were going to have to pump and treat the

water and manage it, it wasn't going to be an environmental disaster. And even though we didn't plan to put the ground back exactly like it was, the only loss was the loss of 200 acres of habitat that used to be there that really wasn't used by animals or people anyway, and we were reclaiming hundreds of acres of additional land, which was far more productive than previously."

Both men have also been constrained legally in speaking about the aftereffects of mining operations. Dunlap says that one of his biggest surprises in coming to his current job (he has been the project manager for Opportunity Ponds only since March) was what happens to the communications process when attorneys get involved. Sometimes communication breaks down completely, and he's wished more than once, being the native Montanan that he is, that he could be allowed to have simple face-to-face conversations that would help resolve various issues when the going gets tough.

Fein's concern about legal issues has to do with what he says is the unfairness of the Superfund law itself. "I tell people, 'You think it's fair? What if, 50 years from now, we decide that the teaching methods that were used now harmed our children? Are you going to allow us to go back and sue every teacher because you now decided it was wrong? That's not fair.' I don't get much traction on that, but at least it gives people a chance to pause. It's not as if last week we went out and dumped a bunch of barrels in the back yard. If you do that, you ought to go to jail. We all agree. We're talking about stuff that was done when it wasn't even in anybody's brain that this was harmful or shouldn't be done."

Both men tell of great diversity in the audiences with whom they try to establish strong communication and relationships. Fein notes that it's not just a matter of some people being against the Superfund cleanup and some people being for it; there is another group that manipulates the situation for its own purposes. "I was at a meeting yesterday, one of these meetings that the EPA set up for the community – we go and explain what's going on. There's a

group that attends that meeting, who is using Superfund to get freebies for the community. I've seen it before. They're the squeaky-wheel group; they'll keep complaining about the impact of Superfund on the community, until someone starts throwing them dollars. Seen it before, seen it many times. Unfortunately, the EPA played ball with them, and now they're regretting it."

Fein separates his audiences out into two more distinct groups. There are people who simply want to know that the cleanup is going well, and that the goals will be achieved, and then there are people who want to know what's going on in their community and may have an agenda behind their interest. Fein works to listen and ferret out that agenda so he can respond to their concerns.

Fein sees some differences between newcomers to the state and old-timers who have been around a while. "The relative newcomers here are probably the ones who are more strident and worked up over this issue than the old-timers. Old-timers – or the long-term residents – don't say a lot. They just kind of sit in the meetings, and they listen, and they don't have a lot to say. A lot of them lived when this was going on. They're not that young that they don't remember seeing these things. They were miners or smelter workers or whatever, or farmers. They say 'Yeah, there are some bad things, but this seems awful overblown. I've lived here my whole life, and I've not had a problem.'

"But then you get the student crowd that comes in, and they'll believe anything anybody prints on the Internet, and they come to the meetings, and they're wide-eyed, and it's like, 'Oh, my God, we're all dying.' But over time, those people usually sort of calm down, too, and they learn, after you keep repeating it, keep saying it. And the best thing is to get somebody else to say it. Like this guy in Idaho – get him turned around, to where he's more vocal, more on your side, telling people – then it's not just me."

Surprisingly, Dunlap has had the exact opposite experience. Some of the local old-timers in Opportunity and Anaconda are the ones most upset about having the sediments returned to Opportunity Ponds to cover up the tailings. “In this specific project, the people that are pretty much against what we do out here were born and raised out in Opportunity. That’s one of the strange things that I have a hard time understanding, especially being a native Montanan. These people, they were raised, and probably their parents were raised, and made a living by working for the Anaconda Company. They’ve actually participated themselves by working for the company that they’re now totally against. So I think out here, most the people we deal with are locals that have grown up here. Now in other jobs, people that are from the outside – I think there is a difference. The native Montanans living near a mine or other site typically understand what the specific issues are, whether they are for or against the activity. They also have the ear of the local legislators and public officials. The newcomers typically don't understand the specific issues, and probably do not care. They glean the information from the environmental groups, and usually seem to have the ear of the Helena or Missoula politicians, who also are not familiar with the specific local issues.”

Both men also decry the lack of good communication coming from the mining industry itself. “I think they’ve done a horrible job of defending themselves, of getting out their message,” Fein says. “If I were in the mining industry, and had a lot of resources and investments at risk, I would make my CEO spend a good portion of his time defending those, and telling people why mining’s O.K., and why we’re doing it, and how we’re doing it right, and that we’re not just out there making these messes that we’re now cleaning up, that were done 100 years ago.”

Dunlap echoes the sentiment. “I think one of the problems is the industries themselves have done a poor job in the past of public relations to let people know what was going on. I know mining. I worked a lot in Nevada, and it was the same way, although it’s not anything like Montana. Trying to mine in Nevada, you see some of the same issues, where

the mining industry has just never had a good public relations strategy. I think if, in Montana, with the timber industry, and now the mining industry, if there would have been some discussions and some better strategies years ago, maybe we still would have some kind of timber industry, and maybe we still would have a chance for mining to go on."

What works best? Dunlap is an advocate of face-to-face communications. "What I've seen work best has been working with local groups as best you can. Whether they're something like OCPA - although they're totally against what you're doing - they are a forum for having some discussions. When I worked at Golden Sunlight, we had a local group there that we started working with years ago, which was a real positive input to the community. It was a way that we could communicate to them about what we were doing. They could tell us what they thought the community wanted, and what they specifically wanted, and then they could go out in the community and let people know what was really going on. And I think that's the best way to do it. Things like newspaper articles can be beneficial, but they just hit a target group of people and then it's left for people to interpret them the way that they want. So I really think that you have to put the effort to have some type of forum where you have public meetings or just discussions with the communities you're working in on a routine basis, and be open and honest with them – and for industry, that's tough to do sometimes."

Again, Dunlap and Fein are in sync. Asked if he actually has a communications plan, Fein says, "We're not anything nearly that formal. It's more just me making myself and my staff available to talk to people when they request. And, again, it's just an experience thing, going to talk to these folks and these groups, and being available when they need us to speak to them. So that's really what we've done. And I think it works. It doesn't come off as forced. I'm not saying the same five points, every time I've been asked."

## Mining for Energy


*Overview of the Powder River Basin on both sides of the Montana/Wyoming border*

*Satellite photo from the author's Google Earth subscription.*


*A portion of the Power River Basin on the Wyoming side showing mine excavations.*

Although mines in Montana and much of the West bring to mind gold, silver and copper, there are, of course, other precious substances beneath the earth that have to do with energy – oil, coal and coal-bed methane gas. The vast lands of the West are more than a little tempting in terms of developing energy sources for a country that must depend on many foreign markets.

Wyoming, for example, has provided oil and gas leases over a large extent of its land, and now says that its "surging energy economy provides 65 percent of the state government's revenue" (Associated Press, 2006, ¶1). According to this article, Wyoming has drilled 24,000 wells and pumped billions of gallons of coal bed methane water to the surface on its side of the Power River Basin, which it shares with Montana. Montana, on the other hand, has 833 wells in the region, and is taking a close look at both conservation and remediation efforts before moving forward. The border dispute is causing friction for both states, as well as for the adjacent Crow Indian Reservation. "Wyoming is land barons and energy boys, and they make up Wyoming's political gentry," former Montana Congressman Pat Williams says. "Montana is much more diverse in its publics and has a long, deep respect for conservation and labor unions." Montanans, says Williams, have resented environmental and political abuses of the past (Associated Press, 2006, ¶s 8, 9).

T.O. Smith is the planning coordinator in Montana's Dept. of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, and works to determine the impact of energy development on the fish and wildlife in the area. He says the first obstacle in communicating and talking with people is to try and convey the complexity of the issue. "It's a known fact that, in the United States, we do not have enough natural gas supply to ever become energy independent. However, they continue to talk about natural gas, that we need to drill and develop and be energy independent because of these folks in the Middle East - - when the companies (such as British Petroleum) are the ones developing the liquid gas docking stations (specifically in Louisiana), and know that we'll never be energy independent. And so the public hears one thing from the industry, and then they'll hear another thing from us, and there's no clear understanding of it."

The second challenge, Smith says, is that diverging camps can use the complexity and the often-conflicting information given out to the public to their advantage. "You have some folks

who are pro-energy industry, and pro-energy development, and they will say one thing, which may or may not be fact. And then often you'll hear from the other side of the coin, environmentalists and others, and they'll twist and turn facts for their own benefit.

"We all use energy – electricity, oil, gas, all of those energies; carbon energies, non-carbon energies, that's life. Life forms use energy. Food is energy. And there's a cost to some of those energies, and the costs are all different."

What Smith most wants to do is provide people with enough clear, coherent information that they can make reasoned decisions. "We're not saying don't develop these resources. But let's lay it out in a truthful manner and look at the facts, and then allow the public to look at cost/benefit on energy development. If you're going to develop energy, such as in the Powder River basin, just be aware that you're going to lose certain fish and wildlife populations."

Smith notes that internal communications within his agency and government in general are the most difficult portions of trying to get a good message out. The Director of Fish, Wildlife and Parks serves at the Governor's pleasure, so "he has to satisfy a lot of people in government before communication is ever released." Money is also an issue, as with most outreach efforts.

Within his own department, there is a traditional aversion to the concept of marketing, so he tends to work out his own communication programs and strategies, with a policy of "asking for forgiveness before asking for permission." As a result, he has developed a deep and wide network of contacts both in government and around the state.

In his communications efforts, Smith targets the people who fund his department first, and they aren't the state's taxpayers; they are hunters and anglers. He says 98 or 99 percent of the department's funding comes from hunting and fishing license fees, and fees that are attached to the purchase of a gun or a fishing rod in the state. He starts with hunting and fishing organizations such as the local rod and gun club, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation or Trout

Unlimited, because "by going to that organization we can immediately try and educate and communicate with a large number of individuals. Then the second step is to educate individuals of the public, at large. That becomes an even bigger issue, because you don't have an audience where you're guaranteed that you have their attention. And so in that form, it almost turns from communication to marketing, in a way. There are a lot of differences between one person and the next, even though they might both be sportsmen. To communicate the message to those people, and to find the right venues, channels, and message, so that they can receive that, and then give you feedback, is very difficult."

Smith, feeling that local leaders are needed, has taken the same tack that Fein and Dunlap have discovered in the course of their careers: he finds individuals who can provide him with "political cover," so that he can tell the truth. By that, he means he's asking for third-party endorsement, for someone to stand up and speak at public meetings, to contact their legislators in Helena, to speak with Montana's Congressional delegation, and to carry the message to others.

Smith sees a large difference in people from eastern Montana as compared with people in western Montana when it comes to public communication. He can lay out a road map of sorts for the easterners, he says, and let them know what works. In the eastern part of the state, he often runs into what he calls a "flock" condition, in that individuals are very reserved, and don't speak up at public meetings. He'll get feedback only later.

In the western part of the state, however, there are "no societal bonds at public meetings the way there used to be, especially in Missoula. It's hard to get western Montana on board; the western part of the state is full of 'armchair environmentalists.'" Smith says that long-term, established, or native Montanans understand the ecology and interconnectedness of natural systems; newcomers don't. Worth noting here is that most of the state's fastest-growing populations are on the western side of the Continental Divide.

Smith also notes that most of the ranchers in the eastern part of the state – 52 percent of the non-federally-owned, non-tribal lands - do not own the mineral rights under their land, and that, of course, affects their views on energy development. Because the state works on the basis of mining laws enacted over a century ago, the rule still is that no notice need be given if a company applies to drill for oil on someone's land. In fact, only 10 days' notice needs to be given before drilling actually starts. Owning the soil is one thing; in America's race to develop new sources of energy, owning the minerals under the soil is something else altogether.

Asked for suggestions on the best ways to communicate, Smith recommends working through organized groups to which the "armchair environmentalists" belong. He advocates going to people and meeting with them over and over again, and to convince at least one influential leader of the rightness of the cause. However, he says, there is a warning: "You get caught when you try to tailor your messages to different groups in Montana, because they'll talk to each other, and lose trust if they are all hearing different things."

Smith also uses graphic presentations in his talks, and the more shock value they have to them, the better – that's what gets people's attention.

## Where There is Agreement: The Rocky Mountain Front

*The Rocky Mountain Front near Great Falls: author's photo*

In Montana, one thing which most people have agreed upon so far is that they don't want to see oil rigs on the Rocky Mountain Front, that area where Rocky Mountains meet the plains. Bordering Glacier National Park and the Bob Marshall Wilderness, the Front is arguably the major stretch of ground that all Montanans hold sacred. In 2004, after 29 years of conflict, and through the work of Montana's Congressional delegation as well as coalitions of environmental groups, ranchers, outfitters, business owners, sportsmen, and equestrians; and with an unprecedented outcry of citizens from throughout the state, the 104th Congress passed legislation that bans future oil and gas leasing across 400,000 acres of National Forest and BLM lands along the Front (Wilderness Society, 2004).

That doesn't mean it's permanent; one Congress may well undo the work of a previous Congress. But it does symbolize the fact that even as cultures within a culture can and do clash, so they can also agree on something much bigger than their local issues.

## Mining, Watershed Protection and Transboundary issues:
## British Columbia and Montana

*Flathead Lake, looking northeast to the Mission Mountains.*
*Public domain photo from www.flickr.com by "Sandy in Seattle"*

For Montanans, the complexities of living with mines and potential Superfund sites also extend across the northern border into Canada. The renowned Glacier/Waterton Peace Park is a combination of each country's stunning national park, extending across the international boundary lines between British Columbia, Alberta and Montana. The vast ecosystem of the parks contains a diversity of wildlife, fish, and stunning scenery that people on both sides of the border cherish and find sacred. However, as with many of the most beautiful areas in the West, there are other treasures lying under the soil. In this case, the area on the Canadian side that serves as headwaters to the Flathead River happens to be sitting on huge coal deposits.

The Cline Mining Corporation, based in Toronto, has proposed shearing off a mountain top in order to develop an open-pit coal mine extremely close to the headwaters of the North Fork of the Flathead River. The Flathead River drainage extends down through Waterton and runs along the western border of Glacier National Park before emptying into Flathead Lake itself, the largest freshwater lake west of the Mississippi. Where Montanans are extremely

concerned about the environmental effects of such a mine, the Canadian government is pro-mining. Canada, in fact, is the world's largest producer and largest exporter of minerals (Studyworld, 2007), and the industry is extremely important to the Canadian economy.

Rich Moy is chief of the Water Management Bureau for the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, and also serves as Chair of the Flathead Basin Commission. The commission is a multi-agency, non-regulatory organization whose mission is to monitor and protect water quality in one of the state's most important watersheds.

The complexity of working with government agencies on both sides of the border and the enormous population growth in the Flathead Valley both pose strong communications challenges. Moy must work with politically conservative audiences in the timber industry and wealthy retirees coming into the Flathead, and also must work with the Canadian provincial government, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, the Montana legislative delegation, and the myriad of managers and organizations which make up the "Crown of the Continent Managers Partnership." The Partnership is a joint effort between both countries to "build awareness of common interests and issues in the Crown of the Continent Ecosystem; improve relationships and opportunities for collaboration across mandates and borders; and identify collaborative work already underway and opportunities for further collaboration" (Crown of the Continent Managers Partnership, 2007, home page). The Crown of the Continent ecosystem "covers approximately 44,000 square kilometers (16,000 square miles) and includes treasured places like Glacier National Park and the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex in Montana and Waterton Lakes National Park in Alberta" (Crown of the Continent Partnership, 2007, ¶ 1).

Working with a myriad of government agencies, organizations and individuals is further complicated by the differences in politics and in land ownership between the two countries. In the United States, most government meetings are open to the public, with few exceptions.

People can attend them, takes notes, and become watchdogs over the process. The same is not true in Canada. Government and industry meetings are held behind closed doors without public scrutiny.

In addition, the lands in the British Columbia Flathead Region where the North Fork of the Flathead River originates are owned by British Columbia itself, the province in which they are located. On the U.S. side of the Flathead basin, about 95 percent of the land is owned by the federal government. So, instead of a federal government-to-federal government dialogue over the issue of mining and watershed projection, the conversation takes place primarily through the U.S. federal government and the Canadian province. With the number of private, environmental and industry interests involved, the situation becomes political very quickly.

Most traditional communication approaches haven't worked in British Columbia, so Moy and his teams are working on a new approach, hoping that simply asking for help will open up the needed discussions. He's also working with Montana's Congressional delegation to help identify viable solutions to the new threats.

One of the key messages Moy wants to convey is that the quality of water in Flathead Lake and in Montana's rivers and streams is directly tied to the economic health of the state. However, one of the politically hot issues in the Flathead is that of private property rights. Almost no other land-use topic brings out the emotions of local residents in as vitriolic a way. Planning for the care and management of the Flathead Basin was thus not an easy road. "In the final public meetings in the 1990s, the five percent of people who were for private property rights brought guns to meetings, and there were death threats." Moy calls these the "energetic opponents," and, echoing his former colleague Dave Mihalic, says they are the people at the extreme end of the bell curve curve, and "you'll never get them on your side." On the other hand, he feels, a good 60 percent of the people don't care much about being involved in such issues

The challenge is getting people to participate early in any public planning or decision-making process, not after the results are in. However, Moy feels public meetings are not the way to go because they become so angry. A better approach, he said, was when they asked each group of people in their target audience group to identify those who would best represent their interests. They also requested help in identifying key leaders. Because the process of working with the public can take a year or longer, he stresses the need to constantly go back to that same constituency and get feedback.

Moy also talks about the differences in public reactions and attitudes between eastern and western Montana. In eastern Montana, he says, people are more willing to listen and are more courteous and respectful, no matter their political persuasion. In western Montana, not so much: people in the Bitterroot Valley and in the Flathead were particularly intolerant, and people in the North Fork area of the Flathead River were actually nasty to each other. However, they came to a consensus because their vision of the North Fork was almost identical. Again, it was love of the land and the landscape which held up underneath other differences in values and perspectives.

People across the west who are trying to work out alternative forms of energy are finding the same thing.

## Alternative Energy: Wind Farms

*Public photo from flickr.com*

Wind energy – what could be better? There are no emissions to pollute the air. The ground around wind turbines can still be used for agricultural purposes. The carbon footprint of a wind farm is minimal. Landowners who provide access to their property for the construction of wind turbines generate income for themselves on an annual basis. Wind farms pay property taxes. The construction of a wind farm generates jobs for the local economy. It's a win-win situation, right?

Well, that depends. What transmission lines will serve the wind farm, and where are those lines located? Where is the wind farm actually situated – in a rural area where hardly anyone will see it, or in a fairly populated area where people find the wind turbines have replaced their great views? Is the base of the wind turbine an H-frame that takes up a lot of room, or a single pole? What happens when the wind stops? What are the real effects on the birds and animals that inhabit the area? Care for a turbine in your backyard?

Not everybody does. Therein lies the challenge for professional communicators working with this particular form of alternative energy.

Montana, as it turns out, leads the nation in its capacity to produce electricity from wind. "The Pacific Northwest has the potential to generate over 137,000 MW of electricity from wind power. This is enough to provide nearly four times the current electricity consumption in the region. The majority of the region's potential wind resources are in Montana, which alone has enough potential wind resources to supply one quarter of the electricity needs of the United States[2]" (Renewable Northwest Energy Project, 2007, ¶ 3). Most people who live east of the Continental Divide in Montana would certainly agree about the amount of wind.

According to an article in *Montana Magazine* in the fall of 2007 titled, "A New Energy" by Karl Puckett (and touted on the magazine's cover as "The state's newest cash crop"), the wind farm at Judith Gap in the south central portion of the state has drawn mostly positive reviews. But up near Great Falls, the reaction to a proposed wind farm is mixed. There are concerns about a proposed Great Falls-to-Lethbridge (Alberta) transmission line, which "makes for an ugly farm" according to one landowner. Various conservation groups are also concerned about wildlife habitat and the views in or near any protected wilderness or scenic areas.

Throw into the mix the fact that the people who are going to build the wind farm, own it, and make a profit from it, are likely to be from out of state, and there is a traditional western problem brewing. In Glasgow, Montana, a 500-megawatt wind farm proposal by GreenHunter Energy, Inc. of Grapevine, Texas, was reduced to a 50-megawatt wind farm after environmental protests were mounted concerning an adjacent wilderness area (Brown, 2007).

Opposition has surfaced in other western states as well. Honoring a public relations consultant's request to remain anonymous, including not revealing the name or location of the project, the consultant found that conducting effective public relations on behalf of a company's wind farm proposal can be complex and frustrating. One of the first challenges, as inferred above, is if the out-of-state owner has not taken the time and trouble to understand the local area in which it wishes to place its wind farm. If the company does not have a

corporate tradition of in-house public relations, or of understanding the need and the value of public relations, that further complicates the communicator's job. Once these two variables are found to exist, there automatically comes a problem of unrealistic expectations. The company may feel that simply informing people is enough and that it doesn't have to get involved in the give-and-take of relationships. It may not understand the values Westerners place on long-term relationships and face-to-face communication or on the wild and scenic areas they cherish. As with the Yellowstone Pipe Line Company, there may be a corporate value of looking at the land for the ways in which it can be used. That utilitarian value may be pitched against those of local residents who consider the land for its aesthetic, recreational and spiritual values.

When this particular public relations firm found it had been hired about mid-way through the legal process of setting up the wind-farm, and thus also mid-way through the public communication process, the biggest challenge of all became apparent: the opposition had grown, had coalesced, and was organized. Moreover, the people who opposed the wind farm felt emboldened and empowered by their own activity, and so in a sense the movement fed on itself. The strength and bitterness of the opposition was a surprise both to the public relations firm and to the company, because in other places and at other times, the use of wind energy in the general region had been greeted with good will and favorable attitudes. The opposition was comprised of more than nearby landowners and homeowners; there were others in the community who also felt that the wind farm would be a "blight on the land."

The public relations firm had several main goals in its initial communications program. One was to communicate in person directly and often with the various groups and stakeholders impacted by the project. A second was to highlight the fact that the state had a law providing financial incentives for alternative energy providers. They hoped for two major outcomes: to grow and develop a data base of supporters who would understand the value and benefits of the project; and to be enable proponents to talk to opponents.

The background research which the public relations firm did in order to begin work on the project was extensive. Perhaps the most impressive piece of it was that members of the firm went to the state offices, to the general public, to the opposition, to every audience involved, and asked them how they wanted to receive information. By phone? E-mail? Newsletter? Most people wanted one-on-one conversations. In fact, in one community, the leaders wanted the issue brought up in civic meetings so the audience could be engaged and discuss it.

The public relations firms also talked with another PR firm across the country, which had worked with the same company on a different project. The public relations consultants wanted a more thorough understanding of how the company itself liked to work, and to gain more insight into the situation at hand.

There were specific drivers that demanded attention when creating the public relations campaign. The first was the realization that the public relations firm would have to train the client on how to work with a PR firm and try to set reasonable expectations on both sides. They also needed to make the client understand the work.

The second driver had to do with money. As the public relations consultants talked about strategic recommendations and began to put a price tag on them, they quickly realized the client did not understand the level of work needed and its associated costs.

The third driver was to gain the client some visibility in the community. Materials had to be created such as brochures and press releases. With company executives, they conducted a round of editorial boards with local media so that reporters could ask questions directly of the company experts.

As it was, however, the media posed more difficulties. “They put a lot of energy into hearing the opposition,” says the consultant, “But they didn’t balance it out with the company’s perspective or the overall benefits of the project.”

Asked about any differences in the target audiences or the various publics within the opposition group, the consultant said that overall, they could be classified as NIMBYs – "not in my back yard." The opposition was made up of newcomers to the area as well as long-term residents. Many of the newcomers had chosen to live there because there wasn't a lot of industry, there wasn't a strong economy. The people moving in were fairly well off, and could locate their businesses anywhere. What joined them to the old-timers was that they wanted to preserve what they had. Even landowners who would had benefited financially from leasing their land to the wind farm eventually joined their neighbors in protest.

The public relations firm did have some access to a local person with extensive knowledge of the land-use issues in that area. They found it helped in some ways, but not in others. They were not allowed direct access, but had to go through the company, which handled things in a very compartmentalized way. The issue of control within the company seemed to be paramount, and there was not a free-flowing exchange of information and ideas on the project. The result, says the consultant, is that a lot of opportunities were missed.

What would the consultant have recommended to improve things? "You can't ever underestimate the strength of bringing relationships to a community that are actually going to matter to that community, especially not when you bring in an outside corporation for the first time. The relationships have to be authentic, I can't stress that enough."

In addition, the consultant says, the "company ultimately has to be willing to sacrifice some of its fear about how to act in certain communities. It's necessary to work with the opposition – what will work for you, what do you want? Neither side was going to get a compromise that was achievable. As a result, the end game wasn't ever going to be mutually satisfactory."

The consultant says that if they had it to do over again, they would have worked harder to gain agreement and consensus from the very beginning, clarifying the roles of

everyone on the team, from the consultants to the company executives and attorneys. They would have raised more alarm bells about the fact that a client spokesperson hated the media. In general, expectations would have been set differently, and they would have been hired at the beginning of the project, not midway into it. Would their strategies have changed? No, says the consultant, with some frustration. They just needed to be implemented.

Working with internal cultures and external cultures can be the biggest challenges for anyone dealing with land use issues. What does the landscape mean to people? The debate rages on in our national parks as well.

## National Parks

*View from Going to the Sun Road, Glacier National Park; author's photo*

Dave Mihalic worked for the National Park Service for many years, at various points serving as superintendent at Glacier and at Yosemite, and as a district ranger at Yellowstone. He has seen the difference in what the landscape means to people many times, and has been extremely challenged by working with both external and internal cultures during his career.

One of the most memorable cultural exchanges came during his tenure in Yosemite. He worked on plans to help restore the Yosemite Valley and the Merced River basin which feeds the valley, following severe flooding in the winter of 1996-97. Located in central California on its eastern border, Yosemite sits adjacent to the San Joaquin Valley, a huge agricultural area that is home to a large number of Hispanic families – families who were not visiting the park that was literally at their back door. "Why?" asked Mihalic. Well, they told him, all of the camping spaces in the park have room for just one car, maybe two cars, and a couple of people. "We are very family-oriented; we want to bring our extended families to the park, and we might use three or four vehicles to do that, so we don't come." The perception that a national park was only

meant for some people and not for others was stunning. It spoke about the cultural mind-set of those who had designed the campsites. Parking spaces and larger campsites were added.

The National Park Service itself, including its employees as well as the various scientists hired to work on projects, can pose a problem in communications due to its own internal culture, says Mihalic. People who work for the Park Service can have a tendency to think the public should not be involved at all. They reason that Park Service employees and scientists are really the specialists, the knowledgeable and caring people, not the public. Helping staff members and scientists to understand that Yosemite and all national parks belong to the public, and it's the public who pays their salaries, was difficult; it went against ingrained thinking.

Mihalic described the situation which brought him to Yosemite: "In January of 1997, there was a major flood in Yosemite Valley that took out roads. In one of the canyons, 400 feet of roadway were washed away. It would be the equivalent of Going-to-the-Sun Road (in Glacier National Park), if 400 feet were washed away. It closed the access from one whole entrance into Yosemite, from the town of Mariposa. It washed out campgrounds; it washed out cabins, and even some of the motel units. There was heavy, heavy snow in the valley, but more so up high. Then there was a Pacific "Pineapple Express" type of warm rain. It was Christmas of 1996, and the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd of January, 1997. They had about 10 days of rain, and it was warm rain, way up high, that melted all the snow. And all of that water came at once. It flooded many places in the Sierra, but it *really* flooded in Yosemite.

"So, in an emergency move, Congress appropriated $200 million dollars to restore that valley. In the federal government, you can't just go do things; you have to plan to do things. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) says is if you're going to make a decision that has significant consequences that you have to plan that with the public."

Mihalic describes the complexities of what happened next: “The Merced River goes through the park. It was designated a wild and scenic river, and it was supposed to have a river management plan, which was supposed to have been done in the late ‘80s. The valley had to have a plan to re-do all of these facilities that had been washed out from the flood, and that’s what we started to do in 1997. One of the first things the environmental community said is, ‘You can’t do this, because you’ve never done a river management plan, and the fact that the river is what flooded means that maybe some of these things were in the flood plain and maybe shouldn’t have been there at all. So therefore you can’t have a new plan that would just go put things back in just because they were there, when you’re supposed to be preserving Yosemite. So therefore you not only have to do the plan as to what are you going to put back, but you have to do this river plan that would say what should have been there to begin with.’”

That started things off on the wrong foot and from there, it got worse. “In 1997, what happened is the Park Service got behind closed doors and did what they wanted to do – bureaucratically, without the public involvement, without anybody else’s involvement. They came up with a grand plan for restoration that had some campgrounds removed, some campgrounds restored. There were problems just in their used of the word ‘restored.’ Sometimes they used the word ‘restored’ to mean taking it back to pristine conditions, sometimes they used the word to mean putting back the campsites that were there, restoring man-made things that were there before. And they used that word ’restore’ interchangeably.

“It set up expectations. And those expectations, they’re not met. All of a sudden now, people point fingers, and say ’You fooled me.’ But it was exacerbated by the fact that this first plan was done without the public. When I got there in 1999, the Park staff said, ‘We’re gonna’ go out and sell this plan to the public.’ It was very much a perceived arrogance that the National Park Service Staff was saying ’because we work here, we know better than you,’ even though

this was supposed to be a public park, and even though all the laws, NEPA and all that, say that you're supposed to work with the public. So there was a communication issue internally with the staff in terms of trying to get them to understand what they had to do. Then there was a problem with the public, because what happened was this was so rejected by the public. I mean the front page of the L.A. Times, the Sacramento Bee, the San Francisco Chronicle editorial were all saying 'This plan is horrible.' When you have that type of public reaction, anything that the government agency does at that point is perceived as just trying to either make excuses, or trying to explain it away."

When he first arrived to take over the Yosemite job in 1999, Mihalic says, the staff thought it would be all right to sort of dress up the plan a little differently and put it back out there. They were good people, but that's how they were used to operating. "You had the public, the people in the middle of the bell curve - they were the ones who rejected it. It wasn't the fringe groups, it wasn't the special interests. It was the people who came and brought their trailers and went camping, or it was the people who came for a weekend, just for a scenic drive. Those are the people who saw that the things that they thought were being done were in fact not being done."

The biggest challenge was "getting the staff to understand that they had to change what they had done before, and that they had to engage the public. They had to understand that we were in the government, and our government is of the people, by the people and for the people."

Mihalic also faced an external challenge with the number of interest groups that were concerned about Yosemite. The various environmental groups were just a start. There were also diverse user groups including hikers, horseback riders and campers. There were also communities surrounding the park, and along the various roads leading into and out of the park such as Mariposa, the gold mining towns of Calaveras County, Sonora, Bishop, Mammoth ski area, and more. The towns all had an economic interest in the park and the

number of tourists who came through. Mihalic told park staff that they had to listen to all of these various groups. “You have to listen to what they actually say, what they want to do, and then you have to consider that as legitimate input.”

The topic of various target audiences is one that Mihalic thought about a lot. “What you have not only in the West but in any of these public land issues is a bell curve. You have all the people in the small part of the curve at one end, and in the small part of the curve at the other end, fighting to get their way. The vast majority of the American public is in the middle, and they don’t really care about it one way or the other; they care about what they think is reasonable. For the most part, the vast majority of that public in the middle is not even engaged in these communications issues. For the most part, they are looking for stability, and for things to not change very much.”

He has some hard-hitting comments about the public discourse. “I think that they don’t want to be engaged because sometimes they see the rancor. I think sometimes they see that people are in fact not looking for a win-win solution, they’re not looking for a win/lose. They’re looking for an ‘*I* win – *you* lose.’ You know, almost a punitive thing. Many of the mainstream groups and certainly the fringe environmental groups have their own agenda, and have their own thing that they want, and they want what they want; they don’t care what you want. In that respect, they’re no different than any other interest group. In my mind, you can’t say that the lawyers who come in for the national groups – NRDC for example, the Natural Resources Defense Council, or the Sierra Club, or Nature Conservancy - that their lawyers are any different than the lawyers from Exxon or Conoco, pressing their agenda. Conoco and Exxon are looking to use public lands for their agenda. The Nature Conservancy is looking to use the public lands for their agenda. Everybody’s got some agenda. And so I think that those members of the public, just the everyday people in the middle of this see the people at both edges fighting it out, and they’re caught almost in the crossfire. I think it causes them to disengage. ‘I

don't want to have to deal with this, because what I really want is stability. I'd like to see things not change very radically.'"

When Mihalic started working to change the internal mindset at Yosemite, he had a staff of 600 that he had to convince. "There were about 20 employees working on this plan. And the other 580 employees were doing what they'd always done in Yosemite. They were giving walks and talks; they were out on patrol; they were shoeing horses; they were fixing potholes in the road. So I had to make sure everybody understood that this plan was the Park's top priority." He worked to drive home the point that people had to do their own jobs as well as become involved in the plan, because if the public lost confidence in the Park Service's ability to manage Yosemite, their jobs could be lost. The road was straight uphill. "What was amazing was to have 600 people that could work on this huge issue, and 90 percent of them said, 'That's not my job. My job is over here to give the evening program. I've got to give the campfire talk.'"

Of course, politics entered the mix and affected things very quickly. Then-Secretary of the Interior, Bruce Babbitt, visited the park and said he wanted the plans and the cleanup completed by 2001, or in other words by the end of the Clinton administration. When Mihalic announced that to the staff the same day, he got massive protests that it wasn't possible. He walked to the back of the room to take a coffee break, leaving the staff a total of 45 minutes to think of ways they could get it done. In response to the staff's saying "We don't think it's possible," Mihalic shot back, "That's the whole problem here, is you don't think it's possible, and so the very first thing you're saying is 'We're going to fail.' What would we need to do it on time?"

The traditional Park Service management style, Mihalic says, was to avoid risk. Mihalic defines leadership as "taking people where they're not yet ready to go." When staff members came back after 45 minutes and said they needed to hire more, more wildlife biologists and other specialists to get the job done, Mihalic reminded them that they'd just been

handed $2 million, and they could hire the needed people. People gradually opened up to the possibilities laid before them, instead of being convinced the plan could not be done.

The second challenge was getting the other 580 employees on board. “I had to make them understand and realize who they were working for,” he says. Prior to that time, the park staff had a “we-they” attitude, one that said, “We’re doing the Lord’s work here, we’re protecting national parks. Who could argue with that?” Mihalic pointed out a lot of people were arguing with that.

As a result, his internal strategy of changing people’s thinking and getting them involved spilled over into his external strategy. With key audiences, “one of the main strategies was to engage with them on their turf. I went to the president of the Sierra Club in San Francisco – I went right to San Francisco. The thing that did was it said the main person was involved; it was not a minion being sent to them. I was this new person who said, ‘We are changing, we heard you. You are right, we are wrong. We’re going do things differently.’ And that message had to come from me.

“The second thing that did was it freed up other people. As long as I was doing that, people on the staff could use their six wildlife biologists to do some of this work they said had to be done to meet that deadline. If I had them doing that type of a job, then they would have been pulled off the important things they had to do. If I had engaged a public relations firm, people would have seen ‘it’s not the person engaged, it’s someone who has been paid to do this.’ So that was the strategy. I tried to gain confidence back from everyone, the users, politicians, everyone, by directly engaging them on their home turf.”

Addressing cultural values was an ongoing concern. Racism had long played a role in the park, and revealed other cultural issues. Mihalic explains: “What a lot of people don’t even realize is that the word ‘Yosemite’ is an Indian word. It actually means grizzly bear in the language of one of the central Sierra tribes. And of course, California used to have grizzly bears; that’s why it’s called the Golden Bear state.

"The word "awanee" which is the name of the hotel in the valley, means grassy valley. So there's a whole Indian component. It's one of the things that surprised me; it's a kind of ironic thing that people are completely unaware of, and shows how invisible Indians are. In Yosemite Valley, Indians always lived. They would travel back and forth by the seasons, but they always figured out some way to live in that valley. That's where the baskets, the big baskets came from, they made them from the native grasses. They always maintained a presence in the valley, even after they started building hotels and before the National Park Service – Indians still lived there. They lived in different places, they moved around; they were kind of forced here or there when a hotel wanted to expand and build a parking lot. But they always had houses, they always had homes, they always lived there, all the way up through the '60s. But their homes were unkempt and didn't really fit with the tourists. In 1967, at the height of the '64 Civil Rights act - the whole business with riots in Detroit, and Martin Luther King, and all of that business with blacks and African-Americans – the National Park Service forcibly evicted and removed the last Indians from Yosemite Valley, as recently as 1967.

"Still, here they are, in the middle of this place and it's just the value set of the National Park Service, and against native peoples. So one of the things that we did in terms of communications is we worked very closely with the Indian community. In the valley, they were called the Mariposa Indian Community because they were forced into the community of Mariposa; they are not federally recognized. And the reason they are not is because during all of that recognition (of other native lands and reservations), they were inside a national park - they had no land. They thought they had land inside that park. One of the things we did is we listened. They have some traditional things that they do. There are traditional ceremonies that are seen as very valuable now in terms of the things that they teach, and the museum interpretive programs, the cultural programs. So we set aside a several-acre area that would be for their exclusive use for ceremonies. They're outside, we can't get them back, but on the other hand

we can let them come and have a place that they could call their own."

Mihalic believes in taking affirmative, pro-active measures, but notes that it is impossible to satisfy everyone. He advocates coming to consensus, and by that, he doesn't mean everyone has to agree. He means that everyone feels they've been heard, and while they may not agree, they go along.

He does wish he had done one thing differently. "If we'd have had the time, I would have liked to have formally tried to train a cadre of team leaders who – remember I said we ramped up, from 20 people to 60 people? We should have taken about six or eight team leaders, and trained those team leaders on what we were trying to do, because at the end of the day, we kept the same management team and were trying to manage 20 people, and then we were trying to manage three times as many. Those other 40 people had to be brought up to speed, and it was difficult to do. We said 'hire a bunch of people.' We should have stopped, hired the people, and told them what we were going to do – just stopped and trained them. We could have still made the deadline, I'm convinced, and we could have done it more efficiently, maybe faster. Everybody internally would have been brought on board. As it was, even as we went through the process, we still had people internally who didn't buy into it. It wasn't that they sabotaged it, but they just weren't totally committed, because they thought, 'WE should be telling those people what to do, not asking them what they want to be done. After all, I've been to the University at Montana, I have a degree in environmental this or that; I'm an environmentalist, I am a wildlife biologist, why would I ask somebody else what they think about how we manage the bears? I am the professional, I'm the specialist, I know this stuff.' It was that attitude – I have my degree, I have my profession, why would I go ask a bunch of the unwashed why they aren't visiting Yosemite?'"

Mihalic says other challenges were also internal, but up the management line, not down. What surprised him the most was the need to get his own supervisors on board.

"I'd say the biggest thing, if you try to do things idealistically, is in finding out that those above you sometimes don't walk the talk. It's hard to try to talk to the rank-and-file in an idealistic sense, especially if you believe that national parks should be for all people, and then find that the people above you are really just paying lip service to that."

Mihalic finished the interview by contrasting an example from Yosemite with one from Missoula. "There is the Hetch Hetchy Reservoir in Yosemite, and a dam there. People are working to take the dam down and get the water drained, because that water's going to San Francisco. San Francisco's full of liberal environmentalists who want to save the world, but every time they turn on their tap, and drink the water, they're killing Yosemite. And they don't even think about it that way. But yet here – we've got this dam here (Milltown) and in all of the United States, we're dealing with it, and we're taking care of it. And I think that's another measure of how yes, we may have some problems, but we're trying to deal with it, we're trying to learn from our mistakes." The Sierra Club, based in San Francisco, would probably take issue with those statements: the group's website indicates it has fought long and hard to remove the Hetch Hetchy Dam. The resulting conversation might be heated, as are many of the conversations about land-use issues – none more heated, literally, than during Montana's fire season.

Wildfires, the timber industry and our national forests

*The summer of 2000 brought severe fire to Montana's Bitterroot Valley. Photo in the public domain.*

The fires started in the summer of 2000. The picture above, depicting fire that summer near Hamilton, Montana, about 40 miles south of Missoula, has become iconic. Suddenly the Missoula Valley was filled with choking smoke for weeks – and no wonder, since Missoula is situated at the base of five canyons, and acts as an air inversion pocket for about a 100-mile radius around the city.

Missoula was just a tiny portion of what happened that summer. Wildfires broke out all over the state, burning a total of 1.1 million acres in more than 4,000 separate fires (Fiedler, Hearst, Keegan, & Morgan, 2004).

There is what seems to be a perennial, acrimonious debate about the value of salvage logging after a wildfire. There are lawsuits in general over any logging that the U.S. Forest Service has done, is doing now, or wants to do in the future. The timber industry in general has been declining for some time. Stimson Lumber shut down its plant in Bonner, just east of Missoula, in 2007. The mill site, formerly a Champion International lumber mill, had been

struggling for some years, with seasonal layoffs. Last year, it could not even sustain itself through the seasonal lows.

Tyler Christensen, writing for the *Missoulian's* "In Business" publication in 2006, summed it up this way: "A shortage of available timber is what's throwing a wrench in the works, industry experts say. 'There are very large volumes of timber under litigation,' said Charles Keegan, director of forest industry research at the University of Montana's Bureau of Business and Economic Research. A report Keegan helped prepare for the state's congressional delegation . . . concludes the industry needs at least a five percent to 20 percent increase in annual timber harvest to sustain production. And in fact, it appears timber availability did increase slightly in 2005, Keegan added cautiously. However, Montana's industrial lands, which account for seven percent of the state's timber ownership, have been heavily harvested, he said. National forests, which used to supply 40 percent to 50 percent of Montana's timber supply, now supply 10 percent to 20 percent, and the state has been supplying 30 percent to 50 percent in recent years, he said. The logging industry is most dependent on the availability of forest lands, imports of Canadian lumber and the national housing market, said Keith Olson, executive director of the 600-member Montana Logging Association" (Christensen, 2006. pg.1).

In 2007, *Missoulian* editor Steve Woodruff wrote of concern with the state's largest commercial timber property owner: "Clouding the future is Montana's largest owner of industrial timberland and its inclination to sell or develop substantial acreages. As my colleagues extensively reported in their 'Timber in Transition' series (*Missoulian*, Feb. 4-7), Plum Creek Timber Co. has morphed from a wood-products company into a real estate investment trust. With this change comes a substantially different notion of land use. Land once valued for its ability to grow timber, generation after generation, has become just more real estate primed for sub-divisions, cabin sites, resorts - all sorts of things other than growing harvestable timber. Trees are

a renewable resource. Land to grow trees isn't. Land sold for purposes other than commercial forestry may continue to grow trees, but it may be lost from the state's commercial timber base, with profound implications for the timber industry and the people of Montana" (Woodruff, 2007, ¶ 8).

The timber supply is further diminished by wildfire. For the past decade, forest fires in the West have been increasing in both frequency and severity. An early and active fire season was once again predicted for Montana by Rick Floch of the Wildlife Dispatch Center for the Bitterroot National Forest (Devlin, 2007), and his prediction more than came true. And that, says an ex-chief of the U.S. Forest Service, could break the bank, since wildfire now consumes over 50 percent of the U.S.F.S. budget.

At least part of the reason the fires have come so early, so often, and so violently in recent years is due to human intervention – the policy of putting out every fire possible. The "Big Burn" of 1910 consumed three million acres in western Montana and northern Idaho, and it was then that fire suppression became an official policy. Fires were seen as bad for the forests, and were simply put out (Devlin, 2000). However, the fires of 2000 made people start to re-think the idea, because in the 90 years since the Big Burn, enormous amounts of fuel – downed logs, brush and so forth – built up on the forest floor. The forests were ripe for the conflagrations that came.

Now the debate and the lawsuits rage over cleaning up the forest floor after a fire through what's known as salvage logging. Environmental groups such as the Native Forest Network and the Alliance for the Wild Rockies have squared off against the U.S. Forest Service and the Montana Logging Association. During an interview with Kathy McAllister, deputy regional forester for the Northern Region of the U.S. Forest Service, she said one of her goals would be to get the lawsuits to either decrease or stop (McAllister, personal interview, 2007).

Her dream is understood by others. In a guest editorial for the *Missoulian*, Mike Hillis, a wildlife biologist retired from the U.S. Forest Service and now a senior wildlife

biologist with Ecosystem Research Group in Missoula, had this to say: "In recent years the *Missoulian* has published numerous articles on the merits of using commercial timber harvest as a tool to improve forest health or reduce wildfire severity. A recent new wrinkle in that dialogue described how nearly $200,000 of taxpayer dollars earmarked for restoration in the Lolo National forest was instead paid out as compensation to plaintiffs who won lawsuits against the Forest Service.

"…Since judges seldom know much about scientific process, it's difficult for them to differentiate between arguments that are logical and those that aren't…

"Whereas it takes a 100 percent effort on the part of the Forest Service to consistently win in court, plaintiffs can sometimes carry the day with a minimal effort. Taking tax dollars earmarked for forest restoration and handing it to environmental advocacy groups is by itself problematic. Do the existing laws need changing? In the past decade the deluge of litigation has become increasingly frivolous, self-serving and inconsistent with the broader public's desires to sustain healthy forests" (Hillis, M., 2007, p. E4).

The litigation, the increasing costs of fighting fires, the increasing complexity of forest management, and the urgency to communicate to the general public all sit on Ed Nesselroad's desk each day. Nesselroad is the director of public and governmental relations for the Northern Region of the U.S. Forest Service, headquartered in Missoula. The conversation about wildfires revealed an internal culture clash similar to that noted by Dave Mihalic with the National Park Service. The biggest challenge, says Nesselroad, is with the internal firefighting community, a conglomeration of agencies including the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Park Service, the smokejumpers, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the state Department of Natural Resource Conservation, Sheriff's departments, and volunteer fire departments. Within this group, he says, there is often an attitude that communication is an annoyance. Nesselroad would like to see an attitude that fire season is an opportunity to communicate, and to

communicate key messages in ways that might not get such close attention the rest of the year.

One of the reasons, says Nesselroad, is the temperament of people who are attracted to the natural resource professions. In the following statements, he echoes many of Mihalic's thoughts: "It's very hard for many of these individuals, because many of them are introspective, introverted and very technically oriented. So they've made decisions all the way from when they went to college about separating themselves from the people part of the business, and focusing on the resource part, or the activity part in the case of fire suppression, and working with people who think like they do, and do the same things as they do. And they can become very separated from this notion of 'who are we doing this for?'

"In the abstract, you can say we don't need to manage resources, because if you just take people out of the equation, resources will manage themselves. You'll have the fires you need; you'll have the floods you need. And if you have global warming, the resources will adapt. We're finding, in some of this stuff that's melting out for the first time in 5,000 years, that places that are under ice used to have big trees on them. These are places we didn't know had ever had trees on them. In some of the melt-out that's occurring even on the Beartooth Highway (near Yellowstone), they're finding spruce underneath sheets of ice that have been there for millennia. They haven't been there in 5,000 years, and if you talk to most of our people, they would suspect that they haven't ever been there. So you really manage these resources for people.

"Even outside the ownership perspective, that's what you're doing it for, and that's a hard point to make to folks. I think some of my sense of this is shaped by my experience in the Congress, where I just wanted to go to resource people and say, 'Wait a minute, these aren't your lands, these aren't your campgrounds. They're not your trees, they're not your rivers – they're the people of America's. And if for no other reason than that, you owe them a full discussion of what you're doing with their resources. It's not just that they're paying your salary – that stuff belongs to them.'"

In the natural resource field, firefighters form a sub-set. Missoula's famed smokejumpers may be attached to the Forest Service or to the BLM as the situation demands. There are also on-the-ground wildland fire fighters, who move in cadres around the country as fire season progresses. Firefighting, says Nesselroad, "is predominantly a testosterone-laden career field. The cocktail of testosterone and adrenaline – even for people who are not males, who are engaged in it – is part of it. A certain degree of that is necessary in order to be able to perform successfully in the face of very real and often very constant physical danger. So you have to drink some of that cocktail to be good at it. And I respect that. But sometimes it gets a little judgmental. 'Well, you're not tough enough,' or 'The reason you didn't take that response is because you just didn't have the will or you're too big a coward to go do it.'

"And these are people who enjoy that adrenaline stuff; who enjoy the fact that this agency (the Forest Service) and other agencies have traditionally given them a green light to go do what they want, and pretty traditionally given them a blank check to go do what they need. They've built up pretty staggering systems and apparatus to do this fire suppression thing. And there's another thing that's common both to fire people and people in natural resources, a sort of a cultural trait. It's that 'the people of the United States hired us to do this for them, and we are the technical experts, and they should defer to us.' It sometimes comes across as arrogance. I don't think it's driven by arrogance, but maybe by a perpetuated misunderstanding of this relationship between people and their resources and the technical folks who manage them."

One of the unintended consequences of such attitudes says Nesselroad, is that in the 2007 fire season alone, the U.S. Forest Service will end up spending more than $1.5 billion dollars nationwide just to fight fires, and there's a need to talk about that. It is a frustration, he says, "in this part of the world, that some do not have an appreciation for how central these activities are to everyone's existence during that period of time around here that we call fire season. There's no place I've ever been in the country where, when it really gets up and going,

you're on the front page of every newspaper, the first 20 minutes of every newscast. There's about a 4-week period of time where we just own the attention of the people in North Idaho and Montana. To the degree that we don't provide people the information they may need to make decisions about things: 'Do I want to leave for a week, just to get away from the smoke?' 'What are these fires doing? How does that affect what I want to do with leisure time?' 'How may it affect my job, my life, my home?' I don't think we do a very good job."

There is also a concern about the timely release of messages during fire season. Again, the timing of information relates back to some internal problems. "We're lucky if we get an update every 24 hours. That's the minimum reporting period. You do a 209 – that's the standard report form – once a day. It comes to the coordination center out by the airport. Every fire has one of those filed on it once a day. But, you know, the demand for information is much greater than that, particularly on the part of decision-makers and on the part of the media." When the author noted that a fire can turn on a dime, Nesselroad replied, "Oh yeah. And that's part of the pushback I give the fire community: 'You don't even have accurate information in some instances to do your work, much less to do the public's work, if you just have information once a day.' Now, they do some informal things to buttress that. They have calls with incident commanders; and they have calls with fire management officers, and they do other things so that they get a little better intelligence and a little better picture than just that one form that gets filed at 6 o'clock every night – or maybe closer to midnight. But the frustration to me is the missed opportunity to serve those information customers and to communicate clearly, and in a way that we can't any other time of the year."

Nesselroad has tried to work through fire people in the field to get information out. His team has provided suggestions and gone out to the fire camps to run information services from the field, but those visits weren't well received. The firefighters felt there was too much distraction, and wanted only activities that were related to fire suppression.

He is frustrated that the coordinating MAC group was also reticent to take on information services and media relations services. “They want to push the responsibility back to the local level, which in many instances is the least capable level of dealing with it – not only from their standpoint at the local level, but also because the way people are distributed in this large, open part of the country, it’s very hard for media to go touch 13 or 14 fires to get their information. It’s very hard for Congressional offices, to get the picture that they need.”

There have been some successes. During fire season, Nesselroad’s office is able to host a legislative call three days a week, “which we’ve expanded to include people from governors’ offices. We sort of make an hour-and-a-half radio newscast out of it. We have the meteorological people report, we have somebody report from whatever has been the biggest incident in the last day or two. We talk about resource issues, about control plans, about strategies. We have a lot of conversations, and then questions and answers. It takes anywhere from half an hour to an hour-and-a-half, depends upon how much is going on.”

This year, for the first time, Nesselroad tried an entirely different strategy. Rather than pressure those in the field or in the coordinating group to talk to the media, he loaned them his own media officer. “My proposal to the fire community was, ‘I will employ this person as a regional media officer for eight or nine months out of the year. For that portion of the year when all media interest is about fire, I’ll give her to you and she’ll be your media officer.’ It was for whatever they want to do.

“But it worked very well. We had a person out there doing daily summaries and doing weekly special feature-type reports that would focus on things we wanted people to understand better, whether it was safety, this notion of appropriate management response or how this whole equipment thing works. She did seven or eight weekly specials, which got wide pickup in the media. And she’s a respected fire person, worked at the Interagency Fire Center in Boise. She’s an old broadcaster and is smart enough to know she doesn’t need to be seen,

she needs to get other people to be seen, the right people. She did a marvelous job. We actually grew closer together with the fire community. She bridged some divides."

Nesselroad feels that senior leadership plays a critical role in paving the road ahead for those who need to communicate during fire season. There was a new regional forester on the ground this past summer, and he was able to observe a lot of the problems: the lack of willingness to talk to the media, the attitude that firefighting was the only job professionals should be doing, and they shouldn't have to pay attention to the rest. He turned to Nesselroad and said, "You know, we're not going to do that anymore. We're not going to let them pull themselves away. We have agency responsibilities, and we're going to fulfill those." When you have line managers who are willing to step in with that attitude, says Nesselroad, then there comes an understanding that this is the best way to help people understand resources, right at the time of fire. It's the end of one cycle, and the start of a new one; and it's when fire news has the complete attention of the media and the general public.

There are some definite messages that he feels need to get out to the public. One is to convey the inevitability of fire in this region. "You're not going to fire-proof any forests in this part of the world, because fire is a natural part of living here and has been for thousands of years. You can make wiser decisions about how you live with fire, and about some of the things you can do not so much to control it, but sometimes get it to move, or at least sometimes create a safer environment for firefighters to operate in.

"Mostly… we've just had people build more and more into that (forest/urban) network, and fuzz even more greatly that line between where people used to be, and where woods used to be. And with the complications of climate change, we've taken a rough drought period and turned it into almost fire storm time, with these fuel types, and their age, and their density. A lot of this country hasn't burned significantly since the Big Burn (in 1910), and so it's time for it all to burn again."

He had another success this fire season. “We came out this year with what we are calling an Appropriate Management Response Strategy. It says when it comes to fire suppression, we’re just not going to throw everything at every fire. We did a significant communications campaign around that. I think we made a lot more progress this fire season than I ever expected us to make. There was a lot more acceptance of it. It seemed to make sense to people. ‘Well, that is a way to save some costs, but you’re not doing it just for cost-savings.’”

Internally, Nesselroad works on the awareness with his staff and field public affairs people by stressing three major points: 1), Add value to the work of the agency by the skills that you bring; 2), Seize the teachable moment, and 3), Tell stories through people.

Nesselroad found himself, as a private citizen, on the receiving end of poor communication a few years ago when his own home was threatened by an area fire, just half a mile away from his house. “We had the little meetings with the fire team, and I’d hosted a hundred of those, in communities all around the West. But it was the first time I was ever in one at the back of the room instead of the front of the room. And it was my house. I felt very different – very different. I felt a sense of comfort in that I knew the kind of people that were doing their jobs, but it’s really different when it’s your place. The community meetings were held at my neighbor’s equestrian center, so we didn’t even need to drive to get there. The forest supervisor spoke at that first meeting’ she lives at the north end of the same area. She said, ‘I just want to reassure you this is fine. I’ve been through this three or four times, it’s going to be O.K.’

“I thought, ‘You can’t say that. You’re in your little Forest Service uniform; you’re invalidating their concerns; you’re being blasé about it – you can’t do that.’ I told her after the meeting, ‘I appreciate what you had to say. I just don’t think it had the effect you think it had. I’m only attuned to that now because I’m a resident – I’m not on the team. I’m not working with your forest. My house is in danger. And you did not put my mind at ease at all.’”

How did she react? the author asked. “Kind of like I was a flake.”

## State air sheds and air quality: slash burning

*These two photos of the Missoula Valley were taken from similar vantage points off the author's deck.*

Roger Bergmeier, in his role with the Montana Dept. Natural Resources and Conservation in the 1970s, was charged with supervising a law that required private landowners to reduce fire hazards resulting from logging on their land. Logging slash is a major contributor to forest fires throughout the Northwest because it leaves fuels on the forest floor. Burning the leftover slash was a common method of disposal: it was economically feasible, it was fast, and it didn't hurt the ground. What it did do, however, was produce smoke and lots of it.

When Benjamin Wake, then director of environmental quality for the state, announced at a meeting of the Society of American Foresters that he "was going to put you out of the slash-burning business," the people were stunned. He had not clarified the issue, and at that particular moment people didn't realize that he meant he wanted slash burning halted. People in the timber industry thought he was threatening their livelihoods. In a way, he was. He wanted slash burning stopped, but an inability to use fire meant that "economically it would be almost impossible to go out and harvest the timber and use something like chipping to remove the problems." Wake's directive served as an impetus to solve the problem in a proactive way. The challenge became one of how to get all the private and public organizations and individuals involved to cooperate in addressing the threat. The goal was to find a process or system that everyone could live with, and avoid being shut down. The objective was to reduce the hazard rather than getting rid of it, so that slash burning could still be used to clean up after logging.

All of this happened back in the 70s, Bergmeier notes, in a time when "Missoula had four or five teepee burners that were going full time. Fuels management after a timber harvest was just a normal thing. People in Missoula burned wood or coal to heat their houses, so a little more smoke was not a big deal." Still, people were complaining about smoke.

The initial task was to ask the right question, and that was, "How do we reduce smoke in the air, or at least put it in the air at a time when it's going to be dispersed?" Of the nine major air sheds in the state, six are on the eastern side of the Continental Divide, where the wind blows and the wind farms grow. Western Montana, on the other hand, has long been known for its winter air inversions and air pollution. Brainstorming for solutions fell to the air quality professionals at the state level, including Bergmeier, the city and county health boards and the Dept. of Natural Resources and Conservation. Cost was a driving factor; they looked for something besides fire "that wouldn't break the bank."

The group looked at the problem in as scientific a way as possible. Elevation played a role: if burning took place above 6,000 feet, or above the inversion layer, it was at an elevation where the wind blew harder and smoke was more likely to be dispersed. Fuel loadings were taken into account. The more tons of slash per acre that there were on the ground, the more potential there was for smoke. The arrangement of those fuels also played a role: the amount of smoke could be changed depending on whether there were dozer piles, hand-created piles, or some other arrangement. Slash scattered around the area by hand would meld into the ground and rot faster than a slash pile that had not been scattered, for example. Finally, the time of day played a role, as did the time of year. The ideal was to burn in the fall, starting about 8 a.m. so that the job was finished by about 4 p.m. After 4 or 5 p.m., when the winter sun went down and the air and land start to cool off, mountain terrain gets down-slope wind and higher humidity; fires taper off, and that means more smoke.

The group formally became the Montana State Air Shed Group, and in turn formed the Smoke Management Unit, managed by the DNRC, but acting as a cooperative organization.

The Smoke Management Unit put out notifications only when there would be a closure, based on U.S. Weather Service information. For example, "There's going to be a temperature inversion, with limited winds or no winds at all. It's a bad smoke situation and there can be no burning below 5,000 feet in the air shed." That would kick off the need to notify the air shed zone where those conditions existed. Because the notifications were always at the last minute and dependent upon weather conditions, they would be handled with phone calls (e-mails did not exist then). The calls would be received at one central location in each air shed, usually the county health department. If the notice was for several days, sometimes it was also placed in local newspapers. For the most part, it was up to the individual and to the companies to contact their local agency, most likely the county health department, to get permission to burn.

As the program got under way, complaints dropped dramatically. That was one measure of success. Another was that for a long time, the local TV stations gave a daily particulate count as to the condition of the day's air quality and it was obvious when the particulate count dropped.

There were difficulties with compliance, some of which were caused by a conflicting state law. The law stated that individual small contractors had to post a cash bond that was an incentive to guarantee they would treat the slash, or somehow reduce the hazard, by a certain date. If they couldn't comply, they wouldn't get their money back. The state understood the conflict between air quality and fire hazard reduction, and granted flexibility as much as possible. For the most part, the law affected small contractors who did not have large burns.

There was a defined difference in values and perspectives on the project. **"**The health departments were dealing with parts per million, very scientific. The private contractors and loggers were dealing with money in the bank. The state agencies were just trying to do the right thing given the 'we're going to put you out of business' statement," says

Bergmeier. Perhaps the huge amount that was at stake for all parties enabled them to work out the state-wide coordination plan for shutting down burning on certain days and allowing it on others. In any event, the system worked then, and still works now.

## State School Trust Lands

Years later, Bergmeier also volunteered his time to work on a problem with school trust lands in the state. This section is not as developed as other sections of this report, but his remarks are included here because they exemplify some of the most difficult challenges in communicating about the way land is used in Montana.

Certain lands were given to the state for specific purposes through the 1889 Enabling Act when Montana became a state. One of those purposes was education. Schools for K-12, the state universities, a capital building fund, the school for the deaf and blind in Great Falls, and others were specifically targeted to receive funds from those lands. The majority of these lands, as much as 80 percent, serve as a trust for common schools.

There are two types of income from school trust lands. Distributable income is made up of proceeds from grazing leases, agricultural crops, timber sales, and the like. That income is distributed to beneficiaries, except for the trust. Five percent of the trust income goes to the permanent fund to build it. Bergmeier believes the trust is currently worth about $400 million.

Extracting non-renewable resources such as oil, coal, and various minerals is a depletion of resources. Those funds go into the permanent trust fund for all state lands.

The major issue MONTRUST (the organization Bergmeier and others formed) had to deal with is the way education is funded in the state. The state budget for education is established, and then it is funded with trust land revenues, federal monies, local taxes, and all the different sources available. When that is done, the state's general fund is used to balance the budget set for the year.

The flaw in the system is that any increase in revenue from school trust lands does not mean a similar increase in funds for education, because of the offset. Just to speak in round numbers, Bergmeier explains, "Say you have a budget of $100 million, and the school trust funds and other sources of funding come up with $25 million. That means the state's general fund will fund the other $75 million. It all looks good on the surface.

"But say, during the next biennium, those school trust lands are exceptionally well managed and produce more revenue; or perhaps the decision is made to sell some of that land, so that there is an additional $5 million in revenue. Now the school trust lands and the other sources are able to contribute $30 million to the education budget. What happens? The general fund balances the budget at $70 million. Good management of school trust lands is effectively punished, because the schools don't get the increased revenue and the state has additional money to spend elsewhere."

There is one exception to this system: When timber is harvested from forested school trust lands, the revenue from everything above 25 million board feet goes into technology for the schools. As a result, the schools actually get money for computer equipment and technical training for teachers.

From the standpoint of trust law, Bergmeier notes, those funds cannot be co-mingled, but the legislature is doing just that, and it's illegal. A ceiling should be put on the amount of trust revenue that goes into the budget – say, $50 million. Then the general fund can be allowed to balance the budget from there. But if another $10 million is raised, then it can and should go directly to education.

Bergmeier and MONTRUST went clear to the state supreme court on the issue. On a 4-3 decision, the court said "no foul, no harm," because if the state was going to help anyway, it didn't matter how much was going into the trust.

Meanwhile, revenue from trust lands has been growing. Land has become more valuable, and as have the proceeds from the land.

MONTRUST doesn't have legal standing to take the issue to the next level. The school districts could, however. The Montana Education Association could. But therein lay the political battles and communication problems.

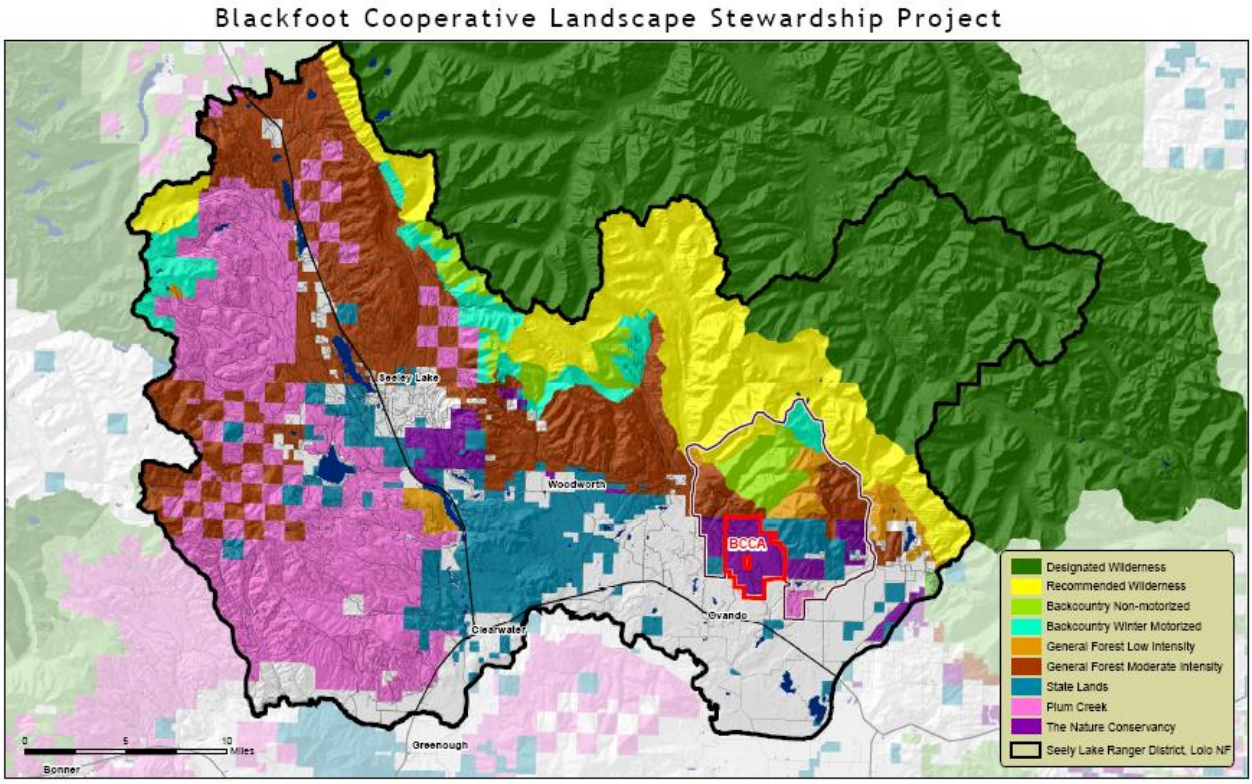
"We went to the rural school superintendents, who thought we were nuts. What school superintendent in eastern Montana is going to work to improve management on school trust lands to make more money for education? Who hires those superintendents? The school board. In eastern Montana those school board members are farmers and ranchers who lease school trust lands. They've got a good deal going; they don't want to see their low grazing fees changed. BIA gets better grazing fees off their lands; almost anyone gets better grazing fees than the school trust lands. And you know those farmers and ranchers in the east. They're the ones who show up at the state legislature. Agriculture in Montana is almost the third rail of politics."

Nor do the legislators want to act on it, says Bergmeier. "They like the unofficial slush fund that comes that they can use elsewhere. The net effect is that education is actually subsidizing agriculture."

Another example is in Whitefish, an expensive place to live at the north end of the Flathead Valley. The town is the gateway community to Big Mountain Ski Resort, and is one of the gateway communities to Glacier National Park. "Right around Whitefish, there are about 13,000 acres of school trust land. Nearly all of it is undeveloped. Whitefish people want to see this undeveloped land left as is, in pristine condition. Although the area has walking trails and cross-country ski trails, people pay no fees. State trust land is not public land. So if you recreate on those lands, you are, in effect, trespassing unless you have a permit. So the acreage around Whitefish is very, very valuable. Trees grow there well. You could sell five acres and make much more than through a timber sale.

"Whitefish residents went through a planning process. One guy in a meeting referred to them as 'these properties' – that's a real estate term. They wanted to use the lands for recreation. They're open space. They go out and use the land anyway, regardless. People are taking advantage of all that open land. It increases their own property values, but they don't pay for it. Most educators don't even know about it. For the few who do, they don't want to do anything about it. It's an education issue; it's a communication issue."

## The Blackfoot Cooperative Landscape Stewardship Project




Across the Mission Mountains which border Flathead Lake lays the Seeley-Swan Valley. The Seeley-Swan, as Montanans call it, is a beautiful string of glacial lakes bordered by the Mission Mountains on the west and the Bob Marshal Wilderness on the east. At the south end of the Seeley-Swan the valley road meets up with Montana Hwy. 200 on its way from Missoula to Great Falls, at a popular intersection called Clearwater Junction. The Blackfoot watershed encompasses the area of the Seeley-Swan and a wide swath of land to the south, east and west. It is there that a remarkable collaboration involving land use has taken shape. The collaboration includes wilderness, and as the reader will recall, the concept of wilderness is a divisive one, not just in Montana but with circuit and district judges and with Congress.

As noted in the two newspaper stories used earlier to illustrate land-use conflicts, not everyone is for wilderness. People want some local input and control, some consideration of the local economy near that wilderness area, and consideration of Montanans' traditional

access to the back country for hunting and fishing. One thing is certain: the entire issue of wilderness brings up the cultural divides between east and west, and between the New West and the Old West. It is a political hot button both in the West and in Washington D.C. Putting aside more land for wilderness might translate into a lack of jobs in the perception of people living in the local area. For newcomers who are aware that their own arrival tends to chop up the land, putting aside more land for wilderness might be a compromise effort intended to let them own a little piece of paradise while preserving a great deal of it.

When Montana Congressman Denny Rehberg came to Gordy Sander's office at Pyramid Mountain Lumber one day a couple of years ago, and asked, "Is there a location, a place, where we could do something to deal with this roadless issue?" Sanders asked him to clarify his meaning a bit. "Are you talking about wilderness designation?" he asked.

"Yes," said Rehberg. "There got to be something in it for everyone, not just wilderness designation."

Sanders, resource manager for Pyramid Mountain Lumber in Seeley Lake, has a long and deep history in Montana's timber industry. He had been involved in every wilderness proposal and discussion since the early '80s, and had more than once helped to craft wilderness legislation. Now he could think of two locations which had never been contentious in the past. One was an area called the Monture Complex in the Seeley Lake Ranger District; and the other was a section between Alberton and Superior, towns along the Clark Fork River west of Missoula. Of the two, he felt the best chance for success would be in the Seeley Lake Ranger District, and for reasons that every public communicator will recognize: "We already had this relationship with a number of mainstream community groups, as a company - and I also do myself. So we knew we could bring those folks together to do something constructive."

The concept that he started working on is described best in the "Blackfoot Cooperative Landscape Stewardship Project Description, Spring 2007," in Appendix F:

"Residents of the Blackfoot River Valley have a vision of a community and conservation approach to the entire watershed. This vision includes protecting traditional ranching, hunting, fishing and other uses, in concert with conserving water and wildlife, wilderness and sustainable forestry activities.

"With the conversion of Plum Creek timberlands to other private, state and federal ownerships in the Blackfoot watershed, a concept is emerging that brings balance to the landscape by addressing restoration, sustainable logging, ranching, recreation and wilderness uses across the landscape. This balance is emerging from consensus after a two-year dialogue among key stakeholders. It demonstrates that wilderness and wildlife can be protected alongside historic and traditional activities on the landscape.

"As a demonstration project for cooperative public-private stewardship across a landscape area, we are developing the *Blackfoot Clearwater Landscape Stewardship Project* that will facilitate cooperative stewardship on the landscape. This is a legislative proposal that includes Congressional funding for the Blackfoot stewardship pilot project and a biomass project in Seeley Lake, as well as inclusion of recommended tracts within the Bob Marshall-Scapegoat and Mission Mountain Wilderness totaling 87,000 acres. The project involves the 400,000-acre Seeley Ranger District of the Lolo National Forest within the Blackfoot watershed as well as lands within the public-private 41,000-acre Blackfoot Community Conservation Area." (Appendix F).

That gives the reader the general idea, but there is a great deal more detailed description in the rest of the document. What should strike the reader about that description after reading about the myriad difficulties in communication and cooperation regarding land-use issues in this document is that something has worked at last – and it's worked in a big way. Gordy Sanders explains how:

"The first thing I did was I got together with John Gatchell from the Montana Wilderness Association, and I told him we could make this happen. Denny Rehberg had the interest; Conrad Burns was in the Senate. And Conrad Burns has had this history for several years in a row previously of providing dollars to the Blackfoot Challenge[1], so they could acquire the Plum Creek property. . . so he had this tie to the Blackfoot in general, and that increased the odds that something could go forward."

Realizing that "nothing would go forward unless the Blackfoot Challenge was O.K. with it," Sanders also involved the executive director from that organization, as well as Bob Ekey from the Wilderness Society. Then these four people went to work.

"We had this discussion, and then we actually modified a couple of areas based on the Blackfoot drainage. For example, the Ovando snowmobilers wanted a certain area to play in which had been recommended as wilderness before. Then there was an area here west of town that was designated O.K. It was open for snowmobiles, but nobody ever used it. It was too wild, hard to get to. It actually had better wilderness characteristics than this other piece, and they were about the same acres.

"You know, plans are great, you have to have plans, but it doesn't mean anything if it's not implemented on the ground because on the ground is the only thing that matters to the public. No matter what their interest is, it really is on the ground. If it's a piece of paper or a map, it doesn't really mean anything.

"So we went down this track, and John Gatchell made agreements with snowmobiles – the club in Ovando and here in Seeley – and so we decided we'll just focus on the Seeley Lake Ranger District only. It was in the Lolo National Forest, and that (national forest) plan was under discussion at the same time. There are other parts of the Blackfoot that are in the Helena National

[1] The Blackfoot Challenge is a landowner-based group whose mission is "To coordinate efforts that will enhance, conserve and protect the natural resources and rural lifestyle of the Blackfoot River Valley for present and future generations" (www.blackfootchallenge.org, 2007).

Forest, but we said let's keep it in one location, so it's a finite area. It's not that big a piece; let's set the stage, let's craft a model that could be replicated later."

As they moved forward, they lined up more key people, and added different pieces to the collaboration. There was the possibility of a co-generation plant on the Pyramid Mountain Lumber property. The plant would burn the unused, unneeded fuels left over from logging on the forest floor, providing both an alternative source of energy and jobs for Seeley Lake. "The environmental people, the conservation committee people, liked that piece a lot."

They added in language for a 50 percent match in restoration dollars so that if, for example, a private foundation was to donate $1 million toward restoration in the Blackfoot, then the Forest Service could match it.

Sanders and his group had to be concerned with strategy from the start. He was concerned that they build certainty into the proposal, explaining that "if you provide the dollars, predictable dollars, to a location that has the greatest chance of performing, the odds are that you are going to get certainty."

In addition, the proposal fully implemented the Forest Service Plan for the Lolo National Forest, which meant that personnel from the Forest Service came on board.

Because the issue of wilderness was so politically touchy, Sanders insisted on delaying announcement of the project a full two years after they were first ready to launch it. "I got the sense that folks weren't sure whether they wanted to move on a bill that had wilderness in it. That, of course, was when Republicans controlled both houses. And I knew if Conrad (Senator Conrad Burns) wasn't out front, and Denny (Rep. Denny Rehberg), there was no way this was going, because they both were in key positions to help make that happen. So I told the group we need to just sit back. We'll keep working with different folks over the course of time, but the timing is not right. You can take the best proposal and advance it at the wrong time, and it'll go

down in flames, and it will never see the light of day again. And so we let it simmer until after the last election. After the election in November, we set up the first public meeting, and we met with the Blackfoot Challenge – their subcommittee on land-use, their conservation committee. We met with those folks, filled them in on what we were proposing; then we met with the Blackfoot Challenge Board, filled them in on what we were proposing; then we had a meeting – two different meetings – in Ovando, public meetings that were advertised."

Holding an unlikely collaboration together for those two years was emblematic of the time and care taken on the communications process from the beginning. "What makes it tick is to have a broad network of long-term relationships, to work with a wide variety of folks, because everybody has their circle of influence."

Sanders and his group were also careful to approach people in specifically tailored ways. "At times, we knew we could just have a group meeting. Other times specific individuals would have one-on-ones with folks to test, see what was out there. We did a fair amount of that. Then we decided who should contact an individual, just to get a read on where they were at, and whether there were any issues that were overriding. We had multiple things going on at the same time, but it was all 'do the homework.' And that includes with the agency (the Forest Service), to make sure the local ranger was on board, then the supervisor, then the regional forester, and the chief. I may have talked to all four levels within three days' time, just because I had the opportunity to bring them up to speed on where we were, so I could get a read on it - are they on board, not on board? So I think that piece of it we did very well. It was a very complex way of doing things, but it certainly was effective in the end."

The group did have a cultural interpreter of sorts, a person who worked to interpret the political situation in Washington, D.C. back to the group. Formerly the executive director for the Blackfoot Challenge, Tina Burn Cohen became a private consultant and now volunteers her

time on the stewardship project. “She’s been very helpful in making sure that we’ll do what we said we’re going to do, but also have some strategic communications with D.C. We’re always in the loop on what she’s doing, and . . . things surface, we’re reacting to it.”

The complexity of developing the project meant that there were multiple things going on at simultaneously throughout the project. The group continually worked for mutually beneficial solutions. At one point, Sanders was working the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, headquartered in Missoula, on the concept of stewardship contracting, in which goods are traded for services. Sanders knew that a nearby game range was very important to the Elk Foundation, but that neither organization would get funding unless the stewardship project received national priority. He initially worked through Bob Ekey from the Wilderness Society and asked him to call the society’s national president, Bill Meadows. He wanted Bill Meadows to tell Dale Bosworth (Chief of the U.S. Forest Service at the time) that the stewardship project had to become the first priority in the country. It seemed like the long way around, but it worked; the project became first priority.

Of special note here is that Sanders and his group did not put themselves out there as the keynote speakers or the lynchpins of the process unless it seemed appropriate to do so. By communicating through their many contacts, they managed to leave the reins of control in place for all the various organizations, while still obtaining their approval and cooperation. They didn’t have wilderness people speak about wilderness, either; others in the group would. In this way, no one seemed to have an agenda, and there was an effect of third-party endorsement.

Sanders had a succinct and funny way of describing the problems with how people perceive “wilderness” across the country. He started with describing how it was to work with the new Congress: “Now you’ve got different people in control, different people wanting to do their thing. And so you’ve got this mixed bag of all these new folks, who are still pretty ideological in their thinking. They’re not very sharp at being able to see how you’re going to

do wilderness in the West, because you're not going to do wilderness unless you've got some economic benefit from it. The Wilderness Society knows it, the Wilderness Association knows it, the National Wildlife Federation – folks know that's true. But in the national scope of things, it plays differently because they're listening more to the East Coast and the West Coast, who are so distant from it that they just don't get it.

"Quite honestly, you go to the East, there may be 160 acres without roads that have never been touched. Someone from the East takes a walk in there, and it's hard telling when they might ever get out. To them, it's like 'This is scary.' They just don't do that every day. For them, a very small area means a lot to them spiritually, or however you want to frame it, from a value system. Well, then you deal with hundreds of thousands of acres it's like 'Well of course that should be wilderness.' They have no idea what it means, but it makes them feel good."

Sanders had specific advice for anyone working on a land-use project: "When you go into a communications effort, before you cross the line, you have to anticipate all the different things and values that are out there. Folks that live in rural areas have very strong land ethics and values that may or may not be the same. Certainly they are different from one ranch to the neighboring ranch. But there are common threads and you follow them. If you can't piece the effort together to match that, then you're going to be out of sync. And it's not O.K. to just say, 'Well, let's just float it out there anyway and see what happens.' That's not O.K.

"The main strategies were to keep it in a finite location and to make certain that we… included the right folks that could bring the right support, resources, and thoughtful creativity to the discussion, and also folks that would work well together. We had to make sure we didn't miss contacting any local community groups or government or congressional staff in the state as well in D.C. And the Secretary of State was important too. We made sure we had language that was easily decipherable in whatever handouts we prepared. It wasn't in total jargon, so the average person could just read it. The key pieces we tried to organize that way."

There is no guarantee that the legislation will be passed by Congress, of course. As of this writing, congressional staffers are still tweaking the exact language in the bill. Of some concern is that there is a similar piece of legislation proposed from elsewhere in the state which, Sanders says, has a lot of mistakes in it and a lot of assumptions that were made in error ("they didn't do their homework"), and does not enjoy the full support the Blackfoot Cooperative Landscape Stewardship Project has enjoyed. The problem, he says, is that "if troubles spill over from that project and people become irritated with it, which I expect, then we could go down, too. If that happens, it will set us back 20 years."

## Tribal lands and Indian reservations


*The shield of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation in north central Montana*

*The buffalo is a sacred symbol to the tribes of the northern plains.*

There are seven Indian reservations in Montana. The Flathead Indian Reservation just north of Missoula, extending about halfway up Flathead Lake and to the ridgeline of the Mission Mountains, is home to the Confederated Salish, Kootenai and Pend O'reille Tribes. The Blackfeet Reservation at the eastern entrance to Glacier National Park is home to the Blackfeet Nation. The Blackfeet do, in fact, claim that the eastern half of the park still belongs to them (Mihalic, personal communication, 2007). Moving further east along the north central Montana "Hi-Line" (that stretch of Interstate Hwy. 2 which parallels the Canadian border) are the Rocky Boy's Reservation, home to the Chippewa-Cree, and Fort Belknap, home to the Assiniboine and Gros Ventre (gro-vaunt) tribes. Further east is the Fort Peck Reservation, about 40 miles from the North Dakota border, and home to the Assiniboine and Sioux. The Northern Cheyenne and Crow reservations are in south central Montana (Indian Nations of Montana, 2007).

Without its own reservation, the Little Shell Tribe of the Chippewa is headquartered in Great Falls, Montana. After many years of struggle, the tribe has gained state recognition and is seeking federal recognition. In a small recent victory, they have obtained a 10-year lease "on several acres of Fish, Wildlife and Parks land, as well as a building, on the Morony Dam site. The property is on the Missouri River, 15 miles northeast of Great Falls, where a large concentration of the Little Shell's widely scattered population lives" (Ratté, 2007, p. 10).

The use and abuse of land related to Native Americans is the elephant in the living room that most pretend not to see. However, tribes are increasingly taking their own measures to protect and preserve their lands and heritage. In his "Essay on Native American Environmental Issues," David R. Lewis wrote: "Traditionally, Native Americans have had an immediate and reciprocal relationship with their natural environments. They lived in relatively small groups close to the earth. They defined themselves by the land and sacred places, and recognized a unity in their physical and spiritual universe.

"Relatively valueless by nineteenth-century standards, their lands contained unseen resources of immense worth. This single fact informs nearly all Native American environmental issues in the twentieth century. Land, its loss, location, and resource wealth or poverty, the exploitation and development of that land, and changing Indian needs and religious attitudes all define the modern environmental debates" (Lewis, 1994, ¶ 3).

Some of the more frequent uses of tribal lands include:

1. Department of Defense training areas such as gunnery ranges and practice bombing sites, as well as air-to-air training in air space above reservations.
2. Hazardous waste disposal: In a 1994 survey, the Tribal Association for Hazardous Waste and Emergency Response noted that there are over 15,000 hazardous sites and facilities that present potential risks to tribal lifestyles identified on or near reservations. Of those, 979 are Superfund sites.
3. Energy: Oil and gas leases, coalbed methane gas. The Powder River Basin in southern Montana is mentioned elsewhere in this report. The Crow Nation sits on the west flank of the basin. While the energy business might provide jobs, the impacts on the Crow nation might be of a different nature (Klauk, 2007).
4. Tourism. The Flathead Reservation north of Missoula is stunningly beautiful, and contains, to the best of the author's knowledge, the only tribally-owned

wilderness area in the United States - the western slopes of the Mission Mountain Range up to the ridge tops. In addition, the reservation reaches halfway up Flathead Lake, one of Montana's most popular tourist destinations.

Many of the cultural differences between Native Americans and the dominant white culture have already been noted in this report, but are noted again in the following case study.

## Montana Air National Guard Case Study

The Cultural Interpreter Model of Public Relations and Its Role in Communicating with Rural Communities and Native American Tribes:
The Montana Air National Guard's Request to Build an Air-to-Ground Training Range

The author was hired to assist with the public communications portion of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) conducted on behalf of the Montana Air National Guard (MANG) in 2002. The rest of this section is taken directly from the case study the author conducted on the communications process.

Montana Air National Guard pilots have traditionally used designated air space above the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation and the towns of Chinook and Havre in north central Montana to run air-to-air training drills. But they have had to fly south to Idaho and to Utah to conduct air-to-ground training, also known as dummy bombing missions. This has meant spending more time in the air getting to their training sites than they are able to spend actually training. Pilots in F-16 fighter jets have traditionally flown to Utah or Idaho, conducted air-to-ground training, and then flown back to Great Falls, all without landing.

MANG therefore applied for permission to build an air-to-ground training site just west of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation, home of the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine Tribes. This kicked off the need for an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), a formal process of study, analysis and recommendation for requested use of land.

MANG, under the direction of then-Wing Commander Col. Rex Tanberg and Project Officer Lt. Col. William Schulz, collaborated with Lt. Col. Tammy Mitnik, an environmental planner at the Air National Guard Readiness Center at Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland. The Environmental Company, a civilian firm with offices in California and Virginia, was hired to conduct the actual EIS. They, in turn, contracted with the author's firm, AdScripts, Inc., to conduct the mandated public communication portion of the EIS.

Communication was necessary with a wide variety of audiences beyond the reservation and the local communities, including government agencies at all levels. It involved federal agencies such as the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), environmental agencies and special interest groups, and politicians. Even before the formal EIS process started, representatives from MANG made it a point to start developing relationships along Montana's Hi-Line and on the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation. During much of 1999 and throughout 2000, MANG representatives held open houses throughout the area, and worked to earn the trust of local residents. During preliminary discussions it became obvious that some kind of training would be required about the cultural values, traditions and practices of the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine tribes on the reservation. The tribal college, at the request of then-Vice Chairman Ben Speakthunder, took on this task.

Once the formal EIS process began, public communication took place in a more structured, formal way as mandated by NEPA law. However, by then adjustments were made in both content and approach in order to engage the local residents and obtain the necessary feedback. In addition to open houses and formal public hearings, traditional tactics included press releases, newsletters, paid ads and commercials, and a website. Extensive personal visits, phone calls, and the use of a local tribal member who was hired to serve as an on-the-ground liaison with the tribes were methods of communication used on the reservation.

When the formal EIS process was finished, i.e., a site had been decided upon, the formal EIS was produced and made public, and the investigation was over. The process of land acquisition, obtaining rights-of-way, planning and construction began. It was during this stage that the communications process began to falter and lose momentum. Stewardship of the relationships previously developed was not maintained as team members had hoped.

The final Record of Decision, published in 2003, approve a site near the reservation on land with multiple ownership, part of which was held in trust for the tribes.

Indications were that the project was in place and going to move ahead. However, in March of 2004 the tribal council at Fort Belknap voted the project down.

As suspected, during the communication which took place prior to the EIS process itself, there was no formal process for deciding which strategies to use. As both Col. Mitnik and Col. Schulz pointed out, nearly everything was done according to the perceived need at the time. This points to the fact that neither the local unit of the Air National Guard nor the national office came in with a predefined agenda and set of assumptions. The only assumption Col. Mitnik had, noted below, was that she would face resentment toward an assumed 'We're here from Washington and we're here to help' attitude found throughout so much of the West. The lack of a predefined agenda and of assumptions made it possible for individual cultural interpreters to step forward and offer help, and for the tribes to provide a formal method of interpreting both cultures to the outside white community. In a case of what might be described as situational ethics (Day, Dong & Robbins, 2001), the key players wisely decided to educate themselves about the situation at hand before proceeding.

The process for Col. Mitnik started when unit leadership (from the 120th Fighter Wing at MANG) visited Andrews AFB in Maryland and announced their intentions to try for a training range in north central Montana. The environmental planners at Andrews AFB are available to take on various projects for National Guard units across the nation, because the individual units cannot afford to hire their own environmental planners. Mitnik did not originally want to take on the project and she wasn't at all sure that MANG originally wanted her involved. Her preference was to work with a simpler Environmental Assessment, also a NEPA process, without having to go through a formal EIS. However, once the formal EIS project was mandated by her bosses, who had become a little nervous when they heard there might be protests on the Ft. Belknap Reservation, she was on board.

In the meantime, Col. Schulz and the MANG unit started to build relationships with the leaders and influential people in the various communities along the Hi-Line as well as with tribal leadership on the reservation, "for rumor control if nothing else," notes Schulz. "We wanted to bring it down to the level of the populace so it wouldn't be intimidating . . . A lot of times we either wouldn't wear our uniforms, or just one or two of us would wear uniforms - it made it easier to visit."

During these visits to the area, Schulz met tribal member Darrell Martin, at the time an entrepreneur running his own tourism business on the reservation, who now sits as chairman of the Tribal Council. Martin became an advocate of the training range project, and provided information and insight throughout the EIS process. He became a cultural interpreter.

As noted, Tanberg, Schulz and the MANG team did not have any general assumptions going into the project, "except for the usual biases there might be in beginning to work with any new group," says Schulz. "Our approach was more interpersonal relations rather than 'corporate meets world.' That's what we're used to here. We're not a lot of spit-and-polish; we're more casual than the average military." Such was not the case for Col. Mitnik who, although a down-home Midwesterner raised in Nebraska, had spent the past 10 years working with the military and political bureaucracies of Washington, D.C. Her only previous assumption was that it would take some work to build relationships and trust, because she was already aware of the attitude she sensed from MANG reflecting distrust of the stereotypical attitude, "Hi, we're here from Washington and we're here to help."

As she soon found out, distrust over that eastern establishment attitude was the tip of the iceberg. "When I first stepped off the plane in Great Falls," says Mitnik, "I thought, oh no, I've stepped back in time 50 years." Her first indication that she'd be operating in a different country came during her initial visit to the reservation, when little children would come up to her, touch her, and run away. She'd had that experience in foreign countries, but never

before in the United States. It didn't take long for her to realize she was going to have to do things entirely differently than she'd done them anywhere else.

"It became obvious I had to learn about these people," she said. She began to read historical books she'd found in Great Falls, particularly books telling the stories of Montana's Indians. "I was shocked and horrified, and embarrassed to see how long we had officially maintained such awful policies. I had no idea."

While Mitnik was overcoming her first cultural shock and educating herself about Montana and Native American nations, the people at MANG ended up with their own source of information, a man who provided valuable information and advice. Brig. General Doug Henneman, a member of MANG and a fighter pilot, also farmed and ranched his own place north of Great Falls, near the Blackfeet Indian Reservation. "He knew how not to get into trouble," says Schulz. Henneman as another cultural interpreter who helped in the early translation of manners, protocol and expectations across the military, agricultural, and Indian cultures.

Col Mitnik returned to the reservation "considerably humbled," and was introduced to some of the women at the college. They offered to provide a cultural training course. So many of the good things which pointed the way were accidental, pure serendipity, she thought at first. But that wasn't so.

There was another factor at work, which was the increasing involvement of Tribal Vice-Chairman Ben Speakthunder. Speakthunder approached Mary John Taylor, dean of Academic Affairs at Fort Belknap College, and Carol Falcon-Chandler, president of Fort Belknap College, and called them into his office. He explained the MANG proposal for a training range and said they would need some cultural training. He wanted the college to do it. Taylor remains surprised that as a white person she was asked to oversee the project, and remains impressed that Speakthunder did not dictate how the cultural training should be done. Taylor called upon the leaders of the cultural committees of both tribes: Selena Ditmar, head of the

Assiniboine, or Nakota, Cultural Committee, and Leo Brockie, head of the Gros Ventre Cultural Committee. She instructed them to develop material for "white people coming onto the reservation stone-cold, so they could have a sense of the culture, the history, and protocol or appropriate behavior." These four people thus became the leaders of a formal cultural interpreter team, and set the groundwork for the pattern of communication and behavior expected throughout the rest of the communications process.

They designed, wrote and produced the Cultural Handbook, which the Air National Guard paid to have printed and distributed. They held a formal training session on the reservation, and invited EIS team members to visit a powwow. Finally, tribal dancers were flown to Washington to perform at Andrews AFB.

Mitnik also ended up with her own mentor, teacher and cultural interpreter on the reservation. Poncho Bigby served as a liaison and planner for the tribes' Natural Resources Department. He drove Mitnik out to the proposed site west of the reservation one day, and Mitnik well remembers her first impression: "He was the scariest looking Indian I'd ever met in my life," she relates. "He made me ride in his pickup - he had to move his beer cans and his horse blankets . . . And the whole time, he is giving me a complete history of his people and all the laws that affect the training range proposal, all the property ownership, all of it." The two became fast friends. Mitnik still mourns the loss of Bigby, who passed away in 2003.

The development of personal relationships with these informal cultural interpreters, and the formal cultural awareness training provided by the tribes, formed the building blocks upon which all other communication eventually took place. Although not part of a formal plan, they were the first strategies which began to open doors. Many members of the EIS team and the management team found that it was impossible to not care after becoming involved with the people along Montana's Hi-Line or on the reservation. The involvement and the caring came about because of the team's immediate assumption of a "moral conversation,"

in which the rights of all individuals are respected (Haas, 2001, p. 429). Where others from an eastern, bureaucratic world have often taken a much more impersonal, corporate approach to work in the West, Mitnik saw her need to learn about the people involved. Once educated, she became involved on a personal level as well as a professional level. Schulz assumed nothing less than the same moral conversation, but, because he (and his team) already lived in Montana, he did not go through the same cultural shock to get there. Nevertheless, it is to Tanberg's and Schulz' credit that they did not assume they knew about life on an Indian reservation. They, too, took the time to research and to learn.

Schulz refers to personal relationships as being at the heart of Montana culture. "If you're a neighbor, you expect to be told what's going on; you don't expect to have to go and ask, like at a public hearing. So, again, hospitality was critical. Some of the white ranchers weren't nearly as polite as the Indians, but they still extended country courtesy." Schulz would follow up on any concerns that were expressed, and call people back.

The concentration on personal relationships extended into the public hearings and open house events held as part of the project. Members of the training range team had a chance to speak with more people on an individual basis during open houses. At the scoping meeting and public hearings "We knew ahead of time we'd have to tailor our sales pitch to the audience, so that if a rancher, for example, wasn't going to ask questions, we had to suggest topics to get him started talking." Tanberg, Schulz, Mitnik and their teams exhibited an intuitive sense of taking a communitarianism approach to their practice of public relations (Day, Dong & Robins, 2001).

Initial priorities were set out of necessity. Once she understood the new culture in which she was working, said Mitnik, "It became a priority to get the cultural training hammered down." She was afraid that some bureaucrat would fly into Montana thinking he was very important, and not get the same courtesies extended. Schulz and Mitnik did end up refusing one person further access to the reservation after seeing his initial ignorance and behavior.

Questions such as “Are you U.S. citizens?” on the reservation could only be answered by a dumbfounded stare. Schulz said MANG never allowed any visitor to drive to the reservation alone, partly out of a sense of hospitality, but partly because they knew that, during the long drive from Great Falls, they could indoctrinate the visitor as to what to expect and how to behave. The MANG team itself started serving as cultural interpreters for others who came to Montana to work on the project. They became protectors of the cultures along the Hi-Line and on the reservation, seeking to keep the channels of communication open.

Their efforts paid off. According to Taylor, “They came in with utter open-mindedness, utter courtesy, and part of that is just military training. They were anxious to please, anxious to show respect. They wanted to know, wanted to learn: ‘Tell us, show us, make us aware.’”

Formal strategies and time lines began to evolve as the project progressed. Schulz said that at the beginning they “weren’t entirely sure of the formal process. So Tammy (Mitnik) filled that gap; she served as a liaison with the national offices of the Air National Guard, above and beyond her normal duties.”

The timing of public communication was primarily a function of money available from Congress, and partly a function of the time frames dictated by the formal EIS process.

Mitnik took the unusual strategic step of forming teams: a management team, composed of MANG personnel and later including the Air National Guard Readiness Center; an advisory team, made up of Air Force management personnel with expertise in different areas; community leaders; and finally, the EIS team itself, composed of all members of the management team, Fort Belknap Tribal Council employees, federal agency personnel, representatives from cooperating agencies, and special interest groups (See Appendix D for list). These teams were in addition to the investigative teams conducting the field work for the actual environmental analysis. Basically, said Mitnik, we “worked to include anyone who wanted to be involved in the process in any way.”

In the end, this approach proved to be part of the core of the successful working relationships developed over the course of the EIS. Mitnik also used a multi-tiered management approach. She noted that the "heavy" authorities in Washington, D.C., those who could tell her what she could and couldn't do, comprised the first tier. The unit people of the 120th Fighter Wing of MANG and the Air Force people involved in the project comprised the second tier. And finally, those people who were on and near the site comprised the third tier. She developed different levels of communication with each group. Formal communication took place through personal debriefing sessions at the top levels. Other tactics, as noted before, included a regular newsletter, extensive personal visits, open houses, public hearings and other meetings, and the formal cultural training process itself. In addition, MANG provided risk communication training and noise and safety training sessions. A hotline (800-number) was provided for people who had questions or concerns; a website provided additional information. Most of these traditional media tactics worked for the white communities, but not on the reservation. On the reservation communication was best handled face-to-face, one-on-one. At all meetings, it was critically important that food be served. That was a mark of culture, tradition, and hospitality.

One of the largest cultural differences was at one and the same time the biggest communication challenge: the frame of reference on the reservation that came from institutionalized racism. Among some individuals, there was an invisible wall of indifference and apathy toward the benefits of the proposed training range, even though those benefits included local jobs. Others disagreed with the entire concept, a disagreement expressed by simply not showing up at meetings. Still others were outspoken in their objections, verbally attacking team members in public.

A lack of leadership training at the tribal level was mentioned by both Schulz and Taylor. It may have been difficult, they thought, for some people at the tribal level to see the larger picture above and beyond their own particular agendas. Then again, there may

have been internal politics at work within the tribal council itself, possibly regarding Ben Speakthunder, who had moved into the position of Chairman of the Council. Whether the final decision was a matter of lack of leadership training and vision, internal tribal politics, or a function of enclosing the community so as to keep the barriers up against the outside white culture is something that will probably never be known for sure. The power reversal built into the project - not of the "no action" alternative, but of the tribe's sovereignty as its own nation - was put into play.

Other challenges included trying to keep people informed at the same level. Everyone felt they should have been told first, from government agencies right on down to individual citizens. As a result, MANG and EIS team members spent long hours on the telephone and worked to ensure that everyone got a copy of the newsletter.

Both Schulz and Mitnik agreed a major problem was that the federal agencies they worked with did not have good internal communications. Mitnik often served as a liaison between the local, state and federal branches of the BLM or other organizations. Schulz preferred to go directly to Washington to be sure information was transmitted directly and accurately. He felt it important that people have a direct link back to MANG, and that this kind of personal communication helped generate trust for MANG and for the Air Force as a whole.

In March of 2004, the tribal council formally voted to withdraw its support for the proposed training range. The *Havre Daily News* quoted then-Vice Chairman Darrel Martin as saying, "Part of the council didn't have all of the information they should have had to make a reasonable decision." A month later, Chairman Ben Speakthunder resigned. He had led the tribes for seven years.

Mary John Taylor and Bill Schulz both believe internal tribal politics led to the final decision. "It's a world apart," says Taylor. "No matter the internal differences on the reservation itself, the white man still comes in from the outside." Taylor felt

that the Montana Air National Guard was exemplary in the courtesy and respect shown at all times throughout the region as well as on the reservation. The difficulties in communication, she stressed numerous times, were not MANG's.

The author asked Taylor if she thought the lack of hope on the reservation for a better way of life and the lack of personal power in the outside world might have caused many of the internal fights at the tribal level. She thought that was true to some degree. However, she felt, as did Schulz, that the more critical element was the need for leadership training at the tribal level - training that would help the Tribal Council to look forward instead of back, and expand its vision of the possible.

At this writing (2004), the Montana Air National Guard is looking at its third alternative site for the training range, just west of the Hi-Line town of Malta.

*If they had to do it over again . . .*

Mary John Taylor has no criticism of anything that MANG did in the communications process. "They were so wonderful. They were such gentlemen. And of course Tammy was in the middle of it all. I have the utmost respect for the MANG people. They wanted to do what was right, they didn't want to offend anyone."

Lt. Col Schulz stressed the need to start communicating and developing relationships early on, although he recognizes that "most people don't have that luxury." But he would change the follow-up process, saying it was an education for him and his team to move from the post-EIS process to the planning, budgeting and real estate acquisition phase. These transitions involved a great deal of time, and, as with all projects, were driven by money. MANG tried to keep a presence along the Hi-Line and on the reservation, noting that people tend to forget about things without an update. For a time, the newsletter continued to go out, but on a far less frequent basis. The tribes were going to hire someone to act as a liaison with MANG, but that never came to fruition. Despite the best attempts at stewardship of the relationships that had

been developed, Schulz says it ended up being "all of us (MANG) and really none of them."

Something similar was happening back in Washington, D.C. and at Andrews AFB. "A key issue . . . is that others in the organization must be as concerned with stewardship as the public relations department" (Kelly, 2001, pg. 279). A staunch advocate of the project, Mitnik felt there had to be follow-up and continuity in the work after the formal EIS process was finished, but her leadership did not feel the same way. As a result, "the project languished; funding fell apart, momentum was lost."

## What Professor Fazio has to say

Almost the last interview conducted for this paper was with Professor James Fazio of the University of Idaho in Moscow, who, with his late colleague Douglas L. Gilbert, wrote the only guidebook the author was able to find on this topic, a textbook titled *Public Relations and Communications for Natural Resource Managers* (Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 2000). Fazio uses the text to teach a graduate course in the Natural Resources Program at the university. The book is extremely comprehensive on both fronts: it provides an overview of the field of public relations and its history, and an overview of the field of natural resource management and its history, and then melds the two together. Although the book focuses a good deal on tactics, it takes care to include sections on ethics; on developing an overall awareness that every action makes an impression; on segmenting and communicating with various publics; and on planning for good public relations. Strategy is not talked about in its own section, but it is heavily considered in the section on segmenting the publics, which includes many ideas and suggestions about the best ways to approach those publics. In the back of the book is a large section on the political side of natural resource management and communication, with chapters on the structure of government and the process of getting a bill introduced and adopted as law. The list of other resources quoted is enormous. The amount of research that went into providing examples and case histories is enormous. The text is well-written and a must-read for any professional communicator working in this field.

It didn't sell. Fazio does not know if it was bad timing, bad marketing, or the fact that so many natural resource professionals are averse to communicating and not interested. Sometimes he does run across someone who is interested, someone who wants to communicate and do it well. But he feels there are still not enough people out there.

In the introduction to the book, Fazio quotes his late colleague Douglas Gilbert: "Natural resource management is 90 percent managing the public and 10 percent

managing the resource." Fazio notes that "Most experienced resource managers would agree with this bit of insight, but what about the new arrivals and students who enter degree programs in natural resource management because of a love for animals, trees, and the outdoor life? Their motivations have traditionally been almost anti-social, a desire to escape urban life and live in the forest as stewards of the land and its wild inhabitants. The secret dream has been to live somewhere in a pleasant log cabin, complete with e-mail and Internet access, of course, but with plenty of time for hunting, fishing and driving around in a pickup to oversee the land. It has been a heroic image, too, with the rest of society seen as looking on with appreciation, admiration and maybe a little envy. Today, anyone entering forestry, wildlife, range or even park and recreation management who harbors those desires is in for a rude awakening."

Fazio had opinions similar to many of the other respondents when it came to discussing cultural differences between the Old West and the New West. Some of the differences are "the independence that prevails in the West; and people being kind of anti-government to begin with. And then they get fixed on certain things, like elk, to the exclusion of any other consideration of resources. So there are those three things: being focused on their own little special interest, whether it's certain species they hunt, or riding particular vehicles, like all-terrain vehicles or motorcycles. That fixation on their particular interest; then the anti-government and the independence, which probably is related to the anti-government, are the three things that are key. But then as you know, with the New West forming and people moving in from California and places like that, it's a whole different breed of cat. The thing I notice - and this is just my biased opinion - but they don't have quite the knowledge of the region, the knowledge of forests and the tradition. They want all their creature comforts, and they want their Internet connections, and they want their speedy way to get elsewhere. They're just very different; much wealthier, and so there's a big divide there. They've got money, and so they don't have to worry about eking out their living from the land – keeping mills open and that sort of thing.

They look at the world through a much different set of glasses. They're detached from the land as a source of income and a necessity for raising one's family that the small-town native folks have on their minds."

Fazio thinks that in Idaho, the progress being made toward educating newcomers is on the fire front, i.e., educating people about proper landscaping to better fireproof their homes. Other than that, he's seen "some signs here and there saying 'Newcomers – this is farming country. Respect it, know it.'" He says, "I talked to a guy in the Sula area once (south end of the Bitterroot Valley) that had just bought a big chunk of land, and he didn't even know that there were rattlesnakes in the area, in that particular drainage. He didn't know."

Asked for his recommendations for professional communicators, Fazio says: "I think the effort has to be made to understand the people, and then, as I pointed out in my book, to divide the general public into segmented publics, understanding that they're not all the same. Get to know them, try to understand them, see where they're coming from, where their gaps of knowledge are. Find out where their common ground is with your particular causes, and go from there. Fashion a communications campaign, rather than just sitting down and pounding out a Power Point Program and heading out."

Results, Section 2:
Answers to Research Questions

As can be seen when viewing the full survey instrument in Appendix E, the questions can be roughly divided into a few major categories. Those categories are listed here, with a summary of the respondents' answers.

1. Framing the discussion. The interviewer had specific topics in mind for the people who were to be interviewed, but when asked about the most difficult public communications problem they'd faced regarding land use issues, some talked about a different topic or incident as well. For example, Dunlap and Fein talked about their work in the mines as well as the Milltown Dam Superfund cleanup; Bergmeier talked about school trust lands as well as slash burning. As much as possible, then, both topics were included in the interviews. The speakers were asked to describe the situation and why it was difficult; what publics they were trying to talk to; and describe the main goal of their communications program.

   The most difficult situations for these communicators had to do with the following conditions:

   a. Whether or not the company they worked for was perceived as the "bad guy" in the situation (Atlantic Richfield, often associated with the bad reputation of the old Anaconda Company which it purchased; the Bunker Hill Mine; the wind farm company).

   b. The complexity of the situation. Complexity could take either of two forms:

   - The number of government agencies, organizations, environmental groups, individuals and others who needed communication and interaction;
   - The complexity of the issue itself, such as whether or not the U.S. still needs to drill for energy in the Powder River Basin, and whether that basin will provide enough energy to compensate for the destruction of habitat; or the

vagaries of how education is funded in Montana; or the interconnectedness of watersheds and their surrounding ecosystems.

c. Whether or not senior management and/or their supervisors were knowledgeable about and supportive of the communications program.

The various publics these communicators were working with ranged from single individuals such as landowners, farmers and ranchers, to environmental groups, to local, state and federal government agencies, the media, sub-contractors, outside consultants, civic groups, economic development groups, groups formed around land preservation, local and national protest groups, and just about anyone who had some kind of interest in the situation at hand.

Several of the respondents stressed that there existed a kind of split among the general public regarding land use issues: there were those fringe groups on either end of a bell curve who were actively involved at the extreme ends of the issue. However, the majority of the public, while wanting to be kept informed, was not involved and didn't care to be. This point of view was also born out in some of the secondary research on values which follows this section.

In some cases, the goal of the outreach effort was not to obtain action on the part of the one group or another, but was simply an attempt to get the major story out and try to portray the facts in a straightforward way. This was the goal of Shannon Dunlap at Atlantic Richfield; of T.O. Smith in the state Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, of Ed Nesselroad at the Forest Service, and was one of the goals of the public relations firm working for the wind farm company.

In other cases, the goal of communicating was to see some kind of action. The organizers of the Blackfoot Cooperative Landscape Stewardship Project would like to see

Congress pass the legislation; Rich Moy and the Flathead Basin Commission would like to halt the proposed mine on the Canadian side of the Flathead Basin; the wind farm company would like to obtain permission to build its wind farm; and Roger Bergmeier hoped to change how education was funded in the state, so that revenue from school trust lands could be more fully and equitably utilized.

2. Background and research. The interviewer asked whether strategy sessions were conducted, and if so, who was on the team that conducted the sessions; what sort of background the respondent had for public communication research; whether or not any research was done about the area in question, including local attitudes and culture; whether or not there had been a local person available to help with that understanding (a cultural interpreter); and whether or not the speaker had conducted research about any other public relations efforts with that particular type of issue.

In many instances, the communicators did not have to do a lot of background research. They had either been on the job long enough, or already knew the situation and its key players, as Gordy Sanders from Pyramid Mountain Lumber did. Dave Mihalic had long experience working with the national parks, and also had received some workshop courses in communication.

In other areas, research would have helped a great deal. Shannon Dunlap scrambled to understand more about the history of Butte and the history of Atlantic Richfield's unsteady relationship with the communities of Butte, Anaconda and Opportunity when he took the job. The public relations firm hired by the wind farm company conducted extensive research, not just on wind farms but on community reactions and expectations.

Many of those interviewed learned about public communication on the job, through trial by fire. Shannon Dunlap and Matt Fein are mining engineers by training. Rich Moy has an

MA in Animal Ecology and has worked extensively on regional, national and international water issues. T.O. Smith has degrees in political science and wildlife biology; Dave Mihalic has degrees in recreation administration and park and recreation management. Gordy Sanders has degrees in forestry management. Roger Bergmeier has a degree in forestry.

The public relations consultant has a background and training in public relations; and Ed Nesselroad at the Forest Service is a former news anchor and announcer, and also a former congressional assistant. Jim Fazio's background covers both public relations and natural resources. In the Air National Guard case study, it is clear that those designing and carrying out the communications program were primarily military personnel.

The difference that formal training or experience in some aspect of professional communications seemed to make was not in whether or not a communication program was successful; it was in the level of frustration felt by the individual communicator when others did not realize the necessity of communication.

As a general rule, the communicators interviewed did not need to do research on local values and attitudes. Those were visible most of the time without much digging. Impressive, however, was the fact that even long-term Montana residents, "old-timers," would ask members of a target audience who they would consider to best represent their interests. They asked who people would consider to be a leader, a person of influence. The fact that this was never assumed in advance speaks to a lack of prior assumptions and a willingness to learn. As in the MANG study case, the attitude of "show me, tell me" was present.

In some cases, a cultural interpreter of some kind was present. With the wind farm, a local person knowledgeable in land-use issues was somewhat available to the public relations firm, although the public relations firm would have liked more frequent and direct access. In the MANG case study, at least four cultural interpreters were available at the tribal level,

with a fifth who became a close friend of the presiding officer; and the members of the Montana Air National Guard became cultural interpreters for others as a result. In the Blackfoot Cooperative Landscape Stewardship Project, a volunteer helps interpret the culture of Washington D.C. and its policy makers back to the local organization. Ed Nesselroad used a media liaison to help ease out tensions with the firefighting professionals and their culture to provide better communication with the media. In these cases, the cultural interpreter might also be thought of as a translator, able to speak the language of the press as well as that of fire fighters, for example.

3. Strategic approaches. The interviewer ask what strategies were used, how they were chosen, and what the primary considerations were; again asked if someone in the local area helped to create the strategies; and asked if there was any "Plan B," or backup strategic plan. Interviewees were asked to explain, if they had not already, why they chose the strategies they did, if they were aimed at a particular target audience; if the strategies were easy or difficult to implement; and if they used the same approach for each target audience, or created special approaches and messages for each audience. There were four distinct types of answers as to plans and backup plans:
    - If the communications program was being implemented in a time of crisis – for example, during fire season – then no plan was in effect.
    - If the situation required extreme flexibility in the face of changing economic and political conditions – for example, trying to get collaboration on a piece of legislation, or trying to change state laws regarding education funding – then a plan was seen as being too confining, and possibly too distracting if it made people feel more hide-bound to the plan than to the project itself.

- If a project was very well defined in scope, and possibly in geography, and was more task-oriented in response to an official edict or rule – the Milltown Dam cleanup communications, the slash burning issue – then a plan was not seen as needed.
- If the situation involved a government agency or quasi-government group – the Flathead Basin Commission, the state Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Yosemite National Park – a plan was required and professionally produced.

The people interviewed who planned strategies quite extensively, though not necessarily in a formal way, were Gordy Sanders (and his group) in dealing with the cooperative stewardship project; the public relations firm dealing with the wind mill farm; Dave Mihalic, constructing restoration plans for the Merced River and the Yosemite Valley; Rich Moy and the Flathead Basin Commission; and T.O. Smith, in the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks. Sanders noted that he wanted no formal plan on paper. He was one who felt people might become too bound to such a plan, unable to react appropriately to changing situations. Yet his strategies were thought out and implemented in an organized fashion. Others simply incorporated strategies depending upon the situation and how it might change from day to day. By and large, respondents felt that they had built enough flexibility into the existing program that a backup plan was not needed.

The drivers of strategies, those things which caused people to choose the strategies they did, were strikingly similar across all interviews in one specific way: people took the time and trouble to communicate face-to-face, no matter what time or expense were required to do it. Every single person knew that was a critical piece of effective communication in rural areas, and particularly in the West where trust is hard to come by.

Another consistent driver was the timing of a message. Getting messages out at the most opportune time meant a lot of personal conversations and notifications. As Gordy Sanders made clear, learning when to wait for a politically advantageous time can be a critical skill in communication.

An interesting aspect of the interviews surfaced when several respondents said they would strategize behind closed doors, away from the glare of any kind of public spotlight. They would decide who would be a spokesperson on what topic, how the topic would be handled, what people would be contacted, and so forth. This was done in order to be able to present a cohesive, coherent program to the public, and was also meant to avoid having opposition groups rake them over the coals with every single thing they did or considered doing. More than one person wanted to avoid the anger that surfaces at public meetings if at all possible. In so long as they were not mandated to hold public hearings, such as is required with an Environmental Impact Survey, most preferred to move ahead quietly and communicate later. The author would like to stress that her clear understanding was that operating in this way was not done in order to hide anything, but in order to work out plans, methods and implementations away from the glare of the spotlight which too often brought with it an uneducated hostility (uneducated about the complexities of the issues) and insistence on personal agendas at the expense of collaboration.

All respondents had either segmented out their various publics, or had it done for them automatically due to the myriad of agencies and organizations with whom they had to communicate. Each respondent was very much aware of the differences between the "old-timers" and the newcomers to the West, although Shannon Dunlap's audience in Opportunity broke the mold for how long-term Montanans were expected to react. Not

everyone tailored their messages to specific audiences. T.O. Smith specifically recommended against it in light of the fact that all the groups in Montana talk to each other, and didn't want to be told different things.

4. Cultural differences; co-orientation differences. A separate question was often used here that does not appear on the original survey instrument in this document, and that is, "Did you notice any differences in cultures, attitudes and values of the people you were communicating with during the course of this project?" Inserting this question before asking people how they addressed those differences seemed to be an easier and better introduction to the topic, and gave the interviewee a chance to reflect about it, even though most of those interviewed needed no further explanation. Again, the topic of a cultural interpreter was brought up. The interviewer asked if the person had received any advice and assistance from a local person and if so, whether or not it helped. Finally, the person was asked if a diversity of opinions and perspectives were found among the local community for the project at hand. Once again, no one had to think much about this before answering.

There was strong consistency among respondents when asked if they had noticed differences in cultures and values among their target audiences, and if they had seen a diversity of opinions and perspectives. Each person said yes, but some made it clear that the primary cultural differences were not among the target audiences so much as they were between their organization's culture and the various publics it addressed. Dave Mihalic addressed the culture of the National Park Service and its insular nature. Ed Nesselroad addressed the culture of the Forest Service and those who work in natural resource management, with fire fighters as a subset. James Fazio wrote about those exact cultural differences and their insular natures in his textbook. T.O. Smith talked about a dissimilar mindset within his organization when it came to the marketing side of a communications

program. Roger Bergmeier spoke about the differences in values and outlook between the health departments, the state agencies, and the private contractors involved in slash burning. Rich Moy talked about cultural, political and value differences between Canada and the United States. The wind farm company did not place the same value on public relations and personal relationships that its public relations firm did. Without a doubt, differences in cultures, values and perspectives played strong and often frustrating roles for the respondents.

As noted earlier, Dave Mihalic found a difference in the Hispanic culture of central California and the way their families would use Yosemite National Park, compared with families in the "traditional" white culture. Cultural differences were pronounced when working with a Native American Indian reservation, as Lt. Col. Tammy Mitnik found with the Montana Air National Guard project. Numerous respondents remarked about the differences in the cultures of the New West and the Old West.

5. Follow-up and recommendations. Finally, respondents were asked what worked best and what didn't work in their communications program, and what kind of follow-up methods they might have used in analyzing it after the fact. They were asked to recommend the best methods for such communication in the future, and, if they had it to do over again, whether they would have prepared differently or use the same strategies. Finally, they were asked if anything in the communications process took them completely by surprise. This particular question turned out to be one of the most useful for the interesting answers it elicited from respondents. They were also asked if they would use communications theories and strategies from other fields if they were aware of them.

Most people would have started the communications process earlier if they could have. They might have needed to talk to just one group, or they may have needed to work out the

whole strategic plan earlier than time permitted. They all saw value in being able to open up dialogue and develop relationships at the earliest possible moment, before misunderstandings ensued, opposition coalesced, or information became too confusing to digest.

Each respondent, without fail, stressed the value of individual relationships. The public relations consultant stressed the quality of those relationships, stating that they had to be completely authentic. Gordy Sanders stressed being able to bring key people into a project, and not insisting on becoming the primary spokesperson.

Shannon Dunlap wished he'd had more time in the beginning to study the history of Butte and the relationship of Atlantic Richfield to its host communities of Butte, Anaconda and Opportunity. He and a few others were surprised by what happened to the communications process when attorneys interceded; reports were consistently negative as to the outcome.

The public relations firm was taken by surprise at the strength and bitterness of the opposition, given the acceptability of other wind farm developments in the region.

If they had it to do over again, the public relations firm would have been stronger and clearer about defining roles and setting the right expectations before work began. Shannon Dunlap would have started communicating earlier than he was able to at the time. Dave Mihalic would have taken his 20 team members in Yosemite and, with the additional 40 people who came on board, formed teams that would be trained on what the project was all about. He would simply have stopped the entire project and trained teams first, believing they would have gotten the work done more efficiently as a result, and still met their deadline.

For some who felt they had their relationships in place, knew their job and knew the territory, using research and theories from other fields was not an attractive option. The author had the sense that research and theories felt very academic to them, when they were more interested in specific tactics that worked on the ground. Others said,

"Sure! You can never stop learning." Background, training and current position did not seem to weigh into this answer, but whether or not the person was facing conflict on the job might have had something to do with it.

## Land-use Values and Perspectives

Fortunately, there is a renewed interest in examining values and attitudes about land and its uses. There are several studies and surveys available which provide key insights for the purposes of this report.

### A. Swan Valley Land-use Survey

The Swan Valley is part of what's known as the Seeley-Swan region about an hour's drive northeast of Missoula. The Seeley-Swan is a string of beautiful glacial lakes nestled between the Mission Mountains on the west (the other side of the Flathead Reservation) and the Bob Marshall Wilderness on the east. The Swan Valley sits at the north end of the region. For many years, the Seeley-Swan was undiscovered by tourists, who automatically gravitated toward Flathead Lake on the other side of the Missions. That was fine with local Missoulians, many of whom had long had summer cabins in the region. But the Seeley-Swan has, indeed, been discovered (for those wanting to know more, visit http://visitmt.com/categories/city.asp?SiteID=1&CityID=376.).

In 2003, The Bolle Center for People and Forests, part of the College of Forestry and Conservation at the University of Montana, conducted a survey of full-time Swan-Valley residents, seasonal or part-time Swan Valley residents, and non-residents with a demonstrated interest in the Swan Valley. This independent survey was funded by the Henry P. Kendall Foundation of Boston, MA, a non-profit organization interested in forests, rural communities and conservation in the West. All quotes in this section are taken directly from the survey itself.

The response rate to the survey was approximately 60 percent, resulting in the report stating, ". . . we can be somewhat but not totally confident that the survey results represent the views of the intended populations. …it is possible that the 40 percent who presumably received, but did not fill out and return the survey (or sufficiently complete the survey) had different opinions than the 60 percent who completed the survey."

Results included the following:

- Respondents were asked, "Here are some features that people used to describe the Swan Valley. Please indicate how important each feature is to you by circling a number of the scale for each." The results were that environmental features such as forests, wildlife, mountains, open space and wilderness were ranked extremely high across all three populations; and they ranked higher across all three populations than social-community features (knowing your neighbors, affordable housing, independent living, community, influencing change).
- Respondents were asked to "Please indicate how important the following items are to you when you think of the future of the Swan Valley by circling a number on the scale for each." The results were that protecting natural resources, protecting private property rights, and sustainable forestry were ranked as very important across all three populations. Fulltime and seasonal residents ranked developing natural resources as important (more so than non-residents); full-time residents ranked economic development as important (more so than seasonal and non-residents); and all thought limiting population growth was important, but it was ranked higher by non-residents. Full-time residents ranked local management as very important (slightly higher than seasonal residents and much higher than non-residents). Seasonal and non-residents ranked as very

important people getting along, long-range planning, and balancing development with protection of natural resources. All three populations rated economic development as important (more so by fulltime residents). All three groups ranked small-scale tourism as important, but ranked large-scale tourism as not important.

- Respondents were asked, "Some statements about issues facing the Swan Valley are listed below. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements." Most people agreed on these two statements:
    a. Local residents should have the most say regarding public land management.
    b. Private landowners in the Swan Valley should be able to use their property as they wish.

  Respondents did not believe that forests would stay healthy on their own without intervention by humans. They also did not believe that the Swan Valley is a better place to live in now than it was 10 years ago.

There is more to this survey, but that provides the general idea. It calls to mind the two newspaper articles quoted earlier in this report, in which congressional representatives from Montana and Wyoming were upset about proposed wilderness protection because local Montanans needed some input, and needed a stronger economy; while a coalition of groups fought for better wilderness protection. Within the Swan Valley, the difference in opinions between non-residents and full-time or seasonal residents can be striking (Belsky, 2003).

**B. Resident Values toward Montana and its Resources:** Institute of Tourism and Recreation, University of Montana, 2005: This survey reports that a significant proportion of Montanans live in Montana because it's a rural state, and for the natural resource amenities. The degree of attachment residents felt for Montana

was expressed in the opinions that a significant proportion would be very sorry if they had to move from their town; and were concerned about the potential disappearance of open space in their counties. Respondents said what they valued most were the following things: that it was a place of scenic beauty; a place for use and enjoyment and for recreational activities; a habitat for wildlife and all living things to exist; something to pass along for future generations; and a resource for fishing.

At the bottom of the values list, i.e. when ranking what they valued the least, they said a resource for logging; an economic resource for their livelihood; and a resource for mining (Nickerson, N., 2006).

**C. Chippewa-Cree Attitudes toward Tourism:** 2004 survey by the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research (ITTR), University of Montana. This survey was taken on Rocky Boy's Reservation in north central Montana. For the purposes of this paper, it is worth noting that Rocky Boy's Reservation is close to the Fort Belknap Reservation, located in the same general geographic area of north central Montana.

Major opinions toward land use expressed by the Chippewa-Cree were:

- They support land-use regulations to manage growth.
- They feel there is adequate undeveloped open space in their community, but…
- They are also concerned about the disappearance of open space.
- They also felt, by a somewhat slim majority, that vacationing in Montana causes too many people to move here (Niche News, 2004).

D. **A Qualitative Examination of Value Orientations toward Wildlife and Biodiversity by Rural Residents of the Intermountain Region.** This study, by Lori Hunter of the University of Colorado at Boulder, and Joan M. Brehm of Illinois State University, was conducted in a small, mostly Mormon, rural town in Utah and "explores the values associated with wildlife and biodiversity by

residents of a small, rural community in the Intermountain West region of the United States. Overall, the results demonstrate the fallacy of assuming constant value orientations within rural population groups, the importance of local context within value formation, and the myriad ways in which individuals define 'environmental value." (Brehm & Hunter, 2004, p. 13). This study outlined the nine types of basic values attributed to wildlife and biodiversity partially referred to in the description of the Yellowstone Pipeline/Ninemile Valley dispute in the introduction to this report. The values are:

1. Utilitarian - Practical and material exploitation of nature
2. Naturalistic - Direct experience and exploration of nature
3. Ecologistic- Scientific Systematic study of structure, function, and relationship in nature
4. Aesthetic - Physical appeal and beauty of nature
5. Symbolic - Use of nature for language and thought
6. Humanistic - Strong emotional attachment and "love" for aspects of nature
7. Moralistic - Spiritual reverence and ethical concern for nature
8. Dominionistic - Mastery, physical control, dominance of nature
9. Negativistic - Fear, aversion, alienation from nature

(Brehm & Hunter, 2004, p. 14)

In their discussion section, Brehm and Hunter noted that "In their research, Fortmann and Kusel conclude that pro-environmentalism (as measured by low support for clear cutting, herbicide application and an expressed desire to balance timber harvesting with other forest uses) characterizes a substantial portion of the concerns of long-term rural residents. These residents do not, however, tend to be engaged in local resource management conflicts. As a result, the new migrant arrivals

provide 'voice' to these pro-environmental values as they become active in local debate" (Brehm & Hunter, 2004, p. 23).

These statements bring back echoes – triangulations, if you will – of the articles and interviews already included in this report about newcomers to Montana speaking out to protect open space and wilderness now that they've moved here and have obtained their own little "slice of heaven." The newcomers appear to be much more vocally active, although, as one columnist noted, that activism and concern may decrease with time. Long-term residents may not be as actively engaged in land-use issues.

## Barriers to Communication

Given such wide-ranging studies on the conflicts and difficulties in communicating across the various land use and natural resource issues in the West, what, then, are the major barriers to communication in Montana and by extension, the Rocky Mountain West, regarding land use issues? They might be summarized this way:

1. Imbalance of power, then and now. For example:
    - The citizens of Anaconda and Butte vs. the Anaconda Company
    - The citizens of Libby, Montana vs. the W.R. Grace Company
    - Native American tribes vs. the dominant white culture/U.S. government
    - Long-term residents working for low wages vs. wealthier newcomers
    - Residents of the West vs. policy-makers - courts, politicians, Congress
2. Traditional western distrust of outside corporations, government agencies
3. The specific cultures within some government agencies such as the U.S. Forest Service and the National Parks Service
4. The specific cultures within some corporate entities, such as mining companies and pipeline companies

5. Lack of support from senior management
6. Difficulties in disseminating information; sheer distances to travel
7. Problems with public meetings and other communications tactics which do not engender trust among the local populace
8. Lack of understanding of the history and culture of the area
9. Lack of understanding the values and views of the "Old West" and the "New West"
10. Lack of knowing about differences in culture, values and perspectives
11. Montanans' (and rural Westerners') traditional reliance on face-to-face communication, not mass media
12. Lack of established relationships
13. Assumptions that are not based in fact
14. Prior biases that may need to be discarded before communication begins

## Discussion

This study's intent was to explore the presence of various theories and models of public relations in the Northern Rockies region of the West concerning land-use and natural resource issues, and to suggest the use of those or other theories and models as seemed applicable. With the West's long history as a "colony" of extractive industries for the rest of the nation, and its current status as a beautiful paradise for outdoor recreation and rural living, clashes between government agencies, corporations, local residents (including Native American, other minority races and Caucasians), newcomers, and a myriad of interest groups have colored the discussions of how to proceed with land-use issues for a long time. This study confirmed the fact that the personal influence model of public relations, the cultural interpreter model, and the co-orientation theory of public relations are all alive and well for those communicating in the American West. However, they are probably not known by those names, and

few would be familiar with the concepts. The strong history of one-to-one communication throughout the West infers that personal relationships are paramount, as each respondent confirmed. Westerners' traits of independence infer that not everyone will think the same on any given issue, and indeed, co-orientation may be a tough thing to find in some instances. In others, such as Montanans' love of the Rocky Mountain Front, co-orientation is so strong that it can change federal government or corporate policies. That one instance (saving the Front) is indicative of the underlying value which ties everyone in the state together: love of the land in all its various forms. The anti-government attitudes held by so many Westerners, the myriad cultural differences between the western and eastern U.S., as well as between newcomers to the West and "old-timers;" and between Native Americans and the white culture, all speak to the need for cultural interpreters. Interpreters are need to explain the West to those from outside the region, and are needed to explain the workings of corporate America, government agencies and Congress to those who live inside the region.

The various theories explored earlier in this paper have something to contribute to understanding communication modes in the West. The learning theory from the field of sociology, which talks about an interactive process rather than a passive one, certainly is at work. People want to be informed, but they also need to ask questions; they need to discuss. There are more options than ever for becoming engaged in a land-use or natural resource issue, from volunteering time on the ground to attending public meetings, contacting legislators, writing letters and attending classes and tours. Even those people in the middle of the bell curve who want to be more informed than engaged need to have the options of an interactive learning process rather than be subject to simple information dissemination.

The social adaptability or congruence theory seems particularly apt for two reasons. In saying "Agencies wishing to measure, respond to, and influence social acceptability must understand the nuances of public perception regarding controversial issues," the

theory speaks directly to the need for understanding whether co-orientation exists. Unmentioned until now in this report, the Spiral of Silence known to public relations professionals fits neatly into a social acceptability framework as well. The Spiral of Silence simply means that if your neighbor stands up at the microphone at a public meeting and loudly protests something, you may not stand up and argue against him; he's your neighbor, you have to get along together. "Individuals who think their opinion conflicts with the opinions of most other people tend to remain silent on an issue" (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 1994, p. 241). So a Spiral of Silence ensues, and most of the time it means that only the protesters are heard; those who might not mind a given project or who might even be in favor of it don't speak out. This has to do with social acceptability, something not many of us are willing to give up very quickly.

One theory that seems unreasonable at first glance is actually worth a second look. It is called the Policy Marketer theory and is posed by Elizabeth Shanahan at Montana State University in Bozeman and Mark K. McBeth from Idaho State University. They argue against the use of cultural values and perspectives in establishing land-use policy, because culture is not a rational thing. Granted, it's not rational; but it is a very human thing, and something that everyone has to deal with in working on any type of land-use or natural resource issue. Cultural values and perspectives about the land and the landscape are not going to go away; they are deeply imbedded in the human psyche, and the author suspects they are imbedded in our DNA as well. As noted numerous times in this report, the one thing that binds people together is their love of the landscape, however fantasy-based or overly sentimental it may sometimes be and in whatever form it might take.

However, Shanahan and McBeth have a point when they say "special interest groups, the media, and elected officials do not act solely as linkage mechanisms, but rather as policy marketers who market public opinion to citizens," and relate that to the rise of consumerism in our society. They conclude that 'Concurrent with the decline in social capital

and the rise of policy marketing, consumer-oriented citizens in the GYA (Greater Yellowstone Area) live in competing social realities with mutually exclusive sources of knowledge and competing interpretations of reality. Thus, when citizens examine policy conflicts they, like the policy marketers who provide the information, approach the conflict from diametrically opposed frames that fail to consider the values of the opposition and the larger context of Greater Yellowstone policy conflict." After listening to the thoughts of T.O. Smith, who says that for him, communication on energy development has approached the level of marketing; James Fazio, who advocates marketing along with public relations in his textbook; and Dave Mihalic, who advocates marketing in terms of getting people to visit their national parks, these statements have new resonance. Perhaps the greatest resonance comes when reviewing the many comments about newcomers to the West, who are disconnected from the land, who don't understand what it means to live on or near the land, and are often so wrapped up in the mythology of the West that they do not understand the reality beneath the myth. These people, without the experience of having lived in the West and soaked it up in their bones, must now shop for information as a consumer would, and shop for opinions that they try on for fit. As T.O. Smith notes, they may not have the societal bonds in public meetings that used to be present and lacking that, the consumer mentality takes over in the quest for opinions and identity in their new communities.

Finally, the Balance Zone Theory of public relations, particularly when considered together with the cultural interpreter and personal influence models and co-orientation theory, provides the best framework for looking at communicating in the West. When Flynn suggests communicators "move beyond two-way thinking about publics and begin to re-conceptualize public relations in a multidimensional perspective, where dialogue, collaboration, and negotiation with multiple stakeholders and stake-seekers occur simultaneously," he could be talking about any one of the interview respondents, who all work with multiple stakeholders and all have a great deal to gain through collaborative efforts. Moving public

relations into a multi-dimensional arena is already being done on the ground; it simply isn't recognized by formal names and theories. The collaborations engineered by Gordy Sanders and the group behind the Blackfoot Cooperative Landscape Stewardship Project are emblematic, and perhaps set the standard for effective collaboration with multiple stakeholders and stake-seekers. This working theory of public relations, combined with on-the-ground, collaborative efforts springing up in various efforts across the West, point the way toward a comprehensive, cohesive, and less divisive future for land-use and natural resource issues in the Northern Rockies Region of the American West.

## If you're gonna' know the territory: Recommendations for further use

*Author's note: This section is provided in expanded form in a booklet for the professional communicator regarding land-use and natural resource issues.*

1. Know the land use and resource management history of the community in which you are operating.
2. Know the history of the relationship your company or organization has with the local community.
3. As far as possible (depending on your location) live the way the natives do.
4. Do your homework; find out what people think and feel. Don't assume everyone in the community feels the same way.
5. Do your homework. Take the time to read about and learn about local history, customs, patterns of behavior, traditions.
6. Get organized up front, early on. Complexity demands organization.
7. Train everyone who will be working with you in the cultural differences. Most of all, insist on complete respect and courtesy at all times.
8. "Manage up" – work to obtain all the support you can from senior management, and do all you can to explain what can happen when communication fails.
9. Manage the legal department. If nothing else, train the attorneys in crisis communications so that they will see the damage that making "no comment" can do.
10. Work at developing relationships and a providing steady, consistent pattern of communication long in advance of when you think you might need them.
11. Understand that out of these relationships will come your cultural interpreter. "Be quiet, be patient, and learn." You don't know where or when this person may appear.
12. Do not assume an equality of relationship, with either white or Indian communities. You are the one who will be on the losing end of such an assumption; you will be the person looked down upon as not being equal to the rest of the community. Lose any ego before entering the territory.
13. Be yourself. One of the worst things you can do in any new culture is to adopt affectations in behavior or appearance to "be one of them." Be low-key, but be yourself.
14. Use language carefully. Most relaxed, good communicators seem to use the word "folks" a lot – a very friendly word. One referred to the opposition as "energetic opponents." When you take the sting out of words, you clear the way for mutual respect.
15. Set a budget in both time and resources that allows for intense personal involvement.
16. Speak out sooner, rather than later.

17. Don’t be afraid to tell your own story.
18. Find those people in the community who can talk to other people in the community, and/or who will stand up for you in public meetings.
19. Try to keep everyone informed at the same level and at the same time. Don’t let anyone in your key publics find out anything from the media first.
20. Do not assume that disseminating information is the same as communicating. If you’re not willing to have this be a two-way relationship, you won’t accomplish your goals.
21. Expect the unexpected. During an early live radio interview on the Fort Belknap Reservation while the Montana Air National Guard’s Environmental Impact Statement was in process, Poncho Bigby - actually an advocate of the training range and a friend and cultural interpreter for the officer in charge of the projected - asked, “Col. Tanberg, can you explain to our listeners by what authority the Air National Guard flies over sovereign air space on the reservation?”
22. Maintain the relationships. Don’t expect to come in cold, after a year with no contact, and be able to start up all over again with the same credibility and trust developed previously.
23. Train your people again – and again. If they are in a natural resource profession, they may not have had training in communication and relationship-building, and may actually be averse to the idea. Even if they never have to be official communicators themselves, they need to be trained to increase their awareness and understanding of the importance of public communication.

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*Appendix B: Montana and Public Relations Timelines*
*Sources for information are listed at the end of this document as well as in the reference list in Appendix A.*

| | Montana Timeline Highlights | Public Relations Timeline Highlights |
|---|---|---|
| 6,500 B.C.- 1,500 A.D. | Prehistoric people populate all areas of Montana | 1st century B.C. – Romans use the phrase, "Vox Populi: Vox Dei. The voice of the people is the voice of God. |
| 1500 | Europeans reach North America and begin to displace native people. Without horses in the West for another 180 years, or guns for 220 more years, Montana's Native Americans are among those severely disadvantaged. | "History followed different courses for different peoples because of differences among peoples' environments, not because of the biological differences among peoples themselves."<br>Guns, Germs & Steel, p. 25 |
| 1623 | | Pope Gregory XV created the College for Propagating the Faith – the first large-scale use of public relations to retain followers and solicit converts in the aftermath of the Reformation. The term "propaganda" derives from this effort. |
| 1641 | | Three preachers traveling to England for Harvard College requested a fund-raising brochure to help in their efforts. The brochure was "New England's First Fruits, large written in Massachusetts but printed in London in 1643.* |
| 1680 | Montana natives acquire the horse. | During the 17th century, newspapers began to appear and ordinary people gained greater access of information and ideas. |
| 1720 | Montana natives acquire the gun. | |
| 1775-1783 | | Samuel Adams works to sway public opinion to support the Revolutionary War, using "pen, platform, pulpit, staged events, symbols, news tips and political organization. The "Sons of Liberty" and the "Committees of Correspondence" were public relations efforts. The Boston Tea Party, "taxation without representation is tyranny," and the Boston Massacre are all familiar events or symbols. |
| 1787-1788 | | Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and John Jay wrote and distributed 85 Federalist letters urging ratification of the Constitution, "a part of one of the most skillful and important examples of pressure group activity in American history," said David Truman. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1805-1806 | Lewis and Clark Expedition crosses and re-crosses Montana. | Part of the purpose of this mission, according to President Thomas Jefferson, was to “acquire what knowledge you can of the state of morality, religion, and information amoung them; as it may better enable those who may endeavor to civilize and instruct them, to adapt their measures to the existing notions and practices of those on whom they are to operate.”**** |
| 1807 | Manuel Lisa builds first fur fort in Montana on the Yellowstone River. | |
| 1820s | | Amos Kendall, a former newspaperman, served as the first presidential press secretary and was a member of Andrew Jackson’s “kitchen cabinet.” He was a pollster, counselor, ghost writer and publicist. |
| 1828 | Fort Union, an American Fur Company post, is built at the mouth of the Yellowstone River. | |
| 1831 | | Bank of the United States President Nicholas Biddle authorized to “cause to be prepared and circulated such documents and papers as may communicate to people information in regard to the nature and operations of the bank,” to prevail over Jackson and Kendall. Didn’t work. |
| 1839-1845 | | The concept of “Manifest Destiny” as articulated by John O’Sullivan takes hold throughout the country*: "…. the right of our manifest destiny to over spread and to possess the whole of the continent which Providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of liberty and federative development of self-government entrusted to us. It is right such as that of the tree to the space of air and the earth suitable for the full expansion of its principle and destiny of growth."* Within 40 years, full-scale mining will have developed in Montana, and Native Americans will have been pushed onto reservations. |
| 1841 | Father Pierre Jean de Smet establishes St. Mary's Mission in the Bitterroot Valley. | |
| 1848 | | Elizabeth Cady Stanton issues the *Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments* at the landmark women’s rights conference. |
| 1850-1883 | | P.T. Barnum was in full swing with promotions, publicity and showmanship. |
| 1850 | | The railroads and land developers use publicity and promotion to encourage people to come West. Free land was provided adjacent to the railroads as an incentive. But the railroads in Montana were only completed between 1883 and the early 1900s. |

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| 1853 | Johnny Grant starts the first beef herd in the Deer Lodge Valley. | |
| 1855 | | The American Medical Association passes a resolution “urging the secretary of the Association to offer every facility possible to the reports of the public press to enable them to furnish full and accurate reports of transactions.” (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 1994, pg. 99) |
| 1857 | First sheep ranching begins in the Bitterroot Valley. | |
| 1860 | First steamboat reaches Fort Benton. | |
| 1862 | Placer miners rush to gold strike on Grasshopper Creek (Bannack). | During the Civil War years in the United States (Montana was not yet a state), Jay Cooke conceived and directed the first American fund-raising drive. |
| 1864 | Vigilantes hang Henry Plummer and other "Innocents"; Congress creates Montana Territory; first newspaper, the *Montana Post*, published in Virginia City. | |
| 1870 | Open-range cattle industry begins on Montana prairies. | |
| 1872 | Congress creates Yellowstone National Park. | |
| 1876 | Custer's command is annihilated at the Battle of the Little Big Horn. | |
| 1877 | Significant copper mining begins in Butte, and Marcus Daily comes up from Salt Lake City and purchases the Alice Mine in Walkerville; Daly and rival Copper King William Clark proceed to battle each other for power, prestige and money for the rest of their lives. Chief Joseph and the Nez Perce retreat across Montana. | |
| 1880 | Utah and Northern Railroad enters Montana. | |

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| 1883 | Northern Pacific Railroad is completed through Montana; Marcus Daly establishes the town of Anaconda and its smelter works. During the 1880s, Butte becomes the world's largest copper producer. | Theodore Vail, working in public relations for the Iowa Union Telephone and Telegraph Company, asked for a report on the relationship between the public and the company; and whether there had been any conflict with the public and what the results were – one of the first attempts to gauge public opinion. The attempt was not successful; it would be another 60 years before Montana journalism reflected genuine public opinion. |
| 1889 | | George Westinghouse forms the first in-house public relations department for his electric corporation. |
| 1889-1959 | | The Anaconda Company in Butte controls not only the "richest hill on earth," but the state's newspapers, controlling the state in its "copper collar." |
| 1892 | | Henry Clay Frick crushed a labor union in the Carnegie-Frick Steel Company's Homestead, Pennsylvania strike using brutal methods; "Cold-blooded might won this battle, but the employees eventually won the war. Much of public relations history is woven into the unending struggle between employer and employee." |
| 1896 | | The Bryan-McKinley presidential campaign engages in full press outreach, using pamphlets, posters, press releases, and propaganda; William Jennings Bryan, with less money, uses the campaign train. |
| 1889 | **Montana joins the Union as the 41st state.** | |
| 1890 | First hydroelectric dam is built in Great Falls. | |
| 1893 | Great Northern Railway is completed through Montana. | |
| 1894 | Helena wins election to determine the permanent capital of Montana. | |
| 1896 | Populism (and later, Progressivism) becomes a significant factor in Montana politics. | |
| 1900 | | Nation's first publicity firm was founded in Boston – "The Publicity Bureau." From 1900-1912, "muckraking journalism" was the order of the day in the press, carrying the voices of protest from the urban middle classes against government corruption and the abuses of big business. Not in Montana. |

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| 1901-1909 | | Presidency of Theodore Roosevelt, who “fully exploited the news media as a new and powerful tool of presidential leadership, and he remade the laws and the presidency in the process. (Cutlip, Center & Broom, p. 105)<br><br>Intense development and use of public relations by the railroad and by utilities.<br><br>Henry Ford develops the public relations concepts of positioning, press accessibility, and corporate social responsibility. |
| 1902 | Montana Capitol Building is completed. | Ivy Lee, representing George F. Baer, a railroad magnate and leader of the anthracite operators, in the 1902 Anthracite Coal Strike, sets out a declaration of the principles of public relations: the public was no longer to be ignored, nor fooled. Prompt and accurate information were mandated. |
| 1903 | Amalgamated Copper Company paralyzes the state's economy with the shut-down to force legislative relief, arguing for a change of venue law, and effectively defeating their last independent rival miner, F. Augustus Heinz. | Amalgamated Copper was the forerunner of The Anaconda Company, in partnership with Rockefeller’s Standard Oil; see 1913 entry below. |
| 1904 | | George F. Parker and Ivy Lee established New York public relations firm, Parker & Lee. |
| 1909 | Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad ("Milwaukee Road") is completed through Montana. | |
| 1910 | Congress establishes Glacier National Park; forest fires devastate western Montana. Wildfire suppression becomes a formal policy. | |
| 1910-1918 | Homesteading boom peaks on Montana's plains. | |
| 1911-1925 | "County-busting" craze creates 25 new Montana counties. | |
| 1913 | | Joseph Ignatius Constantine Clark, the original public relations professional hired by Standard Oil, quit when the company’s executives quit giving him information. |
| 1914 | Montana women receive the franchise (right to vote). | |
| 1916 | Jeanette Rankin elected the first woman in the U.S. Congress. | The Committee on Public Information, headed by George Creel and created by President Woodrow Wilson, marks the first time the U.S. government coordinates wartime communications and propaganda through a central point of command. |

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| 1917 | Rankin votes against U.S. entry into World War I; Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) organizer Frank Little is lynched in Butte. | Arthur Page named vice president of public relations for AT & T. |
| 1919 | First of severe agricultural depressions (extending into the early 1940s) begins in Montana; oil is discovered in the Cat Creek field. | |
| 1921 | Wave of bank failures begins in Montana. | |
| 1922 | KDYS (Great Falls), Montana's first licensed radio station, broadcasts. | During 1920s, American Tobacco Company sponsors a “Torches of Liberty” parade down Fifth Ave. in New York featuring young women smoking cigarettes, which were provided by Lucky Strikes. |
| 1923 | Jack Dempsey-Tommy Gibbons world heavyweight championship fight is staged in Shelby. | Edward Bernays writes the book *Crystallizing Public Opinion* and teaches the first public relations course at New York University. |
| 1926 | Montana artist Charlie Russell dies in Great Falls. | |
| 1930 | Significant tourist industry begins in Montana. | |
| 1933 | Construction of Fort Peck Dam begins; scores of Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camps are established across Montana. | President Franklin Roosevelt begins his “fireside chats,” taking his message directly to the people. |
| 1935 | Works Progress Administration (WPA) begins projects in Montana; series of severe earthquakes hits central Montana. | |
| 1936 | Rural Electrification Act (REA) begins work in Montana. | First widespread use of public opinion polling. |
| 1941 | Congresswoman Jeanette Rankin votes against U.S. entry into World War II. | |
| 1942 | | Office of War Information works with the media and entertainment industry to build public support for WW II. Also, Rosie the Riveter becomes a WW II icon. |
| 1943 | Smith Mine disaster kills 70 coal miners. | |
| 1946 | | Advent of television. |
| 1949 | | Radio Free Europe begins to spread American news across the Iron Curtain as a mandate of Congress. |

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| 1950 | Great Falls replaces Butte as Montana's largest city. | |
| 1951 | Petroleum boom begins in eastern Montana. | A campaign promoting the sale of Israeli government bonds to institutional and individual investors across the U.S. is highly successful. |
| 1952 | Mike Mansfield is elected to the U.S. Senate for the first time. | VP candidate Richard Nixon uses television during his campaign. |
| 1953 | KOOK-TV (Billings), Montana's first licensed television station, broadcasts. | The U.S. Information Agency is created. |
| 1954 | | UN launches UNICEF; Danny Kaye is spokesman |
| 1955 | Aluminum plant begins processing in Columbia Falls; Berkley Pit copper operation starts in Butte. | |
| 1956 | Construction of the federal interstate highway system begins in Montana. | |
| 1959 | Severe earthquakes hit upper Madison Valley. | |
| 1960 | | Campaign about the dangers of smoking led by Edward Bernays. |
| 1961 | Malmstrom Air Force Base (Great Falls) becomes site of the nation's first ICBM missile command. | President John F. Kennedy creates the Peace Corps.<br>Kennedy routinely uses television for his messages. |
| 1964 | Congress passes the federal Wilderness Act. | |
| 1967 | Bell Creek petroleum field is discovered and developed; longest and costliest strike in Montana history runs in Butte. | |
| 1968 | Yellowtail Dam is completed; work begins on Libby Dam. | Presidential candidate Richard Nixon uses entertainment medium as part of campaign by appearing on TV shoe “Laugh-In.”<br>Also, feminists burned their bras outside Atlantic City Miss America pageant. |
| 1969 | Largest-scale strip mining of coal begins at Colstrip. | |
| 1970 | Consolidation creates the Burlington Northern Railroad. | |

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| 1972 | Montana's electorate approves new constitution, stating in Article IX, "The state and each person shall maintain and improve a clean and healthful environment in Montana for present and future generations." | The new constitution, which guarantees Montanans the right to a "clean and healthful environment," sets the stage for the increasingly severe political/environmental/quality of life/industry public relations battles for the next 45 years. |
| 1975 | Underground mining ceases in Butte. | |
| 1976 | Mike Mansfield retires from the U.S. Senate, becomes U.S. Ambassador to Japan. | |
| 1980 | Anaconda Company announces the closing of its Montana operations; Billings replaces Great Falls as Montana's largest city; fallout from Mount St. Helens volcanic eruption blankets Montana. | Some of the first home computers were sold through Radio Shack. Communication began its radical shift into the high-tech age. Ted Turner launches CNN, the first 24-hr. news channel. |
| 1981 | "Milwaukee Road" declares bankruptcy (Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad) | 1981: Paid-by-subscription or by-the-minute data bases are available online for research. The Internet has not arrived for public use yet (it was still in government and private research hands), but a world-wide range of electronic communication is possible through combining dial-up technology, ham radios, and telephones. |
| 1982 | Copper-mining operations cease at Butte's Berkeley Pit. | Johnson & Johnson's handling of the Tylenol poisonings sets the standard for crisis communications. |
| 1985 | Montana institutes a policy of hunting and killing buffalo that wander outside the boundaries of Yellowstone National Park for fear of brucellosis, first discovered in the buffalo in 1917, spreading to Montana's cattle herds. | For the last 22 years, the buffalo/brucellosis debate has raged nationwide, causing bitter confrontations. |
| 1986 | Limited underground mining resumes in Butte; some high-tech gold mining reopens in Montana's mountains. | |
| 1987 | Burlington Northern sells a major portion of its Montana trackage to Montana Rail Link; last gaps in the federal interstate highway system are completed. | The fax machine, which has been around for a long time, comes into common use. It compresses time and communications around the world. |
| 1988 | U.S. and Canada initiate a Free-Trade Agreement, directly affecting Montana's economy; Large forest fires sweep areas of a drought-stricken Montana and Yellowstone National Park. | |
| 1989 | Montana celebrates its statehood centennial. | Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska sets the standard for how NOT to handle crisis communications. |

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| 1990 | Montana's timber-industry income declines, while gains occur in tourism and specialized mining. | Internet use explodes; the general public is onto it.<br>Also: Before blogging became popular, digital communities took many forms, including Usenet, email lists and bulletin boards. In the 1990s Internet forum software, such as WebX, created running conversations with threads. Many of the terms from Weblogging were created in these earlier media. (juiceenewsdaily.com) |
| 1991 | Riot at State Prison in Deer Lodge results in five deaths.<br>Montana halts bison hunting outside Yellowstone. | Another case in how not to handle crisis communications. |
| 1992 | As a result of the 1990 federal census, Montana loses one of its two representatives in Congress; two incumbents oppose each other for the remaining seat; Attorney General Marc Racicot (R) defeats legislator Dorothy Bradley (D) for governor's seat. | Dorothy Bradley rides the state on horseback as part of her campaign to reach out to people directly, the way most Montanans have come to expect. |
| 1993 | Robert Redford's film, "A River Runs Through It," sparks increased tourism and immigration to Montana; a generally wet summer produces record agricultural harvests. | As expected, the tourists ran through it. |
| 1994 | 4,500 wildfires rage across Montana, burning 286,000 acres. | |
| 1995 | Wolves are returned to Yellowstone National Park, where they thrive. | Another national debate kicks off, still running. |
| 1996 | Montana Freeman and federal agents involved in a standoff in eastern Montana; "Unabomber" Ted Kaczynski captured near Lincoln. | CNN characterizes the Freeman standoff as a “feudal siege” on a 960-acre wheat farm. The Unabomber was described as a hermit living in a shack in Lincoln, Montana – which was true, except that people in the town knew him and talked with him on a regular basis. Lincoln is not completely remote, but is on a major highway between Missoula and Great Falls, a road heavily traveled. |
| 2000 | Summer wildfires scorch nearly 1,000,000 acres and raze 320 homes, mostly in the Bitterroot Valley; 19,600,000 acres of state and federal land are closed due to fire hazard. | |
| 2001 | The Montana Legislature deregulates the electric industry in the state; wildfires again dominate Montana's drought-beset summer. | |
| 2002 | Montana tourism increasingly puts pressure on the land and resources, and on resident Montanans who feel shut out | |
| 2005-2007 | The annual bison hunted is re-instated outside Yellowstone in 2005. | “Citizen Journalism” becomes an increasingly important part of public debate and consciousness due to more and better technology. |

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| 2005 | Snapshot of Montana:<br>• Per Capital Personal Income: $29,387<br>• Population: 935,670 – just a small increase over the 902,195 counted in the 2000 census.<br>• Percentage of people in poverty: 14.3 – 3-year average, 2002-2004 | |

Montana timeline sources: Montana History Website, a resource for teachers. (2007). *Montana Education Telecommunication Network.* http://www.metnet.state.mt.us/teachmthistory/

Ultimatemontana Website, http://www.ultimatemontana.com/sectionpages/Section6/Butte/butte.html

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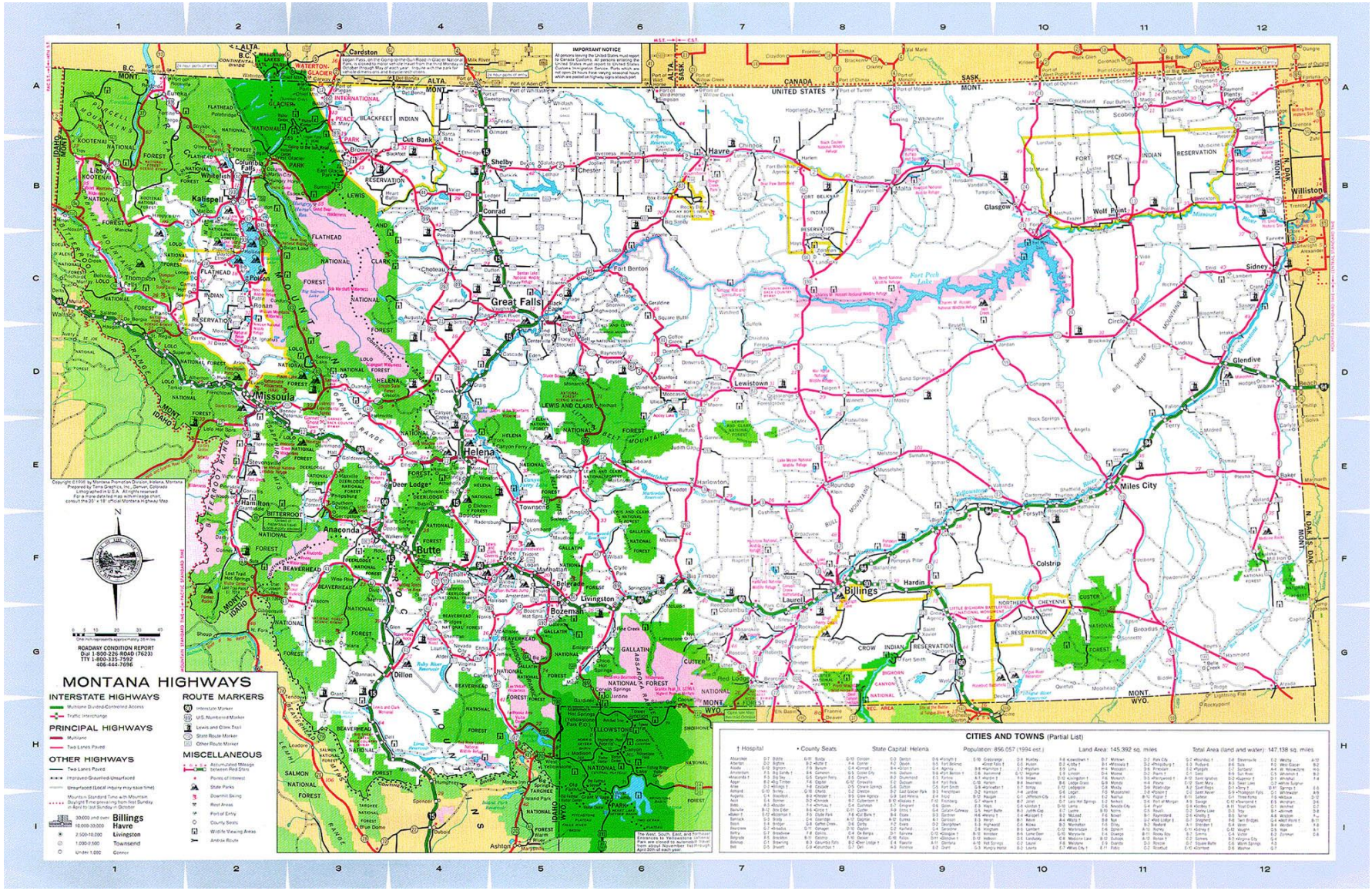
Cutlip, S.M., Center, A.H., & Broom, G.M. (1994). *Effective Public Relations*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc.

# *Appendix C: Montana State Map*



*Appendix D: Prospects Interviewed*

1. Ed Nesselroad, Director of Public and Governmental Affairs, Northern Region of the U.S. Forest Service, Missoula, MT – Topics: communication during and after wild fires.
2. James R. Fazio, Professor, researcher, retired forester, University of Idaho, Moscow, ID Topic: *Public Relations and Natural Resources* (his book).
3. Gordy Sanders, Resource Manager, Pyramid Mountain Lumber Company, Seeley Lake, MT – Topic: Blackfoot Clearwater Landscape Stewardship Project.
4. Public relations consultant in a western state: anonymous. Topic: Wind farm development.
5. T.O. Smith, Planning Coordinator, Montana Dept. of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Helena, MT– Topic: gas and oil drilling in the Powder River Basin.
6. Matt Fein, Senior Project Director, Envirocon, Missoula, MT - Topic: Envirocon's removal of the Milltown Dam over the Clark Fork River, cleanup of the Superfund site stretching between Missoula and Butte.
7. Shannon Dunlap, Project Director for Opportunity Ponds, Atlantic Richfield, Butte – Topic: Removal of old mine sediments from Milltown Dam area near Missoula to Opportunity Ponds near Anaconda.
8. Rich Moy, Chief, Montana Water Resources Division and Chair, Flathead Basin Commission, Helena, MT. – Topic: Transboundary watershed issues with Canada concerning proposed Flathead Basin mine.
9. Case study (by this author, 2004): The Cultural Interpreter Model of Public Relations and Its Role in Communicating with Rural Communities and Native American Tribes: The Montana Air National Guard's Request to Build an Air-to-Ground Training Range

10. Dave Mihalic, retired, National Parks Service – Topic: Yosemite and Glacier National Parks.
11. Roger Bergmeier, retired forestry consultant, Montana Dept. of Natural Resources & Conservation – Topics: Slash burning, air quality issues, and school trust lands in Montana.

*Appendix E: Survey Instrument*

**Interview Protocol**

Thank you for agreeing to this interview. As you know, I am a student of Syracuse University, where I am pursuing my Master's Degree in Communications Management. As part of my final capstone project for the degree, I am conducting research on the perceptions and experiences of land-use managers, natural resource managers, researchers, public relations professionals, non-profit organizations and others concerning their use of public communications strategies related to land-use and natural resource issues. I am interviewing you as part of this research because you and/or your organization are a participant in the use of land and natural resources, or because you have had previous experience dealing with these issues. I'd like you to pick just one major communications challenge you have faced for our discussion – ideally, the greatest communication challenge you have faced regarding a land-use project. If you are agreeable, I will be making an audio recording of this interview for future reference when writing my research report.

**Interview Questions**

1. *Framing the discussion*: Would you please describe for me the greatest public communications challenge you've had regarding a land-use issue?
    a. What made it so difficult?
    b. Who were the various "publics" you were trying to talk to?
    c. What was the main goal of your communications program?
2. *Providing background on previous communications knowledge & research*: How did you prepare for this communications program in advance?
    a. Did you have strategy sessions with your communications team and/or with your management team?

b. Did you have previous experience you could rely on as a sort of template?

c. Did you do any research about the area and local attitudes? Did you have anyone from the local area who helped explain the area to you?

d. Did you do any research about other public communication efforts with this type of issue?

3. *What strategies/theories have you been using?* How did you choose the strategies you used for this communications program?

    a. Did you have someone from the local area who helped you create strategy?

    b. What were the primary considerations? (Cost, reach, etc?)

    c. Did you have secondary strategies or a secondary plan?

4. Why did you choose the strategies you did?

    a. Were the strategies aimed at a specific "target audience?"

    b. Were they easy to implement? Or difficult?

    c. Did your communication reflect the same approach with each target audience, or did you create different strategies for different groups?

5. How did you address differences in cultures, attitudes and values during the course of the project?

    a. If you received advice and assistance from a local person, did it help?

    b. Did you find a diversity of opinions and perspectives on this issue among the people in the local community in which you were operating?

6. Did you do any follow-up analysis of your communications program?

    a. What worked best?

    b. What didn't work?

7. *What are the best methods to communicate on such issues in the future?* How would you have improved your communications program in this instance if you had it to do over again?
    a. Would you choose to prepare differently, and if so, why?
    b. Would you use the same strategies? Why, or why not?
    c. Was there anything in the communications process that took you completely by surprise?
    d. Would you use theories and strategies from other fields if you were aware of them?

*Appendix F:*
*Blackfoot Clearwater Landscape Stewardship Project*
*Detailed synopsis, Spring 2007*

Residents of the Blackfoot River Valley have a vision of a community and conservation approach to the entire watershed. This vision includes protecting traditional ranching, hunting, fishing and other uses, in concert with conserving water and wildlife, wilderness and sustainable forestry activities.

With the conversion of Plum Creek timberlands to other private, state and federal ownerships in the Blackfoot watershed, a concept is emerging that brings balance to the landscape by addressing restoration, sustainable logging, ranching, recreation and wilderness uses across the landscape. This balance is emerging from consensus after a two-year dialogue among key stakeholders. It demonstrates that wilderness and wildlife can be protected alongside historic and traditional activities on the landscape.

As a demonstration project for cooperative public-private stewardship across a landscape area, we are developing the *Blackfoot Clearwater Landscape Stewardship Project* that will facilitate cooperative stewardship on the landscape. This is a legislative proposal that includes Congressional funding for the Blackfoot stewardship pilot project and a biomass project in Seeley Lake, as well as inclusion of recommended tracts within the Bob Marshall-Scapegoat and Mission Mountain Wilderness totaling 87,000 acres. The project involves the 400,000-acre Seeley Ranger District of the Lolo National Forest within the Blackfoot watershed as well as lands within the public-private 41,000-acre Blackfoot Community Conservation Area.

This landscape proposal recognizes that the Blackfoot Valley is a unique ecosystem with significant forest, wildlife and wilderness resources. The proposal will facilitate forest stewardship on the landscape including sustainable logging and restoration work as well as watershed improvements and hazardous fuels reductions. The project will add logging and restoration jobs to the local economy over the long term. It is the culture of cooperation in the Blackfoot that makes a landscape project of this magnitude possible.

The valley has a strong conservation history including the first citizen-initiated wilderness in the nation - the Scapegoat Wilderness. Wildlife and wilderness add much to the local outdoor heritage, as well as providing the valley with sustainable jobs in outfitting, guiding, guest ranching, recreation and support services for hunters, anglers and outdoor recreationists.

The pilot proposes to maintain traditional wilderness pack trails on the Seeley Lake Ranger District as wall as all of the existing groomed snowmobile trails and areas. Groups have agreed to additional snowmobile opportunities in the area between East Spread Mountain and Otatsy Lake. The participating groups agreed to a revision in the proposed Lolo Forest Plan to allow an approximately 2,000-acre “winter motorized use area” in this area.

The pilot project identifies a management approach that allows for most active management such as livestock grazing, logging and restoration work in the roaded lands found at lower elevations. Active management will change as one moves upslope to roadless conservation areas and designated Wilderness in North Fork Blackfoot-Monture Creek areas, as well as Grizzly Basin of the Swan Range and the West Fork of the Clearwater.

All the activities of this pilot project are consistent with the proposed revisions to the Lolo National Forest Management Plan and provide mechanisms to implement the plan.

The proposal includes a funding request to allow the Forest Service to plan and implement landscape stewardship and restoration projects on 400,000 acres in the Lolo national forest portion of the Blackfoot watershed. These projects build on the lessons learned from Clearwater stewardship contracting and restoration experiences, implement the Lolo National Forest Plan revisions and apply the concept at a landscape scale as a demonstration project. This would allow for some logging, with the receipts from the logging being used for restoration work on the ground including watershed improvements, road

rehabilitation work and weed eradication. Participants in this collaborative effort will work together to seek funding for the stewardship activities, as well as supporting a proposal to have Congress designate additions to existing Wilderness areas.

Within the 41,000-acre Blackfoot Community Conservation Area, cooperative management of timber, grazing lands, weeds, hunting and other recreational uses is being planned. Participants believe this proposal represents a new model for landscape-level conservation in Montana. This proposal would help keep historic and traditional activities as part of the landscape, add diversity and sustainability to the local economy with both recreation and forestry jobs, and enhance watersheds and the landscape.

**Congressional Package**

Designation of Wilderness Additions – Designation of Wilderness Under the Wilderness Act and as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System, 87,000 acres would be included within the Bob Marshall-Scapegoat and Mission Mountains Wilderness Areas:

* 75,000 acres in the North Fork Blackfoot-Monture Creek and 6,000 acres in Grizzly Basin (Swan Range) would be included in the Bob Marshall and Scapegoat Wilderness Areas.
* 6,000 acres in the headwaters of West Fork Clearwater River would be included in the Mission Mountains Wilderness.

Blackfoot Cooperative Landscape Stewardship and Restoration Pilot Project – It is anticipated that over the next ten years numerous key restoration projects will be undertaken through this project to address hazardous fuels reduction, habitat improvements, stream restoration, as well as improvements to access and hunting in the Blackfoot. It is also anticipated that USFS will annually achieve historic levels of harvesting (4 MMBF/Yr) as part of its forest management on the Seeley Ranger District. All receipts from Stewardship projects will go toward restoration work.

Authorizes appropriations of $750,000 per year for 10 years for planning, management, restoration and monitoring in the Blackfoot Cooperative Landscape Stewardship Project area.

* Authorizes $400,000 for restoration projects that includes:
- $250,000 per year for 10 years for restoration activities on the Seeley Lake Ranger District as cost-share grants with a dollar for dollar match from private funds. Restoration to address water quality, sediment control and reduction, endangered species protection, weed management, habitat restoration and recreation needs. Restoration activities to include road relocation and closures; culvert and bridge replacements; stream restoration and bank stabilization; invasive species management; trail head and campground improvements, under story removal and vegetative treatment; tree planting and pre-commercial thinning; prescribed burning; and trail reclamation and relocation.
- $100,000 per year for 10 years for restoration activities on the Seeley Lake Ranger District for in-house projects to address Forest Service priorities.
- $50,000 per year for 10 years for restoration projects within the 41,000-acre Blackfoot Community Conservation Area.

* Authorizes $350,000 per year for 10 years for planning, management, monitoring, evaluation and reporting for the Seeley Lake Ranger District tied to landscape stewardship projects. Funds will cover environmental analysis, USFS project management, project monitoring for compliance with forest service regulations, and monitoring committee support.

* Authorizes using funds for federal and non-federal land projects that meet the requirements of protection, restoration and enhancement of fish and wildlife habitat and other resource objectives on federal and non-federal lands where projects will benefit resources of federal lands.

* The Seeley Lake Ranger District will appoint a monitoring committee comprised of diverse stakeholders to review on the ground activities conducted through stewardship contracts. Legislation would require, within 30 days of filing an appeal of a stewardship project, that the appellants meet face-to-face with Forest Service decision-makers and the monitoring committee, to attempt to resolve the appeal.

Seeley Lake Biomass Pilot Project- This $7 million project consists of the construction of a 3.2 megawatt co-generation facility and new boiler on 2 acres at Pyramid Mountain Lumber Inc Plant site in Seeley Lake, Montana. The pilot project is structured in two phases over a 5-year implementation period utilizing cost-share and appropriated funds. Appropriates $1.5 million (FY08) to cost-share a new boiler and $3 million (FY09) to cost-share the co-generation facility.

The cooperative private-public pilot project will provide an outlet for excess forest fuels from private, state and Federal forestlands; increase the number of well-paying manufacturing, trucking and woods worker positions; attain self-sufficiency in increased needs for power and steam for Pyramid; and create the model and vision for rebuilding lost infrastructure in the West. This facility is anticipated to add 20 to 30 new jobs to the local economy.

Blackfoot Partnership -Authorizes Seeley Lake District Ranger for Lolo National Forest and Lincoln District Ranger of the Helena National Forest to serve on the Board of the Blackfoot Challenge and participate in the Blackfoot Community Project.

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Bob Ekey, The Wilderness Society 406-586-1600 x 102
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Other Advisors:
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Jay Kolbe, Wildlife Biologist, MT Fish Wildlife and Parks

Direct your comments and letters of support to:
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**For more information, visit: www.blackfootclearwater.org**